

LACKAWANNA COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREA NE 055



MULTI-YEAR LOCAL PLAN **Modification**

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Introduction:

As local, regional, and broad-based economies shift and change, Workforce Development Boards sit on the threshold of opportunity to adjust service provision to specifically address the needs of business and industry within/across defined areas which, in turn, will affect the overall economies of those locales. The **Lackawanna County Workforce Development Board** (hereinafter referred to as WDB) assumes a lead role in workforce development initiatives, not only in Lackawanna County but as a partner in the self-designated **Northeast Consortium of Workforce Boards** encompassing a 12-County area (Bradford, Carbon, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Monroe, Pike, Schuylkill, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Tioga, Wayne, and Wyoming) in Northeastern Pennsylvania. Working collaboratively, it is the intent of this Consortium to ensure that a regional approach to the provision of workforce development services, through complementing, not competing, practices and operational formats, will strengthen the overall implementation of workforce initiatives regionally and locally, thus, bolstering economic growth across the Northeast region of the Commonwealth. Development of this local plan was created in close adherence to Regional Plan goals and outlooks and disseminated across a wide-variety of partners to ensure a complete and accurate forecast of current, as well as, future requisites to enable a significant recovery from recent challenges and ensure economic stability and growth.

Section 1: STRATEGIC PLANNING: Local Area Workforce and Economic Analysis

Section 1.1: Identify the composition of the local area's population and labor force.

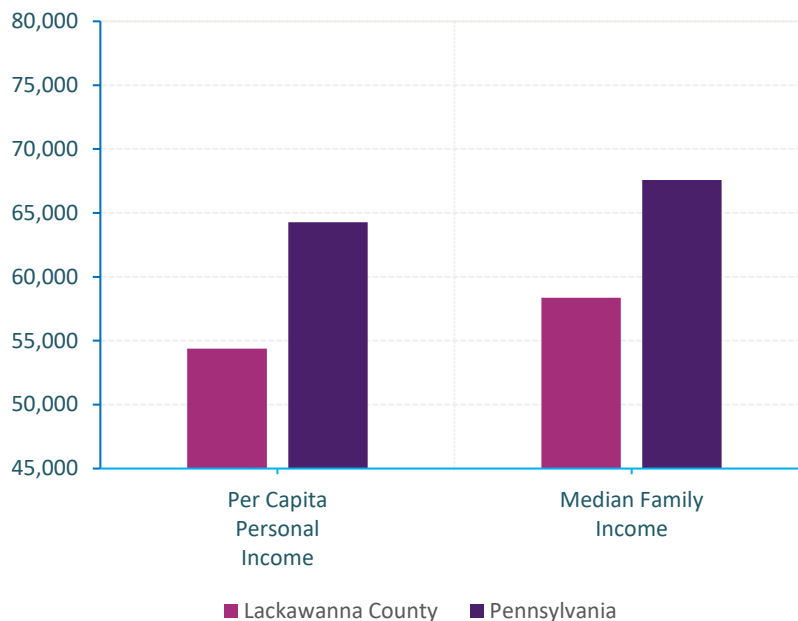
Lackawanna County sits in the far Northeast corner of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania bordered by Luzerne, Monroe, Susquehanna, Wayne, and Wyoming counties. Predominantly urban in nature with two city centers (Scranton and Carbondale), there are many small towns and boroughs as well as pockets of rural landscape across the 465 square mile¹ land area. As of December, 2022, the total population was 215,529 with a civilian labor force totaling 98,800 and a current unemployment rate (seasonally adjusted as of December, 2022) of 4.4%². The Total Per Capita Income is \$54,380. Median Household Income (in 2021 dollars) is \$58,366.

In comparing Lackawanna County's total personal income and median household income, with that of the Commonwealth of PA, it remains apparent that the local area continues to lag somewhat behind in wage comparisons. As we emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic, will have as the economy attempts a rebound; however, as was expected based on an historic pattern, it is anticipated that the recovery will be taking a bit longer and is not as robust as other areas within the Commonwealth. The following chart reflects current figures as of December, 2022:

¹ U.S. Census Bureau

² U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

³ PA Department of Labor and Industry (L & I), Center for Workforce Information & Analysis (CWIA)



Given this documentable lag, it becomes even more imperative that the development of localized workforce solutions must be coordinated with economic development initiatives to encourage growth based on demand.

Statistics as of July, 2020, (most current data available) reflect the median age for the Lackawanna WDA as 42.1. According to the 2022 Indicators Report from the Institute of Public Policy, over the past five years, the largest age category in Lackawanna County as well as Pennsylvania was 45-54 years. Statewide and regionally; however, the 25-34 age group has matched or exceeded this share of the population. Growth in the population of this age grouping reflects the relatively large size of the millennial generation. Further, across both Lackawanna County and the Commonwealth, the share of population aged 60 or holder has trended upward. This age group accounts for 27% of the population in Lackawanna County and over 25% statewide. What is easily recognized is that Lackawanna County has a middle-older aged population denoting an aging workforce.

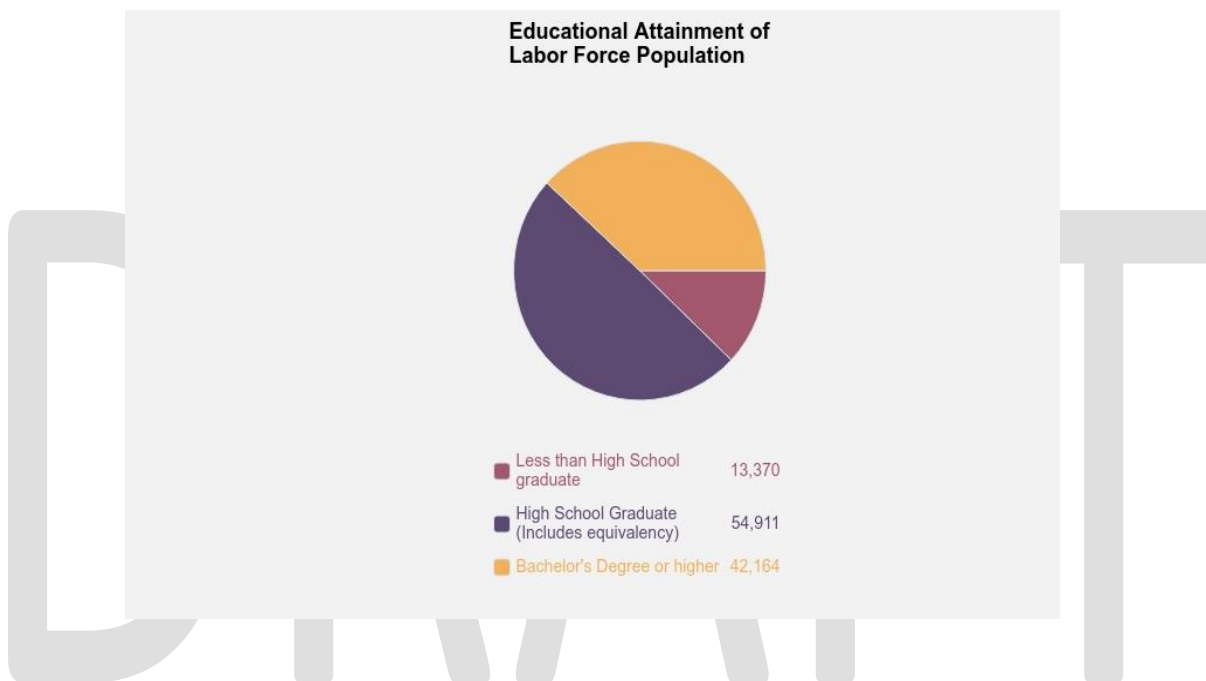
An important factor for consideration in a thorough review of an economic climate is the education and skill level of the current workforce which will, in turn, dictate the types of training and educational opportunities that must be made available to ensure a sizeable pipeline of workers to sustain economic growth.

- 20,288 of 16+ year olds live below the poverty level
- 8,208 of the total population speaks English less than “very well”
- 15,886 of 25+ year olds have a disability

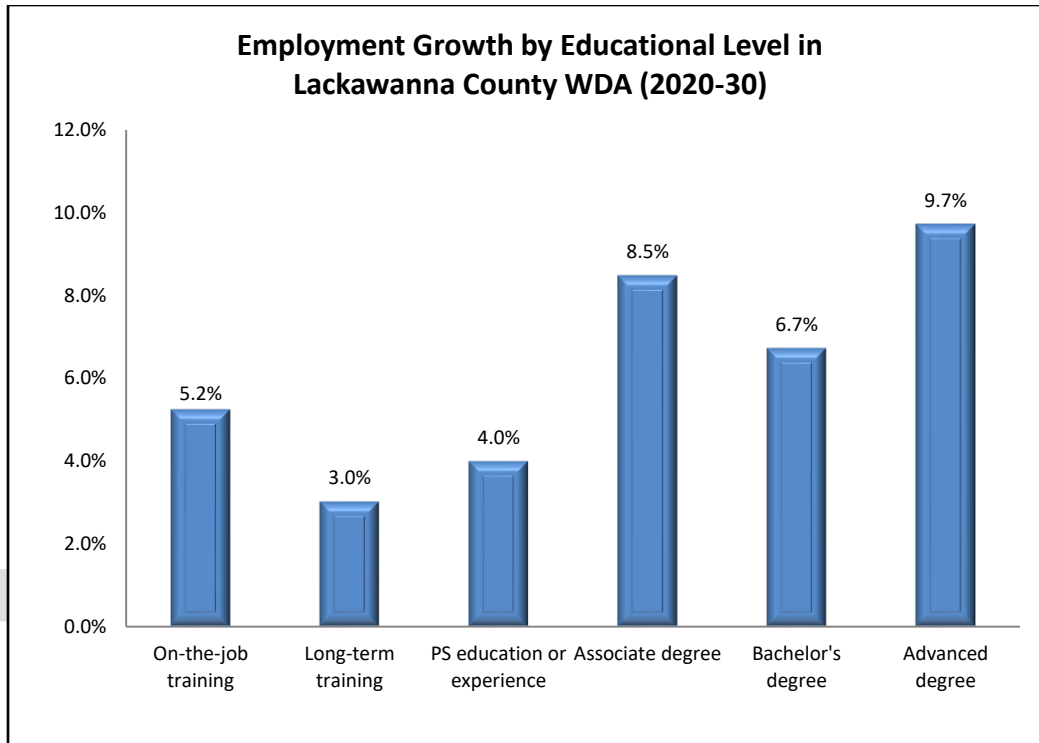
These statistics, as provided by CWIA, represent significant barriers faced by potential workers; however, they do not preclude motivated individuals from migrating career ladders within specific industries.

Here is where the one-stop system exhibits its usefulness within the workforce arena. Those job seekers or underemployed in need of services or training to begin or continue their upward migration on the ladder to success, which then promotes receipt of both self and/or family sustaining wages, must just visit the local PA CareerLink® Center for access to assistance in reaching their goals. The collaboration of one-stop partners and leveraging of community resources enhances this process.

From an educational standpoint, the chart below reflects that the majority of employable individuals within the local WDA fall into the category of high school graduate; however, the area is beginning to see a significant increase in the percentage of individuals attaining post-secondary degrees:

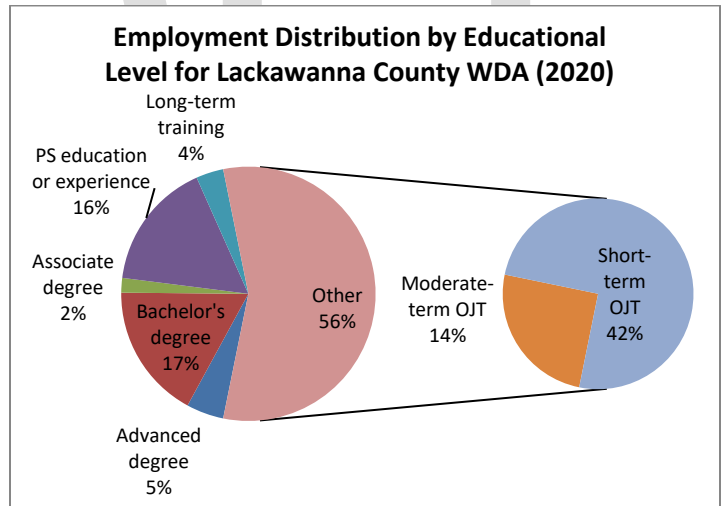
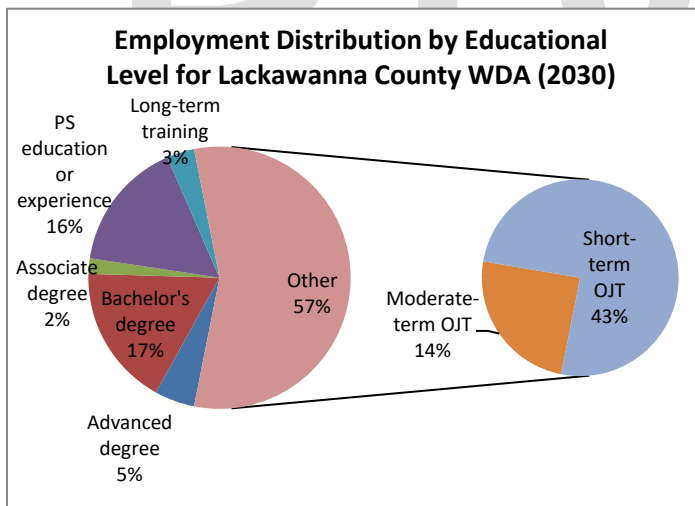


In correlation, the type and numbers of jobs that are available in the local area tend to lean more to a skilled workforce. Analyzing the information below, predictions indicate that the highest job growth will be supported by individuals with an Associate and/or Advanced degree. This is a significant change from previous data review; however, this may be attributed to the fact that, prior to the pandemic, the unemployment rate was running consistently low with Bachelor-degreed individuals were choosing to opt for advanced degrees prior to entering the workforce. It is still anticipated that life-long occupational skills training will have a major impact on the job market.



Source: CWIA

Further, this can be translated to actual on-the-job learning which comprises a larger population than would be expected.



Source: CWIA

A concern that then comes to light is the brain drain of Bachelor-degreed or higher individuals migrating out of the County due to somewhat of a lack of applicable positions. A strong economy must be supported by a wide variety of types of job openings to sustain its workers. An inward migration of

business and industry is needed to engage those exiting four-year colleges and universities to not only reduce quality out-migration but also to encourage the return of those who have left for better positions.

Most of the Lackawanna WDA's current year estimated population are White Alone (90.4%), 2.0% are Black or African American Alone, 0.1% are American Indian and Alaska Nat. Alone, 1% are Asian Alone, 0.0% are Nat. Hawaiian and Other Pacific Isl. Alone, 2.0% are Some Other Race, and 1.0% are Two or More Races.

The number of households in the Lackawanna WDA is estimated to have increased from 87,161 in 2015 to 95,566 in 2019. Given the trend, this increase could, in turn, shift the percentage of available workers in five years.

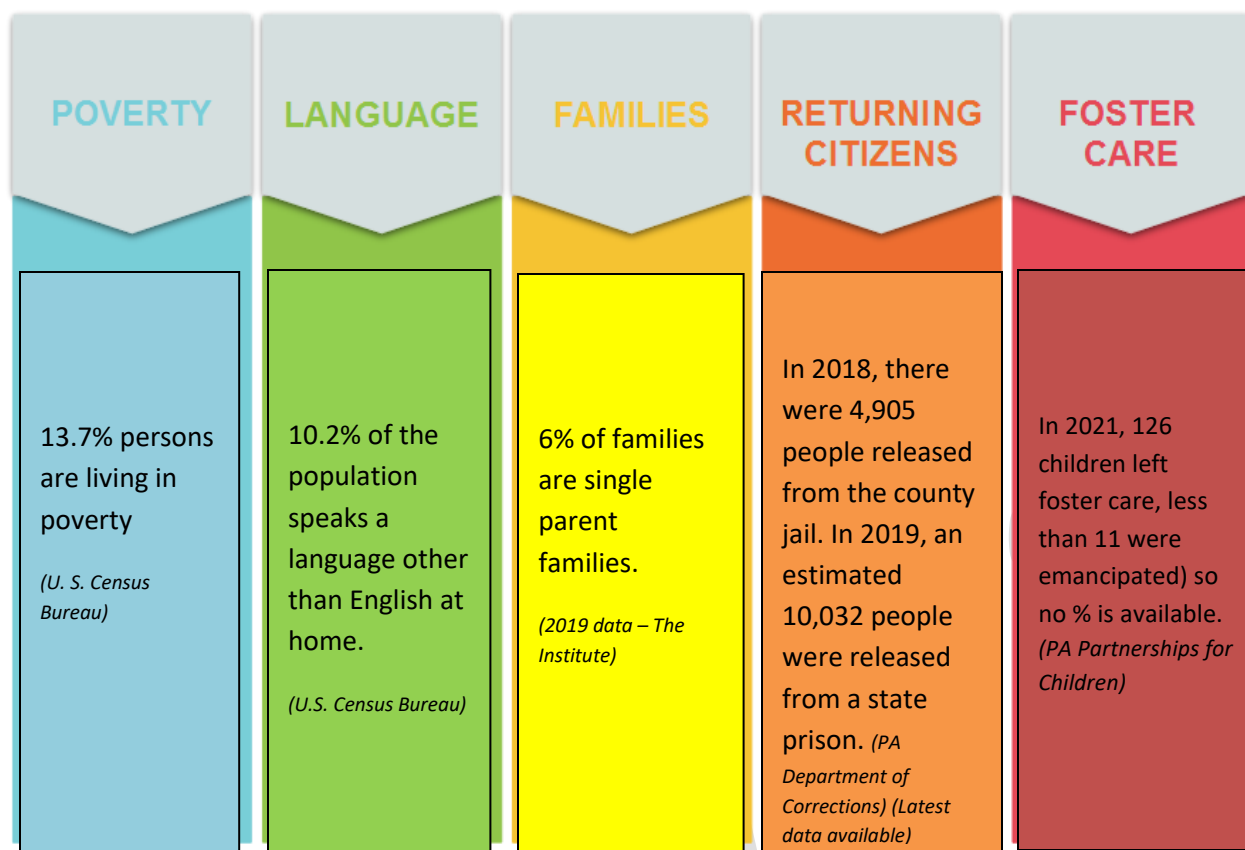
Among the factors that often contribute to poverty are unemployment and underemployment. Many people live in poverty because they are unable to find a job that pays a living wage or to find a job at all. According to *The Institute* for Public Policy, when looking at Lackawanna County (data through 2020), 12.2% of all people are living in poverty. This decline from a 14.2% in 2018, despite the economic disruption due to the pandemic, was likely influenced by an increase in the number of assistance programs and direct federal aid payments that were provided. Single parents are more likely to be living in poverty, with 7.7% of households in the county considered single parent households³. Also correlating, as shown in the chart below, is a decrease in the number of children living in poverty from 21.5% in 2018 to 19.9% in 2019 with no data available for 2020.

Percent of Children Under 18 Living Below the Poverty Level										
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Lackawanna	17.0%	22.1%	21.8%	19.9%	24.1%	17.7%	22.5%	21.5%	19.9%	ND
Pennsylvania	19.2%	19.7%	19.4%	19.4%	19.4%	18.5%	17.0%	16.8%	16.9%	14.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS 1-year Estimates. 2020 PA data is experimental.

Research obtained from Children's Rights has shown that youth who age out of foster care are less likely than youth in the general population to graduate from high school and are less likely to attend or graduate college. By age 26, approximately 80% of young people who aged out of foster care earned at least a high school degree or GED compared to 94% in the general population. By age 26, 4% of youth who aged out of foster care had earned a 4-year college degree. What can be deduced is that this significantly affects the quality of life for these adults.

³ *The Institute*



Persons with disabilities are frequently not considered potential members of the workforce. Perception, fear, myth and prejudice continue to limit understanding and acceptance of disability in workplaces everywhere. Myths abound, including that persons with disabilities are unable to work and that accommodating a person with a disability in the workplace is expensive. Contrary to these notions, many companies have found that persons with disabilities are more than capable.

In analyzing statistics from the *Center for Workforce Information and Analysis (CWIA)*, there are 123,644 individuals (residing in Lackawanna County: (2016-2020) between the ages of 25 and 64 years of age inclusive, who fall into a working-age population group. Of these, 12.8 % or 15,886 individuals have a disability. Further, those that are currently unemployed, individuals with no disability comprise 3.9% compared to individuals with a disability unemployed is 8.9%. In reviewing the percentages, it shows that individuals with disabilities, in all likelihood, will have a more difficult time securing employment.

According to *Youth. Gov.*, the high social and economic costs of teen pregnancy and childbearing can have short- and long-term negative consequences for teen parents, their children, and their community. Through recent research, it has been recognized that pregnancy and childbirth have a significant impact on educational outcomes of teen parents.

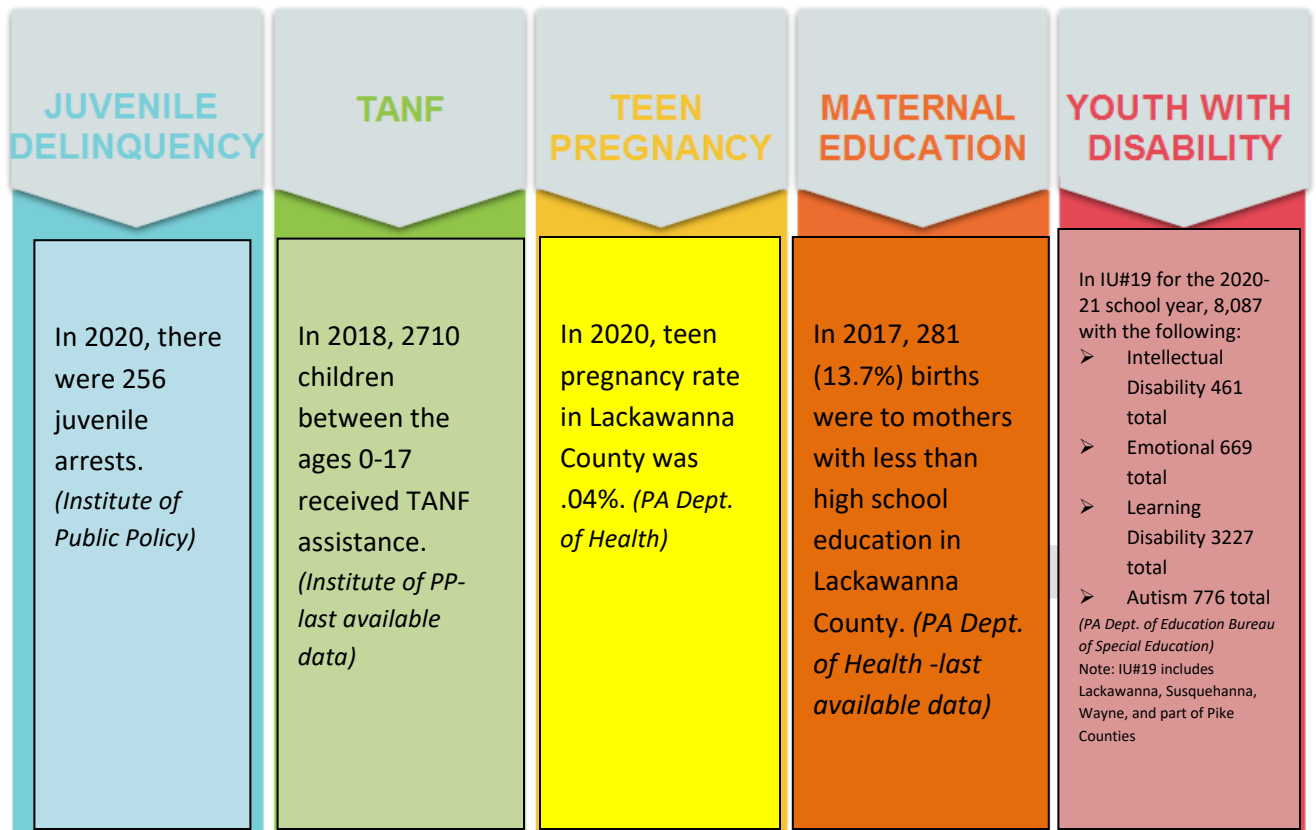
- By age 22, only around 50 percent of teen mothers have received a high school diploma and only 30 percent have earned a General Education Development (GED) certificate, whereas 90 percent of women who did not give birth during adolescence receive a high school diploma.
- Only about 10 percent of teen mothers complete a two- or four-year college program.

- Teen fathers have a 25 to 30 percent lower probability of graduating from high school than teenage boys who are not fathers.

Children who are born to teen mothers also experience a wide range of problems. For example, they are more likely to:

- have a higher risk for low birth weight and infant mortality;
- have lower levels of emotional support and cognitive stimulation;
- have fewer skills and be less prepared to learn when they enter kindergarten;
- have behavioral problems and chronic medical conditions;
- rely more heavily on publicly funded health care;
- have higher rates of foster care placement;
- be incarcerated at some time during adolescence;
- have lower school achievement and drop out of high school;
- give birth as a teen; and
- be unemployed or underemployed as a young adult.

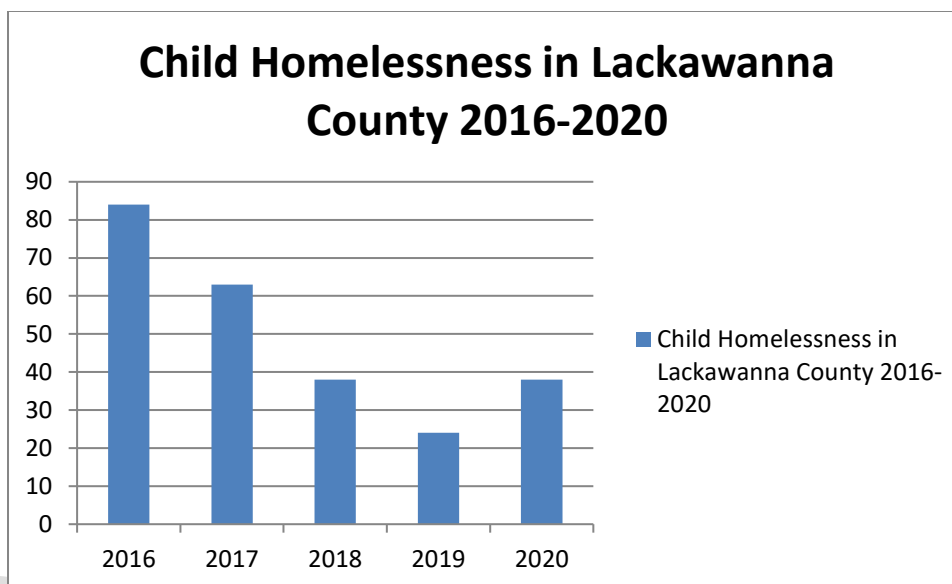
These immediate and long-lasting effects continue for teen parents and their children even after adjusting for the factors that increased the teen's risk for pregnancy—e.g., growing up in poverty, having parents with low levels of education, growing up in a single-parent family, and having low attachment to and performance in school. It also transfers to increased health care and foster care, increased incarceration rates among children of teen parents, and lost tax revenue because of lower educational attainment and income among teen mothers.



(Please note: the figures, as charted above, are the latest available but demonstrate local trends prior to the 2020 Census)

According to the *National Coalition for the Homeless*, meaningful and sustainable employment is the key to creating and maintaining housing stability. Unemployment, underemployment, and low wages relative to rent are frequent causes of homelessness and burden millions of families with the risk of becoming homeless. At the same time, individuals experiencing homelessness face obstacles to finding and maintaining employment.

Statistics from the *Institute of Public Policy*, as illustrated in the chart below, document child homelessness in Lackawanna County.



It can be seen that, the number of children residing in homeless situations had decreased from 84 in 2016 to 24 in 2019. This was a significant reduction and demonstrates a community's on-going response to social service needs. Please note: the most recent statistics available conclude with the year 2020 which shows an increase to 38 that, in all likelihood, was due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

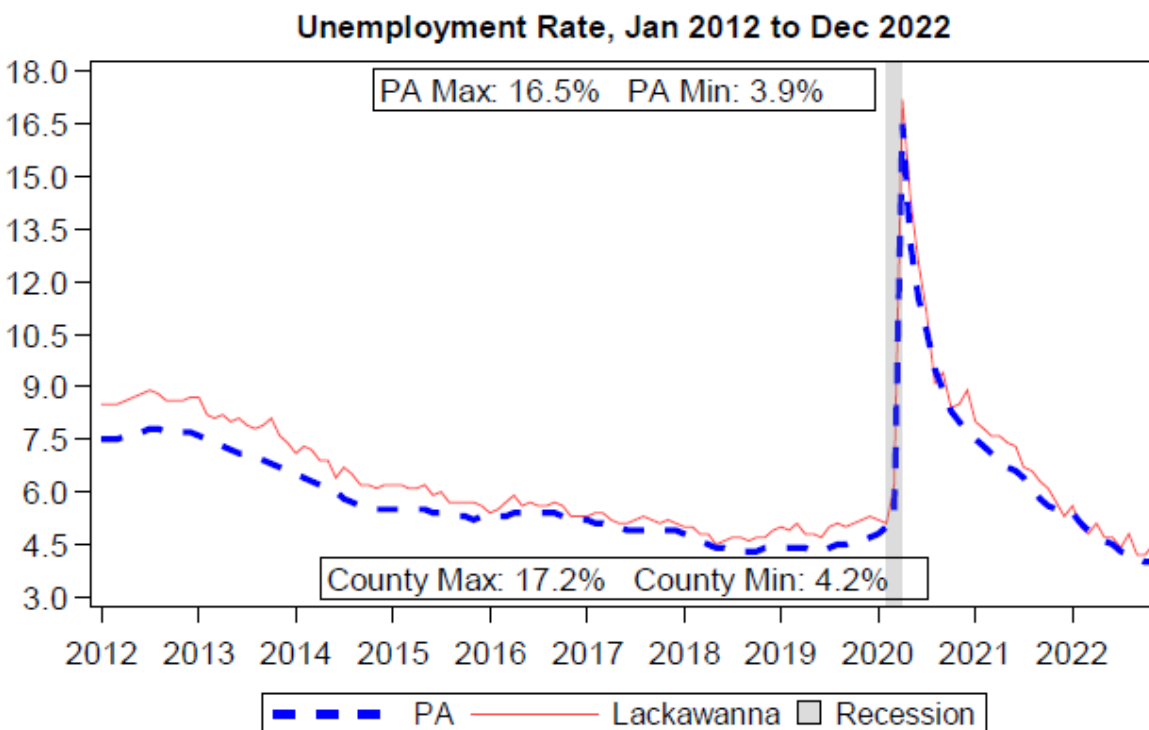
The *McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act* defines youth homelessness as:

- Children sharing housing due to economic hardship or loss of housing;
- Children living in "motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camp grounds due to lack of alternative accommodations"
- Children living in "emergency or transitional shelters"
- Children whose primary nighttime residence is not ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation (e.g., park benches, etc.)
- Children living in "cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations."

According to the *Urban Institute*, most individuals released from prison held some type of job prior to incarceration and want legal, stable employment upon release. Some criminal justice research suggests that finding and maintaining a legitimate job can reduce former prisoners' chances of reoffending, and the higher the wage, the less likely it is that individuals will return to crime. However, most former prisoners experience difficulty finding a job after release. During the time spent in prison, many lose work skills and are given little opportunity to gain useful work experience. Moreover, the availability of job training programs in prison has declined in recent years. A large proportion of former prisoners have low levels of educational attainment and work experience, health problems, and other personal characteristics that make them hard to employ. Once in the community, not only are many employers reluctant to hire convicted felons, but many former prisoners are legally barred from certain occupations. In Lackawanna County, in 2018 there were 4,905 individuals released from the county jail and in 2019 there were 10,823 individuals released from a state prison.

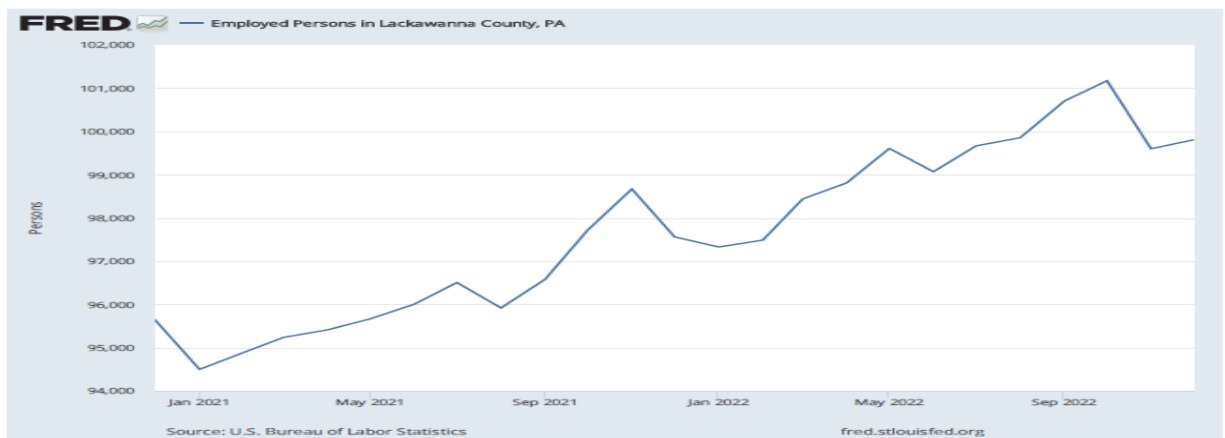
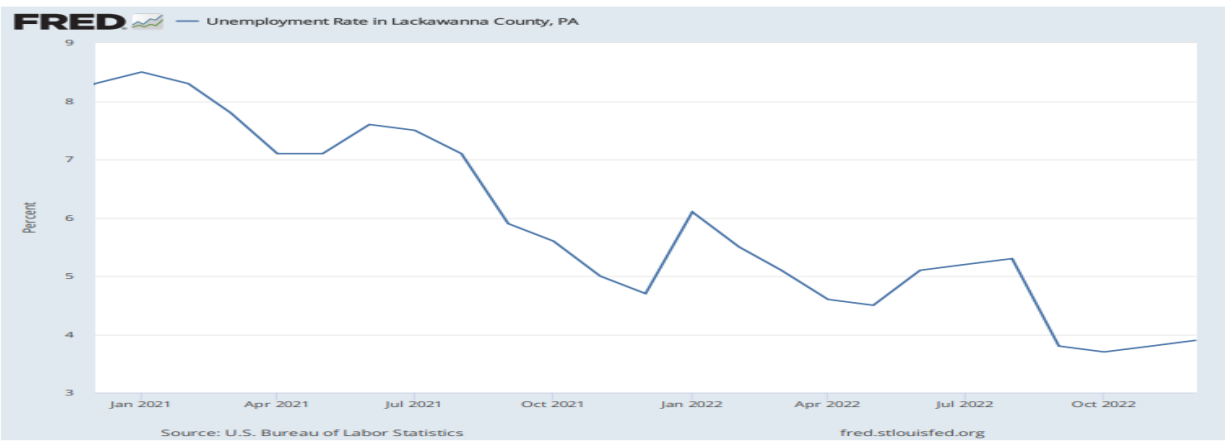
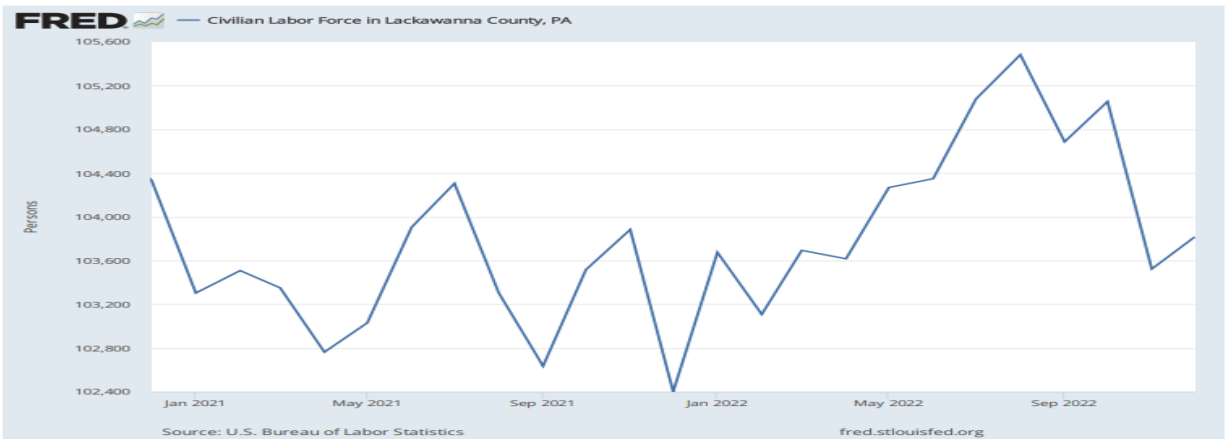
Up until March, 2020, the economic condition in Lackawanna County was stable and bright. The on-set of the COVID-19 pandemic severely impacted the hospitality and food service industries, retail trade, wholesale trade, construction, and professional, scientific and technical services. Manufacturing saw somewhat of a decline and health care and social services slipped slightly based on the occupational area. On the increasing side was agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and utilities.

As can be seen by the chart below, over the last 10-year period, Lackawanna County's unemployment rate consistently decreased but substantially spiked as the pandemic hit in 2020. The period of stabilization that was enjoyed for a number of years was disrupted significantly. As the pandemic began to wane, over the course of the past 2-year period, the rate fell drastically to the current 4.8 level (April, 2023 Lackawanna County Profile – for February, 2023).



Source: County Profiles, CWIA. January, 2023

Providing a 2020 year updated picture through December, 2022, the spike in March, 2020, can be seen on the chart above followed by a sharp decline over the next 2-year period. Specifically, according to the April, 2023, CWIA County Profile, Lackawanna County currently stands at 4.8% as opposed to the Commonwealth of PA at 4.4%. The following three charts (updated) demonstrate the labor force versus the declining employment situation.



In utilizing data from CWIA for the period of 2020 – 2030 for the civilian employed population in the WDA, projected estimates for employment in the following occupational categories are: 0% in Architecture and Engineering, 6.2% in Arts, Entertainment and Sports, 3.2% in Business and Financial Operations, 7.5% in Computers and Mathematics, 6.9% in Education, Training and Libraries, 9.9% in Healthcare Practitioners and Technicians, 16.7% in Healthcare Support, 0% in Life, Physical and Social Sciences, 7.3% in Management, -5.0% in Office and Administrative Support, 12/6% in Community and Social Services, 16% in Food Preparation and Serving, 5.9% in Legal Services, 6.5% in Protective Services, -2% in Sales and Related Services, 8.8% in Personal Care Services, 7.0% in Building and Grounds Maintenance, 2.9% in Construction and Extraction, 7.0% in Maintenance and Repair, -1.9% in Production, and 10% in Transportation and Moving.

In dissecting the percentages as described, a picture emerges illustrating increasing trends in the health care/life sciences arena as well as community and social services with major decreases in the arts, retail, and leisure activities, and office support activities. How this will actually play out, especially due to the pandemic, remains to be seen but the percentages seem to follow the current local trends.

Information Labor Market trends can be examined by Looking at Long Term Industry Projections as well as other labor market information. Regarding Long Term Industry Projections from 2020-2030, the total employment in the Lackawanna WDA is projected to grow by 5.5% or 5,230. This is at a rate lower than the region (5.8%) and the state (7.7%). Education and Health Services, Construction, Leisure and Hospitality, and Professional and Business Services, and, somewhat, Other Services are projected to experience the greatest percentage increase. In contrast, the informational industry Information sector is projected to sharply decline.

Long-Term Industry Projections for Lackawanna County WDA (2020-30)

Industry	Employment (2020)	Projected Employment (2030)	Employment Change (2020-30)	
			Volume	Percent
Total Jobs	95,170	100,400	5,230	5.5%
Goods Producing Industries	13,200	12,880	-320	-2.4%
Agriculture, Mining & Logging	260	260	0	0.0%
Construction	3,400	3,340	-60	-1.8%
Manufacturing	9,540	9,280	-260	-2.7%
Services-Providing	77,690	82,750	5,060	6.5%
Trade, Transportation & Utilities	19,110	19,710	600	3.1%
Information	1,040	930	-110	-10.6%
Financial Activities	5,350	5,350	0	0.0%
Professional & Business Services	8,360	8,940	580	6.9%
Education & Health Services	27,150	29,610	2,460	9.1%
Leisure & Hospitality	7,340	8,630	1,290	17.6%
Other Services, Except Public Admin.	3,840	3,980	140	3.6%
Federal, State & Local Government	5,490	5,620	130	2.4%
Self-Employed Workers	4,290	4,780	490	11.4%

Source: Long-Term Industry Employment Projections (2020-30)

*Data may not add due confidentiality

It is also interesting to review the top occupations and top industries in Lackawanna County, with data as recent as December, 2022, showing a comparison of occupations with increases and declines.

Top Occupations

WDA	Occupation Title	December 2022	December 2021	Volume Change
Lackawanna	Registered Nurses	121	327	-206
	Retail Salespersons	67	69	-2
	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	66	212	-146
	First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	34	54	-20
	Medical and Health Services Managers	33	54	-21
	Nursing Assistants	31	89	-58
	Medical Secretaries	25	53	-28
	Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	25	53	-28
	Customer Service Representatives	22	29	-7
	Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products	21	31	-10

Top Industries

WDA	Industry Title	December 2022	December 2021	Volume Change
Lackawanna	General Medical and Surgical Hospitals	284	44	240
	Home Health Care Services	40	50	-10
	Commercial Banking	27	32	-5
	Department Stores (except Discount Department Stores)	20	8	12
	Aircraft Manufacturing	19	23	-4
	Warehouse Clubs and Supercenters	18	11	7
	Truck, Utility Trailer, and RV (Recreational Vehicle) Rental and Leasing	17	10	7
	All Other General Merchandise Stores	17	11	6
	Women's Clothing Stores	15	4	11
	Discount Department Stores	15	6	9
	Food Service Contractors	12	36	-24
	Pharmaceutical Preparation Manufacturing	10	15	-5

In looking at On-Line job postings data for both Lackawanna County as well as the Commonwealth, it is interesting to see that the County had a decrease in the 12-month period between 12-2021 through 12-2022 while the State experienced a somewhat significant incline.

Online Job Postings	County	PA
December 2022	1,676	196,604
December 2021	2,523	225,051
Annual Volume Change	-847	-28,447
Annual Percent Change	-33.6%	-12.6%

Source: Burning Glass Technologies Help Wanted OnLine™

CWIA County Profile – January, 2023

Looking at the fastest growing industry projections (see chart below) allows training providers to prepare workers who can meet employment needs within those sectors. Individual & Family Services and Restaurants & Other Eating Places are projected to experience the greatest volume increase while Offices of Other Health Practitioners and Individual & Family Services are predicted to experience the greatest percent increase.

Fastest Growing Industries in Lackawanna County WDA (2020 – 2030)

By Volume Change:

Industry Title	Employment Change (Volume)
Individual & Family Services	1,090
Restaurants & Other Eating Places	730
Self-Employed Workers	490
Home Health Care Services	410
General Merchandise Stores	260
Employment Services	250
Offices of Other Health Practitioners	230
Other Amusement & Recreation Industries	220
Elementary & Secondary Schools	220
Local Gov't, Except Education & Hospitals	210
Other Ambulatory Health Care Services	200
School & Employee Bus Transportation	170
Special Food Services	170
Outpatient Care Centers	140
Food & Beverage Stores (4451 & 4452)	130
Warehousing & Storage	120
General Medical & Surgical Hospitals	120
Computer Systems Design & Rel Services	100
Drinking Places (Alcoholic Beverages)	100
Services to Buildings & Dwellings	90

By Percent Change: (min. employment of 500)

Industry Title	Employment Change (Percent)
Offices of Other Health Practitioners	41.1%
Individual & Family Services	32.9%
Home Health Care Services	29.3%
Other Amusement & Recreation Industries	27.5%
Other Ambulatory Health Care Services	25.6%
Special Food Services	22.7%
Employment Services	16.1%
Restaurants & Other Eating Places	14.7%
General Merchandise Stores	14.3%
Self-Employed Workers	11.4%
Outpatient Care Centers	11.1%
Services to Buildings & Dwellings	9.8%
Merchant Whsle, Durable Goods (4232, 4233, 42)	8.9%
Local Gov't, Except Education & Hospitals	7.3%
Offices of Dentists	6.8%
Warehousing & Storage	6.2%
Traveler Accommodation	6.0%
Elementary & Secondary Schools	5.4%
Automobile Dealers	4.8%
Merchant Whsle, Nondurable Goods (4244 & 42)	4.7%

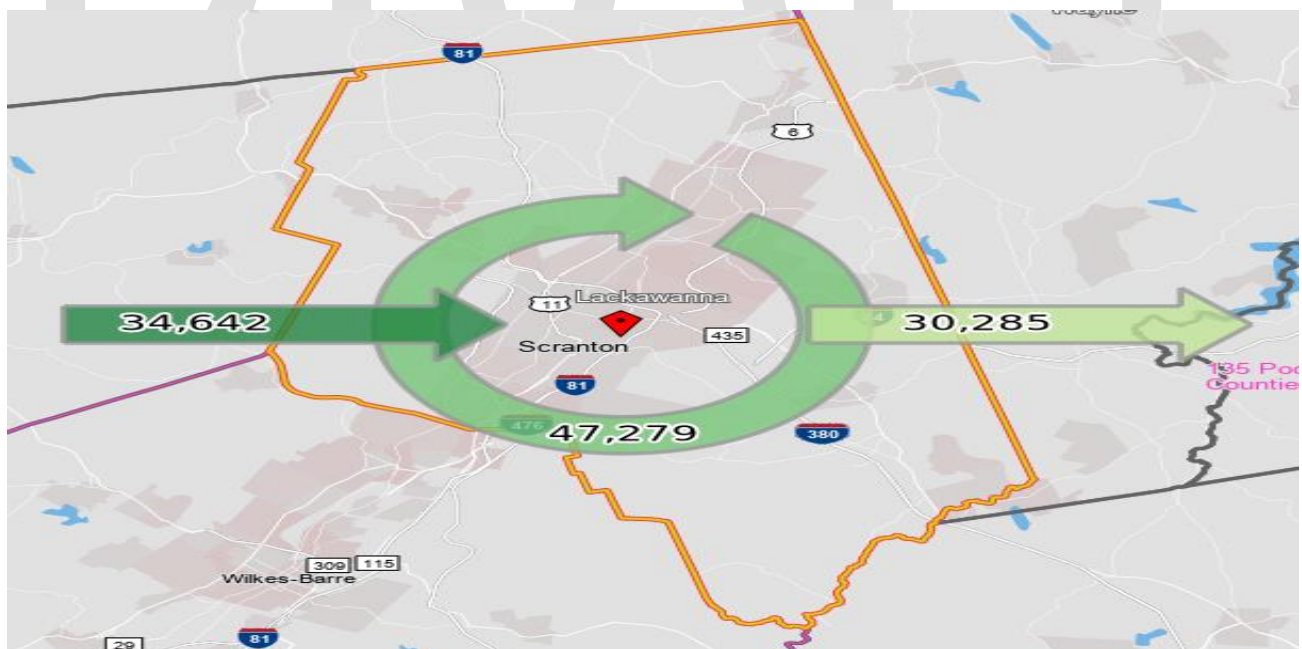
Source: Long-Term Industry Employment Projections (2020-30)

Further, the following top 10 current employers in Lackawanna County by employment in Q2 2022⁴ verifies that the current industry base centers around the health care, government, customer service and education sectors:

State Government
Allied Services Foundation
Community Medical Center
Amazon.com Services Inc
Chewy Inc
Scranton School District
Lackawanna County
University of Scranton
Wal-Mart Associates Inc.
Federal Government

Thus, in comparing the current employment base with projected emerging industries, it can be deduced that health care is the major industry in the County with the most growth potential.

In conducting a thorough review of the workforce condition within any given area, the migration of workers must be taken into consideration. For the Lackawanna County Workforce Development Area, statistics provided by the *PA Center for Workforce Information and Analysis (CWIA)* provides a picture of this migrating pattern:



Specifically, the most recent inflow/outflow pattern (2022) based on a total of 81,921 (100% share) individuals employed in the WDA, 34,642 (42.2%) were migrating in from a surrounding County or area

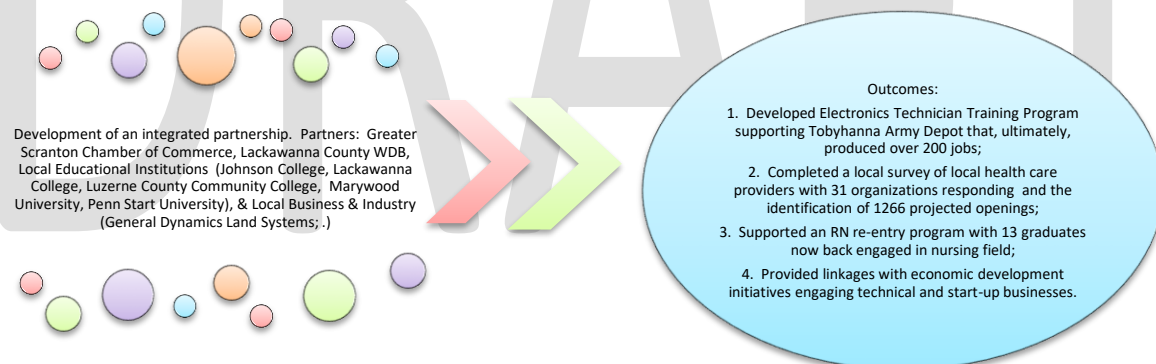
⁴ Lackawanna County Profile, January, 2023

while 30,285 (36.9%) lived within the boundaries of Lackawanna County and leave the County for work. The number of those living and working within Lackawanna County is 47,279, or 57.7%. The Net commuting In/Out is 4,357. What can be deduced from these statistics is that the workforce base within the County is supplemented by larger numbers of in-migration which, in turn, could boost the County's economy.

According to datausa, 2020, the average commute time is 21.8 minutes.

Section 1.2 How are skills gaps defined in the local area? Provide a description of the skills that are required to meet the needs of employers in the region/local area?

Supporting the concept that a demand-driven workforce significantly promotes an area's long-term growth potential, it has been widely documented that local business must be guiding the development of initiatives and providing the specifications for re-alignment of local educational opportunities for in-demand jobs. For many years the Lackawanna County Workforce Development Board has teamed with local community patterns to accomplish this goal. Years of collaboration with the Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce, who has spearheaded wide-range initiatives, has produced new training initiatives and enabled the development of hundreds of new jobs. Currently, given the extremely vulnerable economic climate, the WDB has seized the opportunity to redefine goals and purposes to ensure facilitate successful outcomes.



Initiatives such as these support industry participation in the design of training curriculums specifically targeting projected needs. Most recently, collaboration has occurred between the Workforce Development Board; Johnson College; General Dynamics and other small manufacturing companies; as well as union and apprenticeship representatives to investigate the development of both pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship courses of study to address local shortages of trained Computerized Numerical Control (CNC) technicians. A major outcome of this collaboration was the development by Johnson College of two CNC educational tracks: one addressing short-term studies (285 hours of instruction) as well as a longer (510 hours), more intense instruction. The shorter-term project allowed for a more rapid attachment to the workforce in entry level positions while the longer-term project resulted in the acquisition of additional skills for entry into more advanced positions.

Due to the recent pandemic, methods of communication were altered with Zoom (or the like) meetings, now the norm, but this has not deterred pro-active constituents in moving forward to ensure a solid recovery.

One way to look at the skill gap is to look at current and projected employment data based on educational attainment levels. Employment opportunities requiring an Associate Degree or Advanced Degree seem to be in a minority status with larger openings falling in the Bachelor's Degree or training areas. As can be clearly seen by the data, short-term OJT opportunities remain prevalent both currently and as projected out for the next 7 years.

Educational Grouping	Employment (2020)	Projected Employment (2030)
Advanced Degree	4,530	4,970
Bachelor's Degree	16,370	17,470
Associate Degree	1,770	1,920
PS Education or Experience	15,540	16,160
Long-Term training	3,320	3,420
Moderate-term-OJT	13,440	13,860
Short-term OJT	40,210	42,600

Source: Center for Workforce Information and Analysis

Educational Attainment Level for Lackawanna County WDA residents (as per Point2Homes data, April, 2022).

Approximately 40.9% of the population in Lackawanna County holds a high school degree (80,941 residents) while 22.58% have attained a college certificate (44,680 locals) and 16.06% have a bachelor's degree (31,778 people).

Educational Level	Current Data	Y-o-Y Change
No High School	4,536	-5.2%
Some High School	80,941	2.4%
Some College	44,680	1.3%
Associate Degree	17,277	2.1%
Bachelor's Degree	31,778	0.7%
Advanced Degree	18,643	5.9%

Looking at the projected knowledge and work activities needed in the workforce helps training providers ensure they are preparing the future labor force to meet the needs of employers. Knowledge of the English Language is at the top of the list. According to the US Census Bureau (2017-2021), approximately 10.2% of the households in the Lackawanna WDA speak a language other than English at home. Workers also need to be knowledgeable in Customer and Personal Service as well as Administration and Management. The work activities that are most needed included getting information, communicating with supervisors, peers, or subordinates. Please reference the following two charts:

Knowledge Areas

(Total of 33 – all listed below)

Nearly 750 occupations were analyzed and the knowledge area, "English Language," was found needed in 82 percent of all occupations (606/743).

Knowledge Areas are key educational or experience requirements for an occupation (e.g. Computers and Electronics).

Knowledge Area	Occupations Requiring	Pct.
English Language	606	82%
Customer and Personal Service	537	72%
Mathematics	491	66%
Administration and Management	485	65%
Education and Training	475	64%
Computers and Electronics	441	59%
Public Safety and Security	398	54%
Clerical	378	51%
Mechanical	281	38%
Production and Processing	278	37%
Law and Government	262	35%
Psychology	222	30%
Personnel and Human Resources	218	29%
Engineering and Technology	216	29%
Communications and Media	197	27%
Sales and Marketing	191	26%
Design	190	26%
Transportation	161	22%
Economics and Accounting	152	20%
Chemistry	142	19%
Physics	134	18%
Building and Construction	125	17%
Sociology and Anthropology	116	16%
Telecommunications	111	15%
Biology	95	13%
Medicine and Dentistry	89	12%
Geography	84	11%
Therapy and Counseling	83	11%
Philosophy and Theology	57	8%
Food Production	40	5%
History and Archeology	37	5%
Fine Arts	37	5%
Foreign Language	24	3%

Source: CWIA analysis of Occupation Information Network (O*NET) data.

General Work Activities
(Total of 41- all listed below)

743 occupations were analyzed and the general work activity, “Getting Information,” was found to be rated as **important** in 64 percent of all occupations (472/743).

General Work Activities are types of job behaviors that occur across multiple occupations (e.g. interacting with computers).

General Work Activity	Occupations Requiring	Pct.
Getting Information	472	64%
Communicating with Supervisors, Peers, or Subordinates	324	44%
Making Decisions and Solving Problems	304	41%
Interacting With Computers	256	34%
Identifying Objects, Actions, and Events	232	31%
Updating and Using Relevant Knowledge	223	30%
Establishing and Maintaining Interpersonal Relationships	189	25%
Documenting/Recording Information	177	24%
Organizing, Planning, and Prioritizing Work	171	23%
Processing Information	146	20%
Inspecting Equipment, Structures, or Material	135	18%
Evaluating Information to Determine Compliance with Standards	131	18%
Monitor Processes, Materials, or Surroundings	124	17%
Analyzing Data or Information	118	16%
Thinking Creatively	116	16%
Performing for or Working Directly with the Public	108	15%
Communicating with Persons Outside Organization	102	14%
Controlling Machines and Processes	97	13%
Handling and Moving Objects	93	13%
Interpreting the Meaning of Information for Others	92	12%
Training and Teaching Others	87	12%
Assisting and Caring for Others	80	11%
Performing General Physical Activities	73	10%
Operating Vehicles, Mechanized Devices, or Equipment	62	8%
Developing Objectives and Strategies	45	6%
Resolving Conflicts and Negotiating with Others	44	6%
Coaching and Developing Others	44	6%
Developing and Building Teams	38	5%
Judging the Qualities of Things, Services, or People	37	5%
Coordinating the Work and Activities of Others	36	5%
Scheduling Work and Activities	36	5%
Repairing and Maintaining Mechanical Equipment	32	4%
Guiding, Directing, and Motivating Subordinates	30	4%
Performing Administrative Activities	18	2%
Selling or Influencing Others	17	2%
Drafting, Laying Out, and Specifying Technical Devices, Parts, and Equipment	17	2%
Provide Consultation and Advice to Others	16	2%
Repairing and Maintaining Electronic Equipment	14	2%
Estimating the Quantifiable Characteristics of Products, Events, or Information	12	2%
Monitoring and Controlling Resources	5	1%
Staffing Organizational Units	2	0%

Source: CWIA analysis of Occupation Information Network (O*NET) data.

Looking at the certifications, employers are looking for in their job postings can provide insight into the types of training needed. The most sought-after skills include electronic health record, freight, pediatrics, and English speaker. The certifications most frequently listed in job postings are Driver's License, Certified Registered Nurse, and First Aid CPR AED.

Top 10 Help Wanted On-Line Certifications

Certification	December 2022
Driver's License	194
Registered Nurse	136
Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)	71
Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS) Certification	69
First Aid CPR AED	62
Basic Cardiac Life Support Certification	27
Board Certified/Board Eligible	26
Certified Nursing Assistant	35
Security Clearance	24
Certified Nursing Assistant	17
Certified Medical Assistant	15

Source: Center for Workforce Information & Analysis

It must be noted here that the certification data listed above has been updated as of December, 2022.

Further, building on expertise gained and through utilization of information received following a comprehensive regional survey of business and industry, entitled the *Northeast Pennsylvania Regional Skills Gap Analysis*, regarding actual employment needs that was prepared and conducted by NC3T (National Center for Career and Technical Colleges) under the Northeast PA Jobs 1st Initiative, the local area is poised to address identified needs. From that analysis, the following can be garnered:

Active Listening	Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times.
Complex Problem Solving	Identifying complex problems and reviewing related information to develop and evaluate options and implement solutions.
Coordination	Adjusting actions in relation to other actions.
Critical Thinking	Using logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions, or approaches to problems.
Equipment Maintenance	Performing routine maintenance on equipment and determining when and what kind of maintenance is needed.
Judgment and Decision Making	Considering the relative costs and benefits of potential actions to choose the most appropriate one.
Management of Personnel Resources	Motivating, developing, and directing people as they work identifying the best people for the job.
Mathematics	Using mathematics to solve problems.
Monitoring	Monitoring/Assessing performance of yourself, other individuals, or organizations to make improvements or take corrective action.
Negotiation	Bringing others together and trying to reconcile differences.
Operation & Control	Controlling operations of equipment or systems.

Operations Monitoring	Watching gauges, dials, or other indicators to make sure a machine is working properly.
Persuasion	Persuading others to change their minds or behavior.
Reading Comprehension	Understanding written sentences and paragraphs in work related documents.
Repairing	Repairing machines or systems using needed tools.
Science	Using scientific rules and methods to solve problems.
Service Orientation	Actively looking for ways to help people.
Social Perceptiveness	Being aware of others' reactions and understanding why they react as they do.
Speaking	Talking to others to convey information effectively.
Time Management	Managing one's own time and the time of others.
Troubleshooting	Determining causes of operating errors and deciding what to do about it.
Writing	Communicating effectively in writing as appropriate for the needs of the audience.

Local and regional initiatives such as this are vital to sustained economic growth and support the strategies of Pennsylvania's Combined State Plan. As plainly can be seen, the systems are structurally sound to produce results to support the needs of local business and industry. But, to ensure long-range success, business and industry must "remain at the table," providing industry-driven information on current and emerging job numbers and qualifications, fluctuating conditions or labor changes as they become predictable, retooling needs, infrastructure demands, projected expansion information, etc. As information fluctuates/emerges on local market needs, not only can curriculums of study be revamped or initiated, but proper matching of the local pool of talent will then facilitate the most effective job referrals and placements, thus, eliminating time and frustration of the employer base. This in turn should promote the provision of family sustaining wages for job seekers.

The Lackawanna County WDB, through its Business Services Team (BST) at the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County, weathered the pandemic through the on-going usage of virtual platforms. This entailed email and Zoom sessions to ensure that the business community had a lifeline to services and also served to identify current (throughout the pandemic, if applicable) as well as future projected needs. Additionally, by utilizing the PA CareerLink® employer data base, BST staff were able to update business records and ascertain information on hiring trends and entry-level skill needs. The availability of On-The-Job Training (OJT) opportunities for new hires was also discussed with an OJT Data Sheet provided. The takeaways from this outreach include the development of enhanced relationships with the participating employers; the enlightenment that many of the employers were not aware of the various available resources; the understanding that employers are still somewhat reluctant to "share" information among, in some respects, their competitors; and knowledge that trends within the sector are ever-changing. At present, utilizing employer feedback, the most need, with soft skills not withstanding, seems to be in the following areas: nursing assistants, welders, CNC machinists, informatics, forklift operators, tractor trailer drivers, and production/assembly operators.

It was also discovered that, in some instances, due to local staffing changes, the BST would benefit from strategic training to provide enhanced services. All members must have a comprehensive knowledge of any/all available resources specific to the sector that must be communicated as part of the day-to-day operation of the BST.

Further, for many years, the Lackawanna County Workforce Development Board has endorsed conducting quarterly “Sector Initiatives”, which targeted one of the four main industry sectors (health care and life sciences; transportation, logistics, and warehousing; manufacturing; and business, finance, and IT), at the local One-Stop Center that highlighted guest speakers from the applicable industry, an on-site job fair, and an education fair. As we exit the pandemic, these initiatives have been reinstituted.

Section 1.3 What are the challenges the local area faces in aligning existing labor force skills and education and training activities with the needs of regional employers?

Locally, the system is in place to address the needs of employers as described in Section 1.2; however, a major challenge that surfaced during the pandemic was the immediate change (in March, 2020) to a virtual training environment which affected some individuals/trainees due to their unadaptability to transition to this new format. Simply put, lack of computer skills, internet access, inefficient time management skills, and lack of computer hardware were some issues that became apparent which could easily affect the alignment of existing labor force skills and education and training with the needs of the employers. Also, as employers move to a virtual hiring process, the conditions listed come into play. What was deduced was there exists a distinct need for digital literacy instruction to accommodate new modes of learning and connectivity to employers.

As employers are rebounding from the COVID-19 pandemic, the following factors are still somewhat affecting current job growth:

- 1) wage rates are continuously fluctuating with larger employers having the capability of increasing entry-level wages and sign-on bonuses in an attempt to attract new hires;
- 2) as stated above, educational facilities are conducting training remotely which restricts those with substandard computer knowledge;
- 3) job seekers are reluctant to venture out or return to a compromised environment to work;
- 4) the job market is constantly evolving as employers adjust to new product lines and methods for conducting business (i.e., such as teleworking and telecommunication); and
- 5) the necessity for increased broadband capabilities.

How this will affect business and industry as we continue to emerge from the pandemic remains to be seen but it is apparent that the “old ways” of meeting the supply and demand needs have been altered, and it is unlikely that the future holds a return to the old norms. Therefore; workforce professionals must be attuned to a variety of changes that are forthcoming, such as, but not necessarily limited to, the following:

- how to attract customers to newly designed work environments and processes including remote education and employment opportunities;
- providing enhanced instruction in computer usage to allow for streamlined application processes and competent employment capabilities (note: the local area submitted a Digital Literacy and Workforce Development Grant proposal to the Commonwealth on 2-17-2021);
- encouraging training and educational institutions to enhance their training options on the statewide *Eligible Training Provider List*; and
- heightened awareness of diversity inclusion in methods of recruitment.

How can these challenges be addressed? Given the single-County nature of the Lackawanna County Workforce Area, executive/management level individuals cross-sit on many boards of viable workforce, economic development, and educational entities such as, but not necessarily limited to, the Lackawanna County Workforce Development Board, the Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce, NEPA Alliance, Johnson College, Lackawanna College, and the Northeast Consortium of Workforce Boards. These individuals bring their respective organizations/educational institutions workforce concerns, as well as experience, to the table for discussion and development of community plans of action. At the onset of COVID-19, this was demonstrated by the implementation of a *Regional Economic and Community Recovery Task Force* that was swiftly executed to address COVID-19 needs across the County. Comprised of high-level representatives from government, education, workforce, the Institute on Public Policy, NEPA Alliance, Lackawanna Planning and Economic Development, Keystone Mountain Lakes Regional Council of Carpenters Union, Pipefitters Union, PA Regional Rapid Response, University of Scranton Small Business Development Center, and others, this group, further, broke into subgroups, one of which was the *Workforce Task Force*. Over the course of 2 months in late Spring, 2020, this group, as spearheaded by the Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce, developed a plan of work metrics addressing workforce situations and objectives to enable a consistent message of available services to both employers as well as job seekers. This metrics included the following objectives:

- Research and analyze post-COVID-19 industry data;
- Designate Lackawanna County high priority industries;
- Administer workforce training programs;
- Aggressively pursue and obtain state or federal funding;
- Build a talent pipeline for Lackawanna County employers;
- Align Workforce Development Board to post-COVID-19 employer needs; and
- Adopt a comprehensive Lackawanna County workforce development strategic plan.

Each of these objectives was further defined by 4 or more tasks for the identified lead partner, timeline, and assigned workgroup members.

This is the way it works in Lackawanna County...swift action when needed with an entire County working as one large community to affect change. The *Workforce Task Force* met regularly via Zoom throughout the Summer and Fall of 2020, thus, ensuring that the local workforce community was coordinating and collaborating efforts for recovery. This community linkage remains in effect today.

Another area of concern is the possible internal upgrade of the incumbent workforce across industry sectors to ensure their continued productivity. Identified workers with the qualifications to move upward within their organizations will then vacate entry-level positions. This is where workforce funding comes into play. Some individuals' may need only short-term training in specific skill areas to enable rapid on-boarding, both of which can be accommodated with occupational training (Individual Training Accounts [ITA]) and On-The-Job Training (OJT) reimbursements. Both of these activities are discussed further in the following Section (1.4) of this plan.

Continued and strengthened outreach to Lackawanna County's employer base will ensure that lines of communication are open and operative and the exchange of information is assisting in the development of strategies and tactics to support fluctuating needs.

Section 1.4 Provide an analysis of local area workforce development activities, including education and training.

As the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) legislation was implemented in July of 2015, the Lackawanna County Workforce Development Area took that opportunity to completely realign its processes and procedures to ensure compliance with the new legislation. First and foremost, all services were competitively procured and the local Fiscal Agent was transferred from a community-based organization to the County of Lackawanna to ensure operational security and transparency. The changes have enhanced collaboration among partner entities, increased productivity (larger numbers of job postings and business contacts), promoted universally accessible services, and strengthened stability of the employment and training system.

The PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County, a comprehensive one-stop center, serves as the vehicle for community access to a myriad of education, training and employment activities. Collaboration among partner entities ensures a cohesive approach for the delivery of services. Customers entering an inviting, open-concept atmosphere are greeted by a well-informed and friendly receptionist who directs new visitors to a *Welcome Center*. This initial contact is provided in a confidential setting to allow for an uninhibited flow of personal information. This contact/interview is driven by the customer to allow for the identification of their immediate employment and/or training needs. Additionally, at this time, they are then provided with a full menu of available services.

From there, the customer is afforded a variety of universal services that may include, but is not necessarily limited to: usage of the Career Resource Center (computer-access for job searching including PA's workforce development system of record); career-specific workshops (provision of labor market information and career decision-making for targeted industries); universal employment workshops (i.e., resume' preparation, interviewing techniques, cover letter writing, marketing oneself); a financial aid workshop that provides technical assistance in the preparation of Free Applications for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA); entrepreneurial information sessions; and, lastly, an orientation to WIOA workshop for those customers in need of training to enhance employment opportunities. Please note: due to COVID-19, most of these services have been taken to a virtual platform; however, it is the intent to return to in-person activities as soon as safely possible.

WIOA-funded training is accessible through sub-contracted providers (Educational Data Systems Inc. [EDSI] – Adult/Dislocated Worker services; Equus Workforce Solutions – Youth services; EDSI – EARN services) with eligibility determination completed on site by service provider representatives. This activity is conducted in a confidential interview to ascertain the customer's eligibility based on WIOA standards and facilitate assembly of the pertinent qualifying documents for data validation.

Once determined eligible, the customer is scheduled for computerized assessment in the areas of reading, applied mathematics, and locating information (local area uses WIN/Workkeys or CASAS) to determine appropriate avenues for educational placement. Should an individual fall short of required levels on initial testing, as determined by industry standards, access is provided to on-line coursework (remediation/tutoring) to allow for probable improvement of skills prior to re-testing. Should a customer be determined to be basic skilled deficient or in need of more enhanced developmental services, that person is referred to appropriate community adult literacy and, possibly, English-language providers.

Following the assessment process, each customer is assigned a Career Advisor who provides assistance in the development of an Individual Employment Plan (IEP)/Individual Service Strategy (ISS) which charts a plan of action including the progression of activities enroute to the ultimate goal of employment. This plan can include a variety of one or more of the following activities:

- Individual Training Accounts (ITAs)

As required, the local area utilizes the Statewide Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) for approval of any Individual Training Accounts (ITAs). Local training providers must follow a Statewide eligibility determination process for inclusion on this list. Most local educational/training providers are aware of the process having provided services for many years but any new training entity or newly appointed staff at traditional providers receive one-on-one instruction from WDB management staff and any viable training provider will be forwarded all applicable information as requested. All providers are informed of the local WDB's performance standards and demand-occupation requirements to enable inclusion on the List. Once a course of study is approved, it becomes a viable option of provision of an ITA. Each year the Lackawanna County WDB reviews, updates and approves the *Lackawanna County ITA Funding Cap Policy* which is included with this Plan as **SUPPLEMENT 1**.

This process supports improvement of education and training options directly and in-directly related to the fluctuating needs of business and industry as commonly supported by the ETPL.

The ties to the educational community (both educational institutions of higher learning as well as technical training providers) have long been strong and productive.

- Work-Based Training

Under the WIOA legislation, the following types of activities are considered work-based in nature and available to all eligible customers:

- On-The-Job Training (OJT) has long been a viable option for customers, both from the job seeker as well as employer perspective. As an alternative to the traditional classroom training route, OJT provides an incentive for hire of qualified applicants and reduces the financial cost for an employer during a contracted training phase. Designed to identify gaps in skill sets, it allows for specific employer-driven training to fill the gaps, thus, enabling the employer to augment their workforce. OJT contracting may also serve to eliminate trepidation on the part of the employer who is considering expanding his/her workforce. OJT is promoted through the BST during phone contacts and site visits, during informational sessions at the PA CareerLink®, in pamphlets and brochures, at networking events and job fairs, and on the PA CareerLink® website.

- Work Experience (primarily available for the out-of-school youth population up to 24 years of age and EARN customers) provides an opportunity for those young adults with little or no work history to gain vocational as well as soft skills in an actual worksite setting. Placements occur at both not-for-profit as well as private sites for up to 35 hours per week at a wage of \$10.35 (currently) per hour. (This increased above the current State minimum wage was approved by the local Board at its June, 2019 Quarterly meeting).

- Apprenticeships - strong linkages are maintained with representatives of labor organizations to support various apprenticeship opportunities and a listing is available at the PA

CareerLink® Lackawanna County. Also, apprenticeship and trade opportunities are strongly promoted in PA CareerLink® workshops and outreach ventures. The local Center provides contact information to prospective trainees on local application submission processes.

The Lackawanna County WDB is also a partner in a State-Registered Apprenticeship Expansion Grant that was awarded to the Luzerne/Schuylkill Workforce Board that is promoting and *Innovations in Management* apprenticeship training program across a 7-County region in Northeastern PA. This project is designed to provide 192 hours of classroom instruction (first-time supervisory skills, office management skills, human resource management skills, business communication skills, and customer service skills) as well as a structured On-The-Job Training (OJT) workplace learning process (2000 hours). Involved participants can experience a step-by-step wage progression as they demonstrate competency and complete phases of the program. At the completion of the program, the apprentice will have earned 16 college credits and a Small Business Skills diploma from Luzerne County Community College.

Further, three members of local labor organizations actively participate as members of the Lackawanna County WDB.

Finally, additional linkages and new strategies, as outlined in the PA ATO's *Apprenticeship Strategic Plan Guide*, will be implemented locally and comprehensively defined during the next Local Plan development cycle in July of 2025.

- Job Shadowing and Internships are coordinated based on such criteria as the customer's interests and abilities, linkages to higher education programs, feasibility of scheduling, goal compatibility, and employment expectations.

As previously discussed, an on-going area of strategic concern (made more prominent as the pandemic took hold) is that individuals that are computer illiterate face a severe barrier to both employment and education opportunities. Further, retention of employment also becomes extremely difficult without this skill. The local area provides one-on-one staff assistance for individuals who are experiencing difficulty in this area.

Section 1.5. Describe strategic planning elements including a regional analysis of economic conditions.

To ensure that planning efforts are targeting the right industry sectors and their current, as well as, future needs, a statistical look can provide a picture of trends and projections.

NAICS	Industry Sector	2020 Jobs	2020 Percent	2020 State Location Quotient	Historical Change 2015-2020		Projected Change 2020-2025		Avg. Earnings per Job	Establishments
11	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	2,302	0.5%	0.73	260	12.7%	180	7.8%	\$46,694	126
21	Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	1,176	0.3%	0.65	-103	-8.1%	77	6.6%	\$70,759	88
22	Utilities	2,340	0.5%	1.53	-493	-17.4%	-171	-7.3%	\$152,672	63
23	Construction	19,772	4.6%	0.89	1,284	6.9%	76	0.4%	\$58,473	1,931
31	Manufacturing	45,403	10.6%	1.19	2,146	5.0%	634	1.4%	\$72,226	968
42	Wholesale Trade	12,115	2.8%	0.83	-601	-4.7%	-111	-0.9%	\$66,275	916
44	Retail Trade	50,124	11.7%	1.21	-2,700	-5.1%	-1,853	-3.7%	\$33,876	3,455
48	Transportation and Warehousing	31,986	7.4%	1.64	4,384	15.9%	1,987	6.2%	\$52,366	812
51	Information	4,576	1.1%	0.76	-1,056	-18.8%	-372	-8.1%	\$61,687	250
52	Finance and Insurance	13,783	3.2%	0.73	-3	0.0%	190	1.4%	\$77,604	1,093
53	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	4,096	1.0%	0.78	138	3.5%	-94	-2.3%	\$49,840	692
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	11,918	2.8%	0.44	-1,085	-8.3%	-15	-0.1%	\$67,692	1,703
55	Management of Companies and Enterprises	3,729	0.9%	0.42	-34	-0.9%	144	3.8%	\$84,609	171
56	Admin and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	22,598	5.3%	1.00	69	0.3%	797	3.5%	\$38,055	1,115
61	Educational Services (private)	12,863	3.0%	0.68	-1,567	-10.9%	87	0.7%	\$38,556	219
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	68,657	16.0%	0.96	3,795	5.9%	4,407	6.4%	\$57,463	3,681
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	7,436	1.7%	0.98	5	0.1%	124	1.7%	\$24,534	381
72	Accommodation and Food Services	39,929	9.3%	1.25	1,664	4.3%	1,342	3.4%	\$22,558	2,381
81	Other Services (except Public Administration)	18,349	4.3%	0.88	467	2.6%	-98	-0.5%	\$30,914	2,104
90	Government (includes public education)	56,811	13.2%	1.18	-504	-0.9%	-935	-1.6%	\$78,090	1,213
99	Unclassified Industry	0	0.0%	--	0	0	0	0	\$0	0
All Industries		429,964	100.0%	1.00	6,065	1.4%	6,396	1.5%	\$54,018	23,358
Goods-Producing Industries		68,653	16.0%	1.05	3,586	5.5%	967	1.4%	\$67,384	3,112
Service-Providing Industries		361,312	84.0%	0.99	2,479	0.7%	5,428	1.5%	\$60,465	20,246

SOC	Description	2020 Jobs	2025 Jobs	2020-2025 Change	2020-2025 % Change	2020-2025 Openings	Avg. Annual Openings	Avg. Hourly Earnings	2020 Location Quotient	2025 Location Quotient
11-0000	Management Occupations	8,363	8,645	283	3%	4,661	777	\$47.08	0.67	0.68
13-0000	Business and Financial Operations Occupations	6,919	7,163	244	4%	4,354	726	\$31.57	0.59	0.60
15-0000	Computer and Mathematical Occupations	2,478	2,599	121	5%	1,320	220	\$33.77	0.39	0.39
17-0000	Architecture and Engineering Occupations	2,597	2,607	9	0%	1,297	216	\$37.49	0.73	0.73
19-0000	Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations	1,254	1,262	8	1%	779	130	\$34.90	0.68	0.67
21-0000	Community and Social Service Occupations	4,132	4,182	49	1%	2,770	462	\$20.99	1.14	1.10
23-0000	Legal Occupations	1,101	1,100	(1)	(0%)	441	73	\$41.73	0.62	0.62
25-0000	Educational Instruction and Library Occupations	10,458	10,511	54	1%	5,670	945	\$26.42	0.88	0.87
27-0000	Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations	2,075	2,085	10	0%	1,472	245	\$22.50	0.53	0.53
29-0000	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	13,021	13,316	295	2%	5,166	861	\$35.11	1.12	1.10
31-0000	Healthcare Support Occupations	10,061	11,177	1,115	11%	10,053	1,676	\$13.88	1.11	1.12
33-0000	Protective Service Occupations	4,814	4,747	(67)	(1%)	2,993	499	\$24.92	1.02	1.01
35-0000	Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	16,006	16,159	153	1%	17,578	2,930	\$11.13	0.91	0.89
37-0000	Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	6,028	6,130	103	2%	4,935	822	\$13.98	0.80	0.80
39-0000	Personal Care and Service Occupations	5,042	5,193	151	3%	4,866	811	\$12.95	0.82	0.83
41-0000	Sales and Related Occupations	18,137	17,466	(671)	(4%)	15,327	2,555	\$17.84	0.89	0.87
43-0000	Office and Administrative Support Occupations	27,757	26,989	(768)	(3%)	19,356	3,226	\$17.79	1.03	1.02
45-0000	Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations	952	1,013	61	6%	1,028	171	\$17.25	0.60	0.64
47-0000	Construction and Extraction Occupations	8,394	8,555	161	2%	5,996	999	\$23.24	0.84	0.83
49-0000	Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	9,604	9,779	175	2%	6,002	1,000	\$21.61	1.17	1.18
51-0000	Production Occupations	19,980	19,918	(62)	(0%)	14,563	2,427	\$18.66	1.65	1.69
53-0000	Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	31,848	33,352	1,503	5%	26,931	4,488	\$17.11	1.84	1.89
55-0000	Military-only occupations	545	524	(21)	(4%)	365	61	\$26.30	0.45	0.45
99-0000	Unclassified Occupation	0	0	0	0%	0	0	\$0.00	0.00	0.00
Total	All Occupations	211,567	214,471	2,904	1%	157,925	26,321	\$21.29		

Source: EMSI

The above two charts provide a broad overview of regional industry sectors and occupational trends that are projected through 2025. Growth areas are predicted in the health care and social services as well as in agricultural, forestry, fishing and hunting and in the transportation and warehousing sectors. Comparatively, from an occupational standpoint, growth is also mirrored in the identified areas.

NEPA Region		
Estimated Jobs by Typical Entry Level Education		
Typical Entry Education Level	Jobs	Proportion
No formal educational credential	112,380	26.1%
High school diploma or equivalent	181,261	42.2%
Postsecondary nondegree award	33,327	7.8%
Some college, no degree	10,145	2.4%
Associate's degree	8,163	1.9%
Bachelor's degree	67,416	15.7%
Master's degree	5,700	1.3%
Doctoral or professional degree	10,266	2.4%
N/A (Military Occupations)	1,221	0.3%
Total Jobs included in Estimate	429,880	99.98%
EMSI Total	429,964	--
High School or Less	293,641	68.3%
Bachelor's or Higher	83,382	19.4%

Source: EMSI

From an educational standpoint, it is projected that 42.2% of jobs within the region will require a minimum of a high school diploma or equivalent. A question may arise in that the statistics are showing that 26.1% will not need a formal educational credential; however, based on past history in the local area, this seems extraordinarily high. Should this happen as predicted, the usage of On-The-Job Training (OJT) services will support job hires. Location Quotient (LQ) is a way of quantifying how concentrated a particular industry, cluster, occupation, or demographic group is in a region as compared to the nation. The largest LQ for Northeastern PA for 2020 falls under the transportation and warehousing sector at 1.64 with a project to remain the highest sector through 2025 at 1.67.

All of the above data is irrelevant unless applied to decision-making processes that will affect the overall economic/workforce development situation within a local area or across a region. The Lackawanna County Workforce Development Board is provided statistical information at quarterly meetings to allow for approval of internal process and procedures that support a relationship to fluctuating data. An example is the Individual Training Account (ITA) local process which is visited, at a minimum, on a yearly

basis to mirror changes in the high-priority occupational listing provided by the Commonwealth. A dissection of educational statistics allows area post-secondary institutions to align their curriculums of study with current as well as projected industry trends and promotes the development of both degreed, as well as certificate, areas of study. Ethnic diversity requires the need for translators and age employment statistics tie to what available jobs can be supported by those populations. As the employment market continues to shift to a more hands-on, technically-skilled environment, usage of data to support systemic change in attitudes, educational options, and the provision of services is tantamount to achieving successful ventures.

Section 2: STRATEGIC PLANNING: Vision and Goals

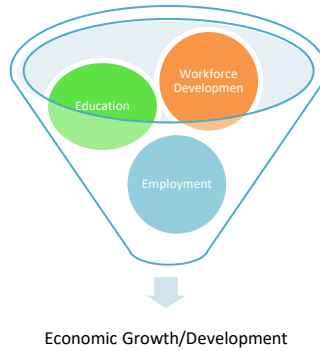
Section 2.1 What are the local board's strategic vision and goals for preparing its workforce?

The broad, long-standing vision of this Board has been *to serve as a conduit for information and communication among stakeholders, promoting economic growth through strategic investment and leveraging of resources to increase career advancement opportunities and the competitive advantage of businesses in Lackawanna County and all of Northeastern Pennsylvania.* That supports the Board's mission of attainment of a *comprehensive and structurally sound workforce development system through human capital development, capacity development, and operational effectiveness.*

Many words, but, dissected, simply means investing available resources and long-established expertise in assisting job seekers and businesses in alignment of needs: job seekers need specific skills to fill the jobs of today and tomorrow. Right now, businesses are clamoring for workers and, yet, the unemployed are not clamoring for work. This is a major conundrum!

The attainment of a goal of a thriving economy and low local/regional unemployment rates rests with reversing this situation. This Multi-Year Plan serves as a structured platform to strengthen the focus on supporting both local and regional economies through training, retraining, and the education of a future workforce. To accomplish this goal, it is recognized that workers, regardless of age or experience, must possess skills identifiable and in-line with the ever-fluctuating needs of business and industry. A needs-driven economy promotes current as well as future growth within and across all industrial sectors. Further, realizing that on-going planning efforts must engage a myriad of partners to ensure successful outcomes, the Lackawanna County WDB continues to stand poised to develop, implement, and sustain comprehensive workforce initiatives; facilitate alignment of educational curriculums; communicate and integrate in regional projects; maintain/increase linkages within targeted industry sectors; and serve as a resource catalyst for economic re-growth.

From a systemic standpoint based on history, for comprehensive provision of services, the system model does not change. Simply, it remains an integrated and collaborative effort among the primary stakeholders in a socioeconomic environment striving to promote economic prosperity among its citizens. The education of a workforce (skilled/trained) coupled with initiatives directly supporting the current needs of business and industry translates into economic growth.



The basic strategy in support of the Vision and Mission, as well as to accomplish the goals outlined in this plan of action, is as follows:

OVERARCHING GOALS	
Recruitment of New Business/Industry	Stabilization of Current Employer Base
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in meetings with prospective businesses/industry. • Provide current labor market information/data. • Identify a pool of workers based on specific industry needs through Americas Job Center locations. • Provide assessment/pre-hire testing of applicants. • Provide On-The-Job Training dollars to support new hires. • Provide facility usage for recruitment and interviewing purposes. • Assist in providing linkages to local educational facilities offering industry-specific training options. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in meetings with local business leaders to discuss potential growth patterns. • Facilitate/participate in discussions regarding educational curriculum development to support current/projected needs. • Provide linkages to the Strategic Early Warning Network (SEWN) • Identify a pipeline of potential workers supporting an industry-specific skilled workforce. • Address development of career pathways supporting advancement/upgrade or current workforce.

These objectives are not new. They have been priorities for many years and have resulted in many successful ventures that have produced qualified, skilled workers in need both locally as well as regionally. However, as the needs of business and industry fluctuate, the local area must be equipped to adapt (quickly) to changes in workforce needs to sustain an energetic economy. Driven by its business representatives, the Lackawanna County WDB is primed to serve as a catalyst for economic growth and development through implementation of prior best practices as well as newly designed/developed initiatives. This will be accomplished by strategic implementation of the overarching goals listed above combined with systemic goals as furthered outlined:

GOAL	STRATEGY
To be recognized by the business and industry community as a valuable resource for the provision of workforce information, data, assistance, and guidance.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Increase outreach to business and industry through expanded employer contacts and site-visits; 2) Improve material for dissemination; 3) Disseminate a PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County/BST newsletter; and 4) Encourage participation of not only current internal members but external entities as well.
Continued and enhanced collaboration with NE PA Alliance and PREP.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Encourage attendance at all NE PA Alliance/PREP meetings; 2) Ensure collaboration in any regional economic development linkages; 3) Provide continued assistance in grant writing of regional project initiatives; and 4) Provide a mutual exchange of local labor market data.
Strategic linkage with the Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce, Lackawanna County Department of Planning and Economic Development, and City of Scranton Office of Economic and Community Development (OECD).	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Ensure a minimum representation of two members from the above agencies/entities on the Board at any given time; 2) Continue collaboration in outreach initiatives such as, but not necessarily limited to, on-site visits to business and industry, provision of current workforce-related data, and dissemination of information detailing One-Stop services; 3) Continue representation by the WDB Executive Director on area Boards and Committees; 4) Collaborate in the development of business-education initiatives supporting career pipeline development, career awareness/ladders, school-to-work projects, identified industry-related specific needs, etc.

Section 2.2 What is the local board’s strategy to work with the entities that carry out the core programs to align resources available to the local area, in order to achieve the strategic vision and goals for the local area?

The Lackawanna County Workforce Development Board, as a single-County entity, has long been integrated into the seam of the community with membership overlapping a variety of different boards and committees which, in turn, promotes a system of stability for the provision of services and eliminates duplication of effort among community providers. Stated simply, the Board endeavors to make everyone aware of “who does what” in the community and “where to go” when specific services are needed. In alignment with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) legislation and to

promote acquisition of the most qualified providers of Title I core services, as previously stated, the local Board conducts a formal Request for Proposals (RFP) process, at least quadrennial or more frequently if needed, that outlines required elements (as defined by the WIOA statutes) and application processes. The local Board currently utilizes an ad-hoc *Procurement Review Sub-Committee* for oversight of this process and allows for impartiality and transparency in the selection of providers. This action will serve to address the needs, both specifically and universally, of the Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth populations from intake and eligibility determination through establishment of their IEP/ISS that may or may not include training opportunities (occupational skills training or On-The-Job Training) enroute to self-sufficiency. Further, the IEP/ISS will identify the need for additional support services which can be provided through collaboration with community partners such as, but not necessarily limited to, adult education and literacy providers (Marywood University – Title II contractor; United Neighborhood Centers of NE PA) as well as vocational rehabilitation services by OVR, as previously described. These processes will, in turn, support a tactical plan for educational growth and the attainment of skills essential within a competitive job market. The Executive Director and staff to the WDB will continue to sit on community boards and provide insight into local WIOA operations and opportunities, serving as a conduit for the dissemination of WIOA operational information and, in turn, assimilating other community-based information for collaboration purposes. The Lackawanna County WDB Executive Director has for many years sat as a member of the Carl D. Perkins planning committee at the Career Technology Center (CTC) of Lackawanna County, attends semi-annual meetings, and actively participates in the Center’s events. The WDB Executive Director also sits on the *Perkins* planning committees of both Johnson College and Lackawanna College as well as the educational arm of the Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce Skills in Scranton Board. Finally, WIOA providers of service, Wagner-Peyser, and OVR staff will leverage collective resources to promote optimum outcomes across the system.

Prior to the on-set of COVID-19, the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County was assisting approximately 25,000 customers per annum providing universal career services. As the pandemic continues to wane, it is predicted that over 600 persons per year will receive direct employment and training funding via WIOA, TRADE, National Emergency Grants (NEGs), Strategic Innovation Grants, Community-Based Grants, foundation awards, and Department of Human Services grants. Processes are in place. The system is working; however, areas of weakness to be strengthened include increased usage of OJT; amplified services for at-risk youth/drop-outs; expanded apprenticeship connections; a re-design of operational handbooks to mirror internal structural changes; and augmented staff training opportunities.

Section 2.3 How will the local board’s vision and goals align with, support, and contribute to the governor’s vision and goals for the commonwealth’s workforce development system, as well as any goals and strategies articulated in the regional plan?

The Commonwealth of PA has outlined a vision with a rigorous plan of action to make changes to enhance the current workforce system. The Commonwealth’s goals surrounding career pathways models, addressing significant worker pipelines and incumbent worker upgrading, increased opportunities for youth, engagement of both local as well as regional employer bases, and data sharing are being replicated locally based on current practices and the development of new and innovative methods of service provision. To that end, the Lackawanna County Workforce Area proposes the following:

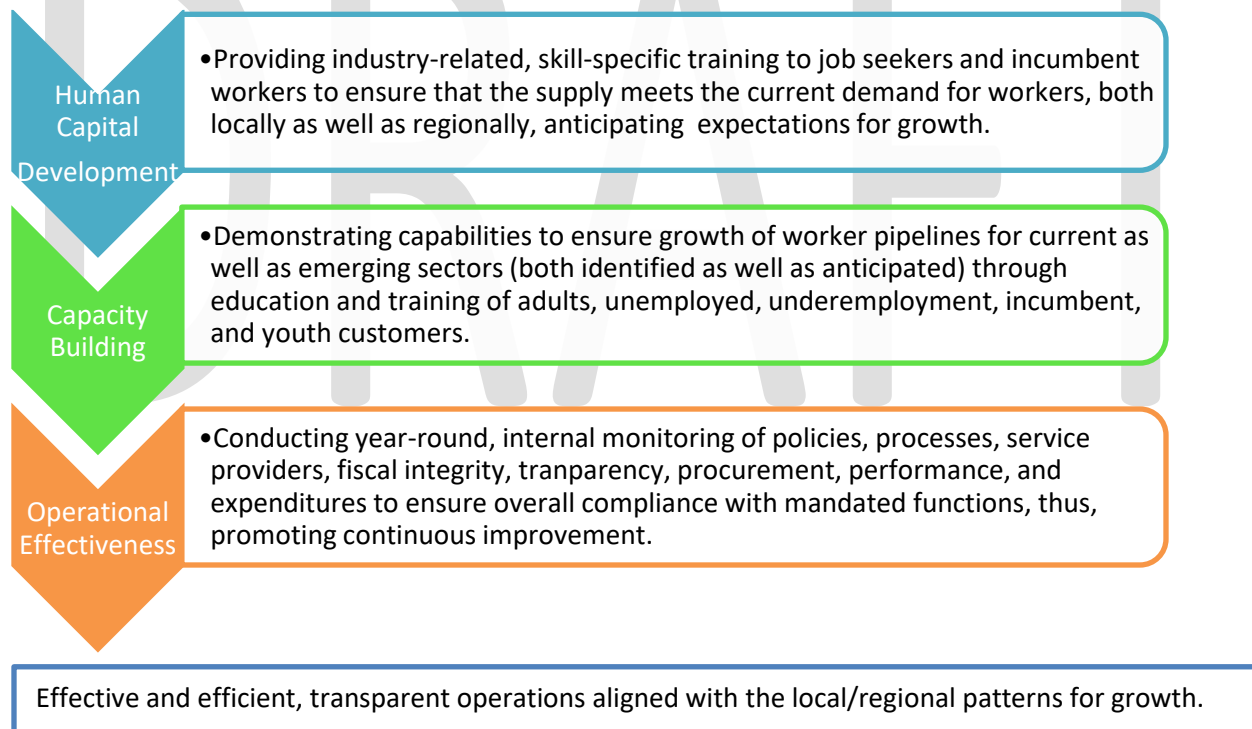
- increased integration into both secondary and post-secondary institutions to ensure heightened awareness of career pathways based on the types of current/fluctuating industry trends. This, in turn, will afford all customers (adults, dislocated workers, youth, and others), including those with disabilities, the opportunity to pursue employment in fields (from entry-level to highly-skilled positions) that are prevalent in the local market as well as to promote the attainment of self/family-sustaining wages in in-demand occupational areas;
- elimination of skill gaps through administration of comprehensive assessments followed by provision of occupational skills training opportunities in alignment with employer-identified needs;
- provision of supplementary intensive employment case management to customers to ensure a broad-based knowledge of the existing workforce conditions and opportunities;
- implementation of this Multi-Year Plan as a guiding plan of action for the provision of career and employment services (Career Pathway plan) across Lackawanna County in accordance with regional initiatives;
- continued involvement (as described in Section 2.2 above) with Perkins V activities at the Career Technology Center of Lackawanna County, Lackawanna College, and Johnson College including, but not necessarily limited to, attending bi-annual meetings, participating in Perkins V planning sessions, providing workforce related information for program development, etc. Additionally, maintaining partnerships with local all local/regional educational institutions to ensure aligned strategies in the provision of training supporting in-demand occupations with the ability to migrate training options as the economy fluctuates. Please note: there is no Community College located in Lackawanna County, but linkages are established with Luzerne County Community College (Nanticoke, PA) and Northampton Community College (Stroudsburg, PA);
- promotion of the award of post-secondary credentials that are recognized by business and industry, ensuring that federal training dollars are supporting “credentialed” courses of study;
- continued promotion of apprenticeship development across the region, through, as an example, collaboration and coordination with the Luzerne/Schuylkill Workforce Board’s *Innovations in Management* apprenticeship project as a model blueprint for successful outcomes as well as linkages to Keystone College’s Early Childhood Pre-Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship projects;
- enhanced linkages with the PA Apprentice and Training Office (PA ATO) to ensure alignment with the PA ATO’s Apprenticeship Strategic Plan Guide (to be further defined in the next round of Local Plan development in July, 2025);
- solicitation of alternate forms of funding/support (i.e., H1B Make-It-In-America grants, Industry Partnership Awards, foundation grants, Union support) that will allow for the provision of training opportunities to industries in need of advanced training for their incumbent workers as well as new hires (addressing pipeline issues) to promote industry growth and competition across a global market;
- a reconfiguration of the overall youth structure that allows for implementation of enhanced work-based training opportunities supporting skill attainment, work-based training, career awareness, structured peer-to-peer as well peer-to-authority interaction, increased pre-apprenticeship/apprenticeship opportunities, and GED/literacy instruction leading to increase employment opportunities and retention in jobs;
- continued engagement of employers through industry-sector initiatives (as previously described and panels of previously-trained workers within the targeted cluster providing invaluable insight into job acquisition. Also, heightened outreach by the local Business

Services Team (BST) as well as a continued strong collaboration with both the local Chambers of Commerce and other economic development entities; and

- utilization of any/all data provided by the Commonwealth of PA as well as such organization as NEPA Alliance, the Institute for Public Policy & Economic Development, the PA State Data Center, etc., to ensure knowledge of current/fluctuating trends that, in turn, provides a basis for program design and development, employer outreach, systemic stability, and concentrated productivity.

The Lackawanna County Workforce Development Area's vision, if broadly interpreted, facilitates a movement for enhanced collaboration and coordination among all key community partners, overarching both economic and workforce development, to include the education community, community-based organizations, the public welfare system, veteran's organizations, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR), literacy providers, and other youth providers of services (YMCA, Boys & Girls Club, and Lackawanna County Department of Human Services including children and youth services).

Furthermore, to accomplish the mission strategies, the following must occur:



The strategies defined above also support the Northeast PA Regional Plan identified goals which are as follows:

- Increase the skill level of the Region's labor force through an innovative, integrated workforce infrastructure system that links labor demand and supply to meet the current and future workforce needs of the Region's businesses.
- Utilize the expertise of educational institutions and training providers within the Region to develop training programs and services which are based upon clearly defined opportunities and

needs, and supported by research within specific industry sectors.

- Enhance linkages between workforce development and economic development delivery organizations with private industry in a collaborative manner that promotes high skill and high wage jobs.

Section 2.4 What are the local levels of performance that have been negotiated with the governor and chief elected officials? How will the local board's goals relate to the achievement of these measures?

The Lackawanna County WDB has negotiated the performance levels outlined in **Attachment 1 – Local Area WIOA Title I Performance and Accountability**. Local level performance goals are tied strictly to Federal performance accountability measures and have always served as the benchmark for rating a local area's attainment of goals, not only within mandated measurable categories but in providing a broad picture of the overall operation of a local program. The overarching goal of the Lackawanna County WDB is to enable a well-rounded menu of services that promotes job acquisition, retention of positions, and the receipt of self/family-sustaining wages upon program exit for all customers (Adult, DW, Youth). Further, the attainment of credentials as well as measurable skill gains serves to increase the parameters for reaching the measures. Moreover, the creation of a skilled workforce that strategically meets the current as well as emerging needs of local (and, perhaps, regional) business and industry is then well positioned to sustain and augment economic growth and development.

The Lackawanna County WDB has always endeavored to meet and/or exceed all mandated performance measures. But this is not enough. Attainment of the measures allows for a usage of a baseline of programmatic data for assessment of current operational practices which, in turn, forms a basis for continuous improvement. As stated in Section 2.3, to accomplish human capital development, capacity building, and operational effectiveness across the local program as a whole, the WDB must have the capability to meet negotiated performance levels.

Section 3: OPERATIONAL PLANNING: Local Area Workforce System and Investment Strategies

Section 3.1: Provide a descriptive overview of the governance structure for the workforce system, including key stakeholders and entities in the local area.

The governance structure for the Lackawanna County Workforce Development Area is illustrated in the enclosed **Attachment 2: WIOA Local Workforce Development Systems Organizational Chart**

The Lackawanna County Workforce Development Area has been authorized by the Governor of Pennsylvania as a single-County entity. Governed by a board appointed by the Lackawanna County Board of Commissioners (BOC), as the Local Chief Elected officials, the current membership is comprised of 14 private sector members and 12 public members (as of 4-3-2023).

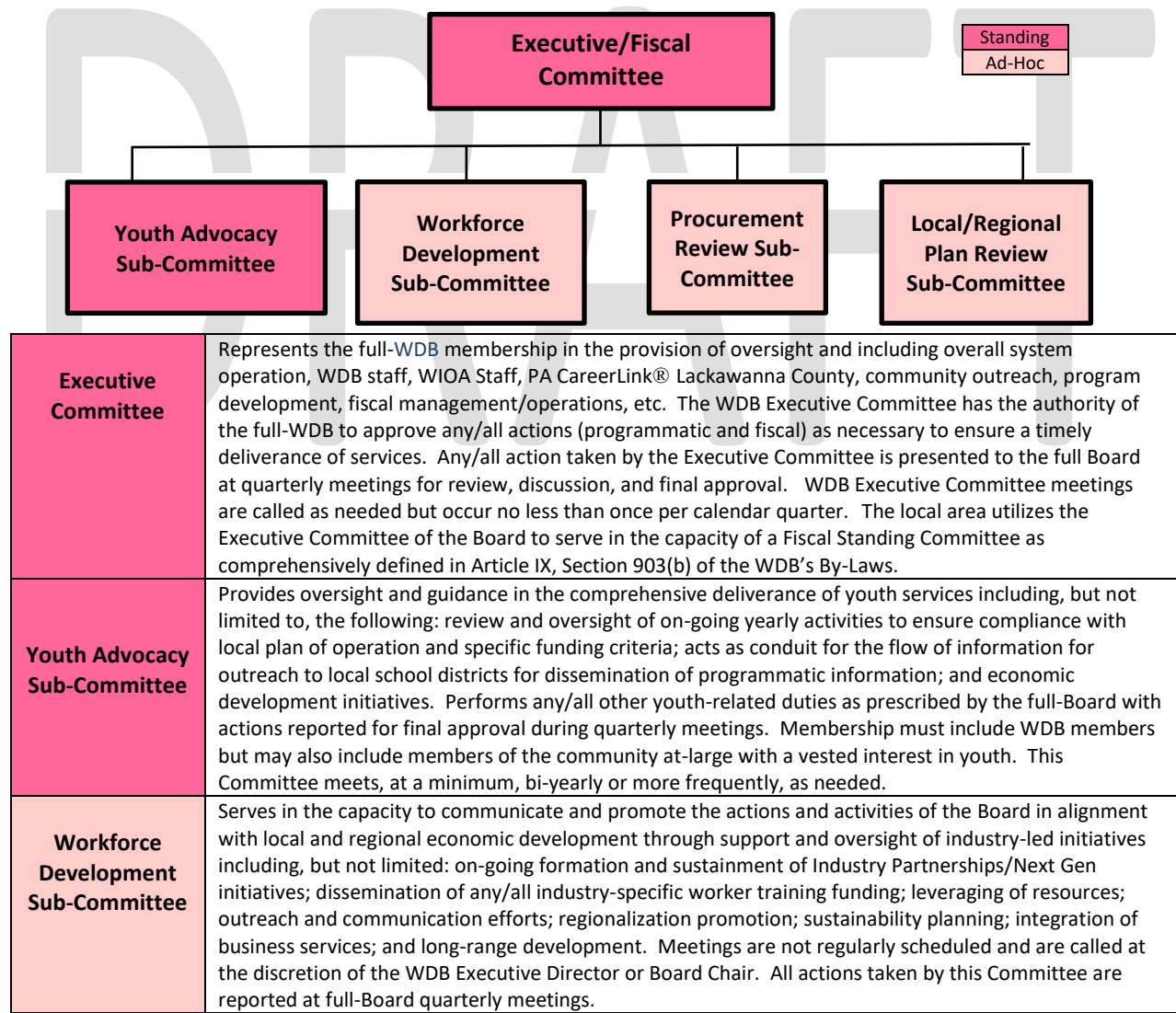
In adherence to the defined structure, the Chief Local Elected Officials (CLEOs) [Lackawanna County Board of Commissioners] appoint all members of the local WDB as authorized by the Workforce

Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014. Local Chambers of Commerce, representing local businesses, business organizations and business trade associations, make nomination, by letter, to the LCEOs (Local Chief Elected Officials) of potential representatives from business and industry. Regional and local education agencies, institutions, unions, and organizations nominate individuals, again by letter, to represent community-based organizations, labor organizations, economic development agencies, etc. The LCEO's then make appointments as they determine appropriate from the nominated pool. The LCEO's also have the authority to appoint any additional members as they so see fit. Adhering to local By-Laws, established by the WDB and reviewed most recently on December 1, 2022, the Lackawanna County WDB must be comprised of a minimum 51% majority representing the local business sector. All appointments, when applicable, are publicly conducted through a formal *Resolution* process at bi-weekly Board of Commissioner's meetings. Once appointed by the Lackawanna County Board of Commissioners, the local WDB assumes responsibility for overall oversight of the comprehensive workforce system in Lackawanna County. This entails:

- develop and strengthen the mission, strategy, objectives and policies of the Lackawanna County Workforce Development Area to ensure that all activities are proactive in nature and in sync with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014;
- in partnership with the Local Elected Officials, shall develop and submit a local plan to the Governor that addresses the requirement in Section 108 of the WIOA of 2014;
- in partnership with the bordering Northeastern PA workforce areas (Luzerne/Schuylkill; Pocono Counties), shall develop and submit a regional plan to the Governor that addresses the requirements of Section 106(c)(2) of the WIOA of 2014;
- provide the necessary technical assistance and guidance in the development of effective, responsive programs that are in line with the local business community/employers' needs;
- Convene, at a minimum, on a quarterly basis to review all system operations;
- Monitor fiscal transparency and accountability for appropriate usage;
- be responsible for the oversight of the local one-stop system, as provided locally through the so-designated PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County, located at 135 Franklin Avenue, Scranton, PA 18503;
- solicit, through a formal Request for Proposals (RFP process), appropriate providers of services for Title I Adult/Dislocated Worker, Title I Youth, Transitional Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Employment Advancement and Retention Network (EARN) activities;
- solicit, through a formal RFP process, an appropriate Operator to oversee activities at the local One-Stop center;
- utilize WIOA funds and other public workforce development resources efficiently and effectively to maximize customer choice and promote local and regional economic development efforts;
- establish and utilize sub-committees as a means to provide comprehensive oversight of specific areas of operation as further defined herein under Article IX;
- assist in developing, fostering and maintaining strong ties to the community served by the local WDB and to garner grass root support and understanding of WIOA programs and systems for promotion of economic development strategies;
- leverage different/additional resources from the community for the purpose of developing a strong workforce development system and to ensure services are not duplicated at the local level while expanding the resources that currently exist;
- promote public and private involvement in the development of workforce development activities in Lackawanna County and the surrounding counties making up the Northeast region of the Commonwealth;

- utilize pertinent data of economic conditions in the local area/region and undertake on-going community needs assessments through which local gaps can be identified and addressed;
- foster continuous program improvement for workforce development activities under Title I of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 and any/all subsequent legislation addressing workforce issues and economic development;
- oversee/procure services for the provision of WIOA Title I services within the Lackawanna County Workforce Development Area;
- coordinate activities with local/regional education and training providers; and
- work closely with the Commonwealth of PA's Bureau of Workforce Partnership & Organization (BWPO) and the Bureau of Workforce Development Administration (BWDA) and the PA Workforce Development Board to ensure high quality economic development initiatives both locally as well as throughout the Northeast region of the Commonwealth.

The following Sub-Committee structure has been implemented to ensure comprehensive oversight and transparency of WIOA operations:



Procurement Review Sub-Committee	Sits for the primary function of review, assessment and rating of any/all proposals received in response to an officially procured Request for Proposal (RFP) solicitation. Meetings are not regularly scheduled and called only following solicitation of RFP. All reviews and documentation (rating results) are forwarded to the Executive Committee for discussion and final approval. Membership must include WDB members but may also include members of the community at-large with a vested interest in workforce projects.
Local/Regional Plan Review Sub-Committee	Provides overall guidance in the development and on-going review of a viable Local and Regional Plans of Action, establishing both short and long-range goals solidifying the Board's objectives, plans, and strategies. Meetings are not regularly scheduled and occur, primarily, on a directive from the Commonwealth based on planning time frames.

At the onset of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act in July of 2015, Lackawanna County assumed the role of Fiscal Agent for the local Board. Due to this change, Lackawanna County is now the administrative entity that serves as the mechanism to provide staff to the local board. In addition, as previously stated all services are now competitively procured via a structured RFP process. Within the Lackawanna County Workforce Area, there is one comprehensive PA CareerLink® One-Stop Center:

PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County
135 Franklin Avenue
Scranton, PA 18503
Phone #: 570.963.4671
Hours of Operaton: Monday through Friday; 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM

As mandated by the WIOA of 2014, the Lackawanna County WDB competitively procures an Operator for the named One-Stop site in Lackawanna County, at a minimum every 4 years. Currently, the approved, 3-member Consortium of Operators for the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County, is comprised of the following: Title I Adult/Dislocated Worker provider of Services – Educational Data Systems Inc.; Marywood University – Title II ABLE Provider; and Equus Workforce Solutions. The roles and responsibilities of the One-Stop partners are described in Section 4.2 of this Plan.

Currently the following individuals hold responsibility for ensuring equal employment opportunities and the protection of civil rights within the local areas:

Cathy Gerard, EO Officer; and
Joseph DiStasi, EO Liaison

These individuals maintain records of any filed complaints or instances of non-compliance and submit quarterly reports, as required. They also serve as the initial line of communication and mediation for staff and/or customer concerns. Finally, they schedule varied EO training at regular intervals.

Section 3.2: What are the programs included in the local workforce delivery system and how will the local board work with the entities carrying out all workforce programs to support service alignment?

As previously stated, the Lackawanna County Workforce Development Board has long been integrated into the seam of the community with membership overlapping a variety of different boards and committees which, in turn, promotes a system of stability for the provision of services and eliminates

duplication of effort among community providers. To ensure alignment with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) legislation and to promote acquisition of the most qualified providers of Title I core services, as previously stated, the local Board procures providers through a formal RFP process that outlines required elements (as defined by the WIOA statutes) and application processes. The local Board currently utilizes an ad-hoc *Procurement Review Sub-Committee* for oversight of this process that allows for impartiality and transparency in the selection of providers. This action also served to address the needs, both specifically and universally, of the Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth populations from intake and eligibility determination through establishment of Individual Employment Plans (IEP)/Individual Service Strategy (ISS) that may or may not include training opportunities (occupational skills training or On-The-Job Training) enroute to self-sufficiency. Further, the IEP/ISS identifies the need for additional support services which can be provided through collaboration with community partners such as, but not necessarily limited to, adult education and literacy providers (Marywood University – Title II contractor; United Neighborhood Centers of NE PA) as well as vocational rehabilitation services by OVR, as previously described. These processes will, in turn, support a tactical plan for educational growth and the attainment of skills essential within a competitive job market. The Executive Director and staff to the WDB continue to sit on community boards and provide insight into local WIOA operations and opportunities, serving as a conduit for the dissemination of WIOA operational information and, in turn, assimilating other community-based information for collaboration purposes. The Lackawanna County WDB Executive Director has for many years sat as a member of the Carl D. Perkins planning committee at the Career Technology Center (CTC) of Lackawanna County, attends semi-annual meetings, and actively participates in the Center’s events. The WDB Executive Director also sits on the *Perkins* planning committees of both Johnson College and Lackawanna College. Finally, WIOA providers of service, Wagner-Peyser, and OVR staff will leverage collective resources to promote optimum outcomes across the system.

Following the previously mentioned competitive procurement process, the Lackawanna County Workforce Development Board (WDB) has assigned responsibility for the day-to-day operation of the physical center, located at 135 Franklin Avenue in downtown Scranton, to a designated Consortium of Operators, comprised of representatives from Educational Data Systems Inc. (EDSI), Educational Opportunity Center (EOC), and Equus Workforce Solutions. Their key role is as follows:

- Ensure a seamless delivery of services.
- Provide oversight to the assigned Site Administrator in the following areas:
 - organization and coordination of all co-located partner staff by function in accordance with State and/or provider personnel rules; collective bargaining agreements, if applicable; and other specific partner policy and guidance.
 - establishment of a customer-friendly service delivery model.
 - development of operational procedures and protocols that promotes effective seamless service delivery to ensure positive program outcomes.
 - communication of workforce system policy that effects overall Center operations.
 - establishment of internal policies and procedures for situations such as inclement weather; holidays, as allowed by partner entity, etc.
 - ensures an effective partner referral mechanism is in place for the benefit of both the individual customer as well as partner performance.
 - act as an ambassador of the One-Stop Center in the community.
 - provides a bridge to business services and resources.
 - assures that relevant policies and procedures including equal opportunity and civil rights measures are enforced.

- recommends and retires technological tools and services needed for the operation of the One-Start Center.
- Serve in the capacity of an intermediary with all the One-Stop partners.
- Recognize and understand the parameters under which the individual partners provide services including partner-specific performance measures.
- Schedule One-Stop Partner meetings (minimum quarterly).
- Prepare a meeting Agenda for distribution prior to the set meeting date.
- Provide in-person facilitation of the Operator meeting.
- Prepare and distribute any/all required meeting materials.
- Prepare and distribute post-meeting minutes.
- Assist the Local Board in preparation of compliance measures for One-Stop Center Certification to ensure continued receipt of infrastructure funding.
- Approve the expenditure of earned income. Provide recommendation for approval of internal operational services (i.e., security services, disbursement of any earned income; disbursement of any Operating Budget costs in excess of \$500.00, etc.) to the Lackawanna County WDB. Allow Site Administrator discretion in disbursement of funds up to a maximum of \$250.00, reportable at the next regularly-scheduled Operator's Meeting.
- Track and implement the negotiated One-Stop Partner Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

The success of the Operator Consortium, all having demonstrated a vested interest in the public workforce system, will be its ability to work cooperatively with the Local Workforce Development Board, the assigned Site Administrator of the Center, and partners, affiliates, and other constituents of the local Center. All members of the Operator Consortium are decision-making level representatives of their organizations with the expertise to provide systemic oversight that strategically fosters an integrated service model. The Operator must inspire others and lead change; demonstrate extremely high levels of professionalism, integrity, and collaboration; and enhance and develop partnerships.

The local board has completed and attached a *Local Workforce Development System Program Partner-Provider List* template which comprehensively details partner entities. Please reference **Attachment 3**, as attached to this plan.

The local area, based on funding availability, conducts outreach to community partners for solicitation of proposals that support activities for TANF/SNAP-eligible youth. These traditionally address after-school tutoring and career-awareness activities, mentorships, community service projects, work experience, and arts-related instruction. These activities provide peer interaction, an introduction to the soft skills necessary for employment, homework assistance, and nutritional information and subsistence.

Additionally, the local area conducts a yearly summer work experience project for approximately 80 TANF/SNAP-eligible youth who are reimbursed at \$12.00-\$14.00 per hour for up to 30 hours per week with placements occurring at local non-profit worksites. These youngsters also receive, during the enrollment, information on career exploration, anti-bullying, financial literacy and health-related information.

Low-income individuals may access Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) home assistance and weatherization programs that help eligible families make minor home repairs and/or reduce energy consumption and overall energy bills through the installation of cost-effective energy conservation measures.

All of these activities as described have been developed in alignment with the Governor's State Plan and support Pennsylvania's strategies to strengthen the local, as well as, regional economies and workforce system. For a detailed description of partner involvement in the system, please refer to the chart in Section L4.2 of this Plan.

Section 3.3: How will the local board work with entities carrying out core programs to:

- Expand access to employment, training, education, and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly individuals with barriers to employment.
- Facilitate the development of Career Pathways and co-enrollment, as appropriate in core programs (specify on-ramps from adult education).

➤ The Lackawanna County WDB utilizes the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County, centrally located at 135 Franklin Avenue in downtown Scranton, PA, as the operational arm for the provision of services and coordination of activities amongst a variety of community partners and educational institutions/training providers. Selected WIOA providers of services (WIOA Adult/Dislocated Worker/Youth and EARN) are based at the PA CareerLink® site to ensure a coordinated effort with not only PA Wagner-Peyser staff but with OVR, PA Department of Human Services, Marywood University – Title II provider of Adult Basic Literacy Education (ABLE), Agency for Community Empowerment (ACE) of NE PA, local training providers, Pathstone (provision of older worker services), and others to ensure a seamless, friendly, and uncomplicated process for service provision for the job-seeking customer as well as assistance for the business community. As mentioned, all of these entities are partners at the local PA CareerLink® site, thus, enabling a comprehensive mix of activities in the true “One-Stop” fashion. It must also be noted here that Lackawanna College, and Johnson College, maintain close ties with the PA CareerLink® as member and/or community affiliates, visiting the Center on a regular basis and providing valuable materials and contact information for all of their programs of study. In an attempt to further expand connections, from a youth standpoint, WIOA staff are visiting local intermediate and secondary schools, providing career information, discussing services available following graduation, and promoting technical education. Also, linkages have been established with the Lackawanna County Department of Human Services (formerly Lackawanna County Children and Youth Services) for referral of youngsters that are foster children, those aging out of the foster care system, or are involved with the Juvenile Justice system. An additional collaboration with the Lackawanna County Department of Human Services (formerly Department of Public Welfare) provides assistance in identifying prospective customers which may, in turn, assist in the reduction of the welfare rolls. Finally, a linkage with the Center for Independent Living allows for frequent visits of their clients (individuals with severe barriers) to tour the local One-Stop site and receive career awareness/pathway information. Linkages are also established with local re-entry programs and domestic relations organizations. As described, all services are available to individuals with barriers to employment. Solicitation of additional PA CareerLink® partner/member entities is perpetual.

Within this system, determination of initial eligibility for services is conducted by the individual partner entities to ensure compliance with specific program requirements. The local area has implemented a *WELCOME CENTER* approach which provides an initial, comprehensive overview of PA CareerLink® services to interested customers. This introductory session details pathways to available programs and services and also may establish linkages to other off-site community service providers (i.e., Dress for Success, Catholic Social Services, United Way and its affiliate agencies, community action agencies). If an individual is interested in specific partner services, they are referred to on-site career advisors/counselors for pre-eligibility determination. This is conducted one-on-one in a confidential

setting with validation to include, at a minimum, inspection of applicable documents (traditionally copied for file data validation), utilization of electronic documentation of government records, and face-to-face attestations. Telephone verification and notarized statement are used only sparingly when no other method is available.

The local board, through its Consortium of Operators and Partner Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), has systemically defined overarching roles and responsibilities for the collaboration and interaction among Partners.

➤ Core services are universal in nature, provided by all partner entities within the PA CareerLink® system that compliment outreach to the business community. Core services traditionally encompass, but are not necessarily limited to, the following: development of customer resumes for employer job matching (PA's workforce development system of record); job readiness services that include career counseling, workshops, and assessments to ensure appropriate job matching; provision of labor market information by industry sector that identifies local high-demand industry openings; provision of one-on-one staff assisted services that compliments not only the job seeker but significantly improves relations with employers and reduces frustrations with usage of a complex system; and development of an Individual Employment Plan with each job seeker with the ultimate goal of successful job matching. The one-stop system of operation significantly enhances local employers' access to an appropriate pipeline of skilled talent to meet their individualized needs. Additionally, training opportunities (provided through WIOA funding) can address skill gaps both prior to hire (new workers) as well as upgrading of the incumbent workforce (career advancement) within an industry to sustain on-going competitiveness and provide an on-ramp from adult education to employment. It has long been recognized that "subsidized training" is only a stepping stone in an individual's career pathway which can be charted from the on-set of service provision through lifetime learning opportunities. The Lackawanna County WDB has also designed its Individual Training Account (ITA) CAP Policy to support career pathway development as follows: "The maximum amount of reimbursement payable to any given training provider will not exceed \$10,000 (short-term training) or \$15,000 (over six months in length) or the actual cost of training, whichever is less, unless it is determined that the customer (trainee) is engaged in career-ladder training as recognized by an employer and/or industry. In that case, an additional \$5,000 may be made available to support second-tier training (i.e., Nursing Assistant to LPN; LPN to RN; machine operator to CNC Operator; MOS certification to Associate Degree in Computer Science, etc.)." One caveat: The Lackawanna County WDB will review ITA CAP limits, as defined herein and as pertaining to WIOA participants, on a 6-month basis if warranted by economic expansion or demonstrated circumstance of need as determined by the Executive Committee of the WDB. The WDB reserves the right of flexibility to circumstantially increase the ITA CAP limit(s) based on any/all requirements of specialized funding sources. This, in turn, provides streamlined access to post-secondary credentialing. Note: during Program Year 2022, the local area adjusted its ITA Policy to include an E-Learning Codicil to ensure proper outlay of funds for on-line learning purposes. Whenever applicable, the process is structured to allow for co-enrollment across relevant programs to ensure an appropriate mix of wrap-around services. An example of this co-enrollment would be services provided to TRADE customers where the individual would receive their initial assessment and case management services through WIOA with their training funded through the TRADE Act. Another example is dual enrollments for OVR clients whereas OVR provides comprehensive assessment and case management services with WIOA providing funding for tuition and skill-training opportunities. Finally, linkages to Registered Apprenticeship opportunities, both locally as well as regionally, provide a point of entry for interested individuals into viable family-sustaining occupations

The local Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) is an integral Partner in the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County. As a WIOA Title IV core program, OVR has a representative on the Lackawanna County WDB, has a staff member sitting on the WDB Youth Advocacy Sub-Committee, and, currently has 6 staff members assigned to the Lackawanna County One-Stop Center. Due to recent changes, referrals now occur via electronic processing; however, the back and forth of referrals within the PA CareerLink® system has, historically, been simple and effective in the best interest of clients.

That said, eligibility to receive services under WIOA Title IV may only be determined by a qualified OVR Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor.

Training for OVR staff is at the discretion of the local OVR District Administrator. OVR staff supervision and direction is the responsibility of the local OVR District Administrator.

Title II Adult Education has long been an affiliate of the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County. A referral process is in place for any workforce customer in need of adult literacy and/or GED services and has been utilized frequently for many years. The need for these services is determined during an in-depth assessment process of incoming clients at the PA CareerLink® and can include the submission of initial testing scores to the local Title II provider. Additionally, PA CareerLink® partner staff periodically present information regarding career services in the actual classroom setting at the provider's location. The Lackawanna County ABLE (Adult Basic Literacy Education) Director sits as a member of the local WDB.

As has been previously discussed herein, when a need is identified, either locally on a regional basis, the community, as a whole, efficiently and effectively implements historical practices which enables the merger of education and business in the development of new curriculums of study to support the identified need.

Finally, linkages with the PA Apprenticeship and Training Office (ATO) will enable the dissemination of information on pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship opportunities for both the job seeking customers as well as the regional business community and will facilitate the engagement of the educational community to create post-secondary credentialing that include Registered Apprenticeships. The Lackawanna County Workforce Development Area will utilize the PA ATO's *Apprenticeship Strategic Plan Guide* in the development of new and innovative plans of action to be implemented during the next Local Plan development cycle in July, 2025.

Section 3.4: What strategies will be implemented in the local area to improve business/employer engagement that:

- Support a local area workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses in the local area;
- Manage activities or services that will be implemented to improve business engagement;
- Better coordinate regional workforce and economic development strategy, messaging, engagement and programs; and
- Strengthen linkages between the PA CareerLink® service delivery system and unemployment insurance (UI) programs.

➤ Building on information as previously described, successful Board-sanctioned *Sector Initiatives* that infuse business and industry into the One-Stop setting, other systemic procedures have been

implemented to address current worker needs and promote the on-going development of a trained workforce that can not only compete in today's global economy but that will significantly and specifically support both the current as well as projected needs of the business community in Lackawanna as well as surrounding Northeastern PA counties. These procedures involve a unified team (economic and workforce development professionals) approach to outreach that allows for identification of challenges and needs of both small as well as large employers. Additionally, representatives from OVR/BVR (District Office in Wilkes Barre, PA) have long been involved in the overall operations of the local area, from a seat on the Workforce Development Board, to integration of 6 OVR/BVR staff members located on-site at the local One-Stop to provide up-to-date information about incentives offered through OVR that can benefit the local business community. Site visits, phone contacts, and email distributions (both employer-specific as well as universal through Constant Contact) augment employer services that includes posting jobs, applicant screenings, wage rate comparisons, research of skilled labor pools, development of job descriptions, and coordination of job fairs.

It is fully understood that the Commonwealth's Industry Partnership initiative is designed to enable the local as well as regional business community to drive the development of activities and programs that fully support economic and workforce growth, regardless of the specific sector. To that end, the Lackawanna County WDB promotes Industry Partnerships through its *Quarterly Sector Initiatives* (currently addressing health care/life sciences; manufacturing; transportation/logistics; and business/finance/IT) which involve industry-expert kick-off speakers followed by an on-site mini job fair and a supporting educational roundtable supporting existing openings. During Covid-19, these events were temporarily suspended; however, they did resume in a revised, somewhat smaller, format during calendar year 2022. Quarterly initiatives have begun to commence again in 2023. It should be noted here that, as sectors grow or decline within the local area, these initiatives will adjust to ensure that the most prevalent needs are addressed. Additionally, the Lackawanna County WDB is a partner in the NE PA Consortium of Workforce Boards that is currently promoting the development of industry-led instructional videos, a Resource Guide, and a website through a Manufacturing Industry Partnership initiative, spearheaded by the Pocono Counties WDB and Keystone Development Partnership (KDP).

Another available resource is the availability of apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships to support growth and development of the local workforce. A successful venture, to-date, can be seen in the recent award (March 4, 2021) of an apprenticeship grant to Keystone College (serving residents of Bradford, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Sullivan, Susquehanna, and Wyoming counties) in the amount of \$173,841 from PA DOLI to build on/expand a previous pre-apprenticeship grant (received in 2019) for high school students that promoted certification in early childhood education and careers. This apprenticeship grant expands the training to adults, allowing for the attainment of credentials to become certified childcare professionals.

A major Northeast regional project, awarded to and spearheaded by the Luzerne/Schuylkill Board, is a State Apprenticeship Expansion Grant, *Innovations in Management*, an apprenticeship training program available across the 7-County region. This project is designed to provide 192 hours of classroom instruction (first-time supervisory skills, office management skills, human resource management skills, business communication skills, and customer service skills) as well as a structured On-The-Job Training (OJT) workplace learning process (2000 hours). Involved participants can experience a step-by-step wage progression as they demonstrate competency and complete phases of the program. At the completion of the program, the apprentice will have earned 16 college credits and a Small Business Skills diploma from Luzerne County Community College.

The following chart provides information on employers/entities in Lackawanna County that have been awarded apprenticeships since 2019:

Entity	Focus
Carbondale Fire Department	Firefighter (currently registered but inactive)
Northeast PA Pipefitters JATC	Pipefitter (construction)
Northeast PA Pipefitters JATC	Plumber
Sandvik Materials Technology	Maintenance mechanic (any industry) (alternate title: industrial maintenance mechanic)
Scranton Electricians	Electrician (alternate title: interior electrician)
Scranton Fire Department	Firefighter
Elmhurst Country Club	Groundskeeper
Keystone College	Early Childhood Education

Strong linkages are maintained with representatives of labor organizations across the region to support various apprenticeship opportunities. Three (3) labor representatives, 1 with apprenticeship-affiliation, maintain active seats on the Lackawanna County Workforce Development Board, thus, ensuring that the face and expertise of labor is at the table and providing valuable insight into development needs across all seven counties. Also, apprenticeship and trade opportunities are strongly promoted in all PA CareerLink® One-Stop centers across the region through the provision of informational workshops and outreach ventures. And, very importantly, unions are now actively posting apprenticeship opportunities on the statewide-approved *Eligible Training Provider List* to allow regional workforce boards the opportunity to expend WIOA funding on apprenticeship curriculums. The local Centers provide contact information to prospective trainees on local application submission processes.

Finally, it should also be noted here that, yearly, each November, the local Board participates in National Apprenticeship Week by spearheading speaking engagements by union officials and apprenticeship representatives in local high schools to engage interested students in investigating apprenticeship opportunities and the rewarding careers that can be attained.

As has been stated previously, the Lackawanna County WDA will utilize the PA ATO's *Apprenticeship Strategic Plan Guide* for the development and expansion of forthcoming initiatives to be comprehensively defined in the next Local Plan development cycle in July, 2025.

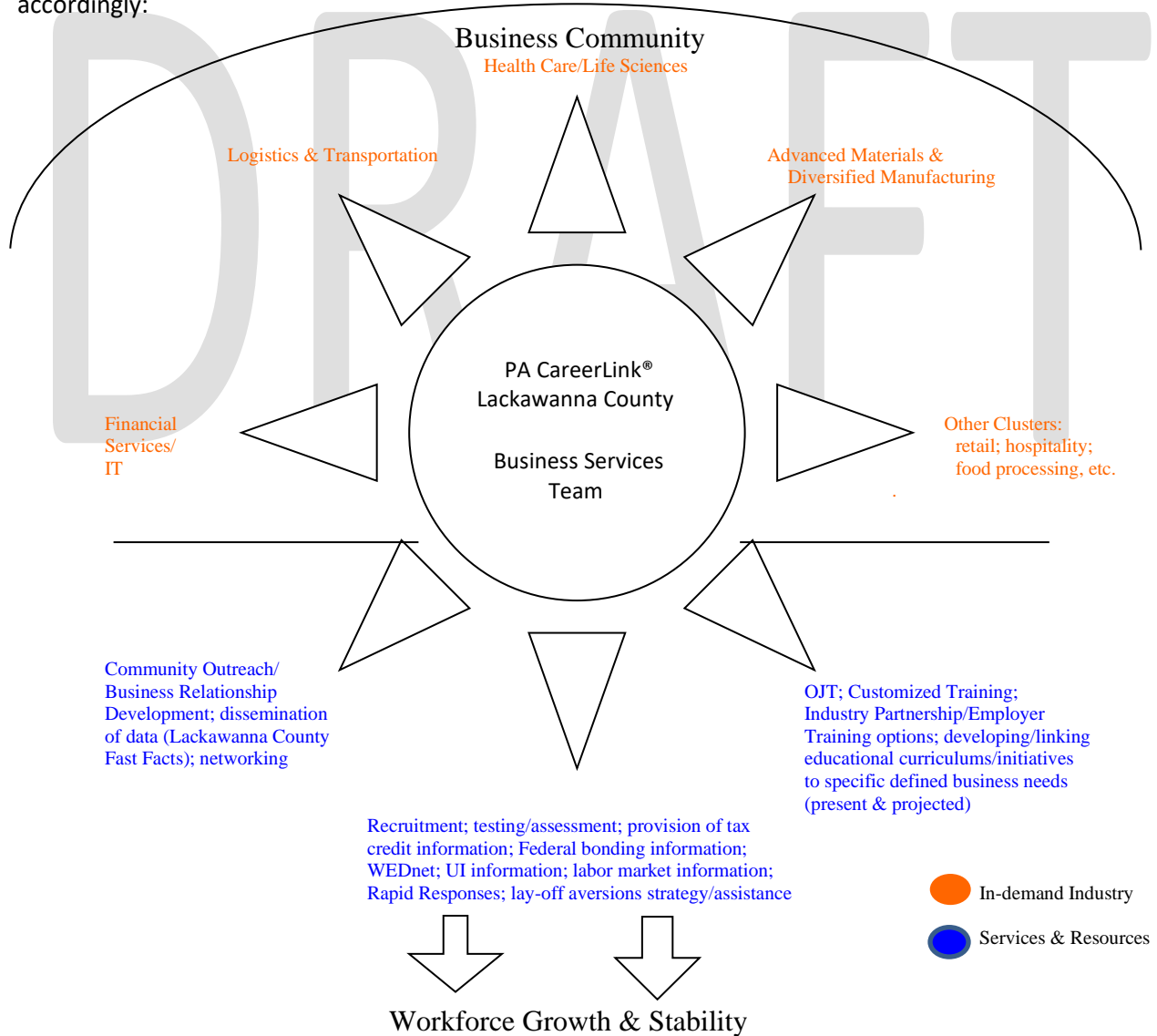
Additionally, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) maintains a physical presence within the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County with the stationing of 6 staff on-site. OVR meets the needs of businesses by providing no cost services to include ADA Awareness training, ADA Accessibility evaluations, accommodation recommendations for current employees and retention services. OVR also continues to partner with employers with On-The-Job Training (OJT), providing 100% wage reimbursement to businesses that hire OVR customers. It must be noted here that OVR has long been an integral partner in the on-site operations of the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County.

It also must be noted here that the Strategic Early Warning Network (SEWN) has proven to be a valuable partner, not only to local Workforce Development Boards, but to many other economic development organizations as well, in helping companies across all industries, to minimize, or in some cases completely avoid, reductions in employment or closures. Should the local area identify any business/company which would need their assistance, a referral would be generated.

To ensure a viable connection to business and industry throughout the pandemic, the PA CareerLink® Business Services Team maintained communication through email and phone correspondence, updating business folders, determining workforce needs (job openings), identifying needed skill sets, and discussing projected needs. The process has since converted to a hybrid model as social and economic conditions fluctuate.

That said, how these services are delivered are particular to individual One-Stop centers; however, all must support the rationale that efficient and effective delivery can significantly drive economic, workforce, and, subsequently, community development. Internal operational practices must promote collaborative enterprises that coordinate broad as well as individualized-based outreach efforts and promote a “demand-driven” product.

It, then, falls to the local One-Stop Business Services Team (BST) to take the lead. Within the Lackawanna County Workforce Area, the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County BST is structured/operates accordingly:



The diagram above is specific to the internal operations of the BST within the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County with the Business Community (see top arch) as the guiding entity. It is understood that business and industry should guide and dictate workforce initiatives and ultimately this will occur as long as the companies are available, amenable to participation, and vocal in the sharing of their needs. To accomplish this, the local BST must be structured internally to address all community sectors.

The PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County BST works extremely hard (proactive approach) to attract and target not only new employers, but also assist and educate existing local businesses, both large and small, in such areas as current in-demand occupations, fluctuating employment trends, available workforce pools, average hourly wage data, etc. Through review and analyzation of reports generated by the PA Center for Workforce Information and Analysis (CWIA) as well as Ad Hoc reports designed to provide local statistics, the BST can assess trends that can then, in turn, provide measurements of current services and dictate any necessary adjustments.

Listed below is a breakdown of the information gathered for calendar years 2021 and 2022:

Calendar Year 2021					Calendar Year 2022				
Month	Self-Entered Job Orders (JO)/Staff Entered	Total # of JO Entered	New Employers	Avg JO per day	Month	Self-Entered Job Orders (JO)/Staff Entered	Total # of JO Entered	New Employers	Avg JO Per day
January	87/390	477	4	23	January	64/306	370	5	16
February	71/262	333	2	17	February	51/282	333	7	18
March	84/399	483	10	24	March	56/243	299	5	13
April	74/399	413	8	20	April	47/119	166	5	9
May	67/256	323	11	16	May	50/192	242	12	11
June	81/324	405	9	21	June	44/104	147	4	7
July	90/285	375	11	19	July	40/90	132	5	7
August	75/363	438	15	22	August	51/146	197	6	9
September	87/271	358	8	18	September	66/222	288	5	14
October	81/281	363	10	18	October	62/229	291	10	15
November	89/184	273	3	14	November	57/183	240	5	14
December	80/234	314	13	16	December	49/196	245	7	16
2021 YTD Totals	966/3588	4555	104	228	2022 YTD Totals	637/2314	2951	76	149

Data retrieved from PA's workforce development system of record.

As can be seen, usage of the system/services is brisk from a business/employer standpoint. Twitter, Facebook, phone apps, and Constant Contact supplement efforts with a distribution of information to well over 5,000 participants, professionals, and educational providers on a daily/weekly basis. Also, the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County now disseminates a weekly informational newsletter that includes upcoming events, specific employer recruitment efforts, a listing of available virtual workshops and recent job postings.

➤ Management of the One-Stop Center's business-related activities falls to the Site Administrator who has over 40 years of local workforce experience and is known throughout the community as the "face of the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County." Guiding a team of professionals, the Site

Administrator coordinates the planning process for *Sector Initiative* events and mobilizes other activities. BST coordinates the usage of a *Business Center* which has been established on-site at the One-Stop Center and includes a private, small conference area and management desk area that can be utilized by any business entity in need of recruiting/interviewing facilities. Prior to the pandemic, the Business Center was averaging approximately 3 business entity usages per week. The Business Center is so designed to accommodate social distancing norms in adherence to any/all COVID-19 protocol.

As the local economy emerged from the pandemic, the BST resumed employer surveying to determine the effectiveness of the local One-Stop operation and/or to identify gaps in services supporting continuous improvement efforts.

➤ The Lackawanna County WDB has, for many years, maintained a strong and solid linkage with the Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce and the Lackawanna County Office of Economic Development, Lackawanna County's foremost economic development entities. Constituents from these entities provide invaluable insight into the fluctuating economic climate. The WDB Executive Director sits as a member of the Board of Skills in Scranton, the education arm of the local Chamber. WDB and PA CareerLink® administrative staff, when applicable, participates in meetings with potential employers considering Lackawanna County as a home and provides statistical workforce information on request. This collaboration ensures that economic development partners are well informed as to the capability of the local workforce system to provide such activities as On-The-Job Training (OJT), work-based training, customized training, incumbent worker training (through WIOA, specialized grants, and industry partnerships) and, in turn, can then effectively promote them to the business and industry community. The BST actively solicits participation from local business and industry in locally-driven sector initiatives (i.e., health care, advanced manufacturing, logistics/transportation, and business/finance) conducted on-site at the PA CareerLink® as have been previously described. Also, as needed, local training providers come to the table to address specific needs of employers through development of industry-specific training resulting in degrees and/or credentials recognized across industry sectors. The usage of Industry Partnership (NE PA regional) funding can further enhance educational opportunities for the incumbent workforce populations. The Lackawanna County Office of Economic Development, the Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce, and the Lackawanna County Workforce Development Board stand united in the provision of data, staff support, linkages to workforce training opportunities as well as WEDnet (when available), Ben Franklin Grants, tecBridge (technology, entrepreneurship, collaboration) and other community resources to ensure a comprehensive approach to coordination of efforts. The linkages are solid; messaging is coordinated. Future ventures will continue.

➤ The local One-Stop Center continues to provide RESEA (Re-employment Services & Eligibility Assessment) which addresses the needs of recently separated individuals including orientation and case management in their quest for re-employment. Wagner-Peyser staff conduct interviews for the development of an individual services plan which could include a variety of assignments such as, but not necessarily limited to: various workshop attendance, informing them of job fairs, introducing career information, and/or workforce training options. If and when the pandemic wanes, this service may resume as an in-person activity.

And, on emergence from the pandemic, the Commonwealth of PA is providing invaluable UC staffing on-site at the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County on a 2-day per week schedule (through scheduled appointments) to provide assistance to UC customers/claimants. UC claimants also are provided access to a UC computer located in the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County Resource Room. Finally,

on request, the local UI liaison to the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County will conduct information workshops for both employers as well as UC claimants.

Section 3.5: How will the local board coordinate local area workforce investment activities with regional economic development activities that are specific to a local area? How will the local board promote entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services?

The Lackawanna County WDB recognizes NEPA Alliance as the premier regional economic development entity in Northeastern Pennsylvania. Various members of the Lackawanna County WDB sit on NEPA Alliance's boards and committees, thus, ensuring complicity in regional planning. The Executive Director of the local WDB has an open invitation to participate in PREP meetings. The Lackawanna County WDB has also, in the past, coordinated special project initiatives with NEPA's staff. Further supporting regionalization, the Lackawanna County, Luzerne/Schuylkill, Northern Tier and Pocono Counties Workforce Boards, through their Executive Officers, have formed the Northeast PA Consortium of Workforce Boards and conduct regularly scheduled, bi-monthly meetings to specifically discuss the regional economic climate, discuss regionalized projects, promote distribution of regional Industry Partnership funding, etc. This Consortium facilitates an open line of communication among partners and allows for the replication of best practices and well as homogenous processes across the Northeast region of the Commonwealth.

The local Board, through its local One-Stop Center, is strategically linked with the University of Scranton's Small Business Development Center (SBDC). On request, the SBDC Director has made presentations to both One-Stop staff as well as the general public at the Center. Referrals of appropriate customers interested in entrepreneurial ventures occur regularly and are coordinated through case management activities and on-site staff. The SBDC can also facilitate microenterprise services for any interested customers. Further, linkages are solid with the Scranton and Carbondale business incubators as well as the micro-loan program administered through the Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce.

Above and beyond the linkages as described, the local SBDC has presented at State/Local Internship (SLIP) Professional Development Sessions and conducted workshops at the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County. The SBDC and local Chamber also coordinated with the local area for recruitment of potential interns across various programs.

Finally, workshops on entrepreneurship are conducted through the One-Stop Center and information on becoming an entrepreneur is included in local Business Education Partnership (BEP) projects with intermediate and secondary school students. Systems are solid for continued promotion of entrepreneurial ventures in Lackawanna County.

The local board measures employer outcomes through a continuous review of job orders and subsequent personnel placements and through ongoing communication with its employer base. Utilizing a PA CareerLink® Ad Hoc report, the area is also able to monitor the local employer penetration rate of usage of the Commonwealth's electronic data system. Also, as detailed/charted in the previous section, the local area has the capability to utilize statistical data to assess trends and gauge tendencies that may be affecting local as well as regional growth.

Section 4: OPERATIONAL PLANNING: Local Area Workforce Delivery System

Section 4.1: Provide a descriptive overview of the local area workforce delivery system, including key stakeholders and entities in the local area.

Locally, the solicitation of vendors occurs through a formal RFP process which follows the procurement processes of the County of Lackawanna with 2 publications of the RFP notice, website postings of such, and, if applicable, a formal Bidder's Conference as well as an opportunity for Bidder's to submit questions. Any/all proposals received in response to any given RFP are reviewed by a WDB Procurement Review Sub-Committee for content and viability with a recommendation for a provider selection then made to the WDB Executive Committee. The Executive Committee has the authority to select a provider and that selection is then ratified by the full-Board at its next regularly-scheduled Quarterly meeting.

During the Spring of 2019, the local Board competitively procured providers of services for Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth activities as well as EARN program services for the period of 7-1-19 through 6-30-21 with a possible extension through 6-30-23 based on successful performance indicators. The following subcontracts were awarded:

- Adult/Dislocated Worker – Educational Data Systems Inc. (EDSI)
- Youth – Equus Workforce Solutions (formerly ResCare Workforce Services)
- EARN – EDSI

Staff of these organizations are co-located at the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County.

It should be noted here that a formal RFP for services commencing on July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2025, was posted during the Spring of 2023. Selection of providers will follow a pre-described review and award process as defined with the RFP.

The local Board also competitively procured a Consortium of Operators for its sole, comprehensive One-Stop Center, which took over full responsibility for Site oversight on July 1, 2021. The Consortium is comprised of the following members:

- EDSI
- Equus Workforce Solutions
- Marywood University – Title II ABLE Provider

The current Consortium of Operator's contract will expire on June 30, 2023; however, a clause exists for a 2-year renewal extension based on successful performance. At this time, it is anticipated that this contract will be extended.

The entity providing WIOA Title II, Adult Education and Literacy programs and activities in Lackawanna County is Marywood University. Of note: the Lackawanna County WDB, in collaboration with Marywood University, submitted a Digital Literacy/Workforce Development Grant to the Commonwealth of PA in December, 2021, and, was awarded on March 11, 2022. Under this grant, digital literacy classes began on-site at the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County in July, 2022 and will continue in 8-week cohorts through July, 2023.

The entity providing WIOA Title III, Wagner-Peyser programs and activities are Commonwealth of PA employees that are co-located at the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County and provide invaluable career, employment, and labor exchange services. Additionally, Wagner-Peyser staff provide linkages to Rapid Response and Trade service for local dislocated workers.

WIOA Title IV, Vocational Rehabilitation programs and activities are handled by staff of the Commonwealth's Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) with a total of six staff maintaining a home base at the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County.

The responsibility of ensuring Equal Opportunity (EO) and civil rights protection (as stated in Section 3.1) locally falls to the following individuals:

Cathy Gerard, PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County Site Administrator – EO Officer
Joseph DiStasi, BWPO Supervisor, EO Liaison

These individuals maintain records of any filed complaints or instances of non-compliance and submit quarterly reports, as required. They also serve as the initial line of communication and mediation for staff and/or customer concerns as well as assuring compliance with all mandated EO regulations.

Other PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County partners and affiliate members, that includes Pathstone Incorporated, 7 local institutions of higher learning, various other training providers, and a myriad of other local community-service providers, facilitate un-complicated referral processes, dual enrollment capabilities, and the coordination of supportive services provision. Finally, the relationship between the local Board/area and the Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce is well-established with the WDB Executive Director sitting on the Chamber's *Skills in Scranton* (educational division) board of directors (past Treasurer with an upcoming appointment to that entity's Governance Committee) and a Chamber Vice-President sitting on the local Workforce Board. Both individuals have been involved in strategic planning efforts across entities which deters duplication, promotes solidarity and ensures comprehensive service provision to the community at-large, local school districts, business and industry, and government entities.

All core partners are comprehensively identified in Attachment 3 – *Lackawanna County WDA Program Partners-Provider List*.

Section 4.2: Identify the one-stop partners (required and other) authorized to provide required and other programs within the local area. Describe briefly the role(s) of the one-stop partners (required and other).

The local area has developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to delineate the roles and responsibilities of WIOA mandated partners and other entities. A locally-developed Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) (included as **Supplement 2**) supports the development of a cost-effective plan for site operations and supports the overarching goal of the Center: *to provide all job seekers and workers with high-quality career, training, and supportive services needed to obtain and maintain good, self and family-sustaining jobs as well as address the needs of business and industry throughout the*

community. WIOA mandated partners provide financial support to the system at levels allowed by their individual funding streams with non-mandated partners providing invaluable in-kind support.

The following chart outlines the local One-Stop partners and their roles and relationships within the workforce system:

PARTNER ENTITY	ROLES/RELATIONSHIPS
<i>Wagner-Peyser Act Services</i>	Services provided by the PA Bureau of Workforce Partnership and Organization (BWPO) and the PA Bureau of Workforce Development Administration (BWDA) that includes vocational counseling, job search assistance, job matching, PA CareerLink® enrollment assistance, business services for employers, and intensive re-employment services
<i>WIOA Title I Adult/Dislocated Worker/Youth Providers</i>	Sub-contracted entities to offer employment, training, and supportive services along with career guidance & planning, Job Clubs, eligibility determination, assessment, job matching, computer instruction, GED instruction, and workshops.
<i>Programs under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973</i>	As the designated sole provider of these programs, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors provide multiple individualized services that include diagnostic, vocational counseling and guidance, vocational evaluation, restoration, training, job placement, and pre-employment training services for eligible and potentially eligible youth (14 – 21 year olds) and adults with disabilities to prepare them for competitive, integrated employment. OVR also provides multiple services to the business community designed to assist businesses with hiring qualified employees with disabilities.
<i>Services authorized under Title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965</i>	Administered locally by Pathstone, Inc., services are targeted to individuals over 55 years of age such as paid work experience programs, some employment training, and vocational counseling.
<i>Community Services Block Grant(CSBG) Act</i>	Services are provided through a local Community Action Agency(Scranton-Lackawanna Human Development Agency, Inc.) with a direct linkage to PA CareerLink® services.
<i>Adult Basic Education & Literacy</i>	Services provided through a local college (Marywood University) as well as secondary local community-based organizations. referrals are direct from the one-stop system.
<i>Veterans Services</i>	Veterans services are provided through the PA CareerLink® system by a BWPO staff person. Services include career counseling, information and veterans benefits, and tuition for skill training.

<i>Department of Human Services (TANF)</i>	Services provided through TANF and EARN which are targeted to Public Assistance recipients and include information and dissemination of welfare benefits, supportive services, counseling, supported work, and job coaching.
<i>Vocational Educational Activities under Carl D. Perkins Act</i>	A vocational /technical school provides these services which include dissemination of information relative to financial aid to attend post-secondary training and post-secondary occupational skill training.
<i>Trade Adjustment Assistance</i>	Service is provided by BWPO and includes tuition assistance for dislocated workers, rapid response to employees in the event of massive lay-offs or plant closings and income subsidies to assist candidates while in training.
<i>State Unemployment Compensation Program</i>	A State UC liaison provides invaluable expertise to the One-Stop system through the provision of staff training and employer workshops (on-site at the One-Stop center) as well as troubleshooting on behalf of local employers and job seekers as problems arise.
<i>Job Corps</i>	There is no Job Corp facility located in Lackawanna County; however, a representative from Keystone Job Corps (Luzerne County) conducts bi-weekly informational sessions and enrollments on-site at the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County. [Pre-pandemic; expected to resume by 7-1-2021]
<i>Youth Build</i>	There is no local project.
<i>Housing & Urban Development</i>	There is no local project.
<i>Council of Three Rivers for the Native American Programs</i>	The local area is affiliated with the Eastern Regional Representative for Native Americans. This individual has provided printed informational materials are available for display at the Center and referrals are made as appropriate.
<i>Migrant or Seasonal Farmworker</i>	Administered locally by Pathstone Incorporated, a PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County on-site partner. Additionally, a Local Migrant Workers organization maintains ties to the PA CareerLink® through youth programming efforts.

Section 4.3: How will the local board facilitate access to services provided through the one-stop delivery system?

The local One-Stop Center, the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County, is conveniently located in downtown Scranton, PA, easily accessible by public transportation. The hours of operation are 8:30 A.M. to 4:30 P.M, Monday through Friday with extended hours implemented as is determined by need. The Center is modern and inviting and is staffed by friendly, courteous, and knowledgeable individuals who have been trained to accommodate customer needs. In 2021, the Site is engaged in an OEO

review with the Commonwealth for attainment of an OEO Compliance status (currently: status approved). Other means of access include social media (Facebook, Twitter and phone app), Constant Contact communication, and posting of information on the Site's website, www.pacareerlinklackawanna.org, the Lackawanna County WDB's website, www.lcwdb.org, as well as the Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce's and Lackawanna County's websites, when applicable. Lackawanna County is primarily comprised of cities, boroughs, towns, and townships that are considered urban in nature with very few rural pockets of populations. Services to any of these rural areas within the local area are provided via improved technology (as necessitated by COVID-19) (i.e., Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Docs, SKYPE) and through proposed enhancements to Broadband capability (i.e., extended, wider-range accessibility towers and fiber-optic lines) currently under development by Lackawanna County. Finally, just recently, the local area has installed WIFI capability outside the physical PA CareerLink® building to allow customers to safely, effectively, and efficiently access services without building entry.

Core partners are located at the One-Stop comprehensive site. Upon entry to the Center, individuals are afforded a triage opportunity which provides a one-on-one setting for dissemination of a menu of available services. At this time, the customer traditionally selects the service which best suits their individualized needs and, from there, can migrate to a *Welcome Center* where more detailed information is available on funding for training and career pathway information (access to partner programs). This provides a seamless mechanism for program service delivery.

As has been previously stated, the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County has six OVR Counselors assigned on a daily basis who can accommodate an immediate consultation or, at the least, schedule an individual accordingly. If an OVR staff is not immediately available, the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County is contracted with *Interpretex Services* who are available on a pre-scheduled basis. The local area also has access to a Language Line (*Propio Language Services*) to ensure reduction of language barriers. Over the past 2-year period, there has been one request by a Spanish-speaking individual for interpreter services for an Unemployment Compensation consultation at the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County. The request was made on September 23, 2022, and the individual was provided with Propio which enabled a successful session. One other request was made in October, 2021, for Nepali for a customer referred to the EARN Program which was also successful. For those deaf or hard of hearing individuals who are OVR customers or are interested in applying for OVR, an appointment with a counselor is scheduled. Should an individual require a sign-language interpreter, they will be accommodated through a contracted provider. Further, PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County partners provide this service to their individual customers. For individuals who may not require or request an OVR eligibility determination, the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County has a TTY line (570-963-4717) as an assistive tool. A new resource, Ubi-Duo, was added to the available list of services during Spring, 2023.

As stated above, *Propio Language Services* can be utilized to provide interpreter services for any language on immediate request by staff/customer.

For customers who have difficulty with seeing or are blind, the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County is currently in the process of upgrading its Braille literature to ensure universal access to services. Pa CareerLink® staff have been trained to ensure every accommodation is made to assist individuals with barriers. Linkages have been established with the NE PA Center for Independent Living, Goodwill Industries of NEPA, Scranton Counseling Center, Advocacy Alliance, and The Children's Advocacy Center to ensure dissemination of information regarding the universal services available through the One-Stop

system. A PA CareerLink® staff person also sits as a member of the Lackawanna Interagency Council which meets on a bi-monthly basis to ensure collaboration among community partners.

In a concerted effort to address the employment needs of youth with barriers (i.e., teen mothers and/or fathers, LEP individuals, youth aged out of foster care), the Title I Youth service provider has, for many years, participated in LEP sessions at local high schools, sat as a member of the Teen parent programs at Scranton High School, and affiliated with the Lackawanna County Department of Children's and Youth Services. These affiliations were shuttered during the recent pandemic but are now being re-established to ensure that youngsters facing hardships and hurdles have the tools to succeed in an adult-life situation. A "helping hand" can be a short step to a brighter future. Linkages to other community service providers (i.e., food banks, Dess for Success, Men's Clothesline, day care facilities, subsidized health care providers, the Lackawanna County Department of Human Services/County Assistance Office, etc.) are well established and provide additional support. An example can be described as a collaboration with the United Neighborhood Centers of NE PA, a community service organization, Johnson College, and the local workforce area to provide services to the ESL population to gain skill sets and support to enter the local workforce. It is the goal of the Local Area to broaden its scope of service provision to these distinct groups through a concentrated outreach initiative that can include the development of processes to assess local needs and eliminate physical barriers for program enrollment/participation, address language barriers that are impeding job placements, and educate the business community as to sector specific needs. This will then be measurable through review of on-going program enrollment demographics, unsubsidized placement data, review of improvement of physical worksite accessibility, and increased communication with schools and businesses.

Title II services are made available through a well-established referral method between the local Title II contractor (Marywood University) as well as the United Neighborhood Centers of NE PA who also offers adult literacy, ESL and workplace literacy services. These referrals commonly occur via Constant Contact, face-to-face case management advocacy or dissemination of information for self-referral. Individuals with Limited English-Proficiency (LEP) are accommodated by bi-lingual staff members as well as the usage of *Google Translator*. Marywood University is, now, one of the 3-member Consortium of Operators at the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County which enables and ensures Title II's "seat at the table," participation, and oversight of operations. There is also a direct link to Title II services through an Adult Literacy hotline through which customers can call during One-Stop regular business hours to obtain information about Title II services from Marywood ABE staff. What is being considered as a success story – the PA CareerLink® has linked Marywood University with Canpack US, a large, newly-established aluminum can manufacturer in Olyphant, PA, has begun providing specialized workforce ESL to a group of individuals from Mexico (approximately 75) who have no English literacy skills yet are working at the company and demonstrates the local area's ability to address fluctuating needs and situations. Implemented as a pilot project during the past 6 months, this type of activity can now be replicated across the business community. This type of collaboration benefits both the company as well as the employee. On a yearly basis, Marywood University's Title II staff conducts cross-training of all PA CareerLink® staff and partners to ensure a better understanding of services for referral purposes. Title I staff also make presentations during the class sessions regarding the availability of training options and assistance in utilizing PA's workforce development system of record. As the Commonwealth's Title II ABE provider, Marywood University compiles and distributes data including a yearly presentation to the local Workforce Development Board. The Title II provider uses Edata as a management system to track program outcomes. Summary reports are shared with the Workforce Development Board along with student success stories and annual performance reports.

Aside from what is described above, the local area publishes outreach materials in Spanish and other languages, as they become more prevalent in the local area. In addition, the Commonwealth of PA has approved the employment of a bi-lingual Career Advisor under Wagner-Peyser who is expected to come on board shortly and will complement the current bi-lingual Career Advisor. It is recognized that, as local population demographics fluctuates, it will be necessary to replicate published/outreach materials in additional languages. This will be instituted following the usage of demographic information (U.S. Census and other publications) and will target those populations in excess of 1000 locally based on available data. At present, the Lackawanna County WDA is seeing somewhat of an influx of Asian, Indian African, and Congolese and will monitor and assess the needs of these (and presumably) other nationalities to determine specific language translation requirements. The Local Area will collaborate with the United Neighborhood Centers of NE PA, Goodwill Industries of NE PA, Outreach-Center for Community Resources, Agency for Community Empowerment (ACE) of NE PA, the United Way of Lackawanna and Wayne Counties, Catholic Social Services, and other community-based organizations who target refugees, migrants, and newly-relocated immigrants to ensure the provision of extensive services that include not only language barrier-elimination but that address housing, transportation, child care, elder care, food distribution/banks, home weatherization, and emergency heating needs. Linkages to these organizations/services are also promoted by the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County Business Services Team in their outreach across the business community. This outreach occurs through a PA CareerLink® Business Services Team (BST) representative(s) who conducts tours of the One-Stop site for interested business representatives; provides off-site services, on request; provides data and business planning information for potential new/in-coming operations, and collaborates with the Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce to positively promote and publicize the local area/region. The PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County has also established an on-site *Business Service Center* that includes a private office space with WIFI and small conference area that is available, on a scheduled basis, for interviewing purposes.

Lackawanna County is predominantly urban in nature with some small rural pockets. The One-Stop center is located in the downtown of the largest metropolitan area, the City of Scranton. Most areas of the County are supported by public bus transportation and the PA CareerLink® is easily accessible. Social media and remote service provision, as has been previously described, and individualized outreach supports those individuals who may have difficulty in on-site visitation.

The Lackawanna County WDA utilizes PA's workforce development system of record as its sole mechanism for data entry. No supplementary systems are utilized. WIOA Title I contractors provide case management services to their applicable customers. Case Managers (or, locally, Career Advisors) primarily hold the responsibility for data entry into PA's workforce development system of record. Data entry occurs as activities are developed for participants (on an individualized basis) and, subsequently, as changes may occur to their IEP/ISS as they migrate through the system. Data entry occurs almost simultaneously with actual service provision (completed in real time).

For services that may be provided by partner entities other than WIOA subcontractors (i.e., OVR, Unemployment Insurance, Wagner-Peyser) data entry is coordinated among partners to ensure that the system of record is accurate and comprehensive to provide an up-to-date picture of a customer's enrollment portfolio. Given the single-County nature of the Lackawanna County Workforce Development Area and a sole One-Stop Center for acquisition of services, data maintenance is easily coordinated and maintained.

It has always been recognized that career planning (a path of action) is the best route to ensure employment stability and career advancement. To that end, the Lackawanna County WDA has designed its Individual Training Account (ITA) Policy to include supplemental funding for individuals in career-ladder training (i.e., Nurses Aide to LPN to RN). All eligible adult learners that migrate through the local workforce system are afforded the opportunity to investigate career pathway options in the development of their IEP/ISS. This may occur during their initial planning process or fluctuate as the learner revises their long-range educational/employment goals.

All partners, both at the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County or across the community, collaborate in the dissemination of information in a timely manner to ensure quality service to individual customers as they develop their career plan. It has been discovered, over many years of providing employment services, that individualized attention is the best means for addressing those with barriers to employment. This one-on-one consultation allows for a confidential, non-threatening environment for individuals to discuss their specific goals as well as specific needs to attain those goals.

Collaboration among partners, both mandated as well as non-mandated, in the local One-Stop system is described extensively throughout this Plan. The following mandated partners are co-located at the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County: WIOA Title I subcontractors for Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth services; Wagner-Peyser, TAA, Veterans and Rapid Response State services; OVR; TANF/EARN; CSBG; SCSEP – Pathstone Incorporated; WIOA Title II Adult Education and Literacy – Marywood University; Post- Secondary Career and Technical Education – Carl D. Perkins; Offenders Program/Second Chance – Pathstone Incorporated; and Migrant/Seasonal Farmworker – Pathstone Incorporated. Representatives of these entities have self-instilled an atmosphere of teamwork and relationships to promote universal access of services across all customer bases. For those mandated partners that are not located on-site at the Center (UC – removal of phone access due to the pandemic; Council of Three Rivers for Native American programs; Job Corps; Second Chance Act; HUD) linkages are established (please reference Attachment 3: Local Workforce Development Delivery System Program Partner-Provider List) to ensure easy access to all available services.

Within the Lackawanna County Workforce Development Area, linkages are well-established with the Lackawanna County Department of Human Services/Public Welfare through the implementation of the Employment, Advancement and Retention Network (EARN) Program to provide services to individuals receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits. The EARN Program is administered by the local Board with activities conducted within the One-Stop site; thereby, allowing for comprehensive service provision. For other than EARN clients, a visit to the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County *Welcome Center* provides the initial step in determination of eligibility which includes a discussion of receipt of SNAP benefits.

Finally, of note, over the past 15-month period, the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County has expanded its base of operation to include the provision of services within the Carbondale Public Library. Carbondale is the 2nd largest city in Lackawanna County and is located approximately 16 miles from downtown Scranton. A short distance for some; a huge travel obstacle for others. Working closely with Carbondale Library officials and facilitated by a Lackawanna County WDB member who also sits on the Board of the Lackawanna County Library System, in-person services (career counseling, resume' prep, cover letter writing, job searching techniques, WIOA eligibility determination, introduction to training opportunities, CWDS enrollment, etc.) now occur on a bi-weekly basis at the Carbondale location. And, as of January, 2023, PA CareerLink® staff are conducting workshops and informational session on a monthly basis in the Albright Memorial Library located on Vine Street in downtown Scranton.

Section 4.4: How will entities within the one-stop delivery system, including one-stop operators and the one-stop partners, comply with WIOA Sec. 188 (as applicable), and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101, et seq.) regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities?

The Consortium of Operators providing oversight to PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County are well aware of the provisions of WIOA Section 188 and applicable provisions of the American with Disabilities Act of 1990 regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology, and the provision of materials. Currently, OEO compliance is under review with status: pending. The PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County now annually conducts an OEO *Lackawanna County Workforce Development Board Compliance Review/Site Certification* of its facility and processes that includes a combined physical and program access evaluation. The local area will continue to comply with any/all directives regarding the provision of services and facilities maintenance for individuals with disabilities. The local Center provides the following amenities for persons with disabilities: TTY phone line, adaptive devices on a computer workstation including a split keyboard and rolling mouse, a video magnifier, headset, computer speakers, Zoom Text Xtra, and JAWS for Windows. Additionally, one-stop staff may utilize technology guides for using screen software, screen reading software, and windows accessibility features. During 2022, the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County updated and re-implemented a *Limited English Proficiency Plan* that assures and demonstrates that customers of the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County are being provided meaningful access to program information, benefits, and services although the customer may be limited in their English Language Proficiency. The *Plan* defines applicable populations, methods for provision of services, translation of documents, related term definitions, and interpreter services. Also newly integrated into the service system is the usage of *Babel* notices which is defined as a short notice included in a document or electronic medium (i.e., website, “app,” email) in multiple languages informing the reader that the communication contains vital information and explaining how to access services to have contents of the communication provided in other languages. The *Babel* notice does not replace the obligation to provide individualized language services but it signifies that the need to translate information into a variety of languages is necessary to meet the fluctuating needs of the community. The PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County is also undergoing an internal phone system upgrade that is replacing a 20-year old voice system and will include a voicemail translation link. The new system has been ordered and is expected to be in place by July 1, 2023.

As the Lackawanna County WDB moves through its OEO review with the Commonwealth, it has begun investigation of new and emerging assistive technology devices, such as, but will not necessarily be limited to: Hearing loop (or induction loop) systems; FM systems; Infrared systems; personal amplifiers; telecoil (or t-coil); InnoCaption Mobile App.

Any questions regarding EO/ADA compliance are discussed at quarterly PA CareerLink® Consortium of Operators meetings. Finally, the PA Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) has stationed 6 OVR staff at the local One-Stop site who regularly monitor Site compliance.

To ensure that all customers are afforded comprehensive services, the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County provides the following:

- 1) For individuals with limited-English proficiency, the Site has bi-lingual staff to assist in eliminating language barriers as well as linkages/referral capabilities with other community

service agencies providing/developing specific remedies to eliminate this barrier. Additional information on LEP services is described in Section 4.3.

- 2) Partner actions traditionally include one-on-one intervention; ensuring accessibility to accommodations, as specifically needed; individualized job coaching; translation of materials; and physical accessibility determination. Please see Section 4.3.
- 3) Once per program year, the Pa CareerLink® Lackawanna County engages an OVR staff member to conduct a disability awareness session to ensure that all partner staff are aware of the OEO requirements as well as the need to provide exemplary services to all individuals with disabilities. The OVR District Administrator for the Bureau of Blind and Visual Services (BBVS) sits as a member of the local WDB and, at least once yearly, provides an update to the Board on OVR mandates.
- 4) Customarily, core program partners include: Title I providers of Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth services; OVR; Wagner-Peyser; Pathstone (SCSEP); Veterans services; TANF/EARN; and Title II (on invite). Additionally, other local partners include: Lackawanna College, New Horizons Computer Learning Center, Fortis Institute, Smith and Solomon Driver training, ACE of NEPA, and TransAmerican Technical Institute. Staff of these organizations are afforded training in EO required areas such as, but not necessarily limited to: ADA accommodations; ethics and confidentiality; diversity and inclusion; conflict management, and civil rights.

Recognizing the importance of staff training and knowledge of EO compliance regulations, the following activities were conducted during calendar year 2022 for PA CareerLink® partners and staff, Workforce Development Board members and staff, and other interested individuals:

- January, 2022 EO – Federal and State Priorities
Conducted by: Joseph Distasi, EO Liaison, PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County
- February, 2022 Ending Retaliation – Securing Racial and Economic Justice in the Workplace
Conducted by: US DOL EEOC and National Labor Relations Board
Black History Month – Civil Rights and Local Culture
Conducted By: Dr. Lisa Richards-Palmiter, Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion Director, Marywood University
- March, 2022 How to Communicate with Professionalism and Etiquette
Conducted Through Metrix learning – On-Line Learning
- April, 2022 EO – Conflict Management and Active Shooter
Conducted By: PA State Police Training/Community Service Officer – Dunmore Barracks
- June, 2022 EO Policy /Procedures
Conducted by: Cathy Gerard/Joseph DiStasi (as approved in EO Plan)
- August, 2022 Senior Community Services Programming/Difficulty in Job Search of Mature Workers
Conducted By: AARP Representative – Patricia Vergnetti
Age Discrimination
Conducted: CBS Video “Ageism in the Workplace” and AARP Handout – “10 Things You Should Know About Age Discrimination
- September, 2022 LGBTQ Training - VETS
Conducted at: Philadelphia Region Strategic Leadership Conference

- October, 2022
 - Managing Conflict – Dealing with Difficult Customers
 - Conducted By: Anthony Libassi, Lackawanna County Family Court Mediator
 - Accessibility, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: Integrating Humanness
 - PA Office of Administration
 - Disability Awareness
 - Conducted By: Bridget Frasscella, MS, CRC, Eastern Business Services, PA Labor and Industry – OVR
- November, 2022
 - PA Relay Service
 - Conducted By: Amy Strausser, PA Relay TSM Community Outreach Coordinator
- December, 2022
 - Disability, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility – What’s the Buzz and How Do We Start

In addition to these formalized training sessions, partner staff at the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County have received training in assistive technology and ethics and confidentiality in the workplace. The Equal Opportunity (EO) Officer has also participated in the following sessions: *Navigating the New Normal* (ADA; LGBT Issues; Return to Work following COVID-19; EEOC; Legal Updates); *Learning & Leading: Effectively Leveraging Experiences in the Pandemic to Promote Recovery*; *Unlawful Harassment/Navigating Harassment*; and *Claims and Investigation*.

To date, the local area has procured job search handbooks translated in Spanish and also utilizes material provided by the PA Department of Labor and Industry, Unemployment Compensation Unit, for distribution to the Spanish-speaking community. Following this review, the Lackawanna County WDB will ensure that any/all notices/advertising are published in both English and Spanish and any internal documents are made available in both languages. As previously described in Section 4.3, as local populations shift/fluctuate, the goal of the Local Area is to provide information in languages based on documentable need followed by a comprehensive review of actual dissemination/usage of the related materials to ensure cost-effective planning and budget outlays. The Lackawanna County WDA will welcome any/all material that can be produced for distribution by the Commonwealth of PA to enable a comprehensive affirmative action approach.

The PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County has long been a member of the Lackawanna County Inter-Agency Council which is comprised of representatives from all County social service agencies representing a myriad of ethnic populations and allows for communication and outreach across the local system. Currently, the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County is involved with United Neighborhood Centers of Northeastern PA (NEPA) and Johnson College for the provision of an “essential worker” technical certification program for an ESL population in the following areas (nursing, medical assistant, basic maintenance, machinist, welding, plumbing, and forklift). This type of collaboration ensures the provision of needed employability and supportive services to those most in need within the community.

The Lackawanna County WDA assures compliance with the Commonwealth’s Office of Equal Opportunity in conducting annual compliance reviews. During the last review, which occurred in 2021, the following corrective action items were addressed: the development of a revised description and organizational chart; the development of training descriptions to be given to training providers and contractors; the development of an expanded internal Affirmative Action Plan (available on request from the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County Site Administrator); the acquisition of Braille and large-

print posters and information; updated contract language; Babel training; development of an expanded outreach plan for 2022; provision of training to One-Stop staff, Operators, and partners/providers on reasonable accommodations and prohibiting discrimination; the development of a monitoring survey tool; and implementation of a harassment and disciplinary conduct policy. On May 10, 2022, the Lackawanna County Workforce development Area received notification from Mr. James Kayer, Director, Office of Equal Opportunity, that the local area was now considered compliant.

Finally, the Lackawanna County WDA ensures equal access to WIOA Title I-financially assisted programs and activities as a supplementation to all previously described actions, ensuring that members of the various groups protected by these regulations, including but not limited to, persons of different sexes, various racial and ethnic/national origin groups, various religions, individuals with limited English proficiency, individuals with disabilities, and individuals in different age groups are afforded . Such efforts may include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Advertising programs and/or activities in media, such as newspapers or radio programs, that specifically target various populations;
- (b) Sending notices about openings in programs and/or activities to schools or community service groups that serve various populations;
- (c) Consulting with appropriate community service groups about ways in which communication/outreach and service to various populations can be improved;
- (d) Coordinating linkages with training providers and educational institutions that have affirmative action mandates; and
- (e) Ensuring staff training and knowledge of appropriate service provision for any/all inquiring individuals.

Section 4.5: Describe how the local board will ensure the continuous improvement of eligible providers through the system and that such providers will meet the employment needs of local area employers, workers, and job seekers.

Understanding the goal of supporting work-based training opportunities with employers to establish training paths to employment, the local Board utilizes an *Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL)* as created yearly by the Commonwealth of PA. Usage of this ETPL ensures accountability of local level training providers, the quality of the training programs to be offered, and assessment of any return on investment. This, in turn, broadens the scope of customer choice in the selection of training opportunities.

It is further understood that the utilization of the ETPL assists the local Board in implementing work-based training activities that include OJT, pre-apprenticeships, internships, and registered apprenticeships or other training that is responsive to the needs of local employers and addresses employer pipeline needs.

Additionally, any program of study must be approved for inclusion on the High-Priority Occupation (HPO) List which will ensure that any/all education training funded with workforce dollars is targeted to available jobs. This is first accomplished by a review by local WDB staff of the information posted on PA's workforce development system of record for inclusion. If all information/data is complete, accurate, and well-defined and performance criteria is met, the local staff person will approve the

course in the system. The Commonwealth will then formally approve or table the action. Once approved by the Commonwealth, the information becomes visible to the general public for acquisition of training dollars. If, for any reason, the course is rejected, a letter is sent to the provider explaining the decision. The local area utilizes the Commonwealth-approved petition process (review and approval by WDB Executive Director for submission) for addition of any provider/course that addresses emerging workforce needs based on fluctuating economic conditions. Emerging trends are usually identified through strategic contacts by the PA CareerLink® Business Services Team (BST), linkages with local Chambers of Commerce and other economic development entities, monitoring of new and/or expanding business ventures, and contacts by business and industry with local educational providers. This outreach is intended to ensure that sufficient numbers of eligible providers are available locally to support current as well as projected needs.

Once approved, training providers are regularly monitored by the local WDB to ensure their compliance with mandated performance requirements and overall attainment of goals.

It should be noted here, that the local area, most recently in the Spring of 2019, formally procured Title I service providers for Adult, DW, Youth and EARN services, thus, ensuring, a transparent delivery system. Current contracts are in place through June 30, 2023. The WDB released an RFP for services for a 2-4 year period in April, 2023. Responders will be reviewed with contracts awarded for the start of PY 2023 on July1, 2023. The WDB meets, at a minimum, monthly, with the selected providers to track progress, review budgets vs. expenditures, project performance outcomes, and align goals, as necessary. The local procurement process has been explained throughout this document and is recognized as mode to support continuous improvement.

The local Board is kept abreast of all operational activities including qualitative and quantitative programmatic and fiscal reviews at each Quarterly meeting. This includes year-to-date reviews of training placements, completion rates, credential and/or employment outcomes, wage at placement, and if employment is training-related. Also, the Board reviews planned versus actual expenditures across all WDB funding streams. Additionally, staff complete *EO Officer Monitoring Training Provider* and *ADA Architectural Accessibility* reviews if training site location are modified or changed during any program year.

At a minimum, once yearly, or upon completion of training, trainees have the opportunity and are encouraged to complete an evaluation/survey regarding the following: overall satisfaction with the training provider; was the curriculum appropriate and relevant to current industry standards; did the training provider assist in job placement; was the assigned instructor qualified and had a good knowledge of the subject matter; were supportive services made available, if needed; and did the training provider conduct follow-up to ensure your continued success?

Within the Lackawanna County workforce area, as well as contiguous Counties, there are a wide-array of exemplary educational and training institutions who have long worked side-by-side with the Lackawanna County WDB and PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County to ensure that training options mirror industry needs across the Northeast region of the Commonwealth. As the area begins to emerge from the pandemic, roundtables of industry experts will again commence to ensure that business and industry is guiding the development of educational curriculums, thus, enabling increased numbers of training options available through the *ETPL*. In addition, as new industry is attracted to the area, anticipated new areas of training will be addressed for inclusion on this list.

Section 4.6: Provide a description and assessment of the type and availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities in the local area.

Through its open-door policy for all customers seeking to utilize the PA CareerLink® One-Stop system of operation, the WDB assures that all adults and dislocated workers have universal access to all core services that includes:

Service determination	In-depth assessment of skills
Outreach, intake, orientation	and service needs
Initial Assessment	IEP/ISS development
Job Search	Group counseling
Employment information	Individual counseling
Performance and cost	Case management
information on providers	Short-term prevocational services
Civil Service information	Computer instruction
Support service coordination	GED assistance
Labor market information	TABE testing
Employment-related workshops	WIN/WorkKeys Testing
Job applications	ABLE/literacy referrals

Once a customer has been identified as an eligible Adult and/or Dislocated Worker under WIOA regulations, a variety of options are available to support the attainment of their career goals through development of individualized employment/re-employment plans. Currently, the local area is subcontracted with Educational Data Systems Inc. (EDSI) as the provider of Adult/Dislocated Worker services. Through EDSI, customers are afforded the following options:

- ◆ Occupational Skills Training is curriculum-based instruction conducted either through a classroom setting or on-line (or mix of both) in one or more occupations identified as high priority within the local area. For inclusion on the Statewide Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL), programs of study must be submitted by eligible educational institutions and other training providers and approved by the Commonwealth of PA. All approved programs must meet performance standards in the areas of program completion, attainment of credentials, job placement rates, and median earnings as well as providing program descriptions, length of time, cost, prerequisites, and outcome credentials. The ETPL is the utilized for development of Individual Training Account (ITAs). The local area currently has an ITA policy which is reviewed yearly by the Board.
- ◆ On-The-Job Training (OJT) has long been an option for customers, both from the job seeker as well as employer perspective. As an alternative to the traditional classroom training route, this work-based training model provides an incentive for hire for the adult/dislocated worker customer and reduces the financial cost for an employer during a contracted training phase. OJT contracting may also serve to eliminate trepidation on the part of the employer who is considering expanding his workforce. OJT is promoted through the BST during phone contacts and site visits, during informational sessions at the PA CareerLink®, in pamphlets and brochures, at networking events and job fairs, and on the PA CareerLink® website. Employer reimbursement is standard at 50% with the contract length determined by the actual job requirements and the skill gaps of the customer.

- ◆ Customized Training, although to-date not widely requested by local employers, is a viable option that includes skill-specific training requested by an employer and designed by the company's selected training provider. Customized training is, primarily, utilized to upgrade the company's incumbent worker population. This, in turn, facilitates new hire openings which can be filled with OJT subsidies.

In addition to these options, additional training and job placement opportunities may become available for adults and dislocated workers through Rapid Response activities/funding and through specialized competitive grants. Also, EDSI conducts weekly Job Clubs for both the entry-level and management level customers. Finally, co-enrollment of WIOA participants across multiple WIOA programs is encouraged.

Through outreach to business and industry, the Board can assimilate plans that address future employment and training requirements in relation to projected trends across various industry sectors. Utilizing the services as described above, training options can be tweaked to address fluctuating needs based on employer escalation and/or decline. Assessment of training providers, through the previously described quarterly qualitative and quantitative analysis, assures constant yearly oversight of available training selections. This, in turn, provides means to address any/all future revisions should they become necessary.

In an effort to widen the scope of training options and eliminate any discrepancies, the Lackawanna County WDB, in the Fall of 2020, conducted an RFP process for the provision of on-line training services and awarded a contract to New York Wired for Education for implementation of *Metrix Learning*, a web-based learning management system that it is envisioned will significantly expand the local area's efforts to provide universal comprehensive training to the citizens of Lackawanna County. *Metrix Learning* offers comprehensive and impactful skills training, certification preparation, and assessments. The availability of Metrix Learning commenced on March 1, 2021 and served to supplement local educational institutions and training provider options. During 2021, the Commonwealth of PA implemented a State-wide contract with Metrix Learning for the provision of SkillUp PA which has since been incorporated into the local area's operational design.

Also, any adult/dislocated worker customer with disabilities receives priority in the provision of all activities and services as discussed.

In adherence to Workforce System Policy (WSP) No. 05-2015, as issued by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of Labor & Industry on December 23, 2015, and in alignment with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, the Lackawanna County Workforce Development Board/Area ensures priority of service in the administration and distribution of WIOA Title I funding. Priority of service ensures that individuals falling into targeted groups such as public assistance recipients, other low-income individuals, individuals who are basic skills deficient, and those that are unemployed who are also low-income are given priority over other individuals for receipt of individualized career and training services funded by the WIOA Title I Adult Program. Further, veterans and spouses of eligible veterans within these groups receive priority over non-veterans. Adult priority is determined for the targeted groups during eligibility determination and enrollment. The WDB Administrative staff ensures on-going review of labor force data through usage of the Center for Workforce information and Analysis data.

Due to the fact that the Lackawanna County Workforce Development Area is designated as a single-County entity, priority of service will be given first to those individuals who reside within the boundaries

of Lackawanna County as verified during the eligibility determination process. No additional discretionary priorities are identified at this time.

In responding to the WIOA of 2014's new emphasis on providing services to older youth, the Lackawanna County WDA conducts monthly programmatic and fiscal review meetings with its Title I Youth provider of services, Equus Workforce Solutions, to ensure that services to older youth continue to be a priority for enrollment and service provision. The local area currently has set a minimum requirement of 90% for provision of services to out-of-school youth.

Finally, once per program year, customarily in January of the applicable year, to-date expenditures as well as projected obligations are reviewed for the sole purpose of addressing the need for a transfer of program funding between the Adult and Dislocated Worker (DW) funding streams. If such a need is identified by staff, the WDB Executive Committee of the Board approves the final decision for transfer of funds (with a subsequent ratification by the full-Board) prior to the submission of a request to the Commonwealth. Historically, over the past several years, a transfer has been made from the DW to Adult funding stream.

Section 4.7: How will training services be provided through the use of individual training accounts (ITA) that fund programs of study, or through the use of contracts for training services that fund work-based trainings?

Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) provide the mechanism for adult and dislocated worker customers to access occupational skills training as described in the previous section. The local area utilizes a structured ITA format and follows an ITA Cap Policy that is reviewed yearly by the Local Board. Once determined eligible, individuals seeking training opportunities matriculate through the on-boarding process of the designated Title I service provider through a process that allows for investigation and identification of an appropriate educational path and selection of a training provider as approved on the local High-Priority Eligible Training Provider List. The Provider's Career Counselor/Specialist facilitates the enrollment and contracting processes and monitors the "new students" progress through the activity. As previously stated, the PY 2020 ITA CAP Policy is included as Supplement 1 to this document.

Work-based training opportunities are conducted through formalized OJT contracting processes, also as previously described. Currently, staff members are assigned specifically to conduct outreach, negotiate, and develop OJT sites for contracting purposes. An OJT Data Sheet has been designed for outreach purposes to business and industry informing them of the opportunity to receive this service. Additionally, through the quarterly *One-Stop Sector Initiatives*, company/business interaction is used for networking purposes for development of opportunities for the local job seekers.

In addition to ITAs and OJT contracting, the local area may engage business/industry for the purpose of development of customized training opportunities. Over the past ten years, this has only been utilized once in the local area.

Regardless of the ITA or other training option, Career Advisors/case managers, during an initial assessment process, discuss customer choice in the selection of a the most appropriate, individualized training provider through direction to the *ETPL* as well as encouraging a thorough research of options. The Center also conducts O'Net Interest Inventory sessions for anyone unsure of their career path and

weekly career decision-making sessions geared to specific industries. Finally, job seekers are informed of the methods to research available training, career path, and employment opportunities.

Constant Contact is used regularly to disseminate information to both job seekers as well as business customers regarding available opportunities. The local One-Stop site hosts both group workshops or one-on-one case management sessions (traditionally bi-weekly) for presentation of labor market data including the knowledge, skills, and abilities to secure employment in local market.

Coordination of all of the described activities/services occurs, primarily, on-site at the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County. Staff of various partners are co-mingled in an easy-access floor plan that promotes interaction and facilitates internal discussion of “what’s best for the customer.” Coordination with the individual training institutions and/or business community is conducted via personal phone calls and, pre and post-COVID-19, through in-person meetings to discuss options.

For individuals with disabilities, all of the steps, as described, will be adjusted to include customized reasonable accommodations.

For any/all apprenticeship opportunities that may be developed and/or become available, the local area will include and/or review and adjust contracting options to ensure universal access to training dollars. The local area will proceed with utilization of the recently-released PA ATO’s *Apprenticeship Strategic Plan Guide* in the adaptation of policies and process to accommodate individuals and business seeking pre-apprenticeship/apprenticeship affiliations.

Section 4.8: Provide a description and assessment of the type and availability of youth workforce investment activities in the local area.

The Lackawanna County WDB, local economic development officials, and constituents have, for many years, promoted the development and orchestration of an information network that thoroughly encompasses all youth organizations throughout the County. Representatives from many of these bodies sit as active members of the WDB and its Youth Advocacy Sub-Committee and provide invaluable insight into local youth issues. All are kept abreast of current systems in place or under development and concur that we must target specific pockets of “at risk” youth such as those involved with the courts for various reasons such as truancy, domestic violence situations, juvenile delinquency and children of incarcerated parents; homeless and foster care youth; migrant and seasonal farm worker youth; youth with disabilities; etc. Also targeted are those economically disadvantaged and underprivileged youth in need of guidance and supervision to learn not only social skills but job skills as well. Strategies addressing the “in-school” student are coordinated with local school districts and outreach centers such as United Neighborhood Centers, the local Boys and Girls Club, Project Elect (pregnant and parenting youth – both Mothers and Fathers), etc., and have, traditionally, revolved around remedial and truancy concerns but are currently broadening to include economic development issues such as local employment awareness campaigns targeting not only high schools, but the intermediate level as well. Local youth advocates strongly agree that access to a younger youth population affords the opportunity to address such pertinent issues as course scheduling for specific occupations in demand or projected to be in demand in the local area, coordination of services addressing specific needs, involvement of the PA CareerLink® in career planning efforts, attendance at local and regional education and job fairs, etc.

Recognizing that career ladders and goal-setting should begin during the intermediate and secondary school years, it must also be accepted that those youth traditionally classified as out-of-school youth, including those categorized as “disconnected”, if they can be successfully engaged and maintained, are adaptable to open options and development of employment plans. Intensive promotion of available services coupled with information on local employment opportunities including wage scales, post-secondary training opportunities, and funding availability serves to entice prospective youth job seekers (through 24 years of age). Initiatives such as school visits, dissemination of career pathways information, speaker presentations, and involvement in career fairs helps to “fill the gaps” in career-based education and promotes the investigation of future career paths. Additionally, implementation of a Business Education Partnership (BEP) Grant, afforded by the Commonwealth of PA, is allowing for much enhanced infiltration with Intermediate (grades 6th, 7th, and 8th) as well as high school level students for career-related material dissemination, interactive career pathways projects, and career “fun days” in local schools.

Currently, the Youth service provider, contracted following a formal RFP process, is Equus Workforce Solutions. Equus staff are physically located at the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County, from where all activities emanate. The initial intake process, objective assessment, case management, the development of Individual Employment Plan (IEP), and eligibility assessments/determinations are handled on a one-on-one basis by Equus staff. Applicants are first provided with an overview of program opportunities and the services available, and, if interested, begin the eligibility determination process. Once program mandated eligibility is confirmed, computerized testing is conducted utilizing the CASAS (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System) format. Scoring is automatic and results are available for discussion with the client immediately. Taking into consideration such factors as the youth’s age, educational level, barriers, skills and abilities, and interest each participant is afforded one-on-one case management services to develop and ensure an appropriate employment plan and confirm the responsibilities involved.

The design of the local youth program format is such as to provide a myriad of opportunities to guide eligible participants in meeting their individual goals which may include attainment of educational credentials, assistance with basic literacy skills, acquisition of a HSE or GED, acquiring basic work experience, smoothly transitioning from high school to post-secondary education, learning new skills, and/or entering the work force. In accordance with WIOA mandates, the local youth program is designed to serve primarily an out-of-school (OSY) youth population, thus, ensuring attainment of the required 75% expenditure requirement. The program framework, as detailed in the chart on the following page, reflects this design.

Activities are developed on an individual basis based on the youngsters/young adults' skills, abilities, desires, specific program (funding stream) eligibility, transportation needs, and financial feasibility (for occupational training above and beyond local ITA limits). All services are prioritized to any youth with disabilities. As previously noted herein, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) is a partner in the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County and has a youth OVR counselor stationed at the One-Stop. This individual not only sits as a member of the WDB's Youth Advocacy Sub-Committee but works closely with Equus staff to ensure that youth with disabilities received the most appropriate mix of services, based on their individualized needs. This linkage also affords leveraging of resources to services to best serve those youngsters with disabilities.

In addressing the 14 essential elements specified for youth under WIOA, the implementation strategy for each element is herein defined:

Element #	Implementation Strategy
<p>1</p> <p>Tutoring, study skills training, instruction and evidence-based dropout prevention and recovery strategies that lead to completion requirements for a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent (including a recognized certificate of attendance or similar document for individuals with disabilities) or for a recognized post-secondary credential.</p>	<p>The Local WDB has, for many years, solicited youth providers of service that addresses this element. During the current program year, locally approved vendors provide tutoring and academic enrichment, study skills training, career awareness, strengthening of individual self-advocacy skills, post-secondary opportunities, and individual one-on-one counseling through a mix of after-school study programs, skill-development activities coupled with remedial education, a personal growth/leadership/community service project, and a pre-apprenticeship project. In addressing drop-out initiatives, the local Board, has, for the past several years, distributed a packet of informational materials, <i>What's Next</i> (a packet of informational materials designed to assist high school students and their parents in navigating community-based resources when transitioning from school to employment), for distribution to any student having made the decision to leave school. Included is invaluable information regarding "where to go" for services, accessing GED/remedial programs, labor market data, training opportunities, etc. Presently, this information is posted on the WDB and PA CareerLink® websites and, additionally, the Scranton School District has made it available on the own website for student access.</p>
<p>2</p> <p>Alternative school services, or dropout recovery services</p>	<p>Drop-out recovery services are discussed above. This process will continue with possible enhanced distribution of information to providers of in-school youth services, the alternative schools, libraries, etc. Alternative schools in Lackawanna County are: Friendship House, Nativity Miguel, and New Story. Youth program staff makes visits to these sites at least once per school year to speak with the participants about opportunities available to them upon graduation with each student receiving a packet of information containing handouts on job searching activities (i.e., enrolling in the PA CareerLink® System, searching for jobs, resume' preparation, and interviewing skills). During these presentations, students are also encouraged to visit the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County to become familiar with activities offered and participate in the many workshops that are offered to the public at no charge. Although not specifically considered an alternative school, the Commonwealth Connections Academy is available for interested students. Finally, other programs available in the community support pregnant and parenting youth (Project Elect) as well as remedial needs.</p>
<p>3</p> <p>Paid and unpaid work experience coupled with academic and occupational education which may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. summer employment and/or other employment opportunities available throughout the school year; ii. pre-apprenticeship programs; 	<p>Paid work experience and on-the-job training (OJT) experiences are an integral part of the current program strategy. Any participant enrolled in work experience has, included in their employment plan, an education activity that may include GED preparation; remediation; referral to local literacy programs; and/or financial literacy. Currently, a pre-apprenticeship project (in collaboration with the other NE PA workforce boards) is available at the Career Technology Center of Lackawanna County, specializing in the building trades and manufacturing. Additionally, each year the local area provides a summer work experience program from late June to late August for approximately 100 participants, working 30-35 hours per week, earning an \$10.35 wage. In addition to the work experience activity, participants receive information on financial literacy, bullying, and career exploration.</p>

iii. internships and job shadowing; and iv. on-the-job training opportunities.	
4 Occupational skill training with priority consideration for training that leads to recognized post-secondary credentials that align with demand industry sectors or occupations in the local area as approved by the local Board as meeting the criteria defined in the WIOA.	Occupational skills training is addressed through the award of Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) to eligible out-of-school youth, with amounts customarily ranging from \$7,500 up to \$10,000 maximum (current WDB-approved funding level) toward specific skills training in in-demand occupational areas at an approved training/educational facility (on ETPL). Historically, approximately 40 ITAs are awarded during each Program year.
5 Education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster.	At present, students attending occupational skills training received job data/information as part of their program involvement. A much-enhanced approach to the provision of labor market information has been implemented to ensure that a comprehensive package is available to all students as they matriculate through their educational endeavor. This new career decision-making component promotes a smarter, quicker, and easier job search upon completion. Youth participants will have the opportunity to master basic academic skills at the same time as learning career-specific technical skills. This approach aligns with recent research which found students using an integrated education and training model occurring concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation activities had better rates of program completion and persistence than a comparison group.
6 Leadership development opportunities, including community service and peer-centered activities that encourage responsibility and other positive social and civic behaviors.	Leadership development opportunities are opportunities that encourage responsibility, confidence, employability, self-determination, and other positive social behaviors such as: exposure to post-secondary educational possibilities; community and service learning possibilities; peer-centered activities, including peer mentoring and tutoring; organizational and team work training, including team leadership training; training in decision-making, including determining priorities and problem solving; citizenship training, including life skills training such as parenting and work behavior training; civic engagement activities which promote the quality of life in a community; and other leadership activities that place youth in a leadership role. During the current Program Year, United Neighborhood Centers of Northeastern PA (UNC) is subcontracted to conduct a <i>Leaders in Training</i> program for youth between the ages of 14 to 18 years of age, which promotes good citizenship and community involvement. Students who successfully complete the program may be placed at Project Hope, a summer camp for economically disadvantaged families, as Junior Camp Counselors to assist and facilitate the activities sponsored by the camp or enrolled in another summer work experience activity.
7 Supportive services.	Supportive services can be defined as services/assistance that are needed to enable an individual to participate in activities. The need for supportive services is determined during each participant's enrollment process and the development of their <i>Individual Employment Plan (IEP)/Individual Service Strategy (ISS)</i> . In accordance with a WDB-approved WIOA Supportive Services Policy, supportive Services, as determined by individual need, can include but are not necessarily limited to the following: linkages to community services; transportation assistance; child and dependent care assistance; housing assistance; needs-related payments; educational testing assistance; reasonable accommodations for youth with disabilities; referrals to health care; assistance with uniforms or other appropriate work attire, and the provision of work-related tools, including such items as eye glasses and protective eye gear. As services are administered, they are recorded in the participant personnel record accordingly.
8 Adult mentoring for at least 12 months that may occur both during and after program participation.	Historically, youth program staff mentor their participants due to their one-on-one involvement with each participant and their understanding of the individual participant's needs, concerns, issues, etc. On-going contacts by the Case Managers serve to identify issues and allow for immediate intervention.

	<p>The local area will solicit adult mentors from the community at-large, from other community organizations, from WDB membership, from the Youth Advocacy Sub-Committee membership, from the Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce Skills in Scranton Advisory Board. Adult mentors (other than the assigned case manager) must commit for at least 12 months and provide guidance, support, and encouragement (face-to-face once per year) to promote the development of competence and character of the mentee. Mentoring activities can be done through electronic means and may include workplace mentoring at assigned worksites.</p>
<p>9 Follow-up services for not less than 12 months after the completion of participation.</p>	<p>Follow up services are the responsibility of the Youth Program staff or contracted provider with all contacts/outcomes recorded in the participant's personnel file.</p> <p>Follow-up services are provided monthly to ensure that all aspects of a participant's plan is being followed as per their agreement. All exited youth participants are contacted at 30, 60, and 90 day intervals; reviewed again at 6 months after exit; and, finally, at 1 year from their exit date.</p> <p>Follow-up contacts are made more often in situations where extenuating circumstances exist. Follow-up services for youth may include the leadership development and supportive services listed earlier; regular contact with a youth participant's employer to address work related problems that may arise; assistance securing a better paying job, career pathway development, and further education or training; work related peer support groups; adult mentoring - minimum duration of 12 months, more if deemed necessary; follow-up services must include more than only a contact attempted or made for securing documentation in order to report a performance outcome.</p>
<p>10 Comprehensive guidance and counseling, which may include drug and alcohol abuse counseling, as well as referrals to counseling, as appropriate based on individual needs.</p>	<p>The approved contracted provider will provide one-on-one comprehensive and counseling services throughout a participant's enrollment in activities as well as support after a participant exits the program. Any participant in need of out-side services (which may include drug and alcohol or abuse services) are referred to community programs, as appropriate.</p>
<p>11 Financial literacy training.</p>	<p>As previously stated in item #3, the local area has, for many years, conducted a summer work experience program. As part of this activity, Wells Fargo Bank provided a curriculum that was used for instructional purposes revolving around the basics of the banking system including such topics as: how to start saving money, opening up a checking and/or savings account, understanding wage tax deductions, debit versus credit use, spending money wisely, electronic banking etc. This activity is being expanded to all work experience participants as part of their overall educational component. Additionally, workers from local banks can be encouraged to serve as speakers in classroom presentations.</p>
<p>12 Entrepreneurial training.</p>	<p>An "entrepreneurial workshop" series provided by the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at the University of Scranton for presentation to OSY participants as well as possible inclusion in high school visit presentations.</p>
<p>13 Services that provide labor market and employment information about in-demand industry sectors or occupations available in the local area such as career awareness, career counseling, and career exploration services.</p>	<p>Currently, career awareness, counseling, and information is provided to all OSY participants during their enrollment in youth activities. This is handled one-on-one between the participant and their assigned case manager as well as through PA CareerLink® workshops and sector initiative projects. The in-school populations receive this as part of classroom/group presentations. The local also utilizes the CWIA High School Guide as an additional resource for dissemination labor market and employment information.</p>
<p>14 Activities that help youth prepare for and transition to post-secondary education and training.</p>	<p>Currently, this is handled through the provision of an interest inventory to all eligible participants through one-on-one discussions and provision of labor market and educational services data. Case managers provide guidance based on a participant's goals and plan of action, all of which are documented in an IEP/ISS. The Educational Opportunity Center will also provide financial aid workshops for transitioning students to identify funding sources.</p>

If a young adult “requires additional assistance to complete an educational program or to secure and hold employment”, Equus staff provides intensive one-on-one case management to ensure that the individual receives a viable plan of action. All activity will be thoroughly documented in the individual’s IEP/ISS and monitored, at a minimum, on a monthly basis to allow for updates and changes as may be necessary. Also, information which may be received from the youth’s educational provider will be incorporated into the overall case management activity and case file.

The WDB has not, customarily, utilized the 5% exception but, if it so implemented in the future, any youth placements will need WDB staff approval.

A Keystone Job Corps representative, who sits as a member of the Youth Advocacy Sub-Committee, prior to the pandemic, visits the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County on a regular basis to present information on the Luzerne County Site as well as to conduct interviews and complete applications on prospective candidates. Referrals are made whenever a need is expressed by a customer, thus, enabling a seamless delivery of service. This activity is currently offered as a virtual session, as applicable.

A major component of the Lackawanna County WDB’s youth program design is the utilization of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Youth Development Funding (YDF) to support a major work experience component coupled with a variety of specialized projects conducted by community partners. A large work experience activity traditionally engages (during non-pandemic times) in excess of 100 youngsters during the summer months of June, July, and August. Program participants are placed in, primarily, non-profit worksites across Lackawanna County that includes, but is not necessarily limited to, county and city parks, county and city offices, schools, social service organizations, Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCAs, libraries, community centers, departments of public works, Catholic Social Services, and housing authorities. Work performed is generally clerical, maintenance, or laborer-oriented. Participants are currently reimbursed at the rate of \$12.00 per hours (ages 14 -17) and \$14.00 per hours for individuals 18-24 and assigned to work up to a 30-hour week. This work experience activity is augmented with both academic and social components addressing: financial literacy (Wells Fargo Bank and NET Credit Union), consumer credit counseling (Advantage Credit Counseling Service), teen health issues including tobacco/drug youth and the consequences of sexting and inappropriate posting on social media (provided by program staff), bullying/cyberbullying (program staff), apprenticeships (local union officials), labor market information/career awareness (program staff), and soft skills needed in the workplace (program staff). At the conclusion of each summer’s activity, based on both funding availability, worksite availability, as well as the interest of participants, a small number of youngsters are afforded the opportunity for after-school and Saturday work experience employment during the school year. In the past, 12 to 15 youngsters have availed themselves of this opportunity.

A second component in the design of the local TANF program is a yearly (more often based on fiscal availability) solicitation (through a formal RFP process) of year-round projects from across the community. Historically, projects have revolved around career awareness, financial literacy, mentoring, after-school homework assistance, skill-specific instruction, educational competency, pre-apprenticeship introduction, bullying information, and instruction in the necessary soft-skills needed for entering the “world of work.” Prospective providers must delineate the types of activities proposed based on specific age groups ranging from 12 to 24 year of age (inclusive). Priority of service is given to those students who reside in TANF households; dropouts, or are at risk of dropping out of school; foster children or those aging out of the system; homeless or runaway children; children of migrant families; court-involved youth or those at risk of involvement; children of incarcerated parents; and/or any child with a documented disability. It is anticipated that a total of 110 youngsters will be served with over 50%

residing in TANF households. Of these, it is envisioned that 90-100 will be enrolled in work experience activities and the remaining 30 in community-based projects.

In reviewing the 14-WIOA Elements that are charted above, Elements #3, #6, #11, #12, and #13 address TANF participants.

Recruitment is the responsibility of the activity provider. For summer activities, recruitment lies with the WDB staff assigned to this project. It is overseen by the WDB Executive Director and WDB Contracts Administrator. For year-round community-based projects, recruitment lies with the entity that proposed and was approved by the WDB for contracting purposes. Recruitment generally occurs through newspaper advertising, Constant Contact information distribution, contact with previous-years participants, referrals from school guidance offices, etc. Of further note: the EARN Program is located within the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County which provides for an efficient connection to all PA CareerLink® services for TANF clients.

Within the Lackawanna County Workforce Area, resources to better serve youth are leveraged through a combination of formula funding, literacy funding through Marywood University, a Business-Education Partnership Grant, linkages with the educational arm of the Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce (Skills in Scranton), and through continued research into foundation grants and supplemental funding. Additionally, the local may receive reduced rates for bus passes from the County of Lackawanna Transit System (COLTS) and referral-capability to Dress for Success of Lackawanna County/Clothesline for Men. Linkages to these entities/initiatives provides invaluable in-kind services to the Lackawanna County WDB.

Customarily, the Lackawanna County WDA does not utilize private businesses under this project. Also, the Lackawanna County WDB DOES NOT provide incentives to TANF participants.

Within the Lackawanna County WDA, two individuals hold responsibility for the implementation, tracking, and reporting of TANF activities and expenditures. Their contact information is as follows:

Virginia H. Turano
Executive Director
Lackawanna County
Workforce Development Board
135 Franklin Avenue
Scranton, PA 18503
PH: (570) 342-3649
vturano@wiblackawanna.org

Cathy Gerard
WDB Contracts Administrator
Lackawanna County WDB
135 Franklin Avenue
Scranton, PA 18503
PH: (570) 963-3110
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Ms. Gerard also holds the responsibility for compilation and submission of any/all TANF information into the DHS Qualification Spreadsheet on DocuShare and/or the Commonwealth Workforce Development System (CWDS).

WDB staff perform comprehensive year-round monitoring following a pre-determined schedule. All TANF activity is included in that schedule and includes the review of the following to ensure compliance: eligibility determination; worksite agreements; working papers, if applicable; file compilation and maintenance; subcontractor financial agreements; site visits to ensure proper working conditions; time and attendance records, payroll development and accuracy; and others as determined by administrative staff.

Section 4.9: How will the local board coordinate workforce investment activities and ensure they are carried out in the local area with statewide rapid response?

The Lackawanna County WDB is fortunate to have a Statewide Rapid Response Regional Representative stationed at the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County. This individual is instrumental in organizing comprehensive rapid response services for any company filing a WARN notice or smaller dislocations/closings, upon request. For many years, the local Board has been strategically involved in all rapid response activities which includes attending meetings of dislocated workers either prior to dislocation or after; conducting information sessions on available services; providing materials to ease the transition process; providing one-on-one, individualized staff services; charting dislocated workers needs through a survey process; developing appropriate employment plans; providing GED referrals; and arranging a job/education fair specific to the dislocated population. Local service delivery staff and partners participate as part of a team that provides the services listed. This is provided through workshops and one-on-one counseling, and, if needed, referrals to other social service agencies. The local BST is also utilized to contact other industry-specific businesses for the purpose of a rapid transition to re-employment for those dislocated individuals. Please note: the local Board will consider using local libraries should extended sites for RR activities be needed.

Section 4.10: How will the local board coordinate relevant secondary and postsecondary education programs and activities with workforce investment activities to support strategies, enhance services, and avoid duplication of services(s).

The design of the local Board's youth activities/services, as described in detail in Section 4.8, is such as to augment/supplement secondary and postsecondary education programs, not duplicate them. Since the inception of the WIOA of 2014, the local Board has made significant in-roads into local secondary schools that has allowed for the dissemination of industry-specific information, career pathways discussions, distribution of systemic materials, and recruitment of potential program participants. Prior to the pandemic and expected to resume at a future time, service provider staff were accompanied by industry experts during school presentations. It has been found that smaller group sessions are much more effective than large assemblies. Further, if sessions are designated for specific groups (e.g., those interested in industry-specific careers; those undecided about their future plans; those seeking summer employment), this activity is much more beneficial to the audience.

To complement its WIOA youth activities and supported by Business Education Partnership (BEP) funding, a WDB staff Youth Project Manager has come on board and has, over the course of the past two school years, provided soft skills instruction and career awareness activities to over 5,000 intermediate and 10th grade students across all 10 Lackawanna County school districts. A booklet entitled *Soft Skills In Today's Workplace* was developed to support this instruction and, prior to the pandemic, provided to all school districts for distribution to sophomore students. At the on-set of COVID-19, a need arose to retool these activities to virtual platforms which was seamlessly accomplished. Presentations were made available either for in-person on-line instruction as well as for teacher usage through You Tube. All of this information is posted and readily available on the WDBs website, www.lcwdb.org. As of the Fall semester, 2022, all activities have resumed as in-person classroom presentations. The development and access to technologically-driven platforms has greatly

enhanced the ability of the local area to provide expanded services to students both in class settings as well as remotely, and will now serve as an alternate tool for the provision of services. In addition, the local area will approach locally-based charter schools to ensure their knowledge of our virtual products for possible inclusion into their curriculums.

Also, the WDB Executive Director and other Board staff regularly participate in activities at the Career Technology Center of Lackawanna County (most school districts are participating members) and, through its youth provider (Equus Workforce Solutions) makes regular visits to local high schools to promote local services and encourage graduating students to visit the local center for career services and/or further training options.

The Director of the Career Technology Center of Lackawanna County (CTCLC) sits as an active member of the Lackawanna County Workforce Development Board (WDB). He regularly provides presentations/updates on CTCLC activities. Under a current Business Education Partnership (BEP) grant, as described above, the following four CTCLC activities (subcontracted from the WDB) are planned for completion during the upcoming 6 months:

Activity	Description
<i>Weld-a-saurus</i> Summer Camp	Project focuses on the Engineering and Industrial Technology career pathway, specifically, manufacturing using welding and fabrication. Students learned how to use a MIG welder and basic welding techniques such as beading, padding and the gas metal arc welding process, practicing skills by welding a variety of projects, and, then transforming a steel plate into the skeleton of a dinosaur.
Computer Building and Networking Academy	Program involves the study of computer hardware, operating systems, and introductory networking. Students gain the technology skills desirable on applications and resumes while also developing an interest that can take them down the many career pathways in this industry leading to careers in high demand occupations. Students are exposed to exactly what component parts make up a computer, how each works, and the relevant assembly techniques involved. Common errors, repairs, replacements, component innovation, and tech tools are additional areas covered. Finally, students receive instruction on networking the computers that they have built.
Saturday Morning Cartoons	Project provides instruction is the basics of animation as well as digital communications and commercial and advertising art. The project focuses on the arts, audio/visual technology, and communications occupational clusters.
Career Exploration Tours – 5 th Grade	Project brings 5 th grade students from interested school districts across Lackawanna County to visit the Career Technology Center of Lackawanna County for the purpose of exploring career options and educational opportunities. Tours are guided by current students of the CTCLC. The youngsters spend a half day touring the facility and learning about the many career pathways available at the school through hands-on instructional learning. Students are exposed to the 16 Career Clusters and 79 pathways available to them through CTC.

As can be seen, integration with the CTCLC is well entrenched as a local Board initiative. The WDB Executive Director and PA CareerLink® Contracts Administrator both sit on the CTCLC Perkins Advisory Committee and participated as a member of the CTCLC's Occupational Advisory Committee for the

development of the local Center's 5-year operational plan. Members of the business community also sat, thus, providing valuable insight into the needs of the local economic base.

The WDB Executive Director and the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County Site Administrator also participated in Perkins V planning sessions at Lackawanna College, Johnson College and the CTCLC which facilitated the discussion of ensuring that high-priority occupational areas are addressed in the development of Programs of Study at local educational/training institutions. Articulation agreements, coupled with the attainment of industry-recognized credentials, promote accelerated job attainment upon graduation. Through a direct referral from their educational institution, adult/post-secondary Perkins recipients are encouraged to utilize the PA CareerLink®/workforce system for acquisition of training funds and other employment-related services (i.e., resume development, job searching techniques, interviewing skills, Worldwide Interactive Network [WIN] assessment, access to electronic job banks, and Civil Service opportunities) to benefit their job search.

As has been previously discussed, Title II services are made available through a well-established referral method between the local Title II Contractor (Marywood University) as well as the United Neighborhood Centers of NE PA who also offers adult literacy, ESL and workplace literacy services. These referrals commonly occur via Constant Contact, face-to-face case management advocacy or dissemination of information for self-referral.

Linkages with all postsecondary institutions are solid and provide a platform for communication of not only current practices but of any issues that may arise which would impair system initiatives. Working collaboratively, issues are resolved and best practices are established.

In addressing collaboration with post-secondary institutions in the area, many members of the local Board as well as Board and PA CareerLink® staff sit as members of these institutions workforce advisory committees to ensure collaboration of programs and functions. The education community in Lackawanna County is close-knit and has, for many years, participated in PA CareerLink® and workforce initiatives with the intention of better servicing the needs of business and industry, both stable as well as migrating/fluctuating. Members of all local postsecondary institutions/facilities regularly participate in educational fairs during Sector Initiative events at the local One-Stop. Representatives of local labor unions sit as members of the local Workforce Development Board and provide a direct link to apprenticeship/pre-apprenticeship offerings and training. Development of and/or referral to pre-apprenticeship/apprenticeship activities that can be coordinated with relevant educational programs will occur as defined in the newly-developed PA ATO's *Apprenticeship Strategic Training Guide* with a plan-of-action comprehensively defined during the next full-Local Plan development in July, 2025. The WDB Executive Director also sits as a member of Keystone College's Early Education Pre-Apprenticeship/Apprenticeship Advisory Committee.

The local Board serves as the overseer of WIOA educational service provision and monitors outcomes to ensure alignment with both secondary and post-secondary initiatives. All of the associations listed above enable a conduit for communication of information and networking that serves to avoid duplication and allow for the enhancement of overall systemic strategies. Further, Quarterly WDB meetings have been used as a vehicle to engage local educational entities through presentations and discussion of activities. Given the nature of a single-County Workforce Development Area, the interactions, as describe, ensure wide-spread dissemination of information regarding the availability of products, activities, and services to eliminate duplication efforts and maximize productivity.

Section 4.11: Describe the plans, assurances, and strategies for maximizing coordination, improving service delivery, and avoiding duplication of Wagner-Peyser Act (29 U.S.C. 49 et. sec.) services and other services provided through the one-stop delivery system.

The PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County conducted its grand opening in April of 2001. Since that time, both WIOA/contracted staff work alongside the Department of Labor & Industry's merit staff to provide the best possible mix of services to both the job seeking as well as business customer. The Pa CareerLink® Lackawanna County is designed in an open floor plan configuration with integrated WIOA contracted/merit/partner staff sitting side-by-side. Customers are served by PA CareerLink® staff with no denotation of their employing agencies. This concept allows for the seamless flow of information among internal staff. There has never been a discord among staff. All staff are integral in the provision of workshops, administration of services, visits to local employers, and Center events. WIOA contracted and Wagner-Peyser staff are cohesive in their approach to service provision and support each other on any/all specific entity projects. Wagner-Peyser merit staff assumes the role of the primary provider of career services within the PA CareerLink® operational structure. The expertise of merit staff in providing labor market information, job order matching, state and federal Civil Service information, RESEA profiling, and TRADE services augments the career information and training opportunities provided by WIOA contracted staff to ensure a non-duplicative, comprehensive menu of services for both customer groups, job seeker and employers. The ultimate goal of the local one-stop system is to provide a customer-friendly, inviting atmosphere with cross-trained staff to assist in all job seeking tasks, training opportunities, and, ultimately, the employment/re-employment of its job seeking customers and to provide seamless services to the business community. As stated, locally, the system is working.

Section 4.12: How will the local board coordinate WIOA Title I workforce investment activities with adult education literacy activities under WIOA Title II?

Coordination with local WIOA Title II Adult Education and Literacy providers has always been of high-priority within the Lackawanna County Workforce Area. Marywood University is the local contracted educational entity with the ABLE Program Director sitting as a member of the local WDB. For the purposes of review of this Plan, this individual received a draft copy, via email distribution, of the document prior to its submission to the Commonwealth for review and comment purposes. She attends quarterly WDB meetings and, yearly, presents information regarding their services and or applications for funding. This individual also conducts cross-training with PA CareerLink® staff and will assist in conducting digital literacy classes on-site at the One-Stop center. When applicable, an ad-hoc Committee of the WDB (comprised of members who have no conflict of interest) is formed to review all WIOA Title II applications to the PA Department of Education (PDE) to ensure that they are consistent with this local plan. Additionally, recommendations will be made to the eligible agencies/providers to ensure alignment. It should also be noted that, prior to the pandemic, the Lackawanna County Literacy Coalition met bi-monthly at the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County for coordination and collaboration of information among a variety of community partners to eliminate any duplication of effort and to provide a continuum in the provision of services. The local Title II Adult Literacy provider, Marywood University, is also a part-time member affiliate at the local One-Stop Center

Section 4.13: What services, activities, and program resources will be provided to participants, including those outlined at WIOA Sec. 3(24), *Individuals with a Barrier to Employment*, in the local area?

The Lackawanna County WDB utilizes the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County, centrally located at 135 Franklin Avenue in downtown Scranton, PA, as the operational arm for the provision of services and coordination of activities amongst a variety of community partners and educational institutions/training providers. WIOA providers of services are based at the PA CareerLink® site to ensure a coordinated effort with not only PA Wagner-Peyser staff but with OVR, PA Department of Human Services, the local Community Action Agency, local training providers, Pathstone (provision of older worker services), the local EARN provider, and others to ensure a seamless, friendly, and uncomplicated process for service provision for the job-seeking customer as well as assistance for the business community. As mentioned, all of these entities are partners at the local PA CareerLink® site, thus, enabling a comprehensive mix of activities in the true “One-Stop” fashion that are described throughout this Plan. It must also be noted here that Lackawanna College, Johnson College, and Marywood University are full and/or affiliate partners in the PA CareerLink®, visiting the Center and providing valuable materials and contact information for all of their programs of study. In an attempt to further expand connections, from a youth standpoint, WIOA contracted staff are visiting local intermediate and secondary schools, providing career information, discussing services available following graduation, and promoting technical education. Also, linkages have been established with the Lackawanna County Department of Human Services (formerly Lackawanna County Children and Youth Services) for referral of youngsters that are foster children, those aging out of the foster care system, or are involved with the Juvenile Justice system. An additional collaboration with the Lackawanna County Department of Human Services (formerly Department of Public Welfare) provides assistance in identifying prospective customers which may, in turn, assist in the reduction of the welfare rolls. As described, all services are prioritized for individuals with barriers to employment as well as veterans and their spouses. Any/all of these services are accessible through a customer-friendly flow pattern commencing with a trained receptionist and soon to be implemented digital intake system with follow-through to an on-site Welcome Center for private eligibility determination discussion of needs. All One-Stop staff have been trained in proper customer relations. Further, outreach is universal to all customers (individuals and/or groups); however, may be specialized if need is determined (i.e., bus side placards that were prepared in both English and Spanish).

WIOA Title IV OVR Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors provide eligible WIOA Title IV customers with multiple, individualized services such as diagnostic, vocational counseling and guidance, vocational evaluation, restoration, as well as training and job placement. OVR also provides both OVR eligible and potentially eligible 14-21 year old in-school youth with disabilities pre-employment transition services designed to prepare them to enter competitive, integrated employment. Pre-employment transition services include paid work-based learning experiences, job shadowing as well as vocational counseling and guidance. Also offered is group training on workplace readiness, independent living skills, and self-advocacy skills.

Section 4.14: What services, activities, and program resources will be provided to businesses and employers, in the local area?

At the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County, the Business Services Team (BST) is comprised, primarily, of the following representatives: WIOA Title I Contractor staff (EDSI; Equus), Wagner Peyser staff, an LVER (Local Veterans Employment Representative), a Rapid Response Regional Representative, and an OVR representative. Through this internal collaboration, the availability of local One-Stop services reaches a broad audience across the community including dissemination of material regarding WEDnet PA funding and tax credits.

Throughout this Multi-Year Plan, many activities have been described which ensure that businesses and employers are provided a myriad of services. These include:

- Access to a state-of-the art, on-site Business Center at the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County for recruiting and interviewing purposes.
- One-on-one off-site visits.
- Access to On-The-Job Training (OJT) funds for new hires.
- Staff-assistance in utilizing the PA's workforce development system of record for job postings and job matching.
- Access to customized training funds addressing larger-scale hiring or incumbent worker needs.
- Dissemination of information regarding Registered Apprenticeship opportunities/development information and linkage to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Apprenticeship Office. This service will be expanded to include both job seekers and employers in accordance with the PA ATO's recently-developed *Apprenticeship Strategic Training Plan* and implemented as part of the overall local planning process during the next full-Plan cycle in July, 2025.
- Ability to participate in quarterly *Sector Initiative* events.
- Ability to participate in industry-specific roundtables.
- Staff-assistance in preparation of job descriptions applicable to the local labor market.
- Provision of wage and labor market information indicative to both the local as well as regional employment market.
- Accessibility to no less than quarterly Unemployment Compensation information sessions.
- Linkages with local post-secondary educational institutions and training providers to address skill gap.
- Provision of information about local/regional specialized grant opportunities and/or Industry Partnership linkages.

This list was compiled mainly from outreach to local/regional employers by the One-Stop BST. Continued open lines of communication with the business community facilitate an awareness of fluctuating needs/trends and allows for a re-focus of service provision.

Also, the local area is well entrenched within the economic development community. Representative from the Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce, the Lackawanna County Office of Planning and Economic Development, and the Northeast PA Industrial Resource center sit as active members of the WDB and provide much insight into the economic climate in the County. Two of these individuals also sits as a representative on the Northeast PA Alliance PREP Board which serves to allow for collaborated regionalization of many projects. These alliances provide an interactive platform for project development that can best meet the needs of the local business community. Coupled with the *Quarterly Sector Initiatives* which are described in Section 3.4 of this Plan, support is provided to business and industry through the following: assistance in posting of job orders, assistance in

recruitment of qualified candidates to fill openings, provision of labor market information regarding wage rates as well as linkages to educational facilities for upgrading of incumbent workforces, provision of quarterly Unemployment Compensation seminars to assist employers in navigating current unemployment law and regulations, and On-The-Job Training (OJT) funds for new hires. And, as has been previously described, a state-of-the-art *Business Center* is available at the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County for use by the business community for interviewing and recruitment purposes.

The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) also provides multiple services to the business community designed to assist businesses with onboarding pre-screened qualified employees with disabilities. OVR meets the needs of businesses by providing no cost services to include ADA Awareness training, ADA Accessibility evaluations, accommodation recommendations for current employees and retention services. OVR also continues to partner with employers with On-The-Job Training (OJT), providing 100% wage reimbursement to businesses that hire OVR customers. OVR also works with businesses through connecting students involved in OVR's pre-employment transition services. Services under pre-employment transition services include programs like paid work experience, job shadowing, workplace tours.

Rapid Response services are also available to businesses as they face downsizings, closures or challenges as they arise. Businesses or employers may work with a Rapid Response team as part of their internal crisis management plan to help ensure business continuity in the event of a natural disaster, economic hardship or closure. The Rapid Response team, can also provide strategic planning, data gathering and analysis to help anticipate, prepare for, and manage an economic transition or hardship. Rapid Response is mobilized when a business reaches out for assistance, when Pennsylvania experiences job dislocations caused by a disaster or when the Commonwealth is notified of a business closure or planned layoff through the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) Act. There are no costs associated with these services.

As described in Section 1.2 of this Plan, businesses/employers and education have long been at the table for collaboration in the development of educational pathways and curriculums that support the needs of the fluctuating economic climate in Lackawanna County. This is further supported through the *Quarterly Sector Initiatives* which bring employers and educational representatives together in the One-Stop for the purpose of promoting job openings (an on-site job fair) and enabling a discussion of the educational requirements associated with the different positions available. If a job seeker is in need of training, either prior to hire or as an incumbent worker, a linkage is established to support employment possibilities as well as employment retention.

Prior to the pandemic, the local UI liaison to the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County conducted employer-based monthly information workshops. Currently, a UI staff person is stationed at the PA CareerLink® two days per week to provide one-on-one assistance to individuals encountering difficulties. Access to a UI computer in the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County Resource Room is also available to the general public.

Section 4.15: How will the local board coordinate WIOA title I workforce investment activities with the provision of transportation and other appropriate supportive services in the local area?

The Local Board developed and approved (most recently at the WDB Quarterly Meeting on June 9, 2022) a Supportive Service Policy that clearly defines the areas for provision of services. This policy, which is reviewed and approved yearly, currently includes the following:

Supportive services for youth are defined (WIOA Section §681.570) as services/assistance that are needed to enable an individual to participate in activities. These services can include but are not necessarily limited to the following:

- linkages to community services;
- transportation assistance (i.e., bus passes);
- child and dependent care assistance;
- housing assistance;
- needs-related payments;
- educational testing assistance;
- reasonable accommodations for youth with disabilities;
- referrals to health care;
- assistance with uniforms or other appropriate work attire; and
- the provision of work-related tools, including such items as eye glasses and protective eye gear.

According to WIOA Section §680.900, supportive services for Adults and Dislocated Workers may only be provided to individuals who are participating in career or training services, unable to obtain supportive services from other programs providing such services, and when necessary to enable participation in career and training services. These services may include:

- transportation;
- child care and dependent care;
- housing assistance; and
- needs-related payments.

Any/all services provided must be identified and defined, in detail, in the participant's *Individual Employment Plan (IEP)/Individual Service Strategy (ISS)*. The maximum amount of WIOA funds will be based on an individual's documented need, not to exceed \$1,500, and not to extend past a participant's actual enrollment in career services or a training activity. The local Board ensures collaboration with One-Stop partners and other community service providers to ensure resource and service coordination in the local area.

Above and beyond the specialized services as listed above, universal access to the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County Resource Room is a mainstay in operational procedures within the local area. Additionally, one-on-one career counseling is made available to any customer, on request, and can include, goal development, resume' preparation and cover letter development, job searching assistance,

computer usage instruction, assistance in preparing for an interview, referrals to Dress for Success and the Men's Clothesline, and assistance with on-line applications.

As has been previously stated, Lackawanna County is primarily urban in nature with a wide-spread, coordinated public transportation system. Lackawanna County also has a coordinated transportation system to accommodate the needs of individuals with disabilities, the aging, and others in need of assistance. Also, there is a coordination of bus transportation between the Lackawanna (COLTS) and Luzerne (LCTA) transit authorities to address travel between Scranton, Pittston, and Wilkes Barre, PA.

Section 5: Compliance

Section 5.1: Describe the cooperative agreements that define how all local area service providers will carry out the requirements for integration of and access to the entire set of services available in the local area one-stop delivery system.

The Local Board has developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that specifically defines the roles and responsibilities of all mandated One-Stop partners including those services providers awarded contracts (through a competitive procurement process) for the period of 7-1-20 through 6-30-2023. This MOU comprehensively outlines the processes and procedures to facilitate the requirements for integration and transparency of service provision including data sharing, confidentiality, referrals, accessibility (physical virtual, communication, and programmatic), outreach, dispute resolution, monitoring, non-discrimination and equal opportunity, indemnification, severability, drug and alcohol workplace compliance, anti-lobbying certification, debarment and suspension adherence, priority of services, compliance with salary compensation and limitation, and governing law. Adherence to these practices will further ensure minimum duplication of effort and a universal access to all services as described below:

Business Services	Job Seeker Services	Youth Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serve as a single point of contact for businesses, responding to all requests in a timely manner • Conduct outreach regarding the local workforce system's services and products • Provide access to labor market information • Assist with the interpretation of labor market information • Use of local one-stop facility for recruitment and interviewing • Post job vacancies in PA's workforce development system of record and take and fill job orders • Provide information regarding workforce development initiatives and programs • Provide information and services related to UI taxes and claims • Conduct on-site Rapid Response activities • Conduct job fairs • provide customized recruitment and job applicant screening, assessment and referral services • Consult on human resources issues • Provide information regarding disability awareness issues • Provide information regarding assistive technology and communication accommodations • Assist with disability and communication accommodations, including job coaches • Provide information on On-the-Job Training (OJT) contracting • Provide employer and industry-driven Occupational Skills Training information • Provide information on customized training initiatives • Coordinate with employers to develop and implement layoff aversion strategies • Develop, convene, or implement industry or sector partnerships 	<p><u>Basic Career Services</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach, intake and orientation to the information, services, programs, tools and resources available through the local workforce system • Initial assessment of skills, aptitudes, abilities, and supportive service needs • Job search and placement assistance • Access to employment opportunities and labor market information • Performance information and program costs of eligible providers of training, education, and workforce services • Information on performance of the local workforce system • Information on available supportive services and referral to such, as appropriate • Information and meaningful assistance on UI claim filing • Determination of potential eligibility for workforce Partner services, programs and referrals • Information for application of financial aid for training and education programs not provided under WIOA <p><u>Individualized Career Services</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of an Individual Employment Development Plan charting goals, achievement objectives, and service needs • Referral to training services • Group counseling • One-on-one counseling and career planning • Literacy activities related to work readiness • Case management for customers seeking training services, in and out of area job search, referral and placement assistance • Work experience, transitional jobs, registered apprenticeships, and internships • Workforce preparation services (soft skills) to prepare individuals for unsubsidized employment or training • Post-employment follow-up services <p><u>Training</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occupational skills training through Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) • Adult education and literacy activities, including English language acquisition (ELA) in combination with the above training activities • Incumbent worker training • On-The-Job training (OJT) • Programs combining workplace training with related instruction (cooperative education) • private sector training initiatives • Skill upgrading and retraining • Entrepreneurial training • Employer-committed customized training • Other (locally determined) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tutoring, study skills training, instruction, and evidenced-based drop-out prevention and recovery strategies that lead to completion of a high school diploma or GED (including a recognized certificate of attendance or similar document for individuals with disabilities) or for a recognized post-secondary credential • paid and unpaid work experience with an academic and occupational education which may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Summer and year-round employment opportunities ◦ Pre-apprenticeship programs ◦ Internships and job shadowing ◦ and OJT Opportunities • Education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster • Supportive services • Follow-up services for not less than 12 months after the completion of participation, as appropriate • Financial literacy education • Provision of labor market and employment information about in-demand industry sectors or occupations available in the local area, such as career awareness, career counseling, and career exploration services • Alternative secondary school services or dropout recovery services, as appropriate • Occupational skill training with priority consideration in areas that lead to recognized post-secondary credentials that are aligned with local in-demand industry sectors or occupations • Leadership development opportunities such as community service, peer-centered activities encouraging responsibility, and other positive social and civic behaviors, as appropriate • Adult mentoring during participation and not less than 12 months subsequent • Comprehensive guidance and counseling, which may include drug and alcohol abuse counseling and referral, as appropriate • Entrepreneurial skills training • Activities that help youth prepare for and transition to postsecondary education and training

Please note: information regarding the local Board’s collaboration with WIOA Title IV and OVR is described in detail in Section 4.4 of this Plan.

Section 5.2: What is the process the local board uses to ensure the collection of the debts of lower-tier sub-recipients, as a result of audits?

The Lackawanna County WDB will adhere to the following process in the collection of debts, as follows:

- Step 1: An official initial contact (letter and/or email) informing the sub-recipient of the audit finding(s) that requests a written response to the allegations within 10 days of the date of the initial correspondence.
- Step 2: Within 15 days of receipt of the sub-recipient letter, a meeting of the WDB Executive Committee will be scheduled for discussion and/or resolution purposes. Any decision made with a restitution plan will be communicated to the sub-recipient via certified mail.
- Step 3: The sub-recipient, must, within 15 days, accept or dispute, in writing, the finding of the WDB Executive Committee. If accepted, the restitution plan will be enforced.
- Step 4: If the finding(s) is disputed, the WDB will solicit a legal decision on the audit concern(s).
- Step 6: If the legal decision supports the audit finding(s), the matter will be forwarded to a collection agency or Magistrate for resolution.

Section 5.3: What action(s) is the local board taking (or will take) towards becoming or remaining a high-performing board?

Lackawanna County has been designated as a single-County workforce area dating back to the late 1970’s under the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) and traversing through the Jobs Training Partnership Act (JTPA), the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, and, most recently, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014. Due to this situation, a formal network is well-established that has brought “to the table” a myriad of local stakeholders providing information and expertise in workforce development as well as community initiatives promoting systemic change. This close-knit community of professionals has the advantage/knowledge of each individual entity’s goals and outcomes, thus, allowing for quick reaction to fluctuating needs within the local business environment and the subsequent development of timely plans of action. Cross affiliation of Board members serves to strengthen the linkages and provides a mechanism for disbursement of information regarding critical socioeconomic workforce and economic development issues.

That said, the Lackawanna County WDB recognizes the need for regionalized linkages and initiatives to ensure that quality services are provided universally and similarly to both job seekers and the business community across the 7-County (Carbon, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Monroe, Pike, Schuylkill, Wayne) Northeast region of the Commonwealth. Given the diversity (i.e., urban vs. rural; square mileage; transportation differences and challenges; local economies) of the three designated workforce areas in Northeast PA, it is important that workforce strategies, policies, procedures, and the like, are designed

to promote a seamless operational package that is adaptable to both the region as well as the specifics of each area.

Collaboration and cooperation (regardless of circumstance), both internally and externally, sets the basis for continued designation as a high-performing Board. The Lackawanna County Board was designated as a high-performing Board in the mid-2000's and recognizes the following as steps for continued success:

- Attainment of the Governor's goals as described in the PA WIOA Combined State Plan;
- Successful performance by meeting the Lackawanna County negotiated federal performance goals;
- Sustained fiscal integrity/accountability through adherence to all Lackawanna County (Fiscal Agent) fiscal controls;
- Development of a local Strategic Plan of Action to supplement this Multi-Year Local Plan with on-going, yearly reviews;
- A strengthened Sub-Committee structure;
- Continued participation in the Northeast PA Consortium of Workforce Boards;
- Continued participation by Board staff in NE PA Alliance PREP initiatives;
- Continued linkages with the Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce, the Lackawanna County Office of Planning and Economic Development, and other local economic development entities;
- Yearly Board review and approval of all policies and procedures;
- Increased Board member attendance and participation at quarterly meetings;
- Successful One-Stop chartering and yearly certification reviews;
- Enhanced One-Stop Business Services Team roles in the local community with strengthened emphasis on employer-engagement;
- Continued linkages with career and technical education; and post-secondary educational institutions and training providers to ensure employer-driven curriculum development aligned with industry needs;
- Continuation of Board-approved Quarterly *Sector Initiatives*;
- Attainment of full mandated partner involvement in One-Stop operations;
- Attainment of successful monitoring reports and other evaluations by the federal and state governments;
- Creation and employment of workforce governance and service delivery "best practices" that may be modeled;
- Continue priority engagement of Out-of-School Youth (OSY);
- Provide career awareness activities to the K-12 population;
- Provide career planning information and labor market data to local secondary schools
- Increased services to individuals with disabilities
- Increased services to veterans and spouses of veterans;
- Attainment of all negotiated performance levels;
- Attainment of the 80% expenditure requirement of WIOA funds;
- Attainment of the 75% OSY mandate;
- Attainment of PA mandated training targets;
- Leveraging of outside funding sources and community resources to promote on-going sustainability; and

- Adherence to any/all Commonwealth of PA directives addressing high-performing Board status.

Section 5.4: What is the process the local board uses to provide an opportunity to have input into the development of the local plan, particularly for representatives of business, education, labor organizations, program partners, public agencies, and community stakeholders?

In an effort to thoroughly communicate the Local Board's development of this Multi-Year Plan and provide an opportunity for input from stakeholders, the following steps were taken prior to its release to solicit comments, suggestions, and areas for improvement:

- ❖ An initial draft of the Plan was distributed to all members of the Lackawanna County Workforce Development Board which includes members of the business, education, and labor communities, program partners, public agencies and additional community stakeholders (primarily the Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce, Northeast Industrial Resource Center [NEPIRC], and the Lackawanna County Office of Economic Development. It is envisioned that these members will disseminate this Plan to their colleagues or business associates for additional input;
- ❖ An initial draft was forwarded to the Lackawanna County Board of Commissioners (Jerry Notarianni, Chair; Debi Domenick, and Chris Chermak) and
- ❖ All mandated One-Stop partners.

There were no suggestions/comments received.

For the purposes of this Plan Modification, the Local Board:

- ❖ Collaborated with locally-approved Title I service providers to ensure confirm operational practices as defined;
- ❖ Attended all Monthly Partner and Service Delivery calls conducted by the PA Department of Labor and Industry for plan development discussion and to ensure compliance with all directives; and
- ❖ Discussed the details and timeline for submission of the Plan Modification at the March 9, 2023, Lackawanna County WDB Quarterly meeting.

Section 5.5: What is the process the local board uses to provide a 30-day public comment period prior to submission of the plan?

This Plan was formally released, via publication in the Scranton Times/Tribune on **February 25, 2021**. This Plan was also posted on the Workforce Development Board's website, www.lcwdb.org as well as the local PA CareerLink® website, www.pacareerlinklackawanna.org. It remained available for public comment through March 26, 2021.

In addition, to ensure transparency and universality for public comments, a public information ZOOM session was made available at 11:00 AM on March 18, 2021. This session was also advertised in the Scranton Times/Tribune and on the WDB and PA CareerLink® websites. There were no attendees.

Comments to this multi-Year Plan were to be submitted in writing (via letter and email processes) to Ms. Virginia H. Turano, WDB Executive Director, 135 Franklin Avenue, Scranton, PA 18503 or to vturano@wiblackawanna.org. **No comments were received.**

For the purposes of this Plan Modification, the revised Plan/Modification was formally released, via publication in the Scranton Times/Tribune on May 23, 2023. This Plan was also posted on the Workforce Development Board's website, www.lcwdb.org as well as the local PA CareerLink® website, www.pacareerlinklackawanna.org. It will remain available for public comment through June 21, 2023.

Further, to ensure transparency and universality for public comments, a public information ZOOM session was made available at 11:00 A.M. on June 7, 2023. This session was also advertised in the Scranton Times/Tribune and on the WDB and PA CareerLink® websites.

Comments to this multi-Year Plan were to be submitted in writing (via letter and email processes) to Ms. Virginia H. Turano, WDB Executive Director, 135 Franklin Avenue, Scranton, PA 18503 or to vturano@wiblackawanna.org.

ATTESTATIONS

By checking the box adjacent to each line item, the local board attests to ensuring the compliance components and documents listed are (or will be) in place and effective prior to June 30, 2023. **In the rare circumstance that something is not applicable, the local board must write "N/A" next to adjacent line item.**

The following components and documents, including local workforce system policies, must be reviewed and revised as to be aligned with WIOA for the current planning cycle **unless it is established as a best practice**. Each item must be available to L&I at any time during the planning process and monitoring or auditing processes. L&I is not requiring copies of such documents to be attached to regional or local area plans at this time.

✓ The Lackawanna County Local Workforce Development Area attests that each of the below referenced policies contain any required language or content and were last revised, if necessary, by this plan's effective date.

✓ Agreement between all counties and other local governments, if applicable, establishing the consortium of local and chief elected officials. N/A

✓ Agreement between the chief elected official(s) and the fiscal agent, if a fiscal agent is designated.

✓ Agreement between the local area elected official(s) and the LWDB.

✓ LWDB policy and process that provides for nomination, appointment and removal of board members; resolutions; bylaws; code of conduct; and conflict of interest.

✓ Financial management policy and process including cost allocation plan; internal controls; cash management; receipts of goods; cost reimbursement; inventory and equipment; program income; travel reimbursement; audit requirements and resolution; annual report; property management; debt collection; and allowable costs.

✓ Local area procurement policy that must describe formal procurement procedures.

✓ Local area MOU.

✓ Program management policies and processes **must include** equal opportunity for customers; complaints and grievances; supportive services; file management; eligibility determination and verification; self-sufficiency criteria; self-attestation and certification random sampling; priority of service; training verification/refunds; individual training accounts; contracts for training services; statewide training providers list and eligibility verification; local area training provider list and eligibility criteria and process; "additional assistance" definition; work-based training policies including incumbent worker training, OJT, CT, and apprenticeship.

✓ **It is best practice to have a** risk management policy and process including records retention and public access; public records requests; monitoring, grievance; incident; and disaster recovery plan.

✓ **It is best practice to have a** human resources policy and process including employee classification; benefits; holidays and PTO; recruitment and selection; employee development; discipline; layoffs, terminations and severance; sexual harassment; and equal opportunity and non-discrimination.

It is best practice to have professional services contract(s) for administrative services such as staffing and payroll, if applicable. N/A