



# **Northern Tier Workforce Development Board**

## **Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Local Plan**

**Effective Dates: July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2028**

**Public Comment Period:  
July 3, 2025 – August 1, 2025**



Local Workforce Development Area Name: Northern Tier Workforce Development Board

Effective Date July 1, 2025

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

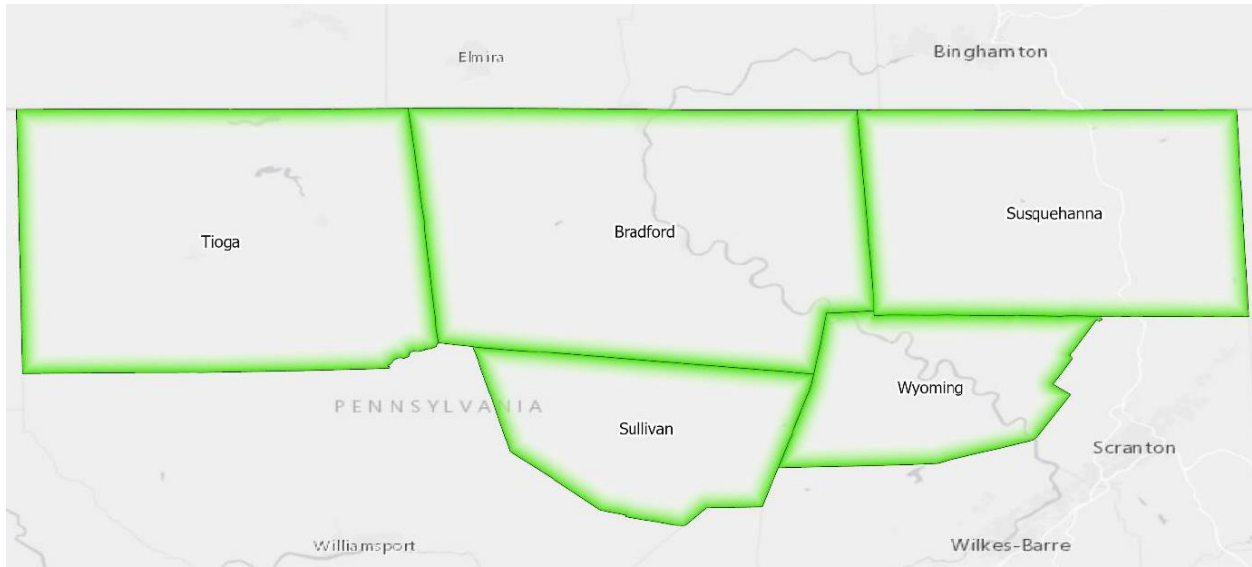
*1.1 Workforce analysis – Provide an analysis of the regional workforce, including the composition of the local area's population and current labor force employment data.*

The Northern Tier Region spans 4,000 square miles in northcentral Pennsylvania and encompasses Bradford, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Tioga, and Wyoming Counties. These counties collectively form both the Workforce Delivery Area and the Local Development District. The Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission (NTRPDC) oversees community, economic, and workforce development initiatives for the region.

Home to approximately 171,322 residents, approximately 1.4% of the Commonwealth's total population. The Northern Tier has a low population density, averaging 46 people per square mile compared to the statewide average of 274 people per square mile. Residents are dispersed across small communities surrounded by extensive agricultural land and forests. The region consists of 166 municipalities and 18 public school districts.

The Northern Tier supports approximately 4,500 businesses of varying sizes, from sole proprietors to larger employers with workforces in the thousands. However, the majority of businesses in the region are classified as small, employing fewer than 500 people.

Historically, the Northern Tier has experienced slower economic shifts compared to state and national trends. While other areas of Pennsylvania have seen periods of economic growth, the Northern Tier has remained stable. Similarly, during economic downturns, the region has faced challenges but with less severe impacts. The region's rugged topography has sometimes posed obstacles to development; however, its abundant natural resources have driven more recent investment and job creation. Notably, the Northern Tier is at the epicenter of Pennsylvania's natural gas industry, which has significantly influenced workforce opportunities and economic activity.



### ***Population***

The Northern Tier region has experienced population declines in recent years. The population in the Northern Tier Region has declined 6.2% from 2010 to 2020, while the population in Pennsylvania has grown slightly (2.4%) during this same time period.<sup>1</sup> Projections indicate that this downward trend is expected to continue over the next five years.

Additionally, population change from 2020 to 2050 for the region is projected to decline by approximately 8.2% while Pennsylvania's overall population is anticipated to grow modestly, with a projected increase of 1.6% over the same time period. This growth is expected to be concentrated in the southeastern part of the state, with northern and western counties, including those in the Northern Tier, likely experiencing further population decreases.<sup>2</sup>

Factors contributing to this trend include an aging population, lower birth rates, and migration to urban areas. These demographic shifts may have significant implications for local economies, healthcare services, and educational institutions in the Northern Tier.

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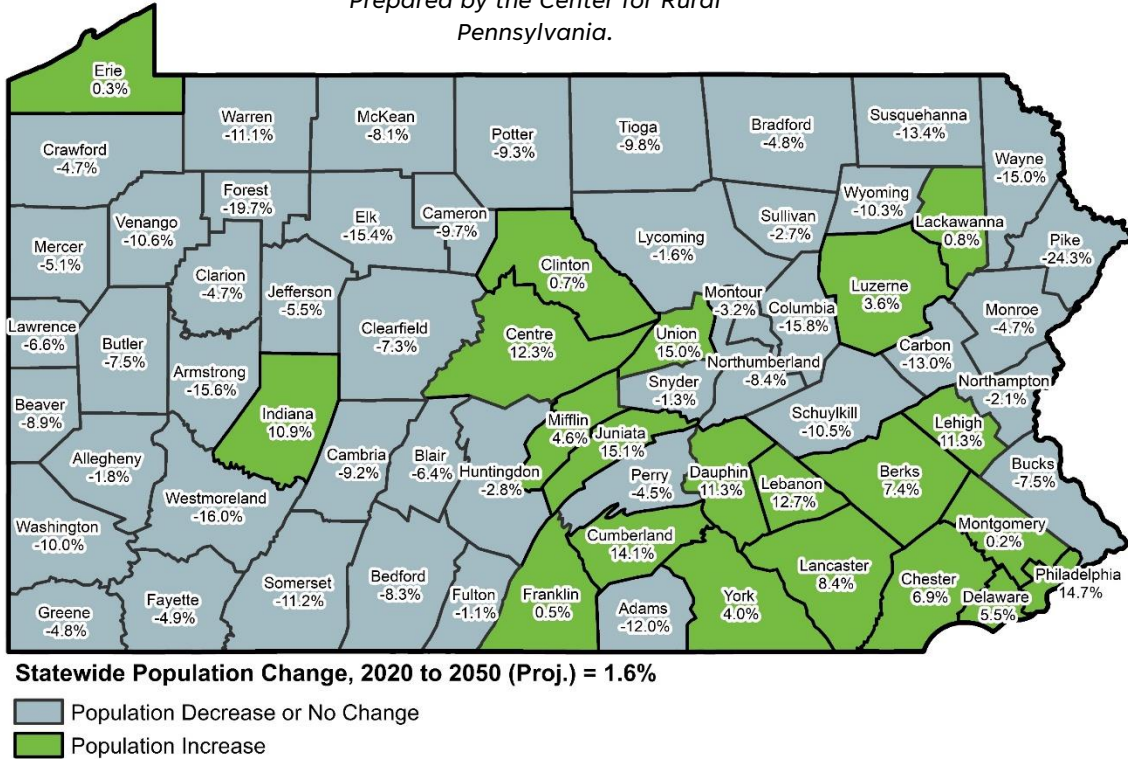
<sup>1</sup> Source: U.S. Decennial Census

<sup>2</sup> Source: Pennsylvania State Data Center, Prepared by the Center for Rural Pennsylvania

## PY2025-PY2028 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

Data source: Pennsylvania State Data Center.

Prepared by the Center for Rural  
Pennsylvania.

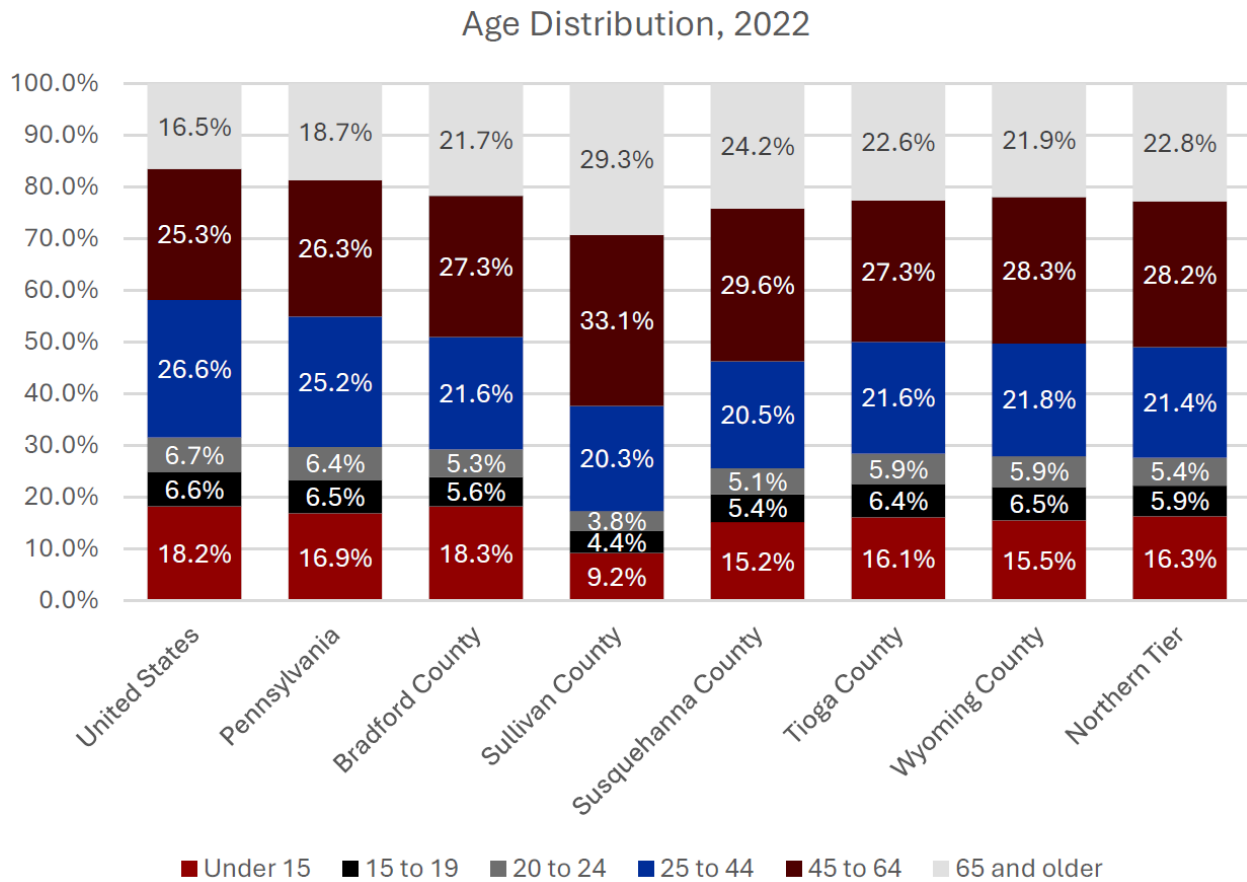


According to American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates, the median age for the region is 46. Comparatively, the current year median age for Pennsylvania is 40.8. Sullivan County has the highest median age in the region at 54.5, while Bradford County has the youngest median age of 44.5.

Data from the US Census Bureau, shows the population 65+ in the Northern Tier is 38% larger than the same age group for the United States, additionally the Northern Tier is 20% below the nation for the age 20-24 population. These statistics support the growing workforce challenges that arise as large numbers of seasoned workers retire leaving a shortage of skilled workers.

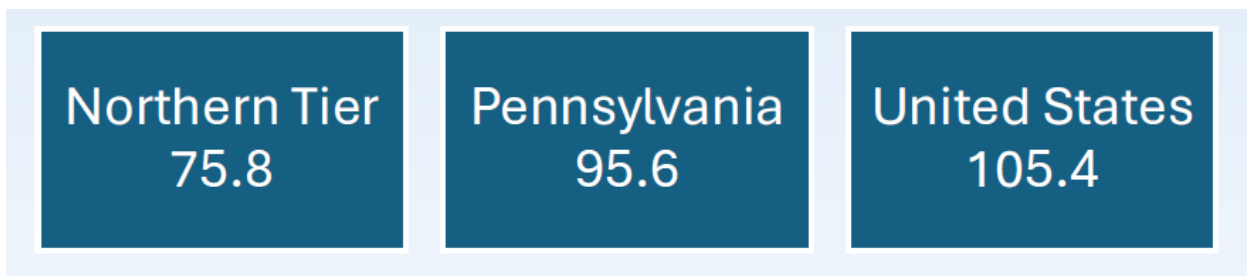
The age distribution in the Northern Tier, based on 2022 data, highlights significant challenges for labor force sustainability. The region has a notably high percentage of residents aged 65 and older at 22.8%, exceeding Pennsylvania's 18.7%. Meanwhile, the working-age population lags behind, with individuals aged 25 to 44 comprising only 21% of the region's population, compared to 25.2% statewide. Additionally, younger age groups show lower representation, with individuals aged 20 to 24 making up just 5.4% of the population and those aged 15 to 19 accounting for 5.9%, both trailing state and national averages. These trends indicate potential workforce shortages and emphasize the need for targeted workforce

development strategies, such as youth engagement and retention programs, skills training, and initiatives to attract working-age individuals to the region.<sup>3</sup>



Source: U.S. Decennial Census

The age sustainability ratio measures the number of residents aged 25 to 44 for every 100 residents aged 45 to 64. In the Northern Tier, this ratio indicates a workforce sustainability challenge, as it suggests a shrinking pool of talent available to employers in the future.



Source: American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

The Northern Tier's population remains less varied compared to Pennsylvania as a whole, with 95.4% identifying as White, 0.8% as Black, 1.9% as Hispanic, and 3.3% as Other. In contrast, Pennsylvania's overall

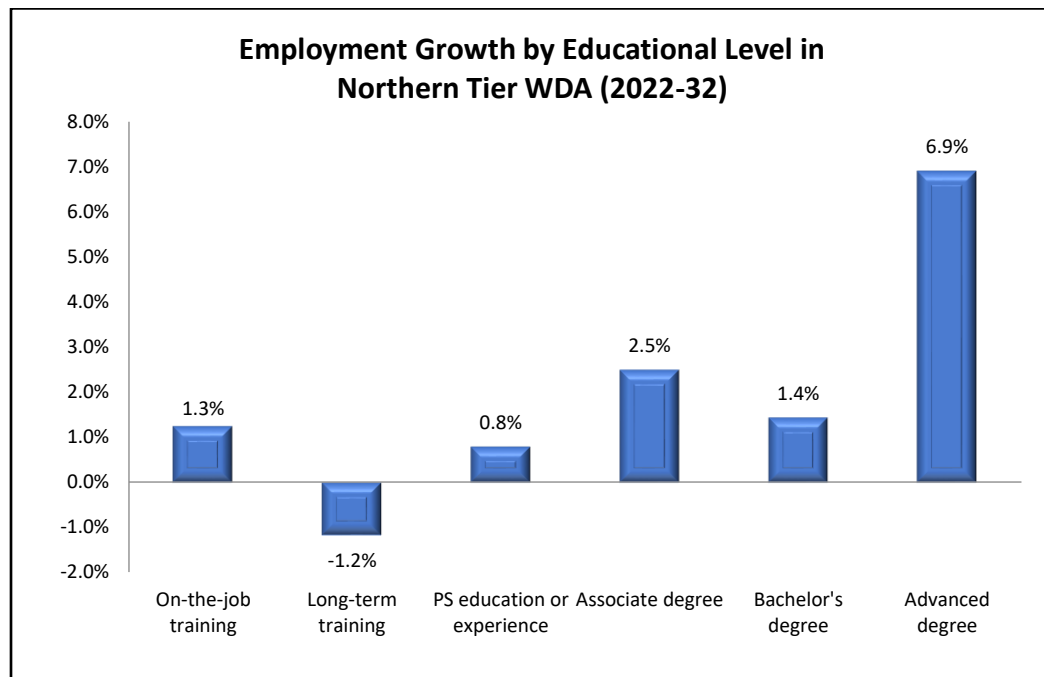
<sup>3</sup> US Census Bureau

population is more diverse, with 75.8% White, 10.7% Black, 8.4% Hispanic, and 10% Other. Sullivan County stands out as the most diverse in the region, with 84.8% White, 1.5% Black, 10% Hispanic, and 3.7% Other. Over the next five years, demographic shifts are expected to be minimal. This limited representation may present workforce challenges, such as talent attraction and retention, and underscores the importance of inclusive workforce development strategies to broaden talent pipelines and enhance economic opportunities in the region. <sup>4</sup>

### ***Educational Attainment***

In the Northern Tier, an estimated 46% of individuals aged 25 and older hold a high school diploma or equivalent, while 25% have some college experience or an associate degree. Additionally, 20.5% have earned a bachelor's degree or higher. Bradford County has the highest percentage of population that does not have a high school diploma or GED (9.4%) and Wyoming County has the highest percentage at of Bachelor's degree or greater (21.5%).

Looking ahead to 2032, workforce demand is shifting, with employment growth for individuals with advanced degrees projected to increase by 6.9%. In contrast, occupations requiring long-term training are expected to see a slight decline of -1.2%.



Source: Long-Term Occupational Employment Projections (2022-2023)

<sup>4</sup> Source: U.S. Decennial Census

## Income

Median household incomes have risen across the Northern Tier, with Sullivan County experiencing the most substantial increase. However, income growth in the remaining counties has trailed behind state and national trends, highlighting ongoing economic disparities within the regional workforce.

Median Household Income, 2017-2022				
Geography	2017	2022	Change, 2017-2022	
			\$	%
Bradford	\$50,900	\$60,650	\$9,750	19.2%
Sullivan	\$45,519	\$62,910	\$17,391	38.2%
Susquehanna	\$52,014	\$63,968	\$11,954	23.0%
Tioga	\$50,017	\$59,707	\$9,690	19.4%
Wyoming	\$55,965	\$67,968	\$12,003	21.4%
Pennsylvania	\$56,951	\$73,140	\$16,189	28.4%
United States	\$57,652	\$75,149	\$17,497	30.3%
Source: American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates				

While income levels have increased, the Northern Tier workforce still faces significant wage disparities. The region's average annual wages are \$14,000 below the state average for Pennsylvania and nearly \$17,000 lower than the national average, reflecting a continued gap in earning potential for workers in the area.<sup>5</sup>

Lower wages can make it difficult to attract and retain skilled workers. This may also lead to talent migration, where workers seeking higher-paying opportunities outside the region, exacerbate labor shortages. Lower earnings may also limit opportunities for skill development, as individuals struggle to afford education and training need for career advancement. Employers may face difficulties in recruiting and retaining qualified workers which can hinder economic growth.

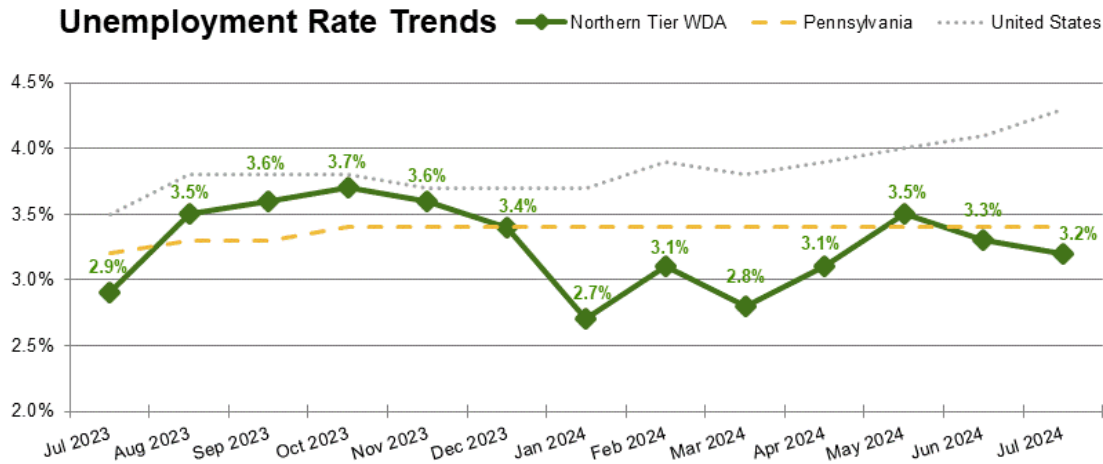
## Employment

In 2023, the Northern Tier's labor force annual average was 84,000 of which 81,100 were employed. Unemployed individuals accounted for 2,900, resulting in an annual average unemployment rate of 3.5%. In January 2024, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was reported as low 2.7%.<sup>6</sup>

Unemployment rates from June 2023 to July 2024 did not stray far from Pennsylvania rates, but remained below the average national unemployment rate.

<sup>5</sup> Source: JobsEQ®

<sup>6</sup> Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS)



Source: CWIA, Prepared by Advance Central

In June 2023, the Northern Tier had 3,500 online job postings compared to 2,900 unemployed jobseekers, indicating more available jobs than job seekers. However, over the past year, job postings have declined by -1,826 shifting the labor market dynamics.

By June 2024, there were 2,800 unemployed individuals, but only 1,600 online job postings. Even if every job seeker filled an available position, an additional 1,200 job opportunities would still be needed to achieve full employment for the region's workforce.<sup>7</sup> This indicates a tight job market where the number of available job opportunities has declined while the number of job seekers remains relatively stable. The current labor market may be signs of shifts in industry demand, skill mismatch and economic slowdown.

### Commuters

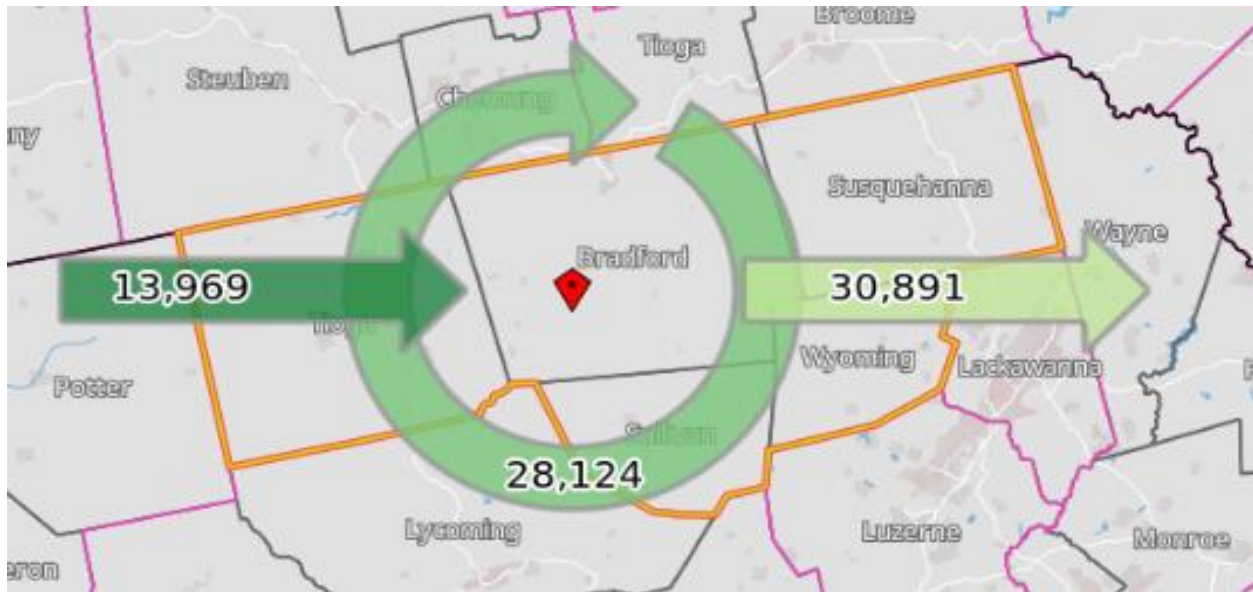
Workforce mobility plays a significant role in regional employment dynamics. In the Northern Tier, 66.8% of those employed in the region also reside here, while 33.2% commute from outside the region for work. However, a larger share of residents 52.3% travel outside the Northern Tier for employment, compared to 47.7% who both live and work within the region.<sup>8</sup>

This results in a net commuting loss of 16,922 workers, meaning more individuals leave the Northern Tier for work than those commuting in. This trend suggests a potential gap in local job opportunities, wage competitiveness, or industry alignment with the skills and career goals of the workforce. Strengthening regional employment opportunities, improving wages, and expanding key industries could help retain local talent and reduce outbound commuting.

<sup>7</sup> Source Center for Workforce Information and Analysis (CWIA)  
Prepared by Advance Central

<sup>8</sup> PA Center for Workforce Information and Analysis (CWIA)





Source: CWIA

## Populations with Barriers

### Poverty

Unemployment and underemployment are key contributors to poverty, with many individuals facing barriers that prevent them from securing or maintaining stable employment. In the Northern Tier, 10.9% of individuals aged 16 and older live below the poverty level. Among them, 27.1% are employed, highlighting a significant number of underemployed workers or the "working poor." Additionally, 66.1% of those in poverty are not in the labor force, representing a potential workforce that may need support overcoming employment barriers. Among the factors that often contribute to poverty are unemployment and underemployment. Many people live in poverty because they have multiple barriers and are unable to find or retain employment.

Bradford County has the region's highest poverty rate at 12.0%, while Wyoming County has the lowest at 9.6%. Workforce participation varies, with Wyoming County having the highest labor force participation rate 37.2%, and Sullivan County the lowest 23.2%.

Family structure also plays a role in economic stability. Among the 15,212 households with children in the region, single-led households face a higher risk of poverty. Currently, 34.1% (5,185 households) are led by a single parent, making them more vulnerable to financial stability.<sup>9</sup>

### Disability

Employment disparities for individuals with disabilities remain a significant workforce challenge both globally and regionally. In developing countries, 80-90% of working-age individuals with disabilities are unemployed, compared to 50-70% in industrialized nations. This is largely due to barriers such as limited access to education, training, assistive technology, and societal attitudes.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Source: American Community Survey, 5 Year Estimates

<sup>10</sup> Source: Division of Social Policy and Development

At the regional level, 12.7% of the population has a disability. Unemployment among individuals with disabilities stands at 10.4%, more than double the 4.7% unemployment rate for those without disabilities. However, this marks a 2.2% decrease from previous American Community Survey (ACS) estimates, indicating some progress in workforce inclusion. Wyoming County has the highest labor force participation rate for individuals with disabilities (44.9%) but also the highest unemployment rate for this population (12.5%).<sup>11</sup>

### **Formerly Incarcerated**

According to the Urban Institute<sup>12</sup>, 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.

The Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (PA DOC) reports the state's recidivism rate is around 64% meaning approximately two-thirds of people released from prison or return to prison within three years. Of those who recidivate within three years, 75% did so within the first 16 months after release. The Northern Tier recidivism rate is approximately 57.6%

The PA DOC 2022 report shows that out of the two-thirds of reentrants who return to state prisons, more than half of those arrested or reincarcerated are due to technical parole violations, like failing to pass drug tests or missing curfew. The report also highlights recidivism rates are higher for those with a diagnosis of substance use disorder, especially for opiates, or a mental health problem.<sup>13</sup>

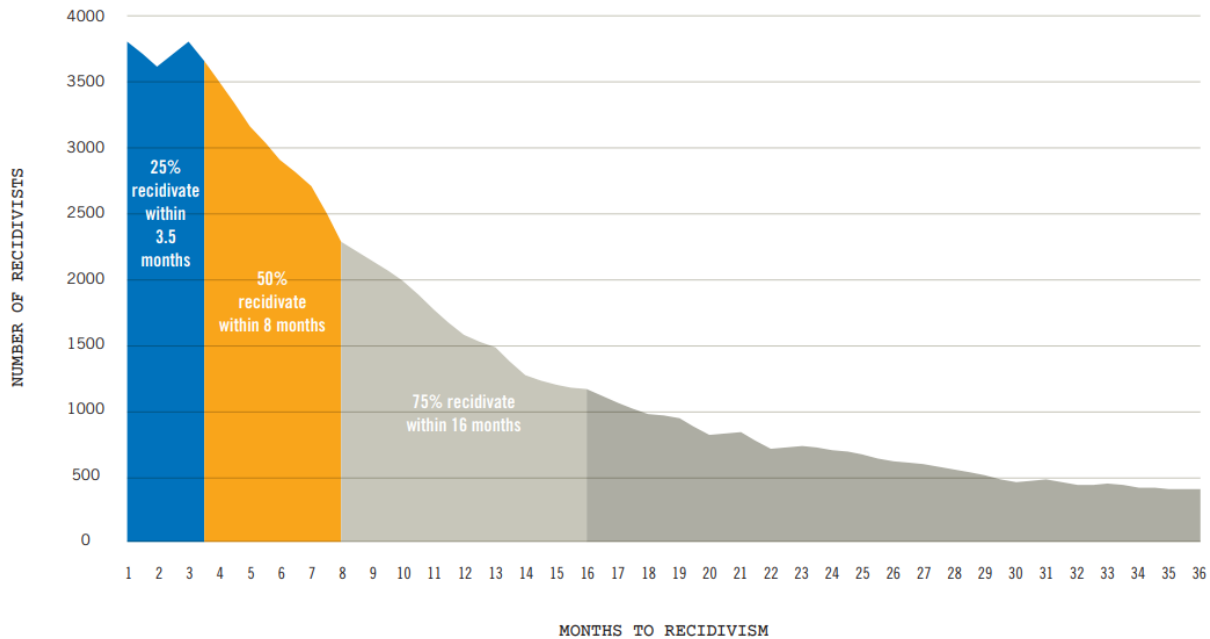
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<sup>11</sup> Source: American Community Survey, 5 Year Estimates

<sup>12</sup> Source: Urban institute

<sup>13</sup> Source: Pennsylvania Department of Corrections Recidivism 2022 report

## OF REENTRANTS WHO RECIDIVATE IN 3 YEARS, 75% RECIDIVATE WITHIN THE FIRST 16 MONTHS



### Substance Use and Misuse

Substance use and misuse have long been prevalent in rural areas. In 2021, there were over 106,000 deaths due to drug overdose in the U.S., the highest on record. Drug overdose death rates increased in Pennsylvania from 18.3 per 100,000 in 2011 to 43.2 per 100,000 in 2021.

In 2023, there were 4,720 drug overdose deaths in Pennsylvania, this is an average of 13 people a day.<sup>14</sup>

While regional data is limited, these statewide figures highlight the ongoing challenges related to substance use in Pennsylvania.

Substance Use Disorder (SUD) significantly impacts the workforce, affecting both employers and employees. Key challenges include absenteeism and productivity loss, workplace safety risks and hiring and retention challenges. In regions like the Northern Tier, expanding employer partnerships and integrating recovery friendly workplace initiatives can help address workforce shortages while supporting individuals overcoming SUD.

### Mental Health

Rural areas such as the Northern Tier face significant mental health challenges due to limited resources, a shortage of providers, and insufficient funding. These barriers contribute to increased rates of mental

<sup>14</sup> Source: Pennsylvania ODSMP

distress, suicide, and other health concerns, which can directly impact workforce participation, productivity, and overall economic stability.

**Contributing Factors:**

- **Provider Shortages** – Rural areas have fewer mental health professionals, such as psychiatrists, psychologists, and counselors, making it difficult for individuals to access necessary care.
- **Insufficient Funding** – Limited financial support for mental health services restricts the availability of programs and facilities in rural communities.
- **Barriers to Access** – Transportation challenges, insurance limitations, and stigma surrounding mental health prevent many individuals from seeking or receiving care.
- **Gaps in Care Coordination** – A lack of integration between healthcare providers, community organizations, and employers can lead to fragmented care and inconsistent support for individuals in need.

Addressing these challenges requires investment in mental health services, telehealth expansion, workforce development for mental health professionals, and employer-supported mental health initiatives to ensure a healthier, more productive workforce.

**Foster Care**

Research obtained from Children’s Rights has shown that youth who age out of foster care are less likely than youth in the general population to graduate from high school and are less likely to attend or graduate college. By age 26, approximately 80% of young people who aged out of foster care earned at least a high school degree or GED compared to 94% in the general population. By age 26, 4% of youth who aged out of foster care had earned a 4-year college degree, while 36% of youth in the general population had done so. In the region, approximately 12 children age out of foster care each year.

**Teen Pregnancy**

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

1. By age 22, only around 50 percent of teen mothers have received a high school diploma and only 30 percent have earned a General Education Development (GED) certificate, whereas 90 percent of women who did not give birth during adolescence receive a high school diploma.
2. Only about 10 percent of teen mothers complete a two- or four-year college program.
3. Teen fathers have a 25 to 30 percent lower probability of graduating from high school than teenage boys who are not fathers.

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

- have a higher risk for low birth weight and infant mortality;
- have lower levels of emotional support and cognitive stimulation;
- have fewer skills and be less prepared to learn when they enter kindergarten;
- have behavioral problems and chronic medical conditions;

- rely more heavily on publicly funded health care;
- have higher rates of foster care placement;
- be incarcerated at some time during adolescence;
- have lower school achievement and drop out of high school;
- give birth as a teen; and
- be unemployed or underemployed as a young adult.

These immediate and long-lasting effects continue for teen parents and their children even after adjusting for the factors that increased the teen's risk for pregnancy—e.g., growing up in poverty, having parents with low levels of education, growing up in a single-parent family, and having low attachment to and performance in school.

### **Homeless**

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.

Homeless shelters are few and far between in the Northern Tier Region. The PA CareerLink® works with organizations that will temporarily assist the homeless and agencies they can call upon in the case of an emergency.

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.); and
- Children living in "cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations".

### *1.2 Economic analysis – Describe strategic planning elements including a regional analysis of economic conditions.*

#### **Regional Overview**

A demand-driven approach to the labor market requires analyzing where jobs are located and what industries are hiring. This section examines general employment trends, followed by sector-specific insights and county-level occupations to provide a comprehensive view of workforce dynamics.

The Northern Tier Region has a diverse employer base, and analyzing employment concentration through Location Quotients (LQs) helps identify key industries with a strong regional presence. Examining historical employment patterns, emerging sector trends, and workforce gaps provides

valuable insights into regional business needs, talent shortages, and opportunities for workforce development.

Location quotient (LQ) is a key metric used to measure how concentrated a particular industry, cluster, occupation, or demographic group is in a region as compared to the national average. The LQs for the key industry clusters as delineated by the Center for Workforce Information by Local Workforce Area are as follows:

Industry Cluster Statistics for Northern Tier WDA												
	Agriculture and Food Production	Advanced Manufacturing	Building and Construction	Bio-Medical	Business Services	Education	Energy	Healthcare	Hospitality, Leisure and Entertainment	Logistics & Transportation	Real Estate, Finance & Insurance	Wood, Wood Products & Publishing
2023 Employment	2,947	4,804	4,452	98	2,976	5,382	3,536	8,684	4,763	2,835	1,563	3,749
Percent WDA Employment	5.4%	8.8%	8.1%	0.2%	5.4%	9.8%	6.5%	15.9%	8.7%	5.2%	2.9%	6.9%
Employment Growth (2018-2023)	1	186	47	-20	-128	-70	-272	-623	-154	354	-3	-63
Percent Growth (2018-2023)	0.0%	4.0%	1.1%	-16.9%	-4.1%	-1.3%	-7.1%	-6.7%	-3.1%	14.3%	-0.2%	-1.7%
2023 Average Wage	\$48,770	\$57,943	\$55,383	\$63,823	\$73,308	\$50,195	\$92,161	\$65,069	\$19,411	\$64,357	\$65,800	\$69,614
2023 National Location Quotient	1.46	1.22	1.15	0.14	0.42	1.07	3.31	1.04	0.73	1.17	0.51	5.59

Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

Those industry clusters with high concentrations in the region are Wood, Wood Products & Publishing, Energy, Agriculture and Food Production, Advanced Manufacturing, Transportation & Logistics and Building and Construction. Given the history of extraction industries including Wood, Wood Products & Publishing and Energy, particular attention may need paid to these clusters. There is a high concentration of Wood, Wood products with a national location quotient of 5.59. Not surprisingly, hardwoods are the number one export for the Northern Tier. Many of our manufacturers produce goods that are exported to national and international markets which strengthen the local economy.<sup>15</sup>

Additionally, long-term industry projections for the Northern Tier Region also provide a window to employer demand to match job seeker supply. Long-Term Industry Projections for the Northern Tier Workforce Area's total employment for 2032 is expected to increase by 1.3%, adding 780 total jobs. For Goods Producing Industries, the greatest employment change by percentage is in Agriculture, Mining and Logging (4.5%) resulting in approximately 200 jobs. For Service Providing Industries, the largest employment increase is projected for Professional and Business Services (8.2%) with an increase 300 jobs followed by Leisure and Hospitality (4.8%) with 210 jobs.

Healthcare and Social Services represents the largest industry sector employing approximately 9,644, making up 15.9% of the region's employment. This sector is projected to grow 4.1% by 2032, estimating the largest number of employment by volume at 540 jobs. This growth highlights the increasing demand for healthcare and social services, likely driven by demographic shifts, aging populations, and expanding healthcare needs.

While long-term industry projections for manufacturing are expected to decrease -2.9% (-240 jobs) by 2032, manufacturing is critical to the economic vitality of the region. Manufacturers are a major source of employment in the Northern Tier and represent 8.8% of the labor force, ranking as the second largest industry sector. Not only does manufacturing employ close to 8,500 across the region, it provides for self-sustaining employment.

The NTWDB leads two key industry partnerships in manufacturing and healthcare, representing the region's largest employers. These partnerships have been connected to resources and education around training opportunities including registered apprenticeship and pre apprenticeship programs. Manufacturing leads the region with more registered apprenticeship and pre apprenticeships than any

<sup>15</sup> Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

other sector. Healthcare has shown interest in registered apprenticeship programs for high-demand roles like medical assistants and EMTs and agriculture has growing potential for apprenticeship development in the region. Expansion and development of registered apprenticeship and pre apprenticeship remains a workforce initiative for the NTWDB.

The projected decline of 100 self-employed workers by 2032, representing a -2.1% decrease, suggests potential challenges for entrepreneurship and independent work. This decline could be influenced by factors such as economic shifts, industry trends, or increasing barriers to self-employment.<sup>16</sup>

### Employment and Occupations

Analyzing specific occupations in a rural area often yields intriguing but sometimes skewed data, making further examination necessary. The largest and fastest-growing occupations provide a snapshot of the most in-demand jobs. Occupations related to the Healthcare industry are at the top of the list for fastest growing occupations in the Northern Tier.

Fastest Growing Occupations in Northern Tier WDA (2022-32)

#### By Volume Change:

Occupational Title	Employment Change (Volume)
Home Health & Personal Care Aides	130
Fast Food & Counter Workers	40
Registered Nurses	30
Medical Secretaries	30
Subst. Abuse, Behavioral Disorder & MH Counselors	30
Social & Human Service Assistants	30
Office Clerks, General	30
Waiters & Waitresses	20
Emergency Medical Technicians	20
Medical Assistants	20
Cooks, Restaurant	20
Clinical Laboratory Technologists & Technicians	20
Computer Systems Analysts	20
Physical Therapists	20
Receptionists & Information Clerks	20
Customer Service Representatives	20
Supervisors - Food Prep & Serving Workers	20
Medical Records Specialists	20
Child, Family & School Social Workers	10
Maintenance & Repair Workers, General	10

The largest annual demand by occupational title is for cashiers at 366 openings, fast food and counter workers at 310 and Heavy & Tractor Trailer Truck Drivers 229 positions. It is expected

<sup>16</sup> Source: Long-term industry employment projections (2022-32)

that cashiers and fast food/counter workers account for part-time positions and typically do not provide for a self-sustaining wage. Heavy & Tractor Trailer Truck Drivers directly correlates with training the NTWDB supports through WIOA programs. In 2023, 64% of the ITA's were for CDL training followed by 24% for trainings related to healthcare.<sup>17</sup>



**By Annual Demand:**

Occupational Title	Annual Demand
Cashiers	366
Fast Food & Counter Workers	310
Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	229
Home Health & Personal Care Aides	221
Retail Salespersons	158
Office Clerks, General	158
Laborers & Freight, Stock & Material Movers	155
Waiters & Waitresses	139
Misc. Assemblers & Fabricators	137
Janitors & Cleaners	131
Stockers & Order Fillers	113
Farmers, Ranchers & Other Agricultural Managers	110
Secretaries	107
Customer Service Representatives	105
General & Operations Managers	97
Childcare Workers	89
Bookkeeping, Accounting & Auditing Clerks	86
Maids & Housekeeping Cleaners	72
Cooks, Restaurant	70
Teaching Assistants, Non-Postsecondary	69

The Long-Term Occupational Projections for 2032, indicate that the greatest employment growth by volume is in Healthcare, including Practitioners, Technicians, and Support roles, with an increase of 410 jobs (6.6%). This is followed by Farming, Fishing, and Forestry, which is projected to grow by 200 jobs

<sup>17</sup> Source: Long-Term Occupational Employment Projections (2022-2032)



(10.3%). In contrast, declines are expected in Production (-2.4%) and Construction and Extraction (-1.8%) occupations.<sup>18</sup>

**Long-Term Occupational Projections for Northern Tier WDA (2022-32)**

Occupational Title	Employment (2022)	Projected Employment (2032)	Employment Change (2022-32)		Annual Demand
			Volume	Percent	
Total, All Occupations	61,550	62,330	780	1.3%	7,041
Management, Business & Finance	5,650	5,750	100	1.8%	475
Computer, Engineering & Science	1,630	1,650	20	1.2%	118
Education, Legal, Social Service, Arts & Media	5,200	5,250	50	1.0%	448
Healthcare Practitioners, Technicians & Support	6,200	6,610	410	6.6%	638
Protective, Food, Building & Personal Service	8,900	9,040	140	1.6%	1,478
Sales & Related	5,010	4,970	-40	-0.8%	708
Office & Administrative Support	7,040	7,210	170	2.4%	822
Farming, Fishing & Forestry	1,950	2,150	200	10.3%	319
Construction & Extraction	3,790	3,720	-70	-1.8%	328
Installation, Maintenance & Repair	3,470	3,440	-30	-0.9%	290
Production	6,270	6,120	-150	-2.4%	645
Transportation & Material Moving	6,460	6,450	-10	-0.2%	771

*1.3 Skill Gap analysis – How are skills gaps defined in the local area. Provide a description of the skills that are required to meet the needs of the employers in the region and local area.*

The most valuable insights into regional skill gaps come directly from employers. Strong relationships with employers are maintained through board-level engagement, industry partnerships in manufacturing and healthcare, public outreach meetings, and collaboration with economic development partners who help connect the workforce with employers. Additionally, PA CareerLink® business services staff and partners engage with employers to assess their workforce needs.

Identifying skill gaps also involves analyzing labor market data, including occupational demand, job postings, growth projections, and skills trends. These relationships and data-driven efforts enable the NTWDB to stay informed about industry workforce requirements. Employers consistently emphasize that

<sup>18</sup> Source: Long-Term Occupational Employment Projections (2022-2032)

while they can provide technical training, they need workers with essential employability skills—such as reliability, punctuality, and the ability to pass a drug test.

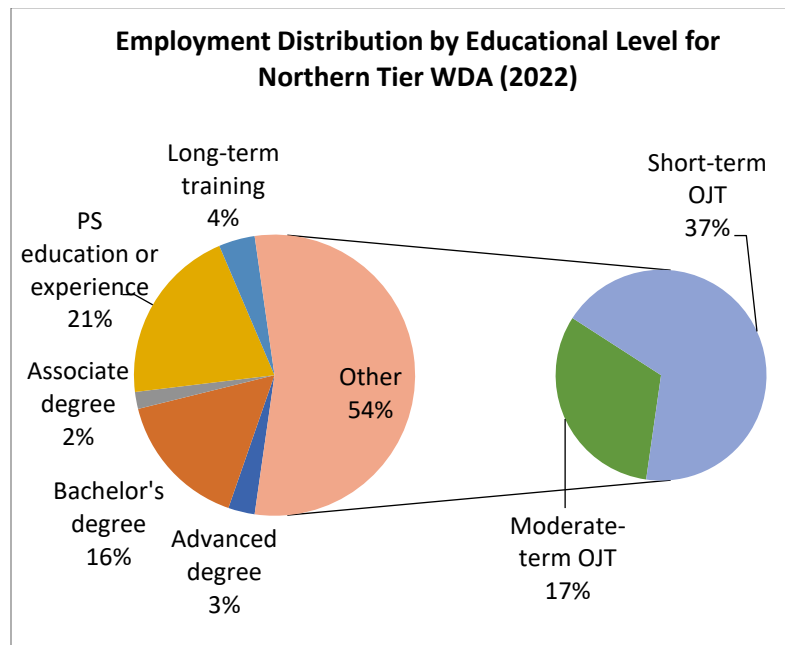
A key method for measuring skill gaps is comparing current educational attainment levels with projected employment growth by education level, ensuring workforce development strategies align with industry needs.

According to data available from American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates for 2018-2022, 20.5% of the adult population holds a bachelor's degree higher but, only 16% of jobs require it. This suggests that a portion of degree holders may be underemployed or in roles that do not require their level of education.

In 2022, the majority (54%) of jobs require only short to moderate-term on-the-job training. Additionally, 21% of jobs require post-secondary education or experience, indicating most jobs do not demand a four-year degree.

Future employment growth for 2032, jobs requiring a bachelor's degree are projected to grow by only 1.4%, indicating limited expansion of high-skill opportunities. Jobs needing an associate degree is expected to grow at a slightly higher rate of 2.5%. The fastest growing category is advanced degree jobs, with a 6.9% increase, which may indicate a growing need for specialized skills.

Jobs requiring long-term training are projected to decline by 1.2%, possibly reflecting shifts in industry demands or automation reducing the need for extensive on-the-job training.



Source: CWIA, Long-Term Occupational Employment Projections (2022-32)

**Employment Growth Rates by Educational Attainment Level for Northern Tier WDA**

Area	Educational Grouping	Employment (2022)	Projected Employment (2032)	Percent Change (2022-32)
Northern Tier	On-the-job training	33,560	33,980	1.3%
Northern Tier	Long-term training	2,560	2,530	-1.2%
Northern Tier	PS education or experience	12,610	12,710	0.8%
Northern Tier	Associate degree	1,200	1,230	2.5%
Northern Tier	Bachelor's degree	9,740	9,880	1.4%
Northern Tier	Advanced degree	1,880	2,010	6.9%

Source: CWIA, Long-Term Occupational Employment Projections (2022-32)

During periods of low unemployment, local employers frequently express frustration in finding workers with essential soft skills needed to be reliable and effective employees. With a limited labor pool, many available job seekers may lack the necessary skills to meet workplace expectations. In response, the Northern Tier Workforce Development Board (NTWDB) launched a program in 2018 to support individuals facing multiple barriers to employment, with a specific focus on those involved in the criminal justice system. Recognizing the ongoing workforce challenges, the NTWDB is now working to expand this program to include individuals in recovery from Substance Use Disorder (SUD), further strengthening opportunities for those seeking to re-enter the workforce.

In June 2024, the Northern Tier Workforce Development Board (NTWDB), in partnership with the Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission (NTRPDC), hosted a business summit to highlight the benefits of hiring non-traditional workers. The event featured presentations from the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) on the advantages of employing individuals with disabilities and the available support for workplace accommodations. JEVS provided guidance on best practices for hiring individuals connected to the justice system, while the Center for Workforce Information & Analysis (CWIA) shared labor market insights. Additionally, a panel of employers who hire individuals in recovery, along with individuals in recovery themselves, shared their experiences.

The summit was well received, and plans are underway for another event in June 2025. A key takeaway was employer interest in fostering a “recovery-friendly” work environment. In response, NTWDB is collaborating with NTRPDC to provide education and resources for local employers on building a recovery-friendly community, including leveraging established programs like Project ECHO. Moving forward, NTWDB aims to develop a regional initiative to promote inclusive hiring practices, establish supportive workplace policies, and enhance workforce retention strategies.

Employers frequently express concerns about aligning job openings with the right skill sets. The concept of skills-based hiring has been introduced to local employers, but further education is needed in this area.

For instance, a job seeker may possess 75% of the required skills for a position, leaving room for targeted training to bridge the gap. This additional education can often be short-term, involving an industry-recognized credential, skills upgrade, or on-the-job training, rather than requiring a full degree or an additional degree.

Over the past year, there has been a rise in individuals seeking retraining due to difficulty finding employment in their previously trained fields. Through the PA CareerLink® system, assessments are available to evaluate foundational skills across various occupations, and staff can assist job seekers in identifying transferable skills. Increasing emphasis is being placed on both assessing and developing transferable skills for job seekers, while also educating employers on how to utilize PA CareerLink® services to better match candidates to their workforce needs.

The High Priority Occupation List for the Northern Tier outlines the educational requirements, average wages, and annual job openings for the region's most in-demand positions. The NTWDB collaborates with local training providers to ensure there is a sufficient supply of skilled workers for these high-priority roles. This list serves as a valuable tool for identifying occupations that lead to quality jobs in the region.

According to the 2024 High Priority Occupations list, the highest projected annual demand is Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers, with 206 positions, which typically require post-secondary education, often short in duration, and offer a self-sustaining wage with entry-level salaries around \$43,600. The second highest demand is for Farmworkers & Laborers in Crop, Nursery, and Greenhouse, which typically require only short-term training, such as on-the-job training (OJT).

Most occupations on the Northern Tier's high-priority list require short to mid-term training, often through on-the-job learning. Only 29% of these occupations require some level of post-secondary education or higher.

# PY2025-PY2028 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

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## 2024 High Priority Occupations for Northern Tier Workforce Development Area

SOC Code	SOC Title	Educational Attainment	Wages (2023)			Employment			
			Entry Level	Annual Average	Exper. Level	Estimated 2020	Projected 2030	Percent Change	Annual Demand
11-1021	General & Operations Managers	BD+	\$48,260	\$99,680	\$125,390	760	800	5.3%	68
25-2021	Elementary School Teachers	BD	\$55,340	\$72,040	\$80,380	720	750	4.2%	54
25-2031	Secondary School Teachers	BD	\$55,830	\$72,960	\$81,520	960	1,010	5.2%	70
29-1141	Registered Nurses	BD	\$64,060	\$81,520	\$90,250	1,260	1,280	1.6%	68
29-2034	Radiologic Technologists & Technicians	AD	\$55,870	\$67,000	\$72,560	110	120	9.1%	8
29-2040	Emergency Medical Technicians & Paramedics	PS	N/A	N/A	N/A	140	140	0.0%	8
29-2061	Licensed Practical & Licensed Vocational Nurses	PS	\$44,620	\$52,750	\$56,810	340	340	0.0%	25
31-1131	Nursing Assistants	PS	\$31,060	\$36,790	\$39,650	580	580	0.0%	71
33-3012	Correctional Officers & Jailers	MT OJT	\$33,550	\$50,430	\$58,870	140	130	-7.1%	11
33-3051	Police & Sheriff's Patrol Officers	MT OJT	\$39,150	\$70,200	\$85,720	380	390	2.6%	30
35-2014	Cooks, Restaurant	MT OJT	\$22,230	\$29,920	\$33,770	390	560	43.6%	86
39-5012	Hairdressers, Hairstylists & Cosmetologists	PS	\$22,370	\$37,360	\$44,860	230	240	4.3%	26
41-1011	Supervisors - Retail Sales Workers	WK EXP	\$31,000	\$45,380	\$52,570	1,220	1,170	-4.1%	120
41-3021	Insurance Sales Agents	MT OJT	\$36,860	\$58,470	\$69,270	170	170	0.0%	15
43-5031	Public Safety Telecommunicators	MT OJT	\$35,240	\$44,690	\$49,410	80	80	0.0%	7
43-5051	Postal Service Clerks	ST OJT	\$41,430	\$55,390	\$62,370	120	100	-16.7%	7
45-2092	Farmworkers & Laborers: Crop, Nursery & Greenhouse	ST OJT	N/A	N/A	N/A	830	840	1.2%	131
45-2093	Farmworkers: Farm, Ranch & Aquacultural Animals	ST OJT	N/A	N/A	N/A	310	320	3.2%	51
47-2031	Carpenters	LT OJT	\$35,980	\$51,500	\$59,260	280	290	3.6%	28
47-2111	Electricians	LT OJT	\$44,830	\$65,790	\$76,270	90	90	0.0%	10
47-2152	Plumbers, Pipefitters & Steamfitters	LT OJT	N/A	N/A	N/A	90	90	0.0%	8
47-4011	Construction & Building Inspectors	WK EXP	N/A	N/A	N/A	250	290	16.0%	34
47-5013	Service Unit Operators, Oil, Gas, & Mining	MT OJT	\$35,520	\$52,040	\$60,300	190	180	-5.3%	21
47-5071	Roustabouts, Oil & Gas	MT OJT	\$37,270	\$45,110	\$49,030	200	190	-5.0%	21
49-1011	Supervisors - Mechanics, Installers & Repairers	WK EXP	\$42,980	\$70,560	\$84,340	250	260	4.0%	22
49-3021	Automotive Body & Related Repairers	LT OJT	\$34,510	\$47,190	\$53,530	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
49-3023	Automotive Service Technicians & Mechanics	PS	\$31,840	\$44,720	\$51,160	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
49-3031	Bus & Truck Mechanics & Diesel Engine Specialists	LT OJT	\$35,490	\$50,360	\$57,800	300	280	-6.7%	24
49-3042	Mobile Heavy Equipment Mechanics	LT OJT	\$42,320	\$50,900	\$55,190	110	110	0.0%	10
49-9021	Heating, A/C & Refrigeration Mechanics & Installers	PS+	\$36,930	\$53,310	\$61,500	160	170	6.3%	16
49-9041	Industrial Machinery Mechanics	LT OJT	\$42,330	\$61,620	\$71,270	290	330	13.8%	32
49-9051	Electrical Power-Line Installers & Repairers	LT OJT	N/A	N/A	N/A	110	110	0.0%	9
49-9052	Telecommunications Line Installers & Repairers	LT OJT	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
49-9071	Maintenance & Repair Workers, General	MT OJT	\$29,790	\$45,340	\$53,120	660	700	6.1%	68

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## 2024 High Priority Occupations for Northern Tier Workforce Development Area

SOC Code	SOC Title	Educational Attainment	Wages (2023)			Employment			
			Entry Level	Annual Average	Exper. Level	Estimated 2020	Projected 2030	Percent Change	Annual Demand
51-1011	Supervisors - Production & Operating Workers	WK EXP	\$45,870	\$68,170	\$79,310	380	410	7.9%	40
51-4121	Welders, Cutters, Solderers & Brazers	MT OJT	\$38,600	\$52,410	\$59,320	130	150	15.4%	16
51-7021	Furniture Finishers	ST OJT	N/A	N/A	N/A	170	180	5.9%	24
51-9161	CNC Tool Operators	MT OJT	\$38,150	\$49,540	\$55,230	70	70	0.0%	7
53-3032	Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	PS	\$43,600	\$53,520	\$58,490	1,800	1,870	3.9%	206
53-3058	Passenger Vehicle Drivers	ST OJT	N/A	N/A	N/A	480	560	16.7%	68
53-7051	Industrial Truck & Tractor Operators	ST OJT	\$35,410	\$42,120	\$45,480	170	190	11.8%	22

### Educational Attainment Abbreviations:

Short-term or Moderate-term training (ST OJT or MT OJT) – basic tasks and skills are learned through a period of on-the-job training. A high school diploma may be required.  
 Long-term training (LT OJT) – a high school diploma and at least one year of on-the-job training or an apprenticeship.  
 Related work experience (WK EXP) – a high school diploma and training gained through hands-on work in a similar occupation.  
 Postsecondary training (PS or PS+) – training is gained through a postsecondary training program. Some period of related work experience may be required.  
 Associate Degree (AD or AD+) – degree completed after two years of full-time schooling beyond high school. Some period of related work experience may be required.  
 Bachelor's Degree (BD or BD+) – degree completed after four years of full-time schooling beyond high school. Some period of related work experience may be required.  
 Master's Degree (MD or MD+) – degree completed after two years of full-time schooling beyond a bachelor's degree. Some period of related work experience may be required.  
 Doctoral Degree (DOCT) – degree programs requiring 3-6 years of education at the college or university level beyond a four-year bachelor's degree.

Top Job Skills projections are also used to identify skills gaps. These projections include detailed work activities and are shared with local secondary and post-secondary education to ensure they understand the demand and can incorporate into curriculum when possible. These are also useful when designing local workshops for jobseekers and our youth populations. Some examples of these activities are: order materials, supplies or equipment, clean work areas, calculate costs of goods or services and greet

customers. Some of the skills predicted to be highest in demand for 2028 employment include spreadsheet software, data base user interface and query software and office suite software and word processing software.<sup>19</sup>

One of the areas identified as a gap in our region is digital literacy. The NTWDB realizes the importance of digital literacy to employment which is supported by the skills projections listed above. The availability of broadband is a significant barrier to the growth of our communities and economy of the Northern Tier region, especially during a time when so many services are provided remotely. Another challenge is ensuring our communities have the digital literacy skills needed to navigate in the current environment. The PA CareerLink® provides digital literacy services such as the basics of using a computer, navigating the internet and tech skills for today. This enables our customers to have the tools and knowledge needed to gain service through a multitude of digital platforms and have the digital skills needed to be competitive in the workforce.

Listed below are top qualifications reported for online postings for the Northern Tier Region. Commercial Driver's License (CDL) is most frequently listed followed by Licensed Nurse Practitioner and Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA).<sup>20</sup> This data supports the training most in demand of the Northern Tier Region. For the 2023, 64% of the WIOA funded Individual Training (ITA) accounts in the Northern Tier were for CDL and 24% were for training in the healthcare field.

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<sup>19</sup> Source: US Department Of Labor's Occupational Information Network

<sup>20</sup> Source: Lightcast

## Top Qualifications

Qualification	Postings with Qualification
American Association of Nurse Practitioners (AANP) Certified	97
American Registry of Radiologic Technologists (ARRT) Certified	21
ANCC Certified	110
ASE Automobile Service Consultant	89
Associates Degree in Nursing	64
Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) Certification	180
Bachelor of Science in Business	47
Bachelor of Science in Business Administration	35
Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN)	314
Bachelor of Science in Pharmacy	37
CDL Class B License	124
CDL Class C License	31
Certificate of Clinical Competence in Speech-Language Pathology (CCC-SLP)	58
Certified Forklift Operator	24
Certified Nursing Assistant	612
Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant	25
Certified Pharmacy Technician	43
Certified Public Accountant	40
Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA)	61
Certified Registered Nurse Practitioner	33

Commercial Driver's License (CDL)	9,064
Critical Care Registered Nurse (CCRN)	50
Doctor of Medicine (MD)	36
Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD)	42
Doubles Endorsement	74
Family Nurse Practitioner	22
Gerontological Nurse Practitioner	43
Hazmat Endorsement	326
Immunization Certification	32
Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW)	55
Licensed Insurance Producer	29
Licensed Practical Nurse	747
Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC)	38
Licensed Social Worker	38
Licensed Vocational Nurses	166
Master of Business Administration (MBA)	80
Master of Science in Nursing (MSN)	61
Medical License	92
Medical Technologist	63
Nurse Practitioner	498
Patient Care Technician	50

*1.4 Workforce Development Activities analysis – Provide an analysis of local area workforce development activities, including education and training.*

The NTWDB continues to develop and strengthen the partnerships and participation in the workforce development system with three major groups: employers, educators and service agencies. The NTWDB will maintain and continue to develop an effective and efficient workforce system that attract partners, build alliances and coordinates resources.

The workforce service delivery in the Northern Tier Region is provided through our PA CareerLink®, part of the American Job Center Network. Within the local PA CareerLink® system, there is a commitment to quality and an understanding that the system is customer-driven. The PA CareerLink® provides universal service for everyone. As such, the local design of the PA CareerLink® centers is focused on: universality; customer choice; integrated systems and results-based accountability. In addition to the partners participating at the PA CareerLink® centers we have a strong referral network of community-based agencies that work with us. These agencies have a long history of providing quality services to their communities. There are two PA CareerLink® comprehensive centers and three affiliate sites operating within the region. These sites are strategically located in areas for individuals that cannot realistically travel to a comprehensive site due the distance. Mobile and remote services are also available for individuals that cannot physically get to our facilities due to the geography or lack of transportation.

NTWDB staff meet regularly with the PA CareerLink® Operator, there are bi-monthly meetings of the PA CareerLink® management teams and monthly staff meetings. All partners meet no less than quarterly.



Service strategy, performance, obstacles, solutions and protocol are all discussed. Communication is key to ensuring service delivery is non-duplicative and accessible to all populations.

Workforce, economic development, and education partners frequently collaborate on various initiatives. In the fall of 2024, multiple stakeholders, including local legislators, participated in a listening and learning session with Pennsylvania's Revitalization Commission. These sessions provide a platform for individuals to share concerns, discuss challenges, and highlight successful practices from across the region. Additionally, NTRPDC recently updated the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) plan, incorporating both community feedback and regional data. Such efforts are shared with partners to help guide future initiatives, ensuring they align with the region's identified priorities.

## **Strengths**

### *Coordination and Effectiveness*

The Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission (NTRPDC) houses the community, economic development and workforce development programs for the region. The Northern Tier region has a low population density with approximately 171,322 residents living in a 4,000-square-mile rural area. The rural nature of our region presents challenges and unique opportunities alike to the residents and businesses in the region. The five counties of the Northern Tier constitute both the Workforce Delivery Area and the Local Development District.

Due to the rural nature of the region it is vital that workforce and economic development work together to establish regional priorities and develop strategies to reach strategic goals. The NTWDB works together with local economic development through the PA Department of Community and Economic Development's (DCED) Partnerships for Regional Economic Performance (PREP) partners and through DCED's Engage! program. NTWDB staff are invited to quarterly PREP meetings and are included on the agenda to share workforce priorities and initiatives. Additionally, a referral system between the NTWDB, PA CareerLink® staff and PREP partners exists. Referrals are documented in the Executive Pulse system. Engage! Partners invite workforce staff to participate in engage interviews with local business. This comprehensive and holistic approach, which utilizes partners across the board, enables better services for the businesses of the Northern Tier.

The NTWDB has established partnerships with Chambers of Commerce, business and industry, post-secondary providers including Career and Technical Centers and post-secondary partners. Our Business Education Partnership (NTBEP) has made great strides in connecting employers to school districts and K-12 education. The chambers and other economic development agencies reach out to our workforce system when a need arises to support a local business.

This collaboration also allows for better communication and sharing of knowledge and resources to ensure non-duplication of services and sound referral systems. These partnerships enable the NTWDB to pivot, redirect or expand upon services based on the needs of employers and jobseekers in the region. This includes developing programs to address individuals with barriers such as the Fit4Work Reengagement program, enhancing work-based learning opportunities for our youth and connecting the K-12 education system to employers through programs such as NTBEP and TTAP and creating strong employer relationships through industry partnerships and apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship opportunities.

### *Priority Sectors*

The local area's priority sectors, including healthcare and social assistance, manufacturing, building and construction, transportation and logistics, natural gas/energy, and retail/hospitality, offer residents a wide range of career options. Over the years, partnerships in healthcare, manufacturing, and transportation/logistics have allowed local employers to collaborate directly with PA CareerLink® centers and NTWDB staff to identify needs and develop training opportunities that align with employer requirements.

The NTWDB has successfully relaunched the Northeast Healthcare Industry Partnership, which includes the Luzerne/Schuylkill, Lackawanna, and Pocono Workforce Development Boards, covering 12 counties in total. This partnership provides Northern Tier employers with a platform to address local workforce and economic development needs. To date, the partnership has engaged healthcare providers, supported career outreach and exploration activities, and offered educational opportunities on topics like avoiding burnout, leadership, and managing multi-generational workforces. Additionally, the partnership developed a healthcare career guide outlining career pathways in the sector, which is distributed to schools, healthcare professionals, and individuals interested in starting or changing to a career in healthcare.

The Northern Tier Manufacturing Partnership, while still gaining traction, is focused on worker attraction and retention, skills hiring and short-term training opportunities. The NTWDB remains committed to supporting the coordination and development of entry-level training programs to help local residents secure employment in emerging industries.

### *Education and Training Providers*

While the Northern Tier Region is very rural, we do have a number of post-secondary education and training providers that includes two career and technical centers that provide hands on training. Commonwealth University - Mansfield is located in the region as are branch campuses of Lackawanna College, Pennsylvania College of Technology and Penn State Extension. WDB 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 five counties include:

1. Commonwealth University - Mansfield
2. Lackawanna College
3. Pennsylvania College of Technology
4. Penn State Extension
5. Susquehanna County Career and Technology Center
6. Northern Tier Career Center

### *Demand-Driven Activities*

Workforce system partners collaborate in various ways to support the business community, from joint visits and job fairs to more comprehensive initiatives like the Fit4Work Reengagement Project. Fit4Work provides both soft skills and hands-on training for individuals connected to the justice system and facing multiple barriers to employment. This program was developed in response to the worker shortage,

providing an opportunity for those that may be traditionally overlooked an opportunity to become productive in the workforce.

The NTWDB organizes the *What's So Cool About Manufacturing?* contest, where students collaborate with manufacturers to create short videos showcasing the industry's exciting career opportunities. This initiative aims to engage students and spark their interest in manufacturing careers.

#### *Customer-Focused Services*

WDB 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. The local design of the PA CareerLink® centers is focused on: universality; customer choice; integrated systems and results-based accountability. In addition to meeting the required performance standards, PA CareerLink® partners must ensure that customers have easy access to services without being hindered by the obstacles related to funding streams and agency distinctness. Customers must also be afforded an opportunity to investigate all of the available services and training options, including statistics and satisfaction rates prior to choosing a career path. Many services, including the Career Resource Center, are available to anyone coming through our doors without eligibility restrictions.

#### *Virtual and Mobile Services*

In an effort to provide career development services to those in our region that are unable to travel to one of our PA CareerLink® and affiliate sites, virtual and mobile services are provided throughout the region. To provide mobile services, staff are housed in various locations throughout their respective county. These sites may vary from the town library to the local community center. A PA CareerLink® staff person is available to provide assistance, including PA CareerLink® registrations, job search, resume writing and referrals. Dates and locations are advertised and shared with local partners.

Virtual service offerings such as workshops are available to individuals that have the ability to participate remotely. With limited staff capacity, an effort to streamline these services regionally was made. Workshops available through one office is now available to the entire region so that we don't have multiple offices duplicating the same efforts which allows for greater variety of workshop offerings to participants. These workshops are also posted on the PA CareerLink® operating system and are available to those outside the region as well. We continue to evaluate alternative methods to provide service to those that are not able to get into one of the offices.

#### *Northern Tier Business Education Partnership (NTBEP)*

Over the past several years, our Business Education Partnership has worked closely with the school districts to expand career exploration activities within the K-12 education system, enhance curriculum to meet employers' needs and connect youth to employers. Career coaches, hired through this project, have been working in schools across our five-county region, with the 2024-25 school year being the tenth year of the partnership. Career coaches focus on developing students' career education, which leads to improved student achievement and a positive impact on the region's workforce. Through the project, students are connected to businesses in the Northern Tier region which helps businesses by educating our

students about local careers and pathways to those careers. Students will make informed career decisions and employers will receive a trained and skillful workforce. The project currently has six career coaches that cover 14 school districts in the Northern Tier.

During the 23-24 school year, career readiness activities resulted in 13,788 career projects completed, of which 2,453 of those were for elementary students. Over 270 businesses were connected to these students through various activities including career fairs, mock interviews, panels, career cafes, tours and job shadow opportunities. During this same period 226 parents were connected to career education activities. Each year the NTWDB sets additional goals in order to expand and build this program. This program has been instrumental in educating educators about career readiness and the opportunities that are available in their local area for their students. Coaches have also been able to bridge the gap between education and the business community. The program helps educators to incorporate knowledge they gain from employer relationships into their curriculum. These efforts are preparing our emerging workforce and assist in our goal of building a talent pool for our employers. Career coaches also coordinate classroom presenters and assist school counselors in completing objectives and recording student artifacts in alignment with their 339 plans.

In 2024, the NTWDB launched Northern Tier Career Connect under the NTBEP program. Northern Tier Career Connect is an online platform that connects students and educators to local business. Businesses can offer a variety of activities to schools and organizations interested in connecting today's youth to educational career-based learning opportunities. This website acts as a clearinghouse for employers, students and educators to develop meaningful career opportunities such as pre-apprenticeships, internships, career mentoring and industry tours. This central location for opportunities cuts down on employer fatigue and streamlines the process to connect students to business in a meaningful way.

During the 2023-2024 school year, the NTBEP helped disadvantaged students in grades 10-12 in obtaining 61 college credits that they earned from successfully completing dual enrollment courses at their schools. Mini grants were also offered to all school districts to complete career education/exploration projects that connect students to businesses/organizations. This competitive process resulted in 7 projects impacting 340 students.

#### *Twin Tiers ARISE Project (TTAP)*

In October 2023, NTRPDC was awarded an ARC ARISE grant to partner with three counties in New York state to align and expand our work with young adults through the NTBEP. The project, called Twin Tiers ARISE Program (TTAP), forms a partnership between Corning Community College, GST BOCES, the Career Development Council, Southern Tier Central, CSS Workforce New York and NTRPDC. TTAP will promote and formalize engagement between the region's employers, the existing youth service/education providers, and the region's youth to enhance the Appalachian workforce and strengthen the Appalachian workforce ecosystem. Three Northern Tier counties border the Southern Tier of New York and the two regions share a labor force.

TTAP is a collaborative initiative designed to coordinate activities that enhance partner services and improve employment outcomes for youth in the region. The service area encompasses the five counties of the Northern Tier, along with Chemung, Schuyler, and Steuben counties in New York, collectively forming the Twin Tiers. The project's goals include:

- Increasing career education, work experience opportunities and positive employment outcomes
- Engaging parents, guardians and student support systems around the benefit of career education
- Partnering with employers to enhance career pathways, awareness of occupations within the region and secure long-term financial partnerships
- Implementing data tracking to improve performance and demonstrate success

This project will expand successful programs like the NTBEP and Corning Community College's Accelerated College Education (ACE) program to new school districts. With a steadily declining labor force initiatives like these are vital in retaining talent. TTAP will increase the supply of youth to engage directly with the region's employers and identify areas of alignment, preparing more young adults for the workforce.

#### *Industry Partnerships*

Industry Partnerships are an important strategy for meeting the skills needs of businesses, the career goals of workers and the economic development goals of the Commonwealth. Industry Partnerships bring together multiple employers in the same industry cluster to address common or overlapping human capital needs such as recruitment, retention and training. The overall goal of an industry partnership is to increase the local and global success of the industry as a whole. These industry partnerships are also providing stronger connections between job seekers and employers in local areas where the workforce system must be designed to support the needs of regional employers.

The NTWDB has been the lead in a multi-workforce area for the Northeast Healthcare partnership and also has established a Manufacturing partnership in the Northern Tier. By working with new and emerging businesses within these clusters, we strive in aggregating training needs for multiple companies with similar needs. This helps to create an employer-driven approach to workforce development. By increasing the economies of scale, a partnership is able to provide incumbent worker training to employers at a lower cost. The partnerships have helped to connect education and training providers with private sector and employer needs, provided a forum to share best practices, and have established relationships between the business community, education and economic development. The partnerships have also implemented initiatives to address the challenges of connecting youth to careers. The NTWDB will continue to build on the successes achieved in its partnerships.

#### *Apprenticeship and Pre-Apprenticeship Opportunities*

Apprenticeship has been around for a millennium because it is an effective and equitable training model. The "earn while you learn" strategy is appealing to employees who need sustainable wages while learning new skills. It is beneficial to employers because they receive highly trained employees who learn skills specific to the Employer's needs because they are trained on the job, within their employer's walls. The apprenticeship model is also beneficial to individuals with barriers and opportunity youth because the model allows learners to work with their mentor(s)/journeyperson(s) at their own pace while being paid to learn on the job. The technical education component can be tailored for individual learning styles. The NTWDB provides information regarding apprenticeship opportunities to PA CareerLink® staff to share with EARN, TANF, WIOA customers as well as those involved in special projects such as re-entry. These populations with barriers to employment can especially benefit from the RA model because of its ability to be tailored to meet any individual's specific needs.

The NTWDB/NTRPDC seeks to build upon existing registered apprenticeship programs both within and outside the region to help local employers implement the model. The LWDA has several employers with active RA programs. There are also several businesses within the region that participate in apprenticeship programs sponsored by entities outside of our workforce development area. NTRPDC seeks to inform businesses, job seekers, students and others about the availability of registered apprenticeship programs both in and outside of the local workforce development area ). NTRPDC also works to bring awareness to pre-apprenticeship opportunities and has presented school districts with group sponsored programs available to them.

NTRPDC seeks to build better infrastructure for registered apprenticeship in targeted industry clusters such as manufacturing and healthcare. NTRPDC has industry partnerships for both manufacturing and healthcare. Registered apprenticeship has been presented and discussed at meetings for both sectors. NTRPDC has provided support for two local manufacturers with registered apprenticeship programs by providing tuition assistance and support services for apprentices in multiple cohorts. NTRPDC has also supported pre apprenticeship students in an early childhood education program. These sectors, and the growth of them, are important to the region's growth. By supporting and enhancing apprenticeship and pre apprenticeship networks and systems, they will continue to grow.

Engaging employers has been done through open information sessions as well as referrals from NTRPDC Economic Development and Business Services Team members. PA CareerLink® also makes referrals to the NTRPDC RA Navigator for follow up. NTRPDC will work with businesses in need of the apprenticeship training model to develop or find group sponsored programs for specific occupations that are in demand. The group sponsored model will benefit small businesses by alleviating the administrative tasks of sponsoring programs.

Additional efforts to expand apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship opportunities have been made through education to our employers and our community partners. ATO representatives have been invited to a workforce board meeting and industry partnership meetings for both healthcare and manufacturing. These meetings have provided additional education to our employers about the benefits of utilizing apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship opportunities. Additionally, ATO representatives have provided training to PA CareerLink® staff so they can appropriately identify opportunities for both employers and jobseekers.

## **Weaknesses**

### *Lack of Training Providers/Courses*

The number of training providers in the Northern Tier is much smaller than in metropolitan areas. While our training providers are eager to explore new ideas it is difficult to start and gain momentum behind new programs when there are small numbers of potential participants. While an employer may express a need for a specific training, the demand may not be enough to warrant a training provider to create new curriculum. The addition of approved online courses has helped to fill some of the need. Post-secondary providers are also often slow to start up a new course for a variety of reasons deterring employers. In other instance employers may not be aware of the educational resources available to them. The Northeast Healthcare Industry Partnership created a healthcare magazine identifying in-demand healthcare occupations highlighting skills and education needed to perform these occupations. These magazines are not only a resource for potential workers, but can also be used by our employers to determine the training that is currently available that pertains to the occupations they have available. A similar initiative has been

identified as a need through the Northern Tier Manufacturing Industry Partnership to identify training resources as it pertains to manufacturing.

#### *Lack of Awareness of the Local Resources*

While we continue to make outreach a priority and we have relationships with many organizations and businesses, there are still those that are not aware of our services or the benefits available. Business struggles with how the various facets of the workforce system or partners are interconnected. Turnover within Northern Tier businesses also poses challenges in maintaining relationships and business service staff are often tasked with educating a new business representative about the services available.

We continue to promote the resources and services available in our region for employers and job seekers to take advantage of. This is done by continued outreach meetings and events to communities, businesses, education, local elected officials and other community agencies that serve the same populations. Both the Adult and Youth programs in the Northern Tier have been “rebranded” in an effort to attract more customers and to streamline enrollment processes to making it easier for a customer to engage in our programs.

#### *Limited Work-Based Learning Opportunities*

Many careers in the Northern Tier Region may be best addressed by learning on the job and/or through a mix of work and learning activities. However, traditionally the workforce system in our area does not always provide an array of relevant work-based learning opportunities to fill these needs. Programs such as TTAP prove valuable in developing work-based learning opportunities for our young adults creating a structured, paid internship in order to gain valuable experience, establish networks and explore career pathways without the restrictions of eligibility and are determined by need instead. These opportunities for youth have been expanded, however these same work-based opportunities are lacking for the Adult population.

#### *Lack of Public Transportation*

The current transportation system does not provide adequate access to all parts of the region where career opportunities are available. Due to the rural nature of the Northern Tier Region, transportation has always been and continues to be a significant barrier for many of the residents. The Northern Tier Region is a 4,000-square mile rural area with its population located in small communities across vast areas of agricultural land and forests. Access to public transportation is restrictive or nonexistent. Limited fixed bus routes are available in Bradford, Sullivan and Tioga Counties along with a taxi service. Susquehanna and Wyoming Counties have access to a Shared-Ride transportation service. Shared rides and taxi service can prove to be cost prohibitive when transportation is needed across several miles for multiple days. Bus routes are often not conducive to traditional work hours and are not available during non-traditional work hours. Individuals often cannot accept work due to their location and inability to get to the workplace at the designated time, often depending on others for a ride. Others are unable to maintain employment because they do not have reliable transportation. Transportation proves to be a barrier for many of our PA CareerLink® customers. As a solution, access to virtual services is available. To our customers, however this does not solve the challenge for individuals that do not have reliable transportation to get to the workplace.

### *Limited Childcare Services*

The area does not have enough childcare providers for individuals who are currently working during, or interested in working, especially during the second or third shifts. This was especially true during the height of the pandemic when individuals were unable to find childcare, forcing some to leave their jobs in order to stay home with their children. Oftentimes, individuals must rely on family or friends for childcare which is not always a reliable solution.

### *Gaps in Youth Services*

We have addressed many gaps through our NTBEP and TTAP programs and have made great progress over the past several years making the connection between students, educators and local employers. While we have made great strides in our work with students it is still difficult for us to recruit opportunity youth into programs as there are few public places where out they “hang out.” We have developed a youth taskforce made up of career advisors throughout the region to develop youth service strategies including recruitment. Additionally, a What’s Next? Event took place in an effort to attract both opportunity youth and their parents to learn about the various career opportunities available to them. More events like these are planned prior to school graduation in an effort to assist youth that have no plan after graduation.

### *Lack of High-Speed Internet or Internet*

There are still many pockets of the region that lack internet connectivity and many areas also do not have high speed internet. This creates a barrier to employment preventing the ability to search for and find jobs, creates social isolation and results in individuals that are digital literacy deficient. Lack of high-speed internet also deters businesses from wanting to locate to the Northern Tier region.

### *Limited Resources*

Many of the area’s unemployed workers possess at least one barrier to employment. The NTWDB may not have the depth of resources required to fully serve all those in need, including development of specific programs. As populations with barriers are increasing, it takes additional resources to serve them and resources are often decreasing. Additionally, it is sometimes difficult for the NTWDB to compete with larger areas for competitive funds. Required outcomes/outputs of funding opportunities are often not realistic for a rural area such as ours leaving us at a disadvantage from the start. According to the US Census Bureau, Pennsylvania statewide population density equals 291 persons per square mile. A total of 48 counties in the Commonwealth are considered to be rural (below 291) and only 19 are urban. The Northern Tier averages 43 persons per square mile. Our limited population detracts from our ability to produce the “numbers” that funding sources want to see, putting the Northern Tier at an unfair advantage from the start.

### *Participation*

While we are successful in outreach to employers and getting them to meet to learn more about what we are doing in the region, it is challenging to get the employers to follow through on the ideas and commitments discussed. For example, apprenticeship opportunities are something that we work to educate employers about, we have a lot of interest, but oftentimes it is the smaller employers that are interested and they end up not having the right candidate or the right ratio of journeymen to apprentice or simply do not have the time to do what is required of an apprenticeship model.



Additionally, it has become increasingly difficult to keep jobseekers engaged in workforce activities. There are many efforts made to engage individuals that could benefit from workforce services. This includes rebranding of both our youth program, Launch! Your Success and our adult and dislocated worker programs, “Navigate Your Success”. These online initiatives include education about available services and a brief online application that quickly connects the individual with a career advisor. Other examples are events that include family participation, such as PA CareerLink® events that invite jobseekers to learn about service and have fun activities for their children to participate in. Another example, is the “What’s Next” initiative that was developed to engage both students and their parents to learn about the various services available to help students prepare for the next steps after high school.

### **Economic Development**

The NTWDB works closely and collaboratively with the state and local areas and economic development for the sustainability of existing businesses and the growth and creation of small, new and emerging industries. The NTWDB continues to strengthen ties to economic development and supports all the local industry partnerships.

The one stop centers also work closely with new and emerging industries, the NTWDB, and economic development to determine and meet critical needs. By learning about workforce needs from data, economic development, and employers themselves, NTWDB is able to better design workforce and training programs with service providers and educational entities. The collaboration allows a case management system that communicates employer needs across multiple entities and allows for the leveraging of resources to meet those needs.

Ongoing efforts between economic development and the NTWDB are crucial in order to achieve regional prosperity. A region that has a strong workforce that is adaptable to new technologies and has success in attracting business is better able to retain business. This allows the community to grow. By working with business to determine their skill needs for existing and emerging employers to prepare for high-growth occupations, the local area is better prepared to work with the needs of under-skilled workers. Workers that are under-skilled can be assessed to their aptitudes and skills levels and then advised of career pathways. The workers are then presented with training opportunities as well as supportive services.

Partnerships include the Governor’s Action Team (GAT), of Partnerships for Regional Economic Performance (PREP) which include the Small Business Development Center (SBDC), Northeast Pennsylvania Industrial Resource Center (NEPIRC), and county economic development partners among others offer support to meet the needs of employers and jobseekers.

The NTWDB will continue collaborating with the regional PREP team, including Engage!, to strengthen economic and workforce development efforts. Regional PREP partners include economic development agencies, Chambers of Commerce, Small Business Development Centers (SBDC), NEPIRC, WEDnet providers, and planning commissions. Through this collaboration, a regional network has been established to support local businesses with joint projects, education, outreach, and referrals to PA CareerLink® and workforce partners.

By utilizing DCED’s Executive Pulse system, NTWDB, NTRPDC, and PREP partners can better coordinate business outreach, track services, and measure results. NTWDB actively participates in PREP meetings to

discuss strategies, share best practices, and enhance employer support. Employer visits often involve multiple partners to provide a team-based approach to service delivery.

Additionally, this partnership has expanded employer engagement, introducing apprenticeship as a workforce development strategy in a region where it has been historically underutilized. The Business Services Team (BST) has been trained to identify and refer businesses that could benefit from registered apprenticeships, further supporting workforce growth and retention.

The NTWDB cooperation with the Local Development District (LDD), the Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission (NTRPDC), which is the agency housing services of both the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) and the LWDB, creates a partnership that is efficient and well-rounded. Employer outreach is necessary for both groups and the shared information helps identify challenges and develop solutions to those strategies. By further developing these partnerships, engagement is improved as well.

*1.5 What are the local area challenges in aligning existing labor force skills and education, and training activities with the needs of the regional employers?*

The Northern Tier Region faces challenges in aligning existing labor force skills and education and training activities with the needs of regional employers. The biggest challenges faced by our region are the small number of training providers coupled with the small population. While we continue to look to recruit other training providers to offer programs for employers, it is often difficult to recruit enough participants to “fill a class” in order for a training provider to be able to offer any selected course. In recent years online and hybrid models of class offerings have become more acceptable, providing more training options for our participants. It also allows for training providers to provide a class to those they may not otherwise reach or have the capacity to do so if required to be in person only.

Challenges include ensuring that school and training program curricula matches employer needs and can be created and implemented in a timely manner. The lack of short-term credential availability is a definite barrier to our jobseekers and employers both. More short-term programs are needed to allow for greater opportunity for our jobseekers to meet the demands of our local employers. Other challenges include engaging opportunity youth to complete high school and/or post-secondary training to attain the skills required by employers, matching the skills of job seekers to employer needs as well as identifying and eliminating barriers to employment for disadvantaged populations.

Specific strategies that the NTWDB will continue to build upon include:

- Industry Partnerships -Continue our work with industry partnerships to ensure goals are employer driven and offer the opportunity for employers to share skill needs related to high-growth and high-demand occupations, including identification of education and training, workforce and economic needs shared throughout an industry or across industries. Coordinate efforts to connect employers with resources needed to utilize incumbent work training in order to upskill the current workforce and open up entry-level positions. Continue to connect local employers with post-secondary training providers, CTCs and high schools to identify gaps in skills and strategies for bridging these gaps.
- Sharing labor market information and workforce needs with the training providers to ensure their

programs meet the needs of our employers, continue our work towards identifying career pathways and increasing our efforts to better match job seekers to jobs that are self and family supporting.

- The Business Education Partnership (NTBEP) has created a better connection between the area businesses and educational opportunities and the region's school system. Over the last several years the program has grown exponentially. We now have six (6) career coaches working in 14 school districts, including one (1) Career and Technology Center, throughout the region who are working with students on career readiness. As outlined in section 1.4, the NTBEP has been instrumental in creating a talent pipeline and bridging the gap between students and employers. TTAP, also presented in section 1.4, provides an opportunity to expand NTBEP services to additional school districts and build upon existing services.
- Continued collaboration with the regional PREP team including Engage! Regional PREP partners include local and regional community and economic development agencies, Chambers of Commerce, Small Business Development Centers (SBDC), North East Industrial Resource Center (NEPIRC), Workforce Development, WEDnet providers and planning commissions. By working closely with our PREP partners, we have developed a regional network of providers that work together to meet the economic and workforce needs of the Northern Tier. Collaboration results in joint projects, education and outreach to communities about the services available, a strong referral system and a forum to discuss strategic measures needed to meet the needs of our local businesses. Referrals are made to the PA CareerLink® system and workforce partners at the county level, as well as at the board level. Cumulative and anecdotal information is shared as deemed appropriate.
- Coordination of services to include leveraging of funds. Continued communication with our training providers including connecting to employers, recruitment for programs and making appropriate referrals. Our training providers attend our regional PREP meetings. This provides a forum for us to discuss local employers' needs for training, skills and education. Providers also attend Youth Committee and WDB meetings. Providers are given local labor market information supplied by the Center for Workforce Information and Analysis (CWIA), results of any surveys implemented by the board and feedback from our Business Service Teams. This enables providers to be responsive to input given by employers regarding their needs.
- PA Careerlink®. Local management teams meet bi-monthly and regional meetings take place on a quarterly basis. Service strategy, performance, problems, solutions and protocol are all discussed. Business services, with an emphasis on partnerships and long-term sector strategies are an evolving process within the region as we work to understand employers who are willing to work with our customers with barriers. The NTWDB establishes annual goals for the business services team in order to meet employer challenges and continuously improve service.
- The *Fit4Work Reengagement Project* program aimed at individuals lacking essential work-readiness and job skills, with a particular focus on those facing multiple employment barriers, including individuals involved in the criminal justice system. The program helps participants overcome obstacles to becoming productive employees and community members. It was developed in response to employer concerns about a shortage of workers with fundamental employability skills. By preparing individuals for entry-level roles, the program enables employers

to train and promote their existing workforce. Efforts are ongoing to expand employer partnerships and extend the program's reach to individuals in recovery.

- Pre-apprenticeship. Over the past few years, the NTWDB has had information sessions and meetings with school districts to review available pre-apprenticeship opportunities for students. The NTWDB acts as an apprenticeship ambassador to the region, sharing information with school districts and businesses as it is gleaned from the PA Apprenticeship and Training Office as well as the Keystone Apprenticeship Alliance. We will continue to partner with our CTC's and educators to expand these offerings.
- Apprenticeship opportunities. The NTWDB works to educate local businesses about the advantages of taking a "learn while you earn" approach with their workers. The method provides workers with the hands-on training and related technical instruction needed to upgrade skills to obtain a better job. The NTWDB has also secured funding to offset the costs of apprenticeship training for the student and employer by supporting related technical instruction and support services. One of the NTWDB's professional staff has been certified under the Keystone Development Partnership's Apprenticeship Navigator program. This improves the knowledge needed to be the resident expert on Apprenticeships, to assist in the education of the benefit to both employers and jobseekers of participating in an apprenticeship program and to assist with the design requirements of a program. Reports of existing Registered Apprenticeships are shared with PA CareerLink® staff so they are aware of what programs exist. The NTWDB uses these reports for outreach to both those that already have an existing apprenticeship and those employers that may benefit from joining an existing apprenticeship program.
- Digital Literacy. The availability of broadband is a significant barrier to the growth of our communities and economy of the Northern Tier Region, especially during a time when so many services are provided remotely. There are several organized efforts being made to improve upon the lack of broadband in our area. Another challenge is ensuring our communities have the digital literacy skills needed to navigate in the current environment. The PA CareerLink® has provides digital literacy services throughout our region. This provides our customers the tools and knowledge needed to gain service through a multitude of digital platforms.
- Skills-based Hiring. Many employers share they face challenges in finding the right candidates for the right position. Often times difficulties are occur because of outdated hiring practices such as focusing on work history or education versus transferrable skills. The NTWDB is researching tools that can be used to assist businesses in properly identifying skills needed for their jobs, determining a candidate's transferable skills and how to identify and close the gap between what exists and what is needed. This may require additional assessment methods for both the jobseeker and the employer. In identifying these gaps, the NTWDB will work with local training providers to develop training opportunities that represent the needs of local employers.
- Incumbent Worker Training (IWT). IWT opportunities are available to Northern Tier employers that need to upskill their current workforce. Often times, employers find that PA WEDnet funds are available for training they are seeking. While not many employers take advantage of IWT in the area, the NTWDB continues to promote the training model and has had success in doing so through the Northeast Healthcare Industry Partnership.
- On-the-Job training (OJT). A majority of occupations on the Northern Tier's high demand occupation list do not require post-secondary training, but short to mid-term hands on training. The NTWDB and PA CareerLink® Business Services team will continue to educate and promote the use of OJT with regional employers through various methods of outreach.
- Business Summit. In 2024, the NTWDB and NTRPDC hosted a business summit for local employers. Emphasis was attracting and retaining non-traditional talent and the benefits that come with

hiring an individual that may have barriers to employment to fill entry level positions. This collaboration resulted in feedback for strategies to include more employer education when it comes to internal policy. Another business summit is planned for this year.

## 2. STRATEGIC PLANNING: Vision and Goals

### 2.1 Local Board's Strategic Vision and Alignment with the Governor's Strategic Vision - What are the local board's strategic vision and goals for preparing its workforce and its strategy for achieving the vision and goals? 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 systems, as well as any of the goals and strategies articulated in the regional plan?

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. Therefore, the local workforce system will work to better serve individuals with barriers to increase the employment, retention, and earnings of customers, develop career pathways, support sector strategies and increase credential attainment through short-term training opportunities, pre-apprenticeship, Registered Apprenticeship and Incumbent Worker training. The Northern Tier's economic future depends on a workforce able to compete in today's global economy. In order for the region to be economically competitive and its residents to acquire careers that pay family-sustaining wages, the region needs to ensure that its workforce system is steered by business and job seeker needs. A skilled and well-trained workforce can be achieved by better aligning the workforce development system with industry and education to competitiveness of the five-county workforce area.

The vision of the Northern Tier Workforce Development Board (NTWDB) is the local area will be a destination of choice for employers and jobseekers, where existing businesses experience growth and where new businesses are eager to locate because of the excellent job opportunities, economic vitality, quality of life and the presence of a skilled workforce.

The mission of the NTWDB is to provide responsive and innovative leadership that meets the current and future needs of employers and jobseekers.

The current goals of the NTWDB include:

1. Continue to build the youth talent pipeline by developing employability skills and increasing work-based opportunities for our youth.
2. Continue to engage industry sectors to address their recruitment, retention and training needs, develop career pathways and improve responsiveness of workforce programs
3. Strengthen relationships with PA CareerLink®, economic development and education to offer a seamless, integrated network of support to regional businesses
4. Enhance customer-focused services to priority populations to overcome barriers and gain self-sustaining employment through our PA CareerLink® centers.
5. Work with partners to increase and promote training opportunities that include Pre-

Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship models, coordination with Career and Technical education and credential attainment

The local area's mission, vision, and strategic goals, seek a business focused workforce system with special care given to those with barriers. This focus creates a better link between business and jobseekers. It allows business to grow and create more jobs. At the same time, it allows jobseekers to be trained in the skills that employers need. Both the state and the local area supports training for high priority occupations, career pathways, better job matching, and programs that address skill gaps.

The mission of the Northern Tier Workforce Development Board is ***to provide responsive and innovative leadership that meets the current and future needs of employers and jobseekers***. The goals that it has established to support its 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 Northern Tier Workforce Development Region by improving the overall quality of its labor force as well as support the recruitment and retention efforts of its local businesses.

**Commonwealth Goal 1: Apprenticeship and Career & Technical Education**

NTWDB's Goal 5, "Work with partners to increase and promote training opportunities that include Pre-Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship models, coordination with Career and Technical education and credential attainment" speaks directly to the Commonwealth's goal to expand opportunities for both individuals and employers in building Apprenticeship and Pre-Apprenticeship programs while increasing coordination with Career & Technical Education. The NTWDB recognizes the value of Apprenticeship and Pre-Apprenticeship programs and continues to work with regional partners to appropriately utilize Apprenticeship and Pre-Apprenticeship models for sector focused initiatives. The NTWDB will work to strengthen relationships with industry and our CTEs to implement pathway models with particular focus on Apprenticeship, Pre-Apprenticeship and credential attainment opportunities through short-term training initiatives.

The NTWDB works closely with secondary and post-secondary institutions within the area by attending advisory committee meetings and shares updates on projects as well as labor market information. Secondary and CTEs and post-secondary institutions are also invited to participate in Industry Partnership meetings connecting them directly with employers. School districts are sent Pennsylvania's In-Demand Occupations list as well as the Northern Tier High Priority Occupations List each year. NTWDB staff, including an RA Navigator, have close relationships with school districts, CTEs and post-secondary schools through numerous initiatives, the LWDB, Youth Committee and others. The on-staff RA Navigator seeks information on existing apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs that might potentially benefit students, employers and job seekers and disseminates information to appropriate parties in an effort to raise awareness about opportunities. This work is done with the help of the PA Apprenticeship and Training Office's (ATO) Apprenticeship Training Representative (ATR) that covers the Northern Tier. When more information is requested, the RA Navigator coordinates informational meetings for employers, job seekers, students, school administrators and PA CareerLink® staff to learn about specific programs. These

coordination efforts help connect adults, dislocated workers, opportunity youth and others with barriers access to high quality training programs.

The RA Navigator can make referrals for jobseekers seeking training and apprenticeship programs to WIOA Title I staff for program participation. WIOA supports training and apprenticeship programs through different facets and funding sources. For example, an employer can receive wage reimbursement for an apprentice through WIOA participation. It is important for LWDB staff to work with employers, job seekers and training providers to best leverage resources to support training and apprenticeship programs. This additional support for those seeking credentials, training and/or registered apprenticeship increases successful outcomes.

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

NTWDB's Goal 2, "Continue to engage industry sectors to address their recruitment, retention and training needs and develop career pathways" and Goal 3, Strengthen relationships between PA CareerLink®, economic development and education to offer a seamless, integrated network of support to regional businesses" support the vision of the Commonwealth. The NTWDB is the lead for the Northeast Healthcare Industry Partnership which includes collaboration with three other Workforce Boards including Poconos, Luzerne/Schuylkill and Lackawanna. This industry partnership has resulted in various services to the healthcare industry including a published healthcare magazine that highlights career pathways for in-demand healthcare occupations, incumbent worker training, partner education series and connection to the emerging workforce. The NTWDB also leads the Northern Tier Manufacturing Industry partnership which is making connections to various business resources, education and training and economic development.

The NTWDB will also continue to strengthen our partnership with our PREP partners and the Engage! program, including PA CareerLink® Business Services team to enable them to provide business with the most up-to-date information regarding services available throughout the workforce and economic development system. The NTWDB will also continue its partnership with economic development to hold an annual business summit, bringing topics of interest to the business community to address recruitment, retention and training strategies.

### **Commonwealth Goal 3: Youth**

NTWDB's Goal 1, "Continue to build the youth talent pipeline by developing employability skills and increasing work-based opportunities for our youth" falls in line with the Commonwealth's goals.

The NTWDB continues to strengthen the system's impact on the secondary school system to increase career awareness, pathways and develop career readiness for students. As a key component of its youth pipeline and sector engagement strategies, the NTWDB will continue to expand upon work-based learning opportunities for our youth including, but not limited to, job shadow, work experience, internships, co-op programs, pre-apprenticeships, and apprenticeships to meet specific skill needs of employers in the region. The Northern Tier Career Coaches continue to work within the schools, and business community, to make the connection between learning opportunities and local business. The NTWDB will continue to develop recruitment strategies to attract youth with the help of the already established youth taskforce.

The NTWDB and PA CareerLink® will continue to strengthen and develop new partnerships to ensure a comprehensive referral system is in place to make appropriate referrals to our youth and opportunity youth including Job Corps, post-secondary opportunities, TANF, Literacy, OVR, work-based learning and wellness agencies that provide mental health, physical health or substance abuse services. Northern Tier Career Connect, as referenced in section 1.4, will assist in connecting youth to employers for work-based opportunities.

#### **Commonwealth Goal 4: Continuous Improvement of the PA CareerLink® System**

NTWDB's Goal 3, "Strengthen relationships between PA CareerLink®, economic development and education to offer a seamless, integrated network of support to regional businesses"

The NTWDB will continue to convene all regional partners including education providers, economic development agencies (local and regional), workforce partners, employers and other community-based agencies to ensure that all partners have access to the labor market information to support the connection between education and training and the economy and align training provider curricula to the needs of existing and emerging sectors. Additionally, through its industry partnerships, the NTWDB will continue to convene employers from the targeted sectors along with education and training providers and other partners to identify the specific skill needs and related training curricula that are required to fill the in-demand, growth, and emerging occupations of the local area.

The NTWDB will continue to set goals of continuous improvement for the local PA CareerLink® system. The NTWDB reviews progress toward goals and reviews service delivery systems for effectiveness. The NTWDB will work to create new initiatives or retrofit existing projects to adjust to the demands of employers and jobseekers.

Finally, The NTWDB, NTRPDC, PA CareerLink® and PREP will continue to collaborate and better coordinate business outreach services, share information and measure results.

#### **Commonwealth Goal 5: Barrier Remediation**

The Board's Goal 4, "Enhance customer-focused services to priority populations through our PA CareerLink® centers" correlates with this goal. The NTWDB works with the PA CareerLink® to create innovative strategies to deliver service for customers facing multiple barriers to employment. One such program is the Fit4Work Reengagement Project focused on developing employability skills for those with multiple barriers with a focus on those involved with the criminal justice system. Currently the NTWDB is working to expand this program to include individuals in recovery. The NTWDB is working to strengthen relationships with other organizations that serve similar populations such as probation, domestic relations, housing authority, county drug and alcohol, correctional facilities, homeless shelters and transportation. Through these relationships PA CareerLink® is able to make appropriate referrals to those customers facing multiple barriers.

PA CareerLink® staff have been able to utilize various platforms to provide services to our customers both virtually and remotely. They also provide mobile services to those that may not have transportation to get into an office or the means to participate in services remotely. PA CareerLink® also generates reports from digital intake to make sure appropriate referrals are made and also to see if there are any trends. For instance, in the last several months there have been many customers coming into the PA CareerLink® that don't have a copy of their birth certificate. As a result, PA CareerLink® is planning to have a representative



from Vital Statistics on-site to meet with customers and help them obtain a birth certificate. The NTWDB will also work to provide training opportunities to PA CareerLink® staff to be equipped to work with individuals that have barriers. One example would be a recent coordination with the North Central PA Recovery Hub to conduct a workshop for PA CareerLink® staff titled, “Supporting Recovering People in Finding Employment”. The NTWDB will continue explore education opportunities to help us better serve individuals with barriers.

### **Commonwealth Goal 6: Shortages in Critical Industries**

NTWDB’s Goal 2, “Continue to engage industry sectors to address their recruitment, retention and training needs and develop career pathways” and NTWDB’s Goal 3, “Strengthen relationships between PA CareerLink®, economic development and education to offer a seamless, integrated network of support to regional businesses” both align with this goal. Examples of this include our industry partnerships. Healthcare and Manufacturing represent two of the largest employers in the region and are faced with worker shortages. As populations decline and more people are exiting these careers due to retirement, it is vital that we work with critical industries to combat worker shortages.

The Northeast Healthcare industry partnership has focused greatly on the emerging workforce, engaging youth to retain local talent. The partnership has also provided incumbent worker training through the grant, recognized healthcare workers, created a healthcare magazine that promotes career pathways and has made connections with future healthcare workers by connecting to students through Medical Careers Clubs.

Manufacturing, while slowly declining for the last several years, is the second largest employer in the region and accounts for 8,450 jobs. The Northern Tier has long been known for its robust manufacturing. Abundant with natural resources, the region is home to a diverse range of manufacturing

The Northern Tier Manufacturing Industry Partnership, still building momentum, focuses on workforce attraction and retention, skills-based hiring, resource mapping, and short-term training opportunities. Additionally, the NTWDB organizes the *What’s So Cool About Manufacturing?* contest, where students collaborate with manufacturers to create short videos showcasing the industry’s exciting career opportunities. This initiative aims to engage students and spark their interest in manufacturing careers.

To further expose youth to manufacturing, TTAP is planning a Manufacturing Career Camp over the summer, introducing participants to the wide range of career paths within the industry.

Moving forward, the NTWDB will strengthen collaboration among workforce, economic development, and education partners to provide a comprehensive and coordinated approach to supporting the region’s critical industries.

*2.2 Negotiated levels of performance – 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 NTWDB and the local elected officials have agreed to adopt the levels of WIOA performance that have been established by the governor for the Commonwealth. The NTWDB's five primary workforce goals fully support these measures and the NTWDB further promotes performance achievement by including these factors as part of its expectations in agreements with subcontractors and the PA CareerLink® partners. The goals of the NTWDB ensure that our area achieves the federal performance accountability measures. For the past several years, board members have engaged in high-level strategic discussions with our local partners about better serving our customers while meeting the federal performance accountability measures. Our Board recognizes that it will be more challenging to meet some of these measures as small downturns and upturns in the economy have a huge impact on our local numbers. It is also more challenging to enhance our focus on harder to serve populations identified in WIOA as well as the WIOA Combined State Plan. The goals that have been developed by the board support these measures as well in several ways.

**NTWDB Goal 1: Continue to build the youth talent pipeline by developing employability skills and increasing work-based opportunities for our youth**

- This goal will assist in identification of recruitment of young adults that are in need of our service. The programs and services that we offer that meet the needs of youth will meet the WIOA Performance Indicators for youth of employment in second quarter rate, employment in fourth quarter rate, and could impact measurable skill gains and credential attainment rate.
- Youth receive career pathway information which leads them to placement in education or employment. The attainment of a degree or certificate ensures that youth are on a career pathway that will lead to a future job with the family sustaining wages. This all leads to a better prepared workforce of higher quality, which helps business grow in the local area and thus supports the local vision.

**NTWDB Goal 2: Continue to engage industry sectors to address their recruitment, retention and training needs, develop career pathways and improve responsiveness of workforce programs**

- This goal will have an impact on several of the WIOA Title I Performance Indicators. More specifically, if the workforce system is better connected to the private sector this will result in an improved "Employment in Second Quarter Rate" as we better understand business needs. As we better prepare individuals for jobs in the local labor market there will be a better "Employed in Fourth Quarter Rate" (retention) for them as well. Median earnings measured during the second quarter after exit can also be impacted.
- This NTWDB 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.
- As more skill gaps are identified programs will be developed. This is expected to positively impact retention rates.

**NTWDB Goal 3: Strengthen relationships with PA CareerLink® economic development and education to offer a seamless, integrated network of support to regional businesses**

- Similar to Goal 2, this goal will also improve the following WIOA Performance Indicators: "Employment in Second Quarter", "Employment in Fourth Quarter", for the same reasons

as indicated above.

- The NTWDB has established partnerships with economic development agencies, business and industry, post-secondary providers including Career and Technical Education Centers. The board will enhance these partnerships and generate referrals through the increased outreach and promotion of the resources available within the workforce development system.

**NTWDB Goal 4: Enhance customer-focused services to priority populations to overcome barriers and gain self-sustaining employment through our PA CareerLink® centers.**

- This goal focuses primarily on WIOA performance indicators including “Employment in Second Quarter Rate,” “Employment in Fourth Quarter” and “The percentage of program participants who obtain a recognized postsecondary credential, or a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent.” It could also impact Measurable Skill Gains.

**The NTWDB Goal 5: Work with partners to increase and promote training opportunities that include Pre-Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship models, coordination with Career and Technical education and credential attainment**

- This goal focuses on education opportunities and will focus primarily on “Credential Attainment” and “Measurable Skills Gains” and also includes “Employment Second Quarter” and “Employment Fourth Quarter”.

The NTWDB gauges its progress in meeting planned outcomes through the following indicators that are regularly reviewed at NTWDB meetings:

- Number of first visits and total visits to the PA CareerLink®
- Number of persons completing occupational skill training and/or receiving certifications
- Number of high school equivalency diplomas achieved
- Number of individuals enrolled in EARN<sup>21</sup>
- Number of business services provided
- Market penetration rates

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

**3.1 Local workforce system structure – provide a descriptive overview of the workforce system structure, including key stakeholders and entities in the local area.**

**Organization Chart**

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

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The current local workforce system structure that has been developed in the Northern Tier WDA was a collaborative effort of the local elected officials, the Workforce Development Board and the Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission. 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 follows:

**Fiscal Agent and Administrative Entity.** The LEO has appointed the Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission as Fiscal Agent and Administrative Entity.

Responsibilities include:

- Oversee the contracting process between Workforce Development Board and service providers.
- Submitting accurate and timely financial reports.
- Ensuring expenditures are allocated to cost categories correctly and within cost limitations.
- Timely reconciliation of records and reports, at least on a quarterly basis.
- Oversee/monitor fiscal activities of the Local Workforce Development Area.
- Oversight of the receipt, disbursement, accounting and reporting of program operations funding.
- Maintaining adequate internal controls.

#### **Chief Local Elected Official (LEO)**

The Local Workforce Development Board membership is appointed by the officers, who must be commissioners, of the Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission's Executive Committee. The five officers of that committee are the Chief Local Elected Officials (CLEOs) for the Workforce Development Board. Appointments are signed by the designated signatory of the CLEOs. Local Chambers of Commerce recommend business members to the CLEOs for nomination to the workforce development board. The CLEOs then appoint the members to the workforce development board.

The functions of the CLEOs include, but are not limited to: maintaining administrative oversight and liability for funds through participating on the NTRPDC Executive Board; designating a sub grant recipient or fiscal agent; appointing local board members; assisting in the development of the local plan; and negotiating local performance standards and other duties set forth by the Act. The Local Elected Official/ NTWDB Agreement spells out the specific relationship between the LEO and the NTWDB.

The CLEOs maintain administrative oversight and liability for funds through participating on the NTRPDC Executive Board; designates a sub grant recipient or fiscal agent; appoints local workforce development board members; assists in the development of the local plan; and other duties set forth by the Act. This includes:

- Establish and appoint a Workforce Development Board to assist in carrying out provisions of the Act, as identified within the Local Elected Officials Agreement.
- Develop the mission, strategic vision, and policies for the WDB.
- Identify and close gaps in local / regional workforce resources.
- Develop and approve local plan that meets requirements of state and federal guidelines.
- Designate operators 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 report:” 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.
- Receive additional non-federal, state, and other workforce funds as an integrated system.

### **Northern Tier Workforce Development Board (NTWDB)**

The Northern Tier Workforce Development Board (NTWDB) shall provide, in partnership with the NTRPDC Executive Board, the policy, program guidance and independent oversight services for all activities under the plan for this workforce development area pursuant to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. In addition, the NTWDB, in mutual agreement with the NTRPDC Executive Board, is designated the administrative entity to conduct oversight responsibility in the course of normal and customary activities pursuant to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. This consent in no way circumscribes or limits the Executive Board’s authority to exercise independent oversight activities.

Staff to the NTWDB are employees of Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission. This structure was developed and approved by the CLEO, WDB, and NTRPDC and is described in the WIOA and the Local Elected Officials Agreement. Staff serves the Executive Committee of NTRPDC and the NTWDB by providing monitoring, oversight, policy and strategy development, technical assistance, project development and additional funding opportunities.

There are currently six (6) board staff including the following. The mailing address for all of the following staff as well as telephone and fax numbers are the same except where noted:

Melissa Fleming, WDB Director  
Jody McCarty, Program Administrator  
Rachel Selleck, Project Development Manager  
Bonnie Warner, Quality Specialist/EO Officer  
Patty Sturzen, Workforce Coordinator  
Rena Chamberlain, Business Education Program Manager

All NTWDB staff work at this physical location: Northern Tier Regional Planning & Development Commission, 312 Main Street, Towanda, Pennsylvania 18848

**Email:** [info@northerntier.org](mailto:info@northerntier.org)

**Telephone:** 888-868-8800 or 570-265-9103

**Fax:** 570-265-7585

### **Standing Committees of the WDB**

There are two (2) committees of the Northern Tier Workforce Development Board as described below.

#### **Youth Committee**

Frequency of Meetings: Quarterly in accordance with the WDB 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:**

- The primary role of the Youth Committee is “to provide information and to assist with planning, the operational oversight, and other issues relating to the provision of services to youth (Section 681.100).”
- Identify eligible providers of youth workforce development activities in the local area
- Develop performance and report measures for youth providers in addition to those required by WIOA

### **Service Delivery Committee**

**Frequency of Meetings:** Quarterly in accordance with the WDB meetings, or as needed.

**Membership:** The Service Delivery 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:** Provides information and assists with operational and other issues relating to the service delivery of all programs governed by the Workforce Development Board.

### **Ad-Hoc Committees**

Ad-hoc committees, as deemed necessary by the Chairperson and approved by the Workforce Development Board, may be established from time to time to address specific needs. The membership of these committees will be determined by the Chairperson based on the task to be accomplished. These committees are established to address a specific scope of work and are meant to be temporary in nature.

All committees shall serve in an advisory capacity only.

### **PA CareerLink® Operator**

Our one-stop operator was selected following a competitive procurement process as outlined in TEGl 15-16, dated January 17, 2017. The Operator was last procured in May 2021 for an effective start date of July 1, 2021. An ad hoc committee of LWDB members reviewed each proposal and selected Bradford County Action, Inc. (BCA) as the PA CareerLink® operator for the region. BCA employs the Site Administrators, and holds the operational duties outlined in WIOA and the policies of the Commonwealth. These roles include functional management to ensure seamless service delivery and oversee the operations of the one-stop. The operator is an intermediary to the partners and ensures an effective referral mechanism is in place for the benefit of individuals and partners while also serving as an ambassador for the one-stop system to the community. The PA CareerLink® Operator Request for Proposal was released June 5, 2025. Proposals are due July 15, 2025. An Ad Hoc committee has been designated by the Workforce Development Board Chair and approved by the WDB to review operator submissions. Reviews will take place the week of July 21-July 25, 2025. The committee will make a recommendation to the WDB at the August 6, 2025 meeting. Services will commence under a new contract for the period of October 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026 and will be renewable up to three additional years not to exceed June 30, 2029.

Bradford County Action is the PA CareerLink® Operator for the two comprehensive PA CareerLink® centers in the region, effective until September 30, 2025

### **Equal Opportunity Officer**

The EO officer for the Northern Tier Region is Bonnie Warner, WIOA Quality Specialist, [warner@northerntier.org](mailto:warner@northerntier.org).

Responsibilities include monitoring and investigating LWDA activities and activities of its subrecipients to ensure compliance with nondiscrimination and EO obligations under WIOA Title I. The EO officer reviews written policy to ensure that they are nondiscriminatory, develops and publishes LWDA procedures for processing discrimination complaints and ensuring those procedures are followed. Provides complaint forms and resolves EO complaints informally in consultation with the Office of Equal Opportunity Specialist. Coordinates EO activities and maintain communication with the Office of Equal Opportunity Specialist. EO Officer develops and provides educational information to local PA CareerLink® staff, LWDB staff and service providers on a monthly basis. EO officer is responsible for dissemination of information and works with the Equal Opportunity Liaisons assigned to each PA CareerLink® center to ensure that customers are aware of their rights and report incidents related to potential discrimination or accessibility.

PA CareerLink® EO Liaison for Bradford is Sonya Metzger, Site Administrator, [smetzger@bradfordcountyaction.org](mailto:smetzger@bradfordcountyaction.org) Tioga EO Liaison is Bianca Powers, Career Advisor [bpowers@trehab.org](mailto:bpowers@trehab.org)

### *3.2 Programs included in the local workforce delivery system – What programs are 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?*

The alignment of local goals and strategic planning with the Governor’s goals, as outlined in the Pennsylvania’s WIOA Combined State Plan, is detailed in Section 2.1, including specifics on how they align with the local vision and objectives. The NTWDB’s vision and policy directs investment in workforce preparation, skill development, education and training. These investments are targeted and align with assisting youth, job seekers and employers. NTWDB aligns regional resources and acts as the intermediary to promote partnerships among businesses, non-profit agencies, economic development providers, educational institutions, community-based organizations, and employers. Through working together, stakeholders enhance the skills needed for workforce inclusion, employability, and educational and training levels of the current and future workforce. The NTWDB is responsible for setting the standards of operations of the PA CareerLink® centers and overall workforce systems in the Northern Tier Region. The Service Delivery Committee is responsible for conveying the standards set by the LWDB by developing and implementing programs, policies and procedures that coordinate partner activities and resources into a seamless, non-duplicative delivery system. To accomplish this vision, the following resources and programs are utilized in accordance with federal and state regulations (A program provider list can be found in Attachment 3):

- Title I (Adults, Dislocated Workers and Youth)
- Wagner-Peyser Act employment services administered by DOL
- Title II Adult Education and Literacy Act Program administered by the Department of Education

- Activities authorized under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- Title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965
- Career and Technical education programs at the postsecondary level authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Act of 2006.
- Department of Human Services- Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) authorized under Section 403(a)(5) of the Social Security Act.
- Activities authorized under chapter 2 of Title 2 of the Trade Act of 1974
- Activities authorized under chapter 41 of title 38, United States Code
- Employment and Training programs carried out under the Community Services Block Grant Act
- Employment and Training activities carried out by the Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Programs authorized under State unemployment compensation laws
- Native American Programs;
- Reentry Employment under Second Chance Act;
- Youth Build Title I Section 171.
- Migrant and seasonal farmworker programs; and
- Programs authorized under part A of Title IV of the social Security Act
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

#### **Title I WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth**

The Northern Tier currently has two Title I Providers. Bradford County Action, Inc. (BCA) is the WIOA provider for Bradford County and Trehab is the WIOA provider for Sullivan, Susquehanna, Tioga and Wyoming Counties. Both entities provide career and training services to our Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth populations as well as provide service to employers through the Business Services Team.

The WDB continuously reviews the performance of the Title I Providers for Adult and Dislocated Worker and Youth Services through performance measures data, monitoring of programs and reporting including

- Successful attainment of the WDB'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
- Meeting expenditure goals such as ensuring service to those with barriers makes up 51% of the customer base, a goal of 30% of funds are spent on training is implemented and at least 20% of youth funding is spent on work-based activities.
- A real time data report is generated by LWDB staff on a quarterly basis which is shared with Title I providers and the LWDB. These reports assist the Title I providers and LWDB an opportunity to identify any areas that may need improvement and highlights areas that are exceeding expectations. Secondary measures have also been implemented by the WDB to improve upon overall program service delivery.

The LWDB conducts an assessment of the type and availability of the Adult and Dislocated Worker and Youth programs by managing a competitive request for proposal process. The NTWDB regularly reviews the type of programs available to adult and dislocated workers and youth in the local area. An RFP is



advertised in the newspapers and online, proposals are received, scored by members of the NTWDB, approved by the full NTWDB and contracts are then negotiated.

### **Wagner-Peyser Act Programs**

Services under the Wagner-Peyser Act are provided by partners from the Bureau of Workforce Partnership and Operations (BWPO), Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry. BWPO staff provide core services to customers including orientation to service, intake, provide workshops, vocational counseling, employee profiling and job matching and posting of job orders. BWPO staff also provide Rapid Response and RESEA services. BWPO are present in both comprehensive PA CareerLink® centers and are available to travel to affiliate sites to provide services when needed.

### **Programs authorized under the Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973**

Programs authorized under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 are provided by the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) and available through the PA CareerLink® System. These program services include vocational counseling and guidance, vocational evaluation, restoration, training, job placement and pre-employment training services for eligible individuals with disabilities.

### **Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy**

Title II programs are provided by local Adult Literacy Training Providers, depending on the availability of literacy training in the individual counties. The Title II provider, Bradford County Action (BCA), has utilized this entire region to ensure the delivery of high-quality services. BCA provides a full range of service from literacy to activities including high school equivalency (HSE) instruction and testing, services that support post-secondary and career readiness goals to adults that are basic skills deficient. Services include English language acquisition when needed. Representation of Title II Adult Education and Literacy exists within the system. Title II services are co-located in the comprehensive sites and provide mobile service to other areas in the region.

### **Activities authorized under Title V of the Older American's Act of 1965**

Services are provided within the local PA CareerLink® system by the local SCSEP organizations including Area Agency on Aging, AARP Foundation and Associates for Training and Development and PathStone. These services are targeted to seniors through the PA CareerLink® system and include vocational counseling, paid work experience programs, employment training, and independent living counseling.

### **Postsecondary vocational education activities authorized under Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act.**

Vocational Technical School and Career and Technology Center partners provide these services as part of the PA CareerLink® services. Program services include the dissemination of information relative to financial assistance to attend post-secondary training and the provision for post-secondary occupational skills training.

### **Temporary Assistance to Needy Families**

The local County Assistance Offices through the State Department of Human Services provide services through TANF, authorized under Section 403(a)(5) of the Social Security Act. These services are targeted to welfare recipients and include information dissemination of welfare benefits. The services act as the

sole determinant for eligibility of those benefits and are the referral resource to a multitude of local services, programs, and training options. The EARN Program receives referrals directly from the local County Assistance Office to provide TANF recipients with job readiness workshops, barrier remediation, job search skills, short term work experience, vocational education opportunities and follow up support during employment. The program is designed to move the TANF recipient from dependency on welfare benefits to self-sufficiency

**Activities authorized under Chapter 2 of Title II of the Trade Act of 1974**

These activities include Trade Adjustment Assistance Program administration, including tuition assistance to Dislocated Workers who have lost their jobs due to imports. Program services, authorized under this funding and provided within the PA CareerLink® system, include rapid response to employees in the event of massive layoff or plant closure, tuition assistance for post-secondary occupational skills training, and income subsidies to assist candidates while in training. This service is provided by BWPO, Department of Labor and Industry.

**Jobs for Veterans State Grant program activities authorized under Chapter 41 of Title 38 United States Code**

Veterans' activities are provided by Local Veteran's Employment Representatives (LVER) Veterans Representatives and Disabled Veteran Outreach Programs (DVOP) from BWPO, Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry. Services include career counseling, job development, case management, information on veterans' benefits, and tuition assistance for skill training. Veterans' services are made available in PA CareerLink® centers and affiliate sites.

**Employment and Training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant Act**

These services are available within the PA CareerLink® System through local community action agencies or limited-purpose agencies (e.g., farm worker organizations). The PA Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) is the agency that provides the required one-stop training and employment activities under the Community Services Block Grant at the state level.

**Employment and training activities carried out by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)**

Where applicable, employment and training activities are provided by the existing Housing Authorities through the PA CareerLink® System. Services include information on HUD-funded employment and training activities, housing assistance, and housing subsidies.

**Programs authorized under State unemployment compensation laws**

The Department of Labor & Industry Unemployment Compensation (UC) deputation operates programs authorized under state and federal UC laws. Services provided in the PA CareerLink® include dissemination of information on the UC laws and claims assistance. UC telephones and computers are designated in the PA CareerLink® to provide access to those seeking to file applications and claims for UC benefits.

**National Farmworker Jobs Programs**

The National Farmworkers jobs (NFJP) program is nationally directed, locally administered program of services for migrant and seasonal farmworkers (MSFWs). In Pennsylvania, the NFJP is administered by

Pathstone Corporation. The NFJP is not local, however, PA CareerLink® staff offers information for assistance.

### **Job Corp**

Red Rock Job Corps Services, located in Sullivan County is a no-cost education and career technical training program administered by the U.S. Department of Labor that helps young people ages 16 to 24 improve the quality of their lives through career technical and academic training. The Job Corps program is authorized by Title I-C of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (supersedes WIA 1998). PA CareerLink® staff make and receive referrals from Job Corp.

### **Commission of Native American Affairs**

Purpose is to reduce unemployment among Native Americans, traditionally the least serviced and poorest group in the United States. The Council of Three Rivers American Indian Center has operated an employment and training program since 1976. The Commission of Native American Affairs is not local, however PA CareerLink® staff offer information about these services as needed.

### **YouthBuild**

YouthBuild provides education, counseling and job skills to unemployed young adults between ages 16 and 24, generally high school dropouts. Students learn construction trade by building homes for their own communities. YouthBuild is not local, however, PA CareerLink® staff offer information about these services as needed.

### **Programs authorized under section 212 of the Second Chance Act of 2007**

Reintegration of Ex-Offenders (REO) targets court-involved youth, young adults, and adult ex-offenders through a variety of discretionary grant awards. There are no local Second Chance Act programs, however, PA CareerLink® staff offer information about these services as needed.

### **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**

SNAP Employment and Training is a program designed to help SNAP recipients gain the skills and experience needed to find and keep jobs and works with WIOA programs for strategic alignment.

The PA CareerLink® Operator holds regularly scheduled meetings with the paying partners in the PA CareerLink® which are representatives from the WIOA Title I Operators, Title II, Bureau of Workforce Partnership and Operations, Department of Human Services and Office of Vocational Rehabilitation. The site administrators, who are responsible for both the comprehensive PA CareerLink® sites in the region, also attend these meetings. Meeting agendas, minutes and comprehensive reports are provided at every meeting.

The PA CareerLink® Operator, Title I and Title II Program Directors along with PA CareerLink® site administrators and BWPO Supervisors attend WDB meetings. BWPO and OVR have representation on the WDB. PA CareerLink® Administrator updates are a standing agenda item at the WDB meetings. This provides assurance that the WDB plans and goals are clearly defined and relayed to the partners ensuring appropriate alignment of services. The WDB has also developed a continuous improvement goals in which the PA CareerLink® is accountable. A report is generated on a quarterly basis outlining goals and

achievement toward those goals. This report is shared with PA CareerLink® staff and the WDB on a quarterly basis.

The purpose of the PA CareerLink® is to create a seamless system of service delivery that will enhance the access to individual program services while improving long term employment outcomes for both job seeker and employer customers receiving assistance. The PA CareerLink® Operator designs the integration of systems and coordination of services, develops in cooperation with the fiscal agent acceptable Operating Agreements utilizing equal access as the cost allocation methodology, evaluates performance and customer needs, maintains the one stop service plan, acts as a liaison with the NTWDB, promotes the PA CareerLink®, recruits partners, assures adherence to the provisions of Memorandum of Understanding, defines and provides means to meet operational goals, share and maintain data, responds to community needs, facilitates team building, and recommends to the NTWDB when necessary the need for additional affiliate sites. The NTWDB and CLEO's determine the number and type of PA CareerLink® sites in the area, defines minimum requirements for each site, sets performance standards, reviews, monitors, and evaluates performance, charters PA CareerLink® sites, and negotiates the memoranda of understanding of the PA CareerLink® partners to provide services.

There are two comprehensive PA CareerLink® sites in the Northern Tier Region. PA CareerLink® – Bradford/Sullivan is located at 312 Main Street, Towanda and PA CareerLink® Tioga is located at 56 Plaza Lane, Wellsboro. The PA CareerLink® Site Administrators are responsible for oversight of both comprehensive sites and affiliated sites within the region. There is one BWPO Supervisor at each comprehensive site.

Due to the rural nature of our region, three affiliated sites are strategically located in our remaining counties ensuring representation throughout the Northern Tier. These sites make it possible to provide services in those areas in which it is not conducive for customers to access one of the comprehensive sites. All four sites are operated by WIOA Title I and EARN and provide full-time WIOA service staff offering WIOA and EARN services as well as links to services provided by other partners through the comprehensive sites such as Veteran and RESEA services. All three sites fall under the umbrella of the comprehensive PA CareerLink® Bradford/Sullivan.

Affiliated sites have a Trehab WIOA Supervisor on-site and the locations are as follows:

Sullivan County: 7406 Route 487, Suite 3, Mildred 570-928-2127, M-Th 8-4  
Susquehanna County: 1302 Main Street, Susquehanna 853-1103, M-W: 7-5, Th: 7-4:30  
Wyoming County: 102 Warren Street, Tunkhannock, 570-836-6840, M-W: 7-5 Thurs: 7-4:30

*3.3 Adult and Dislocated Worker training activities – Provide a description and assessment of the type and availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities in the local area.*

The NTWDB 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 3.3. 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.

The NTWDB 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, all individuals complete a digital intake which provides a brief assessment to establish service needs. Customers are then provided with an overview of PA CareerLink® services and meet with a Career Pathway Navigator (CPN). The CPN role is fulfilled by both Wagner-Peyser and WIOA staff. The CPN reviews the customer information survey and assesses the need with the customer to determine appropriate service. Individuals are directly referred to the specific services that best meet their needs. For example, interpretation and/or translation services may be utilized to assist customers who do not speak English well. The CPN will make referrals to both internal and external partners.

WIOA provides underemployed and unemployed adults 18 years of age and older the comprehensive services needed in order to obtain unsubsidized employment at a family sustaining wage. This includes connection to career pathways as part of the individual's employment plan. Program services should be customer –focused and based on the needs of the individual. Services must be designed to prepare and educate a skilled workforce that will meet the needs of employers. The program prepares adults facing serious barriers to employment for participating in the labor force by providing employment and training services resulting in increased employment and earnings; increased educational and occupational skills and decreased welfare dependency.

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. If an individual is referred to Title I programs and requires individualized or training services, the NTWDB's priority of service policy applies and eligibility is determined. Potential WIOA participants are identified through referrals from other partners, general eligibility intake form when entering the PA CareerLink®, outreach opportunities in which services are explained to community members in an effort to provide service to those that need additional assistance in finding employment or upskilling in order to retain employment.

### **Eligibility**

WIOA focuses on serving individuals with barriers to employment and priority of service is required regardless of funding levels. Individuals in the targeted groups are given priority over other individuals for receipt of individualized career and training services. Veterans and eligible spouses within these groups receive priority over non-veterans. The goal is to serve a greater percentage of adults from the priority targeted groups, at least 51%.

All Adult participants must meet the following general eligibility requirements:

- Age (18 years or older)
- Citizenship/Eligible to work
- Selective Service (If applicable)

### **Priority of Service**

Priority for Adult customers must be given to the following groups when providing individualized career and training services, in addition, training services will only be provided to residents of the Northern Tier region.

**Recipients of Public Assistance** – includes individuals who receive, or in the past six (6) months have received, or are a member of a family that is receiving or in the past six (6) months has received, assistance through one (1) or more of the following:

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA)
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI); or
- State or local income based public assistance.

### **Low-income Individuals**

- Recipients of public assistance (defined above)
- Individuals in a family with total income below the poverty line or 70% of the lower living standard income level
- Homeless
- Foster youth; and
- Individuals with disabilities with individual income below the poverty line or 70% of the lower living standard income level.

**\*\*** A youth 18 or older who was determined low-income for the WIOA title I Youth program may be co-enrolled in the WIOA title 1 Adult Program without an eligibility re-determination and be counted as an individual who meets Adult priority of service, if the original determination was made no more than six (6) months prior to the date of co-enrollment.

**Basic Skills Deficient** – is defined as an adult who is unable to compute or solve problems, or read, write, or speak English, at a level necessary to function on the job, in the participant's family or in society

An adult may be assessed as basic skills deficient through career advisor observations and documented in case notes. For example, the career advisor may observe that the adult is not able to read or fill out an application form, or does not have basic computer literacy. Career advisor may document basic skills deficient using any one (1) of the following:

- Basic skills assessment questions or test results
- School records
- Referral or records from a title II Adult Basic Education program

- Referral or records from an English Language Learner program

Case notes must provide an auditable trail back to the source of the verified information. For example, a career adviser verifies an individual is basic skills deficient by reviewing school records – case notes must include information such as name of school, date of enrollment which would allow an auditor /monitor to later retrieve this information. A hard copy of this information does not need to be kept in file.

Standardized tests used to assess basic skills will include reading, writing or computing skills.

A youth 18 or older who is determined basic skills deficient for WIOA title I youth may be co-enrolled in WIOA title I Adult priority of service if original determination was made no more than six (6) months prior to date of co-enrollment.

**Underemployed** – individuals are employed full or part-time and also meet the definition of a low-income individual.

Individuals that do not meet any of the statutory priority categories listed above may receive services if determined eligible for the Adult program. Individuals earning a family income of equal to or above 235% of the poverty line will not be considered for training services unless prior approval is granted by the Northern Tier Workforce Development Board.

WIOA eligible individuals are assigned a WIOA Career Advisor who will also make co-enrollment referrals or determinations including DHS employment and training programs. An EARN or SNAP case manager may make a referral to WIOA services. Co-enrollments are followed closely by case management from both programs to make sure services are streamlined and not duplicated. This collaborative effort ensures that braiding of funds from both WIOA and DHS occur when appropriate. Co-enrollments are tracked and outcomes monitored. WIOA staff are part of the Local Management Committee (LMC) to strengthen communication.

In the Northern Tier region, WIOA and DHS programs are provided by the same subcontractors ensuring an integrated approach to service. All staff are trained on the various programs available through DHS, including EARN, KEYS, SNAP, JETS and ELECT programs and a referral process is in place.

This pertains to Opportunity Youth as well as Adult and Dislocated Workers. The Career Advisor, along with the participant, develop an Individual Employment Plan (IEP), or Individual Service Strategy (ISS) for Opportunity Youth, which will identify career goals and career pathways needed to accomplish employment goals. This may include training services through an Individualized Training Account (ITA) or it may be the individual is best suited for work-based training such as transitional or on-the-job training opportunities.

For those older Opportunity Youth who are interested in training, the NTWDB co-enrolls participants in the Adult program. When the youth is co-enrolled into both the Opportunity Youth program as well as the Adult program, the youth has access to services and funding from both programs, depending on needs and goals as outlined in their ISS/IEP. This includes basic career services, individualized career services, and training services. The participant's Career Advisors from both the Opportunity Youth program and the

Adult program coordinate to streamline and avoid duplication of services and to make the program tailored to the participant's needs and goals.

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. 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 and job postings. Jobseekers can meet with employers conducting on site interviews and also sign up for job readiness workshops such as career exploration, interviewing, digital literacy. 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. Various services and activities are available to individuals both virtually and in person to fit the individual's needs. 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
- Skills upgrading and retraining
- Pre-apprenticeship / Apprenticeship
- Transitional jobs
- Incumbent worker training

To be enrolled into a 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. Additionally, work-based training opportunities are used to provide jobseekers with the valuable hands-on training needed to obtain a self-sustaining wage. Examples of these work-based trainings would be an OJT or transitional training opportunity.

Career Advisors will work in conjunction with the Business Service Team to develop work-based training opportunities for adults and dislocated workers such as OJT's, transitional training, incumbent worker training and pre-apprenticeship or apprenticeship training.

Most PA CareerLink® required partners, with some exceptions, provide basic career services to our customers. At a minimum, required partners contribute staff to PA CareerLink® Resource Centers, conduct workshops or initial assessments and referrals. These services are universally accessible to all customers. PA CareerLink® centers are certified as ADA compliant annually and materials in alternative format for persons with disabilities are available. Interpretive services are also made available for persons with limited English proficiency. Efforts are made to ensure that persons with disabilities are afforded access to all services provided within the PA CareerLink® sites.

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 disability and the overall number of skilled workers available to business in the region.

The OVR plays a significant role in recruitment and outreach to populations with disabilities. OVR serves on the Northern Tier NTWDB, further ensuring that service barriers for persons with disabilities are identified and eliminated. Financial resources of the PA CareerLink® sites and OVR are coordinated in order

to cover shared customer training and supportive service costs. In addition, the PA CareerLink® utilizes customer assessments conducted by OVR.

The NTWDB supports staff development training to better equip PA CareerLink® staff to work with individuals with multiple barriers. Monthly PA CareerLink® staff meetings provide an open forum for all partnering staff to discuss solutions in the provision of service. Front line staff participate in cross-training to educate each other about the specific populations they focus on from a programmatic standpoint offering insight for appropriate referrals. As with all customer groups, referrals are also made to non-PA CareerLink® partner service agencies in an effort to bridge service gaps. PA CareerLink® staff work with OVR partner staff on an on-going basis to take a proactive approach to ensure that the one-stops retain their ADA compliance status with its adaptive technologies, the TTY line, and the availability of resource materials in alternative formats (Braille, large print). A region-wide inventory has recently been completed to determine what materials or technology may be needed to ensure the most up to date materials are made available to our customers.

The NTWDB annually review adult and dislocated worker programs to determine if a transfer of funds is needed. Evaluation includes program enrollments, program expenditures and forecasting of anticipated needs for participants such as those that may be in the pipeline for training. This data is also compared to the previous years to examine trends. The LWDB has requested a transfer of funds from dislocated worker funds to adult for the last several years. In recent years adult program participant enrollments have exceeded dislocated worker enrollments. Additionally, the adult population tends to have more barriers and often do not have the work history or experience of a dislocated worker. The lack of work history coupled with multiple barriers often requires additional support services, intensive case management and a need for more extensive training than the dislocated worker population typically requires.

### *3.4 Youth workforce investment activities – Provide a description and assessment of the type and availability of youth workforce investment activities in the local area.*

The NTWDB acts in several ways to provide activities beneficial to all youth and young adults of the region. There is and will continue to be promotion of an intensive network of services to address the special educational and employment needs of persons on the margins of the mainstream workforce (opportunity youth, those with disabilities, persons reentering the workforce after long absences). The workforce system will provide the emerging workforce with adequate career guidance that leads to a successful school-to-work transition.

The NTWDB works with in school youth and opportunity youth in a number of ways. Recruiting and outreach to opportunity youth has become a priority for the Northern Tier Region. 75% of WIOA youth funding must be spent on opportunity youth. In the Northern Tier, we dedicate the majority of our WIOA funding to this population. Title I providers provide mobile services to reach those in outlying areas who may not have consistent transportation to PA CareerLink® offices. Currently, the Summer Program provides participants work experience, soft skills, career exploration activities and academic enrichment. This program is made possible by a number of community partnerships and collaboration in each of the five counties that it operates in. Title I providers have expanded this program to include year-round work experiences for all participants. TANF Youth Development Funding (YDF) is leveraged to provide more eligible youth with paid work experiences during the summer months. Work experience funding is

leveraged and supplemented with TTAP funding to provide increased work-based learning experiences year round for young adults.

Eligibility for the TANF YDP is for those aged 12 (or those that have completed 5<sup>th</sup> grade) up to 24 years old at the time of enrollment, who are TANF recipients or whose household monthly gross countable earned income does not exceed 235% of the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines (FPIG). TANF YDP providers do not have to service this entire age range. Local workforce development boards (LWDBs), their staff, as well as their LWDB youth committees and the contracted youth service providers, all come together each program year for the planning, execution, monitoring, and oversight of a successful TANF YDP.

Through the NTBEP, the LWDB has been fostering relationships with local high schools and has linked numerous youth with businesses in the Northern Tier to educate our students about employment opportunities available to them in their own areas. The NTBEP seeks to provide career education and exploration activities in collaboration with local guidance departments to ensure students learn important soft skills and other career information before entering the workforce. Through the NTBEP, the local board has six career coaches in thirteen (14) school districts (which in some cases includes elementary, middle and high schools) and one (1) CTC. The project began in 2015 and, on average, has impacted more than 5,000 students per year since its start.

The NTWDB and Youth Committee distributes labor market information regularly to local school districts, parents, and it is shared with program participants. Youth and young adults are exposed to career and training opportunities throughout their program participation. Employer visits, career fairs, trips to post-secondary trainers and speakers from local industry are provided to educate youth on in-demand occupations. Both the LWDB and Youth Committee will continue to provide ongoing labor market information and look to increase efforts by reaching out to churches and other community-based organizations that serve youth and young adults. The committee evaluates and adjusts existing programs to stay current with employment trends and employer needs. The Northern Tier Youth Committee is comprised of a number of youth experts from around the region. The Chair of the committee is the Center Director at Lackawanna College Towanda Campus. Other members include directors from local CTC's, a prior participant, YMCA, OVR, school counselors and several others. Input is always relevant and helps improve programming.

Collaboration between workforce staff, the Youth Committee, local school districts, OVR, welfare and many human service agencies ensure that youth and young adults most in need of services are identified and provided with the activities and support needed to achieve employment success. Building a strong relationship between participants and their career advisors is an important part of the overall strategy to keep youth and young adults engaged in the program long enough to attain their goals. Using the Individual Service Strategy (ISS) as a roadmap to achieve their goals, the youth/young adult participates in a wide variety of activities designed to prepare them for a career success. Bradford County Action, Inc., Trehab (Title I Providers) and NTWDB staff currently participate in a career pathways group that meets to discuss educational needs and trends of the region. Others participating in the group include local CTC's, postsecondary education, Title II provider and PA CareerLink® staff.

Recognizing that students with disabilities are too often unprepared to transition into post-secondary education or employment, OVR provides a pool of services called Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS) to better prepare these students for life after high school. These skills gains will help to meet one of the intentions of WIOA, to better prepare students with disabilities to graduate high school and work

toward meaningful careers. Both the local OVR counselors and the Youth Program Manager sit on Transition Councils for schools in our region. We have discussed PETS and service providers who employ them in each county. Students have been referred to OVR from workforce staff to these services.

### **Customer Experience**

Career advisors meet with potential participants to explain the program and provide information before the enrollment process begins. All policies, requirements and services are discussed before enrollment occurs. Career advisors let potential candidates know of eligibility requirements and what documents they need to provide for verification. After eligibility is determined, a youth meets with their career advisor to develop an Individual Service Strategy (ISS). They work together to identify strengths, goals, talents, etc. From there, a specific plan is formed for each individual.

### **The key steps and milestones of the program design include:**

1. A *Customer Tracking Form* is completed by the customer and reviewed by staff. The *Customer Tracking Form* captures information to initially identify young adults in need of services.
2. The next step is the determination of program suitability. The *Suitability Determination Form* is used to document the client's barriers including help with education; language; lack of work experience; work maturity issues; child care; transportation; emotional or mental disabilities; drug/alcohol; legal concerns; housing; domestic concerns; physical limitations/disabilities; or medical issues. If it is determined that the services provided through WIOA are not suitable for the customer at this time, referrals to appropriate agencies are documented on the *Suitability Determination Form*.
3. Once suitability has been determined, the *Customer Agreement Form* will be reviewed with the participant, signed and placed in the customer file.
4. An appointment is made to determine program eligibility. Eligibility is the process to determine whether the customer meets program barrier in income (in certain cases) guidelines.
5. Once it has been determined that the customer meets WIOA program Eligibility, a supervisor must review the eligibility determination using the *Eligibility Determination Review* form. The supervisor's review must be done prior to the customer receiving a WIOA funded service. The registration can then be completed in PA CareerLink®. All supporting documentation will be maintained in the customer file.
6. Young adults (ISY and Opportunity Youth with barriers C or I) that do not meet income eligibility may be enrolled under the 5% eligibility exception if participant enrollments for the year will allow. The determination to allow a young adult into the WIOA program under the 5% eligibility exception rule can only be made by the NTRPDC Workforce Program Manager. Eligibility exceptions can be requested using the *5% Exception Form*.
7. The customer is assigned to a Career Advisor.
8. The customer is scheduled for an Objective Assessment using TABE.
9. O\*NET will be used to measure aptitude and career interests.
10. All Opportunity Youth must be pre-tested using TABE, no later than 60 days following the date of participation. The date of participation is the first day the client receives a WIOA funded service. Youth with disabilities are to be provided with reasonable accommodations as appropriate.
11. All Opportunity Youth that are Basic Skills Deficient must be post-tested (using TABE) at a minimum of every 60 days following the pre-test until post-educational functioning levels of above 8.9 are attained for the participation year. Individuals may still receive basic skills remediation services as determined by the Career Advisor after the EFL levels of above 8.9 are achieved.
12. In-School-Youth (ISY) may be TABE tested when the Career Advisor is unable to obtain information

on the students' academic levels.

13. The customer is scheduled for an individual meeting with their Career Advisor to develop an *Individual Service Strategy (ISS)*.
14. All fourteen required program elements under WIOA must be available and provided as appropriate.
15. The ISS is completed and updated per the Northern Tier ISS Policy.
16. WIOA program services will be entered in to the PA CareerLink® system no later than 30 days of the action (e.g. service start date/end date, hold date, exit date). Program participation begins the date the customer receives a value-added service funded by the program.
17. Support Services can be provided and are based on significant need, as demonstrated as an inability to attend activities without such services. *The Northern Tier Supportive Services Policy* guidelines must be followed. If services are given, the *Support Services Determination Form* must be completed.
18. At a minimum, quarterly meetings and activities will be provided to ISY 9-11<sup>th</sup> grade. Career advisors will meet with high school seniors and all Opportunity Youth at least monthly. All customer contacts, activities, supportive services, incentives, customer progress, etc. must be documented in the case notes.
19. Customers wishing to enroll in advanced training/occupational skills training through an Individual Training Account (ITA) must meet the eligibility criteria under the *Northern Tier Individual Training Account Policy*. All ITA policy and procedures must be followed.
20. Incentives are available for young adults and will be awarded in accordance with the *Northern Tier Incentive Policy*.
21. Career Exploration is mandatory for all young adults.
22. Program exit occurs when the customer has not received any services funded by the program or a partner program for 90 consecutive calendar days and has no planned gap in service and is not scheduled for future services.
23. Follow-up services must be provided to all customers after they exit the program. The *Northern Tier Follow-up Services Policy* must be followed.

### **WIOA youth and WIOA young adult's awareness of career pathways**

Youth participants are offered career exploration workshops. If they are interested in training opportunities. We explain the career pathway. All participants are O\*NET tested as part of the assessment process.

### **Work-based learning opportunities**

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). 20% of WIOA funds must be for work experiences for youth.

### **Work readiness training program curriculum and competencies**

All youth participating in work experiences are assessed for work readiness at the beginning and end of their work experience. Depending on the skill levels during the initial assessment, the career advisor and worksite supervisors mentor youth on those competencies that still need to be developed.

### **Financial literacy education**

New WIOA elements and is centered on education awareness from financial aid to budgeting and financial life skills. Youth participating in the program who are determined to be in need of financial literacy education will be exposed to partner banking institutions to learn about financial products, credit, credit reports, identity theft and others to help them make informed financial decisions.

#### **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 Council 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.

#### **Youth and young adult preparation to training or post-secondary education**

Begins with the development of the ISS. Employability Counselors will open discussion with the youth and young adults regarding their education and employment goals. Recognizing many youth maybe 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.

#### **Education and training programs**

May include the Northeast PA Industrial Resource Center (NEPIRC), Individual Training Accounts (ITAs), On-The-Job Training (OJT), summer employment, work experience, and job shadowing to explore career interest and/or exposure to the world of work. Each 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. Additionally, 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. Opportunity Youth are eligible for ITA's. (ITA and OJT policies are located on pages 68-71.)

#### **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. This is provided following the region's OJT policies.

#### **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 costs, and lack of work experience or lack of a high school diploma/GED are significant

barriers to not only employment but in many cases the partner services needed to prepare a youth for education and employment opportunities. Career advisors 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, GED preparation, or work experience opportunities.

Supportive services are available to customers attending training services for child care and transportation needs. ISY and Opportunity Youth are also eligible for support services while active in the program and during follow up. Such support services can include work related supplies, transportation costs, etc. These services are evaluated at an individual level for each customer and can include a number of other services. In order to help determine which support services are most effective in our area, monthly support service reports are generated by the WIOA Title I provider. NTWDB staff review reports monthly to ensure appropriateness of services, trends and cost analysis to determine if change to current policy is needed. Economic conditions and availability of funding are also a determining factor. Information is provided to the NTWDB and any change in policy must have NTWDB approval prior to implementation. Customers are also eligible for a gas stipend based on attendance for training services to offset the travel costs. The NTWDB continually evaluates supportive service and needs-based payment policies to determine whether the current policies are sufficient for the economic conditions.

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

Northern Tier Workforce Development's 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 and its partners. Monitoring and tracking youth performance measures begins with the PA CareerLink® which is the State's database of record for any agency serving WIOA customers. Title I provider staff use PA CareerLink® for all eligibility determinations, 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 Youth Committee and NTWDB.

Compliance and proper documentation begin with all eligibility determination and enrollment documentation upon completion being sent to the Administrative office for filing. The youth program manager and workforce development quality specialist/EO officer completes programmatic monitoring of programs and subcontractors. There are ongoing coordination meetings with front line staff. Career advisors meet with potential participants to explain the program and provide information before the enrollment process begins. All policies, requirements and services are discussed before enrollment occurs.

The Northern Tier provides youth with effective and comprehensive activities that encourage school completion, improving educational attainment, and promoting effective linkages to employers. Because of the strong connections that exist between our program providers, CAO's, school districts, training providers, OVR, PA CareerLink® and numerous human service agencies, youth and young adults most in need of services are identified and provided with activities and support needed to achieve academic and employment success.

Youth program services are designed to facilitate academic and employment success. Activities and services are provided that help youth and young adults build their employment potential by increasing skills employers seek and setting them on the path toward a career that leads to independence and self-sufficiency. Dropout prevention is a priority and services are provided to help youth stay in school and obtain their high school diploma. GED instruction is provided for Opportunity Youth that lack a diploma and is the first step in helping them with their employment and career goals. Additional services are available to help youth further their education or connect them to a job. Working closely with the participant, OVR, parents and school staff, we can determine special needs of our youth with disabilities and work together to help them overcome barriers to their future careers.

Potential program participants are required to complete a common application which helps the career advisors identify eligible participants and the services they may need. An interview with the youth/young adult and their parents/guardian (if under 18 years old) is the next step in determining program eligibility, and to explain the services available through the program. Once program eligibility has been determined it must be verified with required documentation. Such documentation includes information to verify family size, family income in the previous 6 months, residence, citizenship or eligibility to work in the US, disability status, age, barrier status, and Selective Service Registration status (if applicable). After program eligibility is determined by the youth career advisor, it is reviewed and verified by WIOA Title I supervisor before program services are provided.

The career advisor will perform an assessment of the individuals' academic levels, skill levels, and service needs to develop an Individual Service Strategy (ISS) for the client. The ISS is a detailed, unique, individual strategy for each youth participant that is the basis for the overall case management strategy. A successful case management approach includes assessing and interpreting needs; developing strategies to help reach educational, training and employment goals; providing tools and resources to help overcome personal barriers; documenting youth participation, referral outcomes, service decisions, summaries of one-on-one meetings and achievements; and providing follow-up services. Case management provides an opportunity for staff to build a working relationship with the participant and with key organizations in order to assist youth in meeting their objectives.

Young adult case managers work with Adult/DW case managers when a participant is eligible, or it would be beneficial, for the participant to co-enroll in programs. Northern Tier participants have been co-enrolled in both Youth and Adult and Youth and DW programs concurrently. Both an Individual Employment Plan (IEP) and an ISS are developed. Goals and activities are different for each of the programs to eliminate duplication of services.

All program elements are designed to permit access and appropriate activities for youth with disabilities. These elements assist all youth in attaining academic and employment success. LWDB staff will monitor program systems to ensure that the required program elements are being offered and that program eligibility requirements are followed.

- 1. Tutoring, study skills training, instruction and evidence-based dropout prevention and recovery strategies leading to secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent or for recognized post-secondary credential**



Youth career advisors work closely with high school guidance staff and are notified when a student has dropped out of school or if a student may be in danger of dropping out. Activities intended to educate students on the advantages of staying in school are offered. ISY found to be in need of additional academic assistance are enrolled in a tutoring program for more intensive, individual academic services where they receive one-on-one tutoring. Opportunity Youth in need of a high school diploma attend GED instruction, or are assisted in re-entering high school.

**2. Alternative Secondary School Services or drop-out recovery services as appropriate**

Services are coordinated with school districts that have alternative school services within their curriculum. Career advisors will work closely with clients who may need alternative secondary school services. Career advisors meet with potential participants to explain the program and provide information before the enrollment process begins. All policies, requirements and services are discussed before enrollment occurs.

**3. Paid and unpaid work experiences that have academic and occupational education as a component of the work experience which may include the following types of work experiences:**

- a. Summer employment opportunities and other opportunities available throughout the school year**
- b. Pre-apprenticeship programs**
- c. Internships and job shadowing**
- d. On the job training opportunities**

Work experiences such as participation in pre-apprenticeship programs, OJT's, internships and job shadowing are planned structured learning experiences that take place in a work environment for a limited period of time. These experiences are offered throughout the program year in the private for profit sector, the non-profit sector or the public sector. They are designed to enable youth to gain exposure to the working world and its requirements. Work experiences help youth acquire the personal attributes, knowledge and skills needed to obtain a job and advance in employment. The purpose is to provide the youth/young adult with the opportunities for career exploration and skill development.

Work experiences may be subsidized or unsubsidized. Summer experiences are part of the year-round comprehensive strategies for addressing the youth/young adult's employment and training needs. The program allows young people to earn a paycheck while exposing them to the real world of working. When possible, summer employment opportunities are directly linked to academic and occupational learning. In addition to working, they participate in career readiness activities such as instruction on resumes and job interview skills, labor market information, job search techniques and visits to employers and post-secondary schools. Both participants and employers involved in a work experience activity are surveyed on the overall effectiveness of the program and provide input on any changes that they feel may be beneficial. Assessment tools are used to measure foundation and worksite specific skills. Incentives are awarded for successful completion of the summer employment component.

**4. Occupational skill training, which includes priority consideration for training programs that lead to recognized post-secondary credentials that align with in-demand industry**

**sectors or occupations in the Northern Tier**

Individualized Training Accounts are used as a mechanism for providing eligible Opportunity Youth with the means to finance and obtain occupational skills training in order to obtain unsubsidized employment. The training program must lead to a high priority occupation in the Northern Tier Region and the training program must appear on the ETPL. The Career Advisor provides information and counseling that allows the young adult to make informed decisions. They also advise the young adult by suggesting choices relevant to their assessed needs and the goals determined appropriate.

**5. Education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster**

Career advisors will evaluate pathways for youth/young adult participants and offer education opportunities for specific occupations or occupational clusters along with workforce preparation activities for the chosen occupation or cluster. Our program service providers' work in partnership with local CTC's to offer classes such as basic computer skills or remedial math to those that may benefit prior to enrolling in post-secondary education/training.

**6. Leadership development opportunities, including community service and peer-centered activities encouraging responsibility and other positive social and civic behaviors**

Leadership development opportunities are provided for the youth through team building activities, peer tutoring, community service activities and linkages with other youth programs. Youth have participated in community beautification projects, wrapped presents for Toys for Tots, volunteered at a food pantry and other various non-profit organizations.

**7. Supportive Services**

Linkages to community service programs, assistance with transportation costs, assistance with childcare costs, referral to medical services and assistance with uniforms (including items need for on-the-job safety) and work related tool costs are provided. Supportive Services provide participants with options to overcome barriers to employment, education and training.

**8. Adult mentoring for a duration of at least 12 months that may occur both during and after program participation**

Adult mentoring is offered during and after program participation. We have limited access to approved mentors in our region. Career advisors can act as a mentor as long as the services provided are not part of normal case management and are individualized for the participant and targeted toward that participant's program goals.

**9. Follow up services for not less than 12 months after the completion of participation**

Follow-up services are provided for not less than 12 months after the youth/young adult completes program participation and are based on the needs of each individual. Follow-up services can include: 1) support and case management that encourages job retention; 2) supportive services as needed; 3) PA CareerLink® workshops; 4) regular contact with the youth/young adult customer's employer including

assistance in addressing work related problems as they arise; 5) assistance in obtaining better paying jobs; 6) career development and further education; 7) adult mentoring 8) tracking progress of youth in employment after training.

**10. Comprehensive guidance and counseling, which may include drug and alcohol abuse counseling as well as referrals to counseling as appropriate to the needs of the individual youth**

Guidance and counseling is provided on an on-going basis through the Youth Career Advisor, linkages with school guidance counselors and referrals to outside counseling needs when appropriate.

**11. Financial literacy education**

Career advisors will utilize existing curricula, such as GCF Learn Free's Everyday Life Money Module, to provide financial literacy education. They will also reach out to area banking institutions to schedule workshops for presentations throughout the year.

**12. Entrepreneurial skills training**

Career advisors will utilize existing information such as beresource.com, information on the SCORE websites, etc. to provide entrepreneurship training to interested youth/young adults. They will also work to engage local entrepreneurs in presentations and possibly mentoring for those interested participants.

**13. Services that provide labor market and employment information about in-demand industry sectors or occupations available in the Northern Tier Region such as career awareness, career counseling and career exploration services**

Career advisors ensure that youth are counseled on occupational trends, skill levels needed for jobs as well as other Labor Market Information. Youth/young adults also receive information and counseling on High Priority Occupations of the Northern Tier.

**14. Activities that help youth prepare for and transition to post-secondary education and training**

Our program service providers work in partnership with local CTC's to offer classes such as basic computer skills or remedial math to youth that may benefit prior to enrolling in post-secondary education. Assistance with researching and applying for financial aid and scholarships is also provided.

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 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 opportunities to participate in pre-employment transition services, 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-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 field.

Criteria for youth that requires additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program or to secure or hold employment to employment include:

Northern Tier WDB

Additional Assistance Barrier Criteria Policy

For Opportunity Youth and In School Youth\* (ISY) defined as meets one of the following:

#### **Employment**

- Has no history of unsubsidized work
- Has been unable to maintain unsubsidized employment with the same employer for six months or more
- Has been actively seeking employment for at least two months but remains unemployed

#### **Transportation**

- Lack of consistent and available public and/or personal transportation as identified in their Individual Service Strategy (ISS)

#### **At-Risk Youth**

- Has an incarcerated or deceased parent(s)

\* Not more than 5 percent of the ISY assisted may be eligible based on paragraph (1)(C)(iv)(VII), which refers to the barrier for an ISY who requires additional assistance to complete an educational program or to secure or hold employment.

When an ISY is enrolled under the additional assistance barrier, written notice must be given to local board staff from the service provider. The Youth Workforce Program Manager will monitor the number of ISY enrolled under the additional assistance barrier to ensure that our area does not exceed 5%.

As previously mentioned, opportunity youth are targeted with the majority of the LWDB’s WIOA youth funding. The LWDB leverages TANF Youth Development Funding (YDF) to provide opportunities for more youth, especially ISY. The TANF Youth Development Program (TANF YDP) is implemented much the same as our WIOA youth programming, including Individual Service Plans, O\*Net and TABE testing and academic and employment goals. The program can serve youth from age 12 (or those who have completed 5th grade) to 24 years old (at the time of enrollment). Eligible youth are those that are from TANF receiving households or whose personal monthly gross countable earned income does not exceed 235% of the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines (FPIG). Opportunities for work experiences for eligible TANF YDP

participants is a priority. The LWDB offers both summer and year-round work experiences. The LWDB serves approximately 60-80 youth each program year with about 2-3% coming from TANF receiving households. (In program year 2019, more than 100 eligible youth were served.) More frequently, youth are eligible for the program because their individual income is below 235% of the FPIG.

Program participants must meet the criteria below and provide verification to the Title I provider:

1. Be between the ages of 12 (or has completed the 5th grade) and 24 years at the time of enrollment.
2. Have her/his identity verified through SSN.
3. Be a PA resident.
4. Be a U.S. citizen or a TANF-eligible non-citizen.
5. Have personal monthly gross earned income that does not exceed 235% of the FPIG.

Summer program participants complete academic enrichment as a component of the program. During the 30-hour academic enrichment period, participants are exposed to career education and exploration as well as some of the 14 WIOA Youth Program Elements (outlined on pages 63-65). The academic enrichment component is not always possible for year-round participants. However, each TANF YDP participant must participate in at least one of the 14 WIOA Youth Program elements. The more common Program Elements that participants are exposed to include work experiences, leadership development activities, supportive services, financial literacy education and services that provide labor market information.

The LWDB's WIOA Title I providers, Bradford County Action, Inc. and Trehab, Inc. are responsible for gathering participant eligibility verification and implementing programs, both WIOA and TANF YDP. LWDB staff oversee and collaborate with Title I providers to provide programming. After gathering eligibility documents for possible TANF YDP participants, Title I providers use PA CareerLink® to verify participant eligibility through the Preliminary Screening Tool as outlined through the LWDB's *Preliminary Screening Tool Policy*. Title I providers participate in quarterly Direct Service Team (DST) meetings with each of their individual county's CAO offices to increase participation and provide current program guidelines and services offered through the TANF YDP and review referral processes. They also use local school districts, Transition Councils, OVR, CTCs, social media, radio and others for recruitment.

The goal of assisting youth to become ready to work is always a priority in our planning efforts. Projects are designed to begin with the youth participating in various aspects of career awareness (such as O\*Net) while improving their academic abilities, then developing their resume (including PA CareerLink® enrollment) and completing work readiness activities. All participating youth are encouraged to test their job readiness skills with paid work experience placements.

Paid work experience participants are paid in two tiers. Pay is \$9.00/hour for the first tier, as most participants are entering into their first work experience through this program. There is also the possibility of earning \$11.00/hour if specific skills, abilities or learning is required for other positions. Due to LMI for our rural area, the LWDB, with recommendations from the Youth Committee, decided that these rates would be best for the program.

Title I Providers offer work Readiness activities such as orientation, O\*Net, resume writing, interviewing and soft skills. They partner with local bank staff who provide financial/budgeting information. Local manufacturers provide tours and occupational presentations to participants. School districts, local probation departments, businesses and others host participants for work experiences and offer supervision and mentoring. Higher education agencies offer tours and financial literacy education for TANF YDP participants. Various local professionals and community members provide presentations on their occupations, youth program elements and career pathways. All partners provide these services as no cost. Title I providers recruit local businesses and other partners through a variety of channels such as word of mouth, cold calls, social media, radio and meetings.

TANF YDP participants have the opportunity to earn incentives for worksite excellence and full participation in academic enrichment (AE). The process is explained during orientation to all participants. In order to receive a stipend for AE, participants must complete all 30 hours of academic enrichment which is evidenced by project completion for each of the activities as well as sign in sheets. In order to receive worksite excellence incentives, participants must be nominated by their supervisors for showcasing excellent employability skills during their work experience. TANF YDP participants are also eligible for all incentives as outlined by the WIOA Youth Incentive Policy:

#### YOUNG ADULT PROGRAM

#### INCENTIVE POLICY

Effective 10/1/19

1. A \$50 gift card will be awarded to a customer that obtains a GED while participating in the program.
  2. A \$25 gift card will be awarded to a customer that obtains unsubsidized employment or is placed in post-secondary education by the 2nd quarter after exit. Employment must be verifiable under PA Wage Records.
  3. A \$50 gift card will be awarded to a customer that remains employed or in education/training for the 4th quarter after exit. Employment must be verifiable under PA Wage Records
  4. A \$25 gift card will be awarded to participants who obtain a credential for a professional, industry, employer organization or a product manufacturer or developer while participating in the program. Refer to WIN Notice 02-05, Page 43, and TEGL 15-10 for definitions of allowable credentials.
  5. A \$25 gift card will be awarded to customers who achieve a measurable skill gain during participation in the program. (1 gain/person/participation period)
  6. \$10 gift cards will be awarded to customers who achieve their individual goals as stated in their 10 for 10 plan. Each of the completed steps of their individual 10 step plan is eligible for a \$10 gift card incentive. A maximum of 10 \$10 gift cards can be given to each individual for this incentive. The incentive cannot exceed \$100 per participant. Incentives cannot be given for a goal that is met that is already outlined as one of the above program gains.
- \*Customers are eligible for one incentive in each of the above categories. Customers cannot receive more than one incentive for the same program gain.

The NTWDB also seeks to implement TANF YDF projects for groups of eligible participants. Projects completed have included STEM learning opportunities, expansion of work experience opportunities to include STEAM and funding for local CTC students for their CNA testing fees.

Below is information for LWDB staff responsible for implementation, tracking and reporting TANF YDP activities.

Northern Tier Regional Planning & Development Commission  
Jody McCarty  
570-265-1516  
mccarty@northerntier.org

Below is information for the contracted Title I providers in the five-county region who are responsible for TANF YDP programming and activities:

Bradford County Action  
500 William Street Towanda, PA 18848  
Penne Watkins  
pwatkins@bradfordcountyaction.org  
570-265-4434  
Trehab, Inc.  
42 Plaza Lane Wellsboro PA  
Breanna Repard  
brepard@trehab.org  
570-662-8117

NWDB staff monitor the TANF YDP the same as it does WIOA Youth programs. Files are selected randomly from each of the five counties for review each program year. NTWDB staff also monitor worksites for safety, learning and Child Labor Law compliance. The local WDB, in collaboration with the Department of Human Services (DHS), Bureau of Employment Programs (BEP) in regard to the TANF Youth Development Program funding, ensures compliance with all applicable federal and state regulations, including the Uniform Guidance at 2 CFR Part 200, TANF program requirements and workforce development policies governing eligibility, program delivery, fiscal accountability and performance reporting. This collaborative oversight aims to ensure effective service delivery, proper use of funds and achievement of program outcomes for eligible youth participants.

NTWDB staff members responsible for monitoring are:

Jody McCarty  
Program Administrator  
570-265-1516  
mccarty@northerntier.org  
Bonnie Warner  
Workforce Development Quality Specialist/EO Officer  
570-265-1513  
warner@northerntier.org

As previously mentioned, Job Corps staff members participate in the NTWDB's Youth Committee. Job Corps also has representation in local PA CareerLink® regularly for recruitment. All Title I providers are connected to Job Corps recruiters and referral process are in place when staff meet with appropriate/interested youth. There are no YouthBuild or AmeriCorps programs in the Northern Tier Region.

*3.5 Coordination between Title I and Title II – How will the local board coordinate WIOA Title I workforce investment activities with the adult education literacy activities under WIOA Title II?*

To ensure that individuals participating in basic education and English learning programs have direct connections to career pathways leading to high-quality jobs, the NTWDB work with its Adult Education partners to identify strategies that improve access. The Title II provider has a presence within the PA CareerLink® in the Northern Tier, providing both TABE assessments to customers and GED® classes. Title II staff participate in PA CareerLink® meetings and cross-training events that take place throughout the year. All PA CareerLink® staff are educated about the Adult Education and Literacy programs available through our Title II provider and make and accept referrals as appropriate.

Title II services are included in the introductory orientation provided to all customers entering the PA CareerLink®. This provides an awareness to the customer about the services provided through Title II upon entering the PA CareerLink®. After orientation, the PA CareerLink® Navigator meets with the customer to determine the best course of action and referrals are made as appropriate. This may include co-enrollment with Title I and Title II programs. All referrals and case notes and services are recorded in the PA CareerLink® system of record.

Additionally, Title II participants are oriented to PA CareerLink® services and encouraged to register on the PA CareerLink® system. Title II participants have access to PA CareerLink® workshops that are offered such as career exploration, resume writing or interviewing. As appropriate, Title II participants may be co-enrolled in WIOA which may include career management services or obtaining assistance with training through an On-the-Job opportunity with an employer or help with tuition costs to obtain occupational training. The Title II Provider in the Northern Tier, Bradford County Action, is also the PA CareerLink® Operator and Title I provider. The Title II provider attends NTWDB meetings along with PA CareerLink® partner meetings and is part of the local planning process.

The NTWDB participates in review of applications to provide adult education and literacy activities under WIOA Title II to ensure alignment with the local plan, when requested. Upon review the NTWDB will make recommendations to the PA Department of Education to promote alignment, if appropriate.

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

The language in the PA CareerLink® MOU outlines specifically Wagner-Peyser staff will work with other partner staff to ensure integrated service delivery throughout the local workforce system. Throughout the



region, Title I WIOA staff work together with BWPO, OVR and SCSEP staff to provide a seamless array of services to support both job seekers and employers. Examples include the development of the customer information survey which was created as a joint effort between partner staff to develop one initial assessment to be used with a customer at point of entry, the development of a PA CareerLink® orientation so that the same initial information is given to each new customer, all partners contribute the staffing of the career resource center, the Career Pathway Navigator role is filled by both Wagner-Peyser and WIOA staff, both of which enter labor exchange services in PA CareerLink®. The Northern Tier Region continuously strives to provide a seamless, integrated system for our customers. All partner staff are encouraged to provide input and strategies for the improvement of service delivery. Business service teams are made up of Wagner-Peyser including TAA and Veterans staff, OVR and WIOA who work together to provide service to local businesses through the region.

In addition to monthly staff meetings, PA CareerLink® management and partner meetings take place to ensure the strategies for maximizing coordination are effective. PA CareerLink® site administrators also report out at each WDB meeting.

The one-stop operator provides functional supervision of the PA CareerLink® Center Site Administrators who acts as a functional leader within the one-stop. In that role, they have the authority to organize and supervise partner staff in order to provide the best services to customers without duplicating functions. Key responsibilities of the Site Administrator include:

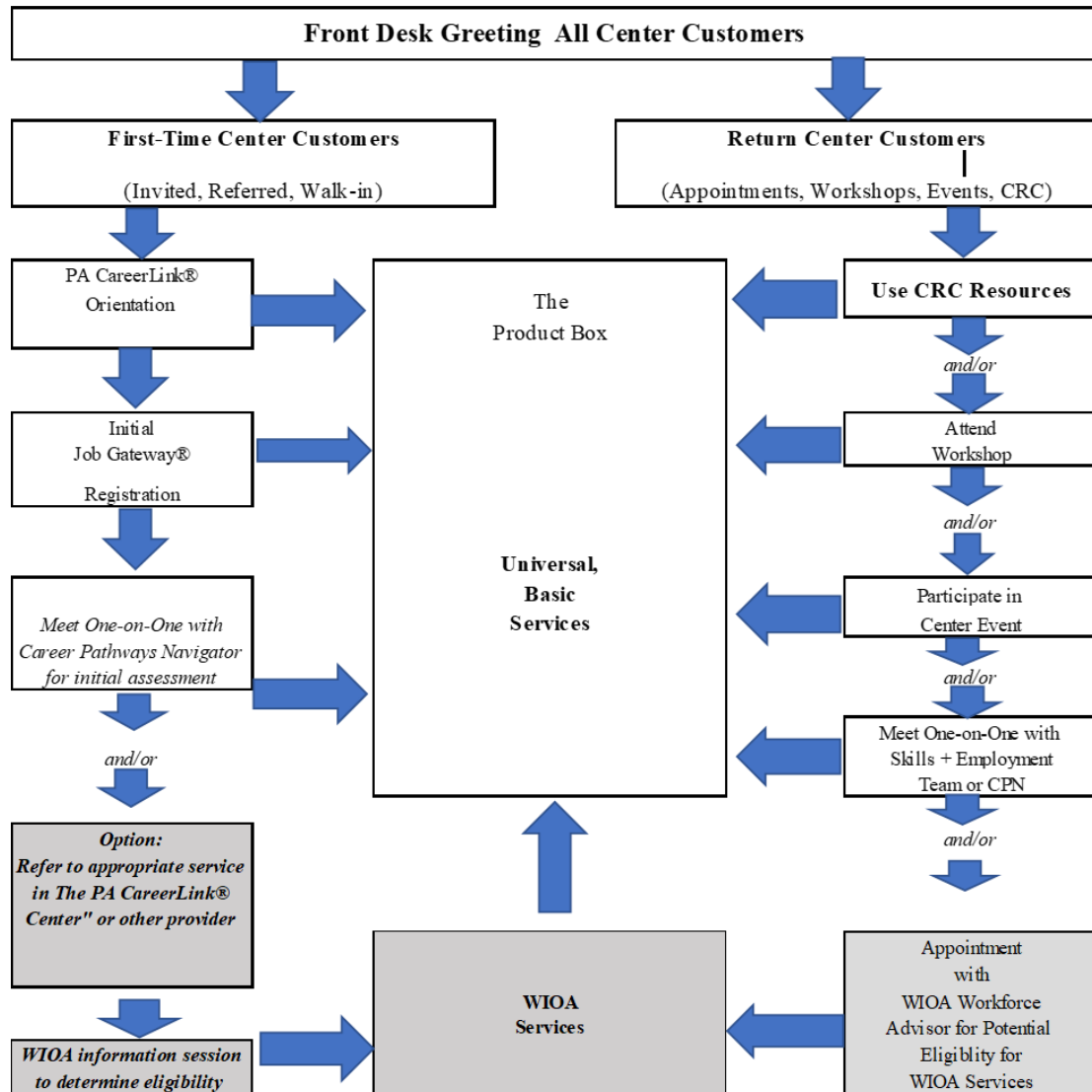
- Integrate systems and coordinate services for the center and its Partners, placing priority on customer service.
- Integrated Workforce Service Delivery, as defined by WIOA, which includes organizing and providing services by function (not by program), when permitted by a program's authorizing statute and as appropriate, and by coordinating policies, communication, outreach, service and training efforts to ensure the best possible customer experience
- Service integration focusing on serving all customers seamlessly (including targeted populations with barriers to employment) by providing a full range of services staffed by cross-functional teams, consistent with the purpose, scope, and requirements of each program.
- Ensuring ease of access, that programs are easy to enroll and navigate, and there is a smooth flow to the menu of services available through the workforce system.

There is an on-going evaluation and all efforts are taken to have a proactive approach to ensure that the staff enhance the services to individuals with disabilities. This includes the maintenance of the Career Resource Area, with its adaptive technologies, the TTY line, and the availability of resource materials in alternative formats (Braille, large print). OVR staff also sits in on PA CareerLink® offices monthly meetings when possible to discuss service strategies and participates in cross-training of front line staff to discuss program specific services and appropriate referrals. OVR has an employer representative that sits on our Business Services Team. Our OVR representative has partnered with other staff to provide employer workshops throughout the region.

The NTWDB supports staff development and encourages cross training. PA CareerLink® staff are asked for feedback regarding training topics they think would be beneficial. Twice annually, all PA CareerLink® staff

participate in a day long regional training with their peers. This provides not only a learning opportunity, but a chance to share ideas and best practices. PA CareerLink® staff are also encouraged to participate in various workforce initiatives such as industry partnerships and the Fit4 Work Reengagement program.

The process flow for all first time and returning customers is as follows:



All staff, regardless of affiliation work together to provide appropriate services.

### 3.7 Core program facilitation – How will the local board work with the entities carrying out programs to:

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

- *Improve access to activities leading to a recognized postsecondary credential (industry-recognized certifications or portable, and stackable certifications).*

The NTWDB's vision and policy directs investment in workforce preparation, skill development, education and training. These investments are targeted and align with assisting youth, job seekers and employers. The NTWDB aligns regional resources and acts as the intermediary to promote partnerships among businesses, non-profit agencies, economic development providers, educational institutions, community-based organizations, and employers. Through working together, stakeholders enhance the skills needed for workforce inclusion, employability, and educational and training levels of the current and future workforce.

The NTWDB is responsible for setting the standards of operations of the PA CareerLink® sites and overall workforce systems in the Northern Tier. The service delivery committee is responsible for conveying the standards set by the NTWDB by developing and implementing policies and procedures that coordinate partner activities and resources into a seamless, non-duplicative delivery system. Operational compliance concerns are addressed by the NTWDB through continuous oversight and monitoring of WIOA programs and the workforce system as a whole.

Individuals entering the PA CareerLink® center receive a comprehensive orientation to partner services. Additionally, service overview is presented at various events throughout the community such as job fairs, career awareness events and various meetings attended by local workforce staff such as chamber or committee meetings. After the individual has received an orientation to services they then meet with a Career Pathways Navigator (CPN) in order to assess needs and make appropriate referrals.

Referrals to Title I meet with a Career Advisor to determine eligibility. For the purposes of determining eligibility, documentation is required as evidence supporting the legitimacy of an individual's acceptability for participation in WIOA funded programs. WIOA eligibility documentation is uploaded and retained in CWDS, the system of record. Eligibility must be confirmed by the local workforce staff and a supervisory/secondary review of eligibility determination is completed for all WIOA participants. This review is done prior to the customer receiving a WIOA service. WIOA allows for self-certification to validate certain eligibility requiring documentation which may cause undue hardship for the participant to obtain, especially those individuals with barriers. Staff must make every effort to obtain documentation to verify eligibility as self-certification is a last resort. Staff must case note all attempts made to obtain documentation prior to the use of self-certification. The use of telephone verification and documentation inspection verification to verify eligibility is allowable, especially in consideration of individuals with barriers. The use of telephone verification is preferred to self-certification and will be attempted prior to self-certification. Information obtained must be recorded in a Telephone/Document Inspection Verification form. WIOA program operators must report all WIOA program participants that utilize the self-certification form on their monthly cumulative participant reports. This information is utilized by LWDB staff to monitor a random sample of WIOA participants with self-certification for review. Monitoring staff conduct review of 10% of files with self-certifications on a quarterly basis. This is done to ensure self-certifications are done in compliance with the LWDB policy. Verification of eligibility through document inspection is appropriate when documents cannot be or may not be copied.

All Title I participants go through a needs assessment and are dual enrolled in programs deemed appropriate in order for the individual to meet their employment goals. Examples include co-enrollment in EARN programs or literacy programs such as HSE instruction. Individuals eligible under TAA are also dual enrolled in the WIOA Dislocated Worker program.

A description of Title II services is included in PA CareerLink® orientation. The Title II provider in our area is also a Title I provider within the region. This creates a unique opportunity for knowledgeable staff to make appropriate referrals between the programs. Title II representatives also participate in PA CareerLink® outreach services to educate the community about the services available through Title II.

Title IV services are also presented when an individual is first orientated to PA CareerLink® services. Additionally, signs are placed in the career resource centers informing individuals that additional assistance is available to them while at the PA CareerLink®. The digital intake upon arrival at the PA CareerLink® includes the ability for a customer to self-identify as being in need of vocational rehabilitation services. Once the individual is assessed the Career Pathways Navigator will make referrals to the program if deemed appropriate.

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 services necessary to meet their specific vocational goal. As a core partner, OVR provides Vocational Rehabilitation services for people with disabilities. Eligible OVR customers receive multiple services that may include but not be limited to, diagnostic, vocational counseling and guidance, vocational evaluation, restoration, training, job placement and preemployment training services for eligible and potentially eligible high school students with disabilities. These individualized services are designed to prepare OVR customers to become qualified trained members of the workforce. OVR recognizes the value of customer access to various services and resources and encourages co-enrollment across programs as appropriate.

The PA CareerLink® management team continuously examines ways to align the PA CareerLink® service delivery system to more directly address issues involving underemployment, business services, and service to special populations. This population includes dislocated workers including displaced homemakers, migrant/seasonal workers, TANF customers, veterans, minorities, women and those with additional barriers to employment including older individuals, those connected to the criminal justice system, persons with disabilities, persons with limited English proficiency and those in recovery. The PA CareerLink® Management Team assists the NTWDB in ensuring availability of employment and training services to these special populations. Services for these individuals are equal to any other including all of the PA CareerLink® workshops, one-on-one services with staff, testing, referral process, as well as online opportunities such as PA CareerLink®.

The NTWDB 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: Other strategies include:

Our Title I provider is also our HSE provider who provides HSE services for individuals who are incarcerated before they are released. We work on lining up services and support before they are released. Incarcerated individuals get an overview of PA CareerLink® services and a preview of the Fit4Work Reengagement Project. They also do individual meetings to provide an initial assessment and develop a service strategy to prepare for employment after release.

Customers in our PA CareerLink® centers are supported by Career Pathways Navigators who provide assessment and referral services as well as help job seekers understand the career pathways available in local industries and how to develop the knowledge, skills and abilities to be qualified for job opportunities on those pathways. They also help job seekers link to educational and employment opportunities within the region. The jobseeker is able to obtain information about high priority occupations and available trainings that would prepare them for their career goals and earning postsecondary credentials. Career Pathways Navigators have information available on pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship opportunities through the Eligible Training provider List (ETPL), the ATO's site on PA CareerLink® and through the LWDB's RA Navigator. Title I funds are available to support approved pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship opportunities. The NTWDB currently has funds through a PA Apprenticeship Expansion grant to support these trainings.

Those seeking training leading to a recognized postsecondary credential would meet with a Career Advisor to determine the best course of action to attain their educational and occupational objectives. Work with the Career Advisor includes assessment of current interests and skills and the development of an Individual Employment Plan that outlines the steps needed to meet their goals. The career advisor also works with the participant to identify and overcome barriers they may have to training and/or employment. Different training options leading to postsecondary credential attainment are explored including but not limited to ITAs, pre apprenticeship and apprenticeships and online options such as SkillUp. The participant will make a decision based on what they determine to be the best training option for them. Title I providers offer transitional work experience to individuals that lack a work history and may be harder to employ due to barriers. These work sites are developed in cooperation with local municipalities or businesses to up to four weeks or more of work experience. We offer mobile services to provide easier access to our PA CareerLink® services for those with transportation barriers.

With support from the Pennsylvania Apprenticeship and Training Office, PA CareerLink® offices within the Northern Tier Region are well equipped to assist job seekers looking for apprenticeship opportunities. PA CareerLink® staff participate in trainings to assist job seekers in identifying pre apprenticeship programs, registered apprenticeships and other trainings pathways that align with career goals. The LWDA has registered apprenticeship options available primarily in the manufacturing industry. However, the RA Navigator is able to help job seekers explore group sponsored programs statewide, especially for those whose interests may not be met locally. There are also healthcare and education apprenticeship programs available within the five-county region and newly developing programs regularly.

PA CareerLink® staff are well-versed in funding streams and local policies that support apprenticeship. They work one-on-one with participants to determine the most effective uses of available funding-

whether through WIOA (ITA, OJT, etc.), registered apprenticeship grants, incumbent worker training, or other resources.

The PA CareerLink® utilizes technology to conduct virtual workshops. PA CareerLink® has transitioned to be able to offer remote service delivery utilizing technology to conduct virtual intake and workshops using a variety of platforms. Our PA CareerLink® and affiliate sites created YouTube channels which house a variety of pre-recorded workshops jobseekers can access at any time. Navigating the PA CareerLink® system, resume writing, interviewing, career exploration and financial problem solving are examples of the workshops added to our list of virtual service. Live workshops also have been made available on different social media platforms. Hybrid models were created allowing individuals to attend in person, following social distancing protocols, while simultaneously allowing for others to attend virtually. Virtual workshops have been streamlined regionally making activities available to all jobseekers no matter where the instructor is. This method allows for more frequent workshop offerings and avoids duplication of efforts.

*3.8 ITA Accounts – How will training services be provided using ITAs, 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, individuals 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 from any of the entities that are included on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) as well as any organizations that have been deemed suitable for work-based learning activities.

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.

The following criteria must be met in order to receive an ITA:

- Must be a resident of Bradford, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Tioga or Wyoming County.
- Must meet the WIOA eligibility requirements, have received at least one basic or individualized career service and have been determined to be unable to obtain or retain employment through such services.
- \*Score at a proficient level on the WorkKeys® Assessment for the occupational profile for which

they are requesting training.

- Do not already possess a **marketable** degree. Prior approval from NTRPDC must be obtained for customers that have a degree but may be in need of additional training to obtain employment (See *ITA Approval Request Form*).
- Are unable to obtain grant assistance from other sources to pay the cost of training including DHS program funds, TAA, and PELL, or require WIOA assistance in addition to other sources of grant assistance.
- Have selected a training program that appears on the Pennsylvania Eligible Training Provider List of training programs and is considered a high priority occupation for the Northern Tier Region.
- For occupations in contiguous areas, an ITA may be granted if there is a proven demand, occupation provides a sustainable wage and the customer has expressed a willingness to relocate or commute (see *ITA Approval Request Form*).
- The individual has not received WIOA funded training in the past.
- The individual has not defaulted on a student loan. The customer must have the default status removed prior to the approval of ITA funding.
- All eligible youth must receive their GED or diploma prior to receiving training funds.

\*Note: In addition to taking the WorkKeys® assessment, all Opportunity Youth must be TABE tested per WIOA program guidelines.

### **ITA Policy**

The Northern Tier Workforce Director may waive conditions contained in this policy under extraordinary circumstances and/or funding considerations for best utilization of training funds.

ITA funding is not a guarantee to any participant and is contingent on funding availability.

The maximum amount of an Individual Training Account (ITA) is \$6,000 per customer for a maximum of two years. The NTWDB analyzes costs of approved training programs to determine if ITA amounts are in line with the trainings our WIOA clients are participating in. If the average costs of trainings increase or decrease significantly the WDB will adjust the ITA cap accordingly. Trainings lasting more than two years from start of WIOA funding to completion of training must be submitted to the Northern Tier Workforce Board for approval prior to granting funding request.

Registered Apprenticeships on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) qualify for ITA funding. The NTWDB has an approved *Apprenticeship Policy* that outlines funding options for eligible participants. ITA and OJT funding are outlined in the policy and can be used either separately or in conjunction for apprentice training.

Expenses covered include tuition, fees, books and school supplies if required by the school for course completion.

The PA CareerLink® Staff must track all ITA expenditures and obligations on the *ITA Calculation Sheet*. Note: The *ITA Calculation Sheet* does not take the place of the cost sheet included in the ITA packet.

All ITA's are limited to funding for (1) training provider and (1) training program. Should subsequent training be required, or if special circumstances require that the customer change training providers, prior approval must be received from the Northern Tier Workforce Development Board.

All other forms of Federal, State or local aid (Title IV, PELL, PHEAA, SEOG, etc.) will be used first to offset the cost of the ITA. The Northern Tier Workforce Development Board will neither duplicate, nor pay in addition to, Title I funds that have been awarded by another Workforce Development Area.

The WIOA Title I provider will issue a contract with the training institution for all customer approved training. The training institution will invoice the WIOA Title I provider for amount of tuition in contract minus expenses covered by other funding sources. Should the customer not complete the program for any reason, the standard refund policy of the provider institution will apply.

### **Customer Responsibility**

The customer must submit a completed *Application for Individual Training Account* at least two (2) weeks prior to the start of classes. The ITA Application is developed to get customers thinking and to assist customers in creating a troubleshooting tool belt for situations that may arise while completing the ITA. For example, does the training fit customer's lifestyle or career goals, does customer have reliable childcare and / or transportation, does customer have their finances budgeted while they are in training. ITA applicants will work on application very closely with their Career Advisor. The Career Advisor will support and assist customers in creating plans to fill in any gaps they may have. This will help the customer build a relationship with Career Advisor if supportive services are needed. While not all problematic situations that may arise can be planned for, having some type of plan or guide to follow will provide confidence and assurance to the customer. They will also have a comfortable relationship with career advisors when aid is needed. This application includes:

- A written justification for the training
- Documentation of employment opportunities in the local area
- A listing of total cost of training, including tuition, fees, supplies, tools, books, etc.

The customer must obtain the minimum WorkKeys® scores required by their occupational choice. If the customer does not obtain required scores, he/she will be scheduled for remediation. Remediation can be offered through WIN software, one-on-one instruction or other appropriate remediation tools. If the Career Advisor determines that TABE testing may be more appropriate for the individual a waiver for WorkKeys® may be requested in writing to the Northern Tier Workforce Development Board. In addition to taking WorkKeys®, all Out of School Youth must be TABE tested as per WIOA guidelines. Testing accommodations can be coordinated with Title I providers when appropriate.

Customers **must** apply for the federal Title IV (PELL) grant program by completing a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FASFA), given that the training is grant eligible. Customer must provide a copy of their Student Aid Report (SAR) to their Career Advisor. If unavailable, verification must first be received from the training institution. Grant awards will be applied prior to the use of WIOA funds.



The customer must maintain at least a 2.0 GPA on a 4.0 scale or meet the training institutions minimum requirement (if stricter). Academic probation will suspend the ITA until such time that the student is no longer on academic probation.

The customer must agree to contact the PA CareerLink® Career Advisor a minimum of once per month and provide school time and attendance records, grades, progress reports, and verification of diploma or certificate upon training completion. Failure to do so may result in the discontinuation of funding.

The customer is responsible for repayment of the ITA should Title IV aid (or other state/local aid) be received after the disbursement of ITA funds.

### **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.
- Identifying career pathways 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.

Board policies related to OJTs include: On-the-Job Training Activities will be provided in accordance with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and accompanying regulations. On-the-Job Training Activities can only be provided for customers meeting the priority service guidelines established by the Northern Tier Workforce Development Board.

On-the-Job Training is used as a mechanism for providing eligible adults and dislocated workers and Opportunity Youth with the means to obtain training in order to receive full-time, self-sustaining unsubsidized employment.

On-the-Job Training can be used only after the participant has been unable to attain employment through basic and individualized career services.

SVP and DOT Codes are used to determine the duration of the OJT. An OJT cannot be provided for positions that pay less than \$10.00 per hour. It is the Northern Tier Workforce Development Board's Policy to reimburse up to 50% of the wage of the participant for positions paying \$10.00 an hour or more. In addition, no OJT will be written for more than 26 weeks in duration regardless of the SVP level.

If an OJT is being used in addition to an ITA, the amount of the OJT and ITA combined shall not exceed the maximum allowable ITA amount of \$6,000. Amounts exceeding \$6,000 will result in disallowed costs unless prior approval from NTRPDC is given.

### **OJT Length**

Employers are paid only for the extraordinary costs they are assumed to incur in training a participant. OJT shall be limited to a period not in excess of that generally required for the acquisition of skills needed for the position within a particular occupation. A participant could also start and stop training under a training plan to accommodate cyclical or seasonal needs. SVP and DOT Codes will be used to determine the duration of the OJT. DOT codes and SVP levels can be accessed at [www.onetonline.org](http://www.onetonline.org). **It is the Northern Tier WDB's policy that no OJT will exceed a 26-week training period, regardless of SVP level.**

OJT may be linked with classroom training, either concurrently or sequentially. If the employer provides the related classroom instruction, he/she may be reimbursed for the actual costs incurred, as long as it is over and above the training that would be provided to regular employees. Time spent in the classroom may count against the OJT maximum compensable training depending on the structure of the training schedule. This also affects the time available for OJT and should be taken into account in developing the training plan.

- Generally, each occupation will be identified by referring to the Dictionary of Occupational Titles, the appropriate 9-digit DOT code will be assigned to the training occupation in the OJT contract.
- By using the assigned DOT code, the occupation will be assigned a vocational preparation (SVP) level by using the selected characteristics of occupations as defined in the Dictionary of Occupational Titles.
- The SVP level will be converted into the maximum allowable training time using the attached chart.
- The length of an OJT can increase or decrease based on special circumstances or the background of the individual. Such circumstances could include a disability, which could require a longer training time, or prior experience of familiarity with the job which would allow the training time to be shortened.
- Reasons for significant adjustments to the standard training time for a given occupation, especially where the participant has had some prior experience with the job, will be documented on the participant's ISS (Individual Service Strategy). The ISS will include a justification in each case where the length of training exceeds that normally provided, as well as the suitability of the OJT itself. Any participant requiring more than the pre-determined length of training by using the method described above, will require NTRPDC approval. Request for approval must be submitted to NTRPDC in writing.

### **Apprenticeship**

There are several ways in which WIOA training funds may be used to support participation in registered apprenticeships and apprenticeship models. Apprenticeships, whether federal or state registered, can be funded for a combination of classroom training and on-the-job training up to the maximum individual amount of \$6,000 and \$1,000 for pre-apprenticeships. Training may be done by the employer of record or a third party contracted by the employer to deliver the training. This funding allocation can be made available to a single participant utilizing any of the available funding resources below. For additional information regarding each training program, refer to the NTRPDC program-specific policy.

- Individual Training Accounts (ITAs): Because WIOA allows registered apprenticeships to be eligible for Pennsylvania’s Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL), ITAs may be developed for registered apprenticeship training.
  - In order for someone to receive funding for a non-registered apprenticeship program, the program must be on the state’s ETPL.
  - NTRPDC will develop an ITA contract with any registered apprenticeship program sponsor that administers an eligible registered or non-registered (but ETPL approved) apprenticeship.
- On the Job Training (OJTs): An OJT contract may be developed with an apprenticeship program for training participants.
  - NTRPDC will develop OJT contracts with an employer. The OJT contract may be made to support some of, or the entire OJT portion of the apprenticeship program, subject to the funding limitations outlined in NTRPDC’s OJT policy.
  - In order for an apprenticeship to qualify for an OJT contract, the employer and participant are subject to the requirements outlined in NTRPDC’s OJT policy. Specifically:
    - An employer must certify that the position will meet the NTRPDC’s OJT self-sufficient wage policy of \$10.00/hour at a minimum of 30 hours per week with evidence that the position is on a career pathway towards higher level and/or higher paying jobs upon completing the OJT (or apprenticeship program).
    - Alternatively, apprenticeships must be able to show an actual career pathway progression by which an individual will attain self-sufficiency within a reasonable period of time.

*3.9 Coordination with education programs – 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).*

To connect and coordinate workforce programs with relevant secondary and postsecondary education offerings and to avoid duplication of efforts, the NTWDB has agreements with the Title II Provider to deliver classes to increase academic skills and personal development skills and include components of career education. The NTWDB 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. The NTWDB shares information gathered from employer interaction in order to provide additional input to the schools. The NTWDB also assists the educational

providers as they work through the ETPL process and add courses to the training lists. All of the efforts combined have the goal of supporting the strategies of the Commonwealth and the local board.

The NTWDB maintains a close partnership with the two CTC's that exist within the region. CTE representatives from both secondary and postsecondary serve on the Youth Committee and provide valuable input to service strategies aligning our youth with the education needed to fulfill employer needs. Youth Committee members are responsible for planning, evaluation and improvement of programs and activities offered to our young adults. The NTWDB staff sits on the CTE Advisory and Occupational committees and provides input regarding the Perkins Act. The NTWDB shares and reviews relevant labor market information including the identification of high priority occupations along with skills and occupation projections for the Northern Tier Region. The high priority occupations list for the Northern Tier is shared with both our secondary and post-secondary Perkins partners and includes the number of anticipated annual openings, annual average wage and educational attainment needed for that particular occupation. This Labor Market data can be used to develop and implement CTE programs and activities.

The NTWDB meets with the CTE's to review their Local Comprehensive Needs Assessment and has discussion about the workforce opportunities that may be available in the region that are being overlooked and the skills required for these occupations, barriers the NTWDB sees in students connecting to these opportunities and solutions to overcome these barriers. The NTWDB makes Career Coach services available to the CTE's to provide career exploration activities, promote career awareness and connect students to work-based opportunities. The PA CareerLink® provides introduction to services for students that will soon be graduating and may need or want assistance in preparing for and finding employment. The NTWDB provides input to the CTE based on employer feedback and invites the CTE's to participate in both the Northern Tier's Healthcare and Manufacturing Industry Partnership meetings. These partnerships provide a forum for direct dialog between employers and the CTE's to discuss topics such as current workforce needs, skills gaps, transferrable skills and also provides a connection to CTE students that have the skills these employers are looking for.

NTWDB staff includes a Registered Apprenticeship (RA) Navigator who facilitates the Northern Tier PAsmart Apprenticeship Ambassador Network. Utilizing partnerships described above with CTCs, Title II Providers, secondary and post-secondary education and other training providers, the NTWDB works to promote registered apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship opportunities within the LWDA. The RA Navigator delivers information to school districts about available pre-apprenticeship opportunities, meets with training providers and employers to discuss participating in apprenticeship programs and distributes information on RA from other areas to students, schools, job seekers, etc.

The RA Navigator has had informational meetings with WIOA Title I providers, BST members and others so that they are aware of registered apprenticeship and pre-registered apprenticeship opportunities as well as how to make referrals if anyone needs more information. The RA Navigator works with the ATO's Apprenticeship and Training Representative designated to the Northern Tier to learn about available and developing apprenticeship programs that can be introduced in the region.

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

*4.1 Business and Employer Engagement – 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 business in the local area*
- *Manage activities or services that will be implemented to improve business engagement*
- *Better coordinate regional workforce and economic development strategy, messaging, engagement and programs; and*
- *Strengthen linkages between the PA CareerLink® service delivery system and unemployment insurance (UI) programs.*

Based on quarterly census data, the largest employment in the region comes from Health Care and Social Assistance, Manufacturing, Retail Trade, Educational services, and Transportation and Warehousing. Of these occupations the largest average wages are from manufacturing and health care. Industries that have the highest location quotients in the area are Wood, Wood Products & Publishing (5.59), Energy (3.31), Therefore, Agriculture and Food Production (1.46) and Advanced Manufacturing (1.22).<sup>22</sup> The NTWDB focuses on industry partnerships and communication as a crucial strategy in identifying skills needs, promoting career pathways, matching jobseekers to available jobs and training. In addition, the NTWDB utilizes the High Priority Occupation List when reviewing regional and sector strategies.

These strategies link to the state as Pennsylvania promotes a workforce system based on the needs of employers, promotes career pathways, promotes industry partnerships, plans to better connect jobseekers and employers, and wants to utilize the HPO List more effectively.

The NTWDB cooperation with the Local Development District (LDD), the Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission (NTRPDC), which is the agency housing services of both the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) and the LWDB, creates a partnership that is efficient and well-rounded. Employer outreach is necessary for both groups and the shared information helps identify challenges and develop solutions to those strategies. By further developing these partnerships, engagement is improved as well.

The NTWDB has implemented several regional strategies to facilitate engagement of businesses and other employers. These methods include:

### **Industry Partnerships**

Industry Partnerships are an important strategy for meeting the skills needs of businesses, the career goals of workers and the economic development goals of the Commonwealth. Industry Partnerships bring together multiple employers in the same industry cluster to address common or overlapping human capital needs such as recruitment, retention and training. The overall goal of an industry partnership is to increase the local and global success of the industry as a whole. The industry partnerships are also providing stronger connections between job seekers and employers in local areas where the workforce system must be designed to support the needs of regional employers.

The NTWDB has been the lead in a Northeastern Healthcare partnership with three other workforce areas and also has a Manufacturing industry partnership. By working with new and emerging businesses within these clusters, we have been successful in aggregating training needs for multiple firms with similar needs. This has helped us create an employer-driven approach to workforce development. By increasing the

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<sup>22</sup> Source: Quarterly Census of Employment Wages

economies of scale, the partnerships have been able to provide incumbent worker training to employers at a lower cost. The partnerships have also helped to align the services of education and training providers with private sector and employer needs, have helped us share best practices, and have established relationships that accelerate industry-wide product and process innovation. The partnerships have also implemented programs that help address the challenges of connecting youth to careers. The NTWDB will continue to build on the successes achieved in its partnership.

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

The Northern Tier Region is made up of mainly small employers – in fact, after each of the county’s top employers, all of the employers are small businesses.

Small businesses need a comprehensive suite of services available at the PA CareerLink® centers 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 business is referred to agencies such as the Scranton & Wilkes University Small Business Development Centers or the Northeast 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 businesses including whether they are small or part of a new/emerging industry will 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.

### **Business Service Teams**

The Northern Tier Regional Business Service Team (BST) has representation from each county made up of core program staff. The BST meets quarterly as a region and also has county specific meetings in their respective areas. They identify employers for outreach and communicate with the PA CareerLink® staff to identify job seekers that would be a good match for the employer needs. The BST works to reach goals determined by the NTWDB such as increased market penetration rates, employer retention and creating increased awareness of services, including training opportunities to the business community through outreach efforts. The BST meets with NTWDB staff and is kept up to date on the programs available through our PREP team. The team is using the Executive Pulse system to share information with the economic development partners in the region, make and receive referrals.

As a core partner, OVR participates in Employer Engagement and provides multiple services to the business community designed to assist businesses with onboarding prescreened qualified employees with disabilities. OVR on-boarding supports for a qualified new hire can include reasonable accommodation consultation, On the Job Training (OJT) wage reimbursement, referral on tax credits or deductions. OVR also works with businesses through connecting students involved in OVR’s pre-employment transition services. Services under pre-employment transition services include programs like paid work experiences, job shadowing workplace tours. 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. Statewide business services staff can identify resources to assist any organization on how to improve access compliance and steps to diversify their workforce to include citizens with a disability.

The BST creates and distributes a monthly newsletter aimed at employers highlighting various business resources, workforce development services and initiatives, workshops and events. The newsletter is distributed widely throughout the region. NTRPDC also includes links to BST newsletters in their quarterly update publication. The BST newsletter was recently recognized as a best practice.

The NTWDB and PA CareerLink® staff meet with the local and regional economic development providers. This allows for information sharing, planning and coordination of outreach strategies. Our workforce staff also utilize the Executive Pulse system to help facilitate referrals, information sharing and outreach tracking.

The NTWDB participates in PREP meetings where partners discuss strategies to better serve employers, share best practices and updates on current events that are available to our local businesses. Sharing information and resources with community partners ensures a solid referral system in which employers can be directed to the appropriate agency for service, which includes PA CareerLink®. The overall goal of Engage! directly correlates with the goals of the BST helping to retain existing business and helping them to grow. Engage! Partners also invite workforce staff on employer visits representing a variety of service, presenting a team approach. Another approach to employer engagement is expanding upon available service. For example, since becoming promoting Apprenticeship and Pre-Apprenticeship opportunities, the NTWDB has come into contact with employers we have not necessarily had a strong working relationship with previously. Apprenticeship is another strategy used to assist employers with their workforce development needs. Historically, this method of training has been almost non-existent in our region. The BST has been instrumental in referring businesses to NTWDB staff for apprenticeship information. In an effort to cultivate the model in the region, the BST has been trained to identify and refer any businesses who might benefit from registered apprenticeship.

The regional Business Services Team (BST) has developed strategies to align with target goals to increase business engagement, such as increasing employer penetration rates by 5% annually. Efforts include reaching out to new business to explain service and also identifying existing business that typically has not utilized PA CareerLink® services. Focus is on those businesses that represent high priority occupations. The BST also realizes the importance of maintaining current relationships and generate reports that identify employers that have not used the PA CareerLink® system in a year. BST members reach out to these businesses which often results in a service being provided.

Registered apprenticeship informational materials from the Pennsylvania Apprenticeship and Training Office are regularly shared with BST members, NTRPDC and PA CareerLink® staff to disburse to partners and businesses during meetings to discuss available training options for incumbent or new workers. There are many resources available for job seekers and employers seeking more information about starting apprenticeship programs. The RA Navigator works with the Apprenticeship and Training Office Representative (ATR) to ensure all local staff remain informed of emerging resources. Any company requiring more information about registered apprenticeship is then referred to local board staff for individual meetings. ATO representatives have been invited to both the healthcare and manufacturing industry partnership meetings to educate partners about the apprenticeship model and provided an opportunity to collectively build apprenticeship opportunities based on their industry needs. This strategy is expected to result in movement to expand apprenticeships in our region, supporting the incumbent

workforce, OJT and customized training opportunities. Once successful apprenticeships are established efforts to expand to the development of pre-apprenticeships will be made. This includes collaboration with our local CTCs to create pre-apprenticeship programs. The NTWDB has strong relationships with our CTCs which already have the infrastructure to provide and develop pre-apprenticeship programs. These strategies are expected to assist industry to create jobs and present opportunities for workers and students to obtain and retain self-sustaining employment. The NTWDB will ensure identified local staff meet with the local ATO representative at least annually to review current Registered Apprenticeships in the local area.

We have improved business engagement through our Northern Tier Business Education Program (NTBEP) and Twin Tiers ARISE program (TTAP). Career Coaches that work in the schools are charged with reaching out to and establishing relationships with local employers to educate students about career opportunities and pathways. These employers participate in a variety of activities including career fairs, tours, panels, mock interviews and presentations. This exposure also opens the door to having employers provide youth with work experiences, internships and job shadow opportunities.

The launch of Northern Tier Career Connect is another way to connect students to local employers through an online platform highlighting work-based opportunities. This model creates streamlined connections between students and business and cuts down on employer fatigue.

The NTWDB has partnered with NTRPDC the last three years to recruit local high schools and manufacturers to participate in the What's So Cool About Manufacturing? Contest. High school students learn about the manufacturer they are partnered with and develop a short video highlighting the manufacturer. The video is entered into a regional contest, the winner of which competes in a statewide contest. In the 2024 competition there eight (8) schools along with eight (8) manufacturers that participated. This is a great example of both workforce and economic development working together to engage local business.

### **Unemployment Insurance Linkages**

Unemployment Compensation - Unemployment Compensation (UC) representatives are currently deployed in all the PA CareerLink® comprehensive centers. Customers and/or claimants may call a designated number to schedule an appointment with an unemployment compensations agent either in person or on occasion virtually. In the event UC staff are not present, claimants can use the CRC to connect with the unemployment compensation filing system. A kiosk system is being deployed throughout the commonwealth to assist with ID.me connectivity issues some claimants have encountered. The kiosk will assist identification verification in order for the claimant to have full access to their unemployment compensation claim dashboard on the state website.

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. There are computers dedicated to UC in each of the centers. Through the UC Connect program claimants are able to connect with a UC agent through in-person appointments at the PA CareerLink® centers. UC agents are available on a weekly basis.

Through the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program, Northern Tier identifies UC claimants most likely to exhaust UC benefits and may benefit from additional support. During RESEA sessions, staff assess claimants' compliance with UC requirements and flag any potential eligibility issues, such as insufficient job search activities or failure to participate in mandatory workshops. When eligibility concerns arise, these cases are referred to the Pennsylvania UC office for adjudication.



For those claimants looking to file an appeal, forms are provided and submitted via fax at no charge and with limited wait. Staff provide copies of the confirmation printout for all faxes sent on behalf of Claimants.

A variety of printable resources such as UC postings, signs, pamphlets, handbooks and forms are available to both claimants and employers. Additionally, PA CareerLink® collaborates with UC to offer workshops to employers that cover UC topics.

*4.2 Promotion and Coordination of Entrepreneurial Skills and Microenterprise -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**

The NTWDB works closely and collaboratively with the state and local areas and economic development for the sustainability of existing businesses and the growth and creation of small, new and emerging industries. The NTWDB continues to strengthen ties to economic development and supports all the local industry partnerships.

The one stop centers also work closely with new and emerging industries, the NTWDB, and economic development to determine and meet critical needs. By learning about workforce needs from data, economic development, and employers themselves, NTWDB is able to better design workforce and training programs with service providers and educational entities. The collaboration allows a case management system that communicates employer needs across multiple entities and allows for the leveraging of resources to meet those needs.

Ongoing efforts between economic development and the NTWDB are crucial in order to achieve regional prosperity. A region that has a strong workforce that is adaptable to new technologies and has success in attracting business is better able to retain business. This will allow the community to grow. By working with business to determine their skill needs for existing and emerging employers to prepare for high-growth occupations, the local area is better prepared to work with the needs of under-skilled workers. Workers that are under-skilled can be assessed to their aptitudes and skills levels and then advised of career pathways.

The workers are then presented with training opportunities as well as supportive services. Partnerships include the Governor's Action Team (GAT), of Partnerships for Regional Economic Performance (PREP) which include the Small Business Development Center (SBDC), Northeast Pennsylvania Industrial Resource Center (NEPIRC), and county economic development partners among others offer support to meet the needs of employers and jobseekers.

#### **Training for Self-Employment**

Entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services should provide the basics of starting and operating a small business. Individuals who are interested self-employment are referred to community partners, such as the Small Business Development Center, and the North East PA Industrial Resource

Center and the Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission 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.

The NTWDB partners with SBDC to provide entrepreneurial workshops through the PA CareerLink®. All PA CareerLink® staff are educated about the availability of services provided by SBDC, NEIRC and NTRPDC. NTRPDC staff have participated in BST meetings to educate PA CareerLink® staff about the services available to entrepreneurs including Loans, Export and Procurement services available through NTRPDC. PA CareerLink® customers are exposed to the idea of entrepreneurship through career exploration workshops. Customers interested in starting their own business are referred to SBDC for an initial consultation, many of which take place at NTRPDC which is housed in the same building as PA CareerLink®. Our Career Coaches also be promote entrepreneurship in middle and high school students.

#### *4.3 Business and Employer program support – What services, activities, and program resources will be provided to businesses and employers in the local area?*

We have a regional BST that meets on a quarterly basis that is comprised of Wagner-Peyser, Veterans, Title I, including Rapid Response Team members, and OVR staff to discuss what is going on in the area and to align services in the region. The regional staff talk about industry sectors that are growing and identify target sectors and/or employers for outreach. BST members work together toward goals set by the NTWDB such as increased market penetration, outreach, expanding the number of work-based training opportunities and retention of business customers.

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 partners with employers with On-the-Job Training (OJT), providing 100% wage reimbursement to businesses that hire OVR customers. OVR also works with businesses through connecting students involved in OVR's pre-employment transition services. Services under pre-employment transition services include programs like paid work experiences, job shadowing and workplace tours.

Each county has BST representatives that conduct outreach with specific employers in specific counties. BST representatives visit any new employers that are identified by the Chambers or PREP partners. Our BST representatives use the Executive Pulse system, the system of record for the economic development partners. This allows our BST staff to both collect and provide information on referrals to other partners

in the region. They also use the PA CareerLink® system to identify which employers in the system have not had a service in the past year. These employers will be a priority for a visit. BST also organizes employer events and participate in job fairs. They coordinate with career advisors to serve job seekers by communicating information about employee openings available through local employers and encouraging employers to post job openings in the PA CareerLink® system. They also provide education to employers on how to most effectively utilize PA CareerLink® and create information videos such as the Employer Spotlight interviewing employers about their business, their jobs and expectations.

BST members in the LWDB have participated in RA training completed by an RA Navigator as well as training facilitated by the PA Apprenticeship and Training Office's Regional ATR and Job Seeker Liaison. They have materials to present to employers about registered apprenticeship just like they present other possible workforce options like OJT. Resources are updated regularly and are in accordance with those posted on the Apprenticeship and Training Office's website. A referral process has been established for those employers wanting more information about the training model and BST members can use the "Employer Needs Assessment" created by the PA ATO when working with employers. BST staff has also been trained on the PA CareerLink® Apprenticeship and Training Office website and available resources on it, specifically, the Registered Apprenticeship Desk Guide for PA CareerLink® Staff.

Business and employers engage with education through a variety of activities and local initiatives. Through our Business Education Program (BEP), Career Coaches have maintained and established new relationships with our local employers. Career Coaches work to educate students about career opportunities and connect them with local employers. During the 23-24 school year the Career Coaches helped to organize 45 career events in the region connecting students in K-12 with local employers from a variety of industry. Local employers had the opportunity to showcase their business and talk to students about career opportunities, what those occupations look like, the skills and training needed to obtain these jobs and career pathways. Overall, throughout the 23-24 school year 9,854 student impacts occurred connecting students to nearly 300 employers. These connections also result in paid work, internship and job shadowing opportunities for our youth.

Registered apprenticeship opportunities also provide another avenue for employers to engage with education. The related technical education required of the apprenticeship model has to be developed and agreed upon between the employer and the training institution helping to create career pathways. The NTWDB will ensure BST members are provided the Registered Apprenticeship Desk Guide and the Apprenticeship Strategic Plan Guide for PA CareerLink® Staff.

During the 24-25 school year the NTWDB partnered with NTRPDC to recruit and participate in the What's So Cool About Manufacturing? (WSCM) contest. This project engaged eighth graders from school districts throughout the region to participate in a video contest showcasing a local manufacturer. Students work with a teacher coach and visit the manufacturer they are paired with to film and edit a video which is entered into a regional contest. The regional winner is then entered into a statewide contest. This project educates students about the career opportunities within the manufacturing sector and also gives exposure to the company.

Rapid Response team members, also representative of BST, participate in Rapid Response sessions with local employers which may be reducing their workforce or closing down operations. These team members help both the jobseekers and employers navigate the workforce system. Assistance can include outreach to other local employers that may be looking for the same skill set as the displaced workers.

Specialized services offered by OVR to employers include pre-screened, qualified job candidates with disabilities. Support for new hires may include reasonable accommodation consultation, OJT, tax credits or deductions and consultation on the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) accessibility standards.

Unemployment Compensation is represented at Rapid Response sessions providing both jobseekers and employers the information they need to proceed during layoffs or closures. Services provided to employers also include seminars on unemployment compensation topics informing employers of rights and responsibilities.

*4.4 Continuous Improvement – 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 employers, workers and job seekers.*

The board and one stop partners regularly seek ways to improve and increase training opportunities for the region. Labor market information is used to align training needs to the area's industry needs and demands. The local board also participates in industry partnership discussions, Business Education Partnership meetings, employer meetings, business services, partner meetings, all of which revolve around meeting the needs of the 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, the NTWDB 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.

The WIOA Title I Contractor is Trehab, Inc. in Sullivan, Susquehanna, Tioga and Wyoming Counties. Bradford County Action is the WIOA Title I contractor in Bradford County. The contracts are awarded following a Request for Proposal (RFP) process, which is completed by staff and an ad hoc committee of the LWDB. The contracts with the contractors are for one year with the Northern Tier Workforce Development Board voting on an option to renew subsequent years. The contractors meet with and report to the LWDB at every meeting and all statistics are presented in monthly reports.

Only training programs that appear on the ETPL list and lead to a high priority occupation in the Northern Tier are funded with WIOA training dollars through ITA's (Individual Training Accounts). Through the ETPL list, customers can compare performance measures, program costs, and curriculum information from various schools to assist them in selecting the best training option in their selected field. Each training program on the ETPL list must meet the required performance measure levels, which ensures that workforce dollars yield the best possible results. The ETPL list is always adapting to workforce needs and trends with our customers and employers leading the change. If a customer or business requires a course not on the ETPL that leads to an HPO, the local board works with service providers to determine educational providers, explain the process to the providers and then review the application to ensure the training provider will produce positive outcomes.

The local board ensures continuing improvement with both fiscal and programmatic monitoring of Title I, EARN and PA CareerLink® offices. Quality outcomes and common measure attainment is expected for customers in individualized services and training services. Therefore, service providers are expected to continuously improve. Any areas in need of corrective action which are noted by the local board during

monitoring need formal responses from service providers. The local board then requires additional steps to be taken or approves the action. If no improvement is made after this step, technical assistance is offered.

The High Priority Occupation list is reviewed annually with employers, industry partnership members and education. Feedback is shared with training providers to help them align their programs of study with needed employment skills and job openings in the current economy. The petition process is used to refine the initial High Priority Occupation list, adding occupations based on input from business and educators. This allows training providers to submit programs that meet local employer demand for a skilled workforce.

*4.5 Technology and remote access- Through the use of technology, how will the local board facilitate access to services provided through the one-stop delivery system, including in remote areas?*

Annual ADA compliance reviews are conducted for all facilities to ensure building accessibility. Reviews include access to parking, exterior and interior accessible routers, ramps, doors, signage (including braille), seating, rooms and office space and accessibility of public restrooms. Follow-up is conducted to address any areas of non-compliance at each facility.

All PA CareerLink® locations have the following assistive technology available to facilitate access to services: Fusion (JAWS & ZoomText) software, PA Relay 711, iPad and an ADA workstation. The workstation includes an adjustable height table, ergonomic chair, 21" monitor with adjustable arm, standard keyboard/mouse, ZoomText keyboard, mini keyboard, accessible mouse, webcam, external speakers, foam wrist rest and headphones. In addition, each comprehensive PA CareerLink® office has a TTY phone system and CCTV. Language assistance is provided through Propio for job seekers for whom English is not their native language. Each comprehensive and affiliate site also have access to an Instant Language Assistant (ILA) which allows for instant communication in over 200 languages and dialects. The ILA can also assist with communication for Deaf and hard of hearing community through connected mini keyboards.

The NTWDB has access to digital literacy courseware through WIN Learning. These courses are self-paced and accessible at all PA CareerLink® facilities in the region. In addition to the WIN learning courseware, digital literacy workshops such as Tech skills for today, Introduction to Excel and PA CareerLink® 101 workshops are available at the PA CareerLink® comprehensive and affiliate sites throughout the Northern Tier region. In addition to onsite, in-person workshops both hybrid and virtual models have been implemented providing the same learning opportunities to individuals virtually that are available in-person.

Each Northern Tier PA CareerLink® site has a YouTube channel to provide remote access to jobseeker and employer workshops that have been pre-recorded. These pre-recorded sessions allow for individuals and businesses to engage in self-paced learning at their convenience. Recorded presentations can assist job seekers with preparing resumes and cover letters, interviewing skills, career exploration, accessing SkillUp PA, and navigating the PA CareerLink® system. Employers have access to information such as WIOA funded employment opportunities, WOTC and federal bonding programs, PA new hire reporting, navigating the PA CareerLink® system and the introduction to business services.

The website for the **Launch! Your Success** program serves as a platform for young adults and their parents to obtain information about the program including availability of career development activities, work-based learning opportunities and success stories. The website also enables the individual to express interest in the program. This referral is then directed to the local career advisor who reaches out to provide more information. **Navigate Your Success** operates in the same manner, but is geared toward the adult and dislocated workers populations. Participants in these programs have access to the same live and recorded workshops that are available through PA CareerLink®. Career Advisors use a Zoom meeting platform where virtual instruction on job readiness skills can take place. Other workshop topics include career exploration, professional resumes & cover letters, Welcome to PA CareerLink® 101, effective interviewing and Life after Layoff. Live virtual workshops give job seekers the opportunity to participate even when they reside a distance away from a PA CareerLink® office.

Our partners play a vital role in providing workforce services across our five-county region and allow for the provision of workforce services in remote parts of the region including mobile services. Mobile services are made available for job seekers not easily served at the local PA CareerLink® office. Transportation is a barrier for many living in the Northern Tier and strategically located mobile sites throughout our five counties, provide access to PA CareerLink® staff and the PA CareerLink® system via a laptop computer. Job seekers receive the same access to employment and training assistance as they would if visiting a physical office. These mobile sites are most often staffed by career advisors from the Title I service providers which are Bradford County Action, Inc. and Trehab.

OVR - Staff will be trained to provide services to all, regardless of range of abilities, mobility, age, language, learning style, or comprehension or education level. All requests for accommodations must be addressed and reasonable accommodations will be made available to customers as necessary to ensure physical and programmatic accessibility to all customers within the PA CareerLink®. Such accommodations will include but are not limited to an interpreter provided in real time or, if not available, within a reasonable timeframe to any customer with a language barrier, assistive devices, such as screen-reading software programs (e.g., JAWS and DRAGON), and assistive listening devices.

#### *4.6 Transportation and Supportive Services – How will the local board coordinate WIOA Title I workforce investment activities with the provision of transportation and other appropriate supportive services in the local area?*

The transportation issues related to workforce development revolve around the lack of a local or regional transportation system. The system that does exist visits most communities twice daily at most. Any workforce customer without a vehicle or driver's license must rely on others for a ride, or face extremely restrictive windows to get to the PA CareerLink®, training, or employment. While the system provides the best service possible under the circumstances, the financial hurdles and lack of demand makes expanding these systems extremely cost prohibitive. The area has two different service providers who offer a ride-share, low-income, and senior transportation program. One provider serves Bradford, Tioga and Sullivan Counties, and the second services Susquehanna and Wyoming Counties. All transportation providers are partners with the system.

The area addresses the issue with an increase in the hub and spoke concept, which sends staff to other community partners on a regular basis that will extend the services without bricks and mortar. The Title I providers travel to community facilities, like libraries, where they can meet with customers and provide PA CareerLink® services.

Information is readily available and referrals are made to community partners to address a variety of needs such as child care, child support, dependent care, housing, Medicaid, CHIP, SNAP, TANF, transportation and counseling services. Referrals are made to a variety of community partners including the Social Security Administration, County Assistance Office, Drug and Alcohol services, BeST Transit, Literacy, Child Support, Housing Authority, Homeless shelters, community churches, food pantries, Domestic Relations – child support, mental health providers, abuse and rape crisis centers, legal services, credit counseling and veteran's services.

*4.7 Rapid Response – How will the local board coordinate workforce investment activities and ensure they are carried out in the local area with statewide rapid response?*

The Northern Tier region has a unified strategy/approach to the integration of Rapid Response, Dislocated Worker and Trade services. PA CareerLink® staff and the NTWDB have worked closely with the Rapid Response Coordination Services of the Bureau of Workforce Partnership and Operations in organizing Rapid Response events and in continuously developing service strategies to best suit the needs of displaced workers. Efforts include creating a unified system and sharing duties to provide services to dislocated workers, including initial assessments, determining training needs, career guidance, case management to job development, support services and on-site customized workshops.

The process begins at the local level. The local rapid response team consists of staff from both job seeker and business services and includes both merit and non-merit staff. If there is notification of a potential layoff or closure the local rapid response team contacts our Rapid Response Coordinator. The coordinator then reaches out to the affected company and schedules a fact-finding meeting. During these meetings information about the current workforce is obtained along with details about the layoff or closure from the company management representatives. The local rapid response team along with the coordinator and often an unemployment compensation representative will provide a rapid response session with the displaced workers at the worksite (when possible) to discuss the many services available to them through the PA CareerLink® system. During this session, if not before, displaced workers are asked to complete a survey to help determine their needs. For example, an individual may need help with resume building or need to obtain a GED or training assistance. The surveys are then reviewed by the local rapid response team so they can ensure those needs are being met through available workshops, referrals, etc.

Often times, the local rapid response team will offer employability workshops on-site to workers if permitted by the company. In some cases, employers, will allow an on-site job fair to give other employers in the area an opportunity to meet with their workforce. The local team works with other employers throughout the region that require the same set of skill sets possessed by the displaced workers in an effort to connect the two.

In some instances we do not get sufficient notice from an employer prior to a lay-off. In this case a rapid response session is scheduled at a central location that is conducive to the worker population. For those that do not attend a rep

*4.8 Individuals with barriers to employment – What services and program resources will be Provided to participants, including those outlined at WIOA Sec.3(24), individuals with a barrier to employment, and WIOA Sec. 188, in the local area?*

As outlined in the flowchart Section 3.6, all individuals who go to one of our region's PA CareerLink® centers are greeted by a staff. Staff ask all customers if they will need assistance during the application or registration process in order to fully participate in PA CareerLink® services, as not all disabilities are visible or obvious. Disability disclosure is voluntary and any information will be kept confidential. Customers who disclose a disability are informed that they may request a reasonable accommodation. After their initial greeting customers are asked to complete the digital intake form, customers then watch a 5-minute presentation that provides a quick orientation to the programs and services available at the PA CareerLink® center. This is followed by a discussion with a Career Pathways Navigator, who conducts an assessment of the individual's needs and competencies and potential barriers to employment that may be faced. The navigator also gives them an overview of the various career pathways available in the industries throughout the region and explains the knowledge, skills and abilities required for the high priority occupations where there are job opportunities. Referrals to appropriate services and/or agencies are then made based on the needs of the jobseeker. This may mean referrals to partners within the PA CareerLink® such as OVR or Title II or it could be to those outside of the center for services such as mental health or housing.

If appropriate, individuals are referred to a WIOA informational session that explains the various programs and services available. During this presentation, WIOA eligibility is assessed and individuals are then referred to appropriate training and/or supportive services. Returning customers can continue to meet with a Career Pathways Navigator who can help them link to employment.

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.

PA CareerLink® site administrators review Digital Intake reports to ensure customers receive appropriate referrals based on their needs. These reports are shared with PA CareerLink® partners and NTWDB staff to assess whether adjustments or enhancements to service delivery are necessary based on identified barriers. For example, if a significant number of individuals seeking services lack a copy of their birth certificate, it may prompt the inclusion of a representative from Vital Statistics on-site to assist customers in navigating the process of obtaining one.

Outreach services are provided at various meetings and that the PA CareerLink® partner staff participate in including, but not limited to advisory board for CTC, career events, job fairs. Students visit the PA CareerLink® centers to learn about services and occupation opportunities available in the area. NTBEP career coaches are familiar with PA CareerLink® services and relay that information to students. A PA CareerLink® calendar of events/workshops is created monthly and hot job lists weekly to be shared with community partners. Visits to county jails are made by Title I staff to provide orientation to services for individuals that will soon be released. PA CareerLink® staff attend meetings with intermediate units and students. Mobile services are provided throughout the communities at places such as public libraries to ensure outreach to those individuals that may have transportation barriers. PA CareerLink® also uses a variety of social media platforms to reach out to customers. PA CareerLink® awareness events take place all across the region providing an opportunity to showcase services available through PA CareerLink®



These “pop-up” events are designed to increase outreach to underserved communities.

*4.9 Nondiscrimination – 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 (42U.S.C. 12101, et seq.) regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology and materials for individuals with disabilities?*

The NTWDB requires that the PA CareerLink® centers and any affiliated sites are fully accessible to any individuals who may be interested in receiving employment and training services. Each site is certified annually for compliance with EO/ADA requirements by the Office of Equal Opportunity, PA Department of Labor and Industry. The Office of Equal opportunity provides technical assistance training and resources to local staff to ensure compliance with WIOA Section 188 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

Each PA CareerLink® site is certified by the Office of Equal Opportunity as being ADA Compliant and are examined by the local OVR Administrator to ensure accessibility. Staff are trained to operate Zoom text and JAWS software found on the ADA compliant computer in each career resource area. Staff are also trained in the use of TTY devices. New technologies are sought to improve access by individuals with disabilities. Sites have accessible restrooms, entrances and exits. OVR personnel conduct periodic training for PA CareerLink® staff regarding serving individuals with disabilities. The board’s Equal Opportunity policy and complaint procedure is explained and distributed to all new WIOA participants.

The NT Equal Opportunity Officer offers multiple training opportunities on a variety of subjects each year. During 2024, training was provided on LEP-Babel Notice, Windows 10 Ease of Access, Instant Language Assistant, NT EO Nondiscrimination Policy, NT EO Complaint Policy, service animals & emotional support animals, Title III Employment Services Complaint Policy, disability etiquette, reasonable accommodations, and customer intake & disability awareness. Future training topics planned include age discrimination, PA Relay 711, working with deaf & hard of hearing, sex & religious discrimination and serving individuals with neurodiversity & mental illness. One-Stop partners participating in local training include WIOA Title I, Trade Title II, Wagner Peyser Title III, and Veterans.

OEO annual compliance reviews have resulted in improvements to:

1. Policy—Updates to NT LWDA EO/Nondiscrimination Policy, NT LWDA EO/Discrimination Complaint processes and policy. Both policies along with the NT Limited English Proficiency Plan are reviewed and approved by the NTWDB annually.
2. Training—Increased training for both NT EO Officer, LWDB Staff, LWDA Operator, one-stop partners and service providers.
3. Communication—Increased notification and communication of EO/ADA rights for program participants through display of office notices in multiple locations, website & social media postings and brochures/flyers. This includes availability of continuing notification to individuals with impaired vision through alternat formats. Closed captioning is part of any recorded video presentations. Appropriate use of EO tagline & EO Office contact information for all written and electronic WIOA Title I promotional materials.

4. Affirmative Outreach—Babel notice was put in place for use in NT LWDA. Training has been provided to staff, providers and partners on requirements of the notice. Increased awareness to ensure all staff are available to participants with hearing impairments through TTY or PA Relay 711 services
5. Facility & Service Accessibility—Comprehensive staff training on various disabilities and accessibility needs has increased awareness of everyone. Equal Opportunity and ADA facility reviews, along with the addition of assistive technologies such as Fusion software (Jaws & ZoomText), iPads, ZoomText keyboards, CCTVs and ILA (Instant Language Assistant) devices support accessibility of the public and program participants.

Expand knowledge of LWDB, PA CareerLink® operator & service providers to improve web site accessibility for all citizens within the Northern Tier region. This would include making textual web site content accessible to those who are non-English speaking, have low vision or other disability. Adding an accessibility widget to a web site. Providing closed captioning of video content for deaf and hard of hearing. An annual review of web site accessibility is added to local monitoring process.

A review of the draft 2023 monitoring compliance report from the Department of Labor & Industry, Office of Equal Opportunity was held on September 26, 2024. The NT LWDA was found to be compliant with all elements reviewed and compliance status is currently pending. The 2024 OEO compliance monitoring survey was submitted to the Office of Equal Opportunity in December 2024.

PA CareerLink® staff host external job fairs and events in ADA compliant spaces only. All flyers and email notices about these events contain the message: “Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. Equal Opportunity Employer/Program.” All flyers also contain PA CareerLink® office contact information, TDD/TTY telephone number, and the NT EO Officer’s contact information.

Overall, the Board promotes full accessibility by requiring that its Operator, Partners, and Site Administrator:

- Conduct and participate in training of staff members and partner personnel regarding services to individuals with disabilities.
- Provide outreach and referral to agencies within the local area, including OVR that offer services to individuals with disabilities.
- Maintain an updated list of resources available within the local area for use by staff and customers in accessing needed services.
- Advocate for individuals with disabilities and barriers to employment by advising and informing them about resources available within the PA CareerLink® centers and throughout the local area and coaching them on how to apply for needed resources.
- Utilize a Limited English Proficiency policy, including providing access to language interpretation services when needed.
- Provide assistive technology items for persons with disabilities, such as adaptive keyboard and mouse, foam wrist rest, headset and/or adjustable work stations.

- Conduct a physical inspection of all assistive technology/equipment to ensure functionality on a regular basis.
- Coordinate staff training on assistive technology and equipment to ensure that personnel are fully-trained in usage and application.
- Help individuals with disabilities who may require additional assistance with the registration process.
- Maintain required federal and state notices and postings.

The NTWDB requires that PA CareerLink® and affiliate sites, along with WIOA Title I service providers, ensure reasonable measures are taken to include individuals from various protected groups including different sexes, racial and ethnic/national origins, religions, limited English proficiency, disabilities, and ages. All offices work closely with various partners, providers and community organizations through meetings and outreach to improve training and/or employment opportunities for these individuals. Examples of outreach efforts include:

- Coordination between WIOA Title I and OVR staff to assist individuals with disabilities who qualify for OVR services and WIOA Title I programs and activities. Job search assistance, paid work experience, on-the-job training, etc. are discussed to develop the best service delivery strategy for the customer while providing the same level of program participation.
- Referral activities and strategies with partner organizations specializing in services to older workers. PA CareerLink® hosted workshops are often attended by this customer group and the partner organization makes use of the PA CareerLink® facilities for onsite program meetings and targeted recruitments.
- Staff attend school district council meetings, outreach/referrals to independent living agencies and recovery centers to assist individuals with disabilities with work experience, job search and other services.
- Out of school youth flyers are distributed targeting young mothers, as well as, presenting information at other local programs serving women.
- Local literacy agency regularly attends PA CareerLink® partner meetings and referrals are made to assist limited English proficiency individuals.
- Mass mailing/emailing of program information is prepared several times a year and distributed to Social Security Administration, local churches, County Assistance Office, WIC, libraries, Area Agency on Aging and other community resources.
- Service provider staff continually request input from local organizations contacted in their pursuit to provide serves to target populations. Service providers report any interactions and needs to the NT EO Officer at least quarterly.

## 5. COMPLIANCE

*5.1 MOU assessment(s) – 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 one-stop delivery system.*

The Memoranda of Understanding that are currently between the NTWDB and the PA CareerLink® partners define the expectations, service levels, and resource contributions of each organization. Additionally, with respect to the provision of services to individuals with disabilities, the NTWDB will utilize

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation's (OVR) expertise regarding assessment, career pathways development, education training and placement services. OVR has a very effective professional development program that will assist in assuring proper cross training of staff, technical assistance and sharing information. The NTWDB will encourage the sharing of PA CareerLink® information that can assist in serving mutual clients.

The NTWDB 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 Equal Opportunity (OEO) Training Manual. Training to support the liaisons and EO Officer as well as technical assistance is provided by the Office of Equal Opportunity.

In 2023, the digital intake form was implemented in the PA CareerLink® offices. The digital intake form is an online, web-based tool that jobseekers use to provide relevant information when they visit the PA CareerLink® office. This process allows for the collection of information needed such as jobseeker demographics or self-identifying barriers. This standardized process increases access and improves service delivery to accommodate the diverse needs of job seekers. It also minimizes the time jobseekers need to spend repeating information they have previously provided. Intake reports help partners identify areas of need and gaps in service. For example, it may be that there are many individuals that do not have access to documents needed for employment such as a birth certificate. As a result, the PA CareerLink® and NTWDB can work to bring vital statics to the offices to meet with and assist individuals in obtaining these documents.

In addition to and in accordance with Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 37-14, board staff will coordinate with the Equal Opportunity Officers 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 Fiscal Responsibility – What is the process the local board uses to ensure the collection of the debts of lower-tier sub-recipients, because of audits?*

In accordance with WIOA Section 184(c); 20 CFR 683.750, issuance of a final determination completes the audit resolution process. A debt is established when that final determination disallows any costs questioned in the audit. The collection of that debt is a separate process with specified time frames and

procedures. The final determination contains the first official demand for repayment of the debt. Please refer to the flow chart at the end of this chapter.

Following issuance of the final determination, the audited entity will have 30 days from issuance to submit an appeal. That appeal will be a request for a formal review of the final determination before an impartial hearing officer of the Department. The debt collection process will be stayed pending a decision regarding the appeal. However, the debt becomes delinquent on the first day following issuance of the final determination, whether or not an appeal has been filed.

Interest on the delinquent debt will begin to accrue at that time according to the prevailing rate determined by the U.S. Treasury and will accrue during the entire time of the appeal process. This interest is waived if the debt is paid before the 31st day following issuance of the final determination. If the appeal is upheld, all interest will also be waived. However, if the appeal results in any disallowed costs, interest will be assessed on the amount disallowed.

If no appeal of the final determination is filed, a lump-sum repayment from non-federal funds is due to BWDA within 30 days after issuance of the final determination. The commonwealth, at its discretion, may negotiate short-term installment agreements in lieu of lump-sum payment.

In general, the options available are as follows:

- **Option 1:** The Grantee pays the full amount in a lump sum by sending a cashier's check, drawn on non-federal funds and payable to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
- **Option 2:** The Grantee may contact the Department to negotiate a short-term installment agreement (generally executed over a period of three years or less) in lieu of a lump-sum payment
- **Option 3:** In rare instances, a local workforce development area may request an offset/deduction as outlined in WIOA Sec. 184(c). An offset/deduction may only be applied if misexpenditures were not part of a pattern of misexpenditure and not due to willful disregard of the requirements of WIOA regulations, gross negligence, and failure to observe accepted standards of administration. In addition, an offset/deduction may only be applied if WIOA Sec. 184(c) has been fulfilled. If an offset/deduction is granted, the Department must deduct an amount equal to the misexpenditures from the Local area/fiscal agent's subsequent year's allocation from funds available for administrative costs.

Upon full repayment of the outstanding debt, the commonwealth will issue a satisfactory resolution letter acknowledging receipt of repayment, closing the audit process. However, the commonwealth reserves the right to reopen the audit in the event the USDOL disagrees with the final resolution. Should repayment not be received within the 30-day period, a second notice will be sent by certified mail. This notice will state that repayment must be submitted within 30 days of issuance of the letter. It will also state that

interest on the outstanding debt began to accrue on the first day following issuance of the final determination.

If repayment of the outstanding debt is not received within 30 days after issuance of the second notice, a final notice will be sent by certified mail. The final notice will state that the Department must receive repayment within 10 days of issuance. It will also list the amount of accrued interest due on the debt. The notice will also state that should repayment of the debt and interest not be received, appropriate legal and/or programmatic sanctions may be instituted. These sanctions may include the following:

- Withholding a percentage of payments until the audit is resolved satisfactorily;
- Withholding or disallowing administrative costs;
- Withholding the federal funds until the audit is resolved;
- Determination of ineligibility, suspension, or debarment through the commonwealth's Contractor Responsibility Program; and
- Referral to the Office of the Attorney General for collection.

*5.3 High-performing board attainment – What action(s) is the local board taking (or will take) towards becoming or remaining a high-performing board?*

NTWDB continuously evaluates its performance and the overall effectiveness of the local workforce system. This includes ongoing analysis of labor market trends, gathering input from regional employers, and developing new programs and partnerships to address the region's workforce needs. A key focus is enhancing services, particularly for individuals facing multiple barriers to employment. Initiatives such as mobile services and the Fit4Work Reengagement Project have been implemented to improve access and support.

To better serve local employers, the NTWDB develops targeted strategies and service models, including the creation of the NTBEP and the addition of TTAP, having a Registered Apprenticeship Navigator on staff that can make connections for industry and work to develop pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship opportunities, and engaging in Industry Partnership initiatives for our two biggest employment sectors.

NTWDB staff ensure Title I personnel receive training on performance measures, with quarterly reports from CWIA reviewed to identify discrepancies or areas for improvement. Additionally, the NTWDB Quality Specialist reviews performance, documents best practices, and raises concerns as needed through monitoring practices. In addition to evaluation of state-generated quarterly reports, the NTWDB also requires real-time data collection for WIOA programs, with monthly updates informing quarterly reports and progress evaluations.

The NTWDB establishes performance goals for PA CareerLink® through continuous improvement plans, tracking accountability measures such as market penetration, business services, and work-based learning opportunities. These metrics are reviewed and reported quarterly to ensure transparency and ongoing enhancement of workforce services.

*5.4 Public Notice – What is the process the local board uses to provide a 30-day public comment period prior to submission of the plan, and describe the opportunity for input into the development of the local*

*area plan, particularly for representatives of business, education, labor organizations, program partners, public agencies, and community stakeholders?*

The local plan has been a standing agenda item for NTWDB meetings for several months. In addition to NTWDB discussion, local partners and stakeholders are asked their input and discuss methods to continue to enhance the local and regional workforce system. These meetings include outreach meetings in each of the five counties in the Northern Tier. These meetings are open to the public and include attendees from local business, secondary and post-secondary education providers, local elected officials, state representatives, community and economic development agencies, Partnerships for Regional Economic Performance (PREP) and human service agencies. These outreach meetings provide a forum for local partners to discuss current economic and workforce needs, strategies and barriers. In addition, summary feedback from the recent Revitalization Commission listening session and results from the CEDS plan have been incorporated. These meetings coupled with Title I, PREP, Youth, Workforce Board and Executive Committee input provide for a well-rounded group of contributors with extensive knowledge about the communities we serve in the Northern Tier region.

## Attachment 1: Local Area WIOA Title I Programs Performance Accountability Tables

The Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry (L&I) negotiates WIOA Title I programs performance goals with the U. S. Department of Labor on a two-year program cycle, which aligns with the WIOA planning requirement of reviewing WIOA Local Area Plans every two years. In an effort designed to meet or exceed the state WIOA performance goals, PA negotiates these same goals with PA's local workforce development areas (LWDA) to optimally set each local area's WIOA Title I performance goal levels so that, collectively, the state negotiated performance goals are met or exceeded.

The *Local Area WIOA Title I Programs Performance Accountability Tables* are for the benefit of the public and Table A or Table B must be updated **annually with L&I supplied information as it becomes available**. The completed tables must be publicly posted with the local area plan. The local workforce development board (LWDB) does not need to perform a WIOA plan modification as the tables are revised; email notification to local area workforce development stakeholders including L&I will suffice.

Table A instructions: LWDBs must use Table A during initial local area plan development (i.e., PY25) and planned modification (i.e., PY27). LWDBs must edit the table's three columns with the appropriate program year(s) to correctly match the attained performance results from the most recent program year and LWDA-negotiated performance goals for the next two program years.

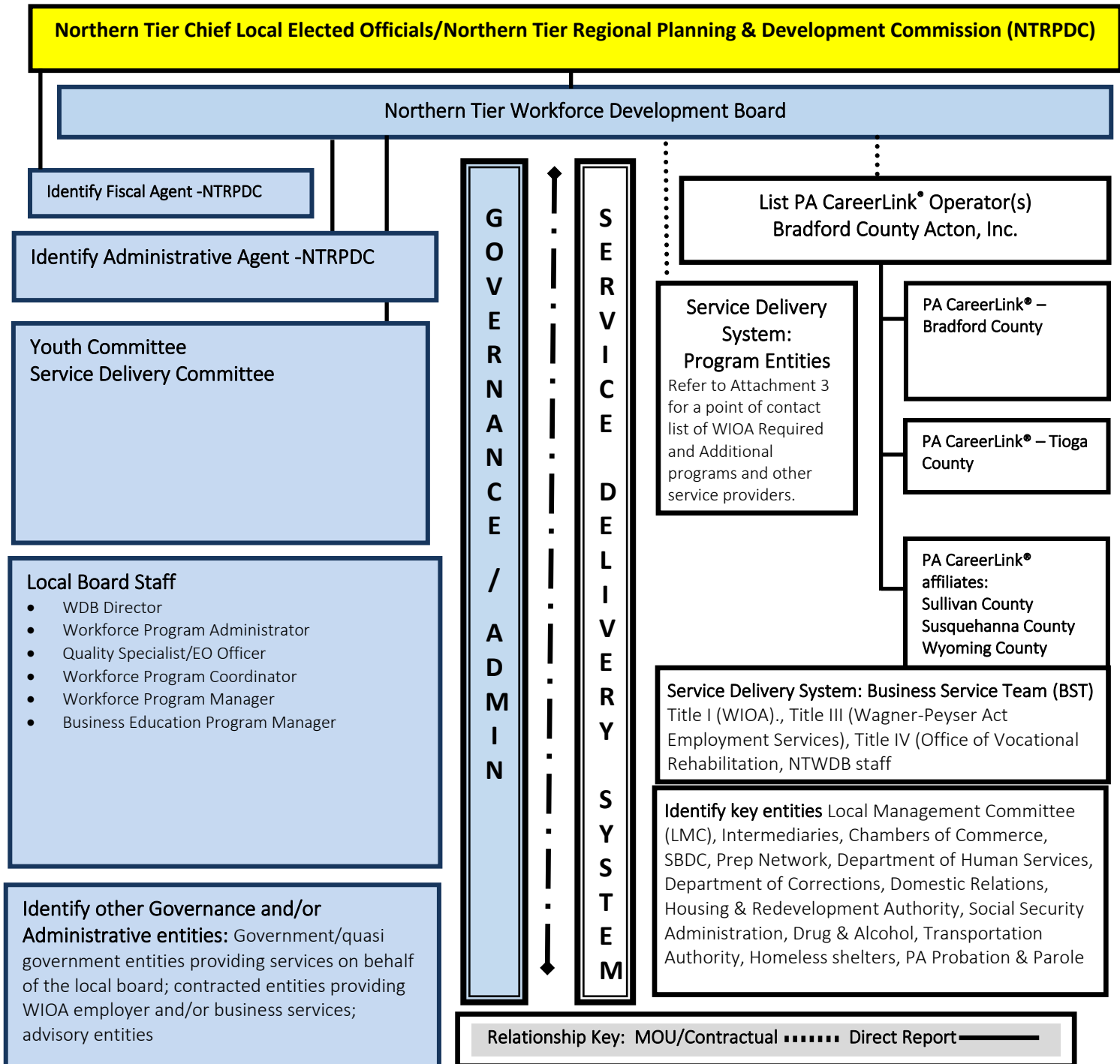
Table A	LWDA Name: <u>Northern Tier</u>		
WIOA Title I Programs (Adult-Dislocated Worker-Youth) Performance Measures	<u>Attained Performance Results</u>	<u>Negotiated Performance Goals</u>	<u>Negotiated Performance Goals</u>
	*Program Year 2023	*Program Year 2024	*Program Year 2025
<b>Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)</b>			
Adult	<u>86.3%</u>	<u>86.0%</u>	<u>86.0%</u>
Dislocated Worker	<u>86.2%</u>	<u>79.0%</u>	<u>79.5%</u>
Youth	<u>60.0%</u>	<u>69.0%</u>	<u>70.0%</u>
<b>Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)</b>			
Adult	<u>84.6%</u>	<u>84.0%</u>	<u>84.0%</u>
Dislocated Worker	<u>78.3%</u>	<u>76.0%</u>	<u>76.5%</u>
Youth	<u>66.7%</u>	<u>67.0%</u>	<u>68.0%</u>
<b>Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)</b>			
Adult	<u>\$9,936%</u>	<u>\$7,750%</u>	<u>\$8,000%</u>
Dislocated Worker	<u>\$8,317%</u>	<u>\$8,250%</u>	<u>\$8,500%</u>
Youth	<u>\$6,402%</u>	<u>\$4,250%</u>	<u>\$4,300%</u>
<b>Credential Attainment Rate</b>			
Adult	<u>63.2%</u>	<u>68.0%</u>	<u>70.0%</u>
Dislocated Worker	<u>53.8%</u>	<u>72.0%</u>	<u>72.0%</u>
Youth	<u>43.8%</u>	<u>66.0%</u>	<u>66.5%</u>
<b>Measurable Skill Gains</b>			
Adult	<u>86.5%</u>	<u>62.0%</u>	<u>63.0%</u>
Dislocated Worker	<u>84.6%</u>	<u>62.0%</u>	<u>63.0%</u>
Youth	<u>58.3%</u>	<u>58.0%</u>	<u>59.0%</u>



## Attachment 2: WIOA Local Workforce Development System Organizational Chart model

The organizational chart is for the benefit of the public and must be used to describe the attributes of the local workforce development system. The local workforce development board (local board) may supplement this model with clarifying charts. If multiple pages are needed to represent the local system, ensure that “Governance/Administrative” and “Service Delivery System” information is displayed on separate pages respectively. Use of model sub-titles is required. Do not list key governance personnel within the chart. Publicly post Attachment 2 with the local area plan.

*This chart should be reviewed annually for revisions. If further revisions are required after a local area plan (or subsequent plan modification) is approved, another separate plan modification is not required.*



**OPTIONAL Organizational Chart Point of Contact List**

Local boards have the option to use the Organizational Chart point of contact list in lieu of inputting this information into a local area plan as narrative (e.g., into the plan proper).

Points of contact listed below, and the general office contact information (i.e., the associated phone numbers and/or email addresses), must align with entities identified on the *WIOA Local Workforce Development System Organizational Chart*. This includes but is not limited to: CEO and/or LEOs, local board main POC, fiscal agent, administrative agent, local board staff, equal opportunity officer, and contact information for PA CareerLink® operator(s), PA CareerLink® offices, and the Business Service Team).

<b>Title</b>	<b>Point of Contact Name</b>	<b>Telephone and/or Email</b>
Chief/Lead Local Elected Official	Shane Nickerson	
Fiscal Agent NTRPDC	Frank Thompson	thompson@northerntier.org
Workforce Director	Melissa Fleming	fleming@northerntier.org
Workforce Administrator	Jody McCarty	<a href="mailto:mccarty@northerntier.org">mccarty@northerntier.org</a>
Quality Specialist, EO Officer	Bonnie Warner	<a href="mailto:warner@northerntier.org">warner@northerntier.org</a>
Workforce Program Coordinator	Patty Sturzen	<a href="mailto:sturzen@northerntier.org">sturzen@northerntier.org</a>
Workforce Program Manager	Rachel Selleck	<a href="mailto:selleck@northerntier.org">selleck@northerntier.org</a>
Business Education Program Manager	Renae Chamberlain	<a href="mailto:chamberlain@northerntier.org">chamberlain@northerntier.org</a>
PA CareerLink Operator	Penne Watkins	<a href="mailto:pwatkins@bradfordcountyaaction.org">pwatkins@bradfordcountyaaction.org</a>
PA CareerLink – Bradford County	Sonya Metzger	<a href="mailto:smetzger@bradfordcountyaaction.org">smetzger@bradfordcountyaaction.org</a> 312 Main Street, Towanda, PA 18848
PA CareerLink – Tioga County	Diana Edler	<a href="mailto:dedler@bradfordcountyaaction.org">dedler@bradfordcountyaaction.org</a> 56 Plaza Lane, Wellsboro PA 16901
PA CareerLink® affiliate – Sullivan County	Tamara Heess	<a href="mailto:theess@trehab.org">theess@trehab.org</a>
PA CareerLink® affiliate – Susquehanna County	Cathy Wagner	<a href="mailto:cwagner@trehab.org">cwagner@trehab.org</a>
PA CareerLink® affiliate – Wyoming	Cathy Wagner	<a href="mailto:cwagner@trehab.org">cwagner@trehab.org</a>
Business Services Team Lead	Breanna Repard	brepard@trehab.org

Attachment 3: WIOA Local Workforce Development Delivery System  
Program Partner-Provider List

Local Workforce Development Area name: Northern Tier Workforce Development Area  
Effective Date: July 1, 2025

Local Workforce Development Boards, or LWDBs, are requested to publicly post the PA CareerLink® Workforce Service Delivery System Program Partner/Provider List to address the public's need for access to service as mandated by the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act, or WIOA. The LWDB should ensure that the Program Partner/Provider List reflects the current PA CareerLink® Memoranda of Understanding(s). Local area plan modifications concerning this subject matter are not required to be submitted to the Department if the list is posted on the LWDB public website.

Program	Program Provider	Local Area Partner/Provider
POC address	POC telephone	POC website/email
WIOA Title I Adult/DW and Youth Services	Bradford County Action, Inc.	<a href="http://www.bradfordcountyaction.org">www.bradfordcountyaction.org</a>
500 William Street, Towanda PA 18848	570-265-4434	pwatkins@bradfordcountyaction.org
WIOA Title I Adult/DW and Youth Services	Trehab	<a href="http://Trehab.org">Trehab.org</a>
36 Public Avenue Montrose, PA 18801	570-662-8117	<a href="mailto:brepard@trehab.org">brepard@trehab.org</a>
WIOA Title II- WIOA Adult Education & Literacy	Adult Education And Family Literacy	Bradford County Action Penne Watkins, Executive Director
500 William Street, Towanda, PA 18848	570-265-4434	pwatkins@bradfordcountyaction.org
WIOA Title III Wagner-Peyser	Wagner-Peyser Employment Services, Foreign Labor Certification, Rapid Response	Ken Reisinger, BWPO
Bureau of Workforce Partner Operations 329 Pine Street, Williamsport, PA 17701	570-327-3501	<a href="mailto:kenreising@pa.gov">kenreising@pa.gov</a>
Vocational Rehabilitation WIOA Title IV	PA Department of Labor	Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
208 W. Third Street Williamsport, PA 17701	570-327-3600	<a href="http://www.dli.pa.gov">www.dli.pa.gov</a> <a href="mailto:nelson@pa.gov">nelson@pa.gov</a>
Jobs for Veterans (JVSC)	PA Department of Labor	Ken Reisinger, BWPO
Bureau of Workforce Partner Operations 329 Pine Street, Williamsport, PA 17701	570-327-3501	<a href="http://www.dli.pa.gov">www.dli.pa.gov</a> kenreising@pa.gov
Trade Adjustment Assistance	Title II Trade Act	Ken Reisinger, BWPO
Bureau of Workforce Partner Operations 329 Pine Street, Williamsport, PA 17701	570-327-3501	<a href="http://www.dli.pa.gov">www.dli.pa.gov</a> brujones@pa.gov

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)	PA Department of Human Services Bureau of Employment Programs	Local County Assistance offices Tammy West, Executive Director 570-265-9186
Job Corps	Red Rock Job Corps Center	<a href="http://www.redrock.jobcorps.gov">www.redrock.jobcorps.gov</a>
Route 487 North, Lopez, PA 18656	800-733-5627	
Unemployment Insurance	PA Unemployment Compensation Law	Kris Kessler, Administrative Officer II
61 Boas Street, Harrisburg, PA 17121	171-787-4971	krkessler@pa.gov
Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)	PA Department of Community and Economic Development	Trehab
36 Public Avenue, Montrose, PA 18801	570-278-3338	Judy Herschel, Executive Director
Senior Community Services Employment Program	Title V Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)	A4TD, Pathstone
		swyble@4td.org
YouthBuild	WIOA Title I Youth Build Sec.171	Scott Emerick, Executive Director
1231 N. Broad St.#3 Philadelphia, PA 19122 Not Local	215-972-0330	semerick@youthbuildphilly.org
Reintegration of Ex-Offenders Program/Second Chance Act Not Local	Reentry Employment under Second Chance Act	PA Department of Corrections
Housing & Urban Development (HUD)	HUD Employment & Training Activities	Trehab Dennis Phelps, Executive Director
Commission of Native American Affairs Not local	WIOA Title I Native American National Programs	Kerry Jevsevar, Native American Employment & Training WIOA kjevsevar@cotraic.org
Migrant & Seasonal Farmworker Not Local	National Farmworker Jobs Program	
Penn College of Technology	Carl D. Perkins Career & Technical Education – Post Secondary	Penn College of Technology
	570-724-7703	<a href="http://www.pct.edu">www.pct.edu</a>