

## North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

Local Workforce Development Area name: North Central – Workforce Solutions for North Central PA

Effective Date: July 1, 2023

### INTRODUCTION

#### **1. STRATEGIC PLANNING: Local Area Workforce and Economic Analysis**

##### **1.1. Identify the composition of the local area's population and labor force.**

### OVERVIEW

Workforce Solutions for North Central Pennsylvania serves as the North Central Workforce Development Board and is a six-county workforce development area (WDA) that includes the counties of Cameron, Clearfield, Elk, Jefferson, McKean and Potter. Workforce Solutions for North Central PA is the legal name for the North Central Workforce Development Board and will be referred to as Workforce Solutions throughout the remainder of the document. Overall, it is home to approximately 215,331 citizens. It is primarily rural with only one combined statistical area, Dubois, PA (Clearfield County) with a population of 79,466. Source: American Community Survey, 2020 5 Year Estimates.

The communities, businesses, industries, and workforce of this region continue to work together with Workforce Solutions, to streamline state, federal and regional services, including workforce investment, economic and community development and transportation planning.

The local area plan was developed with input from stakeholders from throughout the region which included employers, education providers, economic and community development agencies, secondary and post-secondary schools and chambers of commerce. This input is weaved throughout this local workforce plan as we strive to ensure that the workforce development system is meeting the needs of employers and job seekers in the region in order for our communities to thrive into the future. This plan modification 2 is effective from July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024.

The remainder of this section of our plan will provide a more in-depth look at the population of North Central PA and its labor force.

**The reader is encouraged to access Attachment 4: Local Workforce Development System Supporting Data, when reading this section of the plan.**

### POPULATION

Of the 215,331 residents in the North Central PA region, 51.4% are males while 48.6% are females. Regarding age distribution, 19.4% of residents are under 18 years of age, 7.5% are 18-24 years of age, 11.3% are 25-34, 11.2% are 35 to 44, 13.9% are 45 to 54, 15.6% are 55-64, 11.7% are 65-74 and the remaining 9.4% are 75 and older. The median age of the region is 45.4 years of age compared to the state at 40.9 and the US at 38.2.

The population of the North Central region is not very racially and ethnically diverse. Most the citizens of the North Central region (95.6%) are White Alone, 1.7% are Black or African American Alone, 0.1% are American Indian and Alaska Nat. Alone, 0.4% are Asian Alone, 0.0% are Nat. Hawaiian and Other Pacific Isl. Alone, 0.4% are Some Other Race, 1.8% are Two or More Races and 2.0% are Hispanic or Latino (of any race).

This region is substantially less diverse than the state of Pennsylvania overall where 79.4% are White Alone, 11.1% are Black or African American Alone, 0.2% are American Indian and Alaska Nat. Alone, 3.5% are Asian Alone, 0.0% are Nat. Hawaiian and Other Pacific Isl. Alone, 2.4% are Some Other Race, and 3.4% are Two or More Races and 7.6% are Hispanic or Latino (of any race). See Figure 1 in Attachment 4 for a complete demographic profile of the North Central Workforce Development Area.

## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

The North Central PA region is experiencing a population decline. According to JobsEQ® by Chmura, the US Census Bureau reported more than 215,300 people live in the North Central region in 2020 with an annual average decrease of 0.5% (or 1,200 people each year) since 2010. Looking ahead, JobsEQ® anticipates the North Central PA region will decline an annual average of 0.6% per year between 2019 and 2034 resulting in a population loss of 19,100 people. In comparison, the state of PA and the nation are expected to increase an annual average of 0.1% and 0.6% respectively. The population decline is slightly faster for women (-0.7% on average per year from 2019 to 2034) than for men (-0.6%). The population aged 16 to 24 is expected to decline at an average annual rate of 1.3%, compared with -0.8% for ages 25 to 54, and -0.1% for ages 55 and older. Population growth has varied among the counties in the North Central PA region, see Figure 2 in Attachment 4. Jefferson and Clearfield counties, closer to larger metropolitan such as Pittsburgh and Harrisburg, had the slowest declines in population growth, with annual rates of 0.5% and 0.4% respectively. Elk and McKean Counties both had average annual declines of 0.7%, while Potter County had an average decline of 0.6%. Cameron County had the fastest decline at an average annual rate of 1.6%.

### **EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT**

The North Central regions' capacity to provide an educated workforce is evidenced by a variety of post-secondary education and training providers that includes three major university branch campuses, three career and technology centers, one community college "presence" as well as two privately owned schools (business school and technical training provider). There are also two Community Education Centers whose mission is to bring post-secondary training to our region. Most recently the Northern Pennsylvania Regional College was approved by the PA Department of Education that will provide low-cost instruction for nine northwestern Pennsylvania counties lacking a community college.

The educational attainment rates in the north central region are lower when comparing to the state. In our 6 county region when looking at those Age 25 and older 10.0% have less than a high school diploma or equivalency, 48.5% have obtained this credential. Regarding post-secondary attainment, 24.4% have some college or associate's degree and 17.1% have a bachelor's degree or higher. See Attachment 4 Figure 3 for a more detailed look at educational attainment down to the county level as well as Figure 4 which demonstrates how our region compares with the state when looking at educational attainment.

It is also important to look at the Educational Distribution by Educational Attainment Level in the region current and projected. There are seven (7) educational groupings: Advanced degree, Bachelor's degree, Associate degree, Post-secondary education or experience, long term training, moderate-term on the job training and short term on the job training. Based on these projections the greatest need will be a need for more people with short-term on-the-job training. See Attachment 4 Figure 5 for the Educational Distribution by Educational Attainment Level.

### **LABOR FORCE AND EMPLOYMENT**

In 2021 the annual average labor force was 96,000 with an average unemployment rate of 6.9%. Of the total number, 89,400 were employed and 6,600 were unemployed. Our unemployment rate has significantly lowered in 2022 to 5.4% in August of 2022 (seasonally adjusted). See Attachment 4 Figure 6 for a month to month view of the labor force including the Unemployment Rates and employment status.

### **INCOME**

The median household income in the North Central is estimated to be \$50,190, which is substantially below the state average household income (\$63,627) per JobsEQ 2022Q3 data. The average worker in the North Central PA region earned wages of \$45,583 as of 2022Q3. This is an increase of 4.8% over the preceding four quarters, while Pennsylvania saw earned wages of \$68,132 an increase of 5.6% over the preceding four quarters per JobsEQ®. Wages are expected to remain elevated through the first half of 2023 but could decelerate thereafter according to The Conference Board 2022-2023 US Salary Increase Budget Survey as we recoup from pandemic labor shortages, inflation increases and the economic outlook weakens toward recession.

An advantage of our region is the lower cost of living we experience in many of our counties. The North Central region is one of only 4 workforce development areas in the Commonwealth with a lower self-sufficiency wage than

## North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

the state. The 2022 Self Sufficiency wage for the North Central WDA is \$34,407 while the state is \$37,354. The self-sufficiency wage is based on 200% of the federal poverty level for one adult and one child.

The Cost of Living Index estimates the relative price levels for consumer goods and services. When applied to wages and salaries, the result is a measure of relative purchasing power. The cost of living is 8.8% lower in North Central Workforce Development Area than the U.S. average. See Attachment 4 Figure 7 for a cost of living comparison of our region to the Commonwealth and the nation.

### **HOUSING**

There are approximately 118,564 housing units available in the region. The majority of these housing units are owner occupied units with median house value of \$99,053. According to JobsEQ and the American Community Survey for 2016-2020 there were 21,461 Renter-Occupied Housing Units and 968 rental vacancies. Also relevant to our system is the number of occupied housing units with no vehicle available for use – 6,819 or 7.5% of these units do not have a vehicle available for use. This lends itself to one of the largest barriers to employment, lack of transportation, which requires collaboration with public transportation agencies which will be discussed throughout this plan. See Attachment 4 Figure 8 for a complete look at the housing statistics for this region.

The issue of housing has been discussed often and more lately in light of the concern over the job growth over the next 20 years. This was another action item of our Regional Action Plan. The need for additional housing units in the middle income bracket was identified. Each county in our region is looking at opportunities to improve housing options. We also recognize that one potential positive that the pandemic provided was an interest of individuals working and living in urban areas desire to move out of the cities to more rural areas. Our rural areas provide more physical space, more opportunities for outdoor activities, as well as safe communities. We feel that if we can improve broadband access and housing options we could become an attractive area to relocate to. As we continue to address these issues we anticipate working with local realtors, chambers and other partners not already participating in the discussion to assist in addressing the housing issues and develop strategies to provide additional housing opportunities.

### **POPULATIONS WITH BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT**

#### **POVERTY**

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. When looking at the North Central region overall, 12.0% of all people are living in poverty according to the American Community Survey, 5 Year Estimates 2016-2020. Approximately, 16.7% of all households are recipients of Food Stamps/SNAP benefits (JobsEQ).

Cameron County has the highest poverty rate at 17.0% which is far above the state poverty rate at 10.8%. Other counties in our region above the state poverty rate include McKean County at 13.7%, Clearfield County at 12.3%, and Jefferson at 11.9%. Potter County falls just below the state poverty rate at 10.5% and Elk is at 8.9%. See Attachment 4 Figure 9.

#### **DISABILITY**

When looking at the working age population (Ages 16-64) there are 18,375 individuals with a disability in the North Central region which represent 15.1% of the total population. The average unemployment rate for those with disabilities in the region is 15.1% compared to 6.5% average unemployment rate for those with no disability. The average labor force participation rate for those with disabilities in the region is 40.0% compared to 83.3% for those with no disability. See Attachment 4 Figure 10 for the disability and labor force status of working age population (Ages 16-24) by county.

Globally, the United Nations reports, 80% to 90% of persons with disabilities of working age are unemployed in developing countries, whereas in industrialized countries, the figure is between 50% and 70%. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics found that 8 out of 10 individuals with disabilities were not in the labor force in 2020, compared to

## North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

3 in 10 for persons without disabilities. 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. OVR is a critical partner in the PA CareerLink® system to ensure individuals with disabilities are served and provided opportunities.

### **FORMERLY INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS**

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 the North Central region, in 2021 there were 473 individuals released from state prison according to the PA Department of Corrections. The largest number of releases in our region were in Clearfield County (189) and Jefferson County (143).. Three of our counties are ranked in the top ten counties with the highest state incarceration rate for 2020 and 2021, Jefferson ranked #1, Cameron #3 and Potter #5. (PA Department of Corrections, Annual Statistical Report. Additionally, there were 236 youth in the region that had a Juvenile Delinquency Court disposition in 2021, according to the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania. Delinquency dispositions by county include Cameron (2), Clearfield (49), Elk (62), Jefferson (43), McKean (55) and Potter (25).

The workforce system in North Central PA works closely with agencies serving this population – including the Criminal Justice Advisory Board, probation agencies and parole agencies. As you will read in other sections of this plan, Workforce Solutions received a contract through IEL (Institute for Educational Leadership) to provide the RAMP (Ready to Achieve Mentoring Program) to youth who are at risk of or part of the juvenile delinquency court. This program provides a mentor and career readiness activities to ensure youth are on a path to success.

### **FOSTER CARE YOUTH**

According to the Pennsylvania State Resource Family Association ([psrfa.org](http://psrfa.org)) approximately 13,000-15,000 Pennsylvania children are currently in foster care and part of the child welfare system. Sadly, on average, 1,100 PA youth “age out” of foster care or leave the system at 18 or older. Far too many youths never end up with a stable, permanent family situation. Often they are left on their own; with few or no financial resources, limited education, training and employment; homeless, and with little or no support from family, friends. One in four PA youth who “age out” of the system, experience homelessness, struggle with mental health challenges such as depression, substance abuse and anxiety disorders, with nearly 1 in 4 youth having been arrested since leaving care. Young PA women in foster care are two and a half times more likely to become pregnant by 19, than young women who were not in foster care. Nearly half of PA foster care youth haven't found a job four years after leaving the system and struggle to pay bills. Nearly half who “age out” will not complete high school.

PA Partnerships for Children ([papartnerships.org](http://papartnerships.org)) analyzes child welfare data including foster care and child neglect activity. Our region shows the number of children in Foster Care in 2021 includes Cameron (14), Clearfield (174), Elk (39), Jefferson (127), McKean (146), and Potter County data is suppressed (less than 11 persons). While percentage change from 2017-2021 for our region show decreases for Clearfield (-6.5%), Jefferson (-20.6%), and McKean (-17.0%); and increases for Cameron (27.3%) and Elk (62.5%); again Potter County data is suppressed.

PA Partnerships for Children child neglect data for our region shows a look at the number of child abuse and neglect reports as well as county % change from 2017 to 2021. Looking at the number of child abuse and neglect

## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

reports for 2021, Cameron is the lowest at 26, followed by Potter (82), Elk (133), Jefferson (201), McKean (253) and Clearfield (286). The percent change 2017 to 2021 varies by county with Cameron 0.0% change in the number of reports and -50.0% decrease in substantiations; Clearfield -24.7% change in the number of reports and a 115.1% increase in substantiations; Elk 7.3% change in the number of reports and a 141.3% increase in substantiations; Jefferson 9.8% change in the number of reports and a 10% increase in substantiations; McKean -4.2% change in the number of reports and a 2.4 increase in substantiations and Potter 9.3% change in the number of reports and a -40.8% decrease in substantiations. It is noted that child mistreatment is a serious problem and has grave and costly consequences for the child. A child who has experienced abuse and neglect is more likely to have social, emotional and physical health problems and perform poorly in school.

The PA Partnerships for Children's 2022 State of Child Welfare Report states that sexual abuse remains the leading category of substantiated abuse, followed by physical abuse. While parents continue to be the persons most responsible for the abuse of their children.

### **HOMELESSNESS**

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.

The Point-in-Time (PIT) count is a count of sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons on a single night in January. HUD requires that Continuums of Care conduct an annual count of homeless persons who are sheltered in emergency shelter, transitional housing, and Safe Havens on a single night. Continuums of Care also must conduct a count of unsheltered homeless persons every other year (odd numbered years). The total number of homeless persons counted during the 2019-2021 Annual Point in Time Count in the Western PA Continuum of Care was 603. Of this count, there were 69 homeless individuals counted within the region. There were no homeless individuals counted in Cameron County and the highest number was counted in McKean County (28).

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".

For the 2019-2020 program year, education and community agencies identified 37,930 children and youth experiencing homelessness (Pennsylvania's Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness (ECYEH) Program unique/unduplicated count). The population includes children under the age of five and youth enrolled in prekindergarten through grade 12. According to this report, 716 unique individuals were identified as experiencing homelessness within the North Central PA region. Clearfield County leads our region at 262 individuals followed by McKean County at 248 individuals. This population is challenging to serve as they tend to have difficulty completing high school and often have other challenges and barriers.

The requirements of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to ensure that workforce boards are prioritizing those with barriers to employment ensures that our system will work with populations described in the previous pages of this plan to strive towards changing these statistics. Workforce Solutions realizes there are additional populations with barriers to employment and we continue to build relationships and partnerships with social service agencies, community based and faith based organizations to leverage resources and ensure that those with barriers to employment are served appropriately and are able to find employment that will provide family sustaining wages.

*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 region and local area?*

An analysis of skill gaps begins with a look at current and projected skills demands of employers in the region which can be defined and identified in several ways. First, Labor Market trends can be examined by looking at Long Term Industry Projections as well as other Labor Market information including High Priority Occupation lists, fastest growing industries projections and on line job posting data. This data is then compared to the current educational attainment with the expected employment growth by educational level. Currently, while 17.1% of the adult population of the region has a bachelor's degree, 16% of the current occupations on the 2021 High Priority Occupation List for the requires a bachelor's degree. However, the expected growth in employment requiring a bachelor's degree projected 2020 to 2030 is only 1.8%. Although the percentage of employment requiring advanced degrees today is small (.4%), the employment projection 2020 to 2030 shows 4.1% growth in that area. Employment growth is expected to continue for occupations requiring an Associate degree by 4.4% and Long Term Training 10.1%.

Regarding Long Term Industry Projections from 2020-2030, the total employment in the North Central region is expected to increase by 2.9% or 2,420 jobs. This growth rate is lower than the projected growth rate for the state which is expected to increase by 7.6%. The majority of the growth comes from the Services Producing Industries by volume (1,970) at 3.4% employment change from 2020 to 2030. While the Goods Producing Industries has the higher employment change by percent from 2020 to 2030 at 4.4% with a volume of 890. Both manufacturing and construction employment projections are expected to increase. The greatest increase in the Services Industry is Leisure & Hospitality at 820 (volume) and 15.9% change. See Attachment 4 Figure 11.

We also look at the Fastest Growing Industries in our region to identify potential skill gaps. The top 5 fastest growing industries by volume change from 2020-2030 are expected to be Individual & Family Services, Restaurants & Other Eating Places, General Merchandise Stores, Local Govt, Except Education & Hospitals, and Civic & Social Organizations. The top 5 fastest growing industries by percent change are Drinking Places (Alcoholic Beverages), Individual & Family Services, Other Amusement & Recreation Industries, Civic & Social Organizations, and Residential Building and Building Construction. Attachment 4 Figure 12 contains additional fast growing industries. When considering these industries as the fastest growing and comparing the training programs in our region that prepare individuals for occupations in these industries we can identify the gaps.

We look at the previous data as well as our High Priority Occupation (HPO) list as prepared for us by the Center for Workforce Information and Analysis each year to identify skill gaps. If a skill gap is identified this allows us to petition to add an occupation to the list so that training funds can be used to support the occupations.

In addition, utilizing Real Time Intelligence (RTI), a tool available to us through JobsEQ we can identify both soft skills and hard skills that employers are in need of for their current hiring needs. This tool provides live job posting data from over 15,000 sources that can be queried by 8-digit SOC codes, names of employers, certification requirements, locations, and/or job titles in layman's terms. Online ads are retrieved from a variety of sites, including job boards, job aggregators, and individual companies. Job ads are compared against each other to remove duplicates.

The top soft skills employers are looking for include as they show up in the most online job postings: Verbal and Written Communication Skills; Cooperative/Team Player; Customer Service; Adaptability/Flexibility/Tolerance of Change and Uncertainty; Organization; Self-Motivated/Ability to Work Independently/Self-Leadership; Interpersonal Relationships/Maintain Relationships; Detail Oriented/Meticulous; Problem Solving; and Ability to Work in a Fast Paced Environment.

The top hard skills employers are looking for include: Microsoft Office, Ability to Lift 41-50 lbs.; Ability to Lift 51-100 lbs.; Microsoft Excel; Manufacturing; Tractor-Trailer Trucks; Ability to Lift 21-30 lbs.; Retail Sales; Cash Handling (Cashier); and Sales.

The top certifications employers are looking for include: Driver's License; Certification in Cardiopulmonary

## North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

Resuscitation (CPR); Registered Nurse (RN); Basic Life Support (BLS); Class A Commercial Driver's License (CDL-A); Commercial Driver's License (CDL); Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA); Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN); Advanced Cardiac Life Support Certification (ACLS) and Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC). Source: JobsEQ.

All of this data is utilized to identify the skills needed by local employers and when compared to our local area workforce qualifications. If there are gaps and no training providers in our region currently offer the training, we work with the providers to determine the feasibility of developing the training to fill the gap or we work with providers out of our region to ensure their programs are added to our Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL).

Locally collected labor market data is equally important when making workforce and economic strategic planning decisions. At various times, Workforce Solutions will complete surveys of various employers and industries to determine the local need. During Industry Partnership meetings, workforce needs of employers are discussed during each meeting. Knowing this "real time" data is helpful when meeting short term challenges for employers. These relationships and data gathering efforts help us to keep a pulse on industry and their needs.

We have heard from many employers from all industries throughout the North Central PA Region who report that they need all employees to have the following soft, work readiness skills:

- Reliability
- Problem Solving
- Punctuality
- Demonstrating a Positive Attitude
- Honesty
- Dependability
- Communication
- Willingness to Learn New Things – Life Long Learning Skills
- Uses Common Workplace Technologies
- Adaptability
- Interview Skills/Resume Writing

During the stakeholder meetings held to gather input for this plan, employers from all industries repeatedly tell us that if they can find a candidate with some or all of the previous "soft" skills, they can and will train them on the hard skills needed for them to succeed in their industry and company.

These skills are taught at the PA CareerLink® centers via workshops, [readysetworkpa.com](http://readysetworkpa.com) and SkillUp™ PA as well as participation in other work based learning programs such as job shadowing, paid / unpaid work experiences, and on the job training. Several industries however such as healthcare and manufacturing may require additional skills for prospective employees.

In addition, knowledge and skills needs and gaps cannot be reviewed in a vacuum. They must be attributable to specific occupations within our industry. We couple this information garnered from employers with statistics from the Center for Workforce Information and Analysis and other sources (such as JobsEQ). Understanding the knowledge and skills for specific occupations allows the case manager to discuss career pathways with their customers. Knowing how skills sets transcend into other occupations coupled with additional education and training is critical in good case management.

### *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?*

The North Central Region faces a number of challenges in aligning existing labor force skills and education and

## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

training activities with the needs of regional employers. These challenges were identified by employers from our region at a variety of meetings including: Workforce Development Board meetings, Chief Elected Official Board meetings, Local Plan Development Stakeholder Meetings, Industry Partnership meetings, and Business Service Team meetings at the PA CareerLink® centers. Most notable, The Policy and Performance Committee of the North Central Workforce Development Board has been meeting to discuss many of the following challenges beginning with the Business Services Guidance we have in place for our PA CareerLink® centers. The committee met monthly during the latter half of 2021 and established performance measures for each PA CareerLink® Business Service Team as well as recommended to the full board that the Business Services Guidance become a policy. The board approved this in Fall of 2021. This committee continues to meet and is working towards additional measurable performance metrics for the Business Service Teams. Revisions to the policy in the future will also be aligned to the statewide evaluation that is being implemented during the writing of this plan modification.

These challenges include:

1. Lack of a skilled workforce due to population decline.
2. Educational Attainment/Alignment.
3. Ensuring that school and training program curriculum matches employer needs
4. Ensuring youth are aware of the high priority occupations in our region and the skills and education needed for these occupations.
5. Identifying and Eliminating Barriers to employment for disadvantaged populations.
6. Increasing the number and types of employers that utilize PA CareerLink® employer services.
7. Ensuring all core and other partners are communicating and collaborating when serving employers.
8. Lack of affordable childcare.

Each challenge will be explained further below followed by the strategies that we are incorporating to address the challenges and minimize structural weaknesses.

**Lacked of a skilled workforce due to population decline** – the population decline is a major concern for our local employers. As described in Section 1.1 of this plan the North Central PA region is experiencing a population decline. According to JobsEQ, the US Census Bureau reported more than 215,300 people lived in the North Central region in 2020 with an annual average decrease of 0.5% (or 1,200 people each year) since 2010. Looking ahead, JobsEQ® anticipates our region’s population will decline an annual average of 0.6% between 2019 and 2034 resulting in a population loss of 19,100 people. This steady decline in population presents a challenge to the region and has employers concerned about the future of our workforce. In response to this concern, Workforce Solutions along with several other agencies and partners are developing a marketing website with the goal of recruiting people back to our region while retaining our current population. PA SIX is an initiative designed to increase awareness about the great career opportunities that exist in the counties of PA SIX as well as promote the exceptional quality of life residents enjoy. PA SIX, also known as North Central Pennsylvania includes the counties of Cameron, Clearfield, Elk, Jefferson, McKean and Potter.

This initiative was led by Workforce Solutions for North Central PA who partnered with employers, economic development agencies, communities, chambers of commerce and individuals to develop and execute the PA SIX Marketing Campaign.

Through the PA SIX brand we desire to raise awareness of PA SIX as a career destination and ultimately attract and retain talented individuals so that PA SIX employers can continue to thrive into the future. The website went live in June of 2020 and can be found at <https://www.discoverpasix.com>. In 2021 the website was updated to include real estate agencies and listings of available housing to further attract people to move to our region to work, live and play.

**Educational Attainment/Alignment** – Ensuring that training providers in our region are offering programs that meet the needs of local employers is very important to the workforce system in North Central PA. Workforce Solutions maintains a list of post-secondary training providers and holds a group meeting one time per year to



## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

share labor market data and trends as well as to encourage collaboration between providers. In addition to the annual meeting we share data and employer input with the providers in the region. Training providers are also members of our support team for our Industry Partnerships which provides continued communication between employers, workforce and economic development agencies and training providers. This has resulted in providers knowing what is needed by employers and encourages collaboration on solutions rather than duplication of programs offered.

**Ensuring youth are aware of the high priority occupations in our region and the skills and education needed for these occupations.** This challenge has been ongoing for decades and our Business Education Partnership is making great strides to ensure that youth, schools, parents and community members are aware of the local employment and career opportunities available in our region. The goal of the Business and Education Partnership is to increase the awareness of local careers to students and their families in an effort to retain them to the area as well as to increase educators' knowledge of and capacity to help youth learn about potential careers. Workforce Solutions along with the Community Education Center for Elk and Cameron Counties and the Potter County Education Council have built relationships with all of the region's secondary schools and provide a wide variety of business and education partnership programs including company and college tours, industry days, video contests, company speakers, careers on wheels and the list goes on.

Workforce Solutions also developed a career exploration site – ([carlthecareerbear.com](http://carlthecareerbear.com)) several years ago as an innovative program for elementary school students that is now being expanded to include programs for middle and high school students as well. Carl the Career Bear is an educational website designed by Workforce Solutions that includes videos of regional businesses and activities that promote career exploration. Today, videos of *Carl the Career Bear* describing specific businesses introduce students at all levels to area careers.

When safety regulations and heightened liability issues made it no longer possible for elementary students to tour local industries Workforce Solutions Career Counselors began to work with schools to offer assistance with career exploration and Carl the Career Bear saw an increase in hits to the website. In addition, the early adoption of this virtual teaching and learning strategy enabled our Career Counselors to pivot quickly to a virtual platform when the COVID-19 pandemic required us to shift to remote work. This prompted Carl to join the Facebook world and his page Career Exploration [facebook.com/CarltheCareerBear](https://facebook.com/CarltheCareerBear) now offers activities for career exploration featuring a new career or industry each week.

More than ever, employers are competing for the same workers. With the increase in pay at many retail and fast food convenience stores, people are leaving current jobs rather than continuing to work in their field of study. The Healthcare and Social Assistance industry is experiencing this and expresses that this will have a negative impact on the availability of services in our rural area. Working with the

**Identifying and Eliminating Barriers to employment** - Data described above illustrates the large numbers of residents in the region who will require specialized services and multi-agency resources to ultimately prepare and connect them to family sustaining jobs in the region. There are many agencies and services available however the challenge is to leverage the one stop center partnerships, along with partnerships with social service organizations, to provide the necessary connections and support along the skills development pathways to these jobs.

**Increasing the number and types of employers that utilize PA CareerLink® employer services** – Despite the WIOA legislation which introduced the one stop center concept, many employers and others still refer to the PA CareerLink® center as the unemployment office which has led to employers not realizing all of the services that are available to them at the centers. Workforce Solutions has addressed this in several ways including implementing a business service guidance tool for business service teams that challenges them to add 5 new businesses per quarter to open a business folder on the PA CareerLink® system. We have also ensured that the business services teams understand how the employer penetration rate is calculated and the data that needs to be input in PA's Workforce Development System of Record in order to increase this rate. Business Service Team representatives are also members of the support teams for our Industry Partnerships and inform employers of the services they offer during meetings. In addition to these efforts, a marketing effort is under way and being designed by an ad hoc outreach committee to

Workforce Solutions.

**Ensuring all core and other partners are communicating and collaborating when serving employers.** This challenge is two-fold – the first part of this challenge is ensuring that all staff who work with businesses are aware of the programs available to assist employers in addition to the services and programs provided at the PA CareerLink® centers. We ensure that all front-line staff are knowledgeable of programs such as Incumbent Worker Training, WEDnetPA, Work Opportunity Tax Credits (WORC), etc. The second part of this challenge is ensuring that core partners are communicating efficiently so they are able to make appropriate referrals to other agencies and work collaboratively when serving employers. This is extremely important so that employers are not getting contacted by individual partners at the centers. We also partner with the North Central PA PREP network and in particular the ENGAGE PA program.

When working with employers to identify funding for their training needs, Incumbent Worker training is one option when a company needs funding for training for layoff aversion. Companies are able to apply for Incumbent Worker Training through an application process if they meet the eligibility guidelines. The most appropriate use of Incumbent Worker Training funds is when a company provides training to upskill incumbent workers in order to create entry level positions. If the training being applied for is more applicable to WEDnetPA funding, we collaborate with the WEDnetPA provider to ensure the most appropriate funding is identified for the employer. The WEDnetPA provider in our region also refers companies to the Incumbent Worker Training program if they feel the application is more appropriate for this funding. Educating front line staff on programs like this is important so that employers' needs can be met.

#### **Lack of Affordable Childcare**

Affordable and convenient childcare has been identified as a challenge that either keeps people from obtaining employment or adversely affects them from their ability to succeed in the workforce. We have started to research this challenge through a variety of outreach to job seekers, employers, industry partnerships. Upon completion of this research, we will convene the appropriate partners and agencies to discuss the implementation of a pilot project that will address this challenge.

In addition to the strategies mentioned above, Workforce Solutions also intends to:

- Continue the successes of our Industry Partnerships to encourage training providers to collaborate when training is needed by our local employers.
- Continue to assist employers in our region with the development and implementation of Registered Apprenticeship Programs and Pre-Apprentice program in area high schools and career and technical centers. We have been successful in this endeavor and our region now has ten new Registered Apprenticeship Programs and 1 Pre-Apprentice program. We are especially excited about the implementation of a Licensed Practical Nurse Registered Apprenticeship program that we were able to assist utilizing WIOA funding.
- As emerging sectors are identified and needs arise the board will form Industry Partnerships to meet the demand of the emerging industries as was done when the Marcellus Shale industry was more present in our region.
- Career Pathways Development –Workforce Solutions has developed career pathways for each of the 12 industry cluster recognized by Pennsylvania. A Career Pathway is defined as an integrated collection of programs and services intended to develop students' core academic, technical and employability skills; provide them with continuous education, training; and place them in high-demand, high-opportunity jobs. In addition, Career Pathway (as per the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act legislation) means a combination of rigorous and high-quality education, training, and other services that—

(A) aligns with the skill needs of industries in the economy of the State or regional economy involved;

(B) prepares an individual to be successful in any of a full range of secondary or postsecondary education options, including registered apprenticeships;

(C) includes counseling to support an individual in achieving the individual's education and career goals;

(D) includes, as appropriate, education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster;

## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

(E) organizes education, training, and other services to meet the particular needs of an individual in a manner that accelerates the educational and career advancement of the individual to the extent practicable;

(F) enables an individual to attain a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and at least 1 recognized postsecondary credential; and

(G) helps an individual enter or advance within a specific occupation or occupational cluster.

The Career Pathways initiative resulted in a Sector Guide for each industry cluster that introduces the pathways and provides a snapshot of the career pathways in our region for each cluster. The sector guides are a great tool for staff to use when assisting job seekers in identifying their career interest as the guides provide information about expected training, experiences and skills needed to move along a career path.

All staff were trained on how to use the guides and Business Service Teams were provided additional training on how to develop career maps for individual companies. These will assist Business Service Team members in helping employers use the maps to update job descriptions, use the maps in a new hire orientation to illustrate progression and potential for promotion within the organization and to assist employees in understanding what they need to do to move from one job to another within the company, thus helping employees understand that there is room for growth within the company. This could support company retention.

- Annual updating of our employer resource directory that provides a one stop shop for employers to locate and access economic and workforce development programs as well as training and education programs available to them. The directory also connects employers to area secondary schools where they can collaborate to address career pipeline concerns. The directory is updated on a regular basis and shared with all employers in the region.
- Customer Centered Design –Workforce Solutions will continue to put the customer in the center of the design for all programs and services we offer in collaboration with other service providers including economic development agencies, education providers and other community and faith-based organizations.
- Continue to identify untapped labor pools such as the Substance Use Disorder (SUD) population and those currently or formerly incarcerated. Through these efforts we will continue to identify funding sources to assist in these initiative as we did for our work with the SUD Population. We Creating a holistic ecosystem to serve those with Substance Use Disorder (SUD) - PROSPER from Recovery to Career

Program Year 2022 was a milestone year for the implementation of our PROSPER from Recovery to Career project which has resulted in over 100 participant referrals to the program, increased collaboration among PA CareerLink® partners and other community agencies and employer awareness for supporting employees in recovery.

Workforce Solutions for North Central PA submitted a proposal titled *PROSPER from Recovery to Career* in May 2021, and in November 2021 we were awarded \$500,000 to develop, facilitate and monitor a project that will extend a recovery ecosystem to include several key workforce specific components. With match from various partners throughout the region the objectives of this \$1,000,000 have two main objectives:

- 1) To enhance employer knowledge and awareness of best practices for providing mutual aid and support for recovering employees.
- 2) Improve the success rates for long-term recovery for individuals who have completed treatment and are ready for employment through customized services, training, and job search planning.

The *PROSPER from Recovery to Career* project is a collaborative program that will provide job seekers who are in recovery from Substance or Other Drug Use Disorders a sustainable plan for job re-entry or job enhancement. Workforce Solutions (North Central Workforce Development Board) is partnering with existing comprehensive providers of alcohol and drug treatment programs to address the large-scale

## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

community and economic impact that is a direct result of the substance abuse crisis in rural north central PA. Our local workforce development area includes six counties, which contain several distressed areas in Appalachia. Disparities between national and Appalachia substance use statistics have prompted a need to extend the services and programs that are currently available to assist individuals in recovery to obtain meaningful employment. Barriers to employment are compounded by the daily goal to remain sober for this population of individuals. Our PA CareerLink® centers are a key partner in assisting this population in finding and sustaining employment.

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

Workforce service delivery in the North Central Region is provided through our PA CareerLink® centers. In addition to the partners participating at the centers we have a large referral network of community-based agencies. These agencies have a long history of providing quality services to their communities. Some are small county-based entities, while others are larger with state or national affiliation.

The workforce development system consists of WIOA Title I, Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, Wagner-Peyser Act employment services and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation as well as other community-based agencies which provide services to job seekers especially those with barriers to employment. These agencies include but are not limited to Job Corps, Community Action agencies, behavioral health agencies, juvenile and adult probation agencies and homeless and housing agencies.

### **Strengths**

**Priority Sectors.** The local area's priority sectors of **manufacturing, healthcare and social assistance and building and construction** provide residents with a broad array of career choices. Workforce Solutions anticipates developing additional sector partnerships for other industries such as **transportation and logistics, business services and retail/hospitality**.

**Variety of Education and Training Providers.** While the North Central PA region is a rural region, we do have a substantial variety of post-secondary education and training providers that includes three major university branch campuses, three career and technology centers, one community college "presence", as well as 3 privately owned schools (business school and technical training provider). There are also 2 Community Education Centers in the North Central PA region whose mission is to bring post-secondary training to our region. Workforce Solutions staff participates on many of the advisory boards of these institutions and are able to provide information and input regarding our employer needs. Post-secondary providers located within our six counties include:

1. University of Pittsburgh at Bradford
2. Penn State University DuBois Campus
3. Lock Haven University at Clearfield
4. Indiana University of Pennsylvania – Punxsutawney Campus
5. Butler County Community College – BC3 at Brockway
6. Brockway Center for the Arts and Technology
7. Jefferson County – DuBois Area Vocational Technical School
8. Clearfield County Career and Technology Center
9. Seneca Highlands Career and Technical Center
10. Community Education Center for Elk and Cameron Counties
11. Community Education Council for McKean and Potter Counties
12. Triangle Tech
13. Northern PA Regional College

### **Registered Apprenticeships and Pre-Apprenticeships**

Workforce Solutions believes that Registered Apprenticeship (RA) is a great recruitment and retention solution for local employers experiencing challenges in recruiting for and retaining a workforce. Workforce Solutions staff have

## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

been increasing the awareness of the benefits of RA and have made this an integral responsibility of our Business Engagement Coordinator, a position created in 2019. Our Business Engagement Coordinator strives to increase the awareness of RAs and Pre RA in addition to being the liaison responsible for sharing this knowledge with the Business Services Teams in our region. We implemented a guidance tool that provides all PA CareerLink® staff with the information needed to assist in the recruitment of employers to consider implementing Registered Apprenticeship program to assist with their workforce challenges. In addition, RAs are a topic at our Industry Partnership meetings.

Our region has benefited from PA SMART funding to reimburse employers (including and emphasizing non-traditional) for costs associated with the Related Technical Instruction (RTI) and the on-the-job training portion of the program. We will continue to educate employers to increase their knowledge on the benefits of RAs. Ten new Registered Apprenticeship programs were developed with our outreach and assistance, working with the State Apprenticeship and Training Office. One of the apprenticeships developed is for Licensed Practical Nurses (LPN) and we were able to utilize WIOA funding to support the Related Technical Instruction (RTI) for the apprentices which leveraged additional funding.

Pre-Apprenticeship – Workforce Solutions is also committed to increasing the number of pre apprenticeships in our region. We were successful in assisting one secondary school in the implementation of a pre apprenticeship program and we were in the process of working with a local Career and Technical Center to ensure that all of their programs became approved pre apprenticeship programs aligned with Registered Apprenticeships in our region. The pandemic forced this work to halt but this will be revisited during in the new few years.

Regarding both Pre-Apprenticeship and Registered Apprenticeship, we will increase our efforts to ensure that these opportunities are available to understand communities including low skilled workers, low-income populations, people with disabilities, the homeless, formerly incarcerated individuals, TANF Youth, and other individuals with barriers. Populations of those with barriers to employment are among the populations that employers are not actively recruiting from – they are missing this pool of available workers. We will strategically target these populations in several ways. First, we will ensure front line staff have the knowledge and tools to educate employers on best practices of how to engage these populations. Making them aware of the funding available through On the Job Training Work Experience, Registered Apprenticeships, etc. and sharing best practices of companies who have successfully engaged these populations. Second, we will ensure that employers are aware of these programs as well as the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) and the Federal Bonding program for employers hiring the previously incarcerated. This information will also be shared with our Industry Partnerships and other committees and partnerships we are involved in, including the North Central PA PREP network, the Community and Economic Development System (CEDS), and Criminal Justice Advisory Boards (CJABs). Third, we will continue to apply for funding to support Registered Apprenticeships and Pre-Apprenticeship programs. Workforce Solutions has applied for several grants over the past few years to increase the funding and programs have increased with other agencies assisting in our applications. Employers have been telling us they cannot find a skilled workforce for several years now – even prior to the pandemic. According to WorkingNation.com almost half of all employers (46%) are reporting talent shortages. Creating more opportunities for the underserved (including the underemployed) will increase the talent pool for companies struggling to find a skilled workforce. It is more important than ever for the workforce system in North Central PA to ensure that Registered Apprenticeships and Pre-Apprenticeships are targeted towards populations with barriers and could be the answer to the talent crisis we are facing.

**Customer-Focused Services.** WDB staff continues to work with the PA CareerLink® Operator regarding integration and non-duplication of services in our centers. We no longer can afford the staff that we once could with less and less funding every year. Staff in the centers work together to collaborate on services for cost efficiencies and better services to our customers. Through our Customer Centered Design Challenge we identified several projects that have improved the customer experience at the PA CareerLink® centers including: a welcome video, more inviting welcome space, triage, common intake, and a stronger referral process. We look forward to continuing engagement between staff and our customers as we continuously improve these processes.

**Active Business and Education Partnership Initiative** - March of 2012 Workforce Solutions and several partners including the Community Education Center for Elk and Cameron Counties held a summit to address the gap of business and education collaboration. Although this even was almost ten years ago now, it established a strong framework for our region and a strong desire to make a difference. We had over 125 participants at this ground-breaking event with all still participating in one way or another. This summit launched several initiatives in the region

## North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

that are now collaborating and sharing best practices. In Elk and Cameron County the initiative is led by the Community Education Center of Elk and Cameron counties, in Potter and McKean, the Potter County Education Council and in Clearfield and Jefferson the WDB oversees the initiative. Secondary Schools are offered programs such as one on one career plan development with their students which includes job shadowing and other work based learning opportunities, Educator in the Workplace programs, Company tours, assistance with Chapter 339 planning and many other activities. As mentioned previously the activities offered through the Business and Education Partnership were quickly transitioned to virtual programs so that youth in our area are still being provided the information needed to make an informed career choice along with the exposure to local companies.

### Weaknesses

**Lack of consistent career pathways across all providers.** While we have started to make progress in this area, there is much more to do to facilitate a common understanding and use of career pathways across all providers. One of our goals is to have an impact on the “Credential Rate” and “Skill Gains” as we continue to discuss the opportunities of credentials with our post-secondary providers as well as our career pathways efforts. There are still gaps in curriculum between what local employers need and the programs that local training providers offer.

**Lack of awareness of the North Central Business Resource Network.** While we have excellent outreach and relationships with many organizations, there are still many who have no awareness of our services or the benefits available. We would like to continue to improve our “Employer Penetration Rate” and our “Repeat Business Customers Rate” and continue to market our services throughout the region through our resource website and partner activities.

**Limited Work-Based Learning Opportunities.** Many careers in the North Central Region may be best addressed by learning on the job and/or through a mix of work and learning activities. However, the workforce system does not always provide an array of relevant work-based learning opportunities to fill these needs.

**Lack of Public Transportation.** The current transportation system does not provide adequate access to all parts of the region where career opportunities are available.

**Limited Childcare Services.** The area may not have enough childcare providers for individuals who are currently working during, or interested in working during, the second or third shifts.

**Limited Resources.** As our system increases our services to the hard to serve populations (those with barriers to employment) there is typically a need for additional resources. However, knowing that resources are decreasing, it is more crucial than ever that we collaborate with multiple agencies to leverage each other’s resources including staff time and mission.

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

When analyzing employment needs in the region, industry clusters can take on strategic importance because activities that benefit one group member will generally have positive effects on other members of the cluster. An industry cluster consists of a group of industries that are closely linked by common product markets, labor pools, similar technologies, supplier chains, and/or other economic ties.

They are used to:

- Create a consistent definition that allows for workforce comparison across regions;
- Identify major employers for building Industry Partnerships;
- Provide a basis for occupational and skills analysis of shared workforce needs; and/or
- Direct training dollars for jobs in demand that will offer career pathways leading to family sustaining wages.

Currently, Pennsylvania concentrates workforce strategies around 12 industry clusters and Workforce Solutions aligns with these clusters.

The clusters are:

Advanced Manufacturing  
Agriculture and Food Production  
Bio-Medical

## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

Building and Construction  
Business Services  
Education  
Energy  
Health Care  
Hospitality, Leisure and Entertainment  
Logistics and Transportation  
Real Estate, Finance and Insurance  
Wood, Wood Products and Publishing

The largest industry sector in the North Central Workforce Development Area based on 2021 Employment data from CWIA is Healthcare and Social Assistance with employment of 13,201 and average earnings of \$50,870, followed by Advanced Manufacturing with employment of 12,287 with average earnings of \$52,481. The third largest industry based on 2021 employment data the Education Industry with employment of 6,491 and average earnings of \$68,159.

Along with employment trends and average wages, the strength of a cluster is often evaluated using a location quotient (LQ) which compares a cluster's share of local employment with its share of national employment. A LQ greater than one implies a competitive advantage in an area. While the table looks at statewide LQs, many industries are highly regionalized and are even more competitive than the statewide LQ suggests. The industries with highest locations quotients in the North Central region include: Advanced Manufacturing with a 2.19 LQ, Wood, Wood Products and Publishing with a 3.12 LQ, and Energy with a 2.39 LQ.

In addition, each of our counties is home to a niche sector with Information Technology being a significant sector in Potter County. Elk and Cameron Counties have a high concentration of Powder Metallurgy Part Manufacturing (LQ=927.27) and Carbon and Graphite Product Manufacturing (LQ=190.23) plants. Tourism is another major sector worth noting, with all of our six counties within the PA Wilds designation.

See Attachment 4 Figure 13 for a breakdown of all industry clusters in the region.

In addition, to the clusters listed above, when necessary Workforce Solutions will analyze the 16 clusters recognized by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the National Association of State Directors of Career and Technical Education Consortium utilizing JobsEQ a product of Chmura Analytics.

Industry clusters have also served as the basis for the creation of Industry or Sector Partnerships (IPs) – employer/worker consortiums that bring together companies with similar products, markets, and human resource, and workforce development needs. The intent of IPs, through prudent investments, is for Pennsylvania to address the workforce and economic needs of employers, thereby helping these industries grow while creating career opportunities for its workforce and increasing productivity. Pennsylvania was among the first states to extend training and career-building efforts beyond individual companies to networks of companies in specific industries. IPs foster industry collaboration on incumbent worker training, school-to-career and other workforce pipeline initiatives, career pathways, recruitment and retention, and other human resource challenges. These types of collaboration can help strengthen skill alignment, increase entry-level employment opportunities, enhance recruitment and retention of talent, and lead to the creation of more high-paying jobs.

Despite slight declines in the numbers of people employed in recent years, the North Central region depends heavily on Manufacturing. The industry cluster retains a substantial regional competitive advantage, although it is susceptible to economic restructuring due to consolidation and internationalization. This has been proven to some degree by the selling of family-owned metals enterprises in the past few years to large, international firms.

The previous labor force data is used to determine our priorities for training for our job seekers as well as training for our incumbent workers as we work with employers in our region. It is evident that our emphasis is to increase

## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

the number of participants in a variety of Career and Technical Education programs as well as some associate and bachelor degree programs utilizing our workforce funding. These are the education programs that will lead to the skills needed by many of our employer, particularly in the manufacturing industry as well as the healthcare and other industries. Some examples are Nurse Aides, Registered Nurse (Associates' Degree), Truck Driver, Machinists, etc.

### **2. STRATEGIC PLANNING: Vision and Goals**

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

Consistent with the state plan, WIOA provides local regions the opportunity to align workforce priorities across multiple partners, training providers, employers and others to ensure we are creating a skilled workforce for today and the future.

The vision, mission and goals of Workforce Solutions remain unchanged. We are committed to continuing to accomplish our goals and to expand upon what is working well, continuously improving what isn't working well, and collaborating with all of our partners along the way.

#### **VISION STATEMENT**

Workforce Solutions will be a strategic workforce development leader focused on promoting economic prosperity and self-sufficiency of individuals by creating a workforce that is competitive in the global marketplace.

#### **MISSION STATEMENT**

Workforce Solutions serves as the premier facilitator of an innovative workforce development system that meets the changing human capital needs of our employers and provides resources for our job seekers that maximizes their career potential and focuses on the customers' needs.

#### **GOALS**

1. Enhance public-private partnerships through better connectivity and communication in order to increase investment in our workforce system leading to greater economic vitality for our region.
2. Engage in Sector Strategies of our growth industries identifying current skill gaps of both the incumbent and entry-level worker that will result in skill upgrades through customized training and partnerships.
3. Design innovative workforce development strategies to reach young adults and keep them engaged through the identification of best practices and development of new programs utilizing the Customer-Centered Design Method.
4. Identify Career Pathways in major industry sectors to enhance career counselling that will result in training opportunities for our customers through skill, credential and degree attainment.
5. Ensure that our customers, both employers and job seekers, remain in the center of our design of all services and encourage our partners to do the same.

Workforce Solutions have established some additional goals/priority areas in collaboration with the Workforce Development Board, Chief Elected Officials and other stakeholders for the next 2-year planning period that include the following:

1. Childcare options that are affordable and meet the needs of jobs seekers
2. Increase understanding of the broadband and information technology workforce needs of our region and ensure training programs and resources are available in our region.
3. Increase the number of jobs seekers utilizing PA CareerLink® services both in person and virtual.
4. Increase the number of business utilizing PA CareerLink® services as well as increasing the services available to businesses to meet their needs.
5. Increase the number of access points where PA CareerLink® services can be provided to reach customers not able to travel to the comprehensive centers.



## North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

### 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?*

Consistent with the vision of WIOA Partnerships in American Job Centers (TEGL 4-15) – PA CareerLink® Centers, Workforce Solutions continues to strive for a seamless workforce delivery system. The vision as referenced in TEGL 4-15 is:

- Connect all customers to the full range of services available in their communities;
- Provide seamless, customer-focused, integrated service delivery across all programs and enhance access to the programs' services;
- Ensure that businesses and job-seekers have access to information and services that lead to positive employment outcomes.

Grantees, subrecipients, and contractors funded under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) must abide by WIOA law, regulations, and guidance, as well as state and local WIOA policies. Workforce Solutions recognizes that this begins with the core partners of the system but continues with the required and additional partners in our region in order to effectively align service delivery and maximize resources.

Several ways in which this is being done:

- Development and implementation of the required single Memorandum of Understanding which was discussed and negotiated at the local level and describes the services to be provided as well as contains agreements on funding the costs of services and the operating costs of the system.
- In addition, as agreed to in the Memorandum of Understanding core partners agree to: Provide substantive referrals in accordance with this policy – to customers who are eligible for supplemental and complementary services and benefits under partner programs. Workforce Solutions drafted a Referral Policy that not only describes different forms of referral processes but require feedback and follow-up that will be monitored by staff. Our goal for this policy is to ensure that partners understand the value and importance of following up on referrals to ensure that our customers do not experience trouble using other services available to them without assistance.
- Continued the work of the Workforce Delivery System Committee which includes board members, staff, and representatives from the WIOA required and optional partners in the workforce delivery system. The role of this committee is to provide oversight and continuous improvement of the PA CareerLink® System, including Operating Budgets, the development of procurement requests, proposals and resulting contract between the entity selected to serve as the system Operator and the board as well as oversight and guidance of the system operator.
- Core and additional partners are represented on all of the committees of the board often utilizing their expertise to serve as chairs of the committees. For example, the Chair of the youth committee is the District Administrator for the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) for our region, Christina L. Palmer.
- Workforce Solutions staff hold bi-monthly webinars, "Workforce Spotlights," with all PA CareerLink® staff. A topic is discussed each month with a question and answer period as well as discussion about topics of interest or clarification. Topics of discussion include federal, state and local policies and procedures as well as the customer centered design approach to serving all customers etc. The responsibility of hosting the event is shared amongst the board staff and all centers. The host will choose the event and any related activities. It's become a great team building activity.
- Workforce Solutions staff coordinate with all of our partners on an Annual Partner Meeting. The preference is in-person but with COVID this past year we adapted to a virtual platform. At this meeting,

## North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

partners share best practices; board staff share any policy related information, and we participate in team building activities.

- Workforce Solutions staff strive for a cohesive and seamless workforce delivery system where we can openly collaborate for the successful economic vitality of our rural region.
- Workforce Solutions staff participate on several boards that represent not only workforce but other entities with similar missions such as the North Central PA PREP, Northwest PA Area Health Education Center (AHEC), PA Workforce Development Association (PWDA), and many of our career and tech center's advisory committees and post-secondary providers.
- Workforce Solutions staff are members of the Appalachian Education and Workforce Network (AEWN) in which we participate with representatives from all other states in the Appalachia. This network has afforded us the opportunity to convene our secondary and post-secondary schools with like representatives for throughout the Appalachia and has increased the Networks understanding, relevance and importance of the workforce system.

### 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 state's workforce development system, as well as any of the goals and strategies articulated in the regional plan?*

As discussed in the **response to 2.1**, the mission of Workforce Solutions is ***to serve as the premier facilitator of an innovative workforce development system that meets the changing human capital needs of our employers and provides resources for our job seekers that maximizes their career potential and focuses on the customers' needs.*** The goals that we have established to support our mission are aligned with the governor's vision and goals as articulated in the Commonwealth's WIOA combined state plan. Moreover, these goals collectively promote the economic growth and self-sufficiency of the North Central Workforce Development Region by improving the overall quality of its labor force and increasing the productivity of its businesses.

#### • **Commonwealth Goal 1: Career Pathways and Apprenticeship**

The Board's Goal #4, "Identify Career Pathways in major industry sectors to enhance career counselling that will result in training opportunities for our customers through skill, credential and degree attainment" speaks directly to the Commonwealth's goal to establish Career Pathways. The Board recognizes the value of Career Pathway Plans and contracted this past program year to have Career Pathways developed for each of our twelve Industry Sectors. In addition to the tools that were developed and shared with all PA CareerLink® staff, the board organized multiple training sessions to discuss strategies for utilizing the Career Pathways when meeting with customers as well as developing customized tools for employers. Our board also supports Registered Apprenticeship programs and understand the value for our employers. We continue to educate employers on the benefits and offer our assistance in developing RAs and over the past 2 years have successfully assisted in implemented several Registered Apprenticeship programs in both Healthcare and Manufacturing as well as Pre Apprenticeships in Manufacturing. We currently have a staff attending the Registered Apprenticeship Navigator Program through the Keystone Development Partnership (KDP) and the goal is for this staff to share what is learned with all of our Business Services Team members to further increase the awareness of Registered Apprenticeships and Pre Apprenticeships in our region.

#### • **Commonwealth Goal 2: Sector Strategies and Employer Engagement**

The Board's Goal #2, "Engage in Sector Strategies of our growth industries identifying current skill gaps of both the incumbent and entry-level worker that will result in skill upgrades through customized training and partnerships" as well as our Goal #1, "Enhance public-private partnerships through better connectivity and communication in order to increase investment in our workforce system leading to greater economic vitality for our region," address the Commonwealths second goal.

Through our Industry Partnerships, Workforce Solutions will continue to convene employers from the targeted

## North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

sectors along with education and training providers and other stakeholders to identify the needs of our employers. We continue to follow the Next Gen tool kit; our stakeholders listen to the employer needs then develop an action plan to help them address each one.

We will continue to support incumbent worker training resources for local employers, in collaboration with our WEDnetPA provider, to support skill upgrade training.

Our Board has been taking a serious look at short-term credential and certificate programs in order to better meet the needs of our employers. Employers continue to say that when it comes to their entry-level workforce; give them someone who can show up every day, on-time, and be able to communicate and problem solve then they can teach them the technical skills. We have established workshops in our PA CareerLink® centers that teach these skills. We have also developed a virtual site ([readysetworkpa.com](http://readysetworkpa.com)) to provide tutorials, videos, and links to our PA CareerLink® system. Once employed an individual can then work on education and training to move along the career ladder/lattices. Short-term training programs can be offered at much less cost than the current ITA process where only one individual benefits from the training. Success will be measured based on feedback from our employers and if these programs help them meet their hiring needs. Workforce Solutions will continue to monitor the effectiveness of existing education and training activities by collecting information on programs that are being supported by WIOA funds and the funds of core partners. It will identify the programs that have the strongest ties to employers' needs and the best success rates for producing graduates and job placements.

Workforce Solutions will continue to encourage employers to develop and implement Registered Apprenticeship programs. We have staff that work specifically with employers and assist in the application process as well as any other assistance they would need. We collaborate with partners and or secure resources to assist employers with the cost of implementing RAs, either the RTI or the OJT portion of the training.

Workforce Solutions will also continue to convene all regional partners including education providers, economic development agencies (local and regional), workforce partners, employers and other community based agencies, etc. on a regular basis to ensure all have access to the labor market information to make strategic decisions specifically when it comes to serving our employers.

- **Commonwealth Goal 3: Youth**

The Board's Goal #3, "Design innovative workforce development strategies to reach young adults and keep them engaged through the identification of best practices and development of new programs utilizing the Customer-Centered Design Method," addresses the Commonwealth's Goal 3. As a key component of its Customer-Centered design methodology, the Board has worked with our Title I Provider in the development of work-based learning opportunities, such as work experience, internships, co-op programs, apprenticeships, and transitional jobs to meet any unique/specific skill needs of employers in the region. A flagship program of the board is the PA SLIP. This program has become a significant benefit to all youth in our region as well as our employers and has proven to be a successful youth retention strategy. We will continue to seek opportunities to continue this type of activity.

Workforce Solutions will continue to fully utilize the resources and services available through the area's secondary institutions, including those programs authorized by the Carl D. Perkins Act to increase educational achievements as well as postsecondary credentials. It will promote the alignment of its workforce strategies and services along with those of its community partners, including adult education, community colleges, community technical education centers (CTECs), and others to increase access, enhance outcomes, maximize resources, and avoid duplication of effort.

- **Commonwealth Goal 4: Continuous Improvement of the Workforce Development System**

The Board's Goal #5, "Ensure that our customers, both employers and job seekers, remain in the center of our design of all services and encourage our partners to do the same," addresses the commonwealth's goal. If services and activities are being developed with the customer in mind, then our system will be evolving and responsive and will lead to successful outcomes. Our board continuously evaluates our system for continuous improvement. We have developed a comprehensive approach to our certification process for our PA CareerLink® centers that identifies opportunities for improvements. We have established performance measures and benchmarks for our Title I provider in order to evaluate their effectiveness. We offer technical assistance in areas where they may have

fallen short. We are also in the process of re-evaluating our customer satisfaction survey process for both job seekers and employers. We want to ensure it is a system wide review and that it provides us with feedback for improvement.

- **Commonwealth Goal 5: Strengthening the One-Stop Delivery System**

All five of the Board's goals lead toward helping to strengthen our One-Stop Delivery System. Specifically, Goal #5, "Ensure that our customers, both employers and job seekers, remain in the center of our design of all services and encourage our partners to do the same," addresses this goal. The PA CareerLink® centers are important to the success of our job seekers and employers. The myriad of services available in our centers helps to prepare individuals to be successful in their career pathway. Service also assist employers in meeting their skilled workforce needs. Our board and partners continue to support a bricks and mortar approach to serving customers. It is important that those individuals that need the in-person services knows where to find us. We have considered mobile sites as an option but fear that customers may fall through the cracks. We are fortunate in that the board and partners value the partnership and continue to invest in it. We also have, for quite a long time, provided virtual services to our customers. We know that there is a certain percentage of the population that prefer virtual services. We encourage our Title I provider as well as other partners to be creative in their design of services. We offered "Google Hangouts" for years in support of job search clubs for our customers. We also designed a website – [readysetworkpa.com](http://readysetworkpa.com) where customers will find work ready tutorials, resources, and contact information for our PA CareerLink® Centers.

- 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?*

As shown in the Performance Measures Table included as **Attachment 1** the Board and the local elected officials have agreed to adopt the levels of WIOA performance that have been established by the governor for the Commonwealth. An email notification will be sent to all stakeholders of the annual revisions to the local levels of performance.

The Board's five primary workforce goals discussed in the **response to section 2.3**, fully support these measures and the Board further promotes performance achievement by including these factors as part of its expectations in agreements with our subcontractors and the PA CareerLink® partners.

The goals ensure that our area achieves the federal performance accountability measures as the goals were developed with the measures in mind. For the past several years, board members have engaged in high-level strategic conversation about serving our customers effectively while meeting the federal performance accountability measures. Our Board recognizes that in serving the harder to serve as identified in WIOA as well as the WIOA Combined State Plan it will be more difficult to meet these measures. We feel that if we continue to design programs and services from a customer centric perspective we will be successful in meeting these measures. The goals that have been developed by the board support these measures as well in several ways.

**WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS GOAL 1: Enhance public-private partnerships through better connectivity and communication in order to increase investment in our workforce system leading to greater economic vitality for our region.**

- This goal will have an impact on several of the WIOA Performance Indicators – Title I. More specifically if the workforce system is better connected to the private sector this will result in better "Employment Rate" as we understand the needs of businesses more and more. As we better prepare individuals for jobs in the labor market there will be a better "Retention" for them as well. This goal will also affect the "Employer Penetration Rate" as we reach out to more businesses as well as the "Repeat Business Customer Rate" as we provide them more of what they need. When the results of the work being done by KPMG to analyse Business Services is complete, the new goals will be incorporated into our planning and performance.
- Workforce Solutions has established partnerships with economic development agencies, Chambers of Commerce, business and industry, post-secondary providers including the Career and Technical Centers.

However, there is always room for improvement. The board will continue to enhance these partnerships.

**WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS GOAL 2: Engage in Sector Strategies of our growth industries identifying current skill gaps of both the incumbent and entry-level worker that will result in skill upgrades through customized training and partnerships.**

- Similar to the first goal, this goal will also improve the following WIOA Performance Indicators: “Employment Rate”, “Retention”, “Employer Penetration Rate”, and “Repeat Business Customers Rate” for the same reasons as indicated previously.
- This goal will also have an impact on the “Credential Rate” and “Skill Gains” as we continue to discuss the opportunities of credentials with our post-secondary providers as well as our career pathways efforts. We will see more individuals with the right education and training for the jobs in our labor market with the knowledge of the career pathways to move along in the company/industry.
- Workforce Solutions currently manages three Industry Partnerships for our top industries –Advanced Manufacturing, Healthcare and Social Assistance, and Building and Construction. These partnerships meet quarterly to discuss current needs that may include workforce attraction and retention. In addition, this has been a great forum for employers to discuss the impact of COVID and to share best practices. It was through these partnerships that the skill gaps were made known. As more skill gaps are identified programs will be developed.
- There are also employer consortia in some of our counties that meet regardless of their industry. The county consortia discuss PA CareerLink® services, common issues companies are facing such as FLSA and other human resource topics.

**WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS GOAL 3: Design innovative workforce development strategies to reach young adults and keep them engaged through the identification of best practices and development of new programs utilizing The Customer Centered Design Method.**

- This goal will assist in recruitment of young adults that are in need of our service. With programs and services that meet the needs of these youth (as identified below) we will meet the WIOA Performance Indicators for youth of employment, retention, and skill gains.
- Our innovative youth programs continue to be improved through the Customer-Centered Design Process. When we accepted the first USDOL challenge we took on the challenge of designing programs that will engage youth and produce great outcomes. Through this process we learned that young adults, in particular those with barriers that we serve through WIOA, have a strong desire to build relationships, lack self-esteem (not all), do not want to sit for too long and desire hands on activities. The Connection Café is designed to do just that and is bringing young adult together to learn workplace activities in a group setting and developing skills such as team work, interview skills, etc. The Connection Café is evolving and ever changing as customers’ needs are identified. This program will keep young adults engaged and thus assist Workforce Solutions in meeting all of the WIOA youth measures – Placement, Retention, Earnings, Credential Rate and Program Skills Gain.
- Work experience and other work-based learning activities are additional methods of engaging youth and providing real world experience to each of them. This linked with on-the-job training can lead directly to the performance outcomes and measures that have been identified.

**WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS GOAL 4: Identify Career Pathways in major industry sectors to enhance career counselling that will result in training opportunities for our customers through skill, credential and degree attainment.**

- This goal will directly impact the WIOA Performance Indicator of “Credential Rate” and “Skill Gains.” It will also have an indirect effect on all of the other indicators with a workforce prepared with the skills that our employers need.
- As mentioned earlier, Workforce Solutions invested in the development of Career Pathways for our twelve industry sectors. These pathways provide an opportunity for staff to case manage customers in order that they see the pathway for their chosen career. This will encourage customers potentially to enroll in education and training that will lead to a skill credential.

**WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS GOAL 5: Ensure that our customers, both employers and job seekers, remain in the center of our design of all services and encourage our partners to do the same.**

- The intent of Goal number 5 is to be sure to keep our customers in the center. If we continue to design programs around our customer, then we will meet them where they are and will ensure that everyone is successful. This goal will have a direct impact on all of the WIOA Performance Indicators including more success in getting a job, keeping a job, increased skills and satisfaction.

The Board gauges its progress in meeting planned outcomes through the following indicators, in addition to the expectations of our Title I contractor, that are regularly reviewed and reported by the Policy and Performance Committee:

- Number of first visits to the PA CareerLink® center
- Number of return visits to the PA CareerLink® center
- Number of individuals accessing services virtually
- Number of customers completing occupational skill training and/or receiving certifications
- Number of EARN customers participating in a work-based learning experience
- Number of PA CareerLink® customers receiving Career Services
- Number of individuals enrolled in PA CareerLink®
- Market penetration of employers
- Repeat business of employers
- Number of Business and Education Connect Activities, including: job shadowing, company tours, classroom presentations, internships, etc.
- Number of youth served through the Business and Education Partnership.
- Number of schools served through the Business and Education Partnership.
- Number of employers served through the Business and Education Partnership.

**3. OPERATIONAL PLANNING: Local Area Workforce System and Investment Strategies**

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

**Organization Chart.** An Organization Chart that depicts the structure of the North Central Local Workforce Development Area is included as Attachment 2.

The current local workforce system structure that has been developed in the North Central WDA was a collaborative effort of the local elected officials and the workforce development board with Workforce Solutions for North Central Pennsylvania serving as the Grant Recipient and Fiscal Agent. The appropriate agreements and boards have been established in the region to respect the individual roles of policy vs. program. The roles and relationships of each stakeholder follow.

**Chief Elected Official (CEO)**

Workforce Solutions has formed, in collaboration with the County Commissioners in the region, the Chief Elected Official Board referred to as the CEO. The purpose of this Board is to provide policy oversight in administering the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and in partnership with Workforce Solutions to:

- Establish and appoint a Workforce Development Board to assist in carrying out provisions of the Act, as identified within the Chief Elected Officials Agreement.
- Develop the mission, strategic vision, and policies.
- Identify and close gaps in local / regional workforce resources.
- Develop multiyear local and regional Workforce Development Plan.
- Designate an operator of the PA CareerLink® (one-stop delivery system) and oversee their operations.
- Certify providers of workforce development and training in the area.
- Develop performance-based accountability measures and use them to assess programs, measure customer satisfaction, and issue “consumer reports” or “report cards” on providers of training.
- Promote private sector participation in the local workforce development system.
- Develop and approve the WDB and related budgets.

## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

- Receive additional non-federal, state, and other workforce funds as an integrated system. Membership of the CEO Board consists of: one chief elected official representative, as agreed upon by the local elected officials of that county, from each of the counties served by the North Central WDA including: Cameron, Clearfield, Elk, Jefferson, McKean and Potter. The local elected official chosen shall remain on this Board until such time as their term in office has expired or by majority vote of the elected official of that county. Members of the CEO with complete contact information follow:

Joseph Daghir  
Elk County Commissioner  
County of Elk  
300 Center Street  
Ridgway, PA 15853  
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Cameron County Courthouse  
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Clearfield County Courthouse  
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## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

Barry Hayman  
Potter County Commissioner  
Potter County Courthouse  
1 East Second Street  
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Fax: [\(814\)274-8284](tel:8142748284)  
Email: [bhayman@pottercountypa.net](mailto:bhayman@pottercountypa.net)

The members of the CEO also attend scheduled board meetings as well as committee meetings which are held quarterly. All meetings are held in ADA compliant buildings so that anyone interested is able to participate. Meetings are also held virtually utilizing Zoom. During the pandemic all meetings were held virtually and we will continue to offer a virtual format in addition to in person meetings once we are able to meet in person. Members of the Workforce Development Board are selected and appointed by the Chief Elected Officials. These members are nominated by key business agencies to the Chief Elected Officials at both the county and regional level. As a result, a highly impressive board was established with representatives of “CEO type” participating.

**Fiscal Agent and Administrative Entity.** The CEO has appointed Workforce Solutions for North Central Pennsylvania as the Fiscal Agent and Administrative Entity/Grant Recipient.

### **Workforce Solutions for North Central PA**

Workforce Solutions is a 501(c)3 non-profit agency that reports to a private sector driven board (NCWDB) with twenty-two (22) members currently. Twelve (12) of the members are from the private sector while ten (10) represent the public sector – with representation from education, community based organizations, economic development, Department of Labor and Industry.

The process used to select new members for Workforce Solutions private sector members is to request nominations from business organizations (i.e. Chambers of Commerce). These nominations are then brought to the Chief Elected Officials (CEO) for appointment. When a vacancy occurs the Board solicits nominations to the local elected officials from those appropriate agencies to fill each vacancy.

Staff to the board (NCWDB) are employees of Workforce Solutions. This structure was developed and approved by the CEO and is described in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Agreement (WIOA) and the Chief Elected Officials Agreement.

The mailing address and phone number for all NCWDB staff:

Workforce Solutions for North Central Pennsylvania  
(North Central Workforce Development Board)  
425 Old Kersey Road  
Kersey, PA 15846  
Office: [814-245-1835](tel:8142451835)

Pamela Streich, Executive Director - [pstreich@ncwdb.org](mailto:pstreich@ncwdb.org)  
Donna Hottel, Strategic Planning and Project Manager – [dhottel@ncwdb.org](mailto:dhottel@ncwdb.org)  
Linda Franco, Workforce System Manager - [lfranco@ncwdb.org](mailto:lfranco@ncwdb.org)  
Vanessa Hasselman, Finance Director – [vhasselman@ncwdb.org](mailto:vhasselman@ncwdb.org)  
Sherri Cunningham, Administrative Assistant – [scunningham@ncwdb.org](mailto:scunningham@ncwdb.org)  
Colleen Prechtel, Project Coordinator - [cprechtel@ncwdb.org](mailto:cprechtel@ncwdb.org)  
Terry Hinton, Business Engagement and Project Manager – [thinton@ncwdb.org](mailto:thinton@ncwdb.org)

**Equal Employment Opportunity Office (EEO):** The EEO Officer for the North Central Workforce Development Area is Linda Franco, Workforce System Manager for Workforce Solutions. The EEO Officer monitors and evaluates compliance with equal opportunity laws, guidelines, and policies to ensure that employment practices and contracting arrangements give equal opportunity without regarding to race, religion, color, national origin, sex, age or disability.



Full contact information follows:

Linda Franco, Workforce System Manager/EEO Officer  
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814-245-1935  
[lfranco@ncwdb.org](mailto:lfranco@ncwdb.org)

### **Standing Committees of Workforce Solutions**

There are 4 committees of Workforce Solutions as described below.

**Frequency of Meetings:** All committees meet quarterly in accordance with scheduled board meetings and also when necessary if a special issue rises. The exception is the Nominating Committee, which meets every two years to elect officers of the Board. Meetings are often conducted with the use of technology such as conference calls and zoom meetings being sensitive to time and travel demands on board members. Members are asked to volunteer for the committee to which they can bring their expertise and experience. Committees are also open to interested parties who are not board members. The additional members are non-voting members who have expressed an interest in assisting in meeting our goals and objectives.

The committees are as follows:

#### **Executive Committee**

**Frequency of Meetings:** As often as necessary to carry on the routine business of the board.

**Membership:** The Executive Committee consists of the Chairperson, First and Second Vice-Chairpersons, Secretary, Treasurer, and additional members in order that a private sector majority is maintained.

**Responsibilities and Activities:** To carry on the routine business of the board and to act on behalf of the board when time does not permit the full board to meet.

#### **Policy and Performance Committee**

**Frequency of Meetings:** Quarterly in accordance with scheduled board meetings, or as needed.

**Membership:** Chaired by a Board member. Other members may include additional board members, One Stop Operator, board staff and other interested and appropriate non-board members requesting to serve on the committee and as approved by the board.

**Responsibilities and Activities:**

- To set workforce delivery system policy in the North Central Workforce Development Area including the development, implementation and modification of policies and program activities to support a comprehensive and streamlined workforce development system. The workforce delivery system includes the PA CareerLink® centers (One Stop American Job Centers), WIOA core partners, TANF Youth Development and EARN Programs, as well as special grants and projects including the oversight of subrecipient awards.
- To develop performance criteria and implement evaluation methods for the continuous improvement of the workforce delivery system including capacity; compliance with federal, state, and local requirements; performance of programmatic and fiscal activities, administrative systems and management practices; and reporting of performance and financial outcomes and goals of subrecipients/contract providers in receipt of federal workforce funds in order to achieve high-level performance within and high-level outcomes from the workforce development system.

## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

- To provide recommendations to the system as well as commit to learn about the programs that make up the workforce system in order to maintain program statutory and programmatic changes.

### **Finance Committee**

Frequency of Meetings: Quarterly in accordance with scheduled board meetings, or as needed.

Membership: Board members and other members requesting to serve on the committee and as approved by the board.

Responsibilities and Activities:

1. Conducting financial oversight
2. Ensuring WIOA funds are spent in the most cost effective manner
3. Assisting with budget development
4. Approving, monitoring and recommending budgets
5. Reviewing financial monitoring and audits
6. Analyzing strategic plans and determining financial impact
7. Presenting financial information and recommendations to the Board

### **Youth Committee**

Frequency of Meetings: Quarterly in accordance with scheduled board meetings, or as needed.

Membership: The youth committee consists of appointed voting WDB members from the appointed membership as well as non-voting members as approved by the board.

Responsibilities and Activities:

- To coordinate area-wide youth services, assist with planning, and oversee operational youth programs.
- To serve as the architect in designing and building comprehensive youth services at the local level.
- To identify gaps in services and develop a strategy to use competitive selections or community partnerships to the unmet needs of youth.
- To coordinate youth policy.
- To ensure quality services.
- To leverage financial and programmatic resources.
- To recommend youth service providers to the local board.

While our area easily could have met the intent of the WIOA legislation through the operation of one Pennsylvania CareerLink® center in our region, the Board has supported six comprehensive (+1 affiliate) Pennsylvania CareerLink® centers in order to better address the needs in a rural area. The Board meets the intent, however goes above and beyond in doing so.

As the WDB becomes involved in various initiatives at the local, state and federal level a staff person is assigned as the point person to ensure timely attention to reports and other matters. In addition, committees of the Board oversee specific initiatives and are responsible for the information being exchanged in a timely fashion. In addition to quarterly / or as-needed meetings we utilize email, website postings, phone conferences and virtual video conferencing.

One such committee is the Local Management Committee (LMC) which is a Department of Human Services (DHS) entity implemented through the Bureau of Employment Programs (BEP). The LMC is responsible for direct oversight and coordination of programs that are funded through the Department of Human Services. These programs offer welfare to work activities and services to individuals identified and solely referred by the local County Assistance Offices. Workforce Solutions has taken the lead in organizing the LMC meetings on a quarterly basis.

Regarding operations during the pandemic and following the pandemic, board staff worked from home until April 2021. Staff are back to working in the office but have continued to utilize virtual platforms to increase participation in meetings, including board meetings, industry partnership meetings, committee meetings and other planning and grant specific meetings. This has enabled us to ensure that participation occurs from all counties that we serve.

**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?***

Workforce Solutions and all of the partners in the workforce delivery system work closely together to ensure that all North Central PA CareerLink® centers are high-performing work places with staff that will ensure quality of service. The Local Board, with the agreement of the Chief Elected Official (CEO) has developed and entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Local Board and the One-Stop Partners, consistent with WIOA Sec. 121(c)(2), concerning the operation of the one-stop delivery system in a local area.

The PA CareerLink® Workforce Service Delivery System Program Partner/Provider Lists for each of the centers in the North Central PA region can be found in Attachment3, Local Workforce Development System Program Partner-Provider List, which is posted on the Workforce Solutions website ([www.workforcesolutionspa.com](http://www.workforcesolutionspa.com)). The list identifies the programs, the program provider(s) and where in our region the program may be accessed.

WIOA identifies several required One-Stop System partners and allows for additional partners to be designated. Below is a list of the required partners and any other partners that are present in the North Central PA CareerLink® centers and how these programs align with the strategic vision.

Programs authorized under WIOA – (services of each of the following bulleted partners are summarized below):

- Title I (Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth)
- Wagner-Peyser Act employment services administered by DOL
- Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program administered by the Department of Education
- Rehabilitation Act Title I program administered by DoEd.
- Title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965
- Career and technical education programs authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006, as amended by the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.)
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.)
- Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers programs (activities authorized under chapter 2 of title II of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C. 2271 et seq.))
- Jobs for Veterans State Grants program (programs authorized under 38, U.S.C. 4100 et. seq.)
- Senior Community Service Employment program (programs authorized under title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3056 et seq.))
- Community Services Block Grant (Employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.))
- Reintegration of Ex-Offenders program (programs authorized under section 212 of the Second Chance Act of 2007 (42 U.S.C. 17532))

**1. Title I WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth** – Services are provided by EQUUS Workforce Solutions staff and they are present in all of the PA CareerLink® centers in the North Central Workforce Development Area including the affiliate site in Cameron County. Title I staff provide individualized career services as well as intake, assessment, job search workshops, rapid response services, IEP and ISS development and case management for all WIOA eligible customers. WIOA services align with and implement the strategies and vision of Workforce Solutions through the implementation of effective and efficient services being provided to our business and job seeker customers. Staff evaluate the needs of our customers (business and job seekers) continuously to ensure that our local employers have access to and education and skilled workforce.

**2. Programs authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act (29 U.S.C. 49 et seq.);**

Bureau of Workforce Partnership and Operations (BWPO) staff are also present in all of the PA CareerLink® centers in the North Central Workforce Development Area including the affiliate site in Cameron County. BWPO staff provide core services including intake, job screening and referrals, employer outreach services, job search workshops, rapid response activities and case management for job seekers. BWPO and Title I staff match job

## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

seekers with employers in need of their skills by providing basic job search skills and information to entry level job seekers. When necessary, entry level workers are referred to Title I and other programs when they are in need of more intensive services. Title I and BWPO staff work collaboratively to meet the vision and goals of Workforce Solutions.

### **3. Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act;**

Title II Adult Education staff are co-located in all of the PA CareerLink® sites (excluding Jefferson County and Elk County). Staff are considered part of the PA CareerLink® staff, and whether co-located at the centers or not, serve on the various teams and are involved in assessment, staff meetings, and professional development opportunities. Customers are referred to Title II for services as identified. Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy is provided by Intermediate Units 9 and 10, as well as Community Action for Jefferson County, through a subcontracting agreement with Intermediate Unit 9. Title II staff provide services to job seekers referred to them by other agencies and PA CareerLink® partners and help to ensure the creation of a skilled workforce. In addition, Title II refers customers to other PA CareerLink® partners for additional services.

### **4. WIOA Title IV Program authorized under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973**

OVR staff are also present in all of the PA CareerLink® centers in the North Central Workforce Development Area and have representation on the North Central Workforce Development Board as well as the Youth Committee. The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) provides services to Individuals with disabilities to help them secure and maintain employment and independence. These services are designed to prepare OVR customers to become qualified trained members of the workforce increasing regional workforce diversity and the overall number of skilled workers available to business in the region.

Additionally, OVR business services staff can identify resources to assist any employer to diversify their workforce to include individuals with barriers to employment. Specifically, for individuals with disabilities, OVR provides multiple services to the business community designed to assist businesses with onboarding pre-screened qualified employees with disabilities. OVR on-boarding supports for a qualified new hire can include; reasonable accommodation consultation, initial probationary period wage reimbursement (On-the Job Training-OJT), referral on tax credits or deductions. OVR also offers no-cost consultation on the Americans with Disability Act (ADA), accessibility standards and helping a business to retain current employees following an accident, injury or disability. Eligibility to receive services under WIOA Title IV may only be determined by a qualified OVR Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor. Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors determine eligibility for and work with customers to develop an Individual Plan for Employment, providing necessary to meet their specific vocational goal.

**5. Senior community service employment activities** authorized under Title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3056 et seq.); The Area Office of the Aging is represented on Workforce Solutions board. Our PA CareerLink® centers collaborate with the providers of services to older individuals. Older individuals are able to participate in the full range of services available in our PA CareerLink® centers. In addition, services to older individuals are coordinated with either Associates for Training and Development (A4TD) or the AARP Foundation depending on the county. All providers post job opening on PA's Workforce Development System of Record as required by Title V regulation. Collaboration with the provider in the PA CareerLink® centers include: job clubs held at the PA CareerLink®, PA CareerLink® centers provide a training site for participants, often as greeters, office support works, security guards, or career resource area attendants. These participants are trained as peer mentors to be able to assist older job seekers with referrals to SCSEP services. This collaboration aligns with goals of Workforce Solutions as it represents a strategic alliance for the betterment of our local communities.

**6. Postsecondary vocational education activities under the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq)** utilize the PA's workforce development system of record and PA CareerLink® ensuring that job seekers have access to all programs that have been approved on this list for our local area. Staff in the PA CareerLink® centers assist job seekers in accessing this list. In addition, Workforce Solutions staff work with post-secondary training providers (including Vocational – Technical Schools) to ensure that their programs meet the criteria for approval. In addition, job seekers have access to all of the training programs in the North Central Region available to them. Workforce Solutions through its Business and Education Connect Initiative has

## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

stressed the importance of technical education to job seekers in our region therefore having this information available at our PA CareerLink® centers. Board staff are also represented on several advisory boards and occupation advisory board at our CTCs.

**7. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.)** Programs authorized under **Section 403(a)(5) of the Social Security Act**, programs authorized under Part A of Title IV of the Social Security Act (TANF) programs authorized under Section 6(d)(4) of the Food Stamp Act of 1977. The Department of Human Services is represented in all of the PA CareerLink® centers in the North Central Region via referral and through the EARN contracted program with the board. In addition, the Local Management Committee (LMC), made up of all of our counties CAO Executive Directors assuring services to all eligible DHS customers, meets on a regular basis. Workforce Solutions receives EARN and TANF Youth Development funding which is subcontracted to the Title I Provider, to provide these services in the PA CareerLink® centers. This “one-stop” approach assists in assuring that job seekers are provided with the most efficient and effective services available to them. TANF funding is utilized to provide in school youth with a work experience program that includes work readiness components to prepare them with the soft skills need to succeed.

**8. Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers programs (activities authorized under chapter 2 of title II of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C. 2271 et seq.))** authorized under Chapter 2 of title II of the Trade Act of 1974, as amended (19 U.S.C. 2271 et seq.) and Section 123(c)(2) of the Trade Adjustment Assistance Reform Act of 2002 (Pub. L. 107-210), respectively. Many partners within the PA CareerLink® centers in North Central PA are involved in the TAA and TRA programs. While BWPO staff administer and coordinate the case management and training proposals for eligible job seekers, other staff including Title I staff assist in the assessment process to identify transferable skills as well as identify the employers looking for these skills thus ensuring employers have access to a skilled and educated workforce.

**9. Jobs for Veterans State Grants program (programs authorized under 38, U.S.C. 4100 et. seq.)** Activities authorized under chapter 41 of Title 38, U.S.C. (local veterans' employment representatives and disabled veterans outreach programs); Veteran's Representatives are available in all of the PA CareerLink® centers in the North Central Workforce Development Area including the affiliate site in Cameron County and have representation on the board through BWPO. Services to Veterans include case management, job development and referrals and ensure our employers have a skilled and educated workforce. The skills of Veterans are recognized by employers as highly transferrable.

**10. Community Services Block Grant (Employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.))** The Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) is the main source of federal funding for Community Action. Community Action agencies create, coordinate, and deliver comprehensive programs and services to many people living in poverty in order to help these individuals and their families achieve self-sufficiency. The Community Action Agencies that serve the North Central WDA include Northern Tier Community Action, Community Action for Jefferson County and Community Action of Central PA. Community Action is represented on our Youth Standing Committee. PA CareerLink® staff collaborates with Community Action to ensure the most appropriate services are provided to eligible customers. Many times the agencies work collaboratively to provide customers with a mix of services to assist them in reaching their training and employment goals.

**11. Reintegration of Ex-Offenders program (programs authorized under section 212 of the Second Chance Act of 2007 (42 U.S.C. 17532))** Currently there are no programs available in our region through the Second Chance Act. Workforce Solutions and PA CareerLink® staff do work with Criminal Justice Advisory Boards, Collaborative Boards, Probation offices and Domestic Relations offices in each county to ensure collaboration and referrals for services are occurring. Staff also ensure that employers are aware of the Federal Bonding Program that was created as an incentive to employers to hire at-risk, hard-to-place job seekers.

**12. Employment and training activities carried out by the Department of Housing and Urban Development** – currently these services are not available in the North Central PA region however when applicable we do work with the HUD housing agencies in our region. Frequently we have requests from housing agencies to attend meeting to share Labor Market Information with them, discuss services available at the PA CareerLink® centers and brainstorm ways we can collaborate. When appropriate the program managers at the housing agencies are connected to PA CareerLink® staff to discuss participants, referrals, etc. We are members of McKean County Family Self-Sufficiency Program Coordinating Committee that is being led by the McKean County Redevelopment and Housing Authority. In addition, we collaborate with the McKean County Housing Agency to ensure that the program they are working We also provide match services as well as letters of support to grants written by several housing agencies for projects that involve and employment and training requirements.

**13. Programs authorized by state unemployment compensation laws** are made available to customers by PA CareerLink® staff. There is a telephone available that is dedicated for customers to utilize if they have questions about their claims or who wish to file their claims by telephone. Having this telephone available in the PA CareerLink® centers help to ensure that job seeker customers know about and utilize the workforce system and understand its strong ties to economic development. These phones were not accessible during COVID as a state strategy to limit the number of individuals physically in our centers. Staff continued to field calls during this time and referred individuals to the website for assistance.

**Other Programs authorized by WIOA:** Please note that there are no programs in the North Central PA region currently available for any of the following 4 programs however see below for details of how we ensure that we are collaborating with these programs to the extent possible.

Job Corps program – Youth are referred to the Job Corps centers on a regular basis. Periodically, a Job Corps representative provides an orientation to the programs via video conferencing at one of our PA CareerLink® centers and will meet with interested students answering their questions and providing them with additional information.

Youth Build program – While there are currently no Youth Build Programs in the North Central PA region, we continue to search for opportunities similar to the Youth Build Programs currently in place in the Commonwealth.

Native American Programs: Upon identification of an eligible individual, we will assist in connecting them to the Council of Three Rivers American Indian Center, Inc. located at 120 Charles Street, Pittsburgh PA 15238 or by calling them at 412-782-4457 ext. 219. Website is <http://www.cotraic.org>.

Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker programs- Upon identification of an eligible individual we will assist in connected them to the Pathstone Corporation –Located at 421 McFarlan Road Suite E Kennett Square, PA 17103. Typically, we will call them first at: 310-925-5600.

As described previously in this plan Workforce Solutions’ strategic vision is enhanced by the WIOA services provided in the North Central PA region, particularly in the PA CareerLink® centers. No longer do job seekers and employers obtain employment and training services through several points of contact. As was the intent of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and further strengthened in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), a central point of contact for these services results in a proactive, efficient and effective system. Workforce Solutions seeks to continuously improve the system and to ensure satisfaction on both our employers and job seekers. PA CareerLink® staff in our region work collaboratively to ensure the programs offered align with our vision and ensure customers are provided seamless services from the intake process and throughout their involvement with the workforce system.

All of the partners and their programs, as mentioned earlier, are aware of and part of the strategic planning of the Board. Regular updates are provided to staff. It is expected the programs offered through the PA CareerLink® center align with the strategic vision of the Board. This is evaluated on a regular basis both informally and formally. The PA CareerLink® Operator provides functional supervision of the PA CareerLink® Administrators to ensures the vision is being carried out.

## North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

Consistent with the vision of WIOA Partnerships in American Job Centers (TEGL 4-15) – PA CareerLink® centers, Workforce Solutions continues to strive for a seamless workforce delivery system. The vision as referenced in TEGL 4-15 is:

- Connect all customers to the full range of services available in their communities;
- Provide Seamless, customer-focused, integrated service delivery across all programs and enhance access to the programs' services;
- Ensure that businesses and job-seekers have access to information and services that lead to positive employment outcomes.

Grantees, subrecipients, and contractors funded under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) must abide by WIOA law, regulations, and guidance, state and local WIOA policies. Workforce Solutions recognizes that this begins with the core partners of the system but continues with the required and additional partners in our region in order to effectively align service delivery and maximize resources.

The Commonwealth “strives to consistently provide excellent service to workforce development customers, both individuals and businesses” and therefore has committed to establishing minimum requirements for PA CareerLink® career services orientation, basic career services customer flow and a customizable template for development of the Individual Employment Plan. Workforce Solutions, in alignment with the state WIOA Combined Plan, has also implemented similar initiatives:

- Development and implementation of the required single Memorandum of Understanding which was discussed and negotiated at the local level and describes the services to be provided as well as contains agreements on funding the costs of services and the operating costs of the system.
- In addition, as agreed to in the Memorandum of Understanding core partners agree to:
  - Provide substantive referrals in accordance with this policy – to customers who are eligible for supplemental and complementary services and benefits under partner programs.

Workforce Solutions drafted a Referral Guidance document that not only describes different forms of referral processes but require feedback and follow-up that will be monitored by staff. Our goal for this policy is to ensure that partners understand the value and importance of following up on referrals to ensure that our customers do not experience trouble using other services available to them without assistance.

- Participation on the Workforce Delivery System Committee which includes board and staff members as well as representatives from the WIOA required partners in the workforce delivery system. The role of this committee to provide oversight and continuous improvement of the PA CareerLink® System, including Operating Budgets, the development of procurement requests, proposals and resulting contract between the entity selected to serve as the system Operator and the board as well as oversight and guidance of the system operator.
- Core and additional partners are represented on all of the committees of the board often utilizing their expertise to serve as chairs of the committees. For example, the Chair of the youth committee is the District Administrator for the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) for our region.
- Workforce Solutions staff hold began holding monthly webinars, “Workforce Spotlight,” with all PA CareerLink® staff (all partners). A topic is discussed each month with question and answer period as well as discussion about topics of interest or clarification. Topics of discussion include federal, state and local policies and procedures as well as the customer centered design approach to serving all customers etc. Due to COVID we moved these monthly webinars to zoom and take turns hosting

## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

the event. The host will design the agenda including the topic, best practices and activities. This has opened the line of communication amongst all partners and has proven to be a best practice.

- Workforce Solutions staff strive for a cohesive and seamless workforce delivery system where we can openly collaborate for the successful economic vitality of our rural region.
- Workforce Solutions staff participate on a wide variety of advisory councils and boards that represent not only workforce but other entities with similar missions such as the North Central PA PREP, Northwest PA Area Health Education Center (AHEC), Western Continuum of Care (COC) Board of Directors, PA Workforce Development Association (PWDA), Junior Achievement, Advisory Boards for all Career and Technical Centers and many of our post-secondary education providers.

Each year prior to the beginning of a new program year the WDB Executive Committee for the board reviews the performance of the Title I Contractor for Adult and Dislocated Worker Services. This review includes the following:

- successful attainment of the federally mandated performance measure.
- successful attainment of the board's goals including enrollment in key activities, career services, workshops, work-based training, and other training.
- review of expenditures including attainment of 80% obligation in Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth; and comparison of budget to expenditures.

If any deficiencies are noted during this review or anytime throughout the year, the board will work with the Title I Contractor to address those concerns.

In summary, as reflected on the Organizational Chart which is attached to this document, the Chief Elected Official Board (CEO) specifically is responsible for the activities of the Workforce Development Board. The WDB operates through its four standing committees as described in detail above. The WDB also entered into an agreement with the PA CareerLink® Operator to oversee the activities of our PA CareerLink® centers. WDB staff are employed by Workforce Solutions but answer to the WDB and CEO. The fiscal agent falls under the responsibility of the WDB. The PA CareerLink® Operator is responsible for oversight of the PA CareerLink® centers through collaboration with the Site Administrators.

### **Alignment with Other Partners Programs:**

In addition, within the North Central WDA there are additional agencies who provide a variety of services that both our job seeker and business customers can and do benefit from. Workforce Solutions considers all of these agencies as part of the service delivery network in the NCWDA. The agencies include but are not limited to: local and regional economic development agencies, the Small Business Development Centers, Drug and Alcohol agencies, Mental Health agencies, 4-H Cooperative extension, Junior Achievement, Chambers of Commerce, etc. Workforce Solutions has taken great steps at ensuring that all agencies are working together to the best of their abilities and at the very least are aware of the other programs and services available to our customers.

Below is a list of examples of how this extended service delivery network operates in our region:

- Directory Development - Directories of Chambers of Commerce, Secondary and Post-Secondary Schools and Training Providers, Career and Technical Centers, Libraries, Agencies serving youth, economic development staff, etc. are compiled and updated on a regular basis. Workforce Solutions communicates and provides outreach to all on a regular basis (at the very least quarterly) to share best practices, share grant opportunities and others means of collaboration.
- North Central Business and Education Partnership – encouraging the collaboration between business and education through regular meetings, dialogue, sharing of Labor Market Information and most importantly providing activities that connect business with education.
- Sector Partnerships – a regional (all 6 counties of the NCWDA) approach to ensuring that our local employers are aware of the programs that are available to assist them as well as ensuring access to the skilled workers that they require.
- Career Pathways – In 2020, Workforce Solutions developed and implemented Career Pathways Sector Guides for each sector recognized by the PA Department of Labor and Industry. The sector guides are



## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

designed to provide information about career pathways in the North Central PA region and benefits workforce development professionals, businesses and job seekers. All PA CareerLink® staff were trained in the use of the sector guides. The guides provide a general overview of the potential progression of occupations within the region but are not specific to a single employer but rather industry sectors. Workforce Solutions implement Career Pathways Mapping as a follow up to the development of the guides. Working with a consulting firm, a companion guide was developed that provides business service teams with the knowledge and skills to create employer specific career pathways maps. These maps, developed in collaboration with the business service teams and the employers can assist in employers with updating job descriptions, can be used in new hire orientations to illustrate progression and potential for promotion within the organization and to show employees how they can move from one job to another with that company.

- PA SIX - PA SIX is an initiative designed to increase awareness about the great career opportunities that exist in the counties of PA SIX as well as promote the exceptional quality of life residents enjoy. PA SIX, also known as North Central Pennsylvania includes the counties of Cameron, Clearfield, Elk, Jefferson, McKean and Potter. This initiative was led by Workforce Solutions for North Central PA who partnered with employers, economic development agencies, communities, chambers of commerce and individuals to develop and execute the PA SIX Marketing Campaign. Through the PA SIX brand we desire to raise awareness of PA SIX as a career destination and ultimately attract and retain talented individuals so that PA SIX employers can continue to thrive into the future. More at <https://www.discoverpasix.com>.
- Registered Apprenticeship - Workforce Solutions has been successful in increasing the awareness of Registered Apprenticeships as a recruitment and retention tool for employers from all industries through the PA SMART grant opportunity. Ten new Registered Apprenticeship programs were developed with our outreach and assistance. We also implemented a guidance tool that provides all PA CareerLink® staff with the information needed to assist in the recruitment of employers to consider implementing Registered Apprenticeship program to assist with their workforce challenges. One of the apprenticeships developed is for Licensed Practical Nurses (LPN) and we were able to utilize WIOA funding to support the Related Technical Instruction (RTI) for the apprentices which leveraged additional funding. We continue to increase Registered Apprenticeship and Pre Apprenticeship Programs in our region by enrolling staff in the Registered Apprenticeship Navigator Program implemented by the Keystone Development Partnership (KDP), partnership with the German Chamber of Commerce located in Pittsburgh PA and through collaboration with our industry partnerships and business service teams.
- Pre-Apprenticeship – Workforce Solutions has also been successful in increasing the awareness of pre apprenticeship programs in the region. While only one new program was implemented, we were in the process of working with a local Career and Technical Center to ensure that all of their programs became approved Pre-Apprenticeship programs aligned with Registered Apprenticeships in our region. The pandemic forced this work to halt but this will be revisited during in the new few years.

The board will increase our work with Agricultural employers through the Agricultural Recruitment System (ARS) so that staff are able to assist these employers with their permanent, temporary and / or season labor job postings in PA's workforce development system of record and by marketing openings to job seekers. The board will work to identify the migrant farm workers as estimated by the Center for Workforce Information and Analysis (CWIA) which indicates that our region has approximately 150 Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers (MSFW) who plant Green Wrap Tomatoes in our region

### 3.3. *How will the local board work with the entities carrying out core programs to:*

- *Expand access to employment, training, education and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly individuals with barriers to employment.*

Workforce Solutions collaborates with organizations throughout the North Central region to expand access to employment, training, education and supportive services, particularly to those individuals who have barriers to employment.

Workforce Solutions requires / expects the workforce system to be a seamless system that results in employment of

## North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

its customers with priority on the hard to serve. We maintain 6 comprehensive centers and 1 affiliate center in our 6 county region and each center is focused on service access, delivery and quality by offering job seekers and employers a “one-stop” to all services provided by its partners. Staff are well trained, cross trained and aware of other services available to job seekers and employers that are not housed in the centers.

This begins with outreach to the hard to serve categories as required in WIOA and the populations identified in the boards Priority of Service Policy as described below:

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA or Opportunity Act) requires priority be given to public assistance recipients, other low-income individuals and individuals who are basic skills deficient, when providing individualized career services and training services using WIOA title I Adult program funds. In addition, Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) No. 3-15 specifies that priority should also be applied to individuals that are both underemployed and low-income. WIOA provides a focus on serving individuals with barriers to employment, and the intent of this priority in the law is to ensure access to these populations on a priority basis. Under the WIA priority was required for public assistance recipients and other low-income individuals when funds were limited. Under the WIOA, priority of service is required regardless of the funding levels and also is expanded to include individuals who are basic skills deficient. This policy was approved by Workforce Solutions at its April 6, 2016 board meeting therefore the effective date is also April 6, 2016. The policy has been approved by the Commonwealth.

Workforce Solutions recognizes the intent of Congress through WIOA to utilize our funding to better serve those with barriers to employment. While we have historically served this population through our system there is now a heightened sensitivity to their needs. Services will continue to be refined to best meet their needs and to collaborate with partner agencies on the removal of barriers. Below please find more detailed information on service strategies for specific populations with barriers to employment:

- Approach to identify qualified applicants for partner programs – There is a Workforce Navigator in each of our PA CareerLink® comprehensive centers that is responsible for welcoming customers, visitors and guests as well as triage all who enter defining how and who may best fill their needs. The navigators are trained on the eligibility requirements of all partner programs in the centers and provide an initial assessment of all customers so that they are triaged to the appropriate staff. The navigators are fully supported by the Operating Budgets and the PA CareerLink® Site Administrators are responsible for their day to day duties.
- Workforce System staff must verify eligibility prior to the provision of services to all customers. Individuals whose eligibility is not yet determined may receive interim support from Wagner-Peyser, WIOA title III services as they are universally available without eligibility requirements. Workforce Solutions in accordance with Labor and Industry’s Workforce System Guidance No. 04-2015, recognizes the need for self-certification as a viable source for documenting eligibility. With the exception of Out of School Youth, the use for self-certification is limited and only available after all other sources of eligibility verification are exhausted. Self-certification may be accepted from an individual who has experienced a loss of documentation due to 1) a natural or man-made disaster such as fire, flood, tornado; 2) eviction from residence resulting in a loss of supporting documentation; or 3) individual is fleeing or has fled an abusive or untenable home situation. Workforce staff must use self-certification in a manner reflective of the aforementioned guidance (i.e. limited and rare circumstances; or last resort) and only for the following criteria elements:
  - Date of Actual Dislocation (Dislocated Worker)
  - Displaced Homemaker (Dislocated Worker)
  - Reemployment Opportunity is Poor / Unlikely to Return-to-Work (Dislocated Worker)
  - Permanently or Temporarily Laid Off as a Consequence of the Disaster (Dislocated Worker)
  - English Language Learner (Youth)
  - Homeless (Youth and Adult)
  - In/Aged Out of Foster Care System (Youth)
  - Offender (Youth)
  - Pregnant or Parenting (Youth)
  - Runaway (Youth)
  - School Status at time of Registration (Youth)

## North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

Telephone/Document Inspection Verification is allowable to verify eligibility as well however only as a last resort. Applicant Statements as a form of self-attestation and if used a rationale must be provided via case notes on PA CareerLink® in the applicant's electronic case record describing the other methods of verifying eligibility through the workforce staff attempted prior to the use of an applicant statement. Applicant statements and self-attestations cannot be used for family size/family income criteria in determining eligibility. Workforce Solutions requires title I staff to report the use of each of these methods for eligibility on a quarterly basis. Workforce Solutions utilizes a random sampling methodology to ensure the accuracy of the self-attestations for all title I programs eligibility.

- Services to Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers – Typically this type of individual also is in need of workshops (including work readiness) and education/training. Many times these individuals are lacking a solid work history and need work experience prior to being placed in full time work.
- Services to Veterans and related eligible persons, including National Guard and returning veterans. Although the (shared) Veterans Representative is available in each PA CareerLink® to disabled Veterans, Non-disabled Veterans and /or eligible spouses have all services available to them. Workforce Solutions has a Priority of Service to Veteran Policy in place which ensures Veterans and / or eligible spouses are identified at the point of entry so they can take full advantage of the priority of services. The Veterans Priority of Service policy is applicable to six programs offered in the PA CareerLink® System to include WIOA Adult, WIOA Dislocated Worker, National Emergency Grants, Wagner-Peyser State Grants, Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) and Senior Community Service Employment Program.
- Workforce Solutions also ensured that our PA CareerLink® centers are aware of and providing the services available to veterans through the “GoldCard Initiative”. When a veteran presents a “Gold Card” to PA CareerLink® staff they are receiving enhanced intensive services including 6 months of follow up.
- Services to TANF customers and low-income individuals – Workforce Solutions receives TANF and EARN funding and award funding to the Title I Contractor. Therefore, a job seeker who is also a public assistance recipient is referred to the appropriate Case Manager to explore opportunities through the EARN contract.
- Services to displaced homemakers — This type of individual is trying to secure employment opportunities after years of being out of the workforce. Typically, workshops and education/training are the services most appropriate to this job seeker population.
- Services to women and minorities - Typically this type of individual is also in need of workshops and education/training. Many times these individuals lack a solid work history and need work experience prior to being placed in full time work.
- Training for Non-Traditional Occupations – Training for nontraditional employment is encouraged and is recognized by the WDB approved/ State ETPL-Eligible Training Providers List. Workforce Solutions partners with training providers in our region to provide short term training to job seekers including returning veterans, minorities, women and the economically disadvantaged in non-traditional occupations. The training consists of job search skills, communication and teamwork and hands on training required by this industry for entry level employment.
- Services to individuals with multiple barriers to employment, including:
  - Older individuals – Services to older individuals are provided at all PA CareerLink® centers in the North Central Region. Older individuals are able to participate in the full range of services available. In addition, services to older individuals are coordinated with Associates for Training and Development, Pathstone or the AARP Foundation depending on the county. Associates for Training and Development, Pathstone and the AARP Foundation staff posts all job opening on PA CareerLink® as required by Title V regulation. Collaboration with Associates for Training and Development and Pathstone in the PA CareerLink® centers include: job clubs held at the PA CareerLink® or connect virtually with internet access, PA CareerLink® centers sometimes provide a training site for participants, often as greeters, office support workers, security guards, or career resource area attendants. These participants are trained as peer mentors to be able to assist older job seekers with referrals to SCSEP services.
  - Persons with limited English proficiency – Services are coordinated with the appropriate ESL provider in the local area.
  - Persons with disabilities – The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation is the sole WIOA Title IV provider of services to eligible persons. Eligibility to receive services under WIOA Title IV may only be determined by a qualified Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) Counselor. In addition, OVR staff provide technical

## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

- assistance regarding the provision of disability related services to one-stop staff and partners.
  - Ex-offenders – Services are coordinated with the local judge and/or probation officers as appropriate. Workforce Solutions has ensured that all PA CareerLink® staff are aware of the legal limitations on the employment of Ex-Offenders in PA in order to better serve this population. This has been accomplished by building a relationship with each of the county Criminal Justice Advisory Boards (CJABs) and then introducing them to PA CareerLink® staff requesting that a local representative attend the CJAB meetings and increase the collaboration with other members. The board encourages more than just referrals be made but rather discussion about leveraging staff time and resources.
  - Individuals Needing Basic Education Skills – Services are coordinated with ABLE Providers who are partners in the PA CareerLink® centers. Job Seekers may also be referred to services provided by Community Action Agencies in the region through their high school equivalency diploma or GED/HiSET Work Skills programs. Another option for some job seekers is the HiSET, which is a national high school equivalency testing program developed and implemented by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) and Iowa Testing Programs (ITP). The HiSET program includes the elements that states, educators, policymakers and employers state are critical to providing out-of-school youth and adults with the best opportunity to demonstrate their high school-level proficiency and their readiness for higher education or the workplace. The test is affordable and accessible in both paper and computer delivery formats and is used in the PA CareerLink® centers for customers. The nearest testing center is located in Warren PA and is easily accessible for customer who have transportation.
  - Services to Dislocated Workers and Trade Act eligible participants – Rapid Response activities are available to those workers who have permanently lost their job. Included are re-employment, training and education opportunities; as well as an orientation of the various services available to this specific population. Services are coordinated at the PA CareerLink® centers with Unemployment Compensation, Trade Act Program Services and other agencies as appropriate for the individual.
  - Native Americans – the board will continue to explore a partnership with the state of NY to increase the services and opportunities available to the Native American population that we share or are in close proximity to.
- *Facilitate the development of Career Pathways and co-enrollment, as appropriate, in core programs (specify on-ramps from adult education).*

### **Career Pathways Development**

Career Pathways – In 2020, Workforce Solutions developed and implemented Career Pathways Sector Guides for each sector recognized by the PA Department of Labor and Industry. The sector guides are designed to provide information about career pathways in the North Central PA region and benefits workforce development professionals, businesses and job seekers. All PA CareerLink® staff were trained in the use of the sector guides. The guides provide a general overview of the potential progression of occupations within the region but are not specific to a single employer but rather industry sectors. Workforce Solutions implement Career Pathways Mapping as a follow up to the development of the guides. Working with a consulting firm, a companion guide was developed that provides business service teams with the knowledge and skills to create employer specific career pathways maps. These maps, developed in collaboration with the business service teams and the employers can assist in employers with updating job descriptions, can be used in new hire orientations to illustrate progression and potential for promotion within the organization and to show employees how they can move from one job to another with that company.

### **Co-enrollment processes within the PA CareerLink® system**

Within our PA CareerLink® centers, Title I, Title II and Bureau of Workforce Partnership and Operations (BWPO) staff work together to ensure co-enrollment on intake. Through the PA CareerLink® Certification process the board has established goals for each center. Co-enrollment is one of those measures the board uses to evaluate the success of each center. In addition, co-enrollment is a benchmark of our Title I provider the board uses to evaluate their effectiveness. The Title I staff provide individualized career services as well as intake, assessment, job search workshops, rapid response services, IEP and ISS development and case management for all WIOA eligible customers.

## North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

Title II staff assist in the assessment process. BWPO staff provide core services including intake, job screening and referrals, employer outreach services, job search workshops, rapid response activities and case management for job seekers. BWPO and Title I staff match job seekers with employers in need of their skills by providing basic job search skills and information to entry level job seekers. Career Pathway and high priority occupation information is used with job seekers to individuals them set goals and assist them in their job search, help job seekers connect to adult education and other resources to eliminate barriers to employment. Case managers then help connect job seekers to employers' career pathways once they have completed their education and/or developed the skills that will match employers' needs.

### Registered Apprenticeship and Registered Pre-Apprenticeship

Workforce Solutions is committed to increasing the number of RAPs and Pre-RAPs in our region because we agree that employers who sponsor these programs will be positioned to build a pipeline of workers who are better retained and invested in their job. Apprenticeships can aide in reducing recruiting costs and improve work productivity. We view this as a partnership with the PA CareerLink® centers, and in particular the Business Services Teams and Title I staff as well as the board, staff and the PA Apprenticeship and Training Office (ATO). Workforce Solutions has committed time and resources to ensure that we have the staff capacity to accomplish this work. We have created and implemented a Registered Apprenticeship Guidance document that has been shared with all PA CareerLink® staff to outline the process for RAP and PRE RAP development and implementation and to provide information and other resources to increase the knowledge of RAPS and Pre RAPS so they can assess and refer employers to board staff for further assistance as well as assess and refer job seekers to established RAPs and Pre RAPs. Workforce Solutions is also committed to utilizing WIOA and other identified funding to support RAPS and Pre RAPs in our region through all programs including: TANF Youth Development, WIOA Youth, and EARN. Likewise, RAPs and Pre RAPs are considered essential to all of the work we do around career pathways, co enrollment and services for those with disabilities.

#### **3.4. *What strategies will be implemented in the local area to improve business and employer engagement that:***

- *Support a local area workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses in the local area;*

Workforce Solutions has implemented several regional strategies to ensure that the workforce development system meets the needs of businesses in the local area and to facilitate engagement of businesses and other employers. These methods include:

Industry Partnerships - We oversee three active Industry Partnerships for the following industries: Manufacturing, Healthcare and Social Assistance and Building and Construction. The partnerships meet quarterly and are employer driven. A support team made up of workforce, economic and community development agencies, post-secondary education providers, small business development centers, WEDnetPA providers, and other appropriate agencies collaborate on solutions to address the needs and priorities of business.

As emerging sectors are identified and needs arise the board will form Industry Partnerships to meet the demand of the emerging industries as was done when the Marcellus Shale industry was more present in our region.

We have created a Business Services Guidance document to ensure that our business services teams are active, collaborating with all partners and increasing the employer penetration rate. We also provide the business service teams with information on other programs that exist to assist employers including but not limited to: WEDnetPA funding, Registered Apprenticeships, Work Opportunity Tax Credits and other programs that we become aware of.

On a regular basis we provide Labor Market Information to partners in our region including our business partners. Businesses that are expanding request a variety of Labor Market Information from us to ensure that they will have access to a skilled workforce. New companies moving into the region contact us (and are often referred to us by our county and regional economic development agencies) for a variety of labor market information.

## North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

Registered Apprenticeship - Workforce Solutions has been successful in increasing the awareness of Registered Apprenticeships as a recruitment and retention tool for employers from all industries through the PA SMART grant opportunity. Ten new Registered Apprenticeship programs were developed with our outreach and assistance. We also implemented a guidance tool that provides all PA CareerLink® staff with the information needed to assist in the recruitment of employers to consider implementing Registered Apprenticeship program to assist with their workforce challenges. One of the apprenticeships developed is for Licensed Practical Nurses (LPN) and we were able to utilize WIOA funding to support the Related Technical Instruction (RTI) for the apprentices which leveraged additional funding.

Pre Apprenticeship – Workforce Solutions has also been successful in increasing the awareness of pre apprenticeship programs in the region. While only one new program was implemented we were in the process of working with a local Career and Technical Center to ensure that all of their programs became approved pre apprenticeship programs aligned with Registered Apprenticeships in our region. The pandemic forced this work to halt but this will be revisited during in the new few years.

Workforce Solutions is committed to increasing the number of RAPs and Pre-RAPs in our region because we agree that employers who sponsor these programs will be positioned to build a pipeline of workers who are better retained and invested in their job. Apprenticeships can aide in reducing recruiting costs and improve work productivity. We view this as a partnership with the PA CareerLink® centers, and in particular the Business Services Teams and Title I staff as well as the board, staff and the PA Apprenticeship and Training Office (ATO). Workforce Solutions has committed time and resources to ensure that we have the staff capacity to accomplish this work. We have created and implemented a Registered Apprenticeship Guidance document that has been shared with all PA CareerLink® staff to outline the process for RAP and PRE RAP development and implementation and to provide information and other resources to increase the knowledge of RAPS and Pre RAPS so they can assess and refer employers to board staff for further assistance as well as assess and refer job seekers to established RAPs and Pre RAPs. Workforce Solutions is also committed to utilizing WIOA and other identified funding to support RAPS and Pre RAPs in our region through all programs including: TANF Youth Development, WIOA Youth, EARN. Likewise, RAPs and Pre RAPs are considered essential to all of the work we do around career pathways, co enrollment and services for those with disabilities.

PA State Local Internship Program (PA SLIP)– Workforce Solutions has strategically implemented this internship program over the past three years as a youth retention strategy. Employers view this program as a youth pipeline program that helps them secure a skilled workforce for the future.

### **Small Businesses and New and Emerging Industries**

The North Central region is made up of mainly small employers. Small businesses need the services available at the PA CareerLink® centers to provide comprehensive services from helping customers identify resources for entrepreneurship, self-employment and small business development to acting as their human resources department when they are ready to make their first and subsequent hires. Most often small businesses are referred to agencies such as the Clarion University Small Business Development Center or the Northwest Industrial Resource Center for further assistance. We will continue to strive for the goal that PA CareerLink® staff and in particular Business Service Teams have the knowledge of all opportunities available to employers.

In addition, all business including small business and new and emerging industries benefit from the On-the-Job Training Program (OJT). On-the-Job Training (OJT) is training provided by the employer to a Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) eligible trainee, who has completed the required individualized career services available via the PA CareerLink® centers, has been unsuccessful in obtaining employment through such services, and has been approved for OJT participation by the Title I staff.

➤ *Manage activities or services that will be implemented to improve business engagement;*

**Business Service Teams.** Our business service team guidance is consistently revisited and revised to ensure changes from WIOA are captured in the policy and that each PA CareerLink® center has a Business Service team that meet on

## North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

a consistent basis. We have enhanced our business service teams to improve customer service. The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) now has a business service representative that sits on the teams. In some centers, Title II staff sit on the BST as well. County Economic Development Agencies, Chambers of Commerce, Small Business Development Centers and Industrial Resource Centers are all encouraged to participate on these teams as well. The teams meet monthly, share labor market information updates and discuss strategies regarding how the various partners can work together to better serve regional employers.

- *Better coordinate regional workforce and economic development strategy, messaging, engagement and programs; and*

Workforce Solutions has a long history of collaborating with economic development agencies that is more fully explained in the response to Section 3.5. Workforce Solutions is an active, non-funded PREP partner and participate in ENGAGE PA visits often. Staff are trained on the use of Executive Pulse as well. While ENGAGE visits decreased during the pandemic, virtual ENGAGE visits have been implemented and Workforce Solutions plays an active role in these visits as well. When a referral is received through an ENGAGE visit, Workforce Solutions quickly responds to the employer in need of workforce services.

- *Strengthen linkages between the PA CareerLink® service delivery system and unemployment insurance (UI) programs.*

**Unemployment Insurance Linkages.** The local area complies with the Commonwealth's Register for Work and Work Search law by helping unemployed individuals register on the PA CareerLink® system. It also provides telephones in the PA CareerLink® Center so that Unemployment Compensation (UC) Claimants can call the statewide toll-free UC number regarding any benefits questions they may have.

Additionally, individuals who are likely to exhaust their benefits are identified by the State through the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program. These individuals are directed to come to a PA CareerLink® location for job search assistance.

At the PA CareerLink® centers, they are provided with an orientation of services and are given an initial assessment to determine their specific workforce needs. Based on their unique circumstances, they may be referred to additional services and resources, such as job search workshops, staff-assisted job search activities, partner programs, supportive services, and/or training activities to help them secure a new job, or begin a new career.

The PA CareerLink® centers' resource areas are equipped with multiple desktop computers. One computer is equipped for handicap accessibility and one computer is reserved in each center for Unemployment Compensation purposes. Access to the internet and printing is available at no charge to the customer.

Any potential UC eligibility issues identified during RESEA, or any other UC Claimant interaction are referred to the State's Unemployment Insurance department for resolution.

There are two Workforce Development Representatives from the PA Department of Labor and Industry who provide a variety of workshops covering Unemployment Compensation topics. They are: Nancy Smithbauer out of the Altoona UC Service Center serving Jefferson and Clearfield Counties and Dave Mascaro out of the Erie UC Service Center serving Cameron, Elk, McKean and Potter Counties in our region. Both Nancy and Dave have provided workshops in our region over the past several years. Workforce Solutions will coordinate with Nancy and Dave and our PA CareerLink® Administrators to ensure that we are hosting these workshops in our region on a quarterly basis. We will utilize video conferencing to ensure that all of our centers and employers can benefit from these workshops.

If UC staff continue to be present in our centers, we will continue to use the list for appointments as well as call backs. In anticipation of the lack of UC presence, we feel the UC telephone will assist in management the flow of UC customers.

**Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) services.** OVR meets the needs of businesses by providing no cost services

## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

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.

- 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?*

### **Coordination with Regional Workforce and Economic Development Strategy.**

Workforce Solutions is a partner of the North Central PA PREP participating in all meetings and collaborating in all initiatives of the partnership. Under the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Partnership for Regional Economic Performance initiative, economic development service providers in the North Central region of Pennsylvania formalized a long history of partnering and sharing capacity and services to create the North Central Partnership for Regional Economic Performance or North Central PREP.

Two great examples of a strategic collaboration with economic development are the creation of our Regional Action Plan as well as the maintenance of an Employer Services Matrix. First the regional action plan was developed in response to a group of employers in manufacturing concerned about their current and future workforce. Based on the demographics it was obvious that they would not have an applicant pool for skilled positions. We then applied for and received a grant to assist in the development of this plan. Several strategic sessions were held with all of the stakeholders in our region resulting in a plan to 1) Attract individuals to relocate to our region to live and work; 2) Attract individuals to commute to our region to work and 3) Retain our young people either after high school or post-secondary school to live and work. Twelve action items were identified to assist our region in becoming more attractive to individuals to relocated to. Second, the Employer Services Matrix includes services available to employers that includes Economic Development, Workforce Development, Technology Assistance, Small Business Development and Tourism Development resources. The matrix is updated on a regular basis and is shared with all employers. Employers from our Manufacturing Industry Partnership requested such a document and it is helped employers understand the resources available to them at a glance.

In addition, WDB staff collaborate with economic development in the following efforts:

- WDB staff participate on the Community Economic Development System (CEDS) board.
- WDB staff are members of the North Central PREP
- WDB staff work closely with county economic development agencies.
- WDB staff coordinate often with the Clarion University SBDC, Penn State PA LaunchBox, and the Northwest Industrial Resource Center.
- WDB staff collaborate with our WEDnetPA PA provider in our region during the application process as well as throughout the year. This collaboration ensures the best use of funds through both WEDnetPA and Industry Partnerships and avoids any potential duplication.

**Training for Self-Employment.** Entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services should provide the basics of starting and operating a small business. Some examples of such skill development include, but are not limited to, the following abilities:

- Taking initiative;
- Creatively seeking out and identifying business opportunities;
- Developing budgets and forecasting resource needs;
- Developing a customer-centered environment;
- Understanding various options for acquiring capital and the tradeoffs associated with each option; and
- Communicating effectively and marketing oneself and one's ideas.

Individuals who are interested in self-employment are referred to community partners, such as the Clarion University



## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

Small Business Development Center, to receive specialized assistance that includes but is not limited to:

- Entrepreneurship education that provides an introduction to the values and basics of starting and running a business. These programs often guide individuals through the development of a business plan and may also include simulations of business start-up and operation.
- Enterprise development which provides support and services that incubate and help individuals develop their own businesses. Enterprise development programs go beyond entrepreneurship education by helping individuals access small loans or grants that are needed to begin business operation and by providing more individualized attention to assist in the development of viable business ideas.
- Access to micro-loans and grants available to start or expand businesses
- Consulting and business assistance services to help start or expand businesses.
- By collaborating with the partners in our region such as the Clarion University SBDC the board is supporting and promoting a training strategy that leads to self-employment. When working with individuals with barriers to employment, self-employment is a viable means to provide income, assets and other elements of self-sufficiency. The board requires the Business Service Teams to include as members' representatives from the SBDC that serves our region which has led to the SBDC offering several of their business development workshops in our PA CareerLink® centers when appropriate.

The local board currently measures employer outcomes results in several ways. The board requires PA CareerLink® centers to reach out to 5 new employers per quarter to increase employer participation. We then look at the employer penetration report available on PA's workforce development system of record to determine if the percentage has increased. The board also requires employers participating in our Industry Partnerships to provide wage increase data for all employers participating in consortia based training.

### **4. OPERATIONAL PLANNING: Local Area Workforce Delivery System**

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

The current local workforce system structure that has been developed in the North Central WDA was a collaborative effort of the local elected officials, the members of Workforce Solutions board, staff to the board, and committees of the board. The appropriate agreements and boards have been established in the region to respect the individual roles of policy vs. program. The roles and relationships of each stakeholder follow.

#### **Chief Elected Official (CEO)**

Workforce Solutions has formed the Chief Elected Official Board referred to as the CEO. The purpose of this Board is to provide policy oversight in administering the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and in partnership with Workforce Solutions to:

- Establish and appoint a Workforce Development Board to assist in carrying out provisions of the Act, as identified within the Chief Elected Officials Agreement.
- Assist in developing the mission, strategic vision, and policies for the board.
- Assist in identifying and closing gaps in local / regional workforce resources.
- Assist in developing a multi-year local Workforce Development Plan.
- Designate an operator of the PA CareerLink® (one-stop delivery system) and assist in overseeing their operation.
- Assist in certifying providers of workforce development and training in the area.
- Assist in developing performance based accountability measures and using them to assess programs, measure customer satisfaction, and issue "consumer report:" or "report cards" on providers of training.
- Assist in promoting private sector participation in the local workforce development system.
- Assist in developing and approving the WDB and related budgets.

## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

- Assist in applying for additional non-federal, state, and other workforce funds as an integrated system in response to regional and local needs.

Membership of the CEO Board consists of: one chief elected official representative, as agreed upon by the local elected officials of that county, from each of the counties served by the North Central WDA including: Cameron, Clearfield, Elk, Jefferson, McKean and Potter. The local elected official chosen shall remain on this Board until such time as their term in office has expired or by majority vote of the elected officials of that county.

### **Workforce Solution for North Central Pennsylvania**

Workforce Solutions is a 501c3 established to serve as the grant recipient and fiscal agent for WIOA funds by the CEO. We serve a private sector driven board with twenty-two (22) members currently. Twelve (12) of the members are from the private sector while ten (10) represent the public sector – with representation from education, community-based organizations, economic development, and labor and industry; as required by the legislation. The process used to select new members from the private sector is to request nominations from business organizations (i.e. Chambers of Commerce). These nominations are then brought to the Chief Elected Officials (CEO) for appointment. When a vacancy occurs, the board solicits nominations to the local elected officials from those appropriate agencies to fill each vacancy.

Staff to the board are employees of Workforce Solutions. This structure was developed and approved by the CEO and the WDB and is described in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Agreement (WIOA) and the Chief Elected Officials (CEO) Agreement. In addition, the WDB enters into an agreement with the WIOA Title I providers to establish roles and responsibilities specifically related to program implementation and outcomes for all WIOA Title I programs and the EARN program.

Workforce Solutions in accordance with WIOA and the PA Department of Labor and Industry Board Guidance have the following functions:

- (a) Develop and submit a 4-year local plan for the local area, in partnership with the chief elected official and consistent with WIOA sec. 108;
- (b) Conduct workforce research and regional labor market analysis to include:
  - (1) Analyses and regular updates of economic conditions, needed knowledge and skills, workforce, and workforce development (including education and training) activities to include an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses (including the capacity to provide) of such services to address the identified education and skill needs of the workforce and the employment needs of employers;
  - (2) Other research, data collection, and analysis related to the workforce needs of the regional economy as the WDB, after receiving input from a wide array of stakeholders, determines to be necessary to carry out its functions;
- (c) Convene local workforce development system stakeholders to assist in the development of the local plan and in identifying non-Federal expertise and resources to leverage support for workforce development activities.
- (d) Lead efforts to engage with a diverse range of employers and other entities in the region in order to:
  - (1) Promote business representation (particularly representatives with optimum policy-making or hiring authority from employers whose employment opportunities reflect existing and emerging employment opportunities in the region) on the Local WDB;
  - (2) Develop effective linkages (including the use of intermediaries) with employers in the region to support employer utilization of the local workforce development system and to support local workforce investment activities;
  - (3) Ensure that workforce investment activities meet the needs of employers and support economic growth in the region by enhancing communication, coordination, and collaboration among employers, economic development entities, and service providers; and

## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

- (4) Develop and implement proven or promising strategies for meeting the employment and skill needs of workers and employers (such as the establishment of industry and sector partnerships), that provide the skilled workforce needed by employers in the region, and that expand employment and career advancement opportunities for workforce development system participants in in-demand industry sectors or occupations;
- (e) With representatives of secondary and postsecondary education programs, lead efforts to develop and implement career pathways within the local area by aligning the employment, training, education, and supportive services that are needed by adults and youth, particularly individuals with barriers to employment;
- (f) Lead efforts in the local area to identify and promote proven and promising strategies and initiatives for meeting the needs of employers, workers and job seekers, and identify and disseminate information on proven and promising practices carried out in other local areas for meeting such needs;
- (g) Develop strategies for using technology to maximize the accessibility and effectiveness of the local workforce development system for employers, and workers and job seekers, by:
  - (1) Facilitating connections among the intake and case management information systems of the one-stop partner programs to support a comprehensive workforce development system in the local area;
  - (2) Facilitating access to services provided through the one-stop delivery system involved, including access in remote areas;
  - (3) Identifying strategies for better meeting the needs of individuals with barriers to employment, including strategies that augment traditional service delivery, and increase access to services and programs of the one-stop delivery system, such as improving digital literacy skills; and
  - (4) Leveraging resources and capacity within the local workforce development system, including resources and capacity for services for individuals with barriers to employment;
- (h) In partnership with the chief elected official for the local area:
  - (1) Conduct oversight of youth workforce investment activities authorized under WIOA sec. 129(c), adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities under WIOA secs. 134(c) and (d), and the entire one-stop delivery system in the local area;
  - (2) Ensure the appropriate use and management of the funds provided under WIOA subtitle B for the youth, adult, and dislocated worker activities and one-stop delivery system in the local area; and
  - (3) Ensure the appropriate use management, and investment of funds to maximize performance outcomes under WIOA sec. 116;
- (i) Negotiate and reach agreement on local performance indicators with the chief elected official and the Governor;
- (j) Negotiate with CEO and required partners on the methods for funding the infrastructure costs of one-stop centers in the local area in accordance with § 678.715 of this chapter or must notify the Governor if they fail to reach agreement at the local level and will use a State infrastructure funding mechanism;
- (k) Select the following providers in the local area, and where appropriate terminate such providers in accordance with 2 CFR part 200:
  - (1) Providers of youth workforce investment activities through competitive grants or contracts based on the recommendations of the youth standing committee (if such a committee is established); however, if the Local WDB determines there is an insufficient number of eligible training providers in a local area, the Local WDB may award contracts on a sole-source basis as per the provisions at WIOA sec. 123(b);
  - (2) Providers of training services consistent with the criteria and information requirements established by the Governor and WIOA sec. 122;
  - (3) Providers of career services through the award of contracts, if the one-stop operator does not provide such services; and

## North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

- (4) One-stop operators in accordance with §678.600 through §678.635 of this chapter;
- (m) In accordance with WIOA sec. 107(d)(10)(E) work with the State to ensure there are sufficient numbers and types of providers of career services and training services serving the local area and providing the services in a manner that maximizes consumer choice, as well as providing opportunities that lead to competitive integrated employment for individuals with disabilities;
- (n) Coordinate activities with education and training providers in the local area, including:
  - (1) Reviewing applications to provide adult education and literacy activities under WIOA title II for the local area to determine whether such applications are consistent with the local plan;
  - (2) Making recommendations to the eligible agency to promote alignment with such plan; and
  - (3) Replicating and implementing cooperative agreements to enhance the provision of services to individuals with disabilities and other individuals, such as cross training of staff, technical assistance, use and sharing of information, cooperative efforts with employers, and other efforts at cooperation, collaboration, and coordination;
- (o) Develop a budget for the activities of the Local WDB, with approval of the chief elected official and consistent with the local plan and the duties of the Local WDB;
- (p) Assess, on an annual basis, the physical and programmatic accessibility of all one-stop centers in the local area, in accordance with WIOA sec. 188, if applicable, and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 *et seq.*); and
- (q) Certification of one-stop centers in accordance with § 678.800.

### Operator

Through a competitive procurement process, Workforce Solutions contracts with a vendor to provide services as the One Stop Operator. Workforce Solutions began the competitive Operator procurement process in September of 2021 with the goal of completion and an operator in place by January of 2022. The competitive procurement process will be conducted in a full and open competition that promotes efficiency and effectiveness; ensures regular consideration of operator performance and costs and evaluates operator performance helping to ensure continuous improvement. The procurement process will comply and be consistent with all applicable federal law, regulation, guidance, Office of Management and Budget (OMB), circulars and the Uniform Guidance, as well as state law, policy and technical assistance regarding all stages of procurement activity including awarding of contracts and post-award activity for any federally funded activity or program.

Beginning January 1, 2022, we successfully awarded the Operator work to an Operator Consortium made up of 4 one stop partners: Equus Workforce Solutions (Lead Applicant) in cooperation with the Bureau of Workforce Partnership Operations (BWPO), Seneca Highlands Intermediate Unit 9 (IU9), and Central PA Intermediate Unit 10 (IU10) will function as the One-Stop Operator under WIOA for the North Central Workforce Development Area. Workforce Solutions will provide technical assistance, oversight and monitoring of the Operator Consortium through June 30, 2023.

### Responsibilities:

**Required Role.** Under the leadership of Workforce Solutions, the Operator is required to coordinate the delivery of partner program services in the local service delivery system, ensuring a seamless distribution of career services, training services, and other employment-related services provided by required and additional partner programs offered in the local area.

To help ensure the coordination of program services, the operator is charged with the functional supervision of one-stop service locations. Workforce Solutions serves as the employer of record for one Site Administrator while two Site administrators are employees of the Bureau of Workforce Program Operations (BWPO). Functional supervision

## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

of all site administrators is provided by the Operator while administrative oversight is provided by the employer of record. Workforce Solutions ensures that functional supervision does not supersede human resource provision established by any staff (s) employer of record.

Other Responsibilities – Workforce Solutions will assign additional responsibilities to the operator which may include:

### A. Administration

- Is fully cognizant of WIOA and its regulations, state and LWDB imposed policies or directives, and other applicable laws, regulations, rules or contracts to guide administrative requirements and efforts.
- Ensure full implementation of the federal, state, and local branding standards.
- Ensure full compliance with all federal, state, and local policies and procedures related to the one-stop system and one-stop Centers through oversight of foot traffic reporting, referrals, participant and employer survey results, partner surveys, operator performance reports and evaluation of program goals and outcomes, and performance accountability to ensure high-level performance and outcomes.
- Develops and modifies procedures for one stop service operations to ensure regional consistency throughout all PA CareerLink® locations in the north central workforce development area.
- Is fully cognizant of and implements the negotiated MOU.
- Develops procedures for one-stop service location operations in partnership with stakeholders.
- Negotiates with partners and service providers regarding their one-stop service location roles, responsibilities, services and activities, staff complement and other operational particulars.
- In concert with Workforce Solutions and/or assigned local area staff, negotiates with partners and service providers regarding expenses related to space, occupancy, shared costs and other costs associated with the operator and one-stop delivery system.
- Recommends, maintains and retires one-stop service locations' technologic tools and services.
- Provides LWDB with programmatic and fiscal reports and other relevant operational information.
- Meets with Workforce Solutions staff and Workforce Development Board members (optional) on a monthly basis to discuss expectations, roles/responsibilities, to make recommendations and to provide updates.

### B. Coordination

- Coordinates the provision of one-stop partners' services and activities as reflected in the MOU
- Establishes and maintains relationships with one-stop partners and service providers to effect high degrees of partner collaboration and program integration
- Serves as an unbiased intermediary or liaison for all the one-stop partners and service providers
- Encourages one-stop partner and service provider engagement
- Coordination of access to virtual resources at appropriate partner locations, libraries, and other points within the local workforce area.
- Organizes and leads periodic one-stop partner and service provider meetings
- Attends individual one-stop partner and service provider meetings
- Knows and understands the programmatic parameters of every partner and service provider
- Knows and understands one-stop partners' and service providers' performance measurement goals
- Ensures that an effective customer referral mechanism is in place and monitors usage
- Provides avenues of communication so that one-stop partners and services providers are informed of LWDB and other workforce development stakeholders' communiques or activities
- Communicates one-stop partners and service providers' services and activities to the community
- Communicates local area stakeholder workforce development related community events
- Recruits and develops new partnership in PA CareerLink®.
- Communicates strategic objectives of Workforce Solutions Staff and the North Central Workforce Development Board
- Development of a data-sharing plan that will enable a system-wide approach to address local

## North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

workforce issues. Data will be gathered from all partner systems to improve service delivery in response to area labor market requirements.

- Development of new initiatives responsive to the needs of the workforce and businesses including the development of in-demand accelerated training opportunities.
- Development of workforce development activities responsive to business needs assessment.
- Implementation of new and innovative methods to serve customers with barriers to employment including ex-offenders, homeless individuals, veterans, and individuals with disabilities.

### C. Managerial

- Provides operational management supervision across the PA CareerLink® service delivery system
- Plans, directs, reviews and provides functional supervision of PA CareerLink® staff
- Ensures compliance with federal and state issued policy and guidance, LWDB policies and local area operational manual(s) as may exist
- Reviews and enacts the LWDB's WIOA regional and local plan, policies and directives
- Reviews and helps ensure compliance with PA CareerLink® Certification policy and guidance. If the LWDB is selected as an operator, this responsibility is transitioned to the Pennsylvania Workforce Development Board.
- For LWDAs that maintain PA CareerLink® operational and/or business plan(s), the operator, in partnership with stakeholders and as directed by the LWDB, will help develop and implement such plans
- Reviews and enacts the L&I's Non-Discrimination Plan, or NDP
- Plans and directs service delivery system and staff capacity building
- Implements customer satisfaction measurement and feedback mechanisms
- Seeks and remediates duplicated employment and training services and activities
- Monitors identified performance indicators and provides required performance reports

### IV. Limitations.

The operator may not perform the following functions:

- Manage or significantly participate in the competitive selection process for the operator
- Select or terminate an operator, career services and youth providers
- Develop and submit an Operating Budget for local activities but may provide financial records to the LWDB
- Be responsible for oversight of itself or other operators
- Negotiate local and/or regional performance accountability measures
- Convene system stakeholders to assist in the development of WIOA plans
- Prepare and submit WIOA plans

### REPORTS

*The One-Stop Operator Consortium shall periodically prepare written reports to Workforce Solutions upon request, and such other State and Federal agencies as requested or otherwise required by law, pertaining to the following;*

- Coordination and tracking partner agency referrals,
- Developing a reporting process in conjunction with the Partners for the ongoing tracking of performance and referrals, with monthly reporting to the local board,
- Coordination of maintaining the content and integrity of partner website information and linkages,
- Assisting partners responding to economic needs of the local area as specified in the local and regional plans, as well as report outcome to the local board,
- Assisting partners in identifying to recruit and match businesses with the skilled workers they seek,
- Compiling minutes, notes or agendas meetings convened of the One-Stop Partners to:
  - work with partners to assess customer/client needs as part of the continuous improvement process for the one-stop center,

## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

- collect customer feedback and work with partners to address issues as part of the continuous improvement process for the one-stop center,
- periodically review one-stop program(s) and center accessibility,
- assure one-stop center materials are up-to-date and available for resource room staff and customers, and maintain adequate inventories,
- report and coordinate maintenance needs with center staff and property owner/manager

### **Responsibilities of Workforce Solutions for North Central Pennsylvania, Inc. in the procurement and selection of the Operator:**

Workforce Solutions maintains a contractual relationship with the selected PA CareerLink® Operator. Workforce Solutions will provide ongoing policy guidance and technical support to the Operator to ensure that performance expectations are continually communicated and policy issues are addressed. Workforce Solutions is also responsible for performance monitoring and will perform periodic quantitative and on-site reviews of Operator performance to ensure that customer service and financial standards are being met. Workforce Solutions is responsible for determining partners, beyond the ones required by WIOA, who will provide staff and other resources for the PA CareerLink® site in the North Central region. As a result of commitments made by partners documented in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

The procurement process includes:

- Development and distribution of a Requests for Proposals
- Bidders Conference
- Publishing questions and answers from bidder's conference
- Proposal Submission Deadline Date
- Staff Review and Negotiations
- Bidders may be asked to attend an interview with board and/or Workforce Solutions staff members to review proposals and to vet questions
- Chief Elected Official (CEO) Board Approval
- North Central Workforce Development Board Approval
- Agreement finalization and execution

Workforce Solutions has established a comprehensive workforce development system in the North Central Region in collaboration with our many partners. Please see below in regard to roles and functional relationships of our partners:

**WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, WIOA Youth, TANF Youth and EARN–** Contract awarded to EQUUS Workforce Solutions in PY 2018 to provide programs and services to Dislocated Workers, Adults, and Youth. In addition, as a required partner of the One Stop, WIOA Title I also contributes both resources (the board contributes to the Operating budget of the centers on behalf of the WIOA Title I provider) and staff capacity to support the overall function of the PA CareerLink® centers. Workforce Solutions is currently in the process of procuring for a WIOA Title I Youth, Adult, Dislocated Worker and EARN contractor effective July 1, 2021.

**WIOA Title II Adult Education and Literacy Acts** – Organizations carrying out Title II activities in our region provide adult education and literacy to customers throughout our region. Representatives from these organizations serve in various capacities on the board and board committees and attend meetings throughout the year. Agency representatives and board staff meet as a coalition to discuss alignment of services and their role as partners in the workforce development system. The current Title II providers in our region are: IU9, IU10, Community Action, Inc. through a subcontracting agreement with IU9, and Jefferson-Clarion Head Start.

**WIOA Title III Wagner Peyser** – The Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry is the entity carrying out programs and activities under this title. Representatives from L & I serve on the board and various committees of the board.

**WIOA Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation** – The Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry is the entity carrying out programs and activities under this title. Representatives from L & I serve on the board and various committees

## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

of the board.

Workforce Solutions assigns the duties of the EEO Officer for our region to a staff in order to ensure that individuals are protected. The board staff work with county EEO Liaisons in each center to review/discuss processes and potential claims. The EEO Officer for the North Central Workforce Development Area is Linda Franco, Workforce System Manager for Workforce Solutions. The EEO Officer monitors and evaluates compliance with equal opportunity laws, guidelines, and policies to ensure that employment practices and contracting arrangements give equal opportunity without regarding to race, religion, color, national origin, sex, age or disability.

Full contact information follows:

Linda Franco, Workforce System Manager/EEO Officer  
Workforce Solutions for North Central PA  
425 Old Kersey  
Kersey, PA 15845  
814-245-1935  
[lfranco@ncwdb.org](mailto:lfranco@ncwdb.org)

As mentioned throughout this plan, the board and staff work collaboratively with a number of agencies throughout our region in regard to service provisions to both our employers and job seekers. With a concentration on hard-to-serve individuals, our board has looked to agencies that typically serve this population to create innovative approaches to serving these customers

The workforce development system consists of WIOA Title I, Title II - Adult Education and Literacy Acts, Title III - Wagner-Peyser Act employment services and Title IV - Vocational Rehabilitation as well as other community based agencies which provide services to job seekers, and in particular, those with barriers to employment. These agencies include but are not limited to Job Corps, Community Action agencies, behavioral health agencies, juvenile and adult probation agencies and homeless and housing agencies.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 requires that each local workforce development area have at least one comprehensive one-stop center providing an accessible marketplace for employer and job seekers to be effectively matched. In Pennsylvania, the one-stop centers are known as PA CareerLink® centers. The North Central Workforce Development area has six Comprehensive PA CareerLink® centers and one Affiliate PA CareerLink® center.

**Bureau of Workforce Partnership and Operations (BWPO):** (Wagner-Peyser Act) provides career services to job seekers and businesses. BWPO administers the Trade Adjustment Assistance Act, Rapid Response Program, Veteran Services, RESEA or Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment Program and labor exchange services. Staff participates on all teams.

**Labor Exchange:** The Labor Exchange module of the PA CareerLink® website serves as an entry point for Job Seekers and Employers to access PA CareerLink® services. The system supports the employment service functions of the PA CareerLink® staff, to include the collection of common data that creates a job seeker “resume,” employer job orders, job searches and job order referrals. A PA CareerLink® enrollment may be accomplished through self-service or with staff assistance. Enrollment status will be established on the date the first entry of data takes place.

Labor Exchange provides policies and procedures as dictated by DOL regulations, as well as the services provided by staff, which extends participant status. However, the PA CareerLink® is open to all PA CareerLink® staff that provides these services. Furthermore, these services are available to all customers, therefore no formal determination of eligibility is required. Self-directed job searches; resume building, workforce information access, and enrolling in online job search courses will initiate Labor Exchange Program participation. DVOP/LVER services are available to veterans, eligible persons and transitioning service members (TSMs) who meet the applicable



## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

eligibility criteria. WIOA programs are open to job seekers who meet those particular eligibility requirements.

**JVSG Veterans Program:** The Bureau of Workforce Partnership and Operations (BWPO) administers the Jobs for Veterans' State Grant (JVSG) on behalf of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. It bears mention, at the outset, that the JVSG serves as a staffing grant funded by the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL). This staffing grant provides highly restrictive funding which, in turn, allows BWPO to hire additional PA CareerLink® staff—Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialists and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVERs)—that provide services to PA CareerLink® veteran customers. Federal law, codified at 38 U.S.C. §§ 4103A & 4101, specifically delineates the very focused duties that DVOP Specialists and LVERs perform. DVOP Specialists, for example, do not provide services to all veteran customers, but a specific subset that includes veteran customers with significant barriers to employment. Federal guidance, promulgated at Veterans' Program Letter Nos. 03-14; 03-14, Change 1; 03-14, Change 2; 04-14; and 08-14, defines those with significant barriers to employment.

The BWPO Program Coordination Unit, which assists the PA CareerLink® system with JVSG technical assistance, shoulders responsibility for grant administration. This includes grant reporting, monitoring, and ensuring that consistent statewide policies and procedures exist with respect to JVSG activities. Day-to-day operating matters fall to the individual PA CareerLink® sites. The BWPO assistant regional directors supervise JVSG-funded staff, i.e., the DVOP Specialists and LVERs, through subordinate supervisors at each PA CareerLink® office. BWPO reissued its written policy regarding JVSG-funded staff supervision on September 6, 2013. Save for the central office unit administering the JVSG, it remains current.

**Trade Adjustment Assistance Act:** The TAA Program includes training, employment and case management services, job search allowances, relocation allowances, Trade Readjustment Allowances (TRA), Reemployment Trade Adjustment Assistance (RTAA) and Alternative Trade Adjustment Assistance (ATAA), and the Health Coverage Tax Credit (HCTC) (a benefit available to eligible TAA recipients which is administered by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS)).

The TAA program was first established at the USDOL by the Trade Act of 1974, and has been amended several times. Individual workers who are members of the certified worker group apply for benefits and services at a PA CareerLink® office. Individual workers who meet the qualifying criteria may receive: job training; income support in the form of Trade Readjustment Allowances (TRA); job-search and relocation allowances; Health Coverage Tax Credit (HCTC) as determined by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS); and for workers age 50 and older, a wage supplement in the form of Re-Employment Trade Adjustment Assistance (RTAA). Additionally, all workers covered by a certification are eligible for employment and case-management services, including basic and individualized career services either through the TAA program or through and in coordination with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and the Wagner-Peyser Act as discussed in WIOA TEGL No. 3-15.

**RESEA Program:** RESEA is supported by a federal grant to fund additional services to assist UI claimants in becoming reemployed. L&I will select and notify UC claimants to participate in RESEA. Those chosen to participate are identified as most likely to exhaust UC, with military (UCX) claimants receiving first priority as required by the grant.

A WDP 13, RESEA self-scheduling letter, will be mailed to those claimants selected to participate in RESEA. The letter has instructions for the claimants to schedule themselves for a RESEA Orientation at their local PA CareerLink® center. The RESEA consists of a group orientation and an individual meeting with PA CareerLink® staff. The group orientation consists of an introduction to the RESEA participation requirements and the services provided by the PA CareerLink®. Following the group orientation, claimants will be provided a one-on-one interview to further assess reemployment services needed, development of an Individual Employment Plan (IEP) and review and confirmation of the information the claimant provided on the UC eligibility assessment. PA CareerLink® staff will summarize the RESEA meeting on an outcome form, complete a checklist, and provide this information to UC. Each RESEA participant will be scheduled for an appropriate reemployment follow-up activity.

In addition, staff will conduct follow-up phone calls at 30 and 60 days after their initial appointment. During the

## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

follow-up phone calls staff review and update the IEP, provide additional reemployment services, and determine if additional services are needed through the PA CareerLink®. Any UC eligibility issues identified during the RESEA initial interview or follow-up activity will be promptly reported to UC for adjudication.

**Rapid Response:** The Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry (L&I), Deputy Secretary for Workforce Development is responsible for the executive oversight of Pennsylvania's Rapid Response program under WIOA. Rapid Response Services (RRS) within the Bureau of Workforce Partnership & Operations (BWPO) is responsible for the implementation of Pennsylvania's Rapid Response program. Pennsylvania uses a regional approach in the delivery of Rapid Response assistance. Rapid Response Services staff are assigned to geographic areas comprising one or more local workforce development areas (LWDA). Regional staff work closely with the PA CareerLink® staff, the local workforce development boards (LWDB), and/or chief elected officials, meeting periodically to share information on layoffs and dislocations to plan an appropriate response.

Pennsylvania's Rapid Response program provides timely, relevant services to dislocated workers. To organize a broad-based response to dislocation events, the Rapid Response staff must form a core team that includes local agencies and organizations. Rapid Response staff mobilizes agencies and community resources to create a seamless, integrated service strategy that helps workers transition to reemployment.

The PA Department of Labor and Industry has identified layoff aversion and business and job retention as important components of workforce development. Rapid Response staff expedites linkages among at-risk companies and local and state economic development entities. Pennsylvania's Rapid Response program includes support of the Strategic Early Warning Network (SEWN) operated by the Steel Valley Authority in conjunction with LWDBs. Through SEWN, early warning mechanisms are established to identify firms at risk of leaving or closing prior to the actual decisions by companies to shut down or move. The services include timely identification of at-risk businesses; initial viability assessments; key services delivery; and pre-feasibility studies.

**The PA Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED)** is the commonwealth agency that represents the required one-stop (PA CareerLink®) partner representing employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant Act (42. U.S.C. 9901 et seq.) at the state level. The mission of the Community Services Block grant (CSBG) is to provide a full range of services and activities having a measurable impact on the causes of poverty in a community or those areas of a community where poverty is a particularly acute problem. Only federally designated Community Action Agencies (CAA) receive funding, therefore in PA, there are 44 CAAs that cover all 67 PA counties. Ameliorating the causes and conditions of poverty take on a variety of community engagement activities and collaborative activism to remove obstacles that block the achievement of self-sufficiency; i.e. employment and training resources; community stakeholder collaboration; literacy activities; obtaining adequate housing; grassroots activities that provide intervention to the causes of poverty; addressing the needs of youth through programming or coordination; and increased engagement in community planning and improvement activities.

CSBG has been in existence since 1965, always with the same mission: to improve the causes and conditions of poverty. Initiatives have included, but are not limited to: neighborhood linkages, leverage of community resources, conduction of Volunteer Income Tax Assistance sites, building housing capacity, provision of family self-sufficiency and case management, facilitation of Results-Oriented Management and Accountability. For every \$1 of CSBG funds, the PA network leveraged \$16.82 from other federal, state, local and private sources, including the calculated value of volunteer hours.

DCED will participate in the local workforce service delivery system via the local CSBG agencies. CSBG agencies located in this local workforce development area may:

- Participate on local and regional planning groups;
- Engage in Business Service Teams activities;
- Have print materials available in the PA CareerLink® centers;
- Be linked to local workforce websites on computers;
- Potentially hold meetings at PA CareerLink® centers;
- Conduct joint employer outreach sessions as necessary; and

## North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

- Seek to leverage grant funding opportunities.

DCED will contribute financial assistance to be applied to the infrastructure and other operating costs of the PA CareerLink® sites annually and to the extent funding exists.

It is DCED's commitment that CSBG, as a required partner, will become part of the fabric of the public workforce system in a much more formalized way than in the previous years.

**The Department of Human Services** while unable to provide a PA CareerLink® staff person to assist in the day to day activities, will provide a liaison at each County Assistance Office as needed and as a referral person to take applications or to provide information about the Workforce Delivery System. DHS will participate in the local Workforce Delivery System via the local CAOs. CAOs located in this local workforce development area may: Participate on the Workforce Development Board, local and regional planning groups; Local Management Committee (LMC), have print materials available in the PA CareerLink® centers; be linked to local workforce websites on computers; potentially hold meetings at PA CareerLink® centers; and seek to leverage grant funding opportunities. DHS will also contribute financial assistance to be applied to the infrastructure and other operating costs of the PA CareerLink® sites annually and to the extent funding exists.

Below is a list of the six Comprehensive PA CareerLink® centers and the Affiliate PA CareerLink® including all contact information for the Administrator and other supervisors and managers of all staff that are located in each center: See Attachment 3 for services available at each of the centers as well as the affiliate.

Pennsylvania CareerLink® center Cameron County (Affiliate) at Emporium  
135 West 4<sup>th</sup> Street  
Emporium, PA 15834  
Phone: (814)601-0538  
TDD/TYY: (814)834-2154  
Hours of Operations – Mondays through Thursdays – 8:30 am – 12:30 pm

PA CareerLink® Administrator: Mr. Ron Hammersley (employer of record – L&I)  
Pennsylvania CareerLink® center Clearfield County at Clearfield  
1125 Linden Street  
Clearfield, PA 16830  
Phone: (814) 765-8118  
Fax: (814) 765-2955  
TDD/TYY: (814) 765-2688  
Hours of Operations: Monday through Friday - 8:00 am – 4:00 pm  
PA CareerLink® Administrator: Mr. Todd L. Vanderburgh (employer of record – L&I)

Pennsylvania CareerLink® center Clearfield County at DuBois  
602 West DuBois Avenue Unit #1  
DuBois, PA 15801  
Phone: (814) 371-0250  
Fax: (814) 371-8729  
TDD/TYY: (814) 913-1018  
Hours of Operation: Monday through Friday - 8:00 am – 4:00 pm  
PA CareerLink® Administrator: Mr. Ron Hammersley (employer of record – L&I)

Pennsylvania CareerLink® center Elk County at St. Marys  
245 Depot Street  
St. Marys, PA 15857  
Phone: (814) 834-2857  
Fax: (814) 834-7872  
TDD/TYY: (814) 834-2154  
Hours of Operations: Monday through Friday - 8:00 am – 4:00 pm

## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

PA CareerLink® Administrator: Mr. Ron Hammersley (employer of record – L&I)

Pennsylvania CareerLink® center Jefferson County at Punxsutawney

103 East Union Street, Suite 2

Punxsutawney, PA 15767

Phone: (814) 938-0504

Fax: (814) 938-0509

TDD/TYY: (814) 938-0583

Hours of Operation: Monday through Friday - 8:00 am – 4:00 pm

PA CareerLink® Administrator: Mr. Todd L. Vanderburgh (employer of record – L&I)

Pennsylvania CareerLink® center McKean County at Bradford

40 Davis Street

Bradford, PA 16701

Phone: (814) 363-9100

Fax: (814) 368-5376

TDD/TYY: (814) 363-4596

Hours of Operation: Monday through Friday - 8:00 am – 4:00 pm

PA CareerLink® Administrator: Mr. Ron Hammersley (employer of record – L&I)

Pennsylvania CareerLink® center Potter County at Coudersport

279 Route 6 West

Coudersport, PA 16915

Phone: (814) 274-9330

Fax: (814) 274-7651

TDD/TYY: (814) 274-0499

Hours of Operation: Monday through Friday - 8:00 am – 4:00 pm

PA CareerLink® Administrator: Mr. Todd L. Vanderburgh (employer of record – L&I)

The following programs and services are available at PA CareerLink® sites within the region either in-person or through virtual services:

### BUSINESS SERVICES

- Serve as a single point of contact for businesses, responding to all requests in a timely manner
- Provide information and services related to Unemployment Insurance taxes and claims
- Assist with disability and communication accommodations, including job coaches
- Conduct outreach regarding Local workforce system's services and product
- Conduct on-site Rapid Response activities regarding closures and downsizings
- Develop On-the-Job Training (OJT) and Transitional Employment (TE) contracts
- Provide access to labor market information
- Provide customized recruitment and job applicant screening, assessment and referral services
- Provide employer and industry cluster-driven Occupational Skills Training through Individual Training Accounts with eligible training providers
- Assist with the interpretation of labor market information
- Conduct job fairs
- Develop customized training opportunities to meet specific employer and/or industry cluster needs
- Use of one-stop center facilities for recruiting and interviewing job applicants
- Consult on human resources issues
- Coordinate with employers to develop and implement layoff aversion strategies
- Post job vacancies in the state labor exchange system and take and fill job postings
- Provide information regarding disability awareness issues
- Provide incumbent worker upgrade training through various modalities

## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

- Provide information regarding workforce development initiatives and programs
- Provide information regarding assistive technology and communication accommodations
- Develop, convene, or implement industry or sector partnerships

### JOB SEEKER SERVICES

#### *Basic Career Services*

- Outreach, intake and orientation to the information, services, programs, tools and resources available through the Local workforce system
- Initial assessments of skill level(s), aptitudes, abilities and supportive service needs
- In- and out-of-area job search and placement assistance (including provision of information on in-demand industry sectors and occupations and non-traditional employment)
- Access to employment opportunities and labor market information
- Performance information and program costs for eligible providers of training, education, and workforce services
- Information on performance of the Local workforce system
- Information on the availability of supportive services and referral to such, as appropriate
- Information and meaningful assistance on Unemployment Insurance claim filing
- Determination of potential eligibility for workforce partner services, programs, and referral(s)
- Information and assistance in applying for financial aid for training and education programs not provided under WIOA

#### *Individualized Career Services*

- Comprehensive and specialized assessments of skills levels and service needs
- Development of an individual employability development plan to identify employment goals, including the review and discussion on career pathway opportunities, appropriate achievement objectives, and appropriate combination of services for the customer to achieve the employment goals
- Referral to training services
- Literacy activities related to work readiness
- Individual counseling and career planning
- Case management for customers seeking training services; individual in- and out- of- area job search, referral and placement assistance
- Work experience, transitional jobs, registered apprenticeships, and internships
- Workforce preparation services (e.g., development of learning skills, punctuality, communication skills, interviewing skills, personal maintenance, literacy skills, financial literacy skills, and professional conduct) to prepare individuals for unsubsidized employment or training
- Post-employment follow-up services and support (*This is not an individualized career service, but listed here for completeness.*)

#### *Training*

- Occupational skills training through Individual Training Accounts (ITAs)
- On-the-Job Training (OJT)
- Incumbent Worker Training
- Programs that combine workplace training with related instruction which may include cooperative education
- Training programs operated by the private sector
- Skill upgrading and retraining
- Entrepreneurial training
- Customized training conducted with a commitment by an employer or group of employers to employ an individual upon successful completion of the training
- Other training services as determined by the workforce partner's governing rules

## North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

### *Education*

- Instruction at all six adult basic education (ABE) and adult secondary education (ASE) educational functioning levels (EFL), plus English language acquisition (ELA) activities where there is a need.
- One-on-one or small group tutoring where there is a need
- Integration of digital literacy, employability skills and workforce preparation activities into services.
- Basic skills instruction will incorporate activities that includes the use of technology, promote critical thinking, and build self-management skills, such as utilizing resources and information, understanding systems, and working with others.
- Activities that help the individual assess potential barriers to successful participation in instruction.
- Integration of career awareness and career planning activities into services
- Case management to address barriers to participation and to plan and prepare for transition to postsecondary education and/or training, including introducing students to and helping them use the resources available through L&I and the PA CareerLink®
- Assisting students in identifying employment and career pathways that align with their skills and interests and also lead to jobs that pay
- Supporting students through the application process for employment or training.

### *Youth Services*

- Tutoring, study skills training, instruction, and evidence- based dropout prevention and recovery strategies that lead to completion of the 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 postsecondary credential.
- Alternative secondary school services, or dropout recovery services, as appropriate.
- Paid and unpaid work experiences that have as a component academic and occupational education, which may include: Summer employment opportunities and other employment opportunities available throughout the school year, pre-apprenticeship programs, internships and job shadowing, and on-the-job training opportunities.
- Occupational skill training, which shall include priority consideration for training programs that lead to recognized postsecondary credentials that are aligned with in-demand industry sectors or occupations in the local area involved.
- Education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster.
- Leadership development opportunities, which may include community service and peer-centered activities encouraging responsibility and other positive social and civic behaviors, as appropriate.
- Supportive services.
- Adult mentoring for the period of participation and a subsequent period, for a total of not less than 12 months.
- Follow-up services for not less than 12 months after the completion of participation, as appropriate.
- Comprehensive guidance and counseling, which may include drug and alcohol abuse counseling and referral, as appropriate.
- Financial literacy education.
- Entrepreneurial skills training.
- 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.
- Activities that help youth prepare for and transition to postsecondary education and training.

Workforce Solutions strives to build relationships with other key stakeholders in our region including Chambers of Commerce, secondary and post-secondary schools, local and regional economic development agencies, Small Business Development Centers, Industrial Resource Centers, local foundations, Penn State Extension Office, Junior Achievement, faith based organizations and other community based organizations. As we identify additional partners we connect them to the appropriate PA CareerLink® center and discuss ways to collaborate and leverage resources.

**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).**

A complete listing of the PA CareerLink® Partners that are authorized to provide services in the local area is found in the One-Stop Location and Program Services Chart, Attachment 3, and is also available on the Workforce Solutions website. This chart identifies the comprehensive and affiliate locations, the services available at each, and the roles and resource contributions of each of the Partners. Roles and responsibilities of each partner can be found in the Memorandum of Understanding between Workforce Solutions for North Central PA/the North Central Workforce Board, the PA CareerLink® system partners, and the Chief Elected Official Board on our website - <https://www.workforcesolutionspa.com/categories/pa-careerlink/pages/careerlink-what-is?from=business-solutions#workforce-system-partners>.

The Workforce System Manager for Workforce Solutions, Linda Franco, is responsible for ensuring equal employment opportunities and civil right protections as the EEO Officer.

The required and other one-stop partners are listed below along with their roles.

**WIOA Title I - Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs:** – Orientation of the PA CareerLink® System and basic career services; triage of available resources and services for employers and participants. Individualized career services to participants may include, but not limited to: diagnostic testing and assessments, career planning; case management, financial literacy, Job Ready workshops, supportive services; staff support/counseling, and follow up services. Training services include occupational training, work experience, and labor market information. Employer services include, but are not limited to: Business Needs Assessment, On-the-Job Training (OJT) and Subsidized Employment (SE) employment contracts for employers who hire participants; referrals of trained individuals in specific occupations; and refer participants to PA CareerLink® services.

**WIOA Title I- Youth Programs** address in-school youth, ages 14-21, and out-of-school youth, ages 16-24 with a much greater focus on the OSY population with no less than 75% of the funds directed to OSY activities and 20% expended on work experience activities. Youth will have the opportunity upon assessment of need to receive the required WIOA 14 elements of activities.

**TANF Youth Year-Round Programs** addresses work experience opportunities including during the summer months targeting potential dropouts, individuals with disabilities, adjudicated youth, foster children, homeless and runaways, pregnant or parenting youth, and migrants seeking to complete their educational goals and/or secure employment.

**EARN Program** addresses recipients of temporary assistance to needy families (TANF) with employment and training services leading to self-sufficiency. The Employment, Advancement, and Retention Network (EARN) program provides counseling, workshops, work experience activities, and training to address education and employment barriers to employment.

**Title II Adult Education Programs** in the North Central region will provide instruction at all six adult basic education (ABE) and adult secondary education (ASE) educational functioning levels (EFL), plus English language acquisition (ELA) activities where there is a need. Programs may support a tutoring program that offers one-on-one and/or small group instruction or volunteer classroom aides. Programs will prepare students for and support them in achieving successful transition to postsecondary education/training or employment. Programs will integrate digital literacy, employability skills and workforce preparation activities into services. Basic skills instruction will incorporate activities that require the use of technology, promote critical thinking, and build self-management skills, such as utilizing resources and information, understanding systems, and working with others. Programs will have an intake and orientation process that helps students and staff determine an individual's readiness for participation in the program. This includes activities to help the individual assess his/her own schedule and potential barriers to successful participation in instruction. It also includes a discussion of the individual's reasons and goals for participation. Programs will have attendance and other policies that are consistently enforced to help students develop the self-management skills to persist in services, with the goal that those skills will transfer to employment situations. Programs will integrate career awareness and career planning activities into the services

## North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

provided to students, including using those activities as the context for basic skills instruction. Programs will have at least one case manager who works with students to address barriers to participation and to plan and prepare for transition to postsecondary education and/or training. Case management activities in support of transition will be offered in a variety of ways: integrated into instruction, stand-alone group activities, and one-on-one case management support. The activities will include introducing students to and helping them use the resources available through L&I and the PA CareerLink®; helping students identify employment and career pathways that align with their skills and interests and also lead to jobs that pay; and supporting students through the application process for employment or training.

Title II services are provided at a variety of locations throughout the region, including the PA CareerLink®. Provision of services may vary depending on location.

Title II providers of the North Central region will:

- continue to provide and accept referrals for PA CareerLink® partner services.
- participate in cross training to help strengthen and streamline the referral process.
- serve on Job Seeker and Business Services teams as appropriate, based on location.
- have representation on the local Workforce Development Board and committees of the WDB.
- collaborate with site administrators to provide cross-training for access to services through partner staff.
- provide TABE assessment to customers, as appropriate, based on location.
- assist partner staff in proper TABE administration practices.
- be provided access to PA's workforce development system of record.
- collaborate on additional projects, outside our current scope of work, where our professional services can benefit employers and job seekers (i.e. grant funded IET projects).

**Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR)** of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 - Provides assessments, evaluation, vocational counseling, case management, training, and business services. OVR's mission is to assist Pennsylvanians with disabilities secure and maintain employment and independence.

OVR sends and receives referrals to/from other PA CareerLink® partners directly and via the PA's workforce development system of record. Co-funding of OVR-eligible and Title I -eligible clients for training.

Designated staff are present in the PA CareerLink® centers on a regularly scheduled basis and as needed to serve participants with disabilities and employers.

Designated staff actively participate in Business Services Teams, Job Seeker meetings and Staff meetings.

Cross training and presentations are provided upon request for staff, employers, and participants as related to VR specialty areas of: Disability Awareness, Sensitivity and Etiquette, Reasonable Accommodations and Accessibility, and the VR process and services.

Services to individuals with disabilities include:

- Pre-Employment Transition Services for youth.
- Diagnostics and evaluation of medical, occupational, and educational abilities.
- Vocational Counseling and Guidance for goal and planned services development.
- Restoration to minimize limitations to employment and independence.
- Training and job skill development including but not limited to: basic skills, supported employment (job-coaching), technical, college, and on-the-job training.
- Direct and indirect placement services and individualized job seeking skills.
- Post-employment services for job adjustment and retention.

Business/employer services include:

- Staffing, consultation to retain current employees and accommodation solutions.
- Accessibility analysis, worksite modification consultation, and assistive technology information.



## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

- Financial incentives such as On-the-job training reimbursement and tax credit information.
- Disability Awareness, sensitivity and disability etiquette training, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) consultation.
- Networking resources including Business Leadership Network, The Job Accommodation Network, and the National VR Business Network.

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.

**Bureau of Workforce Partnership and Operations (BWPO):** (Wagner-Peyser Act) provides career services, case management, and training services to job seekers and businesses. BWPO administers the Trade Adjustment Assistance Act, Rapid Response Program, Veteran Services, RESEA or Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment Program and labor exchange services. Staff participates on all teams.

**Labor Exchange:** The Labor Exchange module of the PA CareerLink® website serves as an entry point for Job Seekers and Employers to access PA CareerLink® services. The system supports the employment service functions of the PA CareerLink® staff, to include the collection of common data that creates a Job Seeker “resume” creation, employer job orders, job searches and job order referrals. A PA CareerLink® enrollment may be accomplished through self-service or with staff assistance. Enrollment status will be established on the date the first entry of data takes place.

Labor Exchange provides policies and procedures as dictated by DOL regulations, as well as the services provided by staff, which extends participant status. However, the PA CareerLink® is open to all PA CareerLink® staff that provides these services. Furthermore, these services are available to all customers; therefore, no formal determination of eligibility is required. Self-directed job searches; resume building, workforce information access, and enrolling in online job search courses will initiate Labor Exchange Program participation. DVOP/LVER services are available to veterans, eligible persons and transitioning service members (TSMs) who meet the applicable eligibility criteria. WIOA programs are open to Job Seekers who meet those particular eligibility requirements.

**JVSG Veterans Program:** The Bureau of Workforce Partnership and Operations (BWPO) administer the Jobs for Veterans’ State Grant (JVSG) on behalf of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. It bears mention, at the outset, which the JVSG serves as a staffing grant funded by the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL). This staffing grant provides highly restrictive funding which, in turn, allows BWPO to hire additional PA CareerLink® staff members—Disabled Veterans’ Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialists and Local Veterans’ Employment Representatives (LVERs)—that provide services to PA CareerLink® veteran customers. Federal law, codified at 38 U.S.C. §§ 4103A & 4101, specifically delineates the very focused duties that DVOP Specialists and LVERs perform. DVOP Specialists, for example, do not provide services to all veteran customers, but a specific subset that includes veteran customers with significant barriers to employment. Federal guidance, promulgated at Veterans’ Program Letter Nos. 03-14; 03-14, Change 1; 03-14, Change 2; 04-14; and 08-14, defines those with significant barriers to employment.

The BWPO Program Coordination Unit, which assists the PA CareerLink® system with JVSG technical assistance, shoulders responsibility for grant administration. This includes grant reporting, monitoring, and ensuring that consistent statewide policies and procedures exists with respect to JVSG activities. Day-to-day operating matters fall to the individual PA CareerLink® sites. The BWPO assistant regional directors supervise JVSG-funded staff, i.e., the DVOP Specialists and LVERs, through subordinate supervisors at each PA CareerLink® office. BWPO reissued its written policy regarding JVSG-funded staff supervision on September 6, 2013. Save for the central office unit administering the JVSG, it remains current.

**Trade Adjustment Assistance Act:** The TAA Program includes training, employment and case management services, job search allowances, relocation allowances, Trade Readjustment Allowances (TRA), Reemployment Trade Adjustment Assistance (RTAA) and Alternative Trade Adjustment Assistance (ATAA), and the Health Coverage Tax Credit (HCTC) (a benefit available to eligible TAA recipients which is administered by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS)).

## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

The TAA program was first established at the USDOL by the Trade Act of 1974, and has been amended several times. Individual workers who are members of the certified worker group apply for benefits and services at a PA CareerLink® office. Individual workers who meet the qualifying criteria may receive: job training; income support in the form of Trade Readjustment Allowances (TRA); job-search and relocation allowances; Health Coverage Tax Credit (HCTC) as determined by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS); and for workers age 50 and older, a wage supplement in the form of Re-Employment Trade Adjustment Assistance (RTAA). Additionally, all workers covered by a certification are eligible for employment and case-management services, including basic and individualized career services either through the TAA program or through and in coordination with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and the Wagner-Peyser Act as discussed in WIOA TEGL No. 3-15.

**RESEA Program:** RESEA is supported by a federal grant to fund additional services to assist UI claimants in becoming reemployed. L&I will select and notify UC claimants to participate in RESEA. Those chosen to participate are identified as most likely to exhaust UC, with military (UCX) claimants receiving first priority as required by the grant.

A WDP 13, RESEA self-scheduling letter, will be mailed to those claimants selected to participate in RESEA. The letter has instructions for the claimants to schedule themselves for a RESEA Orientation at their local PA CareerLink® center. The RESEA consists of a group orientation and an individual meeting with PA CareerLink® staff. The group orientation consists of an introduction to the RESEA participation requirements and the services provided by the PA CareerLink®. Following the group orientation, claimants will be provided a one-on-one interview to further assess reemployment services needed, development of an Individual Employment Plan (IEP) and review and confirmation of the information the claimant provided on the UC eligibility assessment. PA CareerLink® staff will summarize the RESEA meeting on an outcome form, complete a checklist, and provide this information to UC. Each RESEA participant will be scheduled for an appropriate reemployment follow-up activity. In addition, staff will conduct follow-up phone calls at 30 and 60 days after their initial appointment. During the follow-up phone calls staff review and update the IEP, provide additional reemployment services, and determine if additional services are needed through the PA CareerLink®. Any UC eligibility issues identified during the RESEA initial interview or follow-up activity will be promptly reported to UC for adjudication.

**Rapid Response:** The Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry (L&I), Deputy Secretary for Workforce Development is responsible for the executive oversight of Pennsylvania's Rapid Response program under WIOA. Rapid Response Services (RRS) within the Bureau of Workforce Partnership & Operations (BWPO) is responsible for the implementation of Pennsylvania's Rapid Response program. Pennsylvania uses a regional approach in the delivery of Rapid Response assistance. Rapid Response Services staff are assigned to geographic areas comprising one or more local workforce development areas (LWDA). Regional staff work closely with the PA CareerLink® staff, the local workforce development boards (LWDB), and/or chief elected officials, meeting periodically to share information on layoffs and dislocations to plan an appropriate response.

Pennsylvania's Rapid Response program provides timely, relevant services to dislocated workers. To organize a broad-based response to dislocation events, the Rapid Response staff must form a core team that includes local agencies and organizations. Rapid Response staff mobilizes agencies and community resources to create a seamless, integrated service strategy that helps workers transition to reemployment.

L&I has identified layoff aversion and business and job retention as important components of workforce development. Rapid Response staff expedites linkages among at-risk companies and local and state economic development entities. Pennsylvania's Rapid Response program includes support of the Strategic Early Warning Network (SEWN) operated by the Steel Valley Authority in conjunction with LWDBs. Through SEWN, early warning mechanisms are established to identify firms at risk of leaving or closing prior to the actual decisions by companies to shut down or move. The services include timely identification of at-risk businesses; initial viability assessments; key services delivery; and pre-feasibility studies.

**The PA Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED)** is the commonwealth agency that

## North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

represents the required one-stop (PA CareerLink® partner) representing employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant Act (42. U.S.C. 9901 et seq.) at the state level.

The mission of the Community Services Block grant (CSBG) is to provide a full range of services and activities having a measurable impact on the causes of poverty in a community or those areas of a community where poverty is a particularly acute problem. Only federally designated Community Action Agencies (CAA) receive funding, therefore in PA, there are 44 CAAs that cover all 67 PA counties. Ameliorating the causes and conditions of poverty take on a variety of community engagement activities and collaborative activism to remove obstacles that block the achievement of self-sufficiency; i.e. employment and training resources; community stakeholder collaboration; literacy activities; obtaining adequate housing; grassroots activities that provide intervention to the causes of poverty; addressing the needs of youth through programming or coordination; and increased engagement in community planning and improvement activities.

CSBG has been in existence since 1965, always with the same mission: to improve the causes and conditions of poverty. Initiatives have included, but are not limited to: neighborhood linkages, leverage of community resources, conduction of Volunteer Income Tax Assistance sites, building housing capacity, provision of family self-sufficiency and case management, facilitation of Results-Oriented Management and Accountability. For every \$1 of CSBG funds, the PA network leveraged \$16.82 from other federal, state, local and private sources, including the calculated value of volunteer hours.

DCED will participate in the local workforce service delivery system via the local CSBG agencies. CSBG agencies located in this local workforce development area may:

- Participate on local and regional planning groups
- Engage in Business Service Teams activities
- Have print materials available in the PA CareerLink® centers
- Be linked to local workforce websites on computers
- Potentially hold meetings at PA CareerLink® centers
- Conduct joint employer outreach sessions as necessary and
- Seek to leverage grant funding opportunities.

DCED will contribute financial assistance to be applied to the infrastructure and other operating costs of the PA CareerLink® sites annually and to the extent funding exists.

It is DCED's commitment that CSBG, as a required partner, will become part of the fabric of the public workforce system in a much more formalized way than in the previous years.

**The Department of Human Services** while unable to provide a PA CareerLink® staff person to assist in the day to day activities, will provide a liaison at each County Assistance Office as needed and as a referral person to take applications or to provide information about the Workforce Delivery System. DHS will participate in the local Workforce Delivery System via the local CAOs. CAOs located in this local workforce development area may: Participate on the Workforce Development Board, local and regional planning groups; Local Management Committee (LMC), have print materials available in the PA CareerLink® centers; be linked to local workforce websites on computers; potentially hold meetings at PA CareerLink® centers; and seek to leverage grant funding opportunities. DHS will also contribute financial assistance to be applied to the infrastructure and other operating costs of the PA CareerLink® sites annually and to the extent funding exists.

**Job Corps program** – Youth are referred to the Job Corps centers on a regular basis. Periodically, a Job Corps representative provides an orientation to the programs via video conferencing at one of our PA CareerLink® centers and will meet with interested students answering their questions and providing them with additional information.

**Youth Build program** – While there are currently no Youth Build Programs in the North Central PA region, we continue to search for opportunities similar to the Youth Build Programs currently in place in the Commonwealth.

## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

**Native American Programs:** Upon identification of an eligible individual, we will assist in connecting them to the Council of Three Rivers American Indian Center, Inc. located at 120 Charles Street, Pittsburgh PA 15238 or by calling them at 412-782-4457 ext. 219. Website is <http://www.cotraic.org>.

**Migrant and seasonal farmworker programs-** Upon identification of an eligible individual we will assist in connecting them to the Pathstone Corporation –Located at 421 McFarlan Road Suite E Kennett Square, PA 17103. Typically, we will call them first at: 310-925-5600

**Second Chance Act Programs** – There are currently no active Second Chance Act programs in the North Central PA region, however, Workforce Solutions strives to serve the targeted population this Act is intended to serve. In June of 2021, Workforce Solutions developed and submitted a proposal in response to the Appalachian Regional Commission’s INSPIRE initiative and received the award in November 2021. The project titled PROSPER from - Recovery to Career project is a collaborative program that provides job seekers who are in recovery from Substance or Other Drug Use Disorders a sustainable plan for job re-entry or job enhancement. Workforce Solutions, the local board staff for North Central Pennsylvania will partner with existing comprehensive providers of alcohol and drug treatment programs to address the large-scale community and economic impact that is a direct result of the substance abuse crisis in rural north central PA. Nearing the last year of this three (3) year award, the ecosystem is almost completed as we were able to successfully facilitate the partner connections necessary to serve this population; educating the employer community; provide for career pathways to educational needs and employment opportunities; case management and provision of supportive services leading to the successful employment of the persons in recovery from alcohol and/or other substance abuse disorders.

We have also applied for other grant opportunities to assist in serving this population but have not been successful. In addition, we are currently working with the PA Pardon Project which is intended to streamline the pardon process so that application for pardons can be considered more quickly while also ensuring that individual facts and circumstances of each applicant are fully weighted to ensure justice and uphold public safety. Workforce Solutions has also connected all PA CareerLink® centers to the Criminal Justice Advisory Boards (CJABs) to partner in their Re-Entry Transition plans and when possible participate on these boards as well. Workforce Solutions recognizing this population as an untapped labor pool and will assist employers in learning how to embrace this population to provide a Second Chance.

**HUD Employment and Training Programs** – The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Employment and Training Programs are part of HUD’s commitment to providing employment opportunities, training and supportive services to assist low-income person in becoming self-sufficient. There are currently no active HUD Employment and Training Programs offered in the North Central region and efforts to collaborate with the partners will continue through board engagement as well as outreach from our PA CareerLink® centers.

### *4.3 How will the local board facilitate access to services provided through the one-stop service delivery system?*

#### **Leverage Resources and Expand Capacity**

Workforce Solutions is part of a large network of stakeholders that includes PA CareerLink® partners, economic development agencies, education (secondary and post-secondary), community-based organizations, and employers. We work with these partners to offer services and fill any gaps in services that exist. We do so in order to not duplicate services and to leverage each other’s resources in an effort to expand the capacity of the entire system. An example of this is our Industry Partnerships. Industry Partnerships bring together multiple employers from the same industry cluster to identify common training and employment needs as well as challenges. A support team made up of workforce, economic and community development agencies listen to the employers and develop solutions for them. There are currently three active Industry Partnerships in our region – Manufacturing, Healthcare and Social Assistance and Building and Construction. This initiative provides an opportunity for all of our stakeholders to hear first-hand from our employers their needs. Then everyone is part of the solutions to meet their needs by bringing their expertise. The goals identified by these partnerships focus mainly on ensuring that youth, their parents and schools are aware of the high priority occupations in our region as well as increasing access to

## North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

skilled workers. We have been able to connect the members of the partnerships to the Business Services Teams at the PA CareerLink® centers thus increasing the awareness and use of On-the-Job Training and Work Experience Programs and will be further developing the use of Transitional Jobs. We have also been able to connect the members to our local Career and Technical Education programs and many new employers have hired co-op and work experience students due to this initiative.

We also leverage resources through collaboration with our partners in the development and implementation of our PA CareerLink® MOU.

### **Access to PA CareerLink® Services**

As discussed in previously the Board has established six comprehensive centers and one affiliate center in each county to provide easy access to all partner services. The board continues to support bricks and mortar presence in order that customers most in need are able to access services.

**Providing Access in Remote Areas.** The Board will continue to provide and expand services in the remote locations of the region. Several years ago, we received a Community Based Grant that provided funding for the development of access points throughout the region. The goal was to take the services to locations with a population of people that lacked transportation to the comprehensive centers. Locations such as libraries, secondary school offices, churches and probation offices/jails were utilized to meet with customers. The results included and increase in the awareness of PA CareerLink® services as well as new employers and job seekers registering on the PA CareerLink®. The pandemic caused a decrease in this outreach however with the increase in virtual services we found we were able to reach even more job seekers and employers. The offering of virtual services will continue in addition to face to face. Now that the pandemic is more under control the outreach committee along with board staff will continue to brainstorm ways to implement the following strategies:

- Promoting use of the PA CareerLink® services available at <https://www.pacareerlink.pa.gov/jponline/JobSeeker/SearchJobs>.
- Promoting use of [readysetworkpa.com](https://www.readysetworkpa.com) – access to job search tutorials and other information to support their career search
- Promoting and supporting efforts to expand broadband throughout the region
- Provide Wi-Fi in our PA CareerLink® centers' parking lots
- Continuing to evaluate the need to set-up temporary locations to provide services as needed
- Encouraging staff to meet customers in public settings, when it makes sense, to provide services, while ensuring privacy

Other ways that Workforce Solutions will facilitate access to services provided through the one-stop service delivery system:

- Continue to promote the use of on-line job clubs and other strategies to “virtually” connect job seekers with support and resources available in the system.
- Encouraging and allowing the use of technology, including text messaging, social media, online video conferencing, Internet searches, and other state-of-the-art methods to locate, communicate, and contact jobseekers and industry personnel.
- Continue to expand its existing network community partnerships to include additional community-based entities, faith-based organizations, employer-sponsored groups, and government organizations to increase access throughout the region.
- Continue to identify other regional community sites where outreach and virtual services can be offered at specific times to allow access to the population with transportation barriers.

**Utilizing Case Management Systems.** The PA CareerLink® system and partners utilize the PA CareerLink® to capture data and information on all customers, including job seekers and employers. To promote the timeliness and accuracy of information, staff are required to enter information into the systems within 24 hours of customer interaction/services/activities. All staff input their own data in relation to the customer, job seeker or employer, they

## North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

are working with. Staff also utilize the referral module in PA CareerLink® to track referrals to core partners in the system. The board, in support of system referrals, developed Referral Guidance to assist staff in best practices of customer referrals.

### **Other State-Owned Case Management Information Systems**

There are UC Courtesy Phones in all centers except for Cameron County. At this time the courtesy phones are turned off because of COVID. There is also a UC access only computer in Clearfield, Jefferson, McKean, Potter, Elk and Clearfield County at DuBois. The only staff person that inputs data in regard to customer tracking is those staff that work directly with UC. Because of the back-log of UC customers, a BWPO staff person has been identified in each comprehensive PA CareerLink® center. This person only inputs into a spreadsheet to assist the customer not into the UC database.

To ensure that individuals participating in adult basic education and English learning programs have direct connections to career pathways leading to high-quality jobs, Workforce Solutions and other partners collaborate with our Adult Education partners to identify strategies that improve access. The providers of adult basic education input data specific to their customers into their case management system.

OVR staff are responsible for data entry of their customers into their case management system. Shared customers' data, as applicable, is entered into PA's workforce development system of record by the appropriate partner staff.

### **Other WIOA Program Data Entry into PA's workforce development system**

Customers not provided with WIOA Title I and Title II career and training services but enrolled in other WIOA programs services are entered into PA's workforce development system according to the program direction of their specific departments. Services that are trackable in the system are expected to be entered in a timely manner.

There are no other non-commonwealth owned or leased information management systems utilized in the North Central Workforce Development Area.

### **Career Pathways**

Workforce Solutions Career Pathway Initiative is mentioned throughout this plan. This initiative was developed through a procurement process and KayLynn Hamilton Consulting was awarded the contract. KayLynn also works with all of the Adult Education providers throughout the region as an employee of Penn State University. Therefore, they were developed with the experience of Title II in career pathways work. The pathways were developed in a comprehensive approach for all customers not one specific target population. The documents developed as part of this initiative includes toolkit for each industry cluster, a one-page career pathways document for each cluster and a training manual to instruct front line staff on the use of the tool kit and one page documents. Workforce Solutions provide training for all staff on the use of these documents.

### **Information sharing**

The board continues to stress with our PA CareerLink® centers the critical importance of cross-training of all staff in our centers. It's important that they understand all of the programs benefits and expectations in order that they can best share this information with their shared customers. Information for all partner programs is available both in print and through virtually. Our PA CareerLink® Operator is responsible for ensuring that cross-training is occurring throughout the region. With the recent release of the Workforce Staff Training website from Labor and Industry there is an online, on demand training option that is being completed by all staff in our PA CareerLink® centers. The modules were designed and implemented by a workgroup comprised of state staff and subject matter experts from all of the core programs and led by staff funded with Title II funds is creating a series of online, on-demand training courses.

The first course, *Introduction to the PA CareerLink® System: Referrals and Best Practices*, is now available. This course consists of two modules:

- The first module introduces participants to the PA CareerLink® system and provides an overview of the WIOA core programs.

## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

- The second module shares referral best practices to support participant co-enrollment across WIOA programs. The course includes a user guide with additional activities that workforce partners can complete to encourage collaboration and referrals among WIOA core programs.

In addition, we have established an Outreach Committee for our region to take a regional strategic approach to outreach to our customers. All of our partners are represented on this committee by front-line or administrative staff. To date this committee has accomplished quite a bit. The outreach committee meets monthly to discuss creative ways to increase job seeker and employer participation. Staff have recognized the need to increase referrals between all partners as well as referrals to service providers not located in the PA CareerLink® centers as well as to increase follow up on these referrals to ensure that services are being provided. The committee also identified the need for a toll free number for customer to call to reach our centers. Workforce Solutions staff assisted with this and we now have a toll-free number (844-PACALINK) for our customers to call to reach one of our centers. This came about due to COVID and the transition from in-person to telework and our fear we were losing customers. This number will allow our customers to reach a center whether we are in-person or teleworking. This committee has developed an outreach plan, and is working on a customer brochure for both employers and job seekers. The outreach committee has created and implemented several outreach flyers that are being shared with multiple agencies through the region as well as for use at outreach events. The committee with suggestions from Workforce Solutions have shared the flyers with many community and faith based organizations, food banks, libraries, secondary and career and technical schools, post-secondary training providers, etc.

Workforce Solutions staff provide technical assistance to the outreach committee to ensure they are aware of the affirmative action plan we have in place.

**Meeting the Needs of Individuals with Barriers to Employment.** Efforts are made to ensure that individuals with disabilities as well as other barriers to employment including basic skills deficiencies receive access to all services provided within the PA CareerLink® centers. The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) focuses on individuals with the most significant disabilities who are eligible under WIOA Title IV. WIOA Title I staff will assist individuals with disabilities who do not want or need OVR services or are not found eligible for OVR services. They will also play a role in recruitment and outreach to this population. Sensitivity training is provided for PA CareerLink® staff, as well as training on the various adaptive technologies used within the PA CareerLink® sites. As with other participant groups, referrals are also made, as appropriate, to other partnering community agencies to ensure full accessibility to needed services.

Improving Access to Services for English Language Learners as part of its service strategy, the board requires the PA CareerLink® center to partner with community agencies that can provide ESL and interpretative services. Telephone-based translation services may be used for languages other than English, if necessary. ESL services are provided by Title II where necessary.

Improving Access to Services for Deaf and hard of hearing individuals – on-site OVR personnel are available to assist individuals with other disabilities as needed. A TTY telecommunication device, amplified telephone receiver speakers and the provision of a Pennsylvania certified American Sign Language interpreter upon request in advance are available for Deaf and hard of hearing individuals. The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation staff provide direct services to those interested persons who have been determined eligible to receive WIOA Title IV services.

Workforce Solutions has strategies and approaches to provide services for individuals with disabilities, including identifying significant barriers encountered and offering the means to address them. EO/ADA compliance reviews for the PA CareerLink® centers are performed annually. Workforce Solutions has an equal opportunity point of contact for staff, as identified in section 3.1, and also has a monitoring and compliance team that works with the one-stop operator and partners in the PA CareerLink® to ensure that all comprehensive and affiliate PA CareerLink® centers are EO and ADA compliant. In addition, these staff members will be trained annually on policy updates and EO/ADA compliance changes. During COVID-19, the EO Officer did not conduct any in-person staff training; however, training materials such as articles, links to websites, and access to training videos were provided on at least a monthly basis for self-paced training. This process continues and in – person EO/ADA compliance reviews will resume on an annual basis. Workforce Solutions provides cross training opportunities to all PA CareerLink® centers during quarterly

## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

Workforce Spotlight meetings, PA CareerLink® staff and management team meetings, Workforce Solutions staff and board meeting to ensure compliance. Different EO topics covered include: discrimination and harassment, diversity, equity and inclusion, corporate compliance and ethics and employee health and wellness. Workforce Solutions will continue to cover these topics each year as well as increase our efforts to emphasize diversity, equity and inclusion and corporate compliance and ethics. The Jobs Accommodation Network (JAN) is frequently used as a resource for staff training.

Within the mix of services provided by the PA CareerLink® system are those services targeted to assist the special needs of the population segments referenced so they can attain employment. Throughout the PA CareerLink® PA system, all individuals, regardless of barriers (including persons of limited English-speaking ability and persons with limited basic skills), will be provided equal access to all program services, and appropriate steps will be taken to eliminate any of their barriers to employment. For example, bilingual access is available through the State language system at each site to assist LEP customers.

All brochures, pamphlets, and flyers which detail services specific to PA CareerLink® locations include the TTY number. This includes job seeker flyers, weekly workshop and class flyers, a monthly events calendar, job seeker and employer satisfaction surveys, etc.

Workforce Solutions takes the requirements of WIOA law and regulations seriously with regard to providing equitable access to services to various groups protected by Federal law and regulations (including, but not limited to: persons of different sexes, various racial and ethnic groups, religion, age, individuals with disabilities, limited English language proficiency, etc.). This affirmative outreach for the North Central region includes the following efforts to ensure PA CareerLink® services are accessible:

- Identifying agencies, organizations, non-profits, and other community-based organizations that serve specific populations and build key partnerships with those entities;
- Providing outreach material, information, and programmatic access through these partnerships ensures that we better reach various populations through braille, large print, audio assist, and TTY.
- Ensuring that customers at each PA CareerLink® center have opportunities to share their experiences about ways Workforce Solutions can improve services.

Also, at each comprehensive location, representatives of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) are available to provide vocational rehabilitation services to individuals eligible for WIOA Title IV services, which in Pennsylvania means those with significant disabilities. Services of all partners are available to all persons with barriers to employment. All PA CareerLink® centers have TTY-TDD phones, and the staff has been trained on the system. To ensure accessibility to all customers, all delivery of all services complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). We will be collaborating with OVR to ensure that all new staff receive sensitivity training as this has not been provided since the last planning cycle – likely due to the pandemic. During the past year, Workforce Solutions applied for and received funding to purchase for each comprehensive center: New braille and TTY telephones, Ubi-Duo units, Video Magnifiers and new ADA compliant desks.

#### *4.4 How will entities within the one-stop service 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 PA CareerLink® system Operator and Workforce Solutions assures that WIOA section 188 compliance, including civil rights and equal opportunity, and Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 applicable provisions will be assured for those who avail themselves of our one stop delivery system services and resources (and that resources are at an appropriate reading level for the general population, including regional designated services locations and mobile



one-stops). We assure this compliance in the following ways:

1. All PA CareerLink® staff, Operator, Workforce Solutions staff are trained in the WIOA Sec. 188 requirements as well as the Americans with Disabilities Act definitions. Additional training programs are provided on an ongoing basis for all staff with regular sessions held. The majority of these training sessions are added to the agendas of scheduled staff meetings. Different EO topics covered include: discrimination and harassment, diversity, equity and inclusion, corporate compliance and ethics and employee health and wellness. Workforce Solutions will continue to cover these topics each year as well as increase our efforts to emphasize diversity, equity and inclusion and corporate compliance and ethics.
2. Our regional OEO Officer identifies additional training options on these topics and ensures that all staff are aware and can complete the additional training on their own.
3. A training log is maintained for all training that takes place.
4. Workforce Solutions reviews the accessibility of its facilities on an annual basis in collaboration with OVR. We do an annual walk through to ensure each site is meeting ADA. Site Administrators are also responsible for knowing the criteria and ensuring the sites meet accessibility.
5. Workforce Solutions requires all relevant posters to be displayed in our PA CareerLink® centers.
6. Workforce Solutions assures that state registered American Sign Language interpreters are available upon request.
7. Workforce Solutions, Workforce System Manager monitors ADA/EO compliance on an ongoing basis using the EEOC/ Office of Contract Compliance tools.
8. Workforce Solutions has appointed an Equal Opportunity Officer, Linda Franco, Workforce System Manager.
9. PA CareerLink® centers update their Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan as needed and submit it to the OEO annually for compliance review. The purpose of the LEP Plan is to demonstrate that customers of PA CareerLink® are being provided meaningful access to program information, benefits, and services, even though the customers may be limited in their English language proficiency.
10. The Equal Opportunity Law/Civil Rights Statement, including the process to file a complaint if the individual believes they have experienced discrimination, is provided to each individual as well as staff. Workforce Solutions' EO Policy is posted on our website and is distributed to our One Stop Operator, partners and staff at our PA CareerLink® centers.
11. All one-stop partner staff receive training to familiarize them with all of the programs and services provided through the one-stop delivery system upon hire. Staff also receives annual training on the Auxiliary Aides and Services (Universal Access) Policy and Procedures, LEP Plan and Disability Etiquette. On a regular basis, we also provide training on the application of Section 188.

Each PA CareerLink® center has in place the technology and materials needed for individuals with disabilities. The technology available includes: TTY number, Adapted Computers and accessories. The types of materials available include: Discussion of OVR and their many available services are included on the PA CareerLink® website as well as, pamphlets, virtual services, adaptive assessments and translation services that are also available. We work collaboratively with OVR to ensure that the centers have what they need for computer access as well as the TTY phone lines. We will customize other information as needed in collaboration with OVR. During the past year, Workforce Solutions applied for and received funding to purchase the following for each comprehensive center: new braille and TTY telephones, UbiDuo units, video magnifiers and new ADA compliant desks.

Please refer to sections L4.3 and L4.13 of this plan for detailed information of how individuals with disabilities are served. In addition, please refer to other sections of this plan for services to individuals with Individual Education Plan (IEP).

Our regional compliance review recently received provisional approval through December 2023. Our PA CareerLink® affiliate center received their review three years ago. Only minor issues were identified and were fixed immediately.

## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

Workforce Solutions takes the requirements of WIOA law and regulations seriously with regard to providing equitable access to services to various groups protected by Federal law and regulations (including, but not limited to: persons of different sexes, various racial and ethnic groups, religion, age, individuals with disabilities, limited English language proficiency, etc.). This affirmative outreach for the North Central region includes the following efforts to ensure PA CareerLink® services are accessible:

Identifying agencies, organizations, non-profits, and other community-based organizations that serve specific populations and build key partnerships with those entities;

Providing outreach material, information, and programmatic access through these partnerships ensures that we better reach various populations through braille, large print, audio assist, and TTY.

Ensuring that customers at each PA CareerLink® center have opportunities to share their experiences about ways Workforce Solutions can improve services.

Also, at each comprehensive location, representatives of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) are available to provide vocational rehabilitation services to individuals eligible for WIOA Title IV services, which in Pennsylvania means those with significant disabilities. Services of all partners are available to all persons with barriers to employment. All PA CareerLink® centers have TTY-TDD phones, and the staff has been trained on the system. To ensure accessibility to all customers, all delivery of all services complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). We will be collaborating with OVR to ensure that all new staff receive sensitivity training as this has not been provided since the last planning cycle – likely due to the pandemic.

Workforce Solutions communicates with the One Stop Operator and One Stop Partners including our Title I providers to ensure that a targeted outreach plan and process is occurring. This includes distributing information regarding program services and activities to secondary and post-secondary schools (including Career and Technical Centers), community and faith-based agencies as well as other special interest groups that serve targeted populations. Workforce Solutions regularly meets with many of these groups through our Industry Partnerships, Workforce Development Board committees, special grants that we apply for and are awarded and other initiatives. This provides us the opportunity to ensure they are aware of the programs, services and activities that can benefit their customers/clients. PA CareerLink® staff are included in these meetings with the intent that they will collaborate with each local entity on a regular basis to provide front line services and further create an ecosystem of partners working together in each county to ensure job seekers from all populations are being served.

Workforce Solutions complies with affirmative outreach and ensures that all people without regard to race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, gender identity, genetic information or reprisal are aware of the programs and services available to them at our PA CareerLink® centers whether or not there is a specific funding stream. This includes increasing efforts to ensure that these opportunities are available to underserved communities including low skilled workers, low-income populations, the homeless, formerly incarcerated individuals, TANF Youth, and other individuals with barriers. Populations of those with barriers to employment are among the populations that employers are not actively recruiting from and Workforce Solutions recognizes they are a missing pool of available workers. We will strategically target these populations in several ways.

First, we will ensure front line staff have the knowledge and tools to educate employers on best practices of how to engage these populations. Making them aware of the funding available through On the Job Training, Work Experience, Registered Apprenticeship, etc. and sharing best practices of companies who have successfully engaged these populations.

Second, we will ensure that employers are aware of these programs as well as the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) and the Federal Bonding program for employers hiring the previously incarcerated. This information will also be shared with our Industry Partnerships and other committees and partnerships we are involved in, including the North Central PA PREP network, the Community and Economic Development System (CEDS). And Criminal Justice Advisory Boards (CJABs).

Third, an Outreach Committee was created to discuss creative ways to increase job seeker and employer participation. The faith based and community based organizations that serve populations with barriers are contacted

on a regular basis to ensure they are aware of the services available at the PA CareerLink® centers. For More information regarding the outreach committee please refer to section 4.3 – page 61 of this plan.

Fourth, we will continue to apply for funding to support Registered Apprenticeship and Pre-Apprenticeship programs. Workforce Solutions has applied for several grants over the past few years to increase the funding and programs available to a broader population. While we have not always been successful in receiving this funding, partnerships have increased with other agencies assisting in our applications. Employers have been telling us they cannot find a skilled workforce for several years now – even prior to the pandemic. According to Working Nation.com almost half of all employers (46%) are reporting talent shortages. Creating more opportunities for the underserved (including the underemployed) will increase the talent pool for companies struggling to find a skilled workforce. It is more important than ever for the workforce system in North Central PA to ensure that Registered Apprenticeships and Pre-Apprenticeships are targeted towards populations with barriers and could be the answer to talent crisis we are facing.

***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.***

In accordance with WIOA Section 122 and Workforce System Guidance No. 02-2015, and in collaboration with the PA Department of Labor and Industry, Workforce Solutions solicits training providers within and outside of our local area to ensure a competitive market designed to promote consumer choice and achieve successful implementation of data-driven career pathways and sector strategies. Workforce Solutions determines and monitors eligibility of training providers ensuring alignment with the High Priority Occupations in the NCWDA and communicates regularly with training providers to ensure the accuracy of performance data as it relates to programs for in-demand industry sectors and occupations both in and outside the local area.

The Board ensures the continuous improvement of eligible training providers through the system through its regular monitoring of PA CareerLink® outcomes and processes using a variety of different approaches that ensure we have a good sense of the labor market needs:

- Ongoing, regular meetings with partners
- Sharing standard and adhoc labor market information/reports with partners
- Industry partnership feedback
- Periodic surveys and focus groups of regional employers
- Training satisfaction surveys
- Staff participation on boards and advisory committees of regional training providers

In accordance with the PA Department of Labor and Industry’s Workforce System Policy 04-2015, Workforce Solutions adheres to the following responsibilities related to including a wide range of providers and opportunities through the Local Training Provider List:

- Solicit training providers, including but not limited to, work-based and cohort training providers and registered apprenticeship program sponsors, within and outside of our respective local areas as deemed appropriate to ensure a competitive market designed to promote consumer choice and achieve successful implementation of data-driven career pathways and sector strategies;
- Ensure adequate access to services for individuals with disabilities;
- Verify eligibility of entities providing a program of training services, including but not limited to, the provisions, assurances, and procedures listed in Appendix A of the WSP 04-2015;
- Conduct a debarment check on all subgrantees and/or contractors prior to the execution of a contract to ensure such entities are not under suspension or debarment by the commonwealth or any governmental entity, instrumentality, or authority;
- Collaborate with the Department to ensure sufficient numbers and types of providers of training services, including eligible providers with expertise in assisting individuals with disabilities and adults in need of adult education and literacy activities described under WIOA sec. 107(d)(10)(E);

## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

- Develop and maintain the LTPL. Only providers that the local board determines to be eligible will be included on the local list.
- Disseminate and utilize the ETPL and LTPL throughout the local one-stop system;
- Recommend the termination of a provider due to the submission of inaccurate, incomplete or untimely eligibility and performance information; or the provider's substantial violation of any provisions of federal, state, or local statutes, regulations, policies or procedures

Workforce Solutions meets annually with our training providers to stay in touch and to encourage the addition of quality training programs on the Eligible Training Provider List. Feedback that we sometimes receive from our providers is that it's cumbersome to add programs when there are only one or two customers that enroll. Our board would support efforts to reduce the burden of the ETPL. We asked our providers during our meeting last year, what programs are missing? What programs could we add? We didn't receive much feedback. We'll continue to support our providers and lend our support in making the process as easy as possible. We want to have options for our customers.

Workforce Solutions will utilize the Local Training Provider List (LTPL) to recruit and incentivize our training providers, community-based organizations, private organizations, and other public or private providers of training to offer credential training that is not part of the ETPL leading to a post-secondary credential or an industry-recognized credential.

The procedures for System-Centric Training will follow Workforce System Policy 04-2015, *Eligible Training Providers*; Appendix B:

Step One – Select the reason the program of training of services was contracted:

- Training service is not on the ETPL;
- The training will serve individuals with barriers to employment;
- Training services will be provided by the local board through a pay-for-performance contract; or
- It is more appropriate to offer this type of training to facilitate the training of multiple individuals in in-demand industry sectors or occupations. Note: This training option, also known as 'cohort training' must be provided by an accredited institution of higher education or an eligible training provider included on the statewide ETPL.

Step Two - Provide the purpose for utilizing a contract for training services. This statement may include a rationale for why this training cannot be accomplished through programs on the statewide ETPL.

Step Three - Select the type of entity that is providing the training:

- Post-secondary education;
- Apprenticeship;
- Other public or private provider of training, which may include a joint labor-management organization and an eligible training provider of adult education and literacy activities under WIOA Title II if such activities are provided in combination with occupational skills training (i.e., integrated education and training); or
- Community-based organization or private organization of demonstrated effectiveness.

Step Four - Provide the following information:

- A description of the training program;
- Cost details, to include but not limited to tuition, books, other fees;
- Evidence of state licensure requirements and licensing status as applicable;
- A description of credential earned to include, at minimum, information supporting applicable training program leads to a post-secondary credential or an industry-recognized credential; and a description of the credential;
- A description of the accessibility of training services (i.e., is this program of study facility-based training, or is it accessible throughout the commonwealth, to individuals in rural areas, through the use of technology);

## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

- A description of the demonstrated effectiveness (e.g., through the provision of performance data) in serving employed individuals and individuals with barriers to employment; and
- Data regarding program alignment with in-demand sectors or high-priority occupations, or in a career pathway leading to an HPO.

Step Five - Attest that the following assurances have been verified:

- Physical and programmatic accommodations as required by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended; the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended and the regulations implementing these statutory provisions;
- Compliance with nondiscrimination and equal opportunity laws;
- Disclosure of any and all conflicts of interest with state or local workforce development members and/or staff including, but not limited to, family ties, fiduciary roles, employment or ownership interests in common;
- Exclusion from the commonwealth's debarment list;
- Provision of performance information for each program as required;
- Provision of student data for each program as required;
- Timeliness and accuracy of required information; and
- Permission for onsite visits by any federal, state or local agency as legally authorized to monitor activities for which funds have been provided.

In order for programs to be considered for the ETPL under the System-Centric Training they must meet performance, including:

- Program completion rate; entry into unsubsidized employment at second quarter after exit; entry into unsubsidized employment at fourth quarter after exit; and median earnings during second quarter after exit.

Workforce Solutions staff will develop, maintain, and disseminate the LTPL in collaboration with the Department.

Additionally, Workforce Solutions maintains an appeal policy and process in the event that a training provider is removed from the list for any reason.

In addition, job seeker and employer customer satisfaction surveys are being used in each of our PA CareerLink® centers. The surveys will be completed electronically via Survey Monkey and send to all job seekers and employers on a regular basis. Results will be shared with the Operator who will share them with the Site Administrators as well as Workforce Solutions. The Site Administrators will quickly address any identified issues and Workforce Solutions will utilize the results to make systemic changes to the system.

### ***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.***

The Board regularly reviews the type of programs available to adult and dislocated workers in the local area including training services available through the Eligible Training Provider List as described in the **response to 4.5**. This process is completed through an analysis of the WIOA, a review of current activities related to performance, surveys of local employers and their intermediaries, feedback from regional partner and industry partnership meetings, and a comparison of program delivery type/availability to peer best-in-class local workforce development areas both within the Commonwealth as well as in other states. Through this review, the Board identifies service gaps, confirms the need for specific services with employer and sector groups, and adjusts policies and programming to address identified needs as may be required.

Workforce Solutions provides access to workforce services at the PA CareerLink® Center. In addition to partner programs, it also competitively procures services as needed to meet local labor market needs.

Upon entry in the system, individuals are directly referred to the specific services that best meet their particular

## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

needs. As may be required, interpretation and/or translation services may be utilized to assist customers who do not speak English well. Adult and Dislocated Worker workforce activities are provided under the broad categories of Basic Career Services, Individualized Career Services, and Training Services. Basic Career Services are available to any customer, while Individualized Career Services and Training Services are reserved for individuals who meet WIOA eligibility requirements.

With the implementation of WIOA, there is no longer a sequence of service requirement. Therefore, individuals who are determined eligible and suitable for Adult or Dislocated Worker services do not have to participate in any type of Individualized Career Service activity prior to being enrolled into Training Services.

### **Basic Career Services include:**

- Information about services available through the PA CareerLink® Center
- Initial assessment of needs
- Referral to appropriate services
- Self-directed or staff-assisted job search
- Workshops, such as resume writing, interviewing skills, and job search
- Information:
  - Labor market
  - Training provider
  - Supportive service
  - Unemployment
  - Financial aid
  - Relocation assistance

### **Individualized Career Services include:**

- Eligibility determination
- Comprehensive assessment
- Individual Employment Plan (IEP) defining the customer's specific goals and pathway for achievement
- Career counseling and planning
- Short-term prevocational services
- Internships and work experience
- Workforce preparation activities
- Financial literacy services
- Supportive services

Overall, the PA CareerLink® Center offers a wide variety of services to assist customers with job preparation and job search both in-person and virtually. Resource rooms offer computers with Internet access, as well as printing, mailing, phone and fax services during regular business hours. Further assistance is available through resume and cover letter development, mock interviewing, job postings and job search tip sheets. Jobseekers can meet with employers conducting on site interviews and also sign up for job readiness workshops. Specialized information is available on high school equivalency attainment, Unemployment Compensation, Youth programs, and career services for Veterans, persons aged 55 and over, and individuals with disabilities.

Supportive services include activities designed to eliminate barriers to employment, such as assistance with transportation, work-related tools or clothing, and child care.

### **Training Services include:**

- ITA
- OJT
- Customized training
- Job readiness training
- Workplace training/co-op programs

## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

- Skills upgrading and retraining
- Pre-apprenticeship / Apprenticeship
- Transitional jobs
- Incumbent worker training

In order to access Training Service activity, individuals must meet programmatic eligibility requirements and must also be identified as unlikely to obtain or retain self-sufficient employment or higher wages, need training to obtain or retain self-sufficient employment or higher wages, and have the skills and qualifications to participate in training (i.e., appropriateness for training).

Training must be directly linked to an in-demand industry sector or High Priority Occupation, or a sector that has a high potential for sustained demand or growth. Such training may be delivered via an ITA, training contract, or a combination of both. Training providers are found through the Eligible Training Provider List which establishes eligibility and provides information about training institutions and their programs.

Workforce Solutions' Adult Priority of Service policy identifies three groups of individuals targeted for priority when providing individualized career and / or training services in the WIOA Title I Adult program and they are: public assistance recipients, low-income individuals and individuals who are basic skills deficient.

In addition, the priority of service for veterans and eligible spouses applies across all qualified employment and training programs the board will ensure all WIOA required partners are collaborating through the Operator that currently meets on a monthly basis. The referral process as mentioned earlier is key to ensuring our customers receive all services they need. Adult priority is determined for the targeted groups during eligibility and enrollment. Local procedures for internal monitoring of the goal is to serve a minimum of 50.1% of adult participants from the priority target groups.

Regarding targeting populations – in particular individuals with barriers to employment, Workforce Solutions strategies are:

- ✓ As a core partner and sole provider of WIOA Title IV services the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) will provide services to individuals with disabilities to help them secure and maintain employment and independence. These services are designed to ensure individuals with disabilities become qualified trained members of the workforce increasing regional workforce diversity and the overall number of skills workers available to help fulfill occupational demands regionally. Additionally, OVR provides multiple services and technical assistance to the business community designed to assist them with hiring and retaining skilled employees with disabilities. Workforce Solutions and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation has collaborated via a referral system for years and has had meetings with OVR and Title I to encourage other opportunities for collaboration.
- ✓ Connecting with the Criminal Justice Advisory Boards in each of our counties and ensuring that staff from each of the PA CareerLink® centers are members of each board
  - Connecting with the Bureau of Juvenile Justice Services and the PA Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) to ensure awareness of the programs and services available to this population.
- ✓ Ensuring continued collaboration with the Job Corps' programs available to our job seekers. Currently, there is representation on our youth standing committee however ensuring that programs staff are connected with Job Corps is crucial.
- ✓ Increasing collaboration with the PA Department of Aging's Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) to ensure consistency throughout our region as well as agencies serving veterans.
- ✓ Continued support of our PA CareerLink® centers job seekers teams as well as business service team policy to ensure WIOA regulations are addressed.
- ✓ Continued collaboration with apprenticeship programs to include Registered Apprenticeship offices, state apprenticeship offices and labor union apprentices.

Our board relies on our Title I provider feedback regarding transfer of funds for adult and dislocated worker activities.

## North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

Depending on the eligibility of customers and the number of eligible customers accessing services will determine each year whether or not we transfer funds. The legislation provides the local areas with the ability to transfer up to 100% of the funds depending on need.

In response to the emphasis in WIOA on serving Out-of-School Youth, Workforce Solutions has procured for providers that will ensure this mandate is met. Performance, both programmatic and fiscal is monitored throughout the life of the contract to ensure OSY are being served.

As mentioned in previous sections the board has developed a Career Pathways initiative for our twelve industry sectors. We have shared this information through training sessions of all partner staff. The board has also encouraged co-enrollment of customers in multiple programs depending on customer needs. One of the measures utilized for both our Title I provider benchmarks as well as our PA CareerLink® certification process is co-enrollment. We believe strongly in a holistic approach to serving customers. The board strongly supports work-based training as an option for all customers to lead them to self-sufficiency. Each work-based training option leads to specific goal accomplishment. Work experience, for example, is a basic work component helping to teach the customer basic work readiness habits. OJT, however, is more focused on skill attainment. Finally, an apprenticeship program is the ultimate work-based activity providing Related Technical Instruction coupled with On-the-Job training for a specific occupation.

### ***4.7 How will training services be provided using individual training accounts, or ITAs, that fund programs of study, or through the use of contracts for training services that fund work-based trainings.***

**Training Services Overview.** Historically, the Board has primarily used ITAs to fund occupational skills training activities for its customers. Based on a customer's specific needs and circumstances, he or she may choose to enroll in training activities using an ITA or a work-based learning program. Moreover, an ITA-funded training may also be completed in conjunction with work-based learning activities, such as OJT, customized training, and internships. Such coordination will be clearly identified in the customer's IEP.

Each customer will be given the option of selecting the training provider that best meets his or her particular needs and will be based on customer choice from any of the entities that are included on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL).

An overview of the Board's ITA and work-based learning policies is provided below:

**ITAs.** The Board may enroll individuals who are determined eligible and suitable for training services into occupational skills training programs utilizing an ITA. It has adopted the following policies for the provision of ITAs.

- Funding is limited to \$7,500. This \$7,500 cap was increased from \$4,500 in January 2020 due to the increase in the cost of post-secondary education and training as well as the increase in available resources.
- Training must be in an occupation identified as a growth occupation or within a targeted sector.
- Training must result in an employment wage sufficient to attain self-sufficiency without the aid of public assistance.
- In general, all training programs must be within a reasonable commute of the local area and may include out-of-the-area and out-of-state training institutions. Out-of-the-area training programs that are not within commuting distance to the local area may be approved on a case-by-case basis. All approved training must be located within the contiguous United States.
- All applicants must apply for the PHEAA/Pell Grant. Depending on the need and availability of WIOA funding, PHEAA/Pell funds will be utilized first to cover educational costs. WIOA funds will cover expenses over and above those covered by financial aid.
- On a case-by-case basis, WIOA funding may be provided for college level and post baccalaureate instruction. The following conditions must be met:
  - The customer must be accepted into a certificate or diploma program, and the course of study must be



## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

occupation-specific. No funds shall be provided for general academic programs.

- The customer must demonstrate that he/she has the financial resources to attend long-term training.
- Continuing Education and other similar courses will be approved if the following conditions apply:
  - The customer must have a specific occupational goal.
  - The customer must have a work history or educational background that relates to the occupational goal.
  - The customer must present evidence describing how the proposed training will increase his or her employment marketability.
- ITAs may be utilized for expenses related to training, including but not limited to the following: books, tuition and fees, supplies, tools, uniform pants and shoes, certification, licensing, testing fees, background checks, drug testing for entrance into training, medical requirements for training entrance, etc.
- Customers accepted on a provisional basis will receive assistance on a case-by-case basis.
- ITAs will not be used for payment of late fees caused by customer error or delay. The customer will be responsible for these fees, as well as other fines or penalties.

Customers eligible for ITAs are served through our Title I provider. All services provided are able to be adapted to meet each individual's needs with accommodations provided. ITAs are no different. The process/assessment for approval of an ITA will be accommodated to meet each individual's needs in an effort to support their success.

Workforce Solutions will consider on a case-by-case basis, situations that warrant a contract instead of an ITA. To date, we have not utilized this option.

**Work-Based Learning.** The Board has historically encouraged work-based learning programs as part of the OJT (on the job training) support, such as work experience, internships, co-op programs, apprenticeships, and transitional jobs to meet any unique/specific skill needs of employers in the area. Future strategies to promote these efforts may include:

- Targeting high-growth industries for potential work-based learning opportunities.
- Educating employers, including chambers and industry associations, about how work-based training can enhance their businesses by decreasing turnover and improving productivity.
- Assisting businesses by streamlining work-based learning paperwork requirements.
- Assessing job candidates to determine their eligibility and suitability for work-based learning opportunities.
- Utilizing our Career Pathways Initiative in the targeted sectors that align with work-based learning activities.
- Including work-based learning as part of its agendas and topics of discussion during business forums and summits.
- Requiring the Business Services Team to actively promote work-based learning as key service for local businesses.

Establishing time periods and caps for work-based learning activities.

Workforce Solutions is committed to increasing the number of RAPs and Pre-RAPs in our region because we agree that employers who sponsor these programs will be positioned to build a pipeline of workers who are better retained and invested in their job. Apprenticeships can aide in reducing recruiting costs and improve work productivity. We view this as a partnership with the PA CareerLink® centers, and in particular the Business Services Teams and Title I staff as well as the board, staff and the PA Apprenticeship and Training Office (ATO).

Workforce Solutions encourages the use of WIOA funding for Registered Apprenticeships and has revised our Individual Training Account Policy (ITA) and On the Job Training Policies (OJT) to include an exception to our training cap allowance of \$7,500. For individuals participating in Related Technical Instruction (RTI) through a Registered Apprenticeship that is on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) and On-the-Job Training – we have increased the training cap to \$9,000. Workforce Solutions has successfully funded registered apprenticeship programs utilizing WIOA funding and will continue to do so. We are in the process of created a policy specifically addressing Registered Apprenticeship program that will assist our Title I provider with the process including data entry in CWDS.

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

Workforce Solutions procures for a WIOA Title I youth provider every year with the option to renew up to three years in order to attract proposals that are creative and innovative. In addition, we realize that all youth can benefit from workforce programs and have implemented and partnered with others to ensure all youth have access to the information needed to make informed career choices as well as awareness of career opportunities in our local area.

**Workforce Activities for WIOA Eligible Youth:** Workforce Solutions will procure for WIOA Title I Youth services each year however we do have the option to renew a subcontract with our provider for an additional three years so that services are not disrupted. The WIOA Youth Request for Proposal that was released by Workforce Solutions in February 2021 and was written in alignment with the vision and goals of the Commonwealth’s combined state plan. Due to limited resources projects that do not serve all six (6) counties of the North Central Workforce Development Area (NCWDA), specifically Cameron, Clearfield, Elk, Jefferson, McKean and Potter were not considered. This ensures consistency in our counties and the ability for one entity to ensure the provision of all 14 WIOA Youth Elements.

Providers are required to utilize at least 75% of the award to serve Out of School Youth. In addition, at least 20% of the total WIOA Youth allocation must be spent to provide work experience for WIOA eligible and enrolled youth. Workforce Solutions with recommendation by the youth committee chose not to define the “additional assistance” category for WIOA youth eligibility however we do revisit this with our Title I provider to determine if there is a need to define it further. TANF Youth Development funding is leveraged to provide services to youth who may not be eligible for WIOA. When applicable and appropriate eligibility for youth is determined for both programs to increase the services available to them.

Workforce Solutions strongly encourages the development of proposals that leveraged existing resources and expanded upon successful youth programs currently operating within the community. Crucial to youth programs are the Recruitment and Outreach methods. We have encouraged providers to conduct activities, including outreach to local government facilities, non-profit and faith-based organizations that provide support services to disconnected youth and young adults; including the use of word-of-mouth referrals, and social media platforms. Other suggested activities for youth services provider staff include:

- Utilize the Connection Café to recruit youth in need of services. The Connection Café was developed by a team of workforce professionals through the Customer Centered Design Process.
- Visiting local parks, homeless shelters, and other places that disconnected young people are known to frequent and speaking to them one-on-one in that environment, and in terms that make them the most comfortable.
- Going into low-income communities and neighborhoods and speaking to friends, families, and young adults about available services and opportunities.
- Creating a program application process that is easy to complete by removing as many of the administrative hurdles as possible.
- Using text messages and social media. While this strategy may not be as effective for recruitment, it is a highly effective strategy for keeping participants engaged, as well as reconnecting those participants who have disconnected from the program.
- Considering the tailoring of strategies for young adults by age group, 18-21 and 22-24. Younger individuals may be more ready to enroll in programs when compared to older individuals. Young adults, ages 22-24, are more likely to have been unemployed or separated from educational institutions longer than those in the younger age group. This older group requires more resource-intensive outreach and recruitment efforts. An emphasis on available work experiences and employment services, rather than education and basic skill building, is preferred for this older group.
- Engagement. Many disconnected young adults face challenges and life obstacles that result in the cycling in

## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

and out of program services. Such challenges are many and varied and may include: periods of homelessness, issues with the criminal justice system, pressures to provide for their families, and substance abuse, among others.

Recognizing the unique hardships of each individual and working to establish trust between participants and staff, that is respectful of roadblocks preventing regular attendance, creates an atmosphere where participants feel staff are invested in their success.

It is recommended that proposals ensure the following are taken into consideration when responding to our Request for Proposals.

- Provision of a mentor to assist youth in the navigation of services.
- Develop relationships with youth before introducing them to the required paperwork involved in the programs.
- Empathize with the youth.
- Encourage parental involvement.
- Encourage youth involvement in the programs while enrolled and following the completion of a program (i.e. bring them in to serve as mentors to other youth).
- Once a participant is enrolled, communicate regularly and effectively. Explain the program's available services and activities, the expectations of the participant, and any available support services that may be necessary.
- If a participant disengages from the program at any point, calls, texts, visits and messages on social media are ways to find out why the participant is no longer engaged and let the participant know that he or she can return whenever he or she is ready. Engage adult mentors along with case managers. Such mentors can play a key role in keeping participants engaged with the program.
- Early in the process set achievable goals with the participant and communicate the status of their progress towards meeting those goals often.
- Engage peers. Placing young adults in cohorts allows individuals to move through the program and receive services with others. Participants often become friends and gain a sense of togetherness and accountability within the cohort. Such engagement may also open the door for young adults to take a leadership role, such as tutoring other participants, giving presentations, etc.
- Ensure that supportive services are made available to participants to help remove barriers that would prevent them from continuing with the program.
- Encourage re-engagement. If an individual leaves the program, the case manager/youth provider staff and adult mentor should remain in contact with the individual to encourage re-engagement through phone calls, texts, social media, or in-person visits at their 'hangouts' or homes.

### **Program Design:**

Outreach and recruitment takes place through discussions with county based partners to identify the target populations, conduct presentations on services, share referrals, conduct information sessions at the PA CareerLink®, and utilize past customers to provide orientation about the "Young Adults in Action" services. Each referral completes an application of basic information leading to a scheduled orientation and the development of an Individual Service Strategy (ISS) plan. Front line staff have initiated through the Customer Center design project the "Connection Café" which may be used throughout the service plan from outreach and case management to counseling and **follow up**. Each month and in some cases weekly, staff may schedule the "Connection Café" at the PA CareerLink®, social halls, public libraries, establishments where youth may gather as well as virtual events (due to the pandemic) to share information, listen to the youth issues, and provide support with the goal to enroll youth, link services with partners and advise the youth in their education and employment plans. In many cases initially the youth require intervention leading to partner services prior to or concurrently with the WIOA performance

goals.

### **Customer Experience**

A Participant handbook is reviewed with each youth during orientation. The cover of the handbook was designed by a current youth customer. Each youth receives an orientation addressing the 14 WIOA Elements and program activities. In the handbook is a flow chart highlighting the service flow and identifying the specific type of activities under each of the 14 WIOA elements. Talent Development Specialists review the 14 WIOA elements highlighting the service opportunities and partners' network available to serve the youth.

**The key steps and milestones of the program design** for the Title I Year Round Youth Program begins with outreach and recruitment in collaboration with PA CareerLink® partners and local youth agencies serving disconnected youth and young adults. Experience has shown many of the eligible youth face many challenges and are or have been engaged with a variety of social and human service organizations. Youth staff will coordinate dual enrollments with the partner agencies to establish integrated plans supporting the fourteen (14) WIOA elements of service. Eligibility determination, assessments through interviews and testing, partner referrals for additional services and job ready workshops will follow the orientation in addressing the Individual Service Strategy in a manner encouraging and supportive of the youth. The bottom line is providing access to information and experiences that lead the youth to succeeding in their employment goal. Recognizing in many cases the youth lack positive family or social support staff will develop connections with other agencies, employers; and maintain follow up in support of the youth. Presently past customers give back to the program as presenters and mentors to the enrolled youth.

**WIOA youth and WIOA young adult's awareness of career pathways** starts at orientation and is reinforced through the Individual Service Strategy, labor market information, counseling, workshops, and engagement with employers. Workforce Solutions has developed Career Pathways Toolkits, One Page Industry Cluster Maps and Career Mapping tools that all staff have been trained to utilize. These tools demonstrate to youth the entry level requirements into an industry as well as the training that will help them move along a career pathway within the industry of interest. Many other online tools are available and utilized when work with youth to assess their career interests. Young adults will be exposed to Career Pathways through the Career Exploration workshop, use of O-Net to research career interest and occupations, and engage employers in discussion groups, and work experience.

**Work-based learning opportunities are provided**, as identified in the Individual Service Strategy, and arranged by the scheduling of the summer employment experience, work experience, job shadowing, and On the Job training (OJT). A Work Experience Standard Handbook is attached that all customers receive. In-School Youth will be identified and placed in summer employment experiences in July through August in both non-profit public worksites and for profit worksites exposing them to the world of work and assist in expanding their knowledge of occupations in the workplace. Out-of-School Youth will have the opportunity to participate in work experience throughout the program year, tour places of business and research Career pathways with the opportunity to reconsider post-secondary education or secure unsubsidized employment.

**The 20% of funds targeted for work experience** is highlighted in the operation budget and will be implemented during the summer employment for both In-School and Out-of-School Youth and during the program year for Out-of-School Youth (young adults). Title I staff will coordinate with the Business Service Representatives to identify potential sites and employers interested in accepting young adults to set up the work experience locations. Worksites will be established by several factors and be driven by the discussion and development of the service needs in the Individual Service Strategy. A priority is to have, at a minimum, one crew per PA CareerLink® area.

**Work readiness training program curriculum and competencies** were originally established from a National Skill Standard grant through the Workforce Development Board. The development of the curriculum and subsequent modifications came from employer feedback of critical soft skills and experiences of customers lacking the awareness of career choices. The job ready workshops may be presented in virtual or group settings or one on one, utilizing additional web based resources such as PA Work Stats and O-Net to learn about skill demands, top occupations, and assessments assisting the youth in career awareness and career pathways choices.

ReadySetWorkPA is a website implemented by Workforce Solutions for job seekers, students, training providers, employers and social service agencies. It is widely used in our PA CareerLink® centers and currently has 8 workshops that were specifically designed around the needs of employer in the North Central PA region. The workshops are: The Art of the Interview, Conflict Resolution, Effective Communication, Get Empowered, Online Applications, Resume Writing, Skills and Strengths and Succeeding in a New Job. The courses on this site have been designed to meet the needs of individuals in our area and include current best practices for topics that were selected to ensure you're job ready. The learning is made more fun and engaging through gamification, peer-to-peer learning, and the ability to receive rewards, including certificates of completion.

**Financial literacy education** is one of the new WIOA elements and is centered on education awareness from financial aid to budgeting and financial life skills. Staff have traditionally brought in financial aid officers or held Career Fairs to help youth receive information and guidance on financial aid for attending post-secondary training. Financial literacy education goes a step further with the goal to expose youth to budgeting, insurance, and financial planning. Title I staff will arrange for guest speakers during the summer employment program to speak to the youth on days set aside for career awareness and life skills. During the course of the program year, young adults will also have the opportunity to hear from guest speakers, and financial aid officers. In addition, entrepreneurial opportunities will be exposed to interested youth through appropriate referrals, connection with the Small Business Administration.

**Program measurement and continuous improvements** will be monitored on a regular basis as mentioned through youth staff meetings and the Youth activity report presented to the Workforce Development Board and Youth Standing Committee each quarter. Included in the report are success stories highlighting the activities throughout the program year, barriers to employment, and caseloads. Programmatically each youth has an Individual Service Strategy plan that is a live and ongoing document capturing services and may be modified at any point to reflect the interest and changes to assist the youth to be successful.

**Tutoring, study skills training and dropout recovery services** are addressed through staff assistance and more formally through the partnership with Title II Providers and literacy volunteer groups in each county. Along with the Title I staff using the T.A.B.E assessment to determine reading and math proficiencies, partnership in the PA CareerLink® as an example with Title II Providers affords the youth remedial services and high school equivalency diploma preparation. Partnering with the area Community Education Councils and in some counties the Community Based Organizations provides additional partner support and referral services to the youth in need as identified on the ISS.

**Youth and young adult preparation to training or post-secondary education** begins with the development of the ISS. Title I staff will open discussion with the youth and young adults regarding their education and employment goals. Recognizing many youths may be unsure or unaware to the options and opportunities, Career Exploration workshops will provide the background and competencies for youth to research career interest and occupational skills information to make an informed choice. Youth and young adults will have the opportunity to speak with people in the respective career fields, job shadow, company tours, and use web based sites to review a variety of information from an interest inventory to High Priority Occupations and skill requirements.

Determined by need, youth and young adults will have the opportunity through the summer employment experience and work experience placement to be exposed to the world of work. Specific to financial aid for training, staff will work with the training providers and young adults to complete an Educational Cost worksheet and research training providers on the State approved training provider's list of schools recognized by the Workforce Development Board and the Department of Labor and Industry. Along with the educational cost worksheet, staff arrange for financial aid officers to present on scholarships, work study programs and other financial packages available for attending post-secondary training.

**Education and training programs** may include Individual Training Accounts (ITAs), On-The-Job Training (OJT), summer employment and work experience to explore career interest and/or exposure to the world of work. Each

## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

provides training or experiences that will prepare the youth for mapping their career choice or securing unsubsidized employment. Recognizing the limits on funding the focus is on work experience; as well as, many of the young adults may be dual enrolled with other WIOA programs accessing financial aid for schooling or employer based contracts for employment. Job shadowing on site with various employers will expose the youth and young adults to job profiles and have the opportunity to speak with employees in jobs of interest. All of these activities are captured in the youth's ISS.

**Education and training program may lead to employment** through the linkage with the role of the Business Service Representative and networking with additional partners in the function of job development and job placement. Following the Job Ready workshops, work experience, post-secondary training or occupation training, the youth will work with the Business Service Representative to search for active job orders on the PA CareerLink® system. Each youth will, from the initial enrollment, establish a personal account on PA CareerLink® to post their resume and actively job search. Business Service Representatives will conduct outreach to employers to arrange job interviews, job fairs, and job placement leading to unsubsidized employment. The Business Service Consultants will provide Career Club workshops to customers reviewing job search activities, providing tips on resumes and interviews, and following up on employment leads as needed. This is also an opportunity to bring Human Resource contacts to present on job expectations, skill requirements, and career options to the youth. In many cases, the targeted youth lack previous work history therefore the training programs help establish career plans moving the youth from their initial employment to plans to advance to better paying jobs as identified on the ISS. Follow up is a service staff use to maintain contact with the youth to advise, refer and guide to partner services, update their career plans, and their employment goals. As with any job seeker losing their job is a reality and staff will conduct follow up 12 months after exit to offer counseling and additional referral service to keep the youth engaged or seek out additional education and employment services.

### **Support Services**

Support services will be addressed through the collaboration with partner organizations and appropriate referrals to the relevant organization. As mentioned transportation, lack of family support network, housing, child care cost, and lack of work experience or lack of a high school diploma/high school equivalency diploma are significant barriers to not only employment but in many cases the partner services needed to prepare a youth for education and employment opportunities. Employability counselors commit a significant amount of time coordinating referrals and partner services prior to and in concert with the Individual Service Strategy leading to training and employment. In many cases staff collaborating with a housing authority or additional human services is necessary prior to enrolling a youth into Job Ready workshops, high school equivalency diploma preparation, or work experience opportunities.

Support services based on need may be a gas incentive card for transportation, high school equivalency cost, clearances, purchase of shoes or clothing for work, or reimbursement for cost of participation. In the past we have contributed to the cost of a bicycle because this is the only means of reliable transportation for the youth to participate or get to work. In addition, we recognize many of the adult youth are dual eligible for Adult funded program services and welfare program services. In the past year we have dual enrolled youth to address support service, work experience and post-secondary training based on eligibility and limitation on funding.

### **Performance, Administration, and Project Management**

The Title I program focus is on building partnerships that prepare today's youth to be tomorrow's productive citizens through education and employment opportunities driven by linkages with the PA CareerLink® system partners, social services agencies and community and faith-based organizations.

Monitoring and tracking youth performance measures begins with the PA workforce development system of record which is the State's database of record for any agency serving WIOA customers. Title I staff use the PA CareerLink® database for all eligibility determination, entry of services and tracking performance measures. In addition, the enrollment goals, demographics, support service awards, work experience slots and expenditures, and WIOA performance measures are tracked weekly through an internal spreadsheet. The Youth report and success stories are presented each quarter to the Workforce Development Board's Youth Committee.

## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

Compliance and proper documentation begins with all eligibility determination and enrollment documentation upon completion being sent to the Administrative office for filing. Personnel packets for enrollment into the summer employment for In-School Youth and work experience for Out-of-School Youth is routed to the Administrative office for review and submitted to the Title I Human Resource and Accounting offices for payroll processing. The Individual Service Strategy plan is updated and submitted to the Administrative office for review prior to any youth enrollment into a paid work experience or occupation training activity and includes an Individual Referral Contract (IRC), Individual Training Account (ITA), and On the Job Training (OJT).

WIOA youth and WIOA young adults' awareness of career pathways starts at orientation and is reinforced through the development of the Individual Service Strategy (ISS), provision of labor market information, counseling, workshop and engagement with employers. For example, employers identified by the Business Service Representative may present at a workshop or participate in Connection Café. In addition, young adults will be exposed to Career Pathways through the Career Exploration Workshop utilize O-Net to research career interest and occupations and engage employers in discussion groups and work experience.

Workforce Solutions requires our WIOA youth provider to coordinate and / or implement all fourteen (14) WIOA elements as follows:

### **Tutoring, study skills training**

- Adult Education
- Post-Secondary School Programs
- Connection Café

### **Alternative Secondary Schools or drop out recovery services**

- Cyber School
- Alternative Education at High Schools

### **Work Experience and Summer Employment Opportunities**

- Paid and Unpaid Work Experience
- On the Job Training
- Job Shadow
- Volunteer Opportunities
- Entrepreneur Training

### **Occupational Skills Training**

- College and Technical Trainings
- Short- Term Trainings
- Certification Programs
- Licensing Programs

### **Post-Secondary Education Training Activities**

- Career Exploration
- Financial Literacy
- FAFSA Information Sessions / Financial Aid Nights
- Community Resources

### **Education offered in same context as Workforce Preparation Activities**

- Tutoring Activities
- Job Ready Workshops

### **Leadership Development**

- Community Service

**Adult Mentoring**

- Ready to Achieve Mentoring Program (RAMP)
- Training Advisors
- Probation Officers

**Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling**

- Supportive Services
- Assessments
- Referrals
- Development of ISS
- Connection Cafe
- Job Ready Workshops
- Conflict Resolution

**Labor Market Information and Employment**

- Workshops
- Job Development
- Career/Job Fairs
- O\*NET Online
- Career Guides and Other Websites

**Financial literacy Education**

- Guest Speakers
- Budgeting Handbook
- Web Sites (My Next Move, PA Career Zone, etc.)

**Entrepreneur Skills Training**

- Junior Achievement Curriculum
- SBDC Speakers
- Chamber of Commerce
- Business Services Team

**Supportive Services**

- GED® and/or HiSET test fees
- Transportation
- Work Clothes
- Clearances
- Items to Secure or Retain Employment

**Follow Up**

- Mailings
- Social Media
- Regular Contact (appointment, drop-in and phone calls)
- Employer/Postsecondary Education

**Workforce Activities for all youth: Business Education Partnership**

Workforce Solutions and our Youth Committee recognized that there was both a need and interest in connecting business with education in 2012. Our employers had expressed concern over the years that our young people aren't always aware of the opportunities or completely prepared to enter the work world. So, we kicked off a partnership in March of 2012 at our Youth Summit – "Preparing our Youth for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century." Since the inception of this initiative partners have come together to ensure that all secondary schools have access to



## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

programs that can help their students make career decisions. Activities include job shadowing, educator in the workplace, company tours, mock interviews (with employers) and other work based learning activities as identified. We quickly transitioned all activities to virtual platforms as stated earlier in this plan which has led to an increased collaboration with more schools and students. The individual programs serving each of our six counties are:

**Elk and Cameron Counties** – DISCOVER partners implemented by the Community Education Council for Elk and Cameron Counties

**McKean and Potter Counties** – Business and Education Connect implemented by the Potter County Community Education Council.

**Clearfield County** – Career Counselor Staff present in all schools in Clearfield County providing career counseling to students on an individual basis as well as assisting schools with activities that connect business and education and the implementation of their Chapter 339 Guidance Counseling plans.

**Jefferson County** – Career Counselor Staff present in all schools in Clearfield County providing career counseling to students on an individual basis as well as assisting schools with activities that connect business and education and the implementation of their Chapter 339 Guidance Counseling plans.

Our Business and Education Connect Initiative is building a much needed pipeline of talent to ensure that career pathways are identified that will lead our youth and other job seekers on a pathway to prosperity. The Business and Education Connect is also increasing and improving the connection between job seekers and employers.

Best Practices through Collaboration:

- Our go to source for best practices in youth services has been the Workforce3one.org which is now WorkforceGPS.org – the Employment and Training Administration’s (ETA) new technical assistance website. We regularly participate on webinars and utilize toolkits and best practices for youth programs as well as all other workforce programs.
- The Board formed a Customer Centered Design Team called North Central PA Our Youth Our Future that continues to meet to develop and implement youth programs with the customer in the center of the design. From this practice we have developed and implemented the Connection Café that brings together youth in a comfortable setting to discuss career related issues including barriers to employment.
- Workforce Solutions partnered with an AmeriCorps VISTA team through a partnership with the Headwaters Charitable Trust. The VISTAs assisted us in the development of a matrix for the Building Trades Industry by compiling information necessary for youth to apply for one of the many Registered Apprenticeship Programs available through the North Central PA Building Trades Council. The document, updated annually provides an overview of each trade, a video if available demonstrating the work performed in this trade, application guidelines, prerequisites for each trade as well as contact information.
- As a core partner, OVR has the ability to collaborate with the local Workforce Development Board to provide in-school youth transition services and other services to gain skills and knowledge to enter the workforce. In partnership with the Workforce Development Board and Title I providers, OVR may provide both OVR eligible and potentially eligible in-school youth with disabilities services to enter competitive integrated employment.

These meaningful opportunities allow in-school youth with disabilities to assess their own strengths and skills, while exploring vocational possibilities and removing barriers from employment. Work based learning is an important experience for in-school youth with disabilities to engage in so that they may be afforded opportunities to discover career paths.

Other services that may be provided to OVR in-school youth with disabilities include:

- Counseling and guidance from professional vocational rehabilitation staff to explore career and training options as well as understand VR services.
- Independent Living Skills training will allow students to gain knowledge to perform the daily tasks essential for maintaining or obtaining independence. Independent Living Skills can include the following: household

## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

budgeting and financial management; utilizing public transportation; navigating through the social services system.

- Self-Advocacy Training to assist students with disabilities to gain knowledge on disabilities opportunities to participate in pre-employment transit disability awareness, advocating during an IEP process, understanding transition processes, and advocating for themselves in post-secondary education, employment, and coordinating social services.
- Workplace Readiness Training will provide students with knowledge needed to find and maintain competitive integrated employment. Curriculums can include soft skills training, interview skills, job readiness, job-seeking skills, HR practices, and other skills needed to become “workplace ready”.
- Job Shadowing will provide students with disabilities a one to five one-day job shadowing experience, for a maximum of 25 hours per school year, in an occupation of interest within a community integrated setting. Students will be provided an opportunity to shadow employees and obtain an overview of the knowledge, tasks, and abilities needed to work in this setting.

TANF Youth Development Program – TANF is an acronym for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and Workforce Solutions is awarded TANF funding to serve TANF eligible youth. Workforce Solutions utilizes these funds to provide work readiness skills training, paid work experiences, supportive services and incentives to TANF Eligible Youth. Our goal is to serve 60 TANF and/or 235% of poverty eligible youth per year. The courses on this site have been designed to meet the needs of individuals in our area and include current best practices for topics that were selected to ensure you’re job ready. The learning is made more fun and engaging through gamification, peer-to-peer learning, and the ability to receive rewards, including certificates of completion. The TANF youth development funds are then awarded to our Title I provider which is currently EQUUS Workforce Solutions.

Our Title I provider employs 5 Talent Youth Development Specialists who are responsible for recruiting TANF youth participants. The recruitment efforts are coordinated with other in school programs however and therefore many partners assist with the recruitment of TANF Youth including Business Education Partnership staff, Department of Human Services, Office and Vocational Rehabilitation, Guidance Counselors at local secondary schools and other agencies that serve youth. Communication with these agencies is the most effective method for recruitment however other methods used include: Attendance at Career Fairs held at local schools and Career and Technical Centers, Recruitment events at PA CareerLink® centers highlighting Financial Planning, the Game of Life, Cupcakes and Careers. Workforce Solutions has a strong Business Education Partnership (BEP) that work with all schools in the region to provide career awareness and career exploration activities and information. In collaboration with the BEP, schools are made aware of the TANF Youth Development Program and eligible students are referred to the appropriate staff. Outreach for potential public and private worksites involve an orientation, supervisor’s protocols, child labor laws, and site postings. A Worksite agreement is established with all placements of youth identifying allowable supervisors and supervision responsibilities.

Title I/ TANF Youth Staff meet on a regular basis and as needed to discuss recruitment efforts for TANF YDP. EARN staff attend weekly Direct Service Team meetings reviewing customer services under the EARN program. During the Direct Service Team meetings, EARN staff ensure that all in attendance are aware of TANF Youth Development program providing a strong recruitment effort. This is a premium opportunity to engage key staff and partners in the outreach and recruitment of TANF youth. Release of information forms and information packets are used to receive referrals and market the service opportunities for eligible youth.

The Paid work experience wage, determined by the WIOA Title I provider, is currently set above minimum wage and is agreed upon as the base rate established in the agreement with the employer providing the work experience. Work experience positions are expected to be at least 120 hours but no more than 240 hours of work related activities.

Upon eligibility determination in coordination with Workforce Solutions (board staff), youth receive a program orientation reviewing program goals and expectations. A one page TANF YDP assessment similar to the Individual Service Strategy (ISS) utilized for the WIOA program is developed for each TANF youth. The document captures the youths’ interests, strengths, and barriers to their employment goals. Youth age-appropriate will be instructed on

## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

how to secure working papers through the local school district. Staff will counsel the youth in matching their career interest with potential work site opportunities. Once a recommended match is determined staff will review the work experience expectations detailed in the Work Experience Handbook, the general job duties at the worksite, and completion of the personnel packet.

In addition, worksites receive an orientation on supervision responsibilities, child labor laws, allowable work schedules, and a review of the Worksite handbook covering policies and procedures of the program. All worksites are required to identify the designated supervisors of youth placed at the site and sign off on the Worksite agreement acknowledging Equus as the employer of record and organization responsible for daily supervision. Worksite Supervisors are encouraged to review safety procedures and work assignments daily to reinforce teachable moments at the worksite.

The recruitment of employers and other organizations for work experience is a team effort of all Title I staff and other PA CareerLink® partners. Title I Business Service Consultants are responsible for building relationships with area employers. When they meet with these employers they discuss the variety of programs available including the TANF Youth Development paid work experience program. As employers express interest in the program, staff work together to place youth with these employers. In addition, the Youth Talent Development Specialists are building relationships in the community with agencies that hire youth for paid work experiences. It is the Youth Talent Development Specialists who then maintain the connections with employers and organizations providing a work experience for the youth. Phone calls, email and visits to employers and organizations are the methods utilized for recruitment. The Workforce Solutions Business Education Partnership Career Counselor also assist in referring youth to the TANF youth development program as they are collaborating with all schools in our region to provide career related activities.

Our Title I provider utilizes their talent development specialists and their business services consultants to leverage WIOA out of school youth funds with TANF funding to maximize the continuum of service opportunities for qualified youth and dual enrollments enhancing the linkages of education and employment leading to potential credential training, completion of a diploma or GED, and improve work related soft skills and practical work experience.

Recognizing the target population and participant characteristics of the TANF funds, staff continues to recruit and develop relationships with OVR staff, school counselors, Children and Youth service staff, Probation, and CAO staff to be engaged with the county based Youth Consortium members. Intermediate Units, OVR, Housing authorities and Mental health agencies partner to provide remediation, support services and additional counseling to guide youth through overcoming barriers to career goals and employment. TANF youth are also able to participate in all activities provided through our Business Education Partnership.

Both public and private worksites are recruited for potential placement in work experience opportunities – sites are identified by Business Service Teams, youth committee, Industry Partnerships and other outreach within the region. While we do not expect these sites to make any monetary and / or non-monetary contributions our Title I / TANF Youth Development staff enter into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) as required by Workforce Solutions. The MOA outlines the responsibilities of both Title I/TANF Youth Development and the work experience site. Work experiences sites typically agree to provide 12 months of adult mentoring to the youth in addition to a work experience.

Incentives are considered awards to youth participants for their achievement and successful participation in workforce development activities. The following is a list of incentives that may be awarded at the discretion of the LWDB to youth participants based on funding availability:

Successful completion of work experience: \$50.00

Received High School Diploma and/ or GED: \$50.00

Completed Post-Secondary Semester: \$25.00

All TANF Youth are made aware of the incentive policy of the board as well as the procedures of the provider

## North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

during the time of eligibility determination prior to the start of the program activity. Youth are informed that incentives are not an entitlement and that all incentive awards are subject to availability and budgeting of TANF Youth Development funds and applied at the discretion of Workforce Solutions.

Incentive payments are documented in the youth's Individual Service Strategy (ISS) when a youth is co-enrolled in WIOA and are directly tied to the goals of the specific program. When youth are not co-enrolled the payments are documented on the TANF Youth Development Intake form.

For youth being served as TANF Youth only, the board requires the provider to maintain a list of all incentives issued, and include at a minimum, the following information: amount and type of incentive issued, name of individual receiving incentive, dates issued and reason for issuance of incentive.

Monitoring of the TANF Youth Development program takes place in several ways. Our TANF Youth Provider submits a quarterly report to the youth committee of Workforce Solutions for review. Board staff oversees the Youth Committee and leads the discussion with committee members. If there are concerns regarding the performance of TANF youth providers Workforce Solutions reaches out to the provider for clarification. The Youth Committee is responsible to make recommendations to the board regarding all youth programs.

In addition, Workforce Solutions staff monitors a sampling of TANF Youth Development files 2 times per year and provides a detailed report on findings to the board. The board then works with our provider to ensure compliance and if necessary a corrective action plan is requested from the provider.

### Contact information for TANF Youth Development Program

Name and complete contact information of LWDB staff member responsible for the implementation, tracking and reporting TANF YD activities and expenditures:

Donna Hottel, 814-245-1835, [dhottel@ncwdb.org](mailto:dhottel@ncwdb.org)

Name of Designated TANF Provider Contact Person(s):

Blythe Brunner, 814-834-2857, [bbrunner@pa-cl.com](mailto:bbrunner@pa-cl.com)

### Monitoring

Workforce Solutions staff monitors youth (participant) files twice per year utilizing the monitoring tool the state provided. Some modifications were made to this document to add required clearances as well as a cover sheet to summarize results. Additionally, Workforce Solutions has made the decision to monitor TANF participant files. New to our monitoring efforts this year will be the addition of worksite monitoring, supervisor interviews and participant interviews as the tools have been developed. We are currently working with the provider to finalize the timeline for notifications to the worksites as well as updates to written materials (employer/participant handbook).

Name of LWDB staff member responsible for monitoring:

Donna Hottel, 814-245-1835, [dhottel@ncwdb.org](mailto:dhottel@ncwdb.org)

### *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?*

Workforce Solutions collaborates with Rapid Response activities in the North Central Region. Each PA CareerLink® center has its own Rapid Response Team. The North Central WDA takes a regional approach to mass layoffs of 50 or more and Rapid Response activities occur in cooperation with the State and Regional Rapid Response Coordinator. Title I staff are part of the Rapid Response Team and work with partnering staff to organize Rapid Response Meetings with affected employees and the Title I provider may rotate staff to accommodate larger WIOA enrollments and to provide timely services.

## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

When a company plans to lay off less than 50 employees the same Rapid Response activities are coordinated locally with the Rapid Response Unit Coordinator.

Workforce Solutions intends to increase collaboration with the Regional Rapid Response Coordinator to share information and to discuss major dislocation events in our region. This collaboration will help to ensure that both the board and the Regional Coordinator are aware of programs and resources that may be available to them in addition to the services and programs available at the PA CareerLink® centers.

The board will also increase collaboration and understanding of the Strategic Early Warning Network (SEWN) which provides layoff aversion services to help business, particularly in the manufacturing sector, to remain competitive and keep workers employed.

### *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 service(s).*

Workforce Solutions continues to fully utilize the resources and services available through the area's secondary and work-based institutions, including those programs authorized by the Carl D. Perkins Act to increase educational achievements as well as postsecondary credentials. We promote the alignment of our workforce strategies and services along with those of its community partners, including adult education, community education councils, community colleges, CTECs, and others to increase access, enhance outcomes, maximize resources, and avoid duplication of efforts by connecting and coordinating workforce programs with relevant secondary and postsecondary education offerings and to avoid duplication of efforts.

Workforce Solutions has agreements through the One-Stop MOU with Title II providers to deliver Adult Education to increase academic and workforce preparation skills. The Board further supports local Career and Technical Centers and secondary schools through dual enrollment programs. Additionally, it utilizes Chapter 339 Career Guidance Plan Development as a coordinated effort for college and career readiness. The Board provides access to postsecondary opportunities and financial aid information through the PA CareerLink® system, and its statewide list of approved training providers.

Workforce Solutions staff also participate in the CTE comprehensive needs assessment with all schools that have CTE programs. Staff also participate on the advisory councils at all Career and Technical Centers in our region and provide input from industry and labor market trends as well as access to the High Priority Occupation list.

Workforce Solutions interacts with our providers on a regular basis and in particular through the HPO Petition process to ensure that our providers are offering relevant education programs that will lead to gainful employment. In addition, through our Industry Partnerships we go through an RFQ process with our providers to solicit providers to offer industry recognized/needed training. Our hope is that once this training is provided the school will continue to offer the program on a regular basis.

Workforce Solutions is committed to increasing the number of RAPs and Pre-RAPs in our region because we agree that employers who sponsor these programs will be positioned to build a pipeline of workers who are better retained and invested in their job. Apprenticeships can aide in reducing recruiting costs and improve work productivity. We view this as a partnership with the PA CareerLink® centers, and in particular the Business Services Teams and Title I staff as well as the board, staff and the PA Apprenticeship and Training Office (ATO).

Workforce Solutions has committed time and resources to ensure that we have the staff capacity to accomplish this work. We have worked with the State Apprenticeship Office for several years preceded by work with the Federal Apprenticeship Office which has resulted in board staff with extensive knowledge of Registered Apprenticeship Programs. We currently have a staff completing a Registered Apprenticeship Navigator Program. The state completing the Navigator Program as well as other board staff will continue to inform and educate secondary and post-secondary schools systems of the work being done around RA and Pre RA. This is completed through direct outreach, participation on Local Advisory Councils for many schools in our region, Occupation Advisory Councils, regular meetings with post-secondary training providers (including Career and Technical Centers) as well as through

## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

our Business Education Partnership and youth committee of the North Central Workforce Development Board.

ReadySetWorkPA is a website implemented by Workforce Solutions for job seekers, students, training providers, employers and social service agencies. This virtual training platform aimed to increase customer engagement and provide a system access on-line which will provide basic training to all customers. It is widely used in our PA CareerLink® centers and currently has 8 workshops that were specifically designed around the needs of employer in the North Central PA region. The workshops are: The Art of the Interview, Conflict Resolution, Effective Communication, Get Empowered, Online Applications, Resume Writing, Skills and Strengths and Succeeding in a New Job. The courses on this site have been designed to meet the needs of individuals in our area and include current best practices for topics that were selected to ensure you're job ready. The learning is made more fun and engaging through gamification, peer-to-peer learning, and the ability to receive rewards, including certificates of completion. Data that can be collected from the website includes: Attendee name, participant ID, course completion, time spent in course, as well as assessment outcomes and answers. Each course includes a course evaluation to provide user experience qualitative data pertaining to the workshop content and presentation.

### *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 seq.) services and other services provided through the one-stop service delivery system.*

Workforce Solutions requires that each partner commits to cross-training of staff, as appropriate, and to providing other professional learning opportunities that promote continuous quality improvement.

Partners will further promote system integration to the maximum extent feasible through:

- Effective communication, information sharing, and collaboration with the one-stop operator,
- Joint planning, policy development, and system design processes,
- Commitment to the joint mission, vision, goals, strategies, and performance measures,
- The design and use of common intake, assessment, referral, and case management processes,
- The use of common and/or linked data management systems and data sharing methods, as appropriate,
- Leveraging of resources, including other public agency and non-profit organization services,
- Participation in a continuous improvement process designed to boost outcomes and increase customer satisfaction, and
- Participation in regularly scheduled Partner meetings to exchange information in support of the above and encourage program and staff integration.

Workforce Solutions staff continues to work with the PA CareerLink® Operator regarding integration and non-duplication of services in our centers. Staff in the centers work together to collaborate on services for cost efficiencies and better services to our customers. In addition, the Operator employs a Workforce Navigator for each of our PA CareerLink® centers. Workforce Solutions requires this through our Operator Procurement process as we identified the need for someone to assist in the navigation of services while building strong relationships with customers and staff to work effectively and efficiently as a team for the best outcome of our customers. The roles of the Workforce Navigator include but are not limited to – welcoming visitors, clients and customers to the centers, triage all who enter and define how and who may best fulfill their needs, assist customers with PA CareerLink® registration, referrals to internal programs, provision of an orientation to PA CareerLink® services.

### *4.12 How will the local board coordinate WIOA Title I workforce investment activities with adult education literacy*

## North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

### *activities under WIOA Title II?*

Workforce Solutions reached out directly to our Title II providers for input regarding the development of this plan. Providers were also invited to our public stakeholder meetings that were held prior to the drafting of this plan. The Title II providers read through the applicable sections of the plan and provided us with input on the language for these sections.

Representation of Title II Adult Education exists within the system. Regular communication and active participation is necessary on both Title II and the Board's part for smooth and integrated PY 2021-24 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan.

Both WIOA Title I and WIOA Title II partners have committed to cross-training of staff, as appropriate, and to providing other professional learning opportunities that promote continuous quality improvement.

Partners will further promote system integration to the maximum extent feasible through:

- Effective communication, information sharing, and collaboration with the one-stop operator,
- Joint planning, policy development, and system design processes,
- Commitment to the joint mission, vision, goals, strategies, and performance measures,
- The design and use of common intake, assessment, referral, and case management processes,
- The use of common and/or linked data management systems and data sharing methods, as appropriate,
- Leveraging of resources, including other public agency and non-profit organization services,
- Participation in a continuous improvement process designed to boost outcomes and increase customer satisfaction, and
- Participation in regularly scheduled Partner meetings to exchange information in support of the above and encourage program and staff integration.
- Referrals from each provider to the other as well as follow up on these referrals to ensure that customer are being served in the most effective way possible.

Workforce Solutions is not directly involved in WIOA Title II solicitation and procurement; the Title II competition is run solely by PDE, and all funding decisions are made solely by PDE. We will review applications submitted to PDE for WIOA Title II funds for alignment with the goals and strategies of the local area plan, and then provide recommendations to PDE on ways to improve alignment, if applicable.

Federal regulations require PDE to establish the process by which the local boards will review the WIOA Title II applications for alignment with the local area plan and submit recommendations to PDE for improvement of alignment. PDE will receive the applications for Title II funds and then distribute applications to the appropriate LWDB for review. PDE will develop related review documents and rubrics and provide them to the local boards along with training on how to conduct the review and return the documents to PDE. All local boards must use the review documents and rubrics provided by PDE. Local boards have flexibility in determining which members of the local board participate in the review of applications. The review work may be led by local board staff but cannot be limited to local board staff. Board members connected to entities that submit applications for WIOA Title II funds or that have other conflicts of interest cannot participate in the review.

It is our understanding that the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) will establish procedures, and accompanying rubrics and documentation, for Title II applications to be provided to local boards to review for alignment with their local plan. After reviewing the applications, the local boards will be responsible for submitting to PDE comments regarding alignment of the applications to the local plan.

### *4.13 What services, activities and program resources will be provided to participants, including those*

## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

### *outlined at WIOA Sec. 3(24), Individuals with a Barrier to Employment, in the local area?*

Through our Customer Centered Design Challenge Workforce Solutions implemented several processes that have improved the customer experience at the PA CareerLink® centers including: triage, common intake, and a stronger referral process. These efforts have also improved coordination of services among the various staff. Within our PA CareerLink® Title I staff provide individualized career services as well as intake, assessment, job search workshops, rapid response services, IEP and ISS development and case management for all WIOA eligible customers. Bureau of Workforce Partnership and Operations (BWPO) staff provide core services including intake, job screening and referrals, employer outreach services, job search workshops, rapid response activities and case management for job seekers. BWPO and Title I staff work together to match job seekers with employers in need of their skills by providing basic job search skills and information to entry level job seekers. When necessary, entry level workers are referred to Title I and other programs when they are in need of more intensive services. Title I and BWPO staff work collaboratively to meet the vision and goals of Workforce Solutions.

Each of our PA CareerLink® centers will be utilizing a newly implemented Digital Intake process. The PA Department of Labor and Industry (DLI) and PA State Workforce Development Board in an effort to better understand the demographics and barriers of individuals (job seekers) that enter our PA CareerLink® offices or engage with their offices looking for career related support - regardless of if the individual enrolls in eligibility-based programs and receives services. Creating a common intake form was also a priority outlined in the 2020 WIOA Combined State Plan, the digital intake form standardizes and centralizes user data and creates a one-stop customer service experience.

Title II Adult Education is provided throughout the North Central region by various agencies. Adult Education staff provide services to job seekers referred to them by other agencies and PA CareerLink® partners and help to ensure the creation of a skilled workforce.

WIOA Title IV eligible OVR customers receive multiple services from qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors that may include but not be limited to; diagnostic, vocational counseling and guidance, vocational evaluation, restoration, training, job placement and pre-employment training services for eligible and potentially eligible high school students with disabilities.

With transportation as one of our largest barriers to employment, we ~~will~~ continue to review and assess opportunities to improve this throughout our region. These efforts include identifying faith and community based organizations that provide transportation, collaboration with public transportation and the use of mileage reimbursement or gas cards. Efforts to collaborate with our local transportation provider, Area Transportation Association (ATA) have presented further challenges as they do not provide transportation during evenings, weekends and have limited routes. This is common in rural areas throughout the state and nation. In addition, Manufacturing and Healthcare/Social Assistance are our largest industries and entry level employees often work on second and third shifts. ATA does not operate during this time frame. We have been partnering with other local transportation providers including school bus organizations – these options are much expensive. For example, we implemented a training for participants with substance use disorders to become trained as Certified Recovery Specialists (CRS). The cost to transport these individuals was approximately 75% more than what the cost of public transportation would be (if available). While this is unfortunate, we are also exploring other options including the possibility of mobile units to provide services to the customer's location as well as Uber-like services as alternative transportation modes.

Over the next year we plan to secure funding for a mobile PA CareerLink® van that will be equipped with the technology needed for job seekers to complete their job search, participate in workshops and register with the PA CareerLink®. The unit will be ADA accessible as well. The unit will take services to untapped labor pools such as county jails and prisons, housing authorities, domestic relations, drug and alcohol rehabilitation facilities and more. Another barrier we are working to solve is the issue of childcare as a barrier to employment. We are forming an advisory committee to address this issue and have begun to survey multiple stakeholders including job seekers and employers.



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

Our Business Service Team Core members are the PA CareerLink® Partners as well as additional partners in the region that also serve employers. Workforce Solutions encourages each Business Service Team to include local Chambers of Commerce, County Economic Development Staff, Northwest Industrial Resource Center staff and the Clarion University Small Business Development Centers (SBDC) and others as identified by each Business Service Team.

Our business service team policy was recently revised in collaboration with the Policy and Performance Committee of the board. to ensure changes from WIOA are captured in the policy and that each PA CareerLink® center has a Business Service team and they meet on a consistent basis. In addition, members wanted to ensure that our centers were remaining relevant to employers needs following the pandemic.

The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) now has a business service representative that sits on the teams. County Economic Development Agencies, Chambers of Commerce, Small Business Development Centers and Industrial Resource Centers will be encouraged to participate on these teams as well. The teams meet monthly, share labor market information updates and discuss strategies regarding how the various partners can work together to better serve regional employers.

Team members are expected to make employer visits to obtain employer needs and explain available PA CareerLink® services. Teams are expected to meet at least monthly with an agenda. Additional goals in the policy include:

1. Engage with new employers to open a business folder on CWDS, post positions on CWDS, present an overview of all PA CareerLink® services, etc. A new employer as an employer that hasn't accessed any PA CareerLink® service in the past two years.
  - a. Clearfield County – DuBois and Clearfield centers – at least 5 per quarter
  - b. Jefferson, McKean and Elk Counties – at least 3 per quarter
  - c. Cameron and Potter Counties – at least 1 per quarter

\*Goal determined by the number of establishments by center.

2. Visit, tour and assess at least 2 Employers Visits per quarter– could be in collaboration with the ENGAGE Program (virtual or in person) to discuss services available to employers at the PA CareerLink®.
3. Participates in 3 of 4 Industry Partnership meetings per year (at least one member of the BST).
4. Hold at 3-5 Hiring events, open interview events, etc. per quarter – can be individual company or multiple company events.

Additional goals will be established when results of the Business Services Team analysis being implemented by the PA Department of Labor and Industry are available, and as the labor market and workforce delivery system continues to change.

Agenda items shall include but not limited to; Industry Partnerships, High Priority Occupations, Metrix Learning, Registered Apprenticeship and Pre Apprenticeships, New Employers, Lay Offs, etc. Teams review Job Order processes, i.e. listing/writing Job Orders, reviewing team member responsibilities, discussion of local/regional labor market and/or other employer data/analysis. This is also a good opportunity for all partners to discuss their services and how collaboration can best occur.

Business Service Teams are required to include on their membership the Business Engagement and Project Manager

## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

staff of Workforce Solutions to ensure that all team have the most updated information on workforce initiatives that the board is involved with. This position is also responsible for educating team members on how to promote and discuss Registered Apprenticeships and Pre Apprenticeships.

Workforce Solutions is committed to increasing the number of RAPs and Pre-RAPs in our region because we agree that employers who sponsor these programs will be positioned to build a pipeline of workers who are better retained and invested in their job. Apprenticeships can aide in reducing recruiting costs and improve work productivity. We view this as a partnership with the PA CareerLink® centers, and in particular the Business Services Teams and Title I staff as well as the board, staff and the PA Apprenticeship and Training Office (ATO).

Workforce Solutions has committed time and resources to ensure that we have the staff capacity to accomplish this work. We have created and implemented a Registered Apprenticeship Guidance document that has been shared with all PA CareerLink® staff to outline the process for RAP and PRE RAP development and implementation and to provide information and other resources to increase the knowledge of RAPS and Pre RAPS so they can assess and refer employers to board staff for further assistance as well as assess and refer job seekers to established RAPs and Pre RAPs. Workforce Solutions is also committed to utilizing WIOA and other identified funding to support RAPS and Pre RAPs in our region through all programs including: TANF Youth Development, WIOA Youth, EARN. Likewise, RAPs and Pre RAPs are considered essential to all of the work we do around career pathways, co enrollment and services for those with disabilities.

Staff from Workforce Solutions participate on all Business Service Team meetings held throughout our region to share and discuss information related to our priorities including but not limited to: Internship Opportunities, Prosper: From Recovery to Career Grant, other grants as awarded, and Registered Apprenticeships and Registered Pre- Apprenticeships.

Business Service Team responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- Employer outreach
- Labor Market information
- Explanation of PA CareerLink® services and partner services
- Maintain and build employer relationships.
- Determine employer needs and referral to other agencies
- Implement and assist with Job Fairs, mass recruitments/layoffs and coordinate use of PA CareerLink® facilities for interviewing, testing etc.
- Develop relationships with local business and agencies to promote the PA CareerLink® and host various events that will be of interest to businesses and employers
- Assist Workforce Solutions with data entry for Industry Partnerships and other Workforce Solutions sector strategies as implemented by the board

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 program like paid work experiences, job shadowing, and workplace tours.

WIOA Title IV eligible OVR customers receive multiple services from qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors that may include but not be limited to, diagnostic, vocational counseling and guidance, vocational evaluation, restoration, training, job placement and pre-employment training services for eligible and potentially eligible high school student with disabilities.

Workforce Solutions staff participate on the North Central PREP partnership. Staff participated in training on the

## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

Executive Pulse system and have reported our activities with employers in the System. We collaborate with the PREP partners on a regular basis when meeting with employers. When an employer calls Workforce Solutions to inquire about services we also discuss the services available through the North Central PREP partners. When we meet with employers we invite the North Central PREP partners to the meetings as appropriate so that employers can learn about all of the services (Economic and Workforce and Education) at one time. This practice is based on the interests and needs of the employer. In turn, when local economic development staff meet with employers they will invite us to the meetings as well.

The previous collaborative efforts are important to Workforce Solutions as we strive to meet the needs of local employers and avoid duplication of services. Employers have told us repeatedly that they have a hard time understanding all of the programs that are available to assist them and truly appreciate a united front when partners work together to meet their needs. Workforce Solutions will continue to work on these efforts.

### *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?*

Workforce Solutions recognizes that supportive services are critical to the success of a jobseeker successfully completing training, education and employment in the public workforce system. It understands the value of supportive services and includes the following as anticipated supportive services needs such as transportation, child and elder care, work clothes, shoes and other special attire essential and required for successful work, and other items as necessary.

WIOA supportive services are provided on the basis of need as determined by the Title I Program Provider or other partners as approved by the Workforce Development Board. Eligible adults include individuals who are defined as hard to serve according to Workforce Solutions Priority of Service Policy. Eligible dislocated workers are individuals determined eligible for WIOA enrollment under the dislocated worker provisions. Eligible youth are individuals who are either out-of-school or in-school and meet the definitions of WIOA eligibility.

Upon determination of need by the Title I staff or partner staff a request form is filled out and submitted to the appropriate supervisor for review and approval. This request must take into consideration previous supportive services received. In situations where immediate approval and provision of the supportive services is necessary consultation with that staffs' supervisor via telephone call is accepted. The phone call can then be followed up with the required documentation.

The maximum award identified below is per life of participant enrollment in WIOA.

Supportive services may only be allotted to an eligible participant after all other options are exhausted. When an Individual Service Strategy (ISS) or an Individual Employment Plan (IEP) is developed for a customer, barriers are identified. The counselor and the customer then discuss other community resources that may be available to the participants and makes a referral. This begins with the core partners but reaches out into the community. Use of the county resource guides as well as contacting agencies through which relationships are established assists with this process. Evidence of these referrals to other resources as well as the outcomes are documented in-PA CareerLink® Case Notes.

### TYPES OF SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

Workforce Solutions has determined that support services may be provided for the following and cannot total more than \$1,000 per participant:

- a. Transportation
- b. Clothing (as required and necessary for job)

## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

- c. Physical (as required for job)
- d. License Fee (i.e. CDL)
- e. Child Care
- f. Dependent Care
- g. Housing

As needs are identified in a customer's objective assessment of needs, they may make a request to Workforce Solutions if a service is not on the previous list. Workforce Solutions will ensure that the request meets the language of WIOA prior to approval.

Workforce Solutions and our partners identified transportation as a critical barrier for many of our customers to participate in training as well as employment. This issue has been identified and discussed for many years. Due to the rural nature of our area public transportation is not always an option on a regular basis in a most cost-effective method. The Local Management Committee of the Board responsible for oversight of the EARN program has discussed this issue many times and we continue to struggle to find a solution. We've discussed the possibility of promoting UBER in our region to entice individuals to become drivers to increase the availability of options and recently learned the UBER is now offered in one of our counties.

Employers in our region also recognize this as a major barrier to employment for many of their potential entry-level workers. Some have discussed promoting ride-sharing amongst their current employees. Others don't feel that it is their responsibility to assist in finding solutions.

We continue to evaluate our options and network with others across the country to look for creative solutions. In addition to administering WIOA Title I funds the Workforce Development Board staff partners with the Transportation and Community Development staff on the Community and Economic Development Plan (CEDs) plan and the Long Term Transportation Plan.

Public transportation services in the region are led by two providers: The Area Transportation Authority (ATA) with its mix of fixed-route, deviated fixed-route, and Call-A-Bus services; and DuFAST Transit however ATA recently purchased DuFAST which operates three fixed-route circulator shuttles on weekdays with one-hour headways and other special service within the City of DuBois, Sandy Township and Falls Creek Borough. ATA was established in 1976 and offers both fixed-route and demand-responsive services throughout our six-county region. With the purchase of DuFAST by ATA we anticipate some changes to public transportation.

In addition, there are other community and faith based organizations in our region that may provide supportive services. These entities are identified in county resource guides as well as the PA211.org online tool. Our PA CareerLink® centers utilizes these resources to identify additional supportive services resources that may be available to customers and referrals are made as appropriate.

### 5. COMPLIANCE

- 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.*

A Memorandum of Understanding outlining the roles and responsibilities of each partner including Workforce Solutions/the North Central Workforce Development Board, the PA CareerLink® system partners, and the Chief Elected Official Board can be found on our website - <https://www.workforcesolutionspa.com/categories/pa-careerlink/pages/careerlink-what-is?from=job-seekers#workforce-system-partners>.

Additionally, with respect to the provision of services to individuals with disabilities, the Board will utilize the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation's (OVR) expertise regarding assessment, career pathway development, education training and placement services. OVR has a very effective professional development program that will assist in

## North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

assuring proper cross training of staff, technical assistance and sharing information. The Board will encourage the sharing of PA CareerLink® information that can assist in serving mutual clients.

Workforce Solutions, and our PA CareerLink® partners ensure continued compliance with WIOA Section 188, applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and “The ADA Standard for Accessible Design.” We are committed to following and adhering to all provisions of the U.S. Department of Labor Rule: “Implementation of the Nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunity provisions of the WIOA” and, the “State Nondiscrimination Plan.” Dissemination of information related to those topics previously listed as well as compliance accordingly is under the charge of the LWDA’s designated Equal Opportunity Officer. Our EO officer works with individuals appointed in each PA CareerLink® center, referred to Equal Opportunity Liaisons to ensure that customers are aware of their rights and to report any incidents related to potential discrimination or accessibility. Through mutual efforts those identified above utilize the PA Department of Labor and Industry, Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) “State Employment Security Agency (SESA) Technical Assistance (TA) Training Manual, which requires the use of the nondiscrimination and EO Self-Evaluation Guide.” Training to support the liaisons and EO Officer as well as technical assistance is provided by the Office of Equal Opportunity. In addition, our Office of Vocational Rehabilitation has been a great partner providing accessibility walk-throughs of our PA CareerLink® centers and Sensitivity Training to our PA CareerLink® staff.

In addition, and in accordance with Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 37-14 board staff will coordinate with the Equal Opportunity Liaisons in each of the PA CareerLink® centers in our region to ensure the following:

- Use this TEGL and attachments when reviewing our existing policies and procedures and make any changes necessary to implement the guidance discussed in the directive.
- Ensure that workforce staff are familiar with Attachment I to this TEGL – “Key Terminology for Working with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Persons.” to assist with more effective communication with LGBT customer and employees of the workforce system.

### *5.2. What is the process the local board uses to ensure the collection of the debts of lower-tier sub-recipients, because of audits?*

Workforce Solutions Audit Resolution Policies and Procedures outlines the local debt collection system and how the WDB will ensure the collection of debts established as a result of audits.

Procedures in Collecting Outstanding Debts Resulting from Audit Disallowance of Subrecipient Expenditures include the following:

The issuance of a final determination by Workforce Solutions the Chief Elected Official (CEO) signifies the completion of the audit resolution process. At this time, a debt is established when the final determination disallows any costs questioned in the audit. The final determination contains the first official demand for repayment of the debt and, therefore, initiates the following procedure:

1. Following receipt of the final determination, the audited entity will have ten (10) calendar days to submit an appeal (refer to Section B.6, which outlines this appeal process). The request is an appeal for a formal review of the determination, whether or not an appeal has been filed. Interest on the delinquent debt will begin to accrue at this time and will accrue during the entire time of the appeal process.

The debt collection process will be stayed, pending a decision regarding the appeal. However, the debt does become delinquent on the 31st day following the receipt of the final determination, whether or not an appeal has been filed. Interest on the delinquent debt will begin to accrue at this time and will accrue during the entire time of the appeal process; and

2. If no appeal or the final determination is filed, repayment of the debt is due within thirty (30) days after receipt of that final determination. Upon repayment of the outstanding debt, a final letter will

## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

be issued to the audited entity by the Grant Recipient. This letter will:

- Acknowledge the receipt of payment; and
  - End the debt collection process and audit process.
3. Should repayment not be received in the thirty (30) day period, a second notice will be transmitted by Certified Mail and regular mail, as documented by Certificate of Mailing, P.S. Form 3817. This notice will state the following:
- Repayment must be submitted within twenty (20) calendar days of receipt of the letter; and
  - State that interest on the outstanding debt begins to accrue on the 31st day following receipt of the final determination by the audited entity.
4. Should repayment of the outstanding debt not be received within twenty (20) calendar days of receipt of the second notice, a final notice will be sent by Certificate of Mailing, P.S. Form 3817. The final notice will state that:
- Repayment must be received by the Grant Recipient within ten (10) days of receipt;
  - List the amount of accrued interest due to date; and
  - State that should repayment of the debt and interest not be received, appropriate legal and/or programmatic sanctions will be initiated.
5. Additional Methods of Debt Repayment – Workforce Solutions has also established the following additional acceptable methods of debt repayment. While Workforce Solutions prefers cash repayment as described above, Workforce Solutions may accept stand-in costs and the provision of future program services. Acceptance of these methods is solely at the discretion of Workforce Solutions, with prior approval by the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry and/or the United States Department of Labor.
- a. Stand-in Costs (under-claimed costs) – Workforce Solutions may withhold, if possible, from current and future requests for cash by the SUBGRANTEE, sufficient amounts of money until the debt is collected.
  - b. Services and/or Training – Repayment, in the form of program services and/or training, may be requested to Workforce Solutions. When Workforce Solutions accepts then a repayment plan must be developed as if this were an actual financial contract. These services must then be acceptable, provide for audit, and meet Workforce Solutions goals and objectives for WIOA Title I programming.

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

Workforce Solutions is currently functioning as a high-performing Board (according to the current guidelines) in that we consistently achieve the following:

- Aligns with the Governor’s goals as described in the PA Combined Plan
- Meets the local area negotiated federal performance goals
- Sustains fiscal and administrative integrity
- Accountable to our mission and our stakeholders
- Our Strategies and Operational elements are articulated in applicable law, regulation, contracts and agreement
- Receives successful monitoring reports and other evaluations by federal and Commonwealth oversight staff
- Researches new and/or improved methods to assist individuals with barriers to employment
- Achieves training expenditure targets
- Develops sector initiatives

## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

We understand that the new guidance pertaining to the action a local board must take toward becoming and remaining a high-performing board are currently being developed. Once the guidance is released, Workforce Solutions will implement the necessary action to become and remain a high-performing board.

We have identified in previous sections how our goals align with the Governor's goal. We are committed to accomplishing our goals and in doing so will assist the Governor in reaching the statewide goals.

We ensure we have in place a strong, strategic Title I provider in order that we meet the negotiated federal performance goals. These goals are their goals and even though the law recognizes that 80% of the negotiated measure is acceptable, our board expects at least 90% in order to be considered acceptable. We encourage creativity and help our provider with new and innovative ideas in order that these measures are met.

Workforce Solutions has had a clean audit each year since we were incorporated. Prior to this, the board always had a clean audit. Fiscal integrity is important not only to the board but also the staff. Every decision is based on its connection to our mission and if it fiscally makes sense. We hold all of our vendors and subrecipients to the same level of expectation.

Every new project or initiative that we consider is done so with our vision and mission in mind. If it doesn't relate to either one, then we won't consider it. We pride ourselves in being a local and regional collaborator. Every initiative that we pursue is done with our partners in mind. We will reach out to everyone that should be part of the collaboration and invite them to the table.

All of our strategies and operational elements are articulated in applicable law, regulation, contracts and agreement. All of our services, initiatives, and projects are provided following all applicable laws, regulations, contracts and agreements.

We strive for quality programs and services and ensure all of our processes meet the letter of the law. We pride ourselves in no significant findings over the years in any of our monitoring reports. We have quality checks in place to ensure we are meeting the requirements.

Our board believes in a customer centered design approach to serving individuals with barriers to employment. All of our staff participate in opportunities to continue to learn how we can improve our system and services. Staff participate in statewide workshops and conferences. Some staff participate at the national level as well. We want our rural region to be noticed and to have access to everything that the more urban areas have. We want to ensure our employers remain competitive and have a strong workforce.

Our board has always believed that a large portion of our funding should be dedicated to "dollars on the street." We have historically targeted 25-30% of our program funds to training activities. We work in partnerships with our Title I provider to ensure that customers receive the services and training that they need in order to become self-sufficient.

Our board has supported sector strategies even before Industry Partnerships, we had county employer consortia. We continue to manage and oversee our sector strategies, currently through the three Industry Partnerships we run, Healthcare and Social Assistance, Advanced Manufacturing, and Building and Construction.

### *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?*

#### Modification #2

Workforce Solutions distributed surveys to gather input as well as held one virtual meeting via zoom to gain input on the contents of the plan modification. Surveys were sent January 5, 2022 to Employers, Secondary Schools including Career and Technical Centers, Job Seekers and other stakeholders from across the region and given until January 20, 2022 to respond. A virtual meeting was held for Post-Secondary Training Providers on January 18, 2022 and was facilitated by staff. Below is some feedback we received:

Job Seeker Survey Summary - 15 responses collected. Most job seekers preferred in person services vs using the

## - North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

website only. Likewise, most preferred in-person communication vs. other forms of communication. Some wanted the UC direct phone back and/or a UC staff person to assist.

Employer Survey Summary - 79 responses collected. Most comments were utilized for feedback to PA CareerLink® for continuous improvement purposes what PA CareerLink® can do to better serve employers, such as quality of referrals, lack of communication, lack of applicants, etc.

Secondary School Survey Summary (including CTCs) - 15 responses. Some of the services noted as important included: summer internships; mock interviews by PA CareerLink® staff; increased interactions with older aged students; career opportunities/pathways. Suggestions to provide workshops in the schools and tours of PA CareerLink®.

Post-Secondary School Zoom Meeting Summary - Would like more data including List of every K-12 school; # of students by grade; student enrollment is down.

In addition, monthly meetings with our Operator Consortium and Partners have provided an open forum for input into the plan.-

Other meetings during which the plan was discussed and ideas gathered include the following:

Workforce Development Board Meetings – December 21, 2022 and February 15, 2023 (CEO board members were also in attendance)

Manufacturing Industry Partnership Meeting – February 8, 2023

Healthcare and Social Assistance Industry Partnership Meeting – February 2, 2023

### Original Plan/Modification 1

Prior to the drafting of this plan, Workforce Solutions held two virtual meetings via zoom to gain input on the contents of the plan. Stakeholders from across the region including employers, economic development agencies, community development agencies, secondary and post-secondary education providers including Career and Technical Centers, Chambers of Commerce were notified of these stakeholder meetings via legal notices in local newspapers, emails, chamber newsletters, etc. The meetings were held on January 12, 2021 and January 14, 2021 and were facilitated by staff and board members. Over 75 people attended over both meeting dates, meeting notes were taken and all discussion was taken into consideration and captured while drafting this plan.

In addition, on December 9, 2020 a meeting of all PA CareerLink® partners was held virtually. Staff provided some areas we were seeking input on for the plan including job seeker outreach and employer services prior to the meeting. An overview of the plan was presented and staff were asked for input. Staff were encouraged to provide input during the meeting but could also provide input in writing following the meeting. Staff provided no input into the plan.

Other meetings during which the plan was discussed and ideas gathered include the following:

Future's Committee Meeting - December 8, 2020

Workforce Development Board Meeting - January 6, 2021

Manufacturing Industry Partnership Meeting - February 2, 2021

Healthcare and Social Assistance Industry Partnership Meeting - February 5, 2021

Building and Construction Industry Partnership Meeting - February 16, 2021



## North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

### 5.5. *What is the process the local board uses to provide a 30-day public comment period prior to plan submission?*

#### Required Modification to the local plan (Modification 2):

To ensure an open opportunity for public comment, the board published the North Central Local WIOA Plan Modification #2 on its website for the 30-day comment period beginning May 26, 2023 and ending on June 25, 2023.

The following legal notice was placed in three regional newspapers - the Daily Press, The Bradford Era and the Courier Express who fully represent our region:

*Workforce Solutions for North Central PA is soliciting public input on the 2021-2024 Workforce Development Area Local and Regional Plan Modification #2 in accordance with WIOA Sec. 107 and 20CFR Part 679. The Workforce Development Area includes the counties of Cameron, Clearfield, Elk, Jefferson, McKean, and Potter counties. This plan supports Workforce Solutions (Workforce Development Board) vision of our Workforce Development System for our Region.*

*The modification to the local and regional plans include revised language with regard to the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, updated labor market information, site administrator staffing changes, as well as updated Equal Employment Opportunity language.*

*The plan is available for review on the Workforce Solutions website at [www.workforcesolutionspa.com](http://www.workforcesolutionspa.com). Those wishing to review the plan at our office may do so by contacting Donna Hottel, Strategic Planning and Project Manager, at (814-245-1835) or [dhottel@ncwdb.org](mailto:dhottel@ncwdb.org).*

*Comments on the plan will be accepted starting on May 26, 2023 through June 25, 2023. Please e-mail comments to Donna Hottel at [dhottel@ncwdb.org](mailto:dhottel@ncwdb.org) or mail comments to Workforce Solutions, 425 Old Kersey Road, Kersey, PA 15846.*

No comments were received during the public comment period.

#### Modification #1

To ensure an open opportunity for public comment, the Board published the North Central Local WIOA Local Plan Modification #1 on its website for the 30-day period beginning April 11, 2022 and ending May 10, 2022.

The following legal notice was also placed in three regional newspapers - the Daily Press, The Bradford Era and the Courier Express who fully represent our region:

*Workforce Solutions for North Central PA is soliciting public input on the 2021-2024 Workforce Development Area Local and Regional Plan Modifications in accordance with WIOA Sec. 107 and 20CFR Part 679. The Workforce Development Area includes the counties of Cameron, Clearfield, Elk, Jefferson, McKean, and Potter counties. This plan supports Workforce Solutions (Workforce Development Board) vision of our Workforce Development System for our Region.*

*The modifications to the local plan include staffing, committees, and One-Stop Operator changes.*

*The plan is available for review on the Workforce Solutions website at [www.workforcesolutionspa.com](http://www.workforcesolutionspa.com). Those wishing to review the plan at our office may do so by contacting Donna Hottel, Strategic Planning and Project Manager, at (814-245-1835) or [dhottel@ncwdb.org](mailto:dhottel@ncwdb.org).*

- North Central PA Program Years 2021 – 2024 Local Area Plan – Modification 2

*Comments on the plan will be accepted starting on April 11, 2022 through May 10, 2022. Please e-mail comments to Donna Hottel at [dhottel@ncwdb.org](mailto:dhottel@ncwdb.org) or mail comments to Workforce Solutions, 425 Old Kersey Road, Kersey, PA 15846.*

No comments were received during the public comment period.

Original Plan Submission

To ensure an open opportunity for public comment, the Board published the North Central Local WIOA Local Plan as on its website for the 30-day period beginning February 19, 2021 and ending March 19, 2021. Additionally, notification of the availability of the Local WIOA Plan for public comment was also directly distributed via email to representatives of local businesses, labor organizations, and educational institutions.

The following legal notice was also placed in three regional newspapers that fully represent our region:

Workforce Solutions for North Central PA's PY 2021-2024 WIOA Local Area Plan is available for a 30- day public comment period in accordance with WIOA Sec. 107 and 20CFR Part 679. The Workforce Development Area includes the counties of Cameron, Clearfield, Elk, Jefferson, McKean, and Potter counties. This plan supports Workforce Solutions' (Workforce Development Board) vision of our Workforce Development System for our Region.

The plan is available for review on the Workforce Solutions website at [www.workforcesolutionspa.com](http://www.workforcesolutionspa.com). Those wishing to review the plan at our office may do so by contacting Pamela Streich, Executive Director of Strategic Planning, at (814-594-0245) or [pstreich@ncwdb.org](mailto:pstreich@ncwdb.org).

Comments on the plan will be accepted starting on February 19, 2021 through March 20, 2021. Please e-mail comments to Pam Streich at [pstreich@ncwdb.org](mailto:pstreich@ncwdb.org) or mail comments to Workforce Solutions, 425 Old Kersey Road, Kersey, PA 15846.

During the Public Comment Period, no comments were received.

### 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 North Central Workforce Development Board (dba Workforce Solutions for North Central PA) 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.

☒ 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.

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