



Northeast Pennsylvania Consortium of Workforce Boards

WIOA Multi-Year Regional Plan

**Effective Dates:
July 1, 2021 → June 30, 2025**

Public Comment Period: **February 25, 2021 – March 27, 2021**

Table of Contents

Regional Area Plan Contents:	Page Number
Introduction	3
1.1 Identification of the Region	3
1.2 Vision and Goals	4
1.3 Labor Market Information	6
1.4 Regional Service Strategies	25
1.5 Sector Initiatives	28
1.6 Labor Force Requirements and Occupational Demands	29
1.7 Transportation and Other Supportive Services	31
1.8 Statewide Eligibility Training Provider Increase Strategies	32
1.9 Administrative Cost Arrangements	33
1.10 Levels of Performance	33

Introduction

The Northeast Region of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is comprised of seven counties: Carbon, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Monroe, Pike, Schuylkill, and Wayne. Consisting of a major metropolitan area comprised of the cities of Hazleton, Scranton, and Wilkes Barre, it is also home to a large array of smaller cities, towns, boroughs, townships, forests and rugged/rural farm areas. Overall, the Region is home to 1,009,783 citizens¹.

As Northeastern PA begins to emerge/recover from the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic, local Workforce Development Boards/Areas must band together to ensure that comprehensive and analogous services are afforded to a wide spectrum of business and industry, thus, stimulating a return to a robust and resilient economy both locally as well as regionally. Recognized for decades as a leader in the manufacturing, transportation, warehousing and distribution, retail, and hospitality industry sectors, it can be predicted that, with a broad, overarching plan of action, Northeastern PA will rebound quickly and effectively.

1.1. Identification of the Region.

- **Name of the Region:** The Northeast Pennsylvania Consortium of Workforce Boards (or “Northeast Region)
- **Composition of Workforce Development Boards:**
 - Lackawanna Workforce Development Area – Lackawanna County
 - Luzerne/Schuylkill Workforce Development Area – Luzerne and Schuylkill Counties
 - Pocono Counties Workforce Development Area – Carbon, Monroe, Pike, and Wayne Counties
- **Key Regional Committee Members and Organizational Affiliation**
 - Virginia Turano, Lackawanna Workforce Development Board
 - Patti Lenahan, Luzerne/Schuylkill Workforce Investment Board
 - Garry Wentz, Pocono Counties Workforce Development Board
- **Key Regional Committee Meeting Dates.**
 - 1/7/2021 Meeting to discuss regional workforce strategies
 - 1/28/2021 Meeting to discuss Regional Plan development
 - 2/17/2021 Meeting to discuss Regional Plan development progress
 - 2/23/2021 Meeting for review of rough draft of plan prior to release for public comment
- **Regional Plan Effective Date. July 1, 2021**

¹ Center for Workforce Information & Analysis (CWIA), PA Department of Labor and Industry

1.2. Based on the analysis of the regional labor market and economic conditions, describe the region's workforce and economic development-oriented vision and goals.

The Northeast Region knows that growth in a regional economy comes from a combination of economic development, workforce development, and community development; and it understands that workforce development is instrumental in reducing the number of people who are unemployed.

Its vision is to ensure a world-class trained, readily available workforce, which is the impetus for the enticing of new business ventures and the growing or retooling of existing industry, addressing the needs of all local workers is primary to stimulate progress within Northeastern Pennsylvania. To support this vision, it has established the following goals that consider the workforce and economic development priorities within the Region, including the coordination of services and providers.

- Increase the skill level of the Region's labor force through an innovative, integrated workforce infrastructure system that links labor demand and supply to meet the current and future workforce needs of the Region's businesses
- Utilize the expertise of educational institutions and training providers within the Region to develop training programs and services which are based upon clearly defined opportunities and needs, and supported by research within specific industry sectors
- Enhance linkages between workforce development and economic development delivery organizations with private industry in a collaborative manner that promotes high skill and high wage jobs

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

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

The Northeast Consortium of Workforce Boards (Lackawanna County, Luzerne/Schuylkill, Pocono Counties), through representation by the local Boards' Executive Directors on numerous boards and councils, has long been entrenched across the economic development community in Northeastern Pennsylvania. Working locally with their individual Chambers of Commerce and County economic development agencies, development and implementation of strategic plans of action guide localized community progress. Taking into consideration the diversity (urban versus rural) among the three NEPA workforce boards, distinct localized plans must first be established which then, in turn, becomes integral to the formation of a concerted regionalized initiative.

Regionalization efforts across the 7-county Northeast region is spearheaded by the Northeastern Pennsylvania (NEPA) Alliance, a regional community and economic development agency that promotes effective partnerships and collaboration, through a non-partisan organizational framework, to promote the continued social and economic development of the region through the retention and expansion of industrial, commercial, financial, research, educational, technology, and other business and development activities. This, then, stimulates improvement of the overall region's environment, recreational facilities, and quality of life. NEPA Alliance also coordinates the Northeast PA Partnerships for Economic Performance (PREP) that includes representation and instills linkages among the region's chambers, small business development centers, industrial development centers, and other economic development partners. NEPA Alliance also develops and maintains a *Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS)* that provides a broad-based analyzation of the regional climate for establishing goals and objectives and development of an outcomes plan. Further, NEPA Alliance has, for many years, provided comprehensive regional and localized demographic data to the workforce boards for planning and development purposes. This coordination of activities with NE PA Alliance also ensures a linkage to Engage! with funding provided by the PA Department of Community and Economic Development for regional initiatives. Just recently, NEPA Alliance, working in collaboration with the Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce and COLTS (County of Lackawanna Transit System) provided funding to support transit work programming that seeks to eliminate transportation barriers in Lackawanna County and supports the NE PA MOVES initiative. NE PA MOVES, which was formed in 2017 and is comprised of over 90 community leaders, is working to gain a better understanding of the specific barriers of current transit systems and is focused on a providing a solution to the transportation challenges through a strategic plan that promotes equity, encourages economic growth, and fosters a greater opportunity for all people and communities across Northeastern PA.

Mr. Joseph Sebelin, recently retired long-time Executive Director of the Pocono Counties Workforce Development Board, currently sits as Chairperson of the NEPA Alliance Board. Mr. Sebelin maintains close relationships with his former colleagues; thereby, enabling a first-hand knowledge of regionalization efforts and ensuring a continued collaboration among the local boards. Additionally, many members of the NEPA Alliance Board concurrently sit as members of the local WDB's which allows for wide-spread communication (among business and industry, education, labor, community-based organizations) through quarterly WDB meetings.

In looking at regionalized economic development linkages, the implementation of Next Gen Industry Partnerships across the region must be considered. Business and Industry is at the table providing invaluable expertise in both the workforce development as well as economic development arenas. Working hand-in-hand with workforce boards and educational representatives, companies can dictate their needs (present as well as future) to ensure that a specifically-skilled workforce is at hand which will,

subsequently, spur the growth of both local as well as regional economies.

1.3 Describe the Collection and Analysis of Regional Labor Market Data

In a concerted attempt to articulate a specific geographic region’s economic conditions and workforce needs, a variety of sources must be used to thoroughly compile, dissect, and analyze available data. The following pages are full of statistics, graphs, charts, and diagrams that will provide a picture of the state of the economy of Northeastern Pennsylvania including the key industry clusters; existing and emerging in-demand sectors; existing and emerging occupational sectors; regional and local Location Quotients (LQs); and, perhaps most importantly, the identified needs of the employers across the region.

With a combined labor force of 465,500², the largest industry sector in the Northeast Region is Health Care and Social Assistance, which employs 68,657 workers, and represents 16% of the Gross Regional Product (GRP), with average earnings of \$57,463. The next largest sectors are Government (including education and law enforcement) which employs 56,811 and represents 13.2% of the GRP, with average earnings of \$78,090 and Retail Trade which employs 50,124 workers, represents 11.7% of the GRP, and has average earnings of \$33,876)².

Location Quotient (LQ) is a way of quantifying how concentrated a particular industry, cluster, occupation, or demographic group is in a region as compared to the nation. The largest LQ for Northeastern PA for 2020 falls under the transportation and warehousing sector at 1.64 with a project to remain the highest sector through 2025 at 1.67³.

Let’s take a look at industry clusters across the three NE PA workforce areas:

Description	2015 Jobs	2025 Jobs	2015 - 2025 Change	2015 - 2025 % Change
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	2,042	2,482	440	22%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	1,279	1,254	(26)	(2%)
Utilities	2,833	2,169	(664)	(23%)
Construction	18,488	19,847	1,359	7%
Manufacturing	43,258	46,038	2,780	6%
Wholesale Trade	12,717	12,004	(712)	(6%)
Retail Trade	52,824	48,271	(4,553)	(9%)
Transportation and Warehousing	27,602	33,973	6,371	23%
Information	5,632	4,204	(1,428)	(25%)
Finance and Insurance	13,786	13,973	187	1%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	3,958	4,002	44	1%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	13,003	11,903	(1,100)	(8%)
Management of Companies and Enterprises	3,763	3,873	109	3%
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	22,529	23,395	866	4%

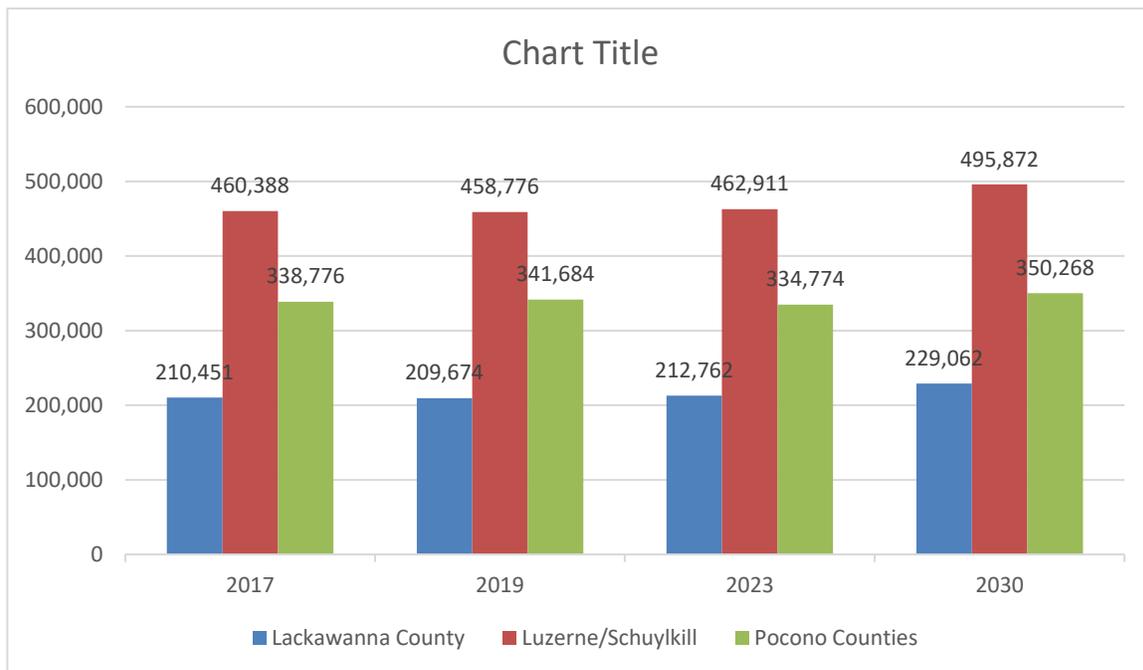
² CWIA

³ Economic Modeling Specialists Intl. (EMSI)

Educational Services (private)	14,429	12,950	(1,479)	(10%)
Health Care and Social Assistance	64,863	73,065	8,202	13%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	7,431	7,561	130	2%
Accommodation and Food Services	38,265	41,271	3,006	8%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	17,883	18,251	368	2%
Government (includes public education)	57,315	55,875	(1,440)	(3%)
Unclassified Industry	0	0	0	0%
All Industries	423,900	436,360	12,460	3%

The population in the Northeast Region has been decreasing over the last decade, while Pennsylvania continues to increase. It appears the decrease in the Region is due to an aging population, resulting in fewer births.

The following chart provides an overview of the population changes for the Region from 2017 through a projected 2030⁴.



⁴ U.S. Census Bureau

As shown in the chart below, the current median age of citizens in the Northeast Region is 44.0, which is older than the State’s median age of 40.9⁵.

	Current Median Age	Average Age
Northeast Region	44.4	44.8
Pennsylvania	40.8	40.8

This reflects the historical pattern that has been prevalent in the NE PA counties for many years. In looking at ethnicity statistics for the two largest counties in the region (only available data) in comparison with State data, over the course of 18 years, it can be seen that the populations across the northeast region are become more and more diverse but still lag behind the Commonwealth.

⁵ U. S Census Bureau

Race by County and State						
Lackawanna	2000	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
White/Caucasian	96.7%	92.7%	92.3%	91.7%	91.8%	90.5%
Black/African-American	1.3%	3.3%	3.1%	2.8%	2.7%	2.1%
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Asian	0.8%	2.2%	2.3%	2.5%	2.8%	2.9%
Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Some other race	0.5%	0.6%	0.7%	0.6%	0.6%	1.2%
Two or more races	0.7%	1.0%	1.7%	2.3%	2.1%	3.2%
Luzerne	2000	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
White/Caucasian	96.6%	90.0%	88.3%	90.2%	88.5%	87.4%
Black/African-American	1.7%	4.9%	4.4%	4.4%	4.9%	4.8%
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%
Asian	0.6%	1.0%	1.2%	1.2%	1.4%	1.3%
Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
Some other race	0.4%	2.4%	3.6%	2.2%	3.6%	4.0%
Two or more races	0.6%	1.5%	2.3%	1.8%	1.4%	2.2%
Pennsylvania	2000	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
White/Caucasian	85.4%	81.4%	81.1%	80.9%	80.7%	80.1%
Black/African-American	10.0%	11.1%	11.0%	11.0%	11.2%	11.2%
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%
Asian	1.8%	3.1%	3.3%	3.3%	3.5%	3.6%
Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Some other race	1.5%	1.9%	1.9%	2.1%	1.9%	2.4%
Two or more races	1.2%	2.3%	2.4%	2.5%	2.5%	2.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

Also, in reviewing comparisons of housing units over the past 18 years, the numbers of houses are rising even though the population has been declining.

Housing Density Comparison									
	Total Square Miles	2000		2016		2017		2018	
		Housing Units	Homes per square mile						
Lackawanna	464.9	95,362	205.1	98,711	212.3	100,511	216.2	100,707	216.6
Luzerne	906.3	144,686	157.7	147,888	163.3	150,114	165.6	150,280	165.8
Pennsylvania	46,054.3	5,249,750	114.0	5,611,995	121.9	5,694,402	123.6	5,713,136	124.1

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

In a review of the educational levels of the current NE PA region, the pattern that emerges is that the highest percentage of residents are either high school graduates or some with college or associate's degrees. As the economies have changed over the past few years, this becomes in line with jobs that are

not always requiring bachelor's degrees⁶.

Educational Attainment of Population (Ages 25 and older) by County - Percent

County	Less than high school graduate:	High school graduate (incl. equivalency):	Some college or associate's degree:	Bachelor's degree or higher:
Carbon	10.6%	45.3%	26.2%	17.9%
Lackawanna	9.0%	36.9%	25.9%	28.3%
Luzerne	10.2%	39.0%	28.0%	22.9%
Monroe	10.4%	35.1%	29.9%	24.7%
Pike	7.0%	34.3%	31.8%	26.8%
Schuylkill	10.7%	46.6%	26.1%	16.6%
Wayne	10.4%	42.9%	26.3%	20.4%
PA Total	9.5%	34.7%	24.4%	31.4%

A review of data regarding poverty and the labor force illustrates the Northeast region is comparable to the State with the rural counties falling slightly below the average.

Poverty and Labor Force Status (Ages 16 and older) by County

County	Total Population Age 16 and Older	Individuals Below the Poverty Level Age 16 and Older						
		Total Individuals	Poverty Rate	Employed	Unemployed	Not in Labor Force	Unemployment Rate	Labor Force Participation Rate
Carbon	52,143	5,221	10.0%	1,194	514	3,513	30.1%	32.7%
Lackawanna	165,599	21,751	13.1%	6,605	1,542	13,604	18.9%	37.5%
Luzerne	251,771	30,864	12.3%	9,323	3,244	18,297	25.8%	40.7%
Monroe	137,249	14,352	10.5%	4,372	1,175	8,805	21.2%	38.6%
Pike	46,673	3,861	8.3%	1,137	468	2,256	29.2%	41.6%
Schuylkill	110,760	12,790	11.5%	2,932	1,533	8,325	34.3%	34.9%
Wayne	40,373	4,407	10.9%	1,104	176	3,127	13.8%	29.0%
PA Total		1,125,696	11.2%	334,396	101,534	689,766	23.3%	38.7%

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

⁶ EMSI

Commuting patterns reveal how workers travel from their home counties to their work counties. The specific reasons for commuting may be unknown; however, it may be reasoned that workers travel to other areas for job opportunities that are not found within their home counties or they may choose to live in their home counties due to housing, schools, or entertainment preferences.

Both the Luzerne-Schuylkill and Pocono Counties WDAs have a higher number of out-commuters, meaning more people are traveling outside these areas for work than are traveling in for employment. The Lackawanna WDA, on the other hand, has a higher number of in-commuters.

The following charts provide support this information with actual data figures:

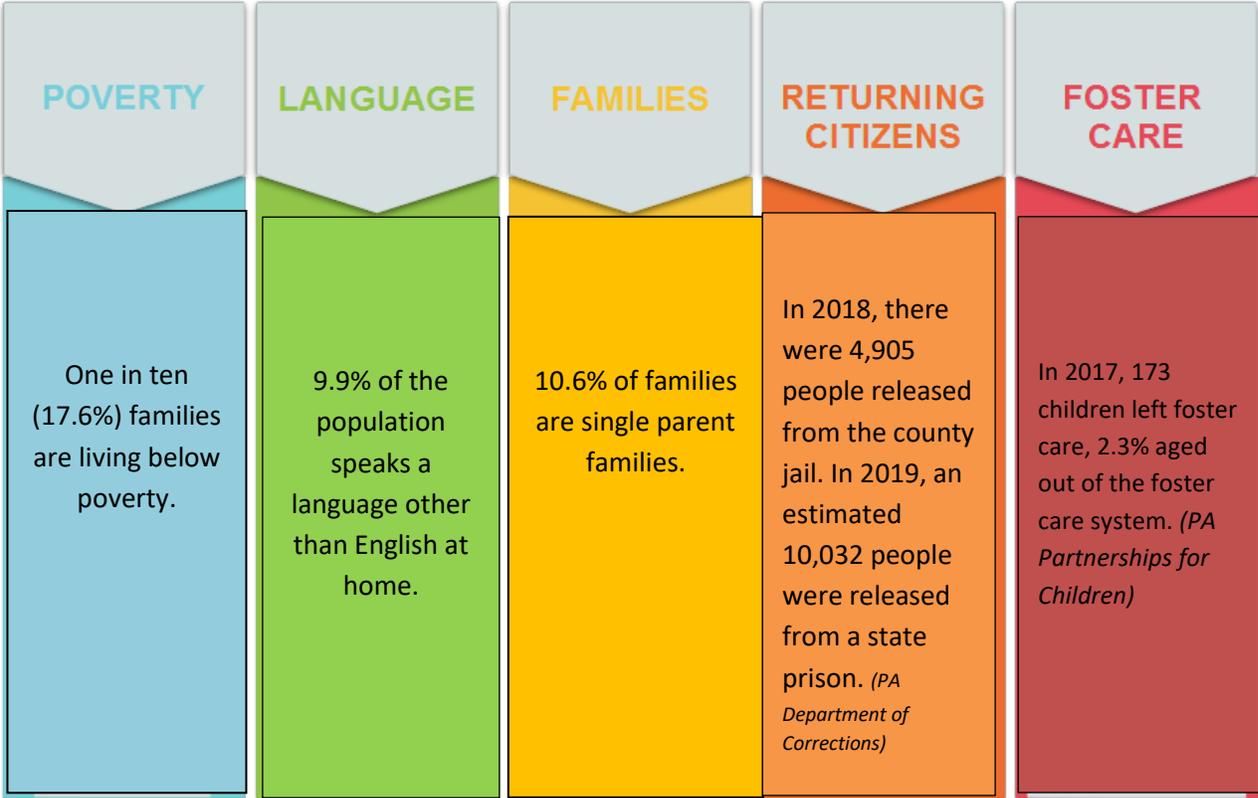


Reflecting on the charts above, within the Northeast region, the average travel time is 29.5 minutes in comparison to the Commonwealth’s travel time of 25.8 minutes.

According to the Urban Institute, most individuals released from prison held some type of job prior to incarceration and want legal, stable employment upon release. Research also suggests that the higher the wage, the less likely it is that individuals will return to crime. However, most former prisoners experience difficulty finding a job after release. During the time spent in prison, many lose work skills and are given little opportunity to gain useful work experience.

Moreover, the availability of job training programs in prison has declined in recent years. A large proportion of former prisoners have low levels of educational attainment and work experience, health problems, and other personal characteristics that make them hard to employ. Once in the community, not only are many employers reluctant to hire convicted felons, but many former prisoners are legally barred from certain occupations.

Research obtained from *Children’s Rights* has shown that youth who age out of foster care are less likely than youth in the general population to graduate from high school and are less likely to attend or graduate college. By age 26, approximately 80% of young people who aged out of foster care earned at least a high school degree or equivalency compared to 94% in the general population. By age 26, 4% of youth who aged out of foster care had earned a four-year college degree, while 36% of youth in the general population had done so. In the Northeast Region, approximately 43 children age out of foster care each year. The following chart provides a descriptive overview of individuals with barriers to employment in NE PA:



According to the *Division for Social Policy and Development*, in developing countries, 80% to 90% of persons with disabilities of working age are unemployed, whereas in industrialized countries the figure is between 50% and 70%. Persons with disabilities are frequently not considered potential members of the workforce. Perception, fear, myth and prejudice continue to limit understanding and acceptance of disability in workplaces everywhere. Myths abound, including that persons with disabilities are unable to work and that accommodating a person with a disability in the workplace is expensive. Contrary to these notions, many companies have found that persons with disabilities are more than capable.

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

- By age 22, approximately 50% of teen mothers have received a high school diploma and only 30% have earned high school equivalency certificate, whereas 90% of women who did not give birth during adolescence receive a high school diploma.
- Approximately 10% of teen mothers complete a two- or four-year college program.
- Teen fathers have a 25 to 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; and
- be unemployed or underemployed as a young adult.

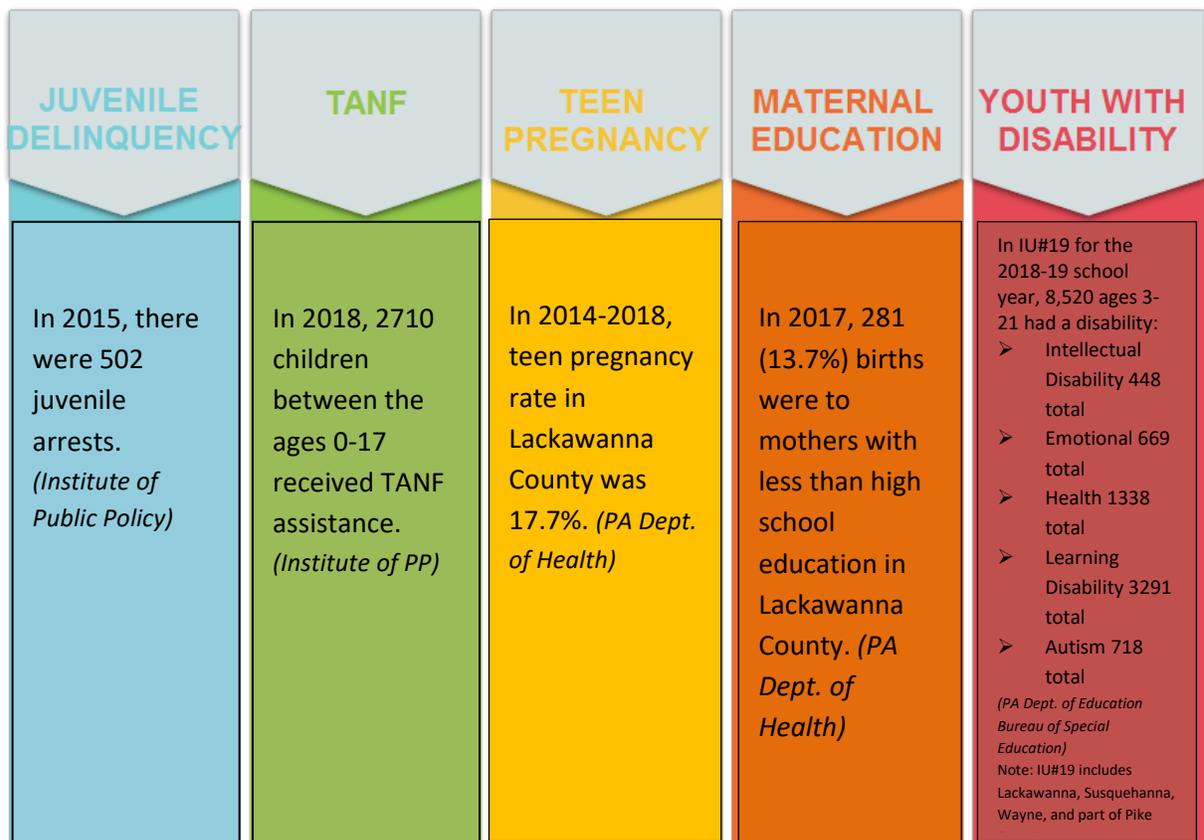
These immediate and long-lasting effects continue for teen parents and their children even after adjusting for the factors that increased the teen's risk for pregnancy—e.g., growing up in poverty, having parents with low levels of education, growing up in a single-parent family, and having low attendance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

According the Department for Health for 2014-2018 (latest data available), the teenage pregnancy rate

per 1,000 youth aged 15-19 for the Counties of Monroe (10.6) and Pike (9.3) were significantly lower when compared to the State (16.3).

However, teenage pregnancy rates for Carbon County (18.7), Lackawanna County (17.7), Luzerne County (22.4), Schuylkill County (21.6) and Wayne County (13.4) were comparable to the State (16.3).

The following chart provides additional information on youth with barriers in the Northeast region:



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

The following Intermediate Units are in the Northeast Region

- IU#18 includes: Luzerne and Wyoming Counties
- IU#19 includes: Lackawanna, Susquehanna, and Wayne Counties
- IU#20 includes: Monroe, Northampton, and Pike Counties
- IU#21 includes: Carbon and Lehigh Counties
- IU#29 includes: Schuylkill County

These Intermediate Units are instrumental in providing comprehensive services to school-aged students, 3-21, who require assistance in attaining their educational goals including preparing to enter the

workforce.

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 the number of sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons on a single night in January. HUD requires that *Continuums of Care* perform the PIT annually to determine the number of homeless persons who are sheltered in emergency shelter, transitional housing, and Safe Havens on a single night. Continuums of Care also must conduct a count of unsheltered homeless persons every other year (odd numbered years).

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

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

Now let's look at labor market trends. The overall unemployment rate in the Northeast Region in 2020 was 7.4% with a labor force of 465,500. As can be seen in the chart below, the unemployment rate, specifically attributable to COVID-19, significantly increase throughout 2020 but is currently waning.

Average Labor Force Statistics for 2020 and Seasonally Adjusted Statistics for 2020

Annual Average Labor Force Statistics, 2020

Annual Average	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Unemployment Rate
2020	465,500	431,000	34,500	7.4%

Seasonally Adjusted Labor Force Statistics, 2020

Month	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Unemployment Rate
July	471,600	406,500	65,000	13.7%
August	468,400	414,600	53,700	11.4%
September	477,700	433,100	44,500	9.3%
October	473,400	434,600	38,800	8.1%

Source: Center for Workforce Information and Analysis

Labor Market trends can be examined by looking at Long-Term Industry Projections as well as other labor market information. Regarding Long -Term Industry Projections from 2018-2028, the total employment in

the Region is expected to grow by 4.2%. This growth rate is lower than the Commonwealth’s projection of 7.7%.

Healthcare Practitioners, Technicians, & Support is projected to experience the greatest percentage increase (12.3%) while Office & Administrative Support is projected to experience the greatest (-2.4%).

At 13,911 jobs, Protective, Food, Building, & Personal Service sector accounts for 26.3% of the projected annual employment growth of 52,879 demand. The following chart provides a wider overview of occupational area trends.

Long-Term Industry Projections for the Northeast Region

Occupational Title	Employment (2018)	Projected Employment (2028)	Employment Change (2018-28)		Annual Demand
			Volume	Percent	
Total, All Occupations	425,210	442,980	17,770	4.2%	52,879
Management, Business & Finance	30,480	31,930	1,450	4.8%	2,920
Computer, Engineering & Science	11,150	11,650	500	4.5%	963
Education, Legal, Social Service, Arts & Media	38,860	41,260	2,400	6.2%	3,977
Healthcare Practitioners, Technicians & Support	40,100	45,020	4,920	12.3%	3,747
Protective, Food, Building & Personal Service	84,890	91,290	6,400	7.5%	13,911
Sales & Related	41,170	40,360	-810	-2.0%	5,826
Office & Administrative Support	64,340	62,780	-1,560	-2.4%	7,385
Farming, Fishing & Forestry	2,250	2,380	130	5.8%	385
Construction & Extraction	15,860	16,870	1,010	6.4%	1,913
Installation, Maintenance & Repair	18,380	19,220	840	4.6%	1,914
Production	33,610	32,980	-630	-1.9%	3,830
Transportation & Material Moving	44,120	47,240	3,120	7.1%	6,109

Source: CWIA Long-Term Occupational Employment Projections (2018-28)

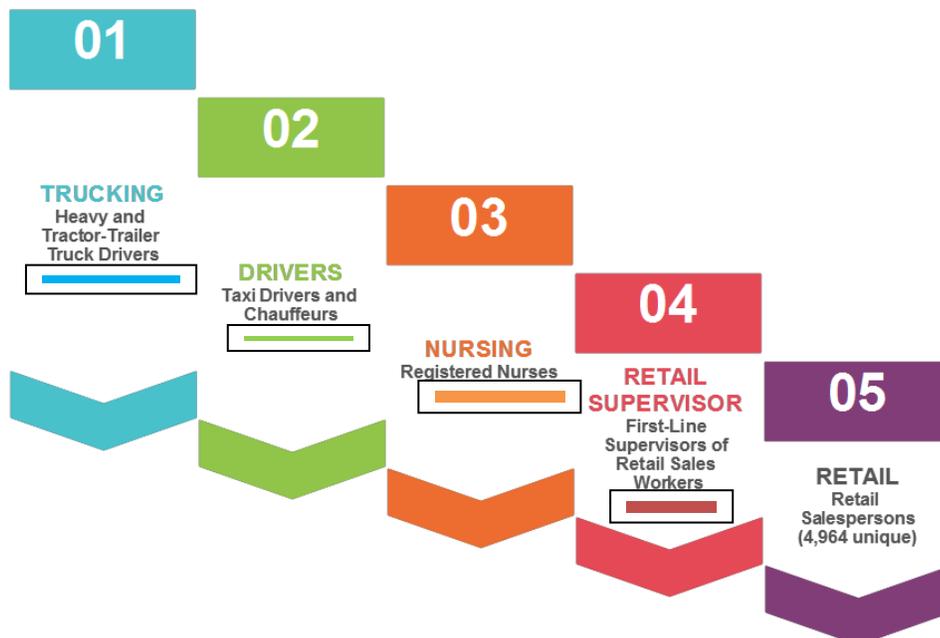
As shown in the chart on the following page, the occupations projecting the greatest volume growth are and Protective, Food, Building and Personal Service, Healthcare Practitioners, Technicians and Support and Transportation and Material Handling. Occupations in Office and Administrative Support, as well as the Production and Sales and Related areas are expected to decline.

Long-Term Occupational Projections for the Northeast Region (2018-2028)

Occupational Title	Employment (2018)	Projected Employment (2028)	Employment Change (2018-28)		Annual Demand
			Volume	Percent	
Total, All Occupations	425,210	442,980	17,770	4.2%	52,879
Management, Business & Finance	30,480	31,930	1,450	4.8%	2,920
Computer, Engineering & Science	11,150	11,650	500	4.5%	963
Education, Legal, Social Service, Arts & Media	38,860	41,260	2,400	6.2%	3,977
Healthcare Practitioners, Technicians & Support	40,100	45,020	4,920	12.3%	3,747
Protective, Food, Building & Personal Service	84,890	91,290	6,400	7.5%	13,911
Sales & Related	41,170	40,360	-810	-2.0%	5,826
Office & Administrative Support	64,340	62,780	-1,560	-2.4%	7,385
Farming, Fishing & Forestry	2,250	2,380	130	5.8%	385
Construction & Extraction	15,860	16,870	1,010	6.4%	1,913
Installation, Maintenance & Repair	18,380	19,220	840	4.6%	1,914
Production	33,610	32,980	-630	-1.9%	3,830
Transportation & Material Moving	44,120	47,240	3,120	7.1%	6,109

Source: Long-Term Occupational Employment Projections (2018-28)

Historically, the following occupational groupings have prevailed across the Northeast region:



July 1, 2021

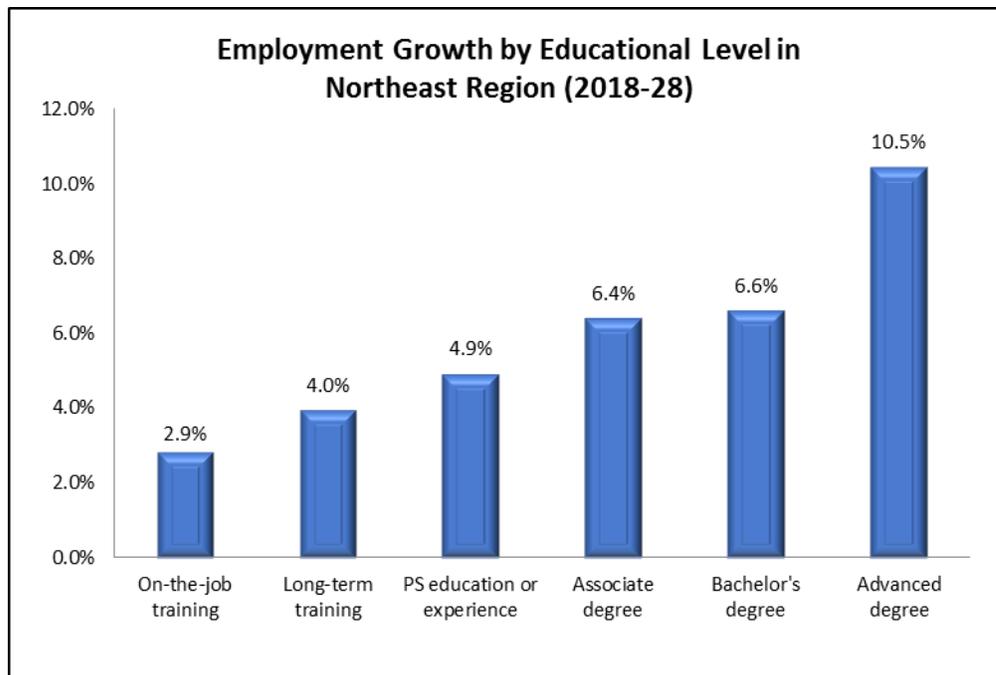
What continues to be apparent, and in line with previous data presented, is that, with the exception of Registered Nurses, the major prevalent occupational fields are in areas that require only on-the-job training or a certification that can be achieved through short-term training.

One way to measure the skill gap is to compare the current educational attainment with the projected employment growth by educational level.

As shown in the charts below, there are projected to be 85,230 jobs that require a Bachelor’s Degree or higher in the Region projected for 2028. Also depicted is that only 31.4% will achieve this educational level (see chart on page 9). Therefore, as can be rationalized due to the pandemic, and, as documented by the figures, it appears that there will be a lack of potential workers with the appropriate levels to meet the projected demand.

At the same time, there are expected to be 348,970 jobs that will require some level of on-the-job training, long-term training, or postsecondary education or experience. Within the Region, 24.4% have some level of college with no degree with 34.7% having achieved a high school diploma. Thus, these two groups may be able to fulfill the projected demand if they are able secure the required skills via additional education and/or training.

Area	Educational Grouping	Employment (2018)	Projected Employment (2028)	Percent Change (2018-28)
Northeast Region	On-the-job training	246,640	253,710	2.9%
Northeast Region	Long-term training	15,110	15,710	4.0%
Northeast Region	PS education or experience	75,810	79,550	4.9%
Northeast Region	Associate degree	8,250	8,780	6.4%
Northeast Region	Bachelor's degree	64,500	68,780	6.6%
Northeast Region	Advanced degree	14,890	16,450	10.5%



Source: Center for Workforce Information and Analysis

Further, it is interesting to note that the percentage change across educational groupings from 2018 through 2028 is slight; however, it can still be deduced that on-the-job training will play a major role in workforce development strategies over the next decade.

Estimated Population Age 25+ by Educational Attainment for the Northeast Region

NEPA Region		
Estimated Workforce Composition by Educational Attainment Level		
Educational Attainment	Jobs	Proportion
Less than high school diploma	42,744	9.9%
High school diploma or equivalent	124,559	29.0%
Some college, no degree	96,490	22.4%
Associate's degree	42,654	9.9%
Bachelor's degree	78,722	18.3%
Master's degree	31,289	7.3%
Doctoral or professional degree	12,171	2.8%
N/A (Military Occupations)	1,221	0.3%
Total Jobs included in Estimate	429,851	99.97%
EMS Total	429,964	--
High School or Less	167,303	38.9%
Bachelor's or Higher	122,182	28.4%

EMSI

Looking at on-line postings provides insight into skills and certifications that employers are seeking. The top requested hard skills in the Northeast Region include recruitment, training and driving. The top soft

skills are scheduling, leadership, and leading. The most requested certifications are Commercial Driver’s License, Registered Nurse, and Licensed Practical Nurse.

Top Hard Skills	Top Soft Skills	Top Certifications
Recruitment	Scheduling (Project Management)	Commercial Driver's License (CDL)
Training	Leadership	Registered Nurse
Driving	Leading	Licensed Practical Nurse
Management	Learning	Nurse Practitioner
Sales	Listening	Board Certified
Customer Service	Ethics	Certified Nursing Assistant
Insurance	Cleanliness	Licensed Vocational Nurses
Retailing	Coordinating	Certified Global Meeting Planner
Cargos	Mental Health	Transportation Worker ID Card (TWIC)
Health Care	Creativity	Certified Benefits Professional
		<i>Source: EMSI</i>

The following sectors account for the largest number of jobs in the Northeast Region.



Health Care and Social Assistance

- Registered Nurses is a top occupation in the Region and a top job posting
- Employs the highest paying occupations
- Personal Care Aides, Registered Nurses and Home Health Aides are among the fastest growing occupations
- Registered Nurse, Nurse Practitioner, Licensed Practical Nurse, Licensed Vocational Nurse, and Certified Nursing Assistant are among the top certifications requested by employers
- With the exception of Lackawanna, individuals in these jobs are likely to commute outside of their county of residency and/or region for employment

Government

- Teaching, Military and Law Enforcement occupations make up the majority of employment opportunities in this sector
- Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education, and Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education are declining occupations
- Accounts for the largest amount of the Region's imports and exports
- Monroe, Lackawanna, and Luzerne are likely to have residents filling teaching occupations, while the other counties and the Region overall have more commuters
- There are more qualified candidates graduating from education programs than are needed to meet the regional demand

Retail Trade

- Retail Salespersons, Cashiers and Stock Clerks and Order Fillers are among the largest occupations
- Retail Salespersons, First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers, Customer Service Representatives, Cashiers and Stock Clerks and Order Fillers are among the top posted positions
- Sales, Customer service, and retailing are among the top skills employers look for
- General Warehousing and Storage is a growing industry
- While this industry tends to hire large numbers of employees and positions are accessible to those with minimal education, they do not offer family sustaining wages

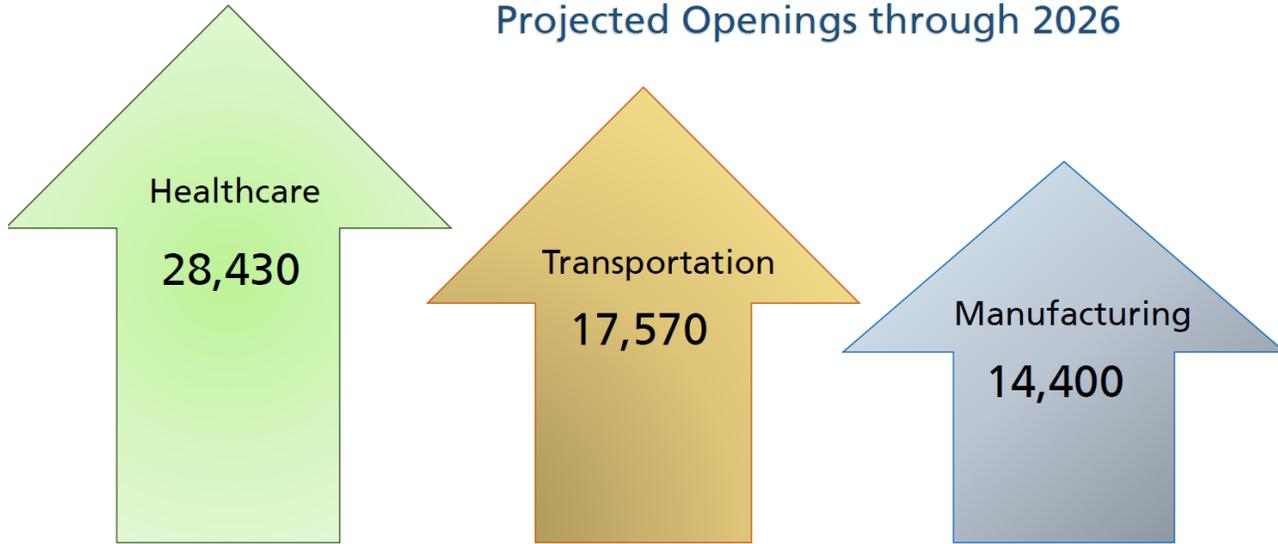
Manufacturing

- Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand is a growing occupation
- Most entry level occupations require a high school diploma or equivalent
- Manufacturing has the greatest economic impact on the Region
- Several types of manufacturing are available within the Region

Based on the analysis of the skills and educational levels of the existing and emerging labor force in the Northeast Region, as compared to the area's current and projected occupational demands, the Northeast Pennsylvania Consortium of Workforce Boards has identified five primary Industry Partnerships that drive its workforce development activities: advanced materials /diversified manufacturing, food

production, logistics and transportation, healthcare, and energy.

Northeast Pennsylvania High-Priority Occupations Projected Openings through 2026



Healthcare Projected Openings by 2026					
Luzerne/Schuylkill		Lackawanna		Pocono	
Substance Abuse & Behavioral Disorder Counselors	300	Child, Family & School Social Workers	350	Registered Nurses	1,860
Social & Human Service Assistants	1,040	Mental Health & Substance Abuse Social Workers	210	Emergency Medical Technicians & Paramedics	390
Registered Nurses	5,090	Paralegals & Legal Assistants	230	Licensed Practical & Licensed Vocational Nurses	640
Medical & Clinical Laboratory Technicians	430	Registered Nurses	2,610	Medical Records & Health Information Technicians	100
Radiologic Technologists & Technicians	410	Surgical Technologists	N/A	Nursing Assistants	1,050

Pharmacy Technicians	970	Licensed Practical & Licensed Vocational Nurses	1,190	Massage Therapists	190
Licensed Practical & Licensed Vocational Nurses	1,960	Nursing Assistants	2,490	Dental Assistants	270
Nursing Assistants	4,160	Dental Assistants	310	Phlebotomists	100
Physical Therapist Assistants	230	Phlebotomists	220	Total	4,600
Massage Therapists	200	Total	7,610		
Dental Assistants	560				
Medical Assistants	640				
Phlebotomists	230				
Total	16,220				

Transportation Projected Openings by 2026					
Luzerne/Schuylkill		Lackawanna		Pocono	
Bus & Truck Mechanics & Diesel Engine Specialists	630	Bus & Truck Mechanics & Diesel Engine Specialists	310	Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	2,050
Supervisors - Helpers, Laborers & Material Movers	680	Supervisors - Helpers, Laborers & Material Movers	210	Industrial Truck & Tractor Operators	360
Supervisors - Transportation & Vehicle Operators	560	Bus Drivers: Transit & Intercity	220	Total	2,410
Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	4,490	Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	1,980		
Light Truck Drivers	1,260	Light Truck Drivers	750		
Industrial Truck & Tractor Operators	2,580	Industrial Truck & Tractor Operators	1,250		
Total	10,200	Total	4,720		

Manufacturing Projected Openings by 2026					
Luzerne/Schuylkill		Lackawanna		Pocono	
Supervisors - Production & Operating Workers	1,280	Supervisors - Production & Operating Workers	410	Supervisors - Production & Operating Workers	430
Team Assemblers	2,430	Team Assemblers	430	Team Assemblers	520
CNC Machine Tool Operators	N/A	CNC Machine Tool Operators	340	Machinists	290
Extruding & Drawing Machine Setters/Oprs/Tenders	680	Cutting, Punching & Press Machine Setters/Oprs/Tenders	200	Welders, Cutters, Solderers & Brazers	70
Cutting, Punching & Press Machine Setters/Oprs/Tenders	740	Machinists	310	Chemical Equipment Operators & Tenders	170
Machinists	780	Multiple Machine Tool Setters/Oprs/Tenders	220	Total	1,480
Multiple Machine Tool Setters/Oprs/Tenders	290	Welders, Cutters, Solderers & Brazers	140		
Welders, Cutters, Solderers & Brazers	550	Printing Press Operators	250	Total	2,640
Printing Press Operators	410	Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers & Weighers	340		
Chemical Equipment Operators & Tenders	450	Total	2,640		
Separating, Filtering & Precipitating Setters/Oprs/Tenders	200				
Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers & Weighers	910				
Packaging & Filling Machine Oprs/Tenders	1,560				
Total	10,280				

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

1.4. Describe the regional service strategies aimed at achieving the vision and goals established for the region.

The Northeast Region relies on both workforce development and economic development initiatives to engage businesses throughout the seven-county area. The role of workforce development is to support the expansion and development of local talent and to assist employers with their workforce needs. Economic development is closely related in that it helps communities with business attraction, supports programs for workforce development, and promotes small business development and new business startups.

The Northeast Region's strategies and activities are overseen by the three local boards of the Northeast

Consortium of Workforce Boards as discussed in Section 1.1. They have well- established working relationships, and are also closely aligned with the Northern Tier Workforce Development Board that is responsible for similar activities for Bradford, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Tioga, and Wyoming Counties.

To promote regional workforce efforts, the group meets, at a minimum, bi-monthly. Formal agendas and minutes are recorded to document activities, progress, and outcomes. Some examples of regional best practices that have been implemented include alignment of Individual Training Account (ITA) levels, standardized operational forms, and a consistent approach to PA CareerLink® customer service. The Boards also work collaboratively to secure ancillary grants to further leverage and supplement regional sector initiatives.

The Region’s economic development activities complement and support its workforce development initiatives. Specifically, business financing, government contracting assistance, international trade assistance, non-profit assistance, transportation planning, research and information and local government services are coordinated across the Region through the Partnership for Regional Economic Performance (PREP). The Northeast Region PREP partners include:

- ✚ Local Development District: The Northeast Pennsylvania Alliance (Lead Organization)
- ✚ Small Business Development Centers at the University of Scranton and Wilkes University
- ✚ The Northeastern Pennsylvania Industrial Resource Center located in Hanover Township
- ✚ The Manufacturers Resource Center headquartered in Bethlehem
- ✚ The Northeast Pennsylvania Manufacturing and Employers Association located in Pottsville
- ✚ Local Industrial Development Organizations: Berwick Industrial Development Association, CAN-DO Inc. (Hazleton), Carbon County Economic Development Corporation, Monroe County Industrial Development Authority, the Pike County Economic Development Authority, Schuylkill County Economic Development Corporation, Scranton-Lackawanna Industrial Building Company, and the Wayne Economic Development Corporation.

These PREP partners provide a powerful network of regional experts to help business owners address challenges facing their companies. Additionally, the network also helps businesses access critical state and federal resources, such as loans, grants, technical assistance, and other support. PREP partners provide services to local businesses and also to individual residents who may be interested in business start-up and management. Of key significance, many of the PREP partners serve on Local Workforce Development Boards in the Northeast Region.

At this time, there are no formal cooperative service delivery agreements in place; however, informal agreements among all constituents support strong linkages. This includes the willingness to collaborate and coordinate in systemic development of regional initiatives, readiness to prepare and submit overarching proposals for support of funding for regional projects, and the development of integrated strategic plans supporting regionalized economic and workforce development growth.

To ensure overarching support for all segments of the regional population such as youth and/or individuals with barriers to employment, it must first be noted that each local area receives Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funding to support these segments of the population. Procedures are established in each of the PA CareerLink® One-Stop sites to conduct program enrollments, provide assessment and case management services, and assist young adults and others with barriers in attaining their educational goals. WIOA Case Managers serve as advocates for these individuals as they research training and career pathway options that will set them on a path to self-sufficiency. Also, located within the area, in Luzerne County, is the Keystone Job Corp Center who actively recruits across the entire region through scheduled sessions in the PA CareerLink® sites. There are no YouthBuild projects currently within the region but an Americorps project revolving around the provision of mentors to youth was recently approved for Carbon County through the United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley. It is envisioned that youth from the southeast corner of the region will be recruited for this project.

Within the Northeast Region, each PA CareerLink® has a Business Services Team (BST) that works directly with employers. They identify needs and match them to qualified candidates to fill open positions. As needed, they help employers maximize job postings PA's workforce development system of record. Additionally, they establish on-the-job training (OJT), customized training, or incumbent worker training programs to help businesses develop workers.

BSTs also use labor market information to help businesses determine appropriate compensation levels and related benefits packages to remain competitive in the Northeast Region. Further, to avoid duplication of efforts, BST staff members communicate and collaborate with the partner organizations that are a part of the PA CareerLink® system. Moreover, each local area's BST members convene at least once each quarter on a regional basis to share best practices and identify emerging trends and needs.

To address the emerging needs of business and industry as they revitalize following the COVID-19 pandemic, the use of apprenticeships can support a workforce growth strategy. An apprenticeship is a program that trains a worker to become skilled in a particular trade, often combining hands-on work with classroom learning to train a new hire or upgrade the skills of an incumbent worker. Apprenticeships are generally considered full-time employment. As the apprentice is learning, they are also applying the lessons through working.

Expansion of Registered Apprenticeship programming provides an opportunity for regional coordination. In addition to support for traditional Joint-Individual Registered Apprenticeship programs, the region also promotes Non-Joint individual and Group Registered Apprenticeship programs for non-traditional occupations. While not exclusive, our recruiting efforts with our PA CareerLink® partners intentionally focuses on reaching underserved, underrepresented, displaced, and veteran groups.

As a recent example, local boards in the Northeastern PA's Planning Region coordinated with Marshall Machine, a regional employer, the Northeast Equipment Dealers Association, Johnson College, and the Wayne-Pike Workforce Alliance to expand the Farm Equipment Mechanic Group Sponsorship Registered Apprenticeship program approved by the PA Apprenticeship and Training Office. Recognizing the importance and value of apprenticeship programming, each local board in the Northeastern PA Planning Region is committed to expanding apprenticeship opportunities within their respective workforce areas as well. For example, the region's Local Workforce Development Boards connects the development of apprenticeship programming to their ongoing industry partnerships and sector strategies. A notable

example is the Non-Joint Individual Mechatronics Registered Apprenticeship program, developed in partnership between the Greiner Corporation, Luzerne County Community College, and the L-S WDB. In the Pocono Counties WDA, ongoing discussions with community organizations, employers, and Penn State University center on the development of food processing and agriculture related group sponsorship Registered Apprenticeship programs. Regional LWDB support was paramount in the development of the Greater Pittston Chamber of Commerce's "Innovations in Management" (IM) Group Sponsorship Registered Apprenticeship program, as described in Section 1.2 of this Plan. The IM Registered Apprenticeship is a one year program intentionally developed to meet the needs of all industries and to prepare individuals develop the skills they need to be successful in a supervisory role. Successful completers of this innovative Registered Apprenticeship receive sixteen transferrable college credits, a Small Business Diploma from the Community College and a Journey Worker Certificate. In addition, the regional LWDB partners were awarded a grant to expand apprenticeships in the region.

The region is also currently guiding Johnson College in their desire to develop and register a Pre-Apprenticeship program for the above mentioned Farm Equipment Mechanics Registered Apprenticeship program. The region's employers struggle to find workers with the right skills. Registered Pre-Apprenticeship provides the instruction needed to help individuals acquire the skills to be successful in registered apprenticeship programs. The region's LWDBs are committed to supporting the development an ecosystem that connects training providers and other organizations with the capacity to administer Pre-apprenticeship programs to Registered Apprenticeship programs. For individuals, Pre-Apprenticeship programs can be a bridge to career opportunities. For employers, Pre-Apprenticeships can provided a dependable pipeline to skilled job seekers.

Further, given the geographical differences across the three NE PA workforce boards and the nature of the individualized business climates, each area must develop their own action plan for dissemination of information and development of specific apprenticeship opportunities. The dissemination of information regarding apprenticeships falls to the Business Services Teams (BSTs) within each of the applicable PA CareerLink® One-Stop Centers across the region. Similar in nature across the various Centers, staff have been trained to initiate discussions regarding this opportunity as they infiltrate business and industry, most commonly through the internal human resources departments. Staff are made available to provide presentations to business owners and/or representatives and provide informational material on establishing apprenticeships as part of their overall outreach campaigns. Having assisted the local workforce boards for many years, the various NE PA institutions of higher learning are well aware of the viability of apprenticeships and have been progressive in their development of courses of study to support apprenticeship usage. The mechanisms are in place to promote apprenticeship development; however, the challenge has always been the engagement of business and industry for participation. Local Boards recognize the qualitative results that can be recognized from apprenticeship development; therefore, the following strategies can be universally applied for strategic planning purposes;

- Each of the three NE PA workforce areas will ensure that BST staff are well-trained and well-versed in their knowledge and support of apprenticeship applications and that all PA CareerLink® partner staff are engaged in the promotion of apprenticeships as part of the overall services available through the Centers;
- The workforce board directors and administrative staff will continue to promote post-secondary curriculum development revolving around emerging industries and apprenticeship applications including addressing non-traditional occupational areas;
- Information on apprenticeship opportunities will be stressed at Quarterly workforce board

meetings to ensure that the varied membership of the boards (private and public representatives) have the knowledge to further disseminate this information throughout their local communities;

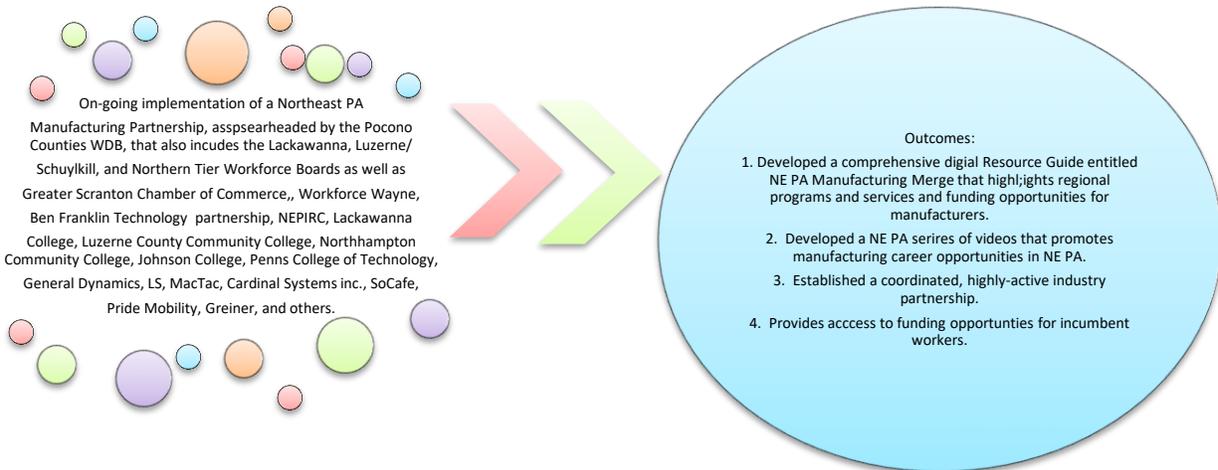
- Support of the current projects will continue; and
- Successful best practices, as they emerge, will be utilized to promote expansion of apprenticeship usage.

Across the 7-County Northeast Region of the Commonwealth, there are 54 school districts, 17 post-secondary institutions of higher education, and various other providers of training (i.e., tractor trailer driving schools, LPN and CNA training programs, technical school offerings, computer programs, and the like.) Business Education Partnership (BEP) Grants received by the three Boards support the provision of career awareness and pathway information to intermediate and high-school-aged students and immerse workforce system information into school districts' 339 plans of action. The receipt of WIOA formula funding by the Boards allows for the channeling of millions of dollars to the post-secondary institutions and local training providers. Given that the selection of training is an individualized choice, there are no boundary regulations for training placements (i.e., a Lackawanna County resident may choose to attend Luzerne County Community College). Finally, WDB Executive Directors and administrative staff are well entrenched on Career Technology Centers and other post-secondary Perkins boards and committees and have participated in the recent development 5-year Perkins operational plans.

1.5. Describe the development and implementation of sector initiatives for in-demand industry sectors or occupations for the region.

Currently, the Northeast Region is focusing workforce development efforts within the region on the key sectors of advanced materials/diversified manufacturing, healthcare, food processing, logistics and transportation, and energy. These sectors have been the most prominent across the region for the past decade and appear to be stable in nature. Prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March, 2020, it must be noted that the Northeast region was struggling somewhat in convening meetings of industry leaders across the various sectors, due mainly to the large geographic footprint of the region. In some instances, attending a meeting involved a two-to-three-hour one-way commute. Prominent business owners and leaders cannot afford this valuable time away from their business to attend a planning session. This issue did not fall on deaf ears. The Northeast Region listened to the concerns voiced by sector representatives about travel time and the appearance of duplicative efforts within the prevailing Industry Partnership structure. As discussions were underway for discovery of alternate ways to conduct meetings and initiate plans of action, the pandemic hit. If anything, good could come of this, it was the ability of major constituents to rapidly adapt to new methods of communication, most notably ZOOM – type meetings. And as this occurred, so did a revitalization of sector initiatives.

An example of how this can work is shown in the diagram below:



Building on events/meetings that had occurred prior to the pandemic, the NE PA Manufacturing Partnership (grant held by the Pocono Counties WDB and aligned with Keystone Development Partnership) regrouped and was able to produce substantial and sustainable outcomes (see blue circle). At present, funding is now available through the partnership to support incumbent worker training.

This structure can be replicated across industry sectors. Continued sustainability, from the Commonwealth’s perspective, through the on-going outlay of Next Gen funding opportunities, will further support IP development.

Given the nature of the Region, the focus of sectoral efforts on its successful Industry Partnership initiatives should rest, primarily, with NEPA Alliance, the previously-mentioned regional community and economic development agency that serves the seven counties of the Northeast Region. Collectively, NEPA Alliance partners provide a powerful network of regional experts who help business owners address nearly every type of challenge facing their companies, including workforce development issues.

As regional opportunities arise, the constituents will convene groups (most likely now through a ZOOM or the like platform) to discuss the strategies and actions that are required to address specific needs. This action will ensure that fluctuating in-demand occupational areas remain at the forefront of any workforce/economic development planning efforts and ensure that both foreseen, as well unforeseen changes are addressed, in real time. The Region believes that by taking incremental steps, and building upon the strong foundation of its past as well as existing Industry Partnerships, it will be able to gather the momentum that is required to gain commitment from sector representatives for Next Gen activities. To note: in cases where IPs must be revived, the three local Workforce Development Boards will assume a lead role in the developmental process and acquisition of funding.

1.6. Describe how the region will connect employer labor force requirements and occupational demands with the region’s labor force, including individuals with barriers to employment.

The Northeast Region continues to utilize the State-approved *High-Priority Occupational (HPO) List* and *Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL)* to connect jobseekers, including those with barriers to employment, with occupational demands across the region. The services provided through the PA CareerLink® centers

and satellite locations are designed to assist individuals who are actively seeking employment or who are interested in improving their current skills. Overall, the Northeast Region strives to ensure that at least 51% of enrolled participants are individuals with barriers to employment, such as veterans, recipients of public assistance, low-income individuals, individuals who are basic skills deficient, and out-of-school youth. The following strategies promote the achievement of this goal.

Title I staff within the PA CareerLink® system work closely with Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVERs). Priority of service is given to veterans at PA CareerLink® offices (a veteran or qualified spouse receives priority access to services and training opportunities).

Individuals on public assistance and low-income individuals are identified on initial visit in the PA CareerLink® centers. They are informed of their right to receive priority of service. Strong partnerships are established among title I Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and Employment, Advancement, and Retention Network (EARN) providers to integrate services and offerings.

PA CareerLink® staff identify individuals who are basic skills deficient through an intake process, then refer them as needed to literacy programs, including high school equivalency review classes, English as a Second Language (ESL), and remediation courses. Co-enrollment with Title II Adult Basic Education and title I services is encouraged for individuals with basic skill deficiencies.

All of these services, as described, are conveyed and discussed at local WDB Quarterly Meetings, thus, ensuring the engagement of business and industry, educational, labor, and community leaders in the oversight of their local area. Of note is that there are Board members crossing geographical workforce areas to sit on contiguous boards which, in turn, allows for the dissemination of information across the various workforce areas and promotes conformity in the development and provision of services. Finally, as has been previously stated, many of these individuals also sit on the various NE PA Alliance boards and committees and transfer information as appropriate.

Of key significance, the Northeast Pennsylvania Consortium's regional strategies go beyond its borders. The three Northeast Region WDBs (Lackawanna, Luzerne-Schuylkill, and the Pocono Counties) are solidly partnered with the Northern Tier Region to ensure a wider-based systemic approach to the provision of services and the coordination of initiatives. The Northern Tier Workforce Development Board is also a major contributor to the Northeast Region AMDM Industry Partnership as described in 1.5 above.

The Northeast Pennsylvania Consortium will continue to discuss additional opportunities for expanding services on a regional basis and to leverage the best practices learned through the collective impact model in the local areas.

In 2019, in collaboration with The Institute, a major public policy and educational development entity in Northeastern PA, prepared and distributed a 2019 NEPA Talent Report that analyzed the current and future workforce, industry, and educational of six NE PA Counties: Lackawanna, Luzerne, Monroe, Pike, Schuylkill and Wayne. The report highlights the top sectors and occupations in each county based on the number of employed workers for each. Also highlighted were the fastest growing industries and occupations, as well as forecasted job growth, replacement demand, exits, and transfers within each of these industries per county. This study provides some answers to questions regarding the supply and demand within the individual counties with the following chart detailing the largest share of the regional economy:

<p align="center"><u>Health Care</u> Employees: 46,639 Average Annual Growth Rate: +0.8 Forecasted Job Demand, 2018-23: 25,450</p>	<p align="center"><u>Retail Trade</u> Employees: 30,469 Average Annual Growth: -1.0% Forecasted Job Demand, 2018-23: 19,319</p>
<p align="center"><u>Manufacturing</u> Employees: 26,058 Average Annual Growth Rate: +0.8% Forecasted Job Demand, 2018-23: 11,093</p>	<p align="center"><u>Transportation, Warehousing, & Logistics</u> Employees: 23,044 Average Annual Growth Rate: +6.0% Forecasted Job Demand, 2018-23: 12,951</p>
<p align="center"><u>Accommodation & Food Service</u> Employees: 20,707 Average Annual Growth Rate: +1.8% Forecasted Job Demand, 2018-23: 16,538</p>	<p align="center"><u>Administrative & Support Services</u> Employees: 16,129 Average Annual Growth Rate: +2.4% Forecasted Job Demand, 2018-23: 9,664</p>
<p align="center"><u>Construction</u> Employees: 10,892 Average Annual Growth Rate: +1.4% Forecasted Job Demand, 2018-23: 5,651</p>	<p align="center"><u>Finance & Insurance</u> Employees: 10,417 Average Annual Growth Rate: +0.8% Forecasted Job Demand, 2018-23: 4,757</p>

As can be seen, information such as the above clearly provides local workforce and economic development professionals with significant information to support planning efforts.

Additionally, The Institute prepares and conducts a yearly community-wide information session (currently scheduled to be conducted as a virtual presentation on May 25, 2021) centered around an Indicator's Report, a statistical-heavy report on the demographics, economic development, community development, education, energy, government, health and health care, housing, industry, infrastructure, land use, planning, public safety, tourism and arts and culture, transportation, and workforce development for two of the region's largest counties: Lackawanna and Luzerne. This report is used by local workforce development professionals as a tool for local as well as economic/workforce development planning.

1.7 Describe the coordination of transportation and other supportive services for the region.

As discussed, the Northeast Region includes three local workforce boards covering seven counties. Taking into consideration the geographical nuances that impact overall regionalization efforts, they work cooperatively to coordinate and collaborate their strategies, services, and delivery methods to maximize services for businesses and job seekers.

Using information from the Northeast Pennsylvania Regional Skills Gap Analysis prepared by NC3T (National Center for Career and Technical Colleges), the Boards identified primary supportive service needs. They established coordinated spending caps, similar priority of service policies, and key sector initiatives (i.e., industry partnerships, community-based grants, sector partnership grants, and other regionally-awarded grants) to promote consistency and provide systemic stability.

Access to public transportation is a principal impediment for many of the Region's jobseekers. Overall, the Northeast Region encompasses nearly 4,400 square miles that is connected by both Interstate highways and rural roads. Additionally, many residents commute to work outside of the local area,

including to Lehigh Valley, Berks County, New Jersey, and New York. Commuting is largely in personal, motorized vehicles with public and private transit providing a much smaller share.

As can be seen in the charts in Section 1.3, both the Luzerne-Schuylkill and Pocono Counties WDAs have a higher number of out-commuters, meaning more people are traveling outside these areas for work than are traveling in for employment. The Lackawanna WDA, on the other hand, has a higher number of in-commuters.

The public bus transportation services that are available in the more urban areas of the Northeast Region are not well coordinated with the needs of business and industry. Services are restricted to traditional day-time hours with limited service on Saturdays, and no service on Sundays. Moreover, many individuals in the Region seek employment in the bordering States of New York and New Jersey. However, public transportation to these areas consists of a daily bus run from Wilkes Barre through Scranton, through the Poconos, and on to New York City. Rail service between NE PA and New York City has long been under discussion; however, to-date, has not materialized.

The Northeast Region is very interested in improving public transportation options. For example, discussions are underway with Commuter Services of Pennsylvania, an organization based in York, PA that works to reduce traffic congestion by helping commuters find alternatives other than driving alone and by reaching out to employers so they can help their workforce find those options. Established practices may be easily transferable to the Northeast Region.

Additionally, NEPA Alliance, the Lead Organization for the Northeast Region's PREP, coordinates the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) that works in conjunction with the PA Department of Transportation and County officials to coordinate transportation planning and programming. TAP projects are intended to build pedestrian and bicycle facilities, improve access to public transportation, create safe routes to schools, preserve historic transportation structures, provide environmental mitigation, create trails projects that serve a transportation purpose, all while promoting safety and mobility. The Executive Directors of the three local workforce boards attend NEPA Alliance meetings where transportation topics are explored and discussed.

Also, the three Boards are strategically involved as partners in NE PA MOVES which is described in Section 1.2 of this Plan.

1.8. Describe the region's strategy to increase participation on then statewide eligible training provider list.

The three NE PA Workforce Development Boards are well aware of the need to increase training options for inclusion on the statewide *Eligible Training Provider List* or *ETPL*. The *ETPL* is a listing of programs of study at local/regional education and training providers that are, yearly, determined to be in high demand in each designated workforce development area by the Commonwealth's Center for Workforce information and Analysis (CWIA). If a course of study is not included on the published List, the education/training provider has the opportunity to petition the Commonwealth for consideration of inclusion. This petition process involves local Board approval prior to submission and must include documentable information regarding the

number of local job opening projected over the next three years as verified by letters of support from established businesses. Petitions may be filed for unmet employer demand, career pathways, or local workforce initiative/sector partnerships.

As the economy and workforce situation fluctuates and with an expectation of regional growth following the pandemic, it will be necessary to increase these training options to allow for the expenditure of WIOA dollars to significantly increase the numbers of trainees to fulfill probable job openings. As the employment opportunities vary, so must the training options. To this end, the local Boards work closely with their educational and training providers to ensure the understanding of current labor market data and the trends that are projected. This proactive approach also allows for the development of new courses of study to accommodate new job openings. As technology continues to change, educational institutions and training providers must be adaptable in their methods of educational delivery systems which will, in turn, enhance options to be included on the *ETPL*.

1.9. Describe how the region established administrative cost arrangements, including the pooling of funds for administrative costs, as appropriate, for the region.

The Northeast Region does not pool administrative funds. The Lead Applicant is the designated Fiscal Agent for regional grants and receives the administrative dollars.

When securing regional grants, the Boards utilize a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreement to identify the specific breakdown and eligibility requirements for the funding the workforce has access to. The funds are typically divided equally among the workforce boards (less administrative dollars) and remain in the control of the designated Fiscal Agent.

If, prior to the last quarter of the funding period, a Board has not expended its allocated portion, then its balance may be re-allocated to one or more of the other areas, typically on a first-come, first-serve basis.

1.10. Describe the agreement between the local boards that describes how the planning region will collectively negotiate and reach agreement with the Department on local levels of performance for, and report on, the performance accountability measures described in section 116(c), for each of the local areas within the planning region.

The three local Boards comprising the Northeast region each negotiate performance levels individually with the Commonwealth of PA. That said, a review of the Common Measures Performance Goals and Performance Levels for the past three years, indicates that the Boards that comprise the Northeast Regional Planning Area have had similar performance goals, as well as similar results.

The highest deviation rate was for the Average Quarterly Earnings, which is to be expected since the Lackawanna and Luzerne/Schuylkill local areas include more urban labor markets as compared to the rural nature of the Pocono Counties.