Pennsylvania WIOA Plans Submission Checklist
Fiscal Year 2021-2024 WIOA Regional and Local Area Plans

This checklist is used to ensure completeness; indicate each submitted item prior to emailing this form and items listed below to RA-LI-BWDA-Policy@pa.gov .

✓	Cover Letter *(see submission cover letter template and page 4 of guide for additional details)*
✓	Regional Plan (*if in a planning region*) and Local Area Plan saved in Microsoft Word
✓	Provided documentation of public notice/public comment (*see pages 3-5 of guidance for additional details*)
✓	Attestations Completed
✓	Attachment 1: Local Area WIOA Title I Programs Performance Accountability Table
✓	Attachment 2: Local Workforce Development System Organizational Chart
✓	Attachment 3: Local Workforce Development System Program Partner-Provider List
✓	Attachment 4: Local Workforce Development System Supporting Data
	Option 1 or 2 is only used when submitting a planned two-year modification: Option 1: WIOA Plan Review and Modification Form (Local Area Plan)
	Option 2: If in a planning region, the designated point of contact will complete the WIOA Plan Review and Modification Form (Regional Plan) *and will disperse* the Planning Region CEO and LWDB Chair Dated Signatures Supplemental Form (Regional Plan) to the rest of the planning region. WIOA Plan Review and Modification Form (Local Area Plan)
	Only use Option 3 when submitting a modification NOT within a two-year modification period: Option 3: If in a planning region *and* the LWDB's Local Area Plan modification is deemed to provide a minor impact on the Planning Region, the Planning Region CEO and LWDB Chair Dated Signatures Supplemental Form (Local Area Plan) is used. WIOA Plan Review and Modification Form (Local Area Plan)

From:	Walls, Andrea E.
To:	Walls, Andrea E.
Subject:	FW: WIOA Local Plan - CEO Approval Needed
Date:	Tuesday, June 29, 2021 4:02:45 PM
Attachments:	dem.JPG image001.png

Andrea Walls
Technical Writer and Communications Specialist
County of Bucks
Department of Workforce and Economic Development
1260 Almshouse Road, Bldg. G, 4th Floor
Doylestown, PA 18901
Cell: 267-242-5686
buckscounty.org

From: Ellis-Marseglia, Diane M. <dmellismarseglia@buckscounty.org>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 3:55 PM
To: Kralle, Dianna J. <djkralle@buckscounty.org>; Marseglia, Diane <dmarseglia@buckscounty.org>
Cc: McKevitt, Margaret A. <mamckevitt@buckscounty.org>; Barnes, Billie F. <bfbarnes@buckscounty.org>; Walls, Andrea E. <aewalls@buckscounty.org>
Subject: RE: WIOA Local Plan - CEO Approval Needed

I approve of the final submission of the PY 2021-2024 WIOA Local Plan for Bucks County and PY 2021-2024 WIOA Regional Plan for Bucks, Berks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia counties, revised to incorporate feedback received from statewide workforce stakeholder agencies as facilitated by the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry. The Bucks County Workforce Development Board approved the final submission of the PY 2021-2024 Bucks County WIOA Local Plan and the PY 2021-2024 Southeast Pennsylvania WIOA Regional Plan at its full board meeting on June 23, 2021, as per WIOA regulations WSP# 108-01, Change 1.

Diane M Ellis-Marseglia, LCSW
Bucks County Commissioner

"Norms and notions of what "just is" is not always "justice"…
We've learned that quiet isn't always peace…Harm to none
Harmony to All."
Amanda Gorman (poet, Biden Inauguration)

COUNTY OF BUCKS

DEPARTMENT OF WORKFORCE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
Almshouse Building G, 1260 Almshouse Road, Doylestown, PA 18901
(215) 345-3484
www.buckscounty.org

County Commissioners

DIANE M. ELLIS-MARSEGLIA, LCSW, Chair
ROBERT J. HARVIE, Vice Chair
GENE DIGIROLAMO

BILLIE F. BARNES, Director

April 1, 2021

Shelia Ireland
Deputy Secretary for Workforce Development
Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry
651 Boas Street
Harrisburg, PA 17121

Dear Deputy Secretary Ireland,

On behalf of the Bucks County Department of Workforce and Economic Development (WED), we approve the submission of the PY 2021–2024 WIOA Local Plan for Bucks County. These documents are being submitted for your review with the concurrence, support, and approval of the Bucks County WED at its meeting on March 24, 2021, as per WIOA regulations WSP# 108-01, Change 1. The Local Plan provides the framework in defining how a designated area's workforce development system will achieve the purposes of WIOA. Therefore, the Bucks County WED created a four-year action plan to develop, align, and integrate One-Stop delivery system services in support of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's strategic and operational goals within its local workforce area as well as goals and strategies described in the Southeastern Pennsylvania Regional Plan. This data-driven Local Plan is based on the current and projected needs of the public workforce system. It is guided by the WIOA principles to foster strategic alignment, improve service integration, and ensure that the public workforce system is industry-relevant, responding to Bucks County's economic needs and matching skilled workers with employers. The needs of job seekers, incumbent workers, youth, and businesses have been considered throughout the development process.

The Bucks County WED solicited public input in accordance with WIOA Sec. 107 and 20CFR Part 679 for the period of February 24, 2021–March 25, 2021 in the *Bucks County Courier Times*, bucksworks.org, and chesco.org. Comments were received as referenced on page 88 of the submitted plan.

If you have any questions or need additional assistance, please do not hesitate to contact Dianna Kralle, assistant director of Workforce and Economic Development, at 267-642-8138 or djkralle@buckscounty.org.

Our signatures below certify that we approve the submission of the PY 2021-2024 WIOA Local Plan to the PA Department of Labor and Industry.

Best Regards,

Diane M. Ellis-Marseglia, LCSW, Chair
Commissioner, County of Bucks

James Horan
Chair, Bucks County Workforce Development Board

Enclosures

Resources - Bucks County Worki
bucksworks.org/resources/
Apps Gmail YouTube Maps Bucks County, PA |...

Phase I March 1st - Reopen by appointment only for use of the CRC on Monday and Thursday. Job seekers that do not have access to a computer or internet can make an appointment at the PA CareerLink® Bucks County. People that are unable to complete their UC tasks may enter to obtain necessary UC forms. There are a total of five appointments per hour. Social distancing guidelines must be followed and masks are required.
The PA CareerLink Bucks County has a service call center dedicated to: (1) individuals who are looking for work and (2) employers who need additional resources and assistance. The number is 347-308-5002 and is supported Monday thru Friday, 8AM – 4:30PM EST.
For PA CareerLink Bucks County Virtual Services visit https://buckscareersolutions.com

Berks, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, Philadelphia Counties

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires States to identify planning regions which consist of two or more local areas. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania identified the local workforce areas of **Berks, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia** as a planning region.

In accordance with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, the Bucks County Department of Workforce and Economic Development (WED) posts its 2021-2024 Local Plan for a 30-day public comment period from February 23, 2021, to March 25, 2021. Any community member who wishes to submit their questions/comments may do so at @buckscounty.org. Please address the email to aewalls.

Bucks County WED Local Plan PY2021-2024_DRAFT

Regional Plan:

Type here to search
10:32 AM
2/24/2021

NOTICE NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT THE COUNTY OF BUCKS

NOTICE Notice is hereby given that the County of Bucks, Department of Workforce & Economic Development has issued a Draft Local Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Multi-Year Plan in accordance with the requirements set forth by the Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry. The Local WIOA Plan can be accessed online at https://www.bucksworks.org/resources/. Hard copies are available for review by request at the Department of Workforce & Economic Development: Almshouse Building G 1260 Almshouse Road Doylestown, PA 18901 The department is accepting public comments on this plan from Wednesday, February 24, 2021 through Thursday, March 25, 2021. Written comments should be addressed to: Andrea Walls, Communications Specialist County of Bucks Department of Workforce & Economic Development 1260 Almshouse Road Doylestown, PA 18901 or aewalls@buckscounty.org 1t F 25 7381429

Appeared in: ***Bucks County Courier Times*** on Thursday, 02/25/2021

Back

BUCKS CO DEPT WORKFORCE DEV
1260 ALMSHOUSE RD ATTN FRANK MCGOVERN
DOYLESTOWN, PA 18901

2153453488
0007381429

I, Kathleen Allen being duly affirmed according to law, deposes and says that I am the Legal Clerk of COURIER TIMES INCORPORATED, Publisher of The Bucks County Courier Times, a newspaper of general circulation, published and having its place of business at Levittown, Bucks County, Pa; that said newspaper was established in 1910; that securely attached hereto is a facsimile of the printed notice which is exactly as printed and published in said newspaper on

February 25, 2021

appears hereto, exactly as published in said newspaper

Kathleen Allen
Legal Clerk

Nancy Heryman
Notary Public, State of Wisconsin, County of Brown

5.5.23
My commission expires

NANCY HEYMAN
Notary Public
State of Wisconsin

Bucks County

NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the **County of Bucks, Department of Workforce & Economic Development** has issued a Draft Local Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Multi-Year Plan in accordance with the requirements set forth by the Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry. The Local WIOA Plan can be accessed online at https://www.bucksworks.org/resources/.

Hard copies are available for review by request at the Department of Workforce & Economic Development:

Almshouse Building G
1260 Almshouse Road
Doylestown, PA 18901

The department is accepting public comments on this plan from Wednesday, February 24, 2021 through Thursday, March 25, 2021.

Written comments should be addressed to:

Andrea Walls,
Communications Specialist
County of Bucks –
Department of Workforce
& Economic Development
1260 Almshouse Road
Doylestown, PA 18901
or aewalls@buckscounty.org

1t F 25 7381429

Attachment 1: WIOA Title I Programs Performance Accountability Table

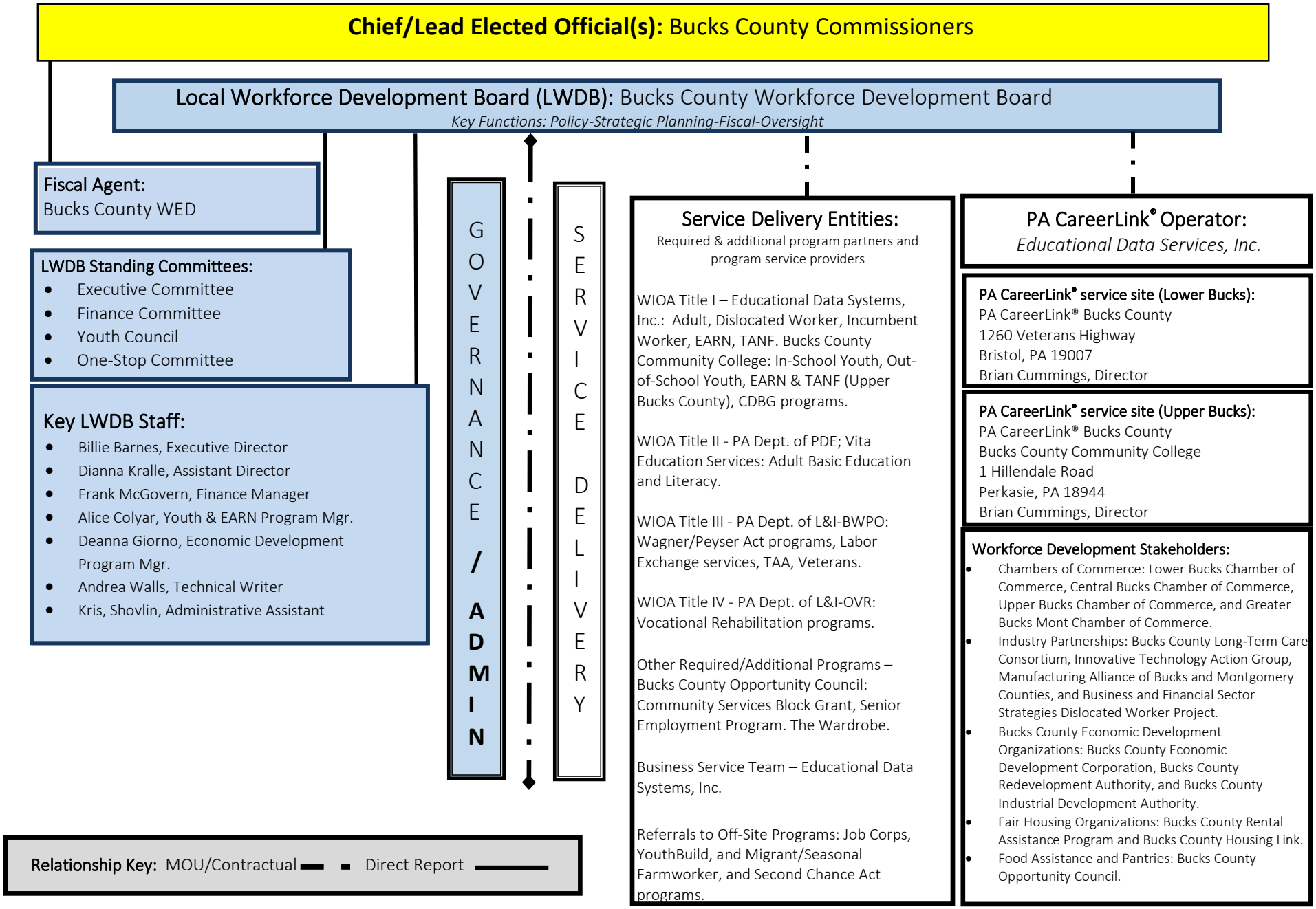
The Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry, or L&I, negotiates WIOA Title I programs performance goals with the U. S. Department of Labor on a two-year program cycle, which aligns with the WIOA planning requirement of reviewing WIOA Local Area Plans every two years. In an effort designed to meet or exceed the state WIOA performance goals, PA negotiates these same goals with PA's local workforce development areas, or 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 *WIOA Title I Programs Performance Accountability Table* is for the benefit of the public and must be updated accordingly. Local boards must edit the table's two columns with the appropriate program year(s) to correctly match the most recent* LWDA-negotiated performance goals and attained performance results. This completed table must be publicly posted with the local area plan. The LWDB does not need to perform a WIOA plan modification as this table is revised; email notification to local area workforce development stakeholders will suffice.

LWDA Name: Bucks County Workforce and Economic Development		
WIOA Title I Programs (Adult-Dislocated Worker-Youth) Performance Measures	LWDA's WIOA Title I Programs Negotiated Performance Goals - **Program Year(s): 2020 – 2021*	LWDA's WIOA Title I Programs Attained Performance Results - **Program Year: 2019*
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	**Negotiated Goals**	**Attained Performance**
Adult	75.0%	84.6%
Dislocated Worker	75.0%	79.8%
Youth	66.0%	65.0%
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	**Negotiated Goals**	**Attained Performance**
Adult	70.0%	72.2%
Dislocated Worker	78.0%	81.2%
Youth	65.0%	69.6%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)	**Negotiated Goals**	**Attained Performance**
Adult	$6,500	$7,021
Dislocated Worker	$8,500	$9,384
Youth	$2,750	$3,329
Credential Attainment Rate	**Negotiated Goals**	**Attained Performance**
Adult	60.0%	68.5%
Dislocated Worker	60.0%	68.7%
Youth	60.0%	29.8%
Measurable Skill Gains	**Negotiated Goals**	**Attained Performance**
Adult	38.0%	Baseline
Dislocated Worker	32.0%	Baseline
Youth	50.0%	Baseline

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. This chart should be reviewed annually for revisions. The 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" information is displayed on separate pages respectfully. Use of model sub-titles is required. Publicly post the organizational chart with the local area plan. A WIOA plan modification is not required when revision occurs with this document.



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

Local Workforce Development Area name: Bucks County, PA
Effective Date: July 1, 2021

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 Name	Program Authorization	Local Area Partner/Provider
POC address	POC telephone	POC website/email
EDSI, Inc.	**WIOA Title I** Adult, Dislocated Worker, Incumbent Worker, EARN, TANF	**Larry Melf**, Regional Operations Director
15300 Commerce Drive, Ste. 200 Dearborn, MI 48120	313-271-2660	edsisolutions.com lmelf@edsisolutions.com
Bucks County Community College	**WIOA Title I** In-School Youth, Out-of-School Youth, EARN	**Susan Herring**, Director of Workforce Development
275 Swamp Road Newtown, PA 18940	215-968-8000, Main 267-685-4884	bucks.edu/workforcedevelopment sherring@bucks.edu
PA Department of Labor and Industry, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Kevin Sand, District Administrator	**WIOA Title IV** Rehabilitation Act of 1973	**Anita Diggs**, Bucks County Area Supervisor
1875 New Hope Street Norristown, PA 19401	484-250-4340	adiggs@pa.gov
Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry	**WIOA Title III** Wagner Peyser Act of 1933	**Marybeth Ferguson**, Assistant Regional Director, Southeast, Poconos Bureau of Workforce Partnership and Operations (BWPO), PA Department of Labor & Industry
479 Thomas Jones Way, Suite 500 Exton, PA 19341	610-280-1010	mferguson@pa.gov
PA Department of Labor and Industry – Unemployment Compensation	**Federal Social Security Act of 1935**	**Shamatutu Nsungwe**, Director, Office of Unemployment Compensation Service Centers
651 Boas Street, Room 625 Harrisburg, PA 17121	717-787-4127	nshamatutu@pa.gov

Vita Education Services	**WIOA Title II** Adult Education and Literacy	**Mercedes Anderson**, Executive Director
8 East Court Street, 2nd Floor Doylestown, PA 18901	215-345-8322	manderson@vitaeducation.org vitaeducation.org
Council of Three Rivers American Indian Center, Native American Programs	**Native American Programs Act of 1974**	**Lauren Garrett**, WIOA Employment and Training Counselor
120 Charles Street Pittsburgh, PA 15238	412-782-4457	lgarrett@cotraic.org cotraic.org
Job Corps (No local entity—refer customers to Philadelphia or Drums, Pa. locations)	**WIOA Title I** Out-of-School Youth	**Erica K. Walker, M.S.,** Director of Outreach, Admissions and Career Services
Philadelphia Job Corps Life Science Institute 2810 S 20th Street, Bldg. 12 Philadelphia, PA 19145-5001	267-987-2903	philadelphia.jobcorps.gov Walker.Erica.K@jobcorps.org
Keystone Job Corps Center 235 W Foothills Drive, Drums, PA 18222	570-788-1164	keystone.jobcorps.gov
YouthBuild (No local entity—refer customers to Philadelphia, Pa. or Trenton, NJ. locations)	**WIOA Title I** Out-of-School Youth	
YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School 1231 N. Broad St. Philadelphia, PA 19122	215-627-8671	youthbuildphilly.org
Isles Youth Institute 10 Wood St. Trenton, NJ 08618	609-341-4700	isles.org
Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Program	**WIOA Title III** Trade Adjustment Assistance Reauthorization Act of 2015	**Marybeth Ferguson**, Assistant Regional Director, Southeast, Poconos Bureau of Workforce Partnership and Operations (BWPO), PA Department of Labor & Industry
Bureau of Workforce Partnership and Operations (BWPO) 479 Thomas Jones Way, Suite 500 Exton, PA 19341	610-280-1010	mferguson@pa.gov
Migrant/Seasonal Farmworker* *No local entity	**WIOA Title IV** Civil Rights Act of 1964	Refer to federal guidance (dol.gov/agencies/eta/agriculture)

		if services are needed by any customers.
Second Chance Act Programs* *No local entity	**WIOA Title II** Adult Education and Literacy	Refer to federal guidance administered by U.S. Department of Education (ed.gov) if services are needed by any customer.
Bucks County Area Agency on Aging	**Older Americans Act of 1965**	**Holly Tuttle**, Outreach Coordinator Supervisor
55 E. Court Street, 3rd Floor Doylestown, PA 18901	267-880-5700	hjtuttle@buckscounty.org buckscounty.org
Bucks County Community College	**Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act of 1998**	**Larry Aniloff Ed.D.**, Interim Director, Perkins Programs
275 Swamp Road Newtown, PA 18940	215-968-8000, Main 215-968-8140	bucks.edu/pass larry.aniloff@bucks.edu
Bucks County Opportunity Council, Inc.	**Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)**	**Erin A. Lukoss**, Executive Director
100 Doyle Street Doylestown, PA 18901	215-345-8175	bcoc.org elukoss@bcoc.org

Attachment 4: Local Workforce Development System Supporting Data

Local area plans have multiple sections requiring various data methodologies needed to support narrative. When documenting data methodologies, plan drafters may reference the data location in the local area plan prompt narrative and move referenced data (e.g., charts, tables, etc.) to this attachment. The *Supporting Data* attachment must be submitted with the local area plan and publicly posted with all other supporting documentation as referenced in the WIOA Regional and Local Area Plan Guide.

Local boards must enter the prerequisite information (i.e. LWDA name, section number with prompt, input data referenced in the plan's prompt narrative and cite data source) if using this form.

If a local board does not use this form, the LWDB must make note on this attachment that "all data is cited in the local plan narrative."

Example of referenced data input is below.

LWDA Name: Bucks County, PA

For Sections 1-5, all data is cited in the local plan narrative.___

Source: Center for Workforce Information and Analysis, based on the May 2017 preliminary dataset using seasonally adjusted values.

Bucks County Department of Workforce and Economic Development
Board Meeting Minutes

Date of Meeting: June 23, 2021, 9:00 a.m.
Teleconference

In Attendance
Board of Directors: Jim Horan, Mateen Afzal, Paul Bencivengo, Marybeth Ferguson, Louis Kassa, Erin Lukoss, Jonathan Mercer, Jessica Peiffer, Dominic Roberto, Brian Shields, Sara Tsivikis, Yolonda Udvardy, Jeane Vidoni, Jennifer Wendling

Bucks County WED Staff: Billie Barnes, Alice Colyar, Deanna Giorno, Dianna Kralle, Frank McGovern, Kris Shovlin, Andrea Walls

Guests: Danielle Bodnar, Brian Cummings, G. Jay Francis, Andre Hardy, Greg Hart, Susan Herring, Margie McKevitt, Larry Melf, Jessica Peterson, Robert Pisko, Eunice Rush-Day

Next Meeting: September 22, 2021, 9:00 a.m.
Location: TBD

Agenda Discussion

I. Welcome & Call to Order, Jim Horan
Jim Horan, Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. and greeted attendees. Mr. Horan thanked all attendees for their time.

II. Meeting Minutes, Jim Horan
Mr. Horan directed Board members to review the March 24, 2021 meeting minutes, which Kris Shovlin sent via email before the meeting. Mr. Horan requested a motion to approve the March 24, 2021 meeting minutes.

Action/Vote: Erin Lukoss made the motion. Paul Bencivengo seconded the motion. All were in favor; none opposed.

III. Fiscal Updates, Jim Horan
Mr. Horan thanked WED staff for their work to rectify the PY19 budget. Timing differences are being accounted for where they are present. WED is compliant with the State.

Frank McGovern directed focus to columns "F" and "H." The WIOA Adult Title I category is over budget, but WED will address an error that requires moving costs to PY20. This issue can be attributed to WED's transition from a nonprofit to a county office, which the department hopes to resolve by year's end. Mr. Horan stated that the Finance Committee is comfortable with how this issue is being addressed.

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Mr. Horan reviewed the LWDA PY20 YTD Budget for May 2021, looked at columns "F" and "H," and state that the budget is compliant with the State. This budget is in the process of being finalized.

Mr. Horan asked attendees to direct their attention to LWDA PY21 Budget Proposal, with a focus on columns "F," "G," and "H," which represent the Title I Adult, Youth, and Dislocated Workers categories. The proposed budget takes new grants into account.

Mr. Horan requested a motion to approve the LWDA PY21 Budget Proposal.

Action/Vote: Jeane Vidoni made the motion. Marybeth Ferguson seconded the motion. All were in favor; none opposed.

Billie Barnes prompted attendees to participate in roll call. Kris Shovlin recorded all those in attendance.

IV. Local Plan, Andrea Walls

Andrea Walls presented an update regarding the Bucks County Local WIOA Plan for Program Years 2021-2024. WED submitted the WIOA Local Plan for 2021-2024 to the PA Department of Labor and Industry in March 2021. In April 2021, subject matter experts from the following organizations/offices requested edits to the local and regional plans from the Southeast Pennsylvania Region.

- Apprenticeship and Training Office (ATO)
- Center for Workforce Information and Analysis (CWIA)
- Bureau of Workforce Development Administration (BWDA)
- Bureau of Workforce Partnership and Operations (BWPO)
- Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR)
- PA Department of Education (PDE)
- PA Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED)
- PA Department of Aging (PDA)
- PA Department of Human Services (DHS)
- PA Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO)
- PA Workforce Development Board (PWDB)
- Unemployment Compensation (UC)

Ms. Walls reviewed the list of WIOA Local Plan edits, which included:

- 1.4 Apprenticeships (pgs. 21-23)
- 3.2 Additional WIOA programs (pg. 43)
- 3.3 Referrals for non-local entities (pgs. 45-46)
- 3.4 Supporting a local workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses in the local area (pgs. 48-49).
- 4.1. Key stakeholders and entities in the local workforce delivery system (pgs. 52-54 and Attachment 2)
- 4.2 One-Stop Partners (pg. 55-57)
- 4.3 One-Stop Delivery System:
- Collaborators (pg. 60)
- Adaptive equipment at PA CareerLink Bucks County (pg. 61)

- CWDS 2.0 for participant enrollment (pg. 62)
- "Revisit Employment Plan" step added (pg. 64)
- 4.4 ELECT program (pgs. 62-63) and adaptive equipment (pgs. 65-66)
- 4.8 WIOA Youth and TANF staff (pg. 74)
- 4.10 Career pathways, training, and Perkins V implementation (pgs. 76-78)
- 4.12 WIOA Title II: Vita Education Services, Bucks County Community College (pgs. 79-80)
- 4.15 Transportation (pgs. 91-92)
- 5.2 Debt collection procedures (pgs. 93-94)

Ms. Walls provided the steps that occurred during the revision process. WED compiled information for the requested edits beginning on April 20, 2021, and then submitted the revised WIOA Local Plan on May 25, 2021. The PA Department of Labor & Industry accepted WED's edits on June 1, 2021. Ms. Walls requested that the Board move forward with their vote to approve the Bucks County WIOA Local Plan for Program Years 2021-2024.

Action/Vote: Ms. Vidoni made the motion. Mr. Horan seconded the motion. All were in favor; none opposed.

V. Regional Plan, Andrea Walls

Ms. Walls reviewed the edits made to the Southeast PA Regional WIOA Plan for Program Years 2021-2021. The list of edits included:

- 1.2 Apprenticeships within the region's workforce and economic development-oriented vision and goals (pgs. 2-5)
- 1.4 Philadelphia Workforce Development Board is hereafter referred to as Philadelphia Works Inc. (pg. 20)
- 1.9 Local areas convene around the designation of a fiscal agent per special project (pg. 40)

Ms. Walls requested that the Board move forward with their vote to approve the Southeast PA Regional WIOA plan for Program Years 2021-2024.

Action/Vote: Mr. Horan made the motion. Erin Lukoss seconded the motion. All were in favor; none opposed.

VI. Andre Hardy, EARN Presentation

Andre Hardy, EDSI Regional Director of Operations, presented an overview of the Employment, Advancement, and Retention Network (EARN) program. Mr. Hardy provided information about program benefits, eligibility criteria, and participant expectations. EARN is reflective of its community partnerships throughout Bucks County, a network of organizations with a shared mission to serve program participants on their journey toward self-sufficiency. Partners are committed to serving individuals with substantial barriers to employment.

Mr. Hardy presented a chart with EARN participant demographics for 2019-2020. Participants face challenges, including housing, childcare, and transportation. Upon enrollment, participants follow a flow of services. They participate in comprehensive assessments and community service activities.

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Mr. Hardy provided EARN program participant success stories. In Program Year 2020, 85 participants were served. Ten participants were dually enrolled in EARN and WIOA programs. Approximately 77% of placements were earning $9.25 per hour. Additional success stories included Christine (ITA and OJT), Erica (DJT), and Marilina (KEYS/Direct Hire).

VII. WED Newsletter, Andrea Walls

Ms. Walls presented information about WED's inaugural newsletter. The newsletter, published on June 7, 2021, was sent to 2,237 subscribers through Constant Contact. The subscriber list consists of Bucks Back to Work 2020 recipients, the Bucks County Workforce Development Board and its Committees, Elected Officials, community members and partners, employers, and staff. As of June 23, the open rate (measures the number of emails opened compared to the number of emails sent) is 31%, which is 9% higher than the industry average. The click rate (compares the number of people who clicked a link within an email against the unique number of opens) is 10%, which is -2% below the industry average. Ms. Walls discussed efforts to increase the click rate over time.

Mr. Horan asked about the numbers behind the open rate and how it may be affected by spam blockers. Ms. Walls explained how bounces from inactive or inaccurate email addresses should be monitored regularly. She also discussed working with the county's IT department to ensure a higher delivery rate to avoid the message being identified as spam or a "spoofed" sender. According to Constant Contact, there were no reports of spam.

Yolonda Urvardy offered suggestions to increase overall engagement, including reducing the size of the email format by shortening text and driving the audience to hyperlinks. Ms. Walls commented on the county's new website launch on June 15, which will allow for the use of more content hyperlinks. Ms. Urvardy suggested additional tips to try based on successes she has experienced at DelVal University.

Ms. Walls reported that 68% of emails were opened on desktops, while 32% were opened on mobile devices. These rates further demonstrate the importance of a mobile-responsive platform like Constant Contact.

The top three clicked links include the American Rescue Plan, the Bucks County COVID-19 Economic Resources Portal, and the County of Bucks website. This information will be helpful when curating future newsletter content.

Ms. Walls asked for assistance in sharing the newsletter link and the sign-up form on social media platforms to help build WED's mailing list. The sign-up form is also available on buckscounty.gov. Jon Mercer recommended the sign-up form link as a more condensed way to promote the mailing list. He offered to share marketing tips to increase audience engagement further. Ms. Walls thanked Board members for their efforts to suggest content for future issues and for helping to spread the word about WED's collaborative work, connect businesses with economic development resources, and share success stories about participants on their journeys to self-sufficiency.

Ms. Barnes encouraged Board members to reach out to Ms. Walls directly with potential feature stories, businesses, and local entrepreneurs.

VIII. Board Manual

Ms. Barnes introduced the Board manual that is currently in production. This project will serve as an important resource for new and current Board members. It contains information to help them be effective and engaged members of the Bucks County Workforce Development Board. WED hopes to present the manual to the Executive Committee for review by June 30, 2021.

IX. Open Discussion

Mr. Horan began the open discussion with a reminder for all Board members to complete the Statement of Financial Interest (SOFI). The SOFI must be updated each year for compliance. Mr. Horan asked that SOFIs be returned to WED by the close of business. He encouraged those with questions to contact him or Ms. Barnes.

Alice Colyar provided youth program grant updates. WED received $30,000 for the State and Local Internship Program (SLIP). This program serves students at Bucks County Technical High School, who work 25 hours per week and earn $15 per hour while tending to a sustainable energy garden. Students also help maintain the 9/11 Memorial Garden in Yardley, Pa.

The PA Department of Labor & Industry awarded WED with the School-To-Work Grant, a pre-apprenticeship program from July 2021 to September 2023. The program is a partnership between WED, the Wistar Institute, William Tennent High School, the Pennsylvania Biotechnology Center, and the Pennsylvania Society for Biomedical Research (PSBR). David Garbe, PSBR Outreach Educator, helped develop the curriculum and work collaboratively on the grant submission. The curriculum is STEM-focused and emphasizes problem-solving in the classroom as well as the workplace. Students in the Centennial School District will participate in the program.

Dianna Kralle provided an update on recent Request for Proposal (RFP)s. The Bucks County Commissioners recently approved WED's recommendation for EDSI as the Employer Assistance and Resource Network (EARN) provider. The EARN contract is awarded for two years. The RFP Committee reviewed proposals for the One-Stop Operator on June 22, 2021, using a grading rubric based on one created by Mr. Mercer. Mr. Horan said the RFP review process is a great experience for Board members and a worthwhile opportunity to gain additional insight into programs.

Ms. Kralle introduced two new Board members: Mateen Afzal and Sara Tsivikis.

Brian Cummings announced the PA CareerLink® Bucks County's schedule for in-person services. The Bristol and Perkasie have been open for in-person services by appointment Monday through Friday since June 14, 2021. This schedule will continue in July, with workshops and assessments held on-site. Virtual services will continue, as this has helped mitigate transportation barriers for participants. Business Services hopes to roll out a virtual service platform for recruitment events.

Ms. Barnes discussed the success of the inaugural WED Talk on June 9, 2021. The webinar, which featured Dr. Daniel Jurman from the Governor's Office of Advocacy and Reform, hosted 93 highly engaged participants. The next WED Talk will be held on July 14, 2021. It will feature Ron Davis, M.Ed., Director of Diversity and Community Development at Parx Casino. He will share best practices in achieving diversity and inclusion in the workplace. Registration is online. WED will also host a Talk on August 11, 2021, which will feature industry experts from the Department of Corrections and the PA

Parole Board. A Behind the Walls hiring event is also being coordinated to continue recruiting reentrants. This program helps incarcerated individuals secure employment before their release. It is held virtually.

X. Adjournment, Jim Horan

Mr. Horan thanked all attendees and requested a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:09 a.m.

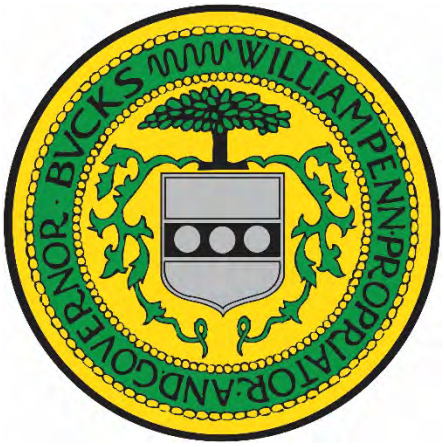
Action/Vote: Mr. Horan made the motion. Ms. Vidoni seconded the motion. All were in favor; none opposed.

The meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted:

Andrea Walls
June 25, 2021

DRAFT



County of Bucks, Department of Workforce & Economic Development

WIOA LOCAL PLAN 2021-2024

1260 ALMSHOUSE ROAD, BLDG. G, 4TH FLOOR | DOYLESTOWN, PA 18901
215.345.3429 | BUCKSCOUNTY.ORG

WORKFORCE AREA: Bucks County

EFFECTIVE DATE OF PLAN: July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2024

FOREWORD FROM THE BUCKS COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

It is the position of the Bucks County Workforce Development Board (BCWDB) that the available data, including long-term industry projections, does not tell the whole story of growth and opportunity within the County. Many factors need to be considered alongside the data formulated by the U.S. Census Bureau and the Pennsylvania Center for Workforce Information and Analysis. These factors include opportunities for job expansion, replacing an aging workforce, and, most significantly, effects on a post-pandemic economy. Feedback from the BCWDB, inclusive of labor unions, employers, educators, community and economic development partners, cites significant and consistent growth, with steady increases in open positions that often go unfilled as securing skilled labor remains a challenge within the foreseeable future. The BCWDB plans to address these needs across industry sectors, informed by data and based on real-time needs communicated by employers in their respective fields.

The BCWDB is dedicated to filling the needs of employers and job seekers in the local workforce development area and recognizes how this commitment will be best executed through flexibility and responsiveness as labor market trends shift and available data changes over the next four years. The BCWDB will make any needed implementation adjustments to the Local Plan working document through regular analysis and outreach.

As the COVID-19 pandemic's full impact evolves, the BCWDB will address new economic and workforce recovery challenges. Ongoing equitable recovery efforts will require a close analysis of labor market data and real-time information in relation to employer needs and skilled job seeker availability. The BCWDB will continue to contribute its local perspective of demographic and economic conditions as part of a collaborative regional approach within the Southeast Workforce Planning Region.

INTRODUCTION

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires each local workforce development board to develop and submit a comprehensive four-year plan to the governor. The Local Plan shall support the vision, goals, and strategy described in the Pennsylvania Combined State Plan.

The Bucks County Department of Workforce and Economic Development (WED) created a four-year action plan to develop, align, and integrate One-Stop delivery system services in support of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's strategic and operational goals within its local workforce area as well as goals and strategies described in the Southeast Pennsylvania Regional Plan.

This Local Plan results from ongoing collaborative efforts among stakeholders, including Chief Elected Officials, the Bucks County Workforce Development Board, community partners, employers, Chambers of Commerce, and the public. It is guided by the WIOA principles to foster strategic alignment, improve

service integration, and ensure that the public workforce system is industry-relevant, responding to Bucks County's economic needs and matching skilled workers with employers.

WIOA emphasizes coordination and collaboration at the Federal, State, regional and local levels to ensure a streamlined and coordinated service delivery system for job seekers and employers. Therefore, this Local Plan is based on the current and projected needs of the public workforce system. The needs of job seekers, incumbent workers, youth, and businesses have been considered throughout the development process.

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

1.1 Identify the composition of the local area's population and labor force. [20 CFR § 679.560(a)(3)]

Located in Southeast Pennsylvania, the Bucks County Workforce Development Area comprises 23 boroughs and 31 townships spanning more than 600 square miles. In 2020, approximately 629,097[1] individuals resided in Bucks County, marking 0.6% of growth since 2015. The population is expected to increase by 1% within the next five years, adding 3,250.

In the Southeast region, the population increased from 3,921,550 in 2010 to 4,011,459 in 2021, resulting in a growth of 2.3%. Over the next five years, the regional population is projected to grow by 1.5%.

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

Age

Overall, the population in Bucks County is older than that at the regional and national levels. In 2019, the median age for Bucks County was 44, which was 15.8% higher than the national median age (38). The aging of Bucks County can be seen clearly in the population change by age groups. The three largest age groups are the oldest at 25 and older. The population between the ages of 45 and 64 is expected to decline by approximately 17,784 over the next five years. The age group projected to grow over the next five years is the retirement age group over 65. That population is on track to increase by nearly 21,000 people or 17%, the largest percentage growth by any age group.

Population Change Among Age Groups				
Age	2020	2025	Change	% Change
Under 5	30,849	33,438	2,589	8%
5 to 14	71,179	68,211	(2,968)	(4%)
15 to 24	72,643	67,238	(5,405)	(7%)
25 to 44	145,499	151,359	5,860	4%
45 to 64	184,244	166,460	(17,784)	(10%)

[1] Emsi, Q4 2021 Data Set

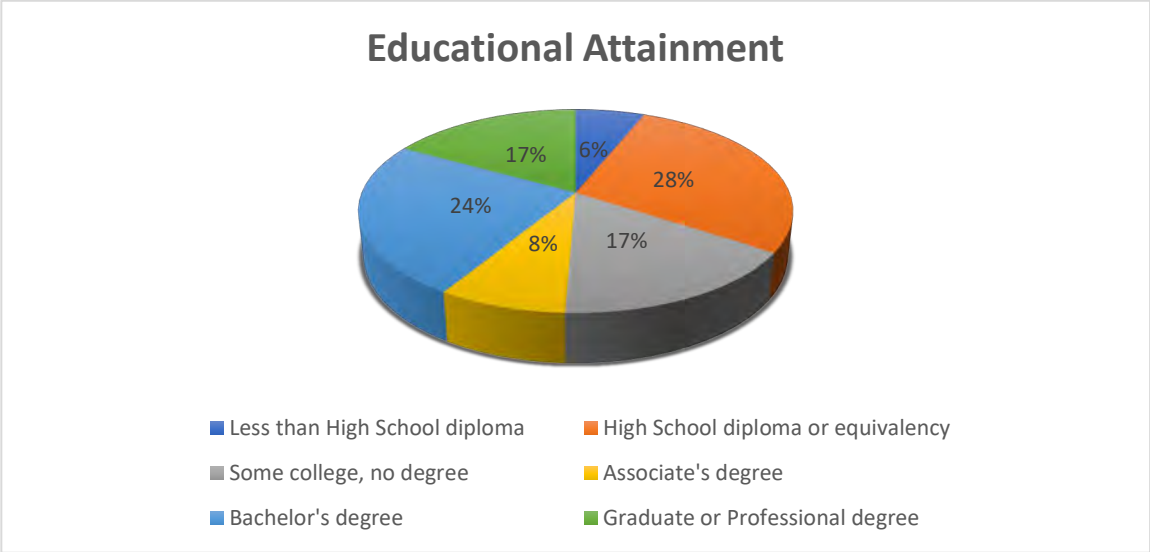
65 and older	124,683	145,641	20,958	17%
Total	629,097	632,347	3,250	1%

Source: U.S Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2015-2019

According to the U.S. Census Bureau[2], individuals in Bucks County are: 83.3% White Alone, 5.7% are Hispanic or Latino, 5.2% are Asian Alone, 4.5% are Black or African American Alone, 0.3% are American Indian and Alaska Native Alone, 0.1% are Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander Alone, and 1.8% reported two or More Races. An estimated 5.3% of Bucks County residents identified as Hispanic and an estimated 84.1% identified as White non-Hispanic.

Education

In 2019, 16.9% of the population age 25 and over in Bucks County had earned a graduate or professional degree. Approximately 24.4% had earned a bachelor's degree (4% above the national average), and 8.1% had earned an associate degree (0.5% below the national average). An estimated 6.1% of the population did not graduate high school, while twice as many of the region's population did not graduate high school (12.0%).



Source: U.S Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2015-2019

Income and Housing

The median household income in 2018 for Bucks County was estimated to be $86,100, which is higher than the national ($60,300) and the region ($81,075). Over the last three years, the median household income in Bucks County has increased by 4.51%.

In 2019, most Bucks County residences (77%) were estimated to be Owner-Occupied. Most residences in Bucks County (12.4%) were built between 1970 and 1979, while most residences in the region (26.0%) were built before 1940. Individuals with a mortgage paid median monthly costs of $2,164, while those who rented paid $1,228 in monthly costs. Overall, housing costs trend significantly higher in the County than the

[2] U.S. Census Bureau, QuickFacts, 2019

median mortgage ($1,474) and rent ($1,015) in Pennsylvania, indicating a disparity in affordable homes in the local area.

Labor Force

Over the last five years, jobs increased by 5.3% in Bucks County from 284,245 to 299,410. This change fell short of the national growth rate of 6.2% by 0.9%. As the number of jobs increased, the labor force participation rate decreased from 64.5% to 63.2% between 2015 and 2020.

With a 2020 labor force of 333,012, Health Care and Social Assistance is the largest sector, employing 56,285 workers, representing 11.6% of the Gross Regional Product (GRP) with average earnings of $57,266. The next largest sectors are Retail Trade (employing 35,536 workers, representing 7.7% of the GRP with average earnings of $40,104) and Manufacturing (employing 28,172 workers, representing 13.8% of the GRP with average earnings of $79,963)[3].

Employment by Industries

Source: Data USA, 2018 American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimate

From 2017 to 2018, employment in Bucks County grew at a rate of 0.26%, from approximately 336,000 employees to roughly 337,000 employees.

The most common employment sectors are Health Care and Social Assistance (51,828 people), Retail Trade (39,243 people), and Manufacturing (38,417 people). The chart above shows the distribution of the primary industries for Bucks County residents, though some of these residents may live in the County and work somewhere else. Census data is tagged to a residential address, not a work address.

Compiled by the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, high Location Quotients (LQs) indicate clusters in which a region has a high employment concentration compared to the nation.

The industry clusters with the largest LQs in Bucks County are Advanced Manufacturing (LQ=1.48), Wood, Wood Products and Publishing (LQ=1.44), Bio-Medical (LQ=1.43), Building and Construction (LQ=1.28), and Health Care (LQ=1.20).

[3] Emsi, Q4 2020 Data Set

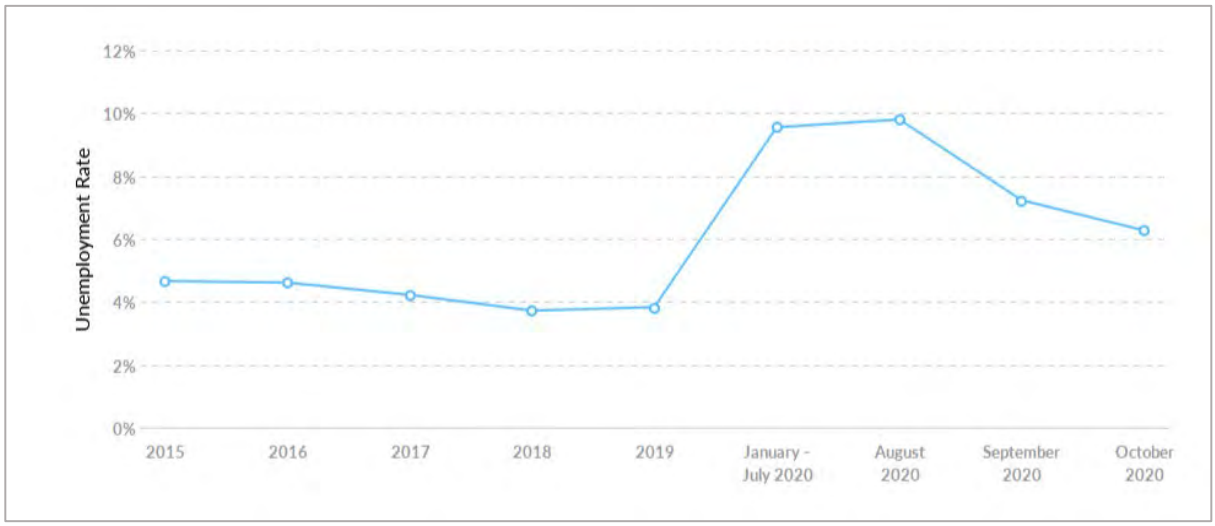
Long-term industry projections from 2018 to 2028 show steady growth in Health Care and Social Assistance (13.6%), Accommodation and Food Services (7.7%), Professional and Technical Services (7.5%), Transportation and Warehousing (6.0%), and Construction (4.6%).

Job seekers in these industries will need specialized training and technical skills to meet employers' demands to fill open positions within each cluster. The projects are consistent with population data, including statistics relating to an aging population that will require various health care and wellness services. Of note, the projected growth within Accommodation and Food Services aligns with the emerging Hospitality and Tourism industry in Bucks County.

Most of the employed population in Bucks County drives alone to work (82.7%) with an average travel time of 29 minutes to work, which is slightly longer than the national average of 25.7 minutes. Additionally, 4.08% of the Bucks County workforce have "super commutes" over 90 minutes.

When looking at the region, most drive alone (69.0%), while 12.5% use public transit and 8.1% carpool. The average commute across the region is 32.5 minutes.

Unemployment Rate Trends



Source: Emsi, Q4 2020 Data Set

In 2019, the unemployment rate in Bucks County was 3.8%, with a labor force of 345,300. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the unemployment rate fluctuated between 4.1% and 5.0%. Bucks County had an October 2020 unemployment rate of 6.4%, following a peak in April (15.4%). In year-end 2020, the regional unemployment rate averaged at 6.3%.

Annual Average Labor Force Statistics, 2019

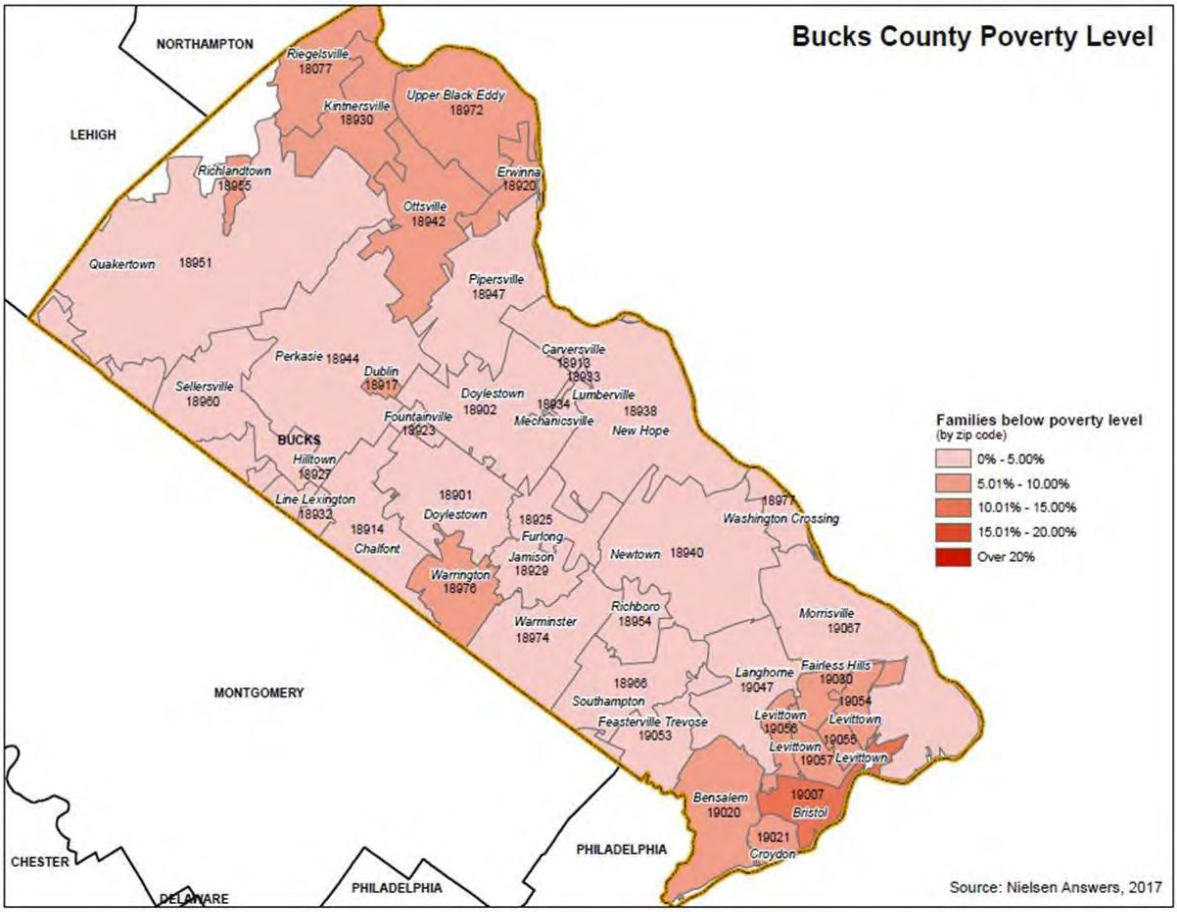
Annual Average	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Unemployment Rate
2019	345,300	326,700	13,200	3.8

Seasonally Adjusted Labor Force Statistics, 2020

Month	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Unemployment Rate
January	348,300	333,900	14,300	4.1
February	348,600	334,200	14,400	4.1
March	345,300	328,000	17,300	5.0
April	337,900	285,800	52,100	15.4
May	340,600	296,600	44,000	12.9
June	333,800	290,200	43,600	13.1
July	332,900	294,200	38,700	11.6
August	331,100	299,700	31,400	9.5
September	337,400	312,400	25,000	7.4
October	333,700	312,300	21,400	6.4

Source: Center for Workforce Information and Analysis, LAUS

POPULATIONS WITH BARRIERS



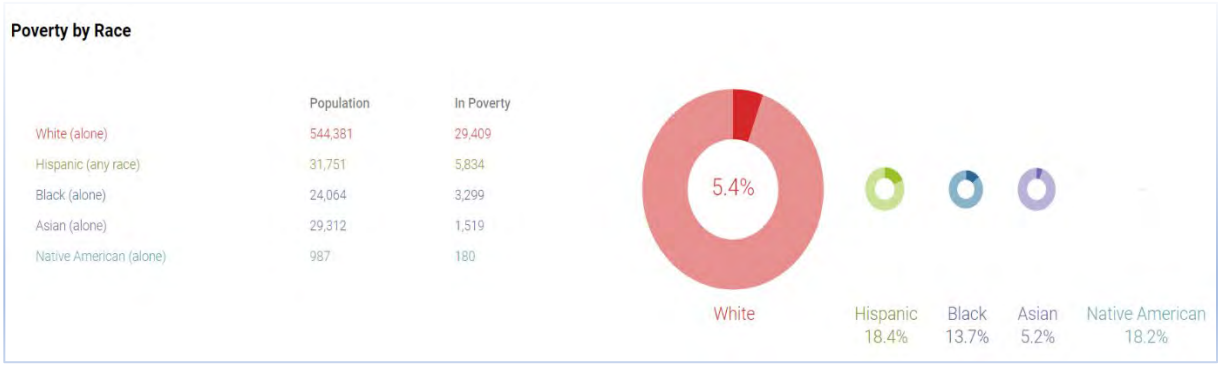
Poverty

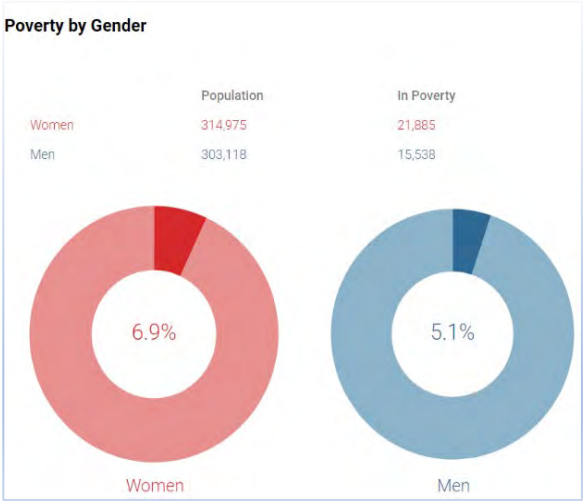
Unemployment and underemployment are among the factors that often contribute to poverty. Many people live in poverty because they cannot find a job that pays a living wage, or their skills do not match in-demand industries. In Bucks County, 5.7% of families are living in poverty.

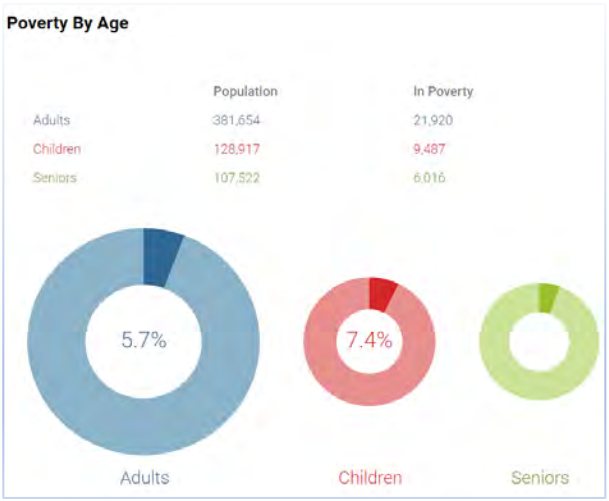
When looking at a County map, there are segments of the County with higher percentages of families living in poverty near Northampton and Philadelphia Counties. Studies indicated that single parents are more likely to be living in poverty. In Bucks County, 20.7% of households in Bucks County are considered single-parent households.

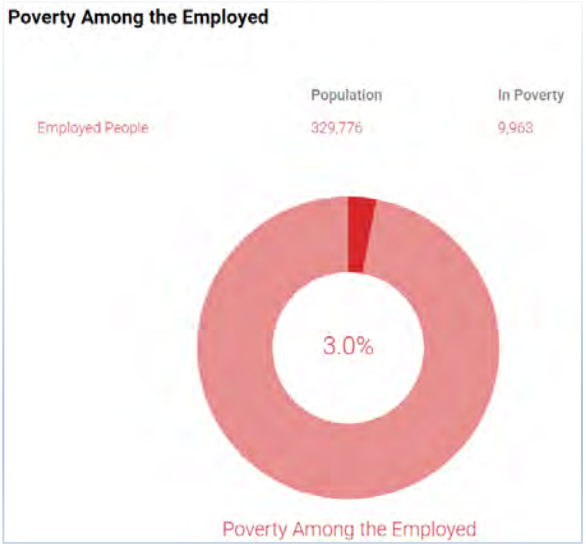
Closer analysis of poverty in Bucks County shows percentages by race, gender, age, employment status, and adults with disabilities.

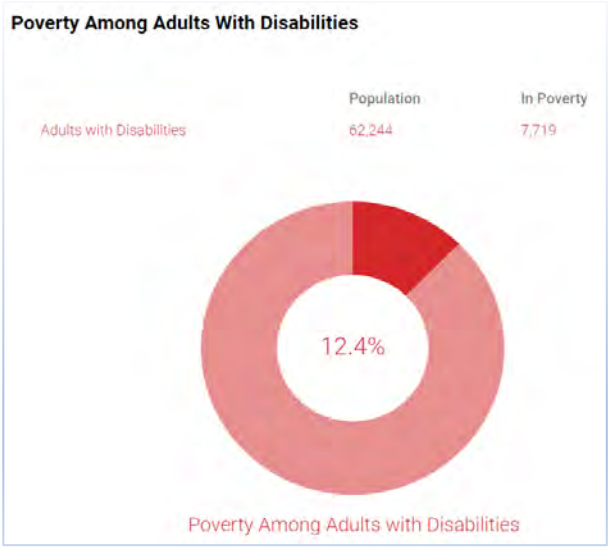
Poverty in Bucks County











Source: Poverty USA, Bucks County Maps & Data, 2018

Incarceration and Reentry

Research from the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)[4] shows 94% of prisoners have only a high school education—and 30% of those who previously attended high school did not earn a diploma. Only 6% of prison inmates have completed some college.

While in prison:

- 58% of inmates did not complete any education beyond what they had when they entered prison.
- 30% percent of prisoners reported a lack of interest in educational programming while incarcerated.
- Less than half of prisoners participated in and completed job training—effectively depriving them of valuable work experience that could make them more attractive to potential employers.
- Only 61% of inmates report working while in prison. Those who do find work while incarcerated are among those with higher literacy scores. This statistic suggests that lower functioning prisoners may be particularly disadvantaged when they fail to increase their educational attainment, fail to build work histories, or earn credentials that open doors with employers.

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 Bucks County Department of Corrections estimates nearly 7,432 prisoners are received a year for both the men's and women's facilities. In 2019, there were 6,717 individuals released from correctional facilities in the County.

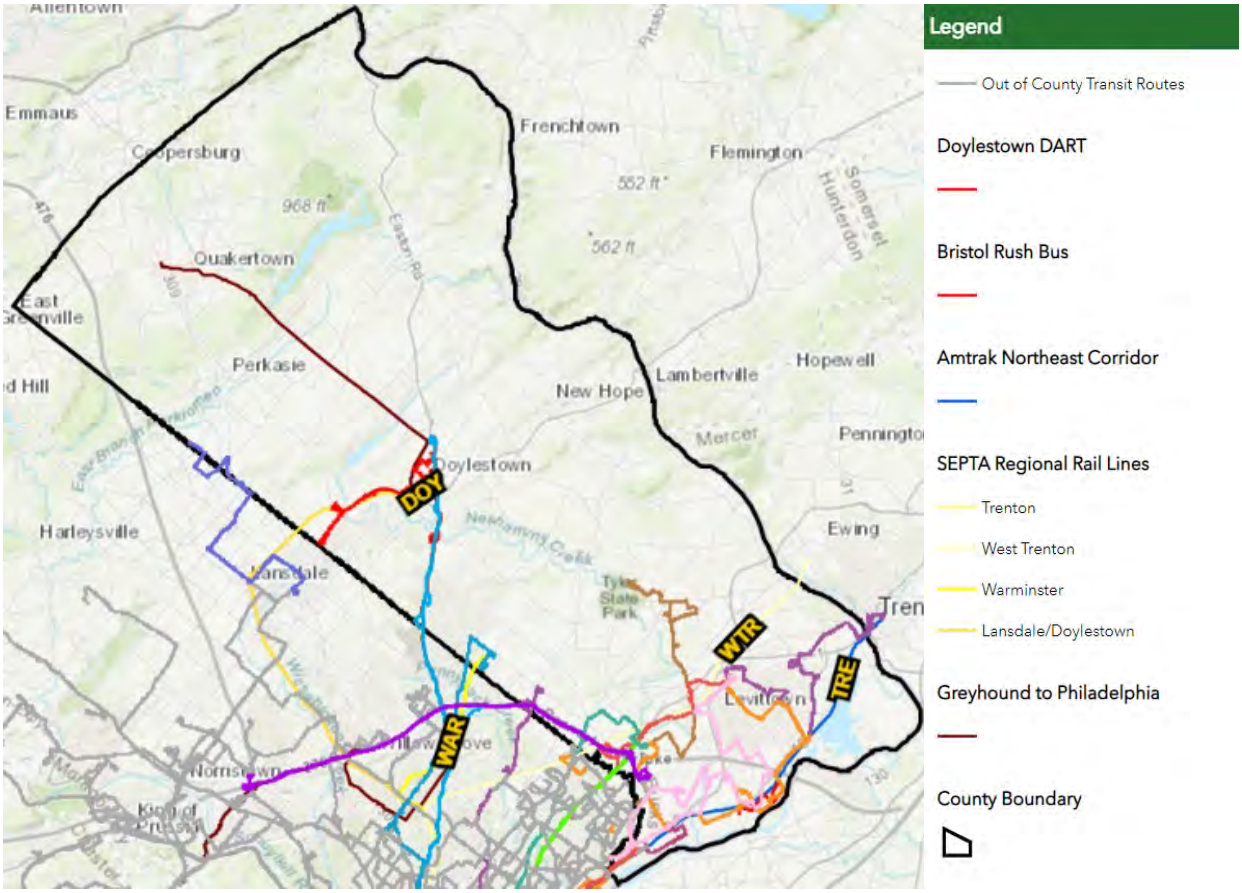
Transportation

In Bucks County, 3.29% (10,900 people) take public transportation to work, which is significantly lower than the 12.5% at the regional level. Although the demand for additional public transit routes within the County abounds, particularly in Upper and Middle Bucks, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) has not expanded routes to connect workers with job opportunities.

Transportation presents a difficult and underreported challenge to low-income and specifically entry-level job seekers attempting to secure employment across the Southeast region. This challenge represents a threat to viable employment for thousands of job seekers in our region and millions of Americans across the U.S. According to a Federal Reserve report, a mix of urban-suburban sprawl and well-documented lack of upkeep with the U.S. transportation infrastructure leaves job seekers in difficult situations. This Federal Reserve report further states that access to reliable transportation is necessary for economic mobility and quality of life. Surveys revealed that your employment options are limited if you do not own a car or access a car. Insufficient public transportation options or no access to a car can create insurmountable barriers to employment, hindering both an applicant's ability to apply for available jobs and employed residents' ability to retain their jobs.

Regionally the Federal Reserve Bank is working to promote economic solutions due to lack of transportation by convening community groups, non-profits, for-profits, and government agencies. One of the executed suggestions is partnerships between public transportation authorities, workforce development boards, employers, and companies like Uber and Lyft. These partnerships entail free rides/transportation for economically disadvantaged riders, discounted rides to interviews or work in certain geographic areas, and significantly discounted rides to rail stations.

The public transportation map below illustrates a disproportionate concentration of routes in Lower Bucks, revealing a sizable lack of public transit infrastructure in Upper and Middle Bucks. Lack of public transportation creates a significant barrier for job seekers looking for employment within the County but do not have the option to drive a personal vehicle to work. Cited by employers as a significant challenge for filling open positions, transportation limitations hinder access to available jobs and creates additional barriers for workers who rely on public transportation to secure sustainable employment.



Source: ArcGis Online, Bucks County Public Transportation Map

Disabilities

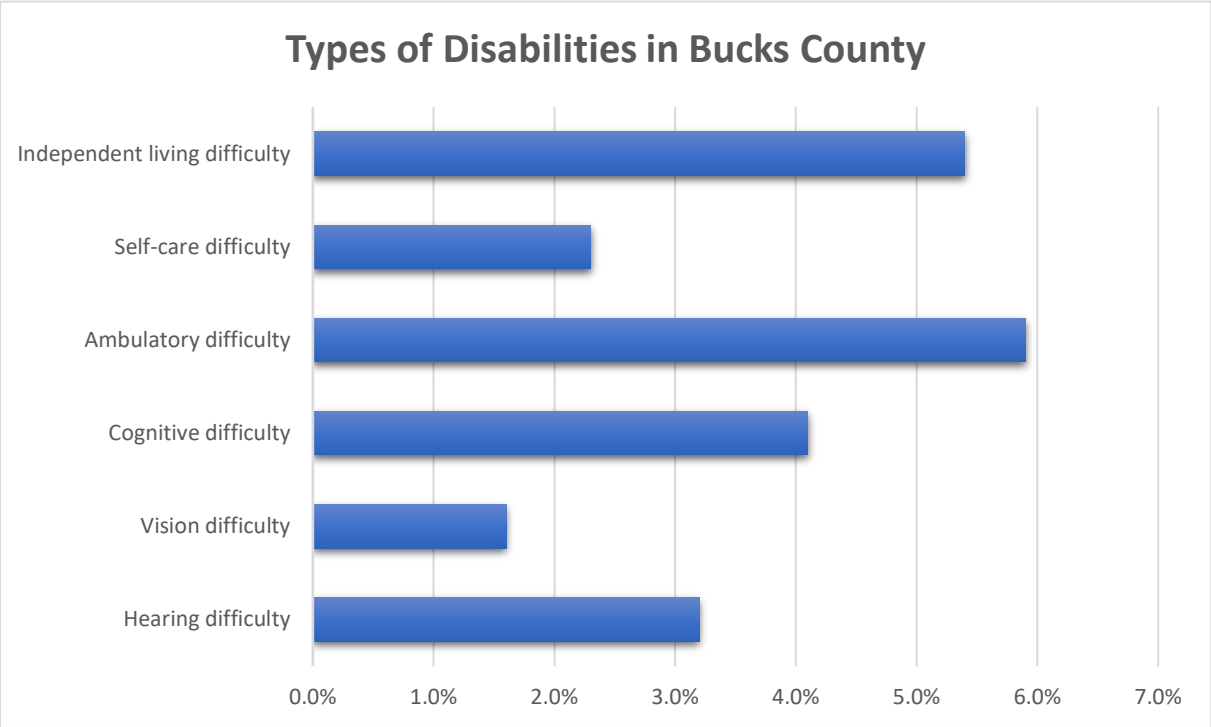
Persons with disabilities are frequently not considered potential members of the workforce. Bias continues to limit understanding and acceptance of disability in workplaces, including that persons with disabilities cannot work and that accommodating a person with a disability in the workplace is expensive. In contrast, many companies have found that persons with disabilities excel in their positions. In Bucks County, 3.75% of those employed have a disability, while 8.7% of those unemployed have a disability. Unemployment is 130% higher for those with a disability (12.7%) than those without a disability (4.7%).

[4] National Center for Education Statistics, PIAAC, 2017

Disability and Labor Force Status of Working Age Population (Ages 16-64)

				Unemployment Rate		Labor Force Participation Rate	
County	Total Population	Number of Individuals with a Disability	Percentage of Population with a Disability	No Disability	Disability	No Disability	Disability
Bucks	381,520	30,302	7.9%	3.8%	8.7%	85.5%	47.4%
PA Total	7,730,493	876,280	11.3%	4.7%	12.7%	82.6%	42.6%

Source: American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates; 2015-2019



Source: American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates; 2015-2019

Approximately 6,000 students are receiving special education services and therapies through the Bucks County Intermediate Unit, including:

1. Speech
2. Physical
3. Language
4. Psychological
5. Hearing/Audiology
6. Behavioral
7. Vision
8. Nursing
9. Occupational
10. Social Worker Counseling

Teen Pregnancy

According to Youth.gov., teen pregnancy and childbearing's high social and economic costs can have short- and long-term negative consequences for teen parents, their children, and their community. Recent research has recognized that pregnancy and childbirth have a significant impact on teen parents' educational outcomes.

By age 22, only around 50 percent of teen mothers have received a high school diploma. Only 30% have earned a General Education Development (GED) certificate, whereas 90% of women who did not give birth during adolescence receive a high school diploma. Only about 10% of teen mothers complete a two- or four-year college program. Teen fathers have a 25-30% 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.
- Be unemployed or underemployed as a young adult.

After adjusting for the factors that increase teen pregnancy risks (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), the immediate and long-lasting effects continue. Teen pregnancy costs U.S. taxpayers about $11 billion per year due to increased health care and foster care, increased incarceration rates among children of teen parents, and lost tax revenue because of lower educational attainment and income among teen mothers. Some recent cost studies estimate that the cost may be as high as $28 billion per year or an average of $5,500 for each teen parent. Most of this cost is associated with teens who give birth before age 18.

In Bucks County, in 2019, the teen pregnancy rate was 1.9%. There were 800 children between the ages of 0 and 17 receiving TANF Assistance in 2019.

Homelessness

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

The Point-in-Time (PIT) count is a count of sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons on a single night in January. HUD requires that Continuums of Care conduct an annual count of homeless persons who are sheltered in emergency shelter, transitional housing, and Safe Havens on a single night. Continuums of Care also must conduct a count of unsheltered homeless persons every other year (odd-numbered years). In 2019, there were 359 individuals counted in Bucks County[5].

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

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

In the 2018-2019 academic year, 858 children and youth in Bucks County met the McKinney-Vento definition of homeless.

1.2 How are skills gaps defined in the local area? Provide a description of the skills that are required to meet the needs of employers in the region/local area? [20 CFR 679.560(a)(2)]

An examination of current and projected employer-demanded skills aids in the analysis of labor force skill gaps. Labor market trends are determined by looking at Long Term Industry Projections and other Labor market information. For the period 2018-2028, employment in Bucks County is projected to increase by 4.0% or 11,550 workers. This growth is less than what is projected for the State (7.7%). Education and Health Services is projected to experience the greatest percentage change (11.3%), followed by Leisure and Hospitality (7.2%) and Professional and Business Services (5.7%). The industries projecting negative employment change are: Information (-5.5%); Manufacturing (-3.0%); Government (-2.1%); Agriculture, Mining, and Logging (-0.8%); and Trade, Transportation, and Utilities (0.8%).

[5] U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2007-2019 Point-in-Time Counts by CoC

Long-Term Industry Projections for Bucks County WDA (2018-28)

Industry	Employment (2018)	Projected Employment (2028)	Employment Change (2018-28) Volume	Employment Change (2018-28) Percent
Total Jobs	288,190	299,740	11,550	4.0%
Goods Producing Industries	44,920	44,830	-90	-0.2%
Agriculture, Mining & Logging	1,240	1,230	-10	-0.8%
Construction	16,080	16,820	740	4.6%
Manufacturing	27,600	26,780	-820	-3.0%
Services-Providing	227,470	238,990	11,520	5.1%
Trade, Transportation & Utilities	57,140	56,690	-450	-0.8%
Information	4,210	4,000	-210	-5.0%
Financial Activities	11,120	11,260	140	1.3%
Professional & Business Services	32,830	34,700	1,870	5.7%
Education & Health Services	70,390	78,310	7,920	11.3%
Leisure & Hospitality	28,700	30,760	2,060	7.2%
Other Services, Except Public Admin.	14,590	14,950	360	2.5%
Federal, State, and Local Government	8,500	8,320	-180	-2.1%
Self-Employed Workers	15,800	15,910	110	0.7%

Source: Center for Workforce Information and Analysis, Long-Term Occupational Employment Projections (2018-28)

The following table lists the industries that are projecting growth over the next several years. Personal Care Aides, Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers, and Home Health Aides are projected to experience the most significant volume growth. Home Health Aides, Physical Therapists, and Occupational Therapists are also projected to have the largest percent increase.

Fastest Growing Occupations in Bucks County (2018-28)

By Volume Change:

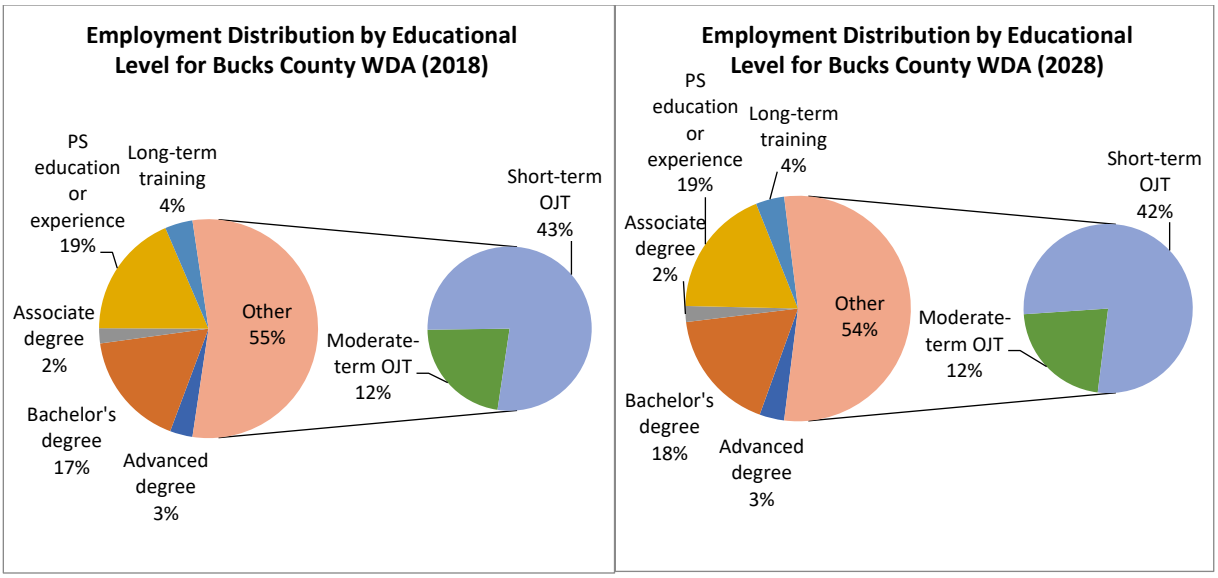
Occupational Title	Employment Change (Volume)
Personal Care Aides	1,850

By Percent Change: (min. employment of 500)

Occupational Title	Employment Change (Percent)
Home Health Aides	28.7%

Combined Food Preparation & Serving Workers	1,050	Physical Therapists	25.9%
Home Health Aides	990	Occupational Therapists	25.5%
Registered Nurses	700	Medical & Health Services Managers	24.2%
Nursing Assistants	420	Personal Care Aides	23.8%
Cooks, Restaurant	390	Software Developers, Applications	22.8%
Licensed Practical & Licensed Vocational Nurses	350	Licensed Practical & Licensed Vocational Nurses	17.7%
General & Operations Managers	290	Cooks, Restaurant	17.5%
Software Developers, Applications	280	Medical Assistants	16.2%
Laborers & Freight, Stock & Material Movers	230	Financial Managers	15.6%
Medical Assistants	210	Taxi Drivers & Chauffeurs	13.7%
Physical Therapists	210	Combined Food Preparation & Serving Workers	13.4%
Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	200	Emergency Medical Technicians & Paramedics	13.0%
Hairdressers, Hairstylists & Cosmetologists	200	Registered Nurses	12.7%
Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder, & Mental Health Counselors	180	Industrial Machinery Mechanics	12.1%
Construction Laborers	170	Medical Secretaries	11.9%
Medical Secretaries	160	Nonfarm Animal Caretakers	11.9%
Medical & Health Services Managers	160	Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder, & Mental Health Counselors	11.8%
Maintenance & Repair Workers, General	150	Market Research Analysts & Marketing Specialists	10.4%
Waiters & Waitresses	140	Nursing Assistants	10.0%

Source: Center of Workforce Information and Analysis, Long-Term Occupational Employment Projections (2018-28)



Source: Center for Workforce Information and Analysis, Long-Term Occupational Employment Projections (2018-28)

One method to assess the skills gap is to compare the current educational attainment with the expected employment growth level. In Bucks County, more than half of the occupations are projected to require on-the-job training (58%). In comparison, 18% will need a bachelor's degree, and 3% will require post-secondary education or experience. Bucks County has enough educated citizens to meet demand.

When looking at the skillset employers are projecting to require of the workforce several years from now, there is a need for workers who can sell products and services and calculate costs of goods or services. They will need to know how to use spreadsheet software and databases to fulfill job requirements meet employer demand.

Top 10 Detailed Work Activities

Detailed Work Activity	2024 Employment	Percent of Annual Openings	Annual Openings
Sell products or services	44,270	17.8%	1,521
Calculate costs of goods or services	40,430	16.0%	1,372
Order materials, supplies, or equipment	43,240	15.3%	1,313
Clean work areas	33,600	13.2%	1,128
Monitor inventories of products or materials	38,170	12.9%	1,106
Greet customers, patrons, or visitors	34,370	12.5%	1,073
Maintain records of sales or other business transactions	30,500	11.9%	1,021
Answer customer questions about goods or services	29,230	11.4%	975
Explain technical product or service information to customers	27,130	10.8%	922
Serve food or beverages	20,570	10.7%	916

*Sources: Center for Workforce Information and Analysis Occupational Projections; and, U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Information Network (O*NET) database*

Top 10 Tools & Technologies

Tools & Technologies	2024 Employment	Percent of Annual Openings	Annual Openings
Spreadsheet software	226,820	75.4%	6,454
Database user interface and query software	208,880	70.6%	6,044
Personal computers	201,340	66.4%	5,683
Word processing software	200,740	64.0%	5,477
Office suite software	184,750	61.4%	5,260
Desktop computers	184,150	61.3%	5,252
Electronic mail software	154,910	48.8%	4,176
Notebook computers	149,330	46.6%	3,988
Internet browser software	144,330	45.4%	3,890
Presentation software	122,840	37.7%	3,232

*Sources: Center for Workforce Information and Analysis Occupational Projections; and U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Information Network (O*NET) database*

Increasingly, jobs created in the County are now including STEM content and customer interaction skills. Combined with the high percentage of skills that employers view as learning on the job, opportunities exist for creative combinations of targeted, short-term certifications (micro-credentials) combined with work-based learning to fill skill gaps. Such solutions allow the employers to be partners in filling gaps, not just customers of education and training programs.

The Bucks County WED continues to survey employers who use PA CareerLink® services at various service intervals incorporated in On-The-Job Training (OJT), Incumbent Worker Training (IWT), hiring events, job fairs, and training. One-Stop services provided in the PA CareerLink® Bucks County Centers have feedback mechanisms. PA CareerLink® partners, coordinated by the One-Stop Operator, meet regularly to review employer feedback to ensure that suggestions and labor market insights are considered in revising service strategies as needed. Employers are always encouraged to attend the Bucks County WED Board meetings, and Board members are encouraged to identify local employers who can bring additional insights to the meetings.

As an integral part of the Southeast PA Regional WIOA Plan's regional strategy, employers are engaged in multiple initiatives that are collective efforts of the region's workforce boards. These initiatives include Industry Partnerships (IPs) to convene industry leaders around shared goals and concerns. The Bucks County WED is a member of the Innovation Technology Action Group (ITAG) to promote IT occupations and the Manufacturing Alliance of Bucks and Montgomery Counties to grow the manufacturing sector and maintain relationships with key supply chain employers. Under guidelines developed by the Commonwealth for Next Generation IPs, Industry Partnerships will continue as a primary means of engaging employers to develop partnerships for talent development within a Career Pathways framework. Working in collaboration with the workforce boards in the Southeast Pennsylvania region, the Bucks County WED will emphasize and respond to local employers' talent demands.

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

A review of employer demands and population skills reveals specific challenges addressed by the Bucks County WED and its partners during this Plan's implementation. Included are working collaboratively throughout Southeast Pennsylvania, the Bucks County WED will utilize the information obtained through the Engage! collaborative efforts led by the Chester County Economic Development Council.

The Bucks County WED has members who are part of or engaged with economic development organizations throughout the County and region, complementing the collective efforts to address business and industry needs. Additionally, the Bucks County WED also contracts with Emsi (economicmodeling.com) and shares and customizes labor market information to benefit economic development and other County and community organizations.

In working with economic development partners, the Bucks County WED continues to obtain a clear and timely assessment of aligning labor force skills and education/training activities with local and regional employers' needs. Southeast Pennsylvania regional PREP meetings, paired with the Engage!, serve to respond to employer needs directly. These collaborative efforts within the region have been critical since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and will continue to be essential in strategic recovery planning.

Aging Workforce

The median age of the Bucks County workforce is 44 compared to the regional median age of 40, and this gap is expected to increase during the next five years. Currently, 17% of the County's population is over the age of 65. This statistic presents challenges for connecting older workers to job opportunities, remaining in the workforce, and replacing these skills for workers leaving the workforce.

Educational Attainment

Bucks County has a college attainment rate that trends higher than the regional and Commonwealth levels. However, as the data shows, many of the jobs projected in the County over the next five years require combinations of on-the-job training and credentials not associated with college degrees. The challenge will be to fill these gaps with micro-credentials and work-based learning.

Under-Employment

The persistence of increased poverty results from residents taking jobs at lower wages or less than full-time. The challenge is to continue to connect skills that exist with jobs that require them and for individuals whose skills are now obsolete to utilize incumbent worker strategies to move them back to prior wage levels and beyond.

Cross-Sector Collaborations

Online job postings point to numerous jobs in service industries, often at lower wages, where customer service skills can be developed. Many lower-wage jobs increasingly have IT components embedded in the work. These jobs can be "gateway jobs" for higher-wage occupations combined with education and training

targeted to high-demand occupations. The challenge is to work outside of sector partnerships to form cross-sector strategies that meet all sectors' needs.

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Needs

All jobs are increasingly requiring STEM components, often in the form of computer literacy: Office suite software, database user interfaces, spreadsheet software, and others. The challenge is to embed computer literacy into all occupational training along with both language and math skills.

Out-Commuting

Bucks County has the highest level of net out-commuting (59.3%) in the Southeast Pennsylvania region. The challenge is to work with employers in the County to determine if skill gaps can be filled with county residents who currently commute longer distances for employment. Further analysis will also point to mismatches in skills that can be addressed through short-term training and education programs.

Barriers to Employment

Data presented above illustrate the large numbers of residents in the County requiring specialized services and multi-agency resources to ultimately prepare and connect them to family-sustaining jobs in the region. The challenge is leveraging the One-Stop center partnerships to provide the pathways to these jobs.

1.4 Provide an analysis of local area workforce development activities, including education and training. [679.560(a)(4)]

Bucks County is fortunate to have a solid foundation of experienced service providers for both youth and adults in partnership with experienced staff from State agencies to provide career services to job seekers and expanded outreach and assistance to employers as called for by WIOA.

Both short-term and long-term training is available for High Priority Occupations through strong relationships established by the Bucks County WED with Bucks County Community College, through the three Career and Technical schools (Bucks County Technical High School, Middle Bucks Institute of Technology, Upper Bucks Area Vocational Technical High School), and through both classroom and on-line training accessible via contractors such as EDSI. High Priority Occupations continue to be an integral part of all training strategies using labor market information provided by the State combined with the "reality check" provided by sector-based communications in Industry Partnerships, ongoing communication with chambers of commerce and economic development organizations, and one-on-one conversations between employers and business development team members. The Bucks County WED has strong partnerships with Vita Education Services and Bucks County Community College, the literacy and language services providers for adults. The Bucks County WED will review all adult education proposals to further align and integrate basic education with occupational training.

Working collaboratively throughout Southeast Pennsylvania, the Bucks County WED will utilize the information obtained through the Engage! collaborative efforts led by the Chester County Economic Development Council. Working in partnership with other organizations, the Bucks County WED addresses

the skill gaps for employers. Many additional partners utilize this information and opportunities for collaboration to improve services.

In reviewing both County and regional labor market information, the capacity for meeting critical needs, and the priorities created by State and Federal policies and guidance, the Bucks County WED has identified several challenges where opportunities exist for expanding employment and training services.

Filling Manufacturing Sector Skills Gaps

In partnership with neighboring workforce areas, the Bucks County WED has identified significant skills shortages in precision machining and other Manufacturing occupations, at least through 2024. These shortages serve to stifle existing employers' expansion efforts and make business attraction efforts more difficult for the Bucks County WED's economic development partners. The Bucks County WED has addressed these shortages via coordination and expansion of Mechatronics/Industrial Maintenance programs in the Career/Technical schools and through collaboration on the Metalworks program at the Bucks County Community College. Even with the expansion of training capacity for Manufacturing occupations, an ongoing challenge is attracting both youth and adult talent to the available training slots. Public perception about today's advanced manufacturing environment still does not match reality. Promotion of high-quality manufacturing jobs and the career pathways that enable success in those jobs remain priorities for the Bucks County WED and partners in the transition plan.

Building Stronger Youth Talent Pipelines

The Bucks County WED is well-positioned to advance WIOA and State priorities in several ways, grounded in continued work with employers in sector-based planning through Industry Partnerships regionally and Career Pathways developed locally with education partners.

Through the Business-Education Partnership grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, students and parents have gained awareness about career opportunities. Middle school students participated in the What's So Cool About Manufacturing Video project, while high schoolers experienced Manufest and Manufacturing Day. These employer-led initiatives promote advanced manufacturing careers in the local region. Employers are promoting their positions to appeal to technically savvy school students and their parents. With many employees approaching retirement age, manufacturing employers are "selling" themselves to the schools, students, and parents. These jobs are in-demand, require offer post-secondary certifications, and are highly technical. Additionally, the grant covers internships for students who are interested in Manufacturing careers. Their hourly rate can be paid via an internship, a valuable option for an employer during the onboarding/training of new employees.

Career Pathways connections have been strengthened between high school Career and Technical Education programs and Bucks County Community College, particularly in Manufacturing occupations where severe skill gaps exist.

Bucks County maintains a model youth program that enlists employers as work-based learning partners for young adults who need to re-engage with education and training. A significant opportunity exists to integrate work with partners such as Corrections to reduce recidivism rates for young adults.

Advancing and Replacing an Aging Workforce

The Regional Plan developed in 2017 identified an aging workforce as one of the five main challenges facing Southeastern Pennsylvania. Bucks County has a median age of 44, higher than the state average of 41 and the national mean of 39, which creates challenges for workforce development strategies in the Plan. First, retiring workers add to job creation to make skill shortages even more acute, particularly in Manufacturing. Second, many older workers will need to retain employment at wage levels to sustain families, even after retirement. The Bucks County WED will work with employers to identify advancement opportunities and use the funding for incumbent worker programs in the County. Incumbent worker strategies will then be paired with backfilling strategies where young adults can enter entry-level jobs with the employer and advance in career ladders. Some older workers will also be able to take advantage of the entrepreneurship training described below.

Creating a Culture of Entrepreneurship

A significant trend in the national and regional economies is toward a rapidly increasing number of "employees" now becoming their own employers, sometimes by choice but other times by necessity. Many employers are building contract employment into their ongoing staffing strategies, requiring that workers think about self-employment and entrepreneurship. Training is needed to prepare the next generation of workers in areas such as a business's legal status, tax management, health insurance, and pension plans.

Blending and Braiding Limited Funding Sources for Maximum Impact

The gap between education and training needs identified by employers and the funding available to meet the needs continues to widen as jobs continue to require higher academic preparation levels. Estimates point to a workforce in the next decade that will need 60% or more of applicants possessing post-secondary credentials in forms that directly relate to business needs. Strategies to braid resources with WIOA funding must include increased employer investment in work-based learning approaches while engaging them as partners-in-training in an integrated career pathways structure. Effective communications about job exploration, work-and-learn structures, internships, co-op programs, and others can lead to increased awareness and interest among potential employers.

Leveraging Apprenticeship and Pre-Apprenticeship Programs

Apprenticeship is designed to benefit the employer by meeting job skill requirements to develop, advance, and retain a qualified, highly competent workforce. The Bucks County WED remains committed to engaging with local employers to develop and sponsor new apprentice models and sustain existing programs. The Bucks County WED recognizes that the apprenticeship model can be leveraged to address the needs of individuals with barriers, underserved communities, diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts by employers. The Bucks County WED will follow the Commonwealth's lead and enhance career guidance and navigation services to advise individuals— especially those with barriers to employment and education—on programs and services that will provide them with an effective pathway to their career goals.

The Bucks County WED will continue activities to increase apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship engagement through partnerships and initiatives. The PA CareerLink® Bucks County Employer Services Manager and the Bucks County WED EARN and Youth Programs Manager participated in the

ApprenticeshipPHL Apprenticeship Intermediary program, completed in 2020, to help advance apprenticeship models in Bucks County in the top six high growth industries: Information Technology, Business and Financial Services, Health and Human Services, Construction and Infrastructure, Manufacturing and Logistics, and Retail and Hospitality The Bucks County WED will leverage Youth Apprenticeship, Pre-Apprenticeship and Registered Apprenticeship across the region through the collaborative efforts of ApprenticeshipPHL with a particular focus on those opportunities that lead to family-sustaining wages and career pathways.

In order to expand employer outreach and promote apprenticeships, the Bucks County WED has partnered with Philadelphia Works to expand the activities for the Southeast Region PA Registered Apprenticeship Ambassador Network (SEPA Region RA Ambassador Network). In 2020, the Bucks County WED offered its continued support of the first cohort of the Apprenticeship Navigator Registered Apprenticeship (ANRA) program in SEPA and will support future recruitment for all additional cohorts.

As a collaborating partner of Philadelphia Works, the Bucks County WED has worked closely to advance the SEPA region's apprenticeship model. With this funding, the SEPA Region RA Ambassador Network trains and supports additional apprenticeship intermediaries in the region. These intermediaries will benefit from the support of employers, organizations, and individuals with apprenticeship expertise and provide the fuel needed to enhance the region's apprenticeship work.

In addition, the Bucks County WED has worked closely with Bucks County Community College to promote and support the following apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs with educational components with Bucks County Community College.

Chef Apprenticeship
(Approved by and registered with the U.S. Department of Labor and Industry, Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training)

Bucks County Community College (BCCC) offers the Chef Apprenticeship in conjunction with the Department of Labor, Bureau of Apprenticeship Training, and participating food service employers. This major has been registered with the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training. Apprentices are awarded an Associate of Arts degree from BCCC and Journeymen Cooks papers from the U.S. Department of Labor. Major requirements include 6,000 hours of supervised, documented on-the-job training and educational courses that support and enhance the work experience.

This Associate Degree program qualifies graduates to compete for various entry-level cook/pastry careers in the hospitality management, food service, institutional foods service, commercial baking, and lodging industries, depending upon which emphasis is selected. Program requirements can be completed in three years of part-time study, full-time employment. Graduates seek employment in positions with job titles such as chef, sous chef, pastry chef, baker, food service production supervisor, kitchen manager, garde manger chef, and lead cook.

Registered Behavioral Technician Apprenticeship
(Recognized by the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry)

The Registered Behavior Technician (RBT) is a credentialed paraprofessional who practices under the close supervision of a Board-Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) and classroom teacher at the Bucks County

Intermediate Unit #22. The RBT is responsible for providing educational instruction to assigned individuals in a structured classroom environment designed to promote intellectual, behavioral, emotional, and social growth. The RBT assists in implementing individualized programs appropriate to the populations served, specifically children and adolescents (ages 5-21 years) with special education needs. Following the commencement of 2,040 hours of on-the-job training, the RBT candidate will be eligible for a certification exam. Apprentices continue with at least 144 hours of credited and non-credited course work at Bucks County Intermediate Unit #22 and BCCC.

In October 2017, the U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Apprenticeship Training awarded the RBT apprenticeship to Bucks County Intermediate Unit #22. Since then, there have been four apprentices that have completed the program. The Bucks County Intermediate Unit #22 is interested in offering the RBT apprenticeship to additional candidates in Fall 2021.

Metalwork Pre-Apprenticeship
(Registered by the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry)

Bucks County Community College's Center for Workforce Development established the Metalwork Training Program in 2014 to better serve Bucks County's population of job seekers and manufacturing businesses. The program aims to upskill and retrain unemployed and underemployed individuals and help them learn new skills to fill the gap for well-trained entry-level employees for manufacturing jobs. The program job placement rate is consistently around 92%. This program has been officially certified by the State of Pennsylvania and is sponsored by the JEVS Tri-State Apprenticeship Program (JTAP).

The program's duration is 288 hours, and topics include Safety, Hand Tools, Math and Measurement Systems, AutoCAD & blueprint reading, welding, manual and CNC machine operations, and employability skills. The program also includes 6-8 site visits of industry partners. Successful graduates of this program receive a College Certificate of Competency, OSHA10, and Forklift Safety certifications and sit for the National Institute for Metalworking Skills (NIMS) Level 1 Certification Exam for Measurement, Materials, and Safety.

Industrial Maintenance Pre-Apprenticeship
(Registered with the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry)

The Industrial Maintenance Training Program was established in 2016 in response to the success of Bucks County Community College's Center for Workforce Development Metalwork Program and employers' needs for a skilled workforce. The program aims to upskill and retrain unemployed and underemployed individuals and help them learn new skills to fill the gap for well-trained entry-level employees for manufacturing jobs. The job placement rate is consistently around 92%. This program has been officially certified by the State of Pennsylvania and is sponsored by the JEVS Tri-State Apprenticeship Program (JTAP).

The program's duration is 288 hours, and topics include Safety, Hand Tools, Math and Measurement Systems, blueprint reading, basic electricity, electrical and mechanical fabrication, PLCs, electric relays, and employability skills. The program also includes 6-8 site visits of industry partners. Successful graduates of this program receive a College Certificate of Competency, OSHA10, and Forklift Safety certifications.

1.5 Describe strategic planning elements, including a regional analysis of economic conditions. [20 CFR 679.560(a)(1)(i) and (ii)]

Since its transition into county government in 2020, the Bucks County WED created a new department combined with workforce and economic development. This transition has positioned the Bucks County WED better to analyze labor market data, articulate economic conditions, and respond to employers' employment needs. Increased access to shared labor market data, coordination with County-directed initiatives for economic recovery, and expanded partnerships with economic development organizations have provided a greater understanding of the unprecedented effects of the COVID-19 pandemic for job seekers and employers within the Local Workforce Area and the larger Southeast Pennsylvania region.

Most of the region reached peak unemployment (12-18%) in April 2020, except for Philadelphia, which hit its peak in June 2020. Though the pandemic's full economic impact is still unknown, the region is aware of the certainty that many residents, particularly low-income workers and those with barriers to employment, have experienced long-term effects. Some of those most affected are those who held positions in the food services and leisure and hospitality industries, which have shown consistent growth in Bucks County and had been on track to increase jobs by 7.2% between 2018 and 2028. In the likelihood that these jobs do not return, short-term training and funded credentialing programs would offer dislocated opportunities to upskill, retrain, and reenter the workforce while earning family-sustaining wages.

As the pandemic's full impact evolves, the local workforce boards will address new economic and workforce recovery challenges. Ongoing equitable recovery efforts will require a close analysis of labor market data in relation to employer needs and skilled job seeker availability. The Bucks County WED will continue to contribute its local perspective of demographic and economic conditions as part of a collaborative regional approach within the Southeast Workforce Planning Region.

A current regional analysis of economic conditions identifies existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors. As described in Section 1.1, Location Quotients (LQ) quantify clusters in which a region has a high employment concentration compared to the nation. Health Care and Social Assistance have an LQ over one in each of the six counties (Berks, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia), demonstrating its regional importance. Management of companies and enterprises has an LQ over one in five (Berks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia) of the six counties. In contrast, Finance and Insurance are concentrated above one in four (Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia) of the six counties. In Bucks, the following industries have an LQ over one: Construction, Manufacturing, Wholesale Trade, Retail Trade, and Health Care and Social Assistance[6].

Long-term industry projections for the Southeast region show where employer demand is expected to increase. Projected employment in Education and Health Services is predicted to grow 12.3% through 2028, Construction 8.8%, Professional and Business Services 7.5%, and Leisure and Hospitality 9.2%[7]. While post-pandemic policies and procedures have yet to be determined, their impact on long-term industry projections will likely play a significant role on expected sector trajectories. The Bucks County WED will work with its counterparts to identify local and regional ways to mitigate the overall impact.

Occupational growth in the region provides the six workforce development areas with additional insight

[6] Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

[7] Center for Workforce Information and Analysis, Long-Term Industry Projections 2018-2028

for collaboration with employers and training providers. As residents show a prevalence of inter-county commuting (Bucks County has the highest level of net out-commuting 59.3%), the local workforce boards can develop regional partnerships that align with individual and collective needs. The following occupational clusters have the highest projected growth through 2028: Healthcare Practitioners, Technicians and Support (14.6%); Computer, Engineering and Science (8.9%); and Protective, Food, Building and Personal Service (10.2%).

Projected in-demand job skills that are not necessarily specific to a given industry or occupation can help the workforce development boards align training opportunities for job seekers. The top five technology skills and tools expected to be conducive to employment in 2026, all computer-oriented, are the same for the six counties in the Southeast region. They include Database user interface and software, Office suite software, Spreadsheet software, Word processing software, Desktop computers, Notebook computers, and Personal computers[8].

Continued analysis of economic conditions, labor market trends, and post-pandemic trends will guide the region's COVID recovery. In doing so, the Bucks County WED will work with the Southeast Pennsylvania workforce development boards to anticipate regional employers' needs and align services to meet those needs.

2. STRATEGIC PLANNING QUESTIONS: Vision and Goals

2.1. What are the local board's strategic vision and goals for preparing its workforce? [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(1)(E); 20 CFR § 679.560(a)(5)]

The Bucks County (WED), with its Vision, Mission, and Values, has established a foundation for long-term success in meeting the needs of employers, job seekers, and students in the County, working in partnership with other workforce areas in the broader Southeast Pennsylvania region. This foundation is maintained as Bucks County WED continues to meet WIOA provisions to improve workforce and economic conditions. The Bucks County WED will expand its Vision, Mission, and Values by making data-informed decisions, analyzing labor market information to anticipate regional dynamics, and embracing new technologies to improve service delivery and increase equity.

[8] Center for Workforce Information and Analysis, Projected Job Skills 2016-2026

Mission

Bucks County WED's mission is to promote, drive, and ensure an effective workforce in Bucks County aligned with economic development.

Vision

Bucks County has a dynamic, globally competitive workforce that responds to the evolving direction of business and industry.

Values

The Bucks County WED is dedicated to:

- Building relationships with organizations and/or individuals to promote its mission.
- Ongoing assessment of workforce needs in Bucks County.
- Integrating educational organizations in the workforce development system.
- Increasing the community's awareness of its mission.
- Maintaining financial stability and sustainability.
- Supporting an effective and efficient staff.

The Bucks County WED is mindful that expenditures are investments of public funds tied directly to employment outcomes. Thus, the Bucks County WED adheres to local objectives, priorities, and procedures to achieve employment results from the investments, including:

- Using accurate, up-to-date labor market information, informed by sector-based discussions with employers, defines entry requirements for demand jobs.
- Utilizing High Priority Occupations (HPOs) to align training and education with employers' demands for talent.
- Employing a Career Pathways framework to connect education and workforce development programs aimed at identified demands.
- Maintaining local policies and protocols that ensure that training dollars are spent on High priority Occupations.
- Providing a quarterly review by the Bucks County WED's Systems Performance and Operations Committee on the return-on-investment of training in the HPOs.

The priority for adult training investments remains a guaranteed job through the On-The-Job Training (OJT) contract with supplementary classroom training to support both the employer and the trainee. This strategy supports the WIOA priorities for increased work-based learning and apprenticeship processes for "earn and learn." Another priority, especially for adults with substantial education and skill gaps or those in need of transitioning from an obsolete occupation to a growing one, is Individual Training Accounts (ITAs). The issuance of ITAs is based on current (up to 12-month forecast) regional labor market demands.

The Bucks County WED implements WIOA youth services requirements that emphasize services to disenfranchised out-of-school youth for enlisting employers and the Youth Workforce Center, preparing young adults for jobs and career exploration opportunities. Young adults are matched with employers that

offer the best fit for the participant's interests and current abilities. Opportunities may take the form of On-the-Job training, an internship, full- or part-time employment, or a mentorship opportunity. The Youth Workforce Center operates in the PA CareerLink® Bucks County office, targeting a group with a history of high unemployment. The goal is to provide intensive coaching, training, and job placement of out-of-school youth into entry-level high-growth, high-demand occupations. Partnerships with the Bucks County Intermediate Unit, Juvenile Probation, and Children and Youth Services broaden targeted outreach.

In-School Youth services are also a strategic priority, with WIOA and TANF funds being utilized to support at-risk youth in partnership with K-12 schools. Emphasis is placed on promoting access to career and technical education (CTE) pathways at both the secondary and post-secondary levels. Bucks County is home to three award-winning Technical High Schools, serving the 13 school districts.

The Bucks County WED's Youth Council Committee continues to focus on Manufacturing as a primary initiative. It works closely with the CTE partners to provide manufacturing career fairs that target students and their parents, who often have misperceptions about job opportunities in today's advanced manufacturing environment. The Youth Council also expands its influence beyond services to target populations by providing ongoing career planning and labor market information to the K-12 school districts, with messaging on Career Pathways combining current labor market data from the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry's Center for Workforce Information and Analysis (CWIA) unit, insights from sector-based work with employers region-wide, and toolkits and lesson plans for teachers on presentation of the information available to schools on the Bucks County Intermediate Unit's website.

Bucks County WED Primary WIOA Goals
Program Year 2020

Identify and fill skill gaps identified through sector-based employer engagement initiatives with neighboring workforce areas as part of the Regional Plan.

Use the Career Pathways framework to coordinate all training and job-related assistance programs in the County to engage employers and create a county-wide system of educational "on-ramps and off-ramps" available for all age groups and job circumstances.

Strengthen partnerships with other workforce development boards in the broader Philadelphia region to create more efficiencies and higher levels of customer service through coordinated policies and procedures in areas such as OJT and ITA protocols and Incumbent Worker guidelines.

Identify and provide services for Unemployment Compensation (UC) claimants in early stages via the Pennsylvania Re-employment Services and Eligibility Assessment Program (RESEA), which is designed to identify claimants who are most likely to exhaust unemployment compensation (UC) benefits and may need assistance to find a new job.

Create new micro-credentials that address specific employer skill gaps and stack toward higher-level certifications.

Engage employers as partners in training through new work-based learning and apprenticeship structures.

Work with the K-12 school systems and higher education partners on integrated career and academic planning processes to decrease the percentage of K-12 students who enter college needing remediation.

The analysis of barriers to employment in the County that prevent residents from accessing jobs increases the need and the opportunity to form stronger partnerships with organizations that work directly with many of the populations cited. As WIOA requires a new Priority of Service protocol, implementing this Plan will result in ongoing relationship building with these organizations. The Bucks County WED will continue relationships with providers, including BARC Developmental Services, Wood Services, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, Bucks County Department of Human Services, Bucks County Department of Corrections, Bucks County Drug and Alcohol Commission, VITA Education Services, and others.

The Bucks County WED and the PA CareerLink® Bucks County have long-standing relationships with area providers who serve populations with barriers. We will continue to maintain established contacts through the One-Stop Operator Committee, which meets quarterly. Specifically related to serving individuals with disabilities or targeted populations, the Committee is responsible for ensuring appropriate accommodations and services to help individuals find employment opportunities. Additionally, this Committee focuses on developing links with regional employers to support the local workforce development system while meeting employers' needs and supporting economic growth. This committee meets quarterly to ensure that the Bucks County WED continues to engage and serve individuals with the highest need. All Partners listed participate in PA CareerLink® Partners meetings, held monthly to address operational needs.

2.2. What is the local board's strategy to work with the entities that carry out the core programs to align resources available to the local area in order to achieve the strategic vision and goals for the local area? [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(1)(F); 20 CFR § 679.560(a)(6)]

The Bucks County WED continually strives to engage a wide range of partners working toward shared goals and clarifying individual roles for the highest collective impact levels. Intra-county and intercounty partnerships are essential for meeting all the Bucks County WED's goals for a highly skilled and employed workforce.

Key partners include:

Career and Technical Education: The three Career Tech high schools are highly engaged with the Bucks County WED's Youth Council Committee and meet quarterly with the Executive Director to coordinate responsiveness to identified employer demands.

Bucks County Intermediate Unit (BCIU): The BCIU works in partnership with the Bucks County WED to provide a hub for information dissemination to all educational partners and serves on the Board.

Adult Education Providers: The Bucks County WED maintains an ongoing collaborative relationship with WIOA Title II providers as key partners in the One-Stop delivery system.

Vocational Rehabilitation Programs: The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) is a key partner and provides specialized programs for job seekers, students, and employers for OVR-eligible individuals. In addition, OVR helps other partners identify persons with disabilities so that the full range of partners' programs and resources can be utilized to address barriers to employment for all applicants.

Higher Education: The Bucks County WED partners with Bucks County Community College, Delaware Valley University, Career and Technical Education programs, and the affiliated universities of LaSalle and Holy Family as part of a consortium dedicated to 21st Century Skills and advancement of Career Pathways.

Bucks County Reentry Coalition: The Bucks County WED joined the Bucks County Reentry Coalition to work collaboratively behind the walls in response to employers who want to expand their applicant pools and offer career pathways to self-sufficiency. Their vision is for all returning citizens to successfully transition into the community by utilizing the necessary resources and support, engaging in prosocial behavior, and remaining free as law-abiding citizens. Coalition members created an accessible guide to raise awareness of available programs, facilitate connections to community resources, provide contact information, encourage communication with case managers and reentry specialists, and ease the process of reentry for formerly incarcerated individuals.

Chambers of Commerce: The Bucks County WED maintains active membership on all four local Chambers, with two of the Chambers having seats on the Youth Council Committee; quarterly meetings also occur between Chamber representatives and the Executive Director; and Bucks County WED staff participate in numerous Chamber functions including Young Professionals, Bucks Business Connect, Business Card Exchange, and Women in Business.

Community-Based Organizations: The Bucks County WED and the PA CareerLink® Bucks County are represented on four multi-organization networking groups to coordinate workforce development and human service programs.

Pennsylvania Workforce Development Association: Bucks County WED staff members actively participate in bi-monthly meetings of the statewide association of workforce development boards; the group serves as a learning network and policy advisory body in working with Commonwealth officials in multiple departments.

Industry Sector Planning Groups: Bucks County WED staff members meet regularly with multiple sector-based groups to share information and obtain insight for new program development, including Manufacturing Alliance of Bucks and Montgomery County; Smart Energy Initiative; Southeastern PA Healthcare Alliance; Innovative Technology Action Group (ITAG); and Bucks County Long-Term Care Consortium.

Other Groups: Bucks County WED staff members participate in other groups, including Local Management Committee, Bucks County Transportation Management Association, Delaware Valley Regional Planning Committee Public Participation Task Force, Career and Technical Education General Advisory Committees, Bucks County Commissioners Economic Advisory Board, Family Service Association Continuum of Care,

Citizens Advisory Committee, Direct Services Team, United Way of Bucks County, Human Trafficking Committee, and Direct Services Coalition.

A key component of service partner alignment under the PA CareerLink® banner is coordinated outreach to the community related to service access. The Bucks County WED currently utilizes social media via active Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter accounts for the PA CareerLink® Bucks County. Bucks County WED plans to increase remote access through virtual enrollment in Title I services and PA CareerLink® services via social media, including videotaping workshop offerings and publicly posting job seeker workshops.

The PA CareerLink® Bucks County maintains two Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant locations; remote partners, including OJT and ITA sites, are reviewed for ADA compliance before starting any partnership.

2.3. How will the local board's vision and goals align with, support, and contribute to the governor's vision and goals for the Commonwealth's workforce development system, as well any the goals and strategies articulated in the regional Plan? [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(2); 20 CFR § 679.560(b)(1)(ii)]

Governor Wolf's WIOA Combined State Plan lays out a vision and framework for local and regional opportunities to advance the workforce development system. The foundation for advancement will be Alignment, Innovation, Employer Engagement, Accountability Structures, and Improved Data.

The Bucks County WED supports the governor's vision through continued adherence to six foundational objectives contained in its Strategic Plan:

- ✓ Purpose and Mission: Establish outcomes-based evaluation measures/metrics for all major organizational activities to demonstrate the impact of the Bucks County WED on workforce and economic development (supports governor's vision for Accountability Structures and Improved Data).

- ✓ Governance/Foundation: Ensure the Bucks County WED acts as responsible and effective stewards of the public's workforce development resources (supports governor's vision for Accountability).

- ✓ Operations/Foundation: Develop the Bucks County WED's staff capacity for operational excellence (supports the governor's vision for Innovation and Alignment through the professional development of staff to implement best practices via work with local partners).

- ✓ Core Agenda: Strengthen relationships with legislative, economic development agencies, and educational institutions to advance a shared agenda for the workforce (supports governor's vision for Alignment through relationship development).

- ✓ Outreach/Promotion: Establish the Bucks County WED as the premier agency for workforce development among employers, workers, and educational institutions throughout Bucks County (supports governor's vision for Employer Engagement as part of overall outreach initiatives).

- ✓ Human and Capital Investment: Enhance workforce development initiatives for high-level professionals, small business owners, entrepreneurs, students, and the emerging workforce (supports governor's vision for Employer Engagement with a focus on small business, and Innovation in support of entrepreneurs to create businesses and jobs).

The objectives above, coupled with the organization's key indicators of financial strength, are reviewed monthly by the Bucks County WED staff and quarterly by the Board.

The governor's vision and Plan, defined in the Pennsylvania Combined WIOA Plan, establishes five broad goals for the Commonwealth's workforce development system with strategies for advancing each one.

The chart below shows how the Bucks County WED's Local Plan goals align with the Pennsylvania Combined Plan and the Regional Plan goals.

1) Career Pathways and Apprenticeships Develop a comprehensive career pathways system in PA and expand career pathways as the primary model for skill, credential, degree attainment, emphasizing assisting individuals in addressing barriers to employment, earn a family-sustaining wage, and advance their career.	
PA Combined Plan Broad Goals	• Increase the creation of registered pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs, particularly in non-traditional occupations, as part of its career pathway system-building efforts. • Increase the recruitment efforts of registered pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs to increase the number of individuals from non-traditional populations, such as women, minorities, re-entrants, and persons with disabilities, into these programs, also ensuring opportunities are available to both youth and adults. • Promote Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS) for all transition-age youth with disabilities. • Increase public awareness of the career pathways model and program design to build a career pathways system. • Increase exposure to career awareness and exploration activities for K-12 and post-secondary students and adult learners, as a strategy related, but not limited to, dropout prevention, increased knowledge of career opportunities, and exposure to business and industry in students' communities. • Continue to maintain a standing Career Pathways and Apprenticeship Committee, charged with developing policy recommendations related to interagency collaboration and coordination around career pathways and apprenticeship programs and priorities, and implementing the career pathways and apprenticeship related goals set forth in the WIOA Combined State Plan.
Bucks County WED Local Plan Goals	• Promote the career pathways model in all Adult and Youth programs. • Utilize High Priority Occupations (HPO) list to align training and education better to demand. • Serve as the "go-to" source of information on employers' jobs, skills demand, and Career Pathway design by education and training providers. • Promote multiple access points for Career Pathways to the public and advance a culture of learning in the County. • Continue to maintain the Bridges Out of Poverty program in Career Pathways to ensure broader access to higher skills. • Advance OJT policies for HPOs tied to Career Pathways.
	Support Regional Plan Goals
	• Promote Career Pathways as the language of the system and connection for education and training to employers.

	• Work collaboratively with employers, industry partnerships, community organizations, and educators to broaden career awareness messages. • Create a regional framework of micro-credentials that attach to specific Career Pathways.
2) Sector Strategies and Employer Engagement Engage employers and industry clusters through innovative strategies to improve the connection and responsiveness of workforce programs and services to labor market demand, including recruiting, training, and retaining talent.	
PA Combined Plan Broad Goals	• Promote Next-Gen Industry Partnerships funded through Industry Partnership grants, with a focus on business-identified priorities. • Increase coordination between business engagement staff at each agency through the Engage! Program to more effectively provide businesses with both workforce and economic development services. • Expand access to online education and training programs that result in a credential or certification of value. • Encourage employers, including those that receive State funds from economic development and other programs, to utilize the public workforce system. • Increase engagement with the business community on Employment First, accessibility standards, disability talent recruitment, Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines compliance, disability etiquette, and the benefits of hiring individuals with disabilities. • Increase collaboration and coordination between the OVR and local workforce development systems when using on-the-job training models. • Increase inter-agency career readiness engagement activities and partnerships for students and educators by engaging with business and industry. • Continue to maintain a standing Sector Strategies and Employer Engagement Committee, charged with developing policy recommendations related to interagency collaboration and coordination around sector strategy and employer engagement programs, and priorities and implementing the sector strategy and employer engagement goals set forth in the WIOA Combined State Plan.
Bucks County WED Local Plan Goals	• Participate fully in regional Industry Partnerships and promote with local Employers. • Prioritize the Business Services Team (BST) efforts to companies participating in partnerships and providing high-quality jobs. • Increase availability of incumbent worker training to advance skills and wages of workers who took jobs at underemployment" level during recent Recession. • Work with county human services partners to increase access points for target populations, including ex-offenders. • Implement the Board's new Priority of Services policy to focus resources on individualized career services for individuals with employment barriers. • Continue accountability reviews to maximize return on investment.
	Support WIOA Regional Plan Goals
	• Create a regional strategy for leveraging Rapid Response funds to address Incumbent Worker Training needs in key industry sectors. • Promote sector strategies and employer engagement as a regional activity through a joint event (job fair, career awareness event, etc.). • Coordinate service approaches for key employer programs (OJT and IWT) to make them more user-friendly for employer customers. • Align policies for Incumbent Worker Training and On-the-Job-Training, to ensure seamless access to job seekers and employers who have a presence in multiple local areas within the SEPA region. • Increase frequency of regional Workforce Board chairs and directors meeting to quarterly through COVID-19 recovery; use meetings as a venue for connecting to regional economic development groups and industry sector leaders/associations. • Continue LWDB representation in SE Regional Economic Development PREP meetings to ensure close coordination and alignment with Economic Development Partners.

	• Leverage relationships with economic development partners to formally engage chambers throughout the region. • Explore the option of a large-scale gathering (frequency TBD) of all SEPA LWDB members. • Expand sector-based employer engagement via Industry Partnerships, apprenticeships, and other programs.
3) Youth Increase opportunities for all youth to experience work-based learning through summer employment, pre-apprenticeship, Registered Apprenticeship, internships, job shadowing, mentoring, and other workplace experiences, including developing employability skills.	
PA WIOA Combined State Plan Broad Goals	• Identify and promote evidence-based models and effective practices for engaging opportunity youth. • Increase co-enrollment of opportunity youth in WIOA Core and partner programs, when relevant, to ensure that appropriate funds are leveraged to provide necessary services to these individuals. • Increase opportunities for youth in registered pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs and establish new partnerships with secondary and post-secondary institutions to achieve this goal. • Promote and encourage service opportunities with AmeriCorps and require all WIOA regional and local plans to include AmeriCorps, when available, as a referral option for young people, particularly opportunity youth. • Promote and encourage opportunities in YouthBuild and Job Corps programs and require that these priorities be included within all WIOA regional and local plans, when available. • Support youth with disabilities in the attainment of competitive, integrated employment by increasing paid work experience opportunities and other career exposure experiences, such as job shadowing, mentoring, and employer mock interviews, in addition to supported employment services. • Promote early career exposure and exploration, as well as the development of employability skills through work-based learning opportunities, particularly through summer employment and STEM career pathways, for in-school youth, as a means of increasing student engagement and dropout prevention, by engaging businesses. • Promote awareness of the 14 required WIOA youth program elements, including financial literacy education, adult mentoring, leadership development opportunities, entrepreneurial skills training, etc. • Continue to maintain a standing Youth Committee, charged with developing policy recommendations related to interagency collaboration and coordination around youth programs and priorities and implementing the youth-related goals set forth in the WIOA Combined State Plan.
Bucks County WED Local Plan Goals	• Create better career awareness alignment with academic preparation in K-12 schools, reducing the need for remediation for K-12 graduates entering post-secondary education and training. • Integrate foundational ("soft") skills into academic and occupational training. • Grow the number of employers joining to expand work-based learning options for high-risk youth. • Expand access to CTE programs for all youth in the County. • Expand partnerships with community organizations and schools as referral sources for high-risk youth.
	Support WIOA Regional Plan Goals
	• Develop a regional plan to outreach to disconnected youth. • Develop a plan to address access to technology and connectivity issues for youth and young adults (align with the plan to address this issue for adults and dislocated workers). • Develop a plan to align existing apprenticeships to pre-apprenticeship opportunities. • Continue to regionally promote and support projects that develop a talent pipeline in high-priority occupations (such as What's So Cool About Manufacturing?).

4) Continuous Improvement of the Workforce Development System

Identify and enact system changes and improvements that enhance the collaboration and partnership between agencies and partners in the workforce development system.

PA Combined State Pan Goals

- Share data across partner programs to assist in the ability to coordinate services to participants and to track participant outcomes, to maximize the positive impact of limited financial resources, including expanding the Commonwealth's Statewide Longitudinal Data System.
- Prioritize issuing joint guidance when two or more agencies have policies that impact the function of multiple agencies or collaborate on implementing an initiative.
- Ensure program planning and policy development are demand- and data-driven, built on sound socio-economic and labor market information, recognize trends related to programmatic data and outcomes, and prioritize evidence-based models.
- Streamline the occupational licensing process by removing barriers preventing qualified individuals from receiving occupational licensure.
- Develop a dashboard to track all key performance indicators related to the workforce development system and implementation of the Combined State Plan, including developing State-driven metrics and elevating promising practices across the system.
- Encourage employers and educational institutions to accept work-based learning experiences as provisional credits and certifications, including military experience and training.
- Continue to maintain a standing Continuous Improvement Committee, charged with developing policy recommendations related to interagency collaboration and coordination around continuous improvement programs and priorities and implementing the continuous improvement related goals set forth in the WIOA Combined State Plan.
- Continue convening the Interagency Workgroup beyond the submission of the WIOA Combined State Plan to ensure the continuous improvement of Pennsylvania's workforce system and maintain collaboration between agencies and programs.

Bucks County WED Local Plan Goals

- Work with employers to validate credentials and to create new micro-credentials to meet critical sector-based needs.
- Create new sector-based employer initiatives in partnership with other workforce areas in the SE PA region.
- Work with regional workforce areas to streamline and coordinate OJT and ITA policies to make them more user-friendly on a regional basis.
- Maintain quarterly meetings with chambers of commerce and key industry groups in the County as a "reality check" on the labor market data and training strategies.
- Prioritize business services for employers offering high-quality jobs in high-growth occupations.

Support for WIOA Regional Plan Goals

- Develop and implement a plan to continuously review local service strategies, curricula, and other resources to leverage when possible. This includes the ongoing review of provider offerings and best practices.
- Continue to partner with the PA Department of Labor and Industry to ensure consistency of guidelines and technical assistance/monitoring practices across the region to enhance leveraging opportunities.
- Expand train-the-trainer opportunities that service delivery staff from multiple areas can attend.
- Continue SEPA Regional Director's meeting on a bi-monthly basis.
- Identify strategies for regional data sets through alignment of data resources.
- Develop and implement a regional report to highlight best practices, opportunities for collaboration, and service delivery comparisons where appropriate, measuring regional versus local benefits.
- Work collaboratively to identify and pursue relevant funding opportunities; identify additional revenue generation through fee-for-service programs to allow for more flexible local and regional resources.

5) **Strengthening the One-Stop Delivery System** Implement improvements to One-Stop service delivery to better serve all customers, including job seekers and employers.	
PA Combined State Plan Broad Goals	• Prioritize increasing online resources, utilizing shared space models, and enhance coordination across programs and services. • Expand customer access and services across the One-Stop system to engage new customers and increase the number of individuals being served by the workforce system through better partner relationships, including, but not limited to, local libraries and community-based resources and programs. • Increase training to all front-line staff on all available program offerings to allow for informed internal and external referrals to additional services and facilitate serving the holistic needs of the customer. • Promote innovative strategies for serving customers with barriers, including better customer engagement and support, as well as a focus on increasing awareness of community partners and available resources. • Business Service Teams will focus on collaborative efforts across programs to increase engagement with employers in a more coordinated way, especially as it relates to barrier remediation and worker recruitment. • Prioritize high-level customer service in facilitating more personal and customer-focused, customer-centered referrals and program design. • Increase the number of individuals co-enrolled in all WIOA Core programs, when relevant, and other partner programs to allow increased access to additional programmatic and supportive services. • Continue to increase the capacity of the Commonwealth Workforce Development System, the workforce development system of record, to include additional partners, programs, and resources, and to increase system communications, referral capabilities, and improve customer usability. • Establish and maintain a standing One-Stop Service Delivery System Committee, charged with developing policy recommendations related to interagency collaboration and coordination around the One-Stop system and implementing the One-Stop system related goals set forth in the WIOA Combined State Plan.
Bucks County WED Local Plan Goals	• Maintain a local data system that is data-driven and outcome-based. • Regularly review local economic data to adjust program and training priorities. • Review outcomes using the PA CareerLink® Monthly Goals and Objectives Scorecard.
	Support for Regional Plan Goals
	• Develop a plan to review and leverage resources and best practices regularly and challenges evolving from Title I provider contracts, especially in instances when the same provider is used for services (at least twice per year). • Share resources for public and employer awareness of programs and services. • Engage PA Department of Labor and Industry as a partner to advocate where appropriate for customers receiving Unemployment Compensation. • Align regional messaging as it relates to One-Stop services. • Develop a plan to address access to technology and connectivity issues for job seekers (align with Plan to address for youth and young adults).

2.4 What are the local levels of performance that have been negotiated with the governor and chief elected officials? [WIOA 116(c); 20 CFR § 679.560(b)(16)]

- ***How will the local board's goals relate to the achievement of these measures? [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(17); 20 CFR § 679.560(b)(5)]***

A table of WIOA-negotiated performance goals is presented in *Attachment 1: WIOA Title I Programs Performance Accountability Table.*

The Bucks County WED is data-driven in assessing its work as a local board and in assessing the collective community impact of its network of workforce development partners in the County. While broader in scope than WIOA negotiate performance goals, its goals and strategies are entirely aligned with the WIOA performance goals of the Commonwealth. Primary program performance drivers include:

- Placement of job seekers in high-quality jobs.
- Wages at a family-sustaining level.
- Credentials that have currency with regional employers plus "stack-ability" toward higher credentials.
- Retention in jobs with pathways to advancement.
- Effectiveness in meeting employers' needs and retaining them as customers of the local workforce development system.

The Bucks County WED performs a detailed review of metrics from the PA CareerLink® Bucks County regularly as a means of using leading indicators to allow program adjustments to be made promptly to ensure adherence to Federal performance accountability measures. Key metrics monitored by Bucks County WED staff and Board members include:

Workforce Service

- New visitors to PA CareerLink® Bucks County
- Returning visitors to PA CareerLink® Bucks County
- Displaced workers through WARN notices
- Customer satisfaction feedback from job seekers and employers

Financial Indicators

- Cost per participant for WIOA-funded participants
- Cost per placement for WIOA-funded participants

Other Indicators (beyond required WIOA and TANF measures)

- Decreased dependence on public assistance
- Contracts with employers (OJT, IWT, customized training, other)
- Percentage of new employer customers who are Premier (high wages/high demand/high growth)

Standards for required WIOA measures are negotiated with the State. *Attachment 1: WIOA Title I Programs Performance Accountability Table* incorporates the local levels of WIOA negotiated performance goals for Program Year 2020-2021 and attained performance measures for Program Year 2019. WIOA also provides a set of shared performance measures employed by all core partners in the One-Stop delivery network. The Bucks County WED will work with all core partners to define local standards developed in the local Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the partners under MOU guidelines of the Commonwealth.

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

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

Passed by the U.S. Congress in 2014, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) established Workforce Development Boards (WDB) across the nation and in each of the fifty states and its territories. These WDBs operate in regional networks to implement the provisions of the WIOA and improve workforce and economic conditions. They are charged with policymaking and oversight of workforce investment and development activities in defined areas known as Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDA).

In practice, each Local Development Board ensures that the investments are used to foster business and industry growth in their area, utilizing the indigenous workforce to fulfill their employment needs. In the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, there are 67 counties and 22 established Workforce Development Boards. In Bucks County, the local workforce development system is comprised of the Bucks County Workforce Development Board, its fiscal agent, the Bucks County Department of Workforce and Economic Development, service delivery entities, and the PA CareerLink® Operator. *Attachment 2: WIOA Local Workforce Development System Organizational Chart Model* depicts a clear separation of duties between the local board and programmatic and service delivery entities.

The Bucks County Board of Commissioners appoints the Bucks County Workforce Development Board members, selecting these dedicated volunteers who commit their time and talents to strengthen the local workforce.

Board Membership

The Bucks County WED is comprised of a minimum of 51% private sector (employer/business) members, representatives of local educational entities, labor organizations, community-based organizations, economic development agencies, and PA CareerLink® Bucks County partners and investors.

The Bucks County WED is charged with:

- Leadership: Identifying and responding to issues that affect the workforce investment and development system in Bucks County and creating policy around issues faced by Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth constituencies in Bucks County.
- Strategic Planning: Developing the local strategic workforce development plan.
- Local Labor Market Analysis: Identifying the growth industries in the local and regional area; addressing the needs of the emerging workforce through Youth Development activities; increasing

the local economy by creating a highly skilled incumbent workforce; and identifying eligible providers of Intensive and Training Services to under-employed residents.

- One-Stop Delivery System: Chartering and providing continual oversight of the PA CareerLink® Bucks County.

Board Committee Structure

The Board has permanent Standing Committees with Chairpersons appointed by the Chair. These Committees are:

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee oversees the WIOA and the Bucks County WED budgets and makes the final determination of funding proposals, subject to ratification of the full Board. The Committee is empowered to act on all Board matters between regular meetings of the Board, pending subsequent ratification by the Board, and standing committees chaired by a Board member but include participation by non-board members who have interest or expertise related to the Committee's function.

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee is responsible for budgeting as well as fiduciary oversight of the Bucks County WED public grants/funding streams, including the Workforce Investment Act Title I (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth), WIOA, Rapid Response, Industry Partnership(s), Incumbent Worker, Department of Human Services, and any other specific grants applied for by or on behalf of the Workforce Development Board. The Committee ensures appropriate and allowable activities are planned and executed in accordance with each funding stream's inherent policies and reviews budget and financial information contained in proposals received through the Request for Proposal process and making recommendations of awards to the Bucks County WED. The Finance Committee approves training contracts to be executed in accordance with Federal, State, and County legislative and governing policies and intent. The Committee also recommends a budget for the full Board as well as oversees the organization's audit.

One-Stop Committee

The One-Stop Committee provides programmatic oversight related to common measures and assists with operational issues relating to providing services to all individuals and businesses. The Committee works to ensure physical access to the services, programs, activities of the One-Stop delivery system, and appropriate staff training. Specifically related to serving individuals with disabilities or targeted populations, the Committee ensures appropriate accommodations and services to help individuals find employment opportunities. Additionally, the Committee focuses on developing effective linkages with employers in the region to support employer utilization of the local workforce development system to meet employers' needs and support economic growth.

Youth Council

The Youth Council is responsible for developing a comprehensive workforce strategy for youth programs and services. The Council identifies youth programs, develops requests for proposals, and makes recommendations to the Board on allocating funds for youth services. The Council also oversees youth program performance and targeted services to youth with employment and/or disabilities barriers. Additionally, the Council participates in the local area's efforts to develop and implement Career Pathways by aligning the employment, training, education, and supportive services needed by adults and youth, particularly individuals with barriers to employment.

Fiscal Agent and Financial Management

The Bucks County WED is the fiscal agent (as selected by the local elected officials) for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and serves as the administrative entity for WIOA and Department of Human Services funded activities in Bucks County. The Bucks County WED's staff is responsible for the monitoring and oversight of activities/programs, with regular reporting of results to the Board to fulfill its responsibilities under the law.

Oversight of the Workforce Development System

The Bucks County WED staff provide ongoing oversight of the local workforce development system via adherence to the Board's Local Area Monitoring Guidelines. These guidelines outline the minimum responsibilities for monitoring, oversight, and evaluation necessary to ensure compliance with WIOA, Federal regulations, and State policies. This plan lists those responsibilities and how they will be carried out by the Bucks County WED.

The four minimum requirements for monitoring/oversight at the local level are reviews of single audits, reviews of the quality of service to enhance program accountability, on-site visits to review records and documents, to observe operations, and reviews of service providers' financial and progress reports. These requirements will be carried out as follows:

Single Audits will be requested to be submitted prior to the execution of any contract award of $750,000 or more. The Fiscal Department will review the Single Audit within 30 days of contract award for new contractors. Audited Financial Statements will be requested annually from contractors with active contracts. Any findings will be noted and discussed with the contractor and brought to the Finance Committee's attention at the next Finance Committee meeting.

Reviews of quality of service will be conducted during the on-site visits or desk reviews. Customer service surveys (including workshop surveys) will be reviewed. Participants will be interviewed during on-site visits whenever possible to get feedback from the customer.

Monitoring may be performed as On-site visits or Desk Reviews. Monitoring will be scheduled and conducted by the Contracts Staff for contractors, training providers (with active ITAs), and employers (with OJT contracts). Each Training Provider who has signed a Master Contract and has at least one participant enrolled will be monitored at least once during the Program Year. The Bucks County WED does not intend to vary the frequency of monitoring based on the number of participants enrolled with a specific Training Provider. Each Employer who has signed an On-the-Job Training Agreement (OJT) will be monitored at least

once during the Program Year. OJT Participants may be interviewed during the on-site visit; however, it is not expected that each participant will be interviewed. The Bucks County WED does not intend to vary the frequency of monitoring based on the number of participants working with a specific employer. Participant file reviews will be conducted throughout the program year to ensure participant eligibility in the Youth and Adult programs.

Review of Service Provider's Financial and Progress Reports may be required by the Bucks County WED staff prior to fiscal review as follows:

- Invoices submitted for ITAs and OJTs will be reviewed and initialed by the Assistant Director, who will follow up with training providers and employers to ensure progress reports and invoices for ITAs and OJTs are submitted timely.
- The Youth Program Manager or designee will review youth Service Provider invoices.
- EARN Service Provider invoices will be reviewed by the EARN Coordinator or designee.

The Fiscal Department will be responsible for the final review of all invoices and progress reports as they are submitted.

Subrecipient Monitoring for compliance is conducted by the Bucks County WED each program year. Should the number of subrecipients (including ITA Providers and OJT employers) increase to a level where it is no longer feasible to continue site visits with all providers, the Bucks County WED will use the Risk Assessment process outlined in this plan. The monitoring process will include but is not limited to the following elements: fiscal and procurement, administrative and programmatic accountability, compliance with contract provisions, compliance with Equal Employment Opportunity requirements, and compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act requirements.

As the local board and fiscal agent staff are organized as a single entity for all administrative functions and procure services from other agencies, the LWDB does not need to monitor the fiscal agent or Bucks County WED staff.

Subrecipients to be monitored include:

- Youth Service Providers
- Adult and Dislocated Worker Service Providers
- One-Stop Operator
- ITA Training Providers
- Employers with OJTs
- Employers with IWTs,
- PA CareerLink® Bucks County
- Any other grant subrecipient not covered above, at the Bucks County WED's discretion.

Monitoring Tools developed by the Bucks County WED include supporting documentation. Specific tools have been developed for each type of program.

Monitoring tools include:

- Name of the provider.
- Services or activities provided.

- The total amount of the contract and funding sources (e.g., WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, TANF, and NDWG).
- Date(s) of the monitoring activity.
- Staff/participants interviewed.
- Summary of findings regarding program strengths, concerns, deficiencies, and areas where technical assistance may be needed.

Monitoring tools also allow the interviewer to interview a participant and receive feedback regarding the program service quality.

Risk Assessment: The Workforce Investment Information Notice No. 3-00, Change 2 recommends a risk assessment approach to narrow and concentrate the scope of review. Currently, the Bucks County WED does not feel that a Risk Assessment Analysis tool is necessary. As the number of subrecipients increases to a level where it is no longer feasible to monitor each provider annually, the Bucks County WED will consider a risk assessment of all contractors and training providers using the Risk Assessment Analysis tool.

Monitoring will then be scheduled in accordance with the results of the assessment: contractors or providers classified as High Risk will be monitored at least annually; contractors or providers classified as Low Risk will be monitored at least once every two years.

Monitoring Reports: Results of monitoring will be forwarded to each entity monitored within 30 days of the review. A summary of all reports will be made available to the Board or Youth Council to assist with strategic planning efforts. These reports will enable the Board and Youth Council as appropriate to assess program/activity provider's compliance, plan future technical assistance activities, and adjust local policies to reflect emerging economic opportunities in Bucks County.

Any findings or concerns will be included in the monitoring report. The Bucks County WED will request the monitored entity to submit a continuous improvement plan (CIP) within 30 of the report's issuance. Follow-up activities must be documented, and action is taken within 90 days of the (CIP). Monitoring reports, CIPs, and follow-up activity will be made available for State and/or Federal review.

Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO): The designated equal employment opportunity officer (EEO Officer) for the local area is Dianna Kralle, assistant director of the Bucks County Department of Workforce and Economic Development (djkralle@buckscounty.org, 267-642-8138). The EEO Officer provides a single point of contact in the workforce area for persons or entities filing complaints and seeking assistance. According to State and Federal policies, the EEO Officer also provides ongoing compliance reviews and provides review summaries to the Bucks County WED. Compliance reviews will be conducted annually by the State in accord with new review guidelines.

3.2. What are the programs included in the local workforce delivery system, and how will the local board work with the entities carrying out all workforce programs to support service alignment? [20 CFR § 679.560(b)(1)]

A full listing of programs of local partners is shown in *Attachment 3: WIOA Local Workforce Development Delivery System Program Partner-Provider List*.

The Bucks County WED has adopted an Integrated Services Customer Flow Model (shown in Section 4.11) as the framework for connecting programs, services, and funding sources to meet job seeker needs as they access the PA CareerLink® Bucks County system. Under the One-Stop Operator, job seekers receive personalized assistance from integrated services providers in finding a customized set of services leading to employment in the region.

Job-seeker services include:

- Determining skillsets through assessment and interviews.
- Planning customized Career Pathways.
- Building a résumé and polishing interviewing skills.
- Obtaining information about job fairs and recruitments in Bucks County.
- Connecting with training programs to gain new job skills.
- Learning about financial aid options for education and training.
- Learning about job opportunities in the immediate area.
- Referrals to job openings leading to job placement.
- Follow-up services for employment retention and advancement.

Within the integrated framework, services are provided for each funding source by:

Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker Services are currently provided by EDSI.

Title I Youth/Young Adult Services are currently provided by Bucks County Community College

Title II Adult and Literacy Services are currently provided by Vita Education Services.

Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation Services are provided by the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation staff in the local area to eligible individuals. OVR staff also assists other core partners in creating an integrated services strategy for persons with disabilities.

Wagner-Peyser Program Services are currently provided by the PA Department of Labor and Industry, Bureau of Workforce Partnership and Operations (BWPO).

Vocational Rehabilitation Services are currently provided by the PA Department of Labor and Industry, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR).

Department of Community and Economic Development, Community Service Block Programs are provided through the Bucks County Opportunity Council.

Connections to programs funded by the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act occur via the Bucks County WED's ongoing relationship with the Bucks County Community College, the Upper Bucks Technical High School, the Middle Bucks Institute of Technology, and the Upper Bucks County Technical School.

Additional WIOA Programs

Job Corps customers are referred to the Philadelphia Job Corps at the Life Science Institute or the Keystone Job Corps Center in Drums, Pa if they are seeking a residential program.

YouthBuild customers are referred to the YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School or the Isles Youth Institute in Trenton, N.J.

Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) customers receive services on-site at the PA CareerLink® Bucks County from the Bureau of Workforce Partnership and Operations (BWPO).

Native American Programs are provided by the Council of Three Rivers American Center, whose staff will reserve space at the PA CareerLink® Bucks County to meet with customers.

Staff seek federal guidance from the U.S. Department of Labor for Migrant/Seasonal Farmworker customers and make referrals for services.

Staff seek federal guidance from the U.S. Department of Education for Second Chance Act customers and make referrals for services.

3.3. How will the local board work with the entities carrying out core programs to: [20 CFR § 679.560(b)(2)]

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

The Bucks County WED will continue a close relationship with core partners to ensure that they implement robust programs and maintain a referral network that ensures eligible participants can access services offered through the PA CareerLink® Bucks County. Increasing on-site partners in the designated One-Stop center(s) will create increased access organically. The Bucks County WED also supports community access points for services through the possibilities of a larger, more centrally located site and implementation of virtual, One-Stop access points through a website visit.

The Bucks County WED will address access issues in a multi-faceted manner, developing new physical access points with partner organizations along with innovative uses of technology to connect system customers to services from computers and phones. However, access to transportation remains a significant barrier to services, training, and employment for participants in Bucks County. Therefore, the Bucks County WED will collaborate with its partners to expand access to services, particularly for job seekers with additional barriers to employment. The expansion of access to employment, training, education, and support services is a priority that will also be addressed in the Regional Plan. The Bucks County WED's One-Stop Operator understands the critical role of local partnerships and leverages these collaborations effectively by expanding access points using partner offices and available technology across the County.

The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) is a key partner in assisting the PA CareerLink® partners in identifying and addressing the needs of individuals with barriers. Eligibility to receive WIOA Title IV services may only be determined by a qualified OVR Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor. Training for OVR staff is at the discretion of the local OVR District Administrator. OVR staff supervision and direction is the local OVR District Administrator's responsibility under the One-Stop Operator's direction and the commitments

contained in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). OVR staff will assist the staff of other partners in outreach to populations with disabilities, including persons who are OVR-eligible and those who do not meet the OVR guidelines. The full range of PA CareerLink® services will be made available and promoted to these individuals in all cases.

The Bucks County WED upholds a policy that no individual receives program services until eligibility requirements have been documented and verified by appropriate workforce staff for each program requiring eligibility determination for program entry. This policy ensures only those individuals for whom funds are targeted receive services.

Relevant Definitions

Verification: Confirm eligibility requirements through the examination of documents or speaking to the representatives of authorized agencies.

Documentation: Maintain physical documentation, which is obtained during the verification process, in participant files. Documentation is used as the basis to verify eligibility.

Self-Certification: The Bucks County WED uses Self-Certification as a method of last resort for program eligibility determination. Self-Certification is a statement signed by the prospective customer used to verify eligibility items requiring documentation that may cause undue hardship for the applicant to obtain or that may be unavailable due to loss of the documentation for the following reasons:

- Eviction from residence, with an inability to provide supporting documentation.
- An individual is fleeing or has fled an abusive or untenable home life, rendering them unable to provide the documentation needed for verification.
- A victim of a natural disaster.

Telephone/Electronic Verification: Verification of required documentation through a telephone or email consultation with a recognized governmental or social service agency.

Document Inspection Verification: Verification of documentation through inspection of a document when the document can either not be copied or copying of the document is not possible.

Eligibility Determination

Eligibility Determination Prior to Program Enrollment: The Bucks County WED administers programs from multiple funding streams with different and varying eligibility requirements. The appropriate staff shall verify program eligibility prior to enrollment of a participant. Failure to complete may create exposure to unallowable costs due to insufficient eligibility determination.

Eligibility Documentation: Required documentation to determine eligibility is defined based on the program. If not defined by the funding stream or in cases where the funding stream is not clear, the Bucks County WED shall take documented steps to define the documentation requirement. Documentation requirements will be made available by the Bucks County WED to all program operators and sub-contractors to ensure proper procedure.

Eligibility Bucks County WED Review. The Bucks County WED follows eligibility verification protocol for all PA CareerLink® Bucks County customers who may qualify for eligibility-based programs. The Bucks County WED assists in the eligibility determination process with program operators to ensure each customer falls within specific program guidelines.

Self-Certification

Allowable Use: Self-Certification is only to be used as a method of last resort and will only be accepted as verification of eligibility for the following elements:

- *WIOA Title I Adult*
  - Homeless
- *WIOA Title I Dislocated Worker*
  - Date of Dislocation
  - Displaced Homemaker
  - Reemployment Opportunity Poor/Unlikely to Return
  - Permanently or Temporarily Laid Off as Result of Disaster
- *WIOA Title I Youth*
  - Homeless
  - In/Aged Out of Foster Care System
  - Current, Past, or Pending Involvement with Criminal Justice System
  - Limited English Proficiency
  - Pregnant or Parenting
- *"Requires Additional Assistance" per local policy*
  - Runaway
  - School Status at Time of Application

Program Compliance/ Monitoring: The use of Self-Certification will be monitored by the Bucks County WED. A review may include an interview with the Case Manager determining eligibility, a search for applicable documentation not already in the file, and an interview with the participant. It is important to re-state that the Bucks County WED accepts Self-Certification only as a last resort and will review all cases of Self-Certification with program operators.

WIOA Program Referrals for Non-Local Entities

Collaboration between partner organizations and agencies is essential to meeting the needs of all customers who come to the PA CareerLink® Bucks County. Therefore, referrals are made to partners for the following programs:

- Job Corps customers are referred to the Philadelphia Job Corps at the Life Science Institute or the Keystone Job Corps Center in Drums, Pa if they are seeking a residential option.
- YouthBuild customers are referred to the YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School or the Isles Youth Institute in Trenton, N.J.

- Native American Programs are provided by the Council of Three Rivers American Center, whose staff will reserve space at the PA CareerLink® Bucks County to meet with customers.
- Staff seek federal guidance from the U.S. Department of Labor for Migrant/Seasonal Farmworker customers and make referrals for services.
- Staff seek federal guidance from the U.S. Department of Education for Second Chance Act customers and make referrals for services.

➢ *Facilitate the development of Career Pathways and co-enrollment, as appropriate, in core programs (specify on-ramps from adult education).*

The Bucks County WED is committed to making Career Pathways the language of the system in bringing employers and educators together as partners. Employers must increasingly become full partners in Career Pathways, engaging in work-based learning in multiple ways (internships, on-the-job-training, apprenticeships, and other work-and-learn strategies) to connect to classroom learning. Specificity on pathways within sectors will continue to be a key topic with employers in sector partnerships and a key component of Next Generation Industry Partnership work. While industry partnerships continue to be a focal point for Career Pathways, the Bucks County WED will engage sector champions in discussions of occupational skills applicable to multiple sectors that can be applied to high-demand, high-quality jobs.

At the operational level, the Bucks County WED will guide its One-Stop Operator on providing an overview of the Career Pathways model and training to PA CareerLink® partners on its connection points. Career Pathways must have multiple on- and off-ramps with interim steps that are manageable segments to achieve while clients are working or with minimal disruption in work transitions and job search to maximize effectiveness. The Bucks County WED and its One-Stop Operator will continue its work with regional partners and the Commonwealth to develop and utilize micro-credentials and other stackable approaches within the Career Pathways model. A key partner in the on-ramp process will be the WIOA Title II Adult Education Programs that provide basic skills for accessing occupational training and work-based learning with employers. To the maximum extent possible, basic skills will be offered concurrently with occupational training and on-the-job training to shorten training time and retain trainees in programs.

The Career Pathways model is a practice used to establish entry points into a career, identifying skill sets, certifications, and educational programs needed to create upward movement in each pathway. Pathways are identified/created through robust collaboration with community partners and the Bucks County WED's One-Stop Committee, informed by relevant data for decisions on growing, stable, emerging, and high-priority occupations, all subject to review and approval by the Bucks County WED. Career Pathway development is the impactful method for the Bucks County WED and PA CareerLink® Bucks County partners to undertake efforts to provide participants with clear, actionable, and objective career choices. This method empowers job seekers to make informed decisions and progress on a career ladder, regardless of the entry point.

Current Career Pathways include Metal Works, Industrial Maintenance/Advanced Manufacturing, Allied Health/Health Care and Social Assistance, Commercial Driver Licensing Program (CDL) as part of a transportation and logistics pathway, Information Technology, and Life Sciences programs through a partnership with the Pennsylvania Biotechnology Center of Bucks County.

Upon enrollment, participants are provided with a comprehensive Career Pathway view. Staff identify the

occupation at entry points and give the participant a simple and straightforward process to identify paths to success within their selected pathway. Participants also have training and work experiences that lead to upward mobility and more stable, higher-wage employment within their chosen career path.

Program co-enrollment is supported by developing and maintaining an organized referral system between PA CareerLink ® Bucks County partners. The Bucks County WED's One-Stop Committee ensures PA CareerLink® Bucks County partners:

- Understand eligibility and participation requirements in addition to all services and benefits for each of the partners' programs represented in the PA CareerLink® Bucks County.
- Develop materials summarizing their program requirements and making them available for partners and participants.
- Participate in active communications between partners.
- Provide referrals to customers who are eligible for supplemental and complimentary services and benefits under partner programs to the appropriate partner and non-partner programs.
- Engage in continuous improvement discussions related to the referral processes.
- Provide comprehensive follow-up of referrals to ensure ongoing program effectiveness.

Vita Education Services, representing services under Title II of WIOA and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR, Title IV) as long-standing operating partners of the PA CareerLink® Bucks County, maintain a co-located presence with two full-time staff members on-site. These programs implement the previously documented referral processes and strategies.

Robust communication strategies between Vita Education Services, the PA CareerLink® Bucks County, and its operating partners increase awareness of Title II services. Vita Education Services staff are active members in the PA CareerLink® Bucks County Operating Partners Committee, in which program and policy updates are shared quarterly among all partners. In addition, on-site operating partners meet weekly on Tuesdays at both PA CareerLink® Bucks County locations in Bristol and Perkasie to discuss program delivery and logistics. Vita has two FTE on-site in Bristol. Program information is regularly disseminated among Board members and Bucks County WED staff as well as promoted on social media.

The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) is the sole WIOA Title IV provider of programs under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. OVR staff provides technical assistance regarding disability-related services to One-Stop staff and partners as an active and ongoing responsibility in their partnership duties. The OVR program is required to provide vocational rehabilitation services to eligible individuals with disabilities based on the program's legal responsibilities outlined in statute. An OVR customer receives multiple services from qualified OVR designated staff, including 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. OVR is an active Business Services Team member within the PA CareerLink® Bucks County. OVR provides businesses assistance with onboarding pre-screened qualified employees with disabilities for gainful employment opportunities.

The Bucks County WED sets aside WIOA Title I funds for occupational and work-based training under various programs, focusing on high-priority occupations. Additional Rapid Response training funds are available for dislocated workers. When funds are exhausted, the Bucks County WED requests additional Rapid Response funds from the PA Department of Labor and Industry. The Bucks County WED uses these funds to supplement programs with needed training resources.

A multi-pronged communication approaches help to increase access to activities leading to a recognized postsecondary credential. Customers receive information about training programs that lead to postsecondary credentials during general discussion and program enrollment as part of their individual training accounts. Training programs leading to recognized credentials aligned with in-demand industry sectors or occupations in the local workforce development area are shared through social media to generate additional awareness. Additionally, PA CareerLink® Bucks County operating partners refer to opportunities for occupational skills training and micro-credentials that address employer skill gaps and build towards higher-level certifications.

3.4. What strategies will be implemented in the local area to improve business/employer engagement that: [20 CFR § 679.560(b)(3)]

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

The Bucks County WED works to bring together multiple employers in the same industry sector to address shared goals and concerns. Partnerships with multiple industry-specific associations include:

- Manufacturing Alliance of Bucks and Montgomery Counties
- Information Technology Action Group (ITAG)
- Southeastern Pennsylvania Healthcare Alliance (SEPHA)
- Smart Energy Initiative (SEI) Energy Partnership

Through regular Partnerships for Regional Economic Performance (PREP) meetings, coalitions in local workforce areas provide customized approaches to address key issues, share information, expand successful models, and assess the overall regional impact. This process allows for flexibility and speed in crafting solutions and sharing leadership on key initiatives while maintaining focus on the collective efforts. Especially timely during the COVID-19 pandemic, workforce and economic development partners have convened regularly to share resources while addressing immediate needs and strategizing effective solutions.

The PA CareerLink Bucks County® Business Services team members, who are active members of the Board's One-Stop Operating Partners Committee, will continue to disseminate employment and apprenticeship opportunities to elected officials, faith-based organizations, and community organizations. These collaborative efforts will raise the awareness of opportunities and resources that will benefit both employers and job seekers.

Additionally, PA CareerLink Bucks County® Business Services team members have implemented a two-part approach to support On-the-Job Training (OJT), Customized Job Training (CJT), and Incumbent Worker Training (IWT). To increase awareness of apprenticeship as a work-based learning strategy, the Business Services Team will ensure that it is part of one-on-one conversations with businesses whose workforce needs can be addressed through apprenticeship. This consultative approach will increase efficiency and maximize the quality of business engagement. To develop pre-apprenticeship programs as a feeder to existing apprenticeship models, the Bucks County WED will continue to engage businesses, recognize the top challenges—skill gaps, attract and retain talent, replace a retiring workforce, and adopt advanced technology—while exploring how apprenticeship can mitigate employment barriers. This interconnected

approach will further build partnerships between local businesses, apprenticeship models, and education and training providers.

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

The Bucks County WED is also part of the following coalitions and partnerships:

- Business-Education Partnership with Bucks and Montgomery counties
- Manufacturing Alliance of Bucks and Montgomery counties
- Southeast Regional Workforce Development Partnership with all workforce boards in the region
- Jobs 1st Initiative for Southeast Pennsylvania with all regional boards
- Micro-Credentials Grant with Bucks County Community College
- Sector Partnership National Dislocated Worker Grant with all regional colleges and workforce development boards
- Southeast Pennsylvania Defense Transition Collaborative with all Southeast Pennsylvania regional workforce development boards and economic development associations, plus Lehigh and Northampton counties
- Innovation Technology Action Group (ITAG) in partnership with the Chester County Workforce Development Board

The Bucks County WED works collaboratively with economic development organizations to support the local and regional economies. The Engage! initiative, funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Economic Development (DCED), encourages business retention and expansion by regularly interacting with targeted companies. A team of experienced professionals helps identify opportunities and challenges and offer their assistance in locating a skilled workforce. Engage! has aided data sharing between organizations and increased referrals between workforce and economic development partners.

Based on successful partnerships, the Bucks County WED hopes to incorporate industry-specific advisory councils to guide employer engagement. These advisory councils can help promote target populations (e.g., youth, aging workers, reentrants) and address employers' needs for more skilled workers throughout the local workforce area.

The PA CareerLink® Bucks County partners have developed recruitment and business resource materials based upon the needs of its diverse employer base, which have become proven assets in retaining businesses and expanding services. Pennsylvania's Rapid Response program uses a comprehensive approach to help businesses avoid layoffs. The Unemployment Compensation Work-Share program also serves as a valuable resource to help companies that need to downsize.

The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) is a key partner in meeting the needs of employers. The OVR provides multiple services to the business community designed to assist employers with onboarding pre-screened, qualified WIOA Title IV eligible employees with disabilities. OVR supports can include reasonable accommodation consulting, initial probationary wage reimbursement (On-The-Job Training), and information and referrals on tax credits and deductions. OVR also offers no-cost consultation on the Americans with Disability Act (ADA), accessibility standards, and assistance in retaining current employees who have experienced an accident, injury, or other disability.

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

The Bucks County WED will continue to work closely with its regional partners to implement combined workforce development and economic development strategies contained in the WIOA Regional Plan. The plan states, "As updated through meetings and discussions with the PREP Partners and other community stakeholders, the Southeast PA Workforce Development Areas have identified additional areas of focus on the regional level."

These include but are not limited to:

- Aligning partnership efforts in advanced manufacturing to better leverage resources and provide opportunities for dislocated workers displaced from other industries.
- Engaging the "Gig Economy" to assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Increasing labor market participation throughout the region to better serve employers, businesses, and priority sectors. This includes regional initiatives targeted at individuals with a barrier as well as the long-term unemployed/under-employed.
- Continue research and engagement in the Construction Trades sectors.
- Research additional potential sectors, including Child Development Associates, opportunities for the Immigrant population, and services to Youth.

Given the size, diversity, and complexity of the broader Southeast Pennsylvania region that includes over a third of the Commonwealth's population, the sponsorship of initiatives by varying combinations of geographic and industry partners has served the region well. Many of these efforts, as shown above, are ongoing and funded for multiple years. As such, they lay the foundation for region-wide sharing of knowledge and best practices and spawning new initiatives that can be expanded and replicated as needed.

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

The Bucks County WED and the PA CareerLink® Bucks County continue to provide services for Unemployment claimants. Participants receive the opportunity to present at the PA CareerLink® Bucks County locations in Bristol and Perkasie and gain access to an Unemployment Compensation (UC) representative through a dedicated phone line. This process ensures that UC registrants have their questions or concerns alleviated through a live representative from a dedicated line. Assistance is provided by on-site staff, as needed, to participants who need help in navigating phone or online systems for UC services in addition to job search services.

Bucks County will continue its robust Pennsylvania Rapid Reemployment Program (RRP). RRP identifies UC participants who are likely to either exhaust their benefit or have difficulty returning to work in their current profession. RRP will continue to work closely with partners to ensure that appropriate candidates are referred to training programs to make the best possible employment pathway.

The Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program, offered at both PA CareerLink® locations, identifies claimants most likely to exhaust unemployment compensation (UC) benefits and may

need assistance to find a new job. The One-Stop Operator also works with the Office of UC Service Centers Customer Services Section to coordinate seminars for employers, which address UC topics such as rights and benefits. These services provide additional opportunities to inform employers of all services provided by the PA CareerLink® partners.

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

As a department within the local government, the Bucks County WED is positioned to support all economic development efforts aimed at employer retention/expansion for existing employers and as a source of labor market information and training connections for prospective employers considering locating in the County. Because of partnerships with local economic development organizations, including the Bucks County Economic Development Corporations and the Bucks County Industrial Development Authority, the Bucks County WED can cross-promote programs and resources.

The Bucks County WED will utilize the additional opportunities afforded through the Regional Plan for Southeast Pennsylvania to recognize the role and value of the Gig Economy and Entrepreneurship to enhance opportunities for job seekers in the Local Workforce Area. Working with other local workforce boards in the region, the Bucks County WED will collaborate with Entrepreneur Works, a leader in the Greater Philadelphia area, for helping underserved entrepreneurs start and grow their businesses (myentrepreneurworks.org). As part of these efforts, the Bucks County WED will consider the distinctive needs of traditional small business entrepreneurship and startup entrepreneurship as well as the value they contribute to the local economy. For example, startup companies often require different workforce skills, support services, and forms of capital to establish a base and grow. The Bucks County WED will continue its efforts to support entrepreneurial needs.

The Bucks County WED will also explore new opportunities to collaborate with the Pennsylvania Biotechnology Center, leaders in Life Sciences, for ways to connect entrepreneurs with innovative developments in the County.

Ongoing coordination is maintained between Economic Development and Workforce Development as a joined department within the County of Bucks and through active participation by staff in multiple groups related to economic development within surrounding counties, including:

- Bucks County Long-Term Care Consortium
- Innovative Technology Action Group (Chester, Delaware, Bucks, and Montgomery Counties)
- Manufacturing Alliance of Bucks and Montgomery Counties
- Southeast PA Healthcare Alliance (entire Southeast PA region)
- Business and Financial Sector Strategies Dislocated Worker Project (Philadelphia, Montgomery, and Buck Counties
- Meetings, tasks forces, and events of multiple chambers of commerce and economic development organizations in the County
- Active participation in the Southeast Regional Workforce Development Partnership (Philadelphia, Bucks, Montgomery, Chester, and Delaware Counties) to coordinate Workforce policies and

strategies for Economic Development officials in promoting services to employers on a regional basis.

One of the more successful efforts is the Bucks County Workforce Development Board's success in obtaining one of 19 competitive Trade and Economic Transition (TET) National Dislocated Worker Grants. This discretionary grant funds training for up to 200 individuals in Bucks County and throughout the region in Advanced Manufacturing, Information Technology, and Metalworking, focusing on retraining dislocated workers, especially those from Retail. Partnering with Montgomery and Philadelphia Counties, this grant supports partner and regional training.

4. OPERATIONAL PLANNING QUESTIONS: Local Area Workforce Delivery System

4.1. Provide a descriptive overview of the local area workforce delivery system, including key stakeholders and entities in the local area. [20 CFR § 679.560(b)(4)]

The Bucks County workforce development system relies on a combination of required partners and other key stakeholders to ensure seamless service delivery for all customers. These ongoing collaborations are organized and developed through service providers procured by the Bucks County WED, with engagement occurring through board subcommittees and by the PA CareerLink® Bucks County partners. See *Attachment 2 WIOA Local Workforce Development System Organizational Chart* for a full list of required partners and other stakeholders.

WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker career services are provided primarily by Bucks County staff under the One-Stop Operator's overall functional supervision that is competitively procured and certified by the Bucks County WED. Cross-agency functional teams provide services under the PA CareerLink® banner without individual agency identifiers.

The One-Stop Operator provides high-quality services to all customers, with specific duties including:

- Establishing effective management structures and processes.
- Conducting ongoing analysis of PA CareerLink® Bucks County operations, conducting appropriate problem solving, continuous improvement, and corrective action activities.
- Surveying customer satisfaction.
- Fostering an integrated organizational structure.
- Identifying and communicating to all partners and staff the vision, mission, and values of the PA CareerLink® Bucks County.
- Assisting all partners to achieve the levels of performance expected of them by their funding sources; providing all partners and staff with all information and communications needed for their optimal performance.
- Staff development.
- Providing guidance and oversight to the PA CareerLink® Bucks County site manager.

The Bucks County WED uses its established procurement process to select the One-Stop Operator. After a

Request-For-Proposal (RFP) was issued, a bidders' conference and public/answer period followed. The Planning Committee of the Board coordinated the selection process. The procurement resulted in the receipt of a single bid. The bid was determined to have complied and to have met all established criteria for a successful bid. Following a recommendation by the Planning Committee, the full Board reviewed the bid and the process and approved the bid at the March 22, 2017 meeting.

Language in the contract specifies the One-Stop Operator's coordination role related to all PA CareerLink® Bucks County network partners' equitable treatment. A process is also prescribed for mediation of any disputes that arise related to the One-Stop Operator.

The procurement of service providers under WIOA Title I is a separate process. Separate contracts are maintained and monitored for the WIOA Title I services and the One-Stop Operator, with the roles and relationships among all service partners and the One-Stop Operator detailed in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The Bucks County WED procures WIOA Title I services, including EARN, Out-of-School Youth, and TANF Youth Programs, while assuming competition and oversight in an open marketplace from a cost and performance perspective.

Currently, five service providers are operating under competitively procured contracts.

WIOA Title I Adult & Dislocated Worker Services

A contract was awarded to Educational Data Systems Inc. (EDSI) on July 1, 2019, for an initial 2-year period and extended on July 1, 2020.

WIOA Out-of-School Youth

A contract was awarded to Bucks County Community College effective July 1, 2019, extended on July 1, 2020.

WIOA In-School Youth

A contract was awarded to Bucks County Community College effective July 1, 2020.

One-Stop Operator

A contract was awarded to EDSI effective July 1, 2019, extended on July 1, 2020. The Bucks County WED will release an RFP to procure a One-Stop Operator provider in summer 2021.

EARN Program

Contracts were awarded to Educational Data Systems, Inc (EDSI) effective July 1, 2019, extended on July 1, 2020. The Bucks County WED will release an RFP to procure an EARN program provider in spring 2021.

TANF Youth Program

A contract was awarded to Bucks County Community College effective July 1, 2019, extended on July 1, 2020.

All contracts are separately procured, negotiated, and awarded. The Bucks County WED monitors performance under each and amends contracts as necessary during the contract award periods.

Additional WIOA Programs

Job Corps

Customers are referred to the Philadelphia Job Corps at the Life Science Institute or the Keystone Job Corps Center in Drums, Pa.

YouthBuild

Customers are referred to the YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School or the Isles Youth Institute in Trenton, N.J.

Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)

Customers receive services on-site at the PA CareerLink® Bucks County from the Bureau of Workforce Partnership and Operations (BWPO).

Native American Programs

Services are provided by the Council of Three Rivers American Center, whose staff will reserve space at the PA CareerLink® Bucks County to meet with customers.

Migrant/Seasonal Farmworker

Staff seek federal guidance from the U.S. Department of Labor for customers and make referrals for services.

Second Chance Act

Staff seek federal guidance from the U.S. Department of Education for customers and make referrals for services.

See question 4.2. for a list of WIOA Core Partners.

Local workforce development stakeholders include:

- Chambers of Commerce: Lower Bucks Chamber of Commerce, Central Bucks Chamber of Commerce, Upper Bucks Chamber of Commerce, and Greater Bucks Mont Chamber of Commerce.
- Industry Partnerships: Bucks County Long-Term Care Consortium, Innovative Technology Action Group, Manufacturing Alliance of Bucks and Montgomery Counties, and Business and Financial Sector Strategies Dislocated Worker Project.
- Bucks County Economic Development Organizations: Bucks County Economic Development Corporation, Bucks County Redevelopment Authority, and Bucks County Industrial Development Authority.
- Fair Housing Organizations: Bucks County Rental Assistance Program and Bucks County Housing Link.
- Food Assistance and Pantries: Bucks County Opportunity Council.

The Bucks County WED has an integral relationship with the Bucks County Opportunity Council, recipients of PADECD Community Service Block Grants (CSBG). We ensure job seekers are linked to CSBG program services with a full range of services and support available to any PA CareerLink® customer who meets CSBG eligibility requirements. CSBG programs traditionally provide supplemental tuition and support services for certificate-based upskilling programs, as well as support program services.

The Bucks County WED is responsible for providing the following:

- Information and guidance on the Strategic Plan and priorities for the area.
- Labor market and industry cluster information, especially on targeted industry clusters of interest to the Local Workforce Board and High-Priority Occupations.
- Information on Industry Partnerships, Incumbent Worker grants, other discretionary and/or competitive funds obtained, and activities conducted with those funds.
- Reports on oversight monitoring and evaluation of PA CareerLink® Bucks County activities.
- Updates on the Local Workforce Board policies and initiatives.
- Additional funds for advertising, staff development, and Incumbent Worker upgrade programs as the financial condition allow.
- Monthly income and expense statements on the Resource Sharing Agreement and separate statements on program income.
- Procurement of the lease for the physical location of the One-Stop center.
- Procurement and purchasing of necessary services, equipment, and materials financed through the Resource Sharing Agreement and program income.

The Bucks County WED utilizes an established, standardized process for soliciting proposals leading to the award of contracts, including contracts for One-Stop Operators and providers of services under the WIOA. The steps in the process are:

1. RFP release with concurrent public notice
2. Question and answer period for interested applicants, with the posting of responses to questions on the website.
3. Bidders' Conference
4. Proposal due date
5. Review and recommendation by the appropriate Board committees
6. Proposal review by the Bucks County WED
7. Action on selection
8. Award of contract
9. Transition period as needed before the start of the contract
10. Contract start date

4.2. Identify the One-Stop partners (required and other) authorized to provide required and other programs within the local area. Describe briefly the role(s) of the One-Stop partners (required and other). [20 CFR § 679.560(b)(5)(iv)]

Core WIOA Title I-B Subrecipients

- Title I – Adult/ Dislocated Worker- Educational Data Systems, Inc.
- Title I – Out of School Youth- Bucks County Community College
- Title I – In School Youth- Bucks County Community College

Core WIOA Title II - Adult Education and Family Literacy Act

- VITA Education Services

Core WIOA Title III - Wagner-Peyser, Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), Jobs for Veterans, Foreign Labor Act, Rapid Response

- PA Department of Labor and Industry
- Bureau of Workforce Partnership and Operations

Core WIOA Title IV - Rehabilitation Act Title I, Parts A and B

- PA Department of Labor and Industry
- Office of Vocational Rehabilitation

State Unemployment Compensation Programs

- PA Department of Labor and Industry
- Office of Unemployment Compensation Centers

Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act

- Bucks County Community College

TANF and EARN Programs

- PA Department of Human Services

Senior Community Service Employment Program

- AARP Foundation

PA Second Chance Act Program

- Staff seek federal guidance from the U.S. Department of Education for Second Chance Act customers and make referrals for services.

Native American Program(s)

- Council of Three Rivers American Indian Center

Community Services Block Grant

- PA Department of Community and Economic Development
- Bucks County Opportunity Council

Job Corps

- Customers are referred to the Philadelphia Job Corps at the Life Science Institute or the Keystone Job Corps Center in Drums, Pa.

YouthBuild

- Customers are referred to the YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School or the Isles Youth Institute in Trenton, N.J.

Migrant/Season Farmworker Programs

- Staff seek federal guidance from the U.S. Department of Labor for customers and make referrals for services.

At a minimum, partners will make the services below available to all customers in an integrated manner under the PA CareerLink® Bucks County brand, as detailed in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), allowable under each partner's funding source, and the direction of the One-Stop Operator. Individual partners may have funding sources that restrict particular services to specified groups (such as veterans, seniors, and persons with disabilities). In such cases, the PA CareerLink® Bucks County Centers' general services will be available to all customers and specialized services added for individuals who meet the eligibility criteria for such services. Additional services may be provided on a case-by-case basis with the approval of both the Bucks County WED and the Chief Elected Official.

Business Services

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

Job Seeker Services

Basic Career Services

- Outreach, intake, and orientation to the information, services, programs, tools, and resources available through the Local Workforce System.
- Initial assessments of skill level(s), aptitudes, abilities, and supportive service needs.
- In- and out-of-area job search and placement assistance (including the provision of information on in-demand industry sectors and occupations and non-traditional employment).
- Access to employment opportunities and labor market information.
- Performance information and program costs for eligible providers of training, education, and workforce services.
- Information on the performance of the Local Workforce System.
- Information on the availability of supportive services and referral to such, as appropriate.
- Information and meaningful assistance on filing Unemployment Insurance claims.
- Determination of potential eligibility for workforce Partner services, programs, and referral(s).

Information and assistance in applying for financial aid for training and education programs not provided under WIOA Individualized Career Services

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

Training

- Occupational skills training through Individual Training Accounts (ITAs).
- Adult education and literacy activities, including English Language Acquisition (ELA), are provided in combination with the training services described above.
- On-the-Job Training (OJT).
- Incumbent Worker Training.

- Programs that combine workplace training with related instruction may include cooperative education.
- Training programs operated by the private sector.
- Skill upgrading and retraining.
- Entrepreneurial training.
- Customized training is conducted with a commitment by an employer or group of employers to employ an individual upon successful completion of the training.
- Other training services as determined by the workforce partner's governing rules.

Youth Services

- Tutoring, study skills training, instruction, and evidence-based dropout prevention and recovery strategies lead to the completion of the requirements for a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent (including a recognized certificate of attendance or similar document for individuals with disabilities) or a recognized postsecondary credential.
- Alternative secondary school services, or dropout recovery services, as appropriate.
- Paid and unpaid work experiences with a component of academic and occupational education may include summer employment opportunities and other employment opportunities available throughout the school year, pre-apprenticeship programs, internships, job shadowing, and on-the-job training opportunities.
- Occupational skill training shall include priority consideration for training programs that lead to recognized postsecondary credentials aligned with in-demand industry sectors or occupations in the local area.
- Education is offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster.
- Leadership development opportunities may include community service and peer-centered activities encouraging responsibility and other positive social and civic behaviors, as appropriate. Supportive services.
- Adult mentoring for the period of participation and a subsequent period, for a total of not less than 12 months.
- Follow-up services for not less than 12 months after the completion of participation, as appropriate. Comprehensive guidance and counseling, which may include drug and alcohol abuse counseling and referral, as appropriate.
- Financial literacy education.
- Entrepreneurial skills training.
- Leadership development opportunities include community service, peer-centered activities, and other activities that encourage positive social and civic engagement.
- Services that provide labor market and employment information about in-demand industry sectors or occupations available in the local area, such as career awareness, career counseling, and career exploration services.
- Activities that help youth prepare for and transition to postsecondary education and training.

4.3. How will the local board facilitate access to services provided through the One-Stop service delivery system? [20 CFR § 679.560(b)(5)(ii)]

The Bucks County WED continues to expand its coordination among core service partners under WIOA, with roles and relationships for a fully integrated service environment described in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). In implementing the WIOA Priority of Service Policy, the One-Stop Operator is charged with developing new and strengthened cross-referral processes with key partners to increase the number of high-priority participants who receive services within the PA CareerLink® Bucks County network.

The Bucks County WED, through oversight of the One-Stop Operator's partners, ensures that appropriate referrals are made to all partners' programs for support, training, education, and job placement services. This topic is discussed at monthly PA CareerLink® Bucks County partner meetings led by the One-Stop Operator.

Collaboration between partner organizations and agencies is essential to meeting the needs of all customers who come to the PA CareerLink® Bucks County. Therefore, referrals are made to partners for the following programs:

- Job Corps customers are referred to the Philadelphia Job Corps at the Life Science Institute or the Keystone Job Corps Center in Drums, Pa.
- YouthBuild customers are referred to the YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School or the Isles Youth Institute in Trenton, N.J.
- Native American Programs are provided by the Council of Three Rivers American Center, whose staff will reserve space at the PA CareerLink® Bucks County to meet with customers.
- Staff seek federal guidance from the U.S. Department of Labor for Migrant/Seasonal Farmworker customers and make referrals for services.
- Staff seek federal guidance from the U.S. Department of Education for Second Chance Act customers and make referrals for services.

The PA CareerLink® Bucks County, at no cost to Limited English Proficient (LEP) individuals or families, provides interpreter services to all LEP individuals or families applying for, participating in programs, or receiving services/benefits through the PA CareerLink® Bucks County via the following means bi-lingual staff can translate and interpret responsibilities, telephone interpreting services, translation services, and TTY and sign language interpreters.

Interpreter services are provided in an efficient and timely manner to not delay eligibility determination or provision of services to an individual or family. The PA CareerLink® Bucks County makes this policy known to the LEP participants through brochures and notices, presentations at schools and community organizations, presentations at workshops and mandatory meetings, and orientations for various PA CareerLink® programs.

PA CareerLink® Bucks County addresses phone calls and voice mail by LEP individuals in the following manner: all Spanish speaking bilingual staff have English/Spanish voicemail greetings; messages left in Spanish on non-bilingual staff voicemails are transferred to bilingual staff for interpreting; all non- Spanish non-English calls are interpreted through Language Line Services. PA CareerLink® Bucks County addresses walk-ins' needs at the PA CareerLink® Bucks County sites by immediately connecting them with bilingual

staff. If such staff are not available, other interpretive services described above are employed.

PA CareerLink® Bucks County staff do not suggest or encourage LEP customers to use family or friends for interpretation. If an LEP customer or family insists that a friend or family member serve as an interpreter, PA CareerLink® Bucks County staff documents that choice. PA CareerLink® Bucks County staff members will consider the competence of the family or friend used as the interpreter, the appropriateness of the use, and the ability to provide quality and accurate information. PA CareerLink® Bucks County staff determines whether to provide its independent interpreter assistance should the interview negatively affect the individual or family's eligibility for benefits/services, potential or actual conflicts of interest, and confidentiality of the information being interpreted.

Adaptive equipment is available at the PA CareerLink® Bucks County to ensure access to services for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing, including:

- Adjustable height table for PC
- Adjustable height chair with adjustable height arm rests
- Alternate mini keyboard
- Alternate track ball mouse
- Foam wrist rest
- Large print/braille keypad stickers
- Monitor arm
- ZoomText
- JAWS Speech output software
- Closed-circuit TV
- Assistive listening devices with disposable covers
- Dedicated telephone line for TTY
- Readers and writers
- Optical wheel mice
- Signature guide
- Sign language interpreting
- Footstool
- AT&T Telecommunications Relay Service
- Automatic doors

All PA CareerLink® Bucks County partner staff will have access to training services for addressing job seekers who have barriers to employment, including language/limited English proficiency barriers. Training services will identify job seekers with specific barriers to employment (e.g., digital literacy, vocational, language, and reentry). Appropriate referrals will be made to partner entities to ensure a continuum of services. Referral to non-partner agencies who focus on target populations will be facilitated to ensure a holistic approach to meeting immediate needs and ultimately ensure job readiness. All customers of PA CareerLink® Bucks County will have access to the full range of services that they are eligible to receive from all partners. Some customers, including veterans, may be eligible for special assistance from providers. Still, the customer's decision to access such assistance is always a choice following information about the services.

Job seekers with barriers to employment are also identified through barrier remediation assessment during the creation of individual employment plans. At this time, job seekers are able to openly discuss barriers

they face to obtaining their employment goals. Their employment plan is updated as barriers are addressed.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, PA CareerLink® Bucks County staff quickly pivoted to meet job seeker's needs by offering virtual enrollments and online services beginning in March 2020 with a full offering of virtual services by June 2020. This shift in One-Stop delivery programs helped ensure uninterrupted services while in compliance with social distancing. It also helped to mitigate transportation barriers for participants, especially for rural customers. The success of One-Stop delivery services in a virtual setting has paved the way for these options to remain in place during the post-pandemic economic recovery.

The PA CareerLink® is the system of record for WIOA programs. Partner and program provider staff enter customer data into PA CareerLink® to track program activity, case notes, and individual employment plans. Data is entered within ten business days of the enrollment date for all programs as required by Commonwealth protocols. Monitoring is conducted by the Bucks County WED to ensure this time frame is met.

The Bucks County WED uses an additional Microsoft Access Database to track customers through WIOA services and non-WIOA grants. Staff members enter data through an Excel spreadsheet completed by the program provider. Customers in WIOA are reconciled with PA CareerLink® monthly.

The Bucks County WIOA Youth service provider uses CWDS 2.0 for each participant at time of enrollment, including ISS documentation. CWDS 2.0 is updated when the client is enrolled in the program and has exited appropriately.

All appropriate services are entered into the system(s) of record by appropriate staff authorized to do so for each program activity of partner/contractor staff (program case manager). Bucks County WED staff input information as needed relating to eligibility determinations. Employers may enter information related to Incumbent Worker training and, where appropriate, information is entered into PA CareerLink® immediately if possible, but within ten business days of the participant's start date. This time increment serves to ensure that all information entered is accurate for each participant and service.

The PA CareerLink® Bucks County provides direct workforce development services for public assistance recipients through the established relationship with the Employment, Advancement, and Retention (EARN) program. The EARN program provides comprehensive case management, remediation, and education, emphasizing individuals with limited English proficiency, occupational skills training, work-based learning, job placement, retention services, and supportive services, including childcare assistance.

The Education Leading to Employment and Career Training (ELECT) program, a TANF program attributed to EARN, is an independent program that seeks to meet the needs of out-of-school pregnant and parenting youth and assistance for non-custodial fathers. ELECT provides pregnant and parenting teens with guidance and services designed to break the cycle of welfare dependence through goal setting, fostering self-sufficiency, building healthy relationships, and obtaining a high school diploma or equivalent. Designed to meet the changing needs of pregnant and parenting teens, the ELECT Initiative uses group and one-on-one approaches to meet each student's unique needs.

There are 29 ELECT programs across the Commonwealth. Their services are available to students ages 22

and younger who:

- attend any PDE approved educational entity,
- are pregnant, expecting, and/or parenting (male or female),
- receive TANF benefits, or
- have a personal monthly earned income that does not exceed 235% of the Federal Poverty Income Guideline (FPIG).

The Bucks County EARN service provider partners with ELECT through referrals and onsite/virtual presentations to clients. The Bucks County EARN service provider also considers ELECT and the Title II program services when creating IEPs to serve their clients best. This approach ensures that the provider is offering all available resources to provide participants success in self-sufficiency.

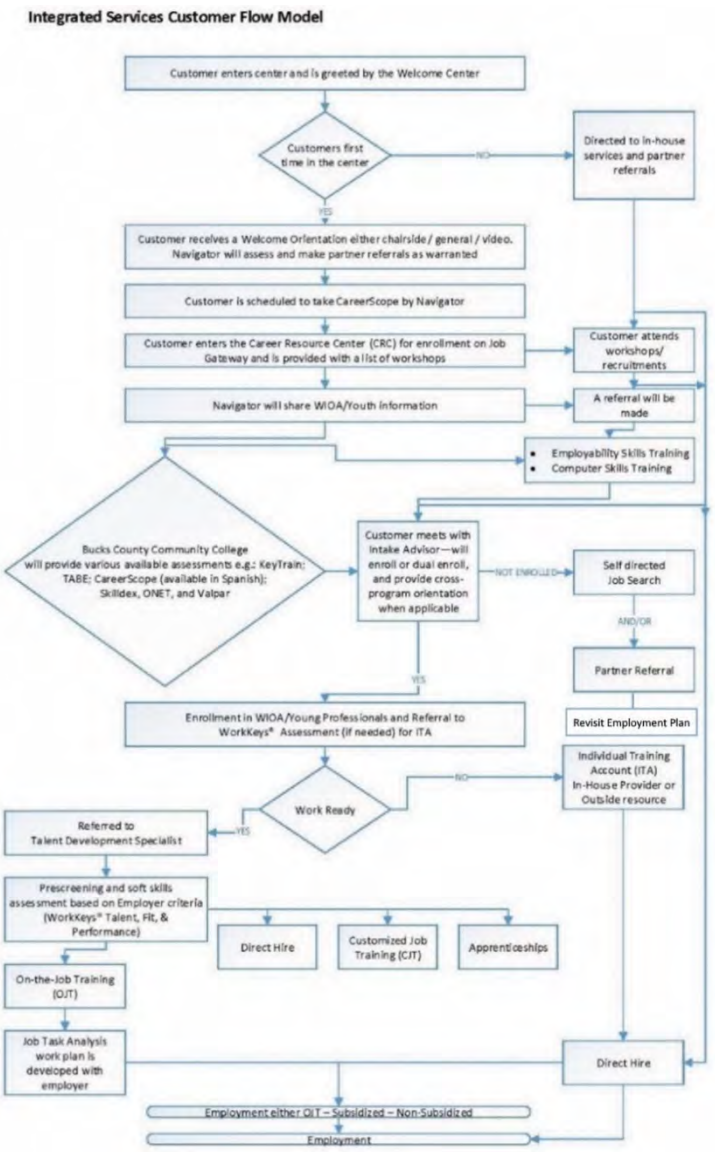
Work activities in EARN include unsubsidized employment, subsidized employment/paid work experience, and community service opportunities. EARN staff members are co-located in the PA CareerLink® Centers and collaborate with other partners in business outreach. Participants are co-enrolled with WIOA and other partners as appropriate, and co-case management structures ensure that regulations and documentation needed for each partner are maintained. The Bucks County WED works closely with all Adult Education partners to identify joint strategies, ensuring individuals who participate in WIOA Title II basic education and English learning programs connect to Career Pathways and the full range of available services.

Keystone Education Yields Success (KEYS) assists students who receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) in their pursuit of post-secondary education. Students enrolled in the program at Bucks County Community College have the opportunity to meet regularly with program staff who will help them meet their educational goals by:

- providing career counseling, tutoring, and academic support, including help with financial aid,
- facilitating supportive services available through the County Assistance Office (CAO) and/or the College, and
- connecting students to other community service agencies.

KEYS is currently providing monthly presentations and attending Bucks County Direct Service Team meetings as short-term and long-term client goals are discussed. This method has provided proper referrals and allowed for consistent communication and collaboration of both the new EARN and KEYS manuals.

The approaches described above compliment recommendations from the PA Department of Education (PDE) that identify linkage points and cross-referral processes to integrate basic skills, occupational training, and work-based learning opportunities for all customers within the PA CareerLink® system.



The Bucks County WED uses EMSI Developer/Workforce Insights to align with economic development partners, allowing the local board and its partners to provide macro-economic trends/data and local talent mapping through unique algorithms the Workforce Insights® programs.

For services under the EARN and WIOA Title II Adult Education programs, the information in respective programs is captured in appropriate systems of record and shared with partner staff in the dual enrollment process, following all necessary release(s) of information. All PA CareerLink® Bucks County partner staff have access to training services for addressing job seekers who have barriers to employment, including language/limited English proficiency barriers. It is important to note that all attempts are made to determine eligibility for specialized services (under programs such as Veterans services). Still, these services supplement, not replace, the services that available from all partners.

Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, the Unemployment Compensation (UC) Program provides meaningful assistance to individuals seeking assistance in filing an unemployment claim in PA

CareerLink® sites, offering claimants dedicated access to UC service center staff and access to important UC information. Assistance to individuals filing an unemployment claim is provided by offering a courtesy telephone at PA CareerLink® sites dedicated to promptly serving One-Stop customers. On-site computers allow One-Stop customers access to unemployment compensation services online along with informational UC postings, signs, pamphlets, and forms for UC claimants and employers.

4.4. How will entities within the One-Stop service delivery system, including One-Stop operators and the One-Stop partners, comply with WIOA Sec. 188 (as applicable) and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101, et seq.) regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities? [20 CFR § 679.560(b)(5)(iii)]

The PA CareerLink® Bucks County promotes Bucks Career Solutions (buckscareersolutions.com), an accessible online tool for job seekers in the local workforce area. A collaboration between the PA CareerLink® Bucks County and Public Consulting, this customized platform allows the One-Stop Operator to provide assistance and services to customers remotely through any smart device. Job seekers can take courses, find events, connect with community service organizations, access other resources available in Bucks County. In addition to One-Stop delivery services, customers can conduct keyword searches (e.g., Education, Health, Public Safety, Human Rights, Human Services, and Supportive Services) to connect with agencies and organizations for additional services. Links to One-Stop partners are prominently featured, including Bucks County Area on Aging, Bucks County Assistance Office, Bucks County Community College, Bureau of Workforce Partnerships and Operations, Career Wardrobe, Educational Data Systems, Office of Vocational Systems, and Vita Education Services.

A description of the One-Stop equal employment opportunity officer (EEO officer) is provided in Section 3.1. According to State and Federal policies, the EEO Officer also provides ongoing compliance reviews and provides review summaries to the Bucks County WED. Compliance reviews will be conducted annually by the state in accord with new review guidelines.

The PA Department of Labor and Industry Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) serves as the Bucks County WED and the local Operator Consortium member. The Bucks County WED and the PA CareerLink® Bucks County director rely upon OVR staff for their expertise in sensitivity training, TTY adaptive equipment/software training, and American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation services.

Adaptive Equipment available at the PA CareerLink® Bucks County includes:

- Adjustable height table for PC
- Adjustable height chair with adjustable height arm rests
- Alternate mini keyboard
- Alternate track ball mouse
- Foam wrist rest
- Large print/braille keypad stickers
- Monitor arm
- ZoomText
- JAWS Speech output software

- Closed-circuit TV
- Assistive listening devices with disposable covers
- Dedicated telephone line for TTY
- Readers and writers
- Optical wheel mice
- Signature guide
- Sign language interpreting
- Footstool
- AT&T Telecommunications Relay Service
- Automatic doors

OVR staff offer input on procedures and policies that enhance access and services for persons with disabilities. Through the development and maintenance of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Board and OVR, the Board incorporates policies and guidance from the Commonwealth and subsequent policies to implement State-issued plans.

All PA CareerLink® staff and partners will have access to training to ensure compliance with all laws and regulations within their programs, along with cross-training coordinated by the One-Stop Operator. This training includes implementing Priority of Service procedures and compliance with the State and Federal requirements under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Supervisors must approve all training for staff of individual partners of the partner's staff.

Primary locations for accessing services in the county are listed below.

PA CareerLink® Bucks County	
Lower Bucks Center 1260 Veterans Highway Bristol, PA 19007 Phone: 215-781-1073 TTY: 215-781-9553	**Upper Bucks Satellite** Bucks County Community College 1 Hillendale Road Perkasie, PA 18944 Phone: 215-258-7755
Hours of Operation: Monday-Friday from 8:30 AM to 4 PM	
Facebook: @pacareerlinkbucks	**Twitter**: @PACareerLinkBC

The designated equal employment opportunity officer (EEO Officer) for the local area is Dianna Kralle, assistant director of the Bucks County WED (djkralle@buckscounty.org, 267-642-8138). The EEO Officer provides a single point of contact in the workforce area for persons or entities filing complaints and seeking assistance. According to State and Federal policies, the EEO Officer also provides ongoing compliance reviews and provides review summaries to the Bucks County WED. Compliance reviews will be conducted annually by the state in accord with new review guidelines.

4.5. Describe how the local board will ensure the continuous improvement of eligible providers through the system and that such providers will meet the employment needs of local area employers, workers, and job seekers. [20 CFR § 679.560(b)(5)(i)]

The Bucks County WED utilizes three primary methods to verify local training activities' relevance to target

occupations in the local area and the broader Southeast Pennsylvania Region. First, the Bucks County WED develops an in-depth understanding of the skills demanded by employers through ongoing review of labor market information provided by the PA Center for Workforce Information and Analysis (CWIA) and reports from EMSI (Economic Modeling Specialists International). The Bucks County WED contracts with EMSI for ongoing demand-side reports, supplemented by real-time job posting data. Second, the Bucks County WED engages in direct communication with local employers in multiple ways: business outreach staff; employer surveys; Industry Partnership groups; and active participation with economic development groups, chambers of commerce, and other employer associations. Lastly, the Bucks County WED reviews customer satisfaction survey information from both employers and job seekers.

The Point of Contact (POC) reviews the new High Priority Occupation (HPO) list to ensure relevance to local labor market needs. Petitions are executed for occupations that are not included on the list but are still in demand locally. Factors that may enter the decision to submit a petition include key business relationships, past training success, new business intelligence. Petitions may be submitted throughout the year when employers present new demand information.

The Board manages the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) process by reviewing proposed training programs for adequate content descriptions, alignment with the High Priority Occupation (HPO) list, and the training provider's prior performance. All training providers must sign and maintain a Master Training Agreement before the start of any WIOA-funded training. Each month, a report of training provider performance is reviewed with the One-Stop Operator and PA CareerLink® Bucks County partners as part of regular coordination meetings. The report includes training starts, training completers, and training-related employments by provider and type of training. Customer satisfaction surveys of training participants are also reviewed. These surveys are compiled by the One-Stop Operator and shared with the Bucks County WED. Programs with low satisfaction scores or inadequate overall performance are provided with technical assistance, and performance improvement plans are established as needed.

One challenge cited in Section 1.3 is the current under-employment of workers and the effects of long-term COVID-19 economic recovery, many of which are yet to be seen. Workers who have not left the workforce have taken jobs at lower wage levels and in occupations where their skills are not being used, in some cases because those skills are not needed in the labor market. As a result, the Bucks County WED views the opportunity under WIOA to expand Incumbent Worker training as a significant asset in addressing this issue. The Bucks County WED and the One-Stop Operator will work collaboratively with the Commonwealth's Rapid Response staff and resources on strategies that upgrade skills and wages and prevent future layoffs of employees with skills in decline within the labor market.

The Bucks County WED sees the Local Training Provider List (LTPL) as an opportunity to effectively manage and hold accountable new and innovative programs, including areas such as cohort training, identification of new and innovative certificates and credentials, and expansion of a suite of work-based learning opportunities to engage job seekers and employers.

The Bucks County WED serves incumbent workers within the local area by working with employers to identify potential candidates and identify training and up-skilling opportunities for prospective participants. Up to 20% of Adult and Dislocated Worker funding is allocated to address this need. As staff work with employers to train their existing workforce, employers can back-fill jobs via posting openings that arise by upskilling existing workers and providing opportunities for existing and new workers. Eligible employers in Bucks County are those that provide permanent jobs with family-sustaining wages and benefits. Employers

do not use Incumbent Worker funding if there is a recent layoff history at the employer's site. The program is intended to prevent layoffs by providing new skills to meet workplace demands and conditions in the local labor market.

While adhering to the Commonwealth's policies related to High Priority Occupations training, the Bucks County WED established a process to endorse HPO applications submitted by local economic development and/or local educational institutions. Documented evidence must be provided to show that the employment position/occupation meets the HPO criteria and will benefit the continued and new economic and workforce development and growth in Bucks County. The Bucks County WED will use the Commonwealth's self-sustaining wage for the HPO list.

HPO application criteria include:

- Evidence that the occupation fits the definition of a specific occupation in demand by local employers has a documented career path and provides family-sustaining wages.
- A minimum of three letters from different local employers. The petitioner must prove the existence of an aggregated 75 openings for each year of the next five years via the employer letters. Each letter must be for a specific occupation.

The petition process allows the Commonwealth to include specific occupations in Bucks County, demonstrating new economic growth, emerging occupations, or a regional industry cluster need. The Bucks County WED will not endorse petitions that do not meet the standards.

Petitions must include:

- The Regional High Priority Occupation Application. Each section must be completed, including the "Justifications" section if the petition is for New Job Growth.
- A letter from the petitioner describes the occupation and the local need for training in this specific occupation.
- A flow chart of the typical career ladder for the occupation.
- Documentation establishing the salary for the occupation from Hourly Wage Occupational Employment Statistics (paworkstats.state.pa.us).
- Three independent letters from local employers that clearly articulate the occupation, the projected/anticipated openings each year for the next five years, and the fact that the occupation offers both family-sustaining wages and growth opportunities. The letters must be included with the total petition packet. The petitioner is responsible for collecting the letters and including the original letters with the total petition packet.

4.6. Provide a description and assessment of the type and availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities in the local area. [20 CFR § 679.560(b)(6)]

The Bucks County WED's ongoing efforts to assess the needs of employers, as well as the effectiveness, availability, and capacity of current programs to meet the needs, as described in prior sections, include:

- Participation in multiple Industry Partnerships and other sector-based planning groups.
- Regular meetings between the Board's staff and staff of local economic development organizations and chambers of commerce.

- Cross-membership between the Bucks County WED, economic development organizations, and chambers of commerce.
- Business-Education Partnership meetings to identify needs and gaps.
- Monthly meetings of workforce development board directors from the broader Southeast PA region to identify needs, programs, and practices in the broader area.

The Bucks County WED works diligently to identify best practices and open the door to new training and education approaches through formal requests for proposals. Consistent with priorities under WIOA, the Bucks County WED places emphasis on establishing Career Pathways as the language of the system and, in doing so, seeks to advance the availability of education and training services in multiple ways, including:

- Increased stackability of credentials between CTE programs and Bucks County Community College programs, particularly in Manufacturing.
- Involvement of employers in expanding work-based learning opportunities along the Career Pathways.
- Identification of candidates for new apprenticeship programs and other work-and-learn strategies, including the expansion of the Metalworks program offered through the Bucks County Community College (The Bucks County WED also utilizes OJT funds for participants to ensure a fully integrated continuum of learning).
- Working with other regions throughout the State to identify micro-credentials relevant to meeting employers' needs as part of the Commonwealth's implementation of the Workforce Innovation Fund (WIF) grant.

The Bucks County WED continues to position On-the-Job Training (OJT) as its highest priority training strategy for increasing skill levels of adults and dislocated workers. OJT may be combined with classroom training as needed to create apprenticeship-like structures consistent with the work-based learning priorities in the WIOA.

The OJT Training Policy ensures that local policies and procedures are aligned with the priorities of the State and local economic development entities and includes the following key provisions:

Eligibility

An OJT contract may be executed only for jobs that are considered High Priority Occupations (HPO). Generally, an HPO is an occupation that offers family-sustaining wages, has career lattice/laddering opportunities, and is projected to have 75 or more openings every year for the next five years in the Bucks County Workforce Area.

Goal Wages

The goal wage for OJT contracts is $10.88 for Adult and Dislocated Worker customers and $8.00 for Youth customers. Contracts with lower wages may be considered if there is the possibility of increased salary compensation upon completing the OJT. OJT contracts will not be executed for wages below minimum wage or seasonal positions. OJT contracts are executed for full-time employment positions of at least 35 hours per week; contractual agreements for less than 35 hours per week or 140 per month will be at the discretion of the BCWDB. Hours/wages reimbursement occurs through the Employer's submission of monthly payroll registers to the BCWDB. Only actual hours worked are eligible for the reimbursement.

Length

The OJT contract's length is determined by whichever of the following three factors occurs first: The time required for an OJT Employee to become proficient in the occupation for which the training is being provided; a maximum period of six months; or the Employer receiving $8,500 in subsidy. In determining the appropriate length of the contract, consideration must be given to the skill requirement of the occupation and the academic and occupational level of the OJT Employee, including prior work experience.

Capacity

At any time, no more than five OJT employees will be funded by the Bucks County WED for employment with the same company/organization. Before increasing the number of OJT employees working for the same company, a 90-day job retention period for each initial OJT employee will be necessary.

ADA Compliance

As the OJT is funded through federal resources, the work-site location where the OJT Employee will be working/training is required to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Participating employers must certify compliance with ADA standards provided to them by the Bucks County WED. Should the worksite be found out of compliance due to monitoring of the site or as a result of a complaint filed with the Bucks County WED, the employer must agree to make reasonable change/accommodations to comply.

The following safeguards are also built into the OJT program:

- The Bucks County WED will not contract with an employer who has previously exhibited a pattern of failing to provide OJT participants with continued long-term employment with wages, benefits, and working conditions equal to those provided to regular employees who have worked a similar length of time and are doing the same type of work.

- The OJT contractual agreement must be completed and fully executed (authorized signatures from the employer and the Bucks County WED) before the OJT employee/trainee starts working. Should the OJT employee/trainee starts working before the contract is executed, the Bucks County WED will not be able to provide any reimbursement or funds going forward for that OJT employee/trainee. It includes paid job shadowing, internships, or hiring OJT applicants as 1099-C contractors. Unpaid job shadowing may not exceed 8 hours.

- An OJT cannot be executed for an employment position that was downsized within the previous six months. An OJT cannot be executed for an employment position that has been subject to reduced hours within the past six months.

- The Employer must make a good faith effort to retain the OJT Employee at the end of the contract.

- Reverse referrals, whereby the employer brings a potential candidate to the PA CareerLink® for an OJT, are not permitted. OJTs are executed for referrals of appropriate candidates from the PA

CareerLink® Bucks County and eligible for subsidized work opportunities through the Federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

4.7. How will training services be provided through the use of individual training accounts (ITA) that fund programs of study, or through the use of contracts for training services that fund work-based trainings. [20 CFR 679.560(b)(18)]

An Individual Training Account (ITA) contract allows, as appropriate, an enrolled PA CareerLink® Bucks County job seeker customer to increase their skills through short-term occupational skill training programs to gain meaningful employment.

ITA funding is allocated for PA CareerLink® Bucks County eligible customers seeking training through a State-approved eligible training provider that has entered a master contract with the Bucks County WED. Priority is given to residents of Bucks County.

Training services may be made available to eligible participants who:

- Have met the eligibility requirements of receiving career services and have been determined to be unable to obtain or retain employment through such services.
- After an interview and case management has determined the need for training services.
- Have researched and selected a training program directly linked to employment opportunities either in the local area or in another area to which the participant is willing to travel/relocate.
- Are unable to obtain grant assistance from other sources to pay the total cost of such training, including State-funded training, Trade, Pell Grants, or require WIOA assistance in addition to other sources of grant assistance.

The maximum amount of an ITA is $6,500 per customer. This limit is reviewed annually and may be adjusted higher or lower during a program year. Once a specific allocation is committed to a particular training provider for a particular PA CareerLink® customer, that amount will remain contractually binding as long as funds remain available. No payments are made directly to an individual. All training contracts must be fully signed and executed by the Bucks County WED before they are considered approved and funding is allocated. Funding is based on appropriateness and funds availability. PA CareerLink® Bucks County customers should never be guaranteed funds or training.

Eligibility

A training contract may be entered into only in occupations that are in the High Priority Occupation List as published by PADOL, which include the following conditions: are in demand by employers, have higher skill needs which provide family-sustaining wages, and targeted to have 75 or more local openings each year for the next five years.

Length

The length of the ITA contract may not exceed 18 months.

Cost

An ITA contract may not exceed $6,500.

ADA Compliance

As the ITA is funded through Federal resources, the ITA client's location for training must comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The PA CareerLink® Bucks County Business Services representative will conduct an ADA inspection before engaging in a master contract with the provider. If the site is not compliant, the provider must agree to make reasonable changes/accommodations should the customer make the request.

4.8. Provide a description and assessment of the type and availability of youth workforce investment activities in the local area. [20 CFR § 679.560(b)(8)]

The Youth Council, whose mission supports a comprehensive workforce strategy for youth programs and services, identifies youth programs, develops requests for proposals, and makes recommendations to the Board on allocating funds for youth services. This Council also oversees program performance, including targeted services for youth with employment barriers and/or disabilities. Additionally, this Council participates in the local area's efforts to develop and implement Career Pathways by aligning the employment, training, education, and supportive services needed by adults and youth, particularly individuals with barriers to employment.

The Youth Council provides the forum for active participation of youth agencies across the County, including foster care programs, Children and Youth Services, Housing and Urban Development services, and Family Services Association of Bucks County. The Youth Council also has representation from the career and technical high schools, the public school system, and the local community college. Employers also serve on the Youth Council, with priority given to employers who provide employment and work-based learning opportunities for young adults.

With a diverse mix of Board and non-Board members, the Youth Council leverages its members' experiences and insights to guide the development of youth preparation strategies and connections to employers. The Youth Council reviews program proposals and makes recommendations to the full Board for approval, including recommendations on policies and procedures for co-enrollment opportunities with TANF/EARN, WIOA Title II Adult Education, and WIOA Adult Programs as appropriate within the context of each youth's individualized service plan.

Under the WIOA priorities for serving out-of-school youth, the Bucks County WED and the One-Stop Operator focus on strengthening relationships and referrals with key partners such as the corrections system and community-based organizations where youth are already engaged.

The Youth Council and the Board review and approve all policies and procedures for youth eligibility and documentation procedures, including the policy for "requires additional assistance to complete an educational program or secure and hold employment."

Youth must provide documentation to enroll in a WIOA Youth program and establish eligibility under the following requirements:

- Age (14-21 for in-school, 16-24 for out-of-school)
- Authorization to Work
- Residency
- Selective Service Registration (if applicable for age)
- School Status
- Low-Income Determination
- Barrier Status (school dropout, pregnant/parenting, youth with disability, in foster
- care/aged out, homeless/runaway, offender, basic skills deficient, English Language Learner, "requires additional assistance").

The Board adopted the following policy related to the provision for "requires additional assistance to complete an educational program, or to secure and hold employment," as a youth/young adult who meets one or more of the following:

- Poor work history (fired from one or more jobs in the past six months, or history of sporadic employment – such as three or more jobs in the past year and no longer employed).
- A low score on pre-employment skills assessment or letter from employer stating youth does not possess skills for employment.
- Actively seeking employment for part two months but remains unemployed or underemployed (may have part-time status and unable to obtain full-time job).
- Is currently at risk of dropping out of school, documented by a school official due to absences, discipline, or underachievement.

In-school youth who do not meet the WIOA income eligibility criteria may still participate if they meet one or more of the following barriers: basic skills deficient, behind grade level, pregnant of parenting, individuals with disabilities including learning disabilities, homeless of runaways, and offenders.

If a youth vendor wants to enroll a youth that may fall into the 5% category for eligibility, permission must be granted by the Bucks County WED. Any 5% exception is tracked monthly against all ISY and OSY that meet the low-income barrier, and enrollments may only be granted if it does not exceed the 5% of low-income enrollments.

In-School and Out-of-School Youth employers are recruited for participation in multiple ways, with recruitment messages shown below:

Job Shadowing is a great way to let someone see first-hand what it's like to spend a typical day on the job. In as little as one hour or one day, you can help your "shadow" learn about your field and whether it might be the right choice for them.

Mentorship allows you to offer guidance to at-risk youth on your terms, according to your schedule. You specify the time, place, and frequency of meetings. You can even choose to be an e-mentor if e-mail is more convenient.

When you bring a youth intern on board, you get a reliable, pre-screened worker who is ready to learn. A youth intern can help you boost productivity without hiring a full-time employee. Most internships run 20 hours a week for four weeks.

With On-the-Job Training, you hire a youth full-time and spend up to six months training them on the job—to your standards, for your company. You can even receive financial reimbursement of their hourly wages to offset your investment.

When you hire a youth full-time, not only do you get a qualified, pre-screened employee—you get someone who a youth program caseworker is actively supporting. This relationship helps ensure employee reliability and decrease turnover.

TANF Youth Development Services are offered by Bucks County Community College staff and are offered to junior and senior high school students from nine Bucks County high schools. Students are recruited and/or recommended to the In-School-Youth Program by their high school counselors. Referred students may need additional support with drop-out prevention, career exploration, workplace readiness skills, post-graduation employment pathways, or post-graduation education options. The curriculum includes all 14 WIOA Youth Program Elements during the yearlong program offered twice a week. In addition to career pathways exploration, the program includes project-based, hands-on experience with small tools, basic electric, forklift training, and OSHA 10 certification. For students interested in healthcare, certifications include First Aid/CPR/AED/Narcan, Concussion training, and Bloodborne Pathogens. There is a pathway for students interested in hazardous materials training with three separate certifications. In addition to industry-based certifications, all students participate in Customer Service training and certification, diversity, equity and inclusion training, resume writing, business writing, and mock-interview training. Industry tours, job shadowing, military speakers, and internships are encouraged whenever possible. Bucks County Workforce and Economic Development have multiple employers interested in offering internships to youth enrolled in the In-School Program. With the availability of a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor, paid internships or subsidized wages to the TANF program students have been available. Incentives and/or supportive services have not been offered in the TANF program.

The LWDB staff member responsible for implementation, tracking, and reporting TANF YDF activities, expenditures and for the compilation and submission of the DHS Qualification Spreadsheet to DocuShare is:
Alice Colyar, Bucks County Workforce & Economic Development
amcolyar@buckscounty.org, 267-680-9467

The TANF Youth Development Program-Youth Provider is:
Ms. Eunice Rush-Day, Bucks County Community College
eunice.rush-day@bucks.edu, 215-258-7741

The Out-of-School Youth program maintains a close working relationship with OVR and other partners to recruit and support young adult participants in the program. The program partners with OVR in sponsoring a Youth and Young Adult Job Fair in Lower Bucks County for 16-21-year-olds with disabilities.

As a core partner, OVR collaborates with the Bucks County WED to provide in-school youth with disabilities opportunities to participate in pre-employment transition services and other services to gain skills and knowledge to enter the workforce. In partnership with the Bucks County WED and other youth services

providers, OVR may provide both OVR eligible and potentially eligible in-school youth with disabilities services to enter competitive integrated employment. These meaningful opportunities allow in-school youth with disabilities to assess their strengths and skills while exploring vocational possibilities and removing employment barriers.

Work-based learning is an important component for in-school youth with disabilities to engage in opportunities to discover career paths. Other services that may be provided to OVR in-school youth with disabilities include:

- Counseling and guidance from professional vocational rehabilitation staff to explore career and training options as well as understand VR services.
- Independent Living Skills training will allow students to perform the daily tasks essential for maintaining or obtaining independence. Independent Living Skills can include household budgeting and financial management, utilizing public transportation, and navigating through the social services system.
- Self-Advocacy Training assists students with disabilities in gaining knowledge on 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 the 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 various occupational fields.

As with adult programs accessed via the PA CareerLink® Center, youth have access to all partners' services, and costs of service are shared accordingly. Some individuals may choose not to access services of OVR; in such cases, individuals will still have access to the services of all other partners.

4.9. How will the local board coordinate workforce investment activities and ensure they are carried out in the local area with statewide rapid response? [20 CFR § 679.560(b)(7)]

The Bucks County WED is committed to maintaining procedures to fully coordinate local activity with statewide Rapid Response activities. The Board receives both formal notices of impending layoffs and informal early warnings of layoffs obtained via a close working relationship between the Business Development Team, local employers, and the state. The Bucks County Rapid Response Team is comprised of experienced PA CareerLink® Title I and Wagner-Peyser staff, along with key community partners. At appropriate intervention points, the team is assembled to reach out to the employer and labor representatives to design service strategies and timelines for assisting impacted workers and their employers. The Board and its service provider partners continue to monitor activities and needs throughout the process, with Business Development Team and Business Services Team members serving on committees and task forces to coordinate services. While maximum use is made in directing exiting

resources to meet the needs of impacted works, the Board may also seek additional funding available for large-scale layoffs.

Bucks County WED staff and PA CareerLink® Bucks County staff are aware of the conditions outlined in the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act (WARN). They are fully trained in procedures to assist employers in full collaboration with state Rapid Response staff. The PA CareerLink® Centers staff in the local area and the region also coordinate efforts with the regional Strategic Early Warning Network (SEWN) Coordinator. The Bucks County WED and the One-Stop Operator continue to support local and regional coordination efforts.

A greater focus will be placed on utilizing all resources, including Rapid Response staff and resources, for layoff aversion by engaging employers in training incumbent workers and connecting employers to sources of assistance from economic development partners for business development. In placing greater emphasis on WIOA's permissible use of Adult and Dislocated Worker funds to support Incumbent Worker training, the Board strives to work with the PA CareerLink® partners to create proactive strategies to prevent layoff, not just respond to them.

4.10. How will the local board coordinate relevant secondary and post-secondary education programs and activities with workforce investment activities to support strategies, enhance services, and avoid duplication of service(s)? [20 CFR § 679.560(b)(9)]

Coordination with secondary and post-secondary education is driven by collaboration with employers in identifying projected job demand and skills needed to fill the jobs. Through a wide range of venues, the Bucks County WED interacts with educators to design Career Pathways for youth and adults. The shared goals are to create mechanisms to inform individuals of in-demand jobs and skills and increase engagement and enrollment in training opportunities that meet employers' needs and lead to career paths and wage advancement.

Venues for interaction include:

- Membership of educators from secondary and post-secondary schools on the Workforce Development Board, the Youth Council, or special task forces.
- Participation by Board members and staff on committees and task forces formed by the local chambers of commerce, local economic development organizations, and educational advisory groups.
- Sector-based employer groups and Industry Partnerships where the educational program providers and workforce development providers interact to meet the specific needs of the sector.
- Regular discussion sessions of the Executive Director with educators, chambers of commerce, and economic development leaders in the County, funded through ITAs.

Customers who are not identified in a career pathway have opportunities to learn about educational services at the Career Resource Center (CRC). Training providers conduct information sessions and workshops at the CRC to help customers select those educational services that best meet their educations needs and career goals.

The Bucks County Workforce Development Board works through several methods to address Perkins Act Section 134 biennial Career and Technical Education (CTE) needs assessment.

The PA CareerLink® Site Administrator is an active participant in Perkins Advisory Committees for each Career-Technical Center (CTE), which provides up-to-date information on approved programs that support high-priority occupations. The PA CareerLink® Site Administrator and direct service staff work to ensure that all customers who are eligible for education, in alignment with career pathways, have access to those programs and the supports necessary to succeed. In addition, Business Services Team will refer customers when incumbent worker funds are not available. In-depth assessments and ongoing career coaching for job seekers include a thorough review of each individualized plan review to ensure preparedness and confirm that there is no duplication of services.

The Bucks County Workforce Development Board has an outstanding and exemplary relationship with the three CTE facilities in the County and a strong relationship with Bucks County Community College, the Perkins V postsecondary recipient the local workforce development area. Through this strong existing partnership, the Board works to help ensure that training programs are developed to align with high-priority occupations for in-demand industries, further aiding Buck County's Perkins V implementation and alignment with labor market needs.

With these strong partnerships, the Board collaborates By maintaining Board representation from educational institutions, including representation on the One-Stop Operator Committee and Youth Council, the Bucks County Workforce Development Board stays informed of the coordination of employers' needs related to educational program offerings.

The Bucks County Workforce Development Board has long emphasized and has had great success with the Business Education Partnership Grants. In 2019, Bucks County was awarded a grant for the State Local Internship Program (SLIP) to assist young people in their internships related to CTE dominant occupations. The Bucks County Workforce Development Board provides great assistance to the CTE providers and their biennial assessment through areas based upon an exemplary day-to-day working relationship between the CTE and the public workforce system.

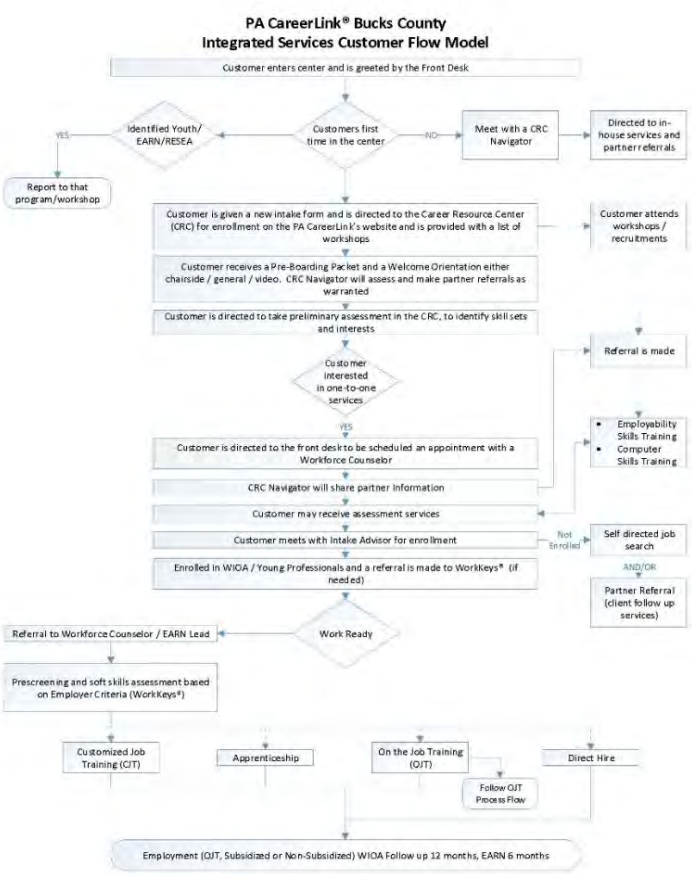
At the operations level, educators interact routinely with the PA CareerLink® Bucks County staff, as shown in the Assessment Flow on the following page. Assessment results for individual job seekers are combined with career interests to design an individualized training plan that will integrate remedial education as needed and increasingly include work-based learning at an employer's site to combine with classroom training. It is an even higher priority, given WIOA's emphasis on work-based learning and Career Pathways and the Commonwealth's emphasis on increasing expenditures directly related to training. The Bucks County WED has prioritized Manufacturing occupations in high demand, and the Bucks County Community College provides a Metalworks program for two cohorts of students. WIOA Title II programs are a key component for providing the basic skills needed to participate in occupational training programs. A priority is to integrate basic skills with occupational training in co-requisite rather than pre-requisite structures to allow participants access to occupational training as early as possible, a practice that has been shown nationally to promote student retention in programs.

At the secondary school level, a focal point for coordination is the Business-Education Partnership of Bucks and Montgomery County, supported by funding from the PA Department of Labor and Industry. The Partnership's overall goal is to provide an intermediary network through the leadership of the Workforce

Development Boards of the two counties to support middle and high schools and direct student involvement in career awareness and exposure activities. The Partnership includes employers, career/technical schools, and higher education institutions in addition to the regular K-12 districts. The Partnership sponsors several activities, including Manufacturing Day, Educator in the Workplace, Future Fairs, ManuFest, and Food for Thought sessions, where lunch sessions connect teachers, students, and employers in sessions about career opportunities.

4.11. Describe the plans, assurances, and strategies for maximizing coordination, improving service delivery, and avoiding duplication of Wagner-Peyser Act (29 U.S.C. 49 et seq.) services and other services provided through the One-Stop service delivery system. [20 CFR § 679.560(b)(11)]

The Integrated Services Customer Flow Model (referenced in Section 3.2) is the foundation for job seeker services delivered at PA CareerLink® centers. Services for employers are also provided in an integrated model and are described in Section 4.14.



Career services, provided by the PA CareerLink® Bucks County, are delivered primarily at the integrated, comprehensive One-Stop center. The One-Stop Operator is charged with ensuring services are delivered on a functional basis by partners who adhere to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) terms that the partners have with the Bucks County WED.

The One-Stop Operator calls regular meetings to coordinate customer service approaches to cover the following key functions:

- Welcome and initial orientation for new customers.
- Introduction to self-service options.
- Skill and career development with staff assistance in creating individualized plans.
- Business services combine outreach staff with internal staff to screen and connect qualified applicants to jobs employers post in the system.
- Seamless connections to additional services available for special populations (e.g., veterans, persons with disabilities, and TANF recipients) while general career services are maintained.

Partners also collaborate to make workshops available to job seekers on résumé development, labor market information, High Priority Occupations, supportive services, and Career Pathways through local post-secondary institutions. Duplication of business services has been greatly reduced by integrating external outreach and internal business support functions.

The One-Stop Operator has regular managers meetings in which all contracted programs offered on-site at the PA CareerLink® Bucks County are represented. Bucks County WED representatives participate in the weekly meeting when needed or appropriate. Agenda items include updates on current programs and discussion on leveraging resources.

4.12. How will the local board coordinate WIOA Title I workforce investment activities with adult education literacy activities under WIOA Title II? [20 CFR § 679.560(b)(12)]

The Bucks County WED has strong partnerships with Vita Education Services and Bucks County Community College as the providers of adult education and literacy services under WIOA Title II, including services behind the walls for reentrants. Both partners provide services on-site at the PA CareerLink® Bucks County: Vita Education Services at the Bristol location in Lower Bucks and Bucks County Community College at the Perkasie satellite in Upper Bucks. Their maintained co-presence ensures seamless delivery of services within the One-Stop delivery system. These services implement the previously documented referral processes and strategies.

Coordination of Title I and Title II services for customers is conducted in several ways. First, the Title II provider for Bucks County serves as a member of the Bucks County Workforce Development Board, bringing expertise and insight into program delivery and alignment strategies. Second, PA CareerLink® Bucks County workforce counselors make referrals for concurrent dual enrollments, including adult education programs, for WIOA-eligible individuals based on their barrier assessment and employment plans. This approach, which is also implemented for EARN customers, connects individuals with services focused on addressing needs and barrier remediation. Additionally, Title I and Title II providers maintain a co-located presence at the PA CareerLink® Bucks County with two full-time staff members on-site. Lastly, Title I and Title II providers are active members in the PA CareerLink® Bucks County Operating Partners Committee, in which program and policy updates are shared quarterly among all partners. In addition, operating partners meet weekly on Tuesdays at both PA CareerLink® Bucks County locations in Bristol and Perkasie to discuss

program delivery and logistics. Program information is regularly disseminated among Board members and Bucks County WED staff and promoted on social media.

Representatives from Vita Education Services and Bucks County Community College have been involved in developing the Local Plan, attending Bucks County WED's community partners roundtable session on January 27, 2020, where they reviewed WIOA topics and Local Plan elements. A member of Bucks County Community College's senior leadership team serves on the Board of Directors, and Vita Education staff members serve on the One-Stop Operator Committee. Both provide guidance and insight throughout the program year.

According to the Commonwealth's defined process, the Bucks County WED is committed to reviewing adult education and literacy program applications. Board members and staff have close working relationships at all levels of the education pipeline in the County, allowing for expanded opportunities to integrate basic literacy and English as a Second Language (ESL) programs into Career Pathways under the WIOA provision. In practice, the Bucks County WED will review all adult education proposals to further align and integrate basic education with occupational training.

Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) procedures call for prospective local Adult Education providers to submit applications directly to PDE. PDE will perform an initial review to ensure that applications meet requirements for submission. PDE will then share applications related to each workforce area with the appropriate local workforce development board, along with the scoring framework. Local boards will then send recommendations regarding local Adult Education provider proposals to PDE for consideration during PDE's final review, scoring, and selection process.

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

The Bucks County WED implemented a Priority of Service Policy among its partners to expand access to programs and services to individuals with barriers to employment, as called for under WIOA and the Pennsylvania Combined State Plan.

Primary Partners in the Bucks County Workforce Area

- Area Agency on Aging
- Bucks County Assistance Office
- Bucks County Community College
- Educational Data Systems, Inc.
- Department of Labor and Industry Bureau of Workforce Development Partnership
- Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Vita Education Services

Key Elements of the Priority of Service Policy

Overview of Priority of Service

Priority of service means that individuals in targeted groups are given priority to receive individualized career services and training services funded by the WIOA Title I Adult program. Target groups include public assistance recipients, other low-income individuals, individuals who are basic skills deficient, and underemployed who are also low-income. Veterans within these groups receive priority over non-veterans. Adult priority is determined for the targeted groups during eligibility and enrollment.

Priority of service (20 CFR 1010.250) cannot be waived. Priority of service does not guarantee that an individual will always receive service by virtue of their status. The individual must be eligible and able to benefit from the services. The application of priority of service is also subject to additional criteria as the Bucks County WED may determine to be appropriate (20 CFR 680.600(b)). Once another participant is enrolled in a WIOA individualized career or training service, that participant may not be displaced by an individual who qualifies for priority of service.

Residency Requirement

Priority of service requires residency in Bucks County. Residency is to be considered along with the individual satisfying at least one of the following barriers/criteria to meet priority of service: the individual is a public assistance recipient, is a low-income individual, is basic skills deficient, or is low-income and underemployed.

Definitions

"Individuals with Barriers to Employment"

- Displaced homemakers
- Low-income individuals
- Native Americans, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians
- Individuals with disabilities
- Older individuals
- Ex-offenders
- Homeless individuals
- Youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system.
- Individuals who are English language learners, have low literacy levels, or face substantial cultural barriers.
- Eligible Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers
- Individuals within two years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under TANF
- Single parents (including pregnant women)
- Long-term unemployed individuals
- The Governor of Pennsylvania may identify members of other groups.

The Bucks County Priority of Service Policy applies to individualized career services and training services.

"Individualized career services" include comprehensive and specialized assessments, development of an individualized employment plan, group and individual counseling, career planning, short-term prevocational services, internships, and work experiences, workforce preparation activities, financial literacy services, out-of-area job search and relocation assistance, and English language acquisition and integrated education and training programs.

Target Populations Identified to Receive Priority of Service

There are four groups of individuals targeted for priority when providing individualized career services and training services in the WIOA Title I Adult program: public assistance recipients; other low-income individuals; individuals who are basic skills deficient; and individuals who are both underemployed and low-income.

"Recipients of public assistance" includes individuals who receive, or in the past six months have received, or are a member of a family that is receiving or in the past six months has received, assistance through one or more of the following: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF); Supplemental Security Income (SSI); or State or local income-based public assistance.

"Low-income" includes 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. Also included are Youth in school up to age 21; or parents of such youth who are eligible to receive a free or reduced-price lunch.

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 I Adult Program without an eligibility redetermination and be counted as an individual who meets Adult priority of service if the original determination was made no more than six 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.

- In assessing basic skills, the Bucks County WED will only use assessment instruments that are valid and appropriate for this target population and provide reasonable accommodation in the assessment process, if necessary, for individuals with disabilities. Standardized assessments will be administered following published guidelines, and locators/appraisals will be used to determine the appropriate level of use of such assessments.
- An adult may be assessed as basic skills deficient through case manager observations and documented in case notes. A case manager may document basic skills deficiency using any one 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 will provide an auditable trail back to the source of the verified information.
- If a standardized test is used to assess basic skills, the test will include reading, writing, or computing skills. Lacking soft skills or specific skills needed for a particular job will not be used to determine otherwise high-functioning individuals as basic skills deficient.
- A youth 18 or older, who was determined basic skills deficient for the WIOA Title I Youth Program, may be co-enrolled in the WIOA Title I Adult Program without an eligibility redetermination and be counted as an individual who meets Adult priority of service if the original determination was made no more than six months prior to the date of co-enrollment.

"Underemployed" individuals are employed full-time or part-time and must also meet the definition of a low-income individual to be eligible for the Adult priority of service.

Interaction of the Adult Priority and Veterans' Priority of Service

The priority of service for veterans and eligible spouses applies across all qualified employment and training programs. The priority of service for public assistance recipients, other low-income individuals, and basic skills deficient individuals is a statutory priority that applies only to the receipt of individualized career services and training services in the WIOA Title I Adult program.

With regard to the priority of service for veterans and eligible spouses, and in accordance with the Jobs for Veterans Act of 2008 (JVA), priority of service for the WIOA Title I Adult program must be applied in the following order:

- Veterans and eligible spouses who meet the statutory priority (public assistance recipient,
- other low-income individuals including the underemployed or basic skills deficient) and
- Adult program eligibility will receive the highest level of priority for services.
- Other individuals (not veterans or eligible spouses) who meet the statutory priority (public assistance recipient, other low-income individuals including underemployed, or basic skills deficient) and Adult program eligibility then receives the second level of priority for services.
- All other veterans and eligible spouses who meet Adult program eligibility receive the third level of priority for services.
- Other individuals (not veterans or eligible spouses) who do not meet the statutory priority (public assistance recipient, other low-income individuals including underemployed, or basic skills deficient) then receive the fourth level of priority for services.
- Other individuals (not veterans or eligible spouses) who do not meet the statutory priority (public assistance recipient, other low-income individuals including underemployed, or basic skills deficient), but do meet Adult program eligibility, then receive the fifth level of priority for services.

The Bucks County WED partners with the Bucks County Opportunity Council (BCOC) to provide "Bridges Out of Poverty" training to direct service provider staff. This training aims to remove organizational and systemic barriers for low-income clients, help staff interact more effectively with clients in understanding the barrier presented by a "poverty mindset," and ultimately contribute to a more sustainable community bolstered by a strong middle class. The BCOC has assisted by presenting workshops and train-the-trainer sessions to service staff, primarily focused on working directly with low-income clients and transitioning them to the PA CareerLink® Bucks County for job and training assistance resources to staff to ensure continuity of service for low-income clients.

The BCOC offers a third type of assistance in implementing a Workplace Stability component of training for employers. This component helps Bucks County employers to stabilize employees' lives and boost productivity. Low-wage employees in entry-level jobs are often in danger of losing their jobs due to problems with resources such as transportation, healthcare, childcare, elder care, housing, and other personal emergencies. Employers who invest in worker stability also invest in their organizations' stability and save money due to decreased turnover and dedicated employees. The Bucks County WED and the PA CareerLink® Bucks County Operator Consortium also work closely with the BCOC to explore ways to incorporate this employer training into employer services.

There are five target populations to identify and catalog existing resources, conduct needs assessments, and determine the appropriate investment for each of the groups:

1. Offenders and Returning Citizens.
2. Immigrants, English as a Second Language, and Low-Literacy individuals.
3. Aging out of Intermediate Unit Services, Individuals with Disabilities not physical or intellectual (substance abuse, mental health, communication disorders), and Individuals with Autism.
4. Individuals with Physical/Intellectual Limitations and Disabilities, and Individuals with Traumatic Brain Injuries.
5. Older Individuals.

Support for serving these target populations is provided in collaboration with partners who specialize in meeting their needs. The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) provides eligible Title IV customers with individualized vocational counseling and guidance, vocational education, restoration, training, and job placement services. Eligible and potentially eligible 14-to-21-year-old in-school youth with disabilities receive pre-employment transition services, including work-based learning, job shadowing, and vocational counseling. Group training services for youth include workplace readiness, independent living skills, and self-advocacy training.

Business Services staff members identify resources to assist any employer in diversifying their workforce to include individuals with barriers to employment, specifically for individuals with disabilities, including a wide array of Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) services described in the next section.

The Bucks County WED has increased its services to incumbent workers as allowed under WIOA. The Incumbent Worker Training Policy was created to address non-traditional hours of operation at the PA CareerLink® centers and increased options for upskilling offered by the Community Colleges and Career and Technical Education providers.

Key Elements of the Incumbent Worker Training Policy

Purpose

Incumbent Worker training, under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), is designed to meet the special requirements of an employer or group of employers to retain a skilled workforce or avert the need to lay off employees by assisting the workers in obtaining the skills necessary to retain employment.

Employer Eligibility and Requirements

Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) may be available to employers seeking to train participants for multiple positions.

The Bucks County WED contracts with Employers for IWT, subject to the Procurement Policy. To contract with the Bucks County WED, an entity must:

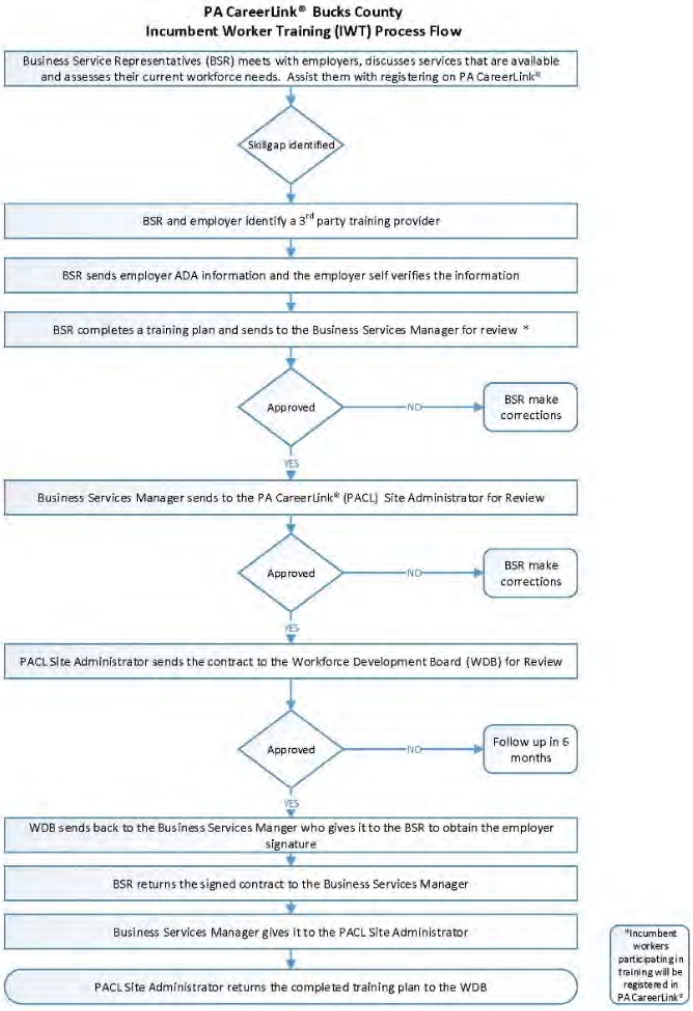
- Be in an Industry defined as “in-demand” (WIOA §3(23).
- Not have laid off workers within 120 days or relocated to Pennsylvania from another state.

- Offer IWT training that does not interfere with the promotion of or displacement of any currently employed worker or a reduction in their hours.
- Be providing full-time, non-seasonal work of 37.5 to 40 hours per week.
- Current in unemployment insurance and workers' compensation taxes, penalties, and/or interest or related payment plan.
- Not have previously exhibited a pattern of failing to provide IWT participants with continued long-term employment with wages, benefits, and working conditions equal to those provided to regular employees who have worked a similar length of time and are doing the same type of work.
- Cooperate with monitoring requirements as stipulated in the WIOA legislation and adhere to all other applicable local, state, and federal rules and regulations.
- Provide quality training such as industry-recognized credentials or specific advancement opportunities.
- Provide documentation on wage and benefit levels of incumbent workers trained pre- and post-training.
- Share the cost of the IWT based on the size of the workforce as follows:
    - At least 10% of the cost for employers with 50 or fewer employees.
    - At least 25% of the cost for employers with 51 to 100 employees.
    - At least 50% of the cost for employers with more than 100 employees.

Stipulations

- Priority of funding will be for workers not earning a self-sufficient wage and workers employed in Manufacturing, Healthcare, Biotechnology, Information Technology, or Tourism.
- An example of IWT training that may be offered includes the training on proprietary software by an organization for an Employer/Industry that will benefit its employees' competitiveness.
- The maximum time frame for an IWT is six months. The duration of an IWT is a function of training needed, not the maximum funding allocated.
- IWT funds may not be used to pay for the wages of workers being trained. Funds provided under the IWT Training Services may be used for the cost of providing the training, including the cost of developing the training or fees for the training program or provider.

The Incumbent Worker Chart demonstrates the overall process flow at the PA CareerLink® Bucks County.



4.14. What services, activities, and program resources will be provided to businesses and employers, in the local area? [20 CFR § 679.560(b)(12)]

The Bucks County WED and its partners provide a fully integrated customer service approach to employers in the Local Workforce Area. Services are provided by a 13-member Business Services Team that provides outreach to employers, with priority given to Premier Employers who have jobs on the High Priority Occupation (HPO) list.

Business Services Team Members

Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) Members (6 members)

- Employer Service Supervisor (1)
- Business Relations Specialist (2)
- Recruiter (2)
- Customer Care Specialist (1)

Employment and Retention Network (EARN) Members (1 member)

- Job Developer

Veterans (1 member)

- Local Veterans Employment Representative

Youth Workforce Center (1 member)

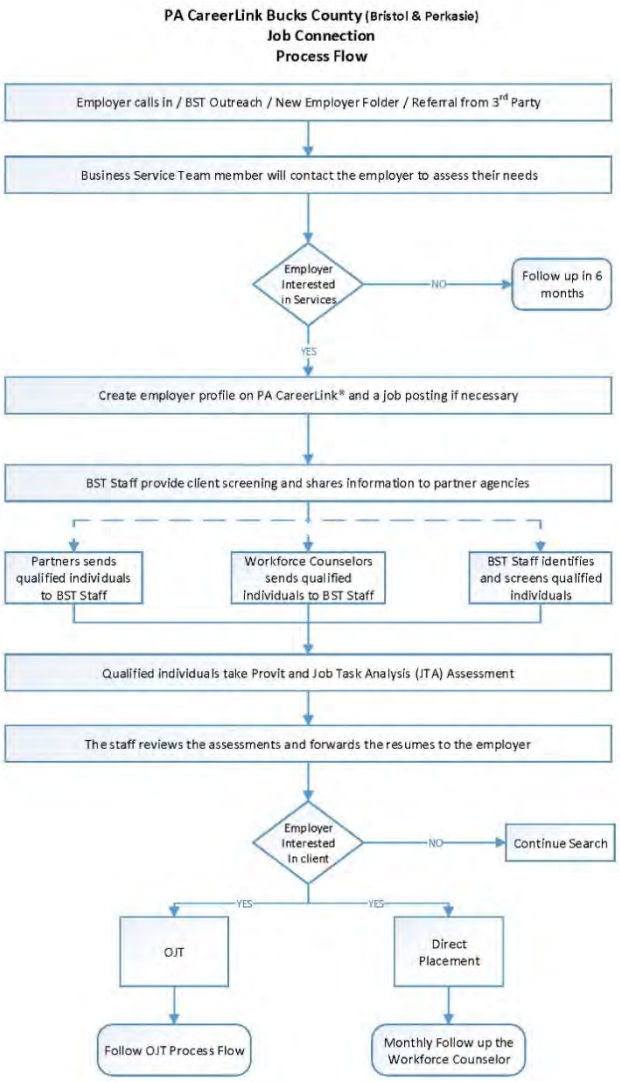
- Youth Job Developer (for Out-of-School Youth)

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (1 member)

- Business Service Representative

Business Development Team Process

- Outreach to employers via one-on-one engagements and/or presentations made at Industry Partnership meetings, chamber of commerce events, and other business association meetings and events
- Referrals received directly from partners (Bucks County WED Board members, PA CareerLink® Bucks County partners, Business Services Team (BST) staff)
- Options discussed with the employer to meet needs (job postings, OJT, Incumbent Worker training, customized job training, assessments, credentials produced by current training programs, youth work-based learning experiences)
- Job Posting Process
    - Assisted: A Business Development Team (BDT) representative enters employer in PA CareerLink®, creates a folder (if new), enters job posting, starts hand-off process (alerts Business Services Supervisor (BSS) to posting, request BST assignment, and makes introductions between BST representative and employer), and follows up within six months.
    - Unassisted: Alerts BSS; BDT representative follows up with employer within two weeks and again within six months.
- OJT/Customized Job Training: Schedules and conducts ADA review inspection and begins handoff process to appropriate PA CareerLink® Bucks County staff.
- Incumbent Worker Training – Connects employer to appropriate PA CareerLink®.
- Bucks County staff to review needs for skills upgrading of existing workers and backfill positions with new hires.
- Assessment Services: Alerts BSS of employer interest in assessment, requests BST assignment, initiates introductions of the employer to BST staff.
- Industry Partnership: BDT representative introduces employer to sector-based Industry Partnership, encourages the employer to participate, and follows up with the employer.
- Credentials Produced by Current Training Programs – introduces employer to training providers related to employer's needs, refers program graduates to the employer as appropriate, follows up with employer (also obtaining information on training relevance to skills needed for use in future planning).
- Youth Work-Based Learning Experiences – BDT representative introduces employer to appropriate youth staff (Young Workforce Center), follow up within six months.



Services Provided to Local Employers by the Business Development Team and the Business Services Team

- Setting up an individual account for each employer with access to PA CareerLink®
- Direct Job Posting
- Recruitment events customized to each employer's unique needs
- Assistance in screening applicants for direct hiring
- OJT and Customized Training
- Job Task Analysis
- Workshops and seminars, including information on employer roles in the Unemployment Compensation (UC) process
- Labor market information/economic forecasting
- Referrals to community partners as appropriate

- Assistance in acquiring training grants
- Access to participation in Industry Partnerships

The Business Services Team utilizes various sourcing strategies to engage and attract quality candidates for jobs posted by employers, beginning with qualified candidates in career services and training programs described in Section 3.2. Sources beyond program participants include:

- Direct partner referrals
- Unemployment tracking through PA CareerLink®
- Online résumés from Indeed, LinkedIn, Monster, Craigslist, and others
- Newspaper ads
- Community Outreach

Applicants identified and recruited from multiple sources are then screened for fit with the employer's job specifications in the following manner:

- In-person or over-the-phone screening by a Business Services representative to verify an applicant's skills, experience, and interests to ensure a good match.
- If the applicant is not already enrolled in a WIOA program, a referral is made to an Intake Specialist.
- The Business Services representative reviews relevant assessments.
- Résumés of qualified and screened applicants are sent via email to the employer.
- A Business Services representative works with the employer during the hiring process to document hiring actions and obtain more applicants if needed.

Once the employer takes the hiring action, the Business Services Team enters data into PA CareerLink®. If an OJT contract is being used in the process, the Business Services Team prepares the draft contract and submits it to the Bucks County WED. If the employer is making a direct hire, the applicant starts work immediately, and contact with the employer is maintained to ensure satisfaction with services and identify additional needs.

Ongoing coordination at the planning level is maintained through participation in the PREP partnership, including multiple economic development organizations in Southeast Pennsylvania and through all regional workforce development boards' active participation in implementing the Regional Plan. Coordination with economic development partners in the region is ongoing with multiple Industry Partnerships and applications under the Next Generation Industry Partnerships. The Bucks County WED also works with regional partners to develop higher levels of responsiveness to employers via the Engage! Application process.

The Bucks County WED maintains an innovative Business Services team in constant and strategic communication with businesses throughout the County and throughout the region. As noted previously, they also maintain an exemplary ongoing day-to-day relationship with the Career and Technical Education and Bucks County Community College. These organizations, both business and education, share information provided by the Bucks County WED, participate in common Workforce Development Board and Sector-based meetings to plan, advise and implement the business/education collaboration. Working with Engage! facilitates an ongoing and organized database of information that aids in planning and implementation.

Talent Acquisition services are provided to employers in each key industry sector group, including:

Candidate Search

- Pre-Screening Applicants
- Skills/Qualifications Matching your opening and the right candidate
- PA CareerLink® Business Services – Representative managing your online business folder to tailor recruitment and referrals

Assessment Services

- Comprehensive assessment and matching services
- Matching services including WorkKeys® – a nationally recognized hiring tool measuring "real world" skills across nine areas critical to job success:

    1. Applied Mathematics
    2. Applied Technology
    3. Workplace Observation
    4. Locating Information
    5. Business Writing
    6. Teamwork
    7. Reading for Information
    8. Listening
    9. Writing

On-the-Job Training (OJT)

- Training new employees for the skills needed to perform a specific job.
- Salary costs are reimbursed up to 50% of wages.
- The maximum training period per new hire is six months.
- The average training is 3-4 months.
- The maximum reimbursement per employee is $8,500.

OVR also provides multiple services to the business community to assist businesses with onboarding pre-screened qualified employees with disabilities. OVR on-boarding supports for a qualified new hire can include reasonable accommodation consultation, initial probationary period wage reimbursement (On-the-Job Training (OJT), referral on tax credits or deductions. OVR also offers no-cost consultation on the Americans with Disability Act (ADA), accessibility standards, and helping a business retain current employees following an accident, injury, or disability.

4.15. How will the local board coordinate WIOA title I workforce investment activities with the provision of transportation and other appropriate supportive services in the local area? [20 CFR § 679.560(b)(10)]

The Bucks County WED understands that the availability of supportive services is often a critical element for an individual to complete a training program and search for and sustain employment.

Supportive Services are provided to individuals based upon need. Upon determining the need, community resources are solicited, including community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, and other resources. Depending on funding sources and related participant eligibility for those resources, additional supportive services may be provided by TANF/EARN and other funds.

A critical and overarching factor of successful, reliable employment is the consistent transportation to education and training programs. The Bucks County Transportation Management Association, as part of the SEPTA system, has a diverse mix of transportation resources available for job seekers.

Supportive Services are available to participants enrolled in the WIOA program who are unable to obtain these services through other programs. Supportive Services should only be provided when necessary to enable participants to continue Title I activities.

Supportive Services

- Transportation
- Clothing allowances for training courses
- Dependent care
- Exam/Certification Fees
- Medical Testing needed for entry into training or employment

If a participant requests assistance with any of the items listed above, it is the Workforce Counselor's responsibility to help them research community resources first. After the attempts have failed, the participant is required to provide a letter requesting supportive services. The following must be included in the request:

- justification for the need,
- a detailed description of the need,
- a list of the community resources contacted, and
- documentation providing the amount being requested.

The Workforce counselor completes a Supportive Service Request and submits the request and documentation to the WIOA operations manager for review. If approved, the Workforce counselor submits the request to the Fiscal Department for payment. If denied, the Workforce counselor will forward a denial letter to the participant with the explanation. A copy will be retained in the participant's file.

When issuing a Supportive Service Request, the following funding caps apply:

- Transportation: The most inexpensive means of transportation will be approved. If the participant is requesting mileage reimbursement, the approved rate will equal the mileage rate as determined by the Internal Revenue Service and in force at the time of the request. The maximum mileage reimbursement is 50 miles per day. Mileage will only be paid for actual participation days and must be documented by an attendance record. Participants who are employed may be approved to receive a weekly or monthly bus pass or TransPass, based on employment needs and cost-effectiveness until they receive one full paycheck. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, PA CareerLink® Bucks County staff quickly pivoted to meet job seeker's needs by offering virtual

enrollments and online services beginning in March 2020 with a full offering of virtual services, including career counseling, workshops, mock interviews, recruitment events, and many ITA programs as well. by June 2020. This shift in One-Stop delivery programs helped to mitigate transportation barriers for participants, especially for rural customers. The success of One-Stop delivery services in a virtual setting has paved the way for these options to remain in place during the post-pandemic economic recovery.

- Clothing allowances for training courses will be limited to one time per enrollment with a maximum of $175.
- Dependent care will be paid at the rate of up to $20 per day per dependent for a licensed daycare center only. The total dependent care allowance cannot exceed $800 per enrollment.
- Exam Fees and/or training items needed to enroll or attend a training course are for exact cost only. They must be related to the WIOA-funded training program the participant is enrolled in or recently completed. Exam Fees may also be considered for a participant needing certification to gain employment.
- Medical Testing for entry into training or employment will only be approved after all other avenues (i.e., Medical Assistance, free clinic, etc.) have been explored to cover the cost. The maximum allowance is $600.

These policies are reviewed each program year.

5. COMPLIANCE

5.1. Describe the cooperative agreements that define how all local area service providers will carry out the requirements for integration of and access to the entire set of services available in the local area One-Stop delivery system. [20 CFR § 679.560(b)(13)]

The Contract Agreement is executed between the County of Bucks Department of Workforce and Economic Development (WED), PA CareerLink® Bucks County One-Stop Partners ("Contractors"), and the Chief Elected Official (CEO). This Contract confirms the Bucks County WED ("Fiscal Agent") regarding the PA CareerLink® Bucks County's operation and management.

The Bucks County WED provides local oversight of workforce programming in the Local Workforce Area. With the agreement of the CEO, the Bucks County WED has, through a competitive open bid procurement process (RFP) in accordance with the Uniform Guidance, WIOA, and its implementing regulations, and Local procurement laws and regulations selected Educational Data Systems, Inc. as the One-Stop Operator for the PA CareerLink® Bucks County. Proposal responses were screened and reviewed by a Committee/Council with consensus recommendation being approved by the WED Board of Directors and/or the Bucks County Local Management Committee.

The One-Stop Operating Budget and Infrastructure Funding Agreement establish a financial plan, including terms and conditions, to fund the services and operating costs of the PA CareerLink® Bucks County. The Contractors to the Contract agree that joint funding is an essential foundation for an integrated service delivery system and necessary to maintain the PA CareerLink® Bucks County. The Vision, Mission, System Structure, Terms and Conditions, One-Stop Operating Budget, and Infrastructure Funding Agreement outlined in the Contract reflect the Contractors' commitment to their job seeker and business customers

and the overall success of the PA CareerLink® Bucks County.

5.2. What is the process the local board uses to ensure the collection of the debts of lower-tier subrecipients as the result of audits?

The Bucks County WED requires all subrecipients subject to the Single Audit provisions of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Uniform Administrative requirements to submit a copy of the audit report and corrective action plan. The Bucks County WED will review the audit report and corrective action plan for any findings related to WIOA or State funds provided to the subcontractor to determine if it contains any questioned cost.

The Bucks County WED will issue, in writing, the results of its review, giving the audited entity no more than 30 days from the issuance of the letter to submit an appeal. That appeal will request a formal review of the final determination before an impartial hearing officer of the Bucks WDB. The debt collection process will stay pending a decision regarding the appeal. However, the debt becomes delinquent on the first day following the letter's issuance, whether 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 the final determination's issuance. 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 the Bucks County WED within 30 days after issuance of the final determination. The Bucks County WED, with approval from the PA Department of Labor and Industry, Bureau of Workforce Development Administration (BWDA), may negotiate short-term installment agreements in lieu of lump-sum payment, so long as the disallowed cost was not a result of:

- Willful disregard of the requirements of WIOA, gross negligence, or failure to observe accepted standards of administration.
- Incidents of fraud or misfeasance.
- Illegal actions or irregularities must be reported under OMB Uniform Guidance.

Debt Collection Procedures

In cases where it is determined that repayment of misspent funds is required, the Bucks County WED will seek to collect funds from the party determined to have misspent the funds. Funds collected in settlement of all debts resulting from fraud, malfeasance, misapplication of funds, or other serious violations will be returned immediately upon receipt. When debt is not a result of fraud, malfeasance, misapplication of funds, or serious violations or illegal acts, the cash repayment of the misapplication will be a credit to the grant that was originally charged. If a repayment is required after the fund availability period, payment will be made to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

The steps described below will be taken to collect the debt established because of an audit investigation, a monitoring finding, or other means:

- Initial Determination: After the audit investigation or monitoring in which there is a finding to disallow a questioned cost, a notice of the initial determination will be issued to the Operators and Service Providers regarding the amount and nature of the disallowed cost.
    - The initial determination will provide 30 calendar days for the Operators and Service Providers to seek an informal resolution.

- Final Determination: If there is no satisfactory resolution because of the initial determination, it will be concluded that funds have been misappropriated, and a Final Determination will be issued, formally notifying the Operators and Service Providers that a debt has been established. The notification will include the appeal rights of the Operators and Service Providers, the date by which the debt must be repaid, the date that it will be considered delinquent, whether or not interest will be charged and at what rate, and possible sanctions if the debt is not repaid. This might include, but would not be limited to, debarment, in which the Operators and Service Providers are prohibited from receiving future contracts.

- Appeal Process: Following the issuance of a Final Determination, the responsible entity will have ten workdays to file an appeal. The appeal must include a clear and concise statement of the facts and reason for the appeal. A request received after ten workdays will not be honored. A copy of the Final Determination letter should accompany the appeal letter and state specifically those sections of the Final Determination being appealed. If no appeal is requested within the required time, the Bucks County WED will assume the responsible party is in agreement with the finding. However, in the event that an appeal is heard, debt collection actions will be suspended, and no interest or other sanctions will be charged or imposed until completion of the appeal process.

- Repayment: If no appeal has been filed contesting the debt owed, full repayment in cash from a non-federal source is required within 30 calendar days of the date on which the debt was established as final.
    - If payment is not received within 30 days, a second notice will be sent by certified mail to the responsible party. The second notice will advise the responsible party that payment has not been received and will reiterate the information contained in the Final Determination. This notice will state that repayment must be received within 30 days of the issuance of the second notice and detail the terms of any interest charges.
    - If payment is not received after the second notice, a final notice will be sent by certified mail indicating payment must be received within ten days of the final notice. This letter will advise the responsible party that the debt is delinquent and that payment must be sent immediately. The final letter will advise the responsible party that if repayment of the debt and interest is not received, appropriate legal proceedings, including but not limited to action by the County Solicitors Office and/or implementation of programmatic sanctions, may be instituted.

- Record Retention: the Bucks County WED shall maintain a permanent record of all Debt Collection cases and their status. Permanent records will include but are not limited to documentation of actions taken with respect to debt collection and why such actions were taken. These records shall be maintained by the Bucks County WED and securely stored with all other contract documents. The status of each Debt Collection case shall be updated as needed and reported to outside parties when appropriate.

5.3. What action(s) is the local board taking (or will take) towards becoming or remaining a high-performing board? [20 CFR § 679.560(b)(17)]

The U.S. Department of Labor and Industry has identified characteristics of high-performing workforce development boards. These characteristics cluster around the following general standards and specific criteria.

Standard I: Strategic Planning and Implementation

Criteria

- Creation of a goal-oriented strategic plan that goes beyond the scope of WIOA funds.
- The strategic plan developed from a broadly inclusive process includes economic development, employer, education, human services, and other community leaders.
- The strategic plan is a living document that is part of the board's continuous improvement process.
- Adoption of a sector strategy approach in engaging employers.
- Adoptions of a career pathways approach in engaging education and training providers.

Standard II: Developing and Managing Resources

Criteria

- Board reviews and monitors budget that aligns with strategic goals.
- Resources and assets are coordinated and leveraged among service partners.
- Board works with partners to attract more public and private resources to support strategies.
- Board meets the expectations of the local elected officials in spending public funds.

Standard III: Managing the Work of the Board

Criteria

- Board is diverse, includes major employer sectors, and includes key community planners in economic development, education, and community services.
- Board oversees the One-Stop partnerships and resources pledged in the Contract/MOU as a primary line of business.
- Board has its business plan and manages its business in accord with the plan, including oversight of staff to implement the board's business strategies.

The Bucks County WED is committed to maintaining these standards and to continuous improvement processes related to the criteria under each standard.

Current practices in this process include:

- Creating a strategic plan for the Bucks County WED's work in economic development that complements the WIOA Local Plan.

- Sector strategies are used as the framework for engaging employers within the context of the WIOA Regional Plan for Southeast Pennsylvania and for sub-regional work with neighboring workforce areas in forming Industry Partnerships.
- Career Pathways have become the "language of the system" in working with education partners and other Bucks County government departments.
- The Board has Youth Council and One-Stop Operator subcommittees that monitor program performance and work with its staff on creating corrective actions on a timely basis as needed.
- The Bucks County WED has successfully secured competitive grants to address gaps in services not funded through formula WIOA allocations, with the diversification of funding sources a high priority.
- The Bucks County WED conducts a comprehensive county-wide needs assessment and uses the data to apply for leveraged funds in accord with needs that are identified as a high priority.
- The Bucks County WED collaborates with other departments within the local government and its affiliated partners to complete an employer survey to identify training needs and other local employers' priorities for economic growth.

5.4. What is the process the local board uses to provide an opportunity to have input into the development of the Local Plan, particularly for representatives of business, education, labor organizations, program partners, public agencies, and community stakeholders? [20 CFR § 679.560(b)(19)]

The Bucks County WED hosted two community roundtable sessions through Zoom for local businesses, schools, labor organizations, program partners, and other stakeholders as an opportunity to assess its collaborative work within the workforce system. Held on January 27 and February 3, 2021, these roundtables were attended by more than 65 representatives of local government, economic development, education, human services, organizations representing individuals with barriers to employment, employment providers, and training services in the County. After an overview of Local Plan elements, attendees engaged in an open discussion prompted by various WIOA-related topics. They offered suggestions for the overall actionable strategy to better assist job seekers and employers through comprehensive programs and support services.

Specific input gathered at the sessions is shown below, categorized by topic areas. The input was used to develop the draft plan posted on the Bucks County WED's website for public review and comment. The community contact list will be used to inform key contacts of the updated plan's availability and commenting process.

Highlights of Roundtable Sessions

Mitigating Barriers to Employment

"Transportation is one of the biggest barriers for job seekers in Bucks County, especially in the upper and middle parts of the County."

"Computer literacy and wi-fi access are significant challenges for people seeking employment."

"People who are on probation and parole face the barrier of having criminal backgrounds. They want to rebuild their reputations and can be some of the hardest workers."

"We face challenges to overcome misinformation about the reentrant population and must market them as an asset to employers."

"Older members of the workforce deal with age discrimination and are often not given a chance when they need to supplement their incomes even though they have a lifetime of work experience."

"Youth from low-income families often lack skills and need help with job shadowing and pre-apprenticeships to build up skills, navigate the workplace, and gain confidence."

Strengthening Communications and Messaging

"We need to build a robust network among partners and promote job awareness for youth in areas such as Manufacturing and increase apprenticeships."

"As a conduit to our partners, we can close gaps by amplifying messages through strategic marketing and revisit recruitment events to connect employers, including those in hospitality, to local talent."

"Career Pathways is a pipeline to connect people with untapped resources. We need to communicate to school districts about why they should be involved."

"Increased public awareness of One-Stop delivery services would help providers better service customers."

"The more companies that know about workforce services, before they need them, would better connect employers to resources. It can be done through marketing and positioning to increase awareness."

"Increased communications with Manufacturers will let them know what type of workforce programs are out there."

"Parents and students in Bucks County have misperceptions about Manufacturing jobs. Amplifying a clear message and more career education would build interest."

Recruiting Skilled Employees

"The biggest hurdle right now is finding and hiring qualified staff with technical skills."

"It is hard to find employees who are not only qualified but also want to stay. More apprenticeship programs would make employees more invested in their work."

"Skilled workers are hard to come by. There are just not enough applicants to fill all the open positions."

Support for Unemployment Compensation Claimants

"Particularly in a pandemic year, but also ongoing, a navigator or point person would help claimants find information about claim statuses or provide a timeline for benefits. Many people do not know how to

navigate the process and need a dedicated staff person to explain each step and walk them through the application."

Expanding Virtual Services

"Job seekers are looking for more options for virtual training and work-from-home employment opportunities."

Connecting Employers and Schools to Workforce Programs

"Many employers are hesitant about going through hoops related to government agencies, so consistently connecting helps employers in any way possible way."

"After the COVID pandemic, it would be helpful to have better coordination with local schools."

"The PA CareerLink® offers great services once a connection is made, but they're not always what we are looking for. Employers don't always know every available service."

"Smaller companies can't invest the time and resources available or are not savvy enough to do all of the necessary paperwork. More outreach would encourage employers to overcome their hesitance and help them with On-the-Job Training."

"Safety regulations and human resources can be overwhelming for small businesses. They need someone to navigate services for employers."

5.5. What is the process the local board uses to provide a 30-day public comment period prior to submission of the Plan? [20 CFR § 679.560(b)(19)]

The Bucks County WED posts the Local WIOA Plan on its website, bucksworks.org, along with a link to the Regional WIOA Plan for a 30-day comment period from February 24, 2021-March 25, 2021. Notice of the availability of both Plans is sent to key local stakeholders to ensure awareness.

All comments related to suggested changes are then noted and addressed before submission to the Commonwealth. This process is used for all subsequent major revisions of the Local WIOA Plan.

The Bucks County WED did not receive public comments related to its Local Plan. For received public comments and responses regarding the Regional Plan, refer to the *Fiscal Years 2021-2024 WIOA Regional Plan—Southeast PA Attachment 1—Regional Plan Public Comment*.

TESTATIONS

By checking the box adjacent to each line item, the local board attests to ensuring the compliance components/documents listed are (or will be) in place and effective prior to June 30, 2021.

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

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

☑ Agreement between all counties and other local governments, if applicable, establishing the consortium of local and chief elected officials.

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

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

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

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

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

☑ Local area MOU.

☑ Program management policies and processes addressing, at a minimum, layoff assistance; equal opportunity for customers; complaints and grievances; supportive services; needs related payments; incentives; file management; eligibility determination and verification; self-sufficiency criteria; self-attestation and certification random sampling; priority of service; stipends and incentives; training verification/refunds; individual training accounts; contracts for training services; statewide training providers list and eligibility verification; local area training provider list and eligibility criteria and process; "additional assistance" definition; transitional jobs thresholds; work-based training policies including incumbent worker training, OJT, CT, and apprenticeship.

☑ Risk management policy and process including records retention and public access; public records requests; monitoring, grievance; incident; and disaster recovery plan.

☑ Human resources policy and process including employee classification; benefits; holidays and PTO;

recruitment and selection; employee development; discipline; layoffs, terminations and severance; sexual harassment; and equal opportunity and non-discrimination.

☑ Professional services contract(s) for administrative services such as staffing and payroll, if applicable.