

PY2021 - PY2024

NORTHWEST PENNSYLVANIA

WIOA LOCAL PLAN

Effective July 1, 2021



Appendix C: Local Area Plan Instructions

INTRODUCTION

Local areas have the option to summarize why and how the local area plan is created with hopes of expanding potential reader engagement. The introduction may include but is not limited to a summary of the strategic planning process, timeline, and outcomes; or the purpose, design and how the local workforce development board, or LWDB, will use local area plan findings.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires local workforce development boards to develop and submit, in partnership with the Chief Local Elected Officials (CLEOs), a comprehensive four-year Regional Plan and Local Plan to the Governor. These plans support the vision, goals, and strategy described in the Governor’s Combined State WIOA Plan.

The Regional and Local Plans will be effective July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2025, covering Program Years 2021 - 2024. This Local Plan submitted by the Northwest Workforce Development Area (Northwest 170) governed by the Northwest Pennsylvania Workforce Development Board (dba NWPA Job Connect) seeks to focus on current and future strategies that address the workforce shifts and development of new skills needed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This will include increasing the use of technology and creating a more customer-centered system where the needs of business and jobseekers drive workforce solutions; and where the workforce system supports strong regional economies, as well as alignment with state priorities.

WIOA strengthened the alignment of the workforce development system’s six core programs with unified strategic planning requirements, common performance accountability measures, and requirements governing the one stop delivery system. This placed increased emphasis on the coordination and collaboration at federal, state, and local levels to ensure a streamlined and coordinated service delivery system. This Local Plan is based on the current and projected needs of jobseekers, incumbent workers, youth, and businesses.

The NWPA Job Connect board has initiated a Workforce Needs Assessment at the local level to identify underserved and targeted populations to connect them with services that lead to training and skills needed to gain employment in in-demand occupations. This effort will significantly enhance outreach that will provide support and assistance to individuals with disabilities and other barriers to employment.

To accomplish the objectives set out by WIOA and this Local Plan guidance, the NWPA Job Connect, in consultation with the Chief Local Elected Officials, have incorporated input from a variety of partners and stakeholders. This Local Plan is designed to ensure that a comprehensive, aligned, and integrated workforce development system is in place to achieve the vision of developing a highly skilled and educated workforce to meet the needs of businesses in the increasingly competitive global economy.

1. STRATEGIC PLANNING: Local Area Workforce and Economic Analysis

Prompts in this section are designed to address aspects of the local area’s labor force including composition and determination of skill gaps between the talent needed by employers in the region and the knowledge and skills held by workers and job seekers. One prompt addresses workforce development activity necessary to bridge the regional skill gaps.

Local boards may provide a comparative analysis describing similarities and differences between any of the regional plan narrative and what is (or may be) occurring in the local area.

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

Expectation: Narrative must include a reference name for the region and the local area plan's effective date. Narrative must focus on characteristics about the regional population such as age distribution, educational attainment levels, individuals with barriers to employment (based on WIOA Sec. 3(24) and employment status. This section must also focus on trends in each of these areas. Explain why some of these groups are harder or easier to serve. Data must be provided to support narrative as appropriate.

The Northwest Workforce Development Area is comprised of Clarion, Crawford, Erie, Forest, Venango and Warren counties in Northwest Pennsylvania. Overall, it is home to 487,116 citizens. With a 2020 labor force of 222,800, the largest sector in the Northwest is Health Care and Social Assistance, which employs 40,068 workers, and has average earnings of \$52,976. The next largest sectors include Manufacturing, which employs 35,595 and has average earnings of \$72,509, and Government, (including education and law enforcement) which employs 29,602 workers and has average earnings of \$73,578.

The local area's population and labor force participants are viewed considering employer demand and specific occupational opportunities identified in the Keystone Edge Regional Plan. The Healthcare industry continues to provide high-quality jobs, with occupational employment projected to expand by more than 2,000 jobs in the next 7 years alone. For the local area's population to be able to seize the opportunities for employment at family-sustaining wage levels, increases in education and training levels beyond high school will be needed. Approximately 29% of the local area's adult population has a bachelor's degree or higher, with another 10% possess an associate degree. Employment projections point to the highest increases in skill needs will be for candidates who possess post-high school credentials or long-term training. The challenge faced by the local area is one of both quantity and skills quality of workers needed by employers. The overall population of the local area has been, and is projected to be, in decline, with an 18% decline across all counties in the past 5 years and a median age of nearly 42 years. That leads to the need for an extensive analysis of the barriers to participation in the labor force. New strategies will be needed to expand access points and incentives to move those with barriers into the labor force, along with new approaches to integrating basic education, occupational skills training, and work-based learning in ways that allow skills advancement and income simultaneously. The region continues to have high demand for CDL drivers, and entry-level nursing and home health care positions, both of which can serve to launch a successful career path in their given sectors. Curriculum development and work-based learning will continue to be addressed by the expansion of employer partnerships, and a focus on career path development.

The Northwest is experiencing an aging workforce. In 2019, the median age for the Northwest was 41.9 and in 2020, the age range with the largest number of people was 60 to 64 years at 36,644. Individuals 55 to 59 came in second (34,333) and 65 to 69 came in third (32,997). This is projected to shift slightly in the next 5 years with the 15- to 19-year-old population moving into third place. So, it will be pertinent that the LWDB partner with focus on career path development in the schools.

Regarding race and ethnicity most of the Northwest's current year estimated population are White Alone (88.6%). 4.9% are Black or African American Alone, less than 0.1% are American Indian and Alaska Nationality Alone, 1.3% are Asian Alone, 0.0% are Nationality Hawaiian and Other Pacific Isl.

Alone, and 1.8% are Two or More Races. The Northwest's current estimated Hispanic or Latino population is 3.2%.

The number of households in the Northwest is estimated to have increased from 201,775 in 2014 to 202,507 in 2019, resulting in an increase of 0.4%. The average household income has also increased from \$44,645 in 2014 to \$50,545 in 2019, which is an increase of \$5,900 annually. Currently, it is estimated that 7.4% of the population age 25 and over in the Northwest have earned a master's degree, 2.9% have earned a professional or doctorate degree and 18.5% have earned a bachelor's degree.

In addition to the aging population the LWDA is also showing a high rate of those commuting out of the area for work. Based on 2016 data 10,900 civilians (5.5%) are commuting out of the region for work with the highest rate of outflow coming from Warren county at 19.9%. Erie is the only county in the northwest workforce region showing an in-flow of commuters at 2.0%. The highest age group population of commuters fall into 30 to 54 range and 4,600 of those commuting out of their region reported that they were earning more than \$3,333 per month.

The largest barrier impacting individuals in the area is poverty. Among the factors that often contribute to poverty are unemployment and underemployment. Many people live in poverty because they are unable to find a job that pays a living wage or to find a job at all. When looking at the Northwest, 13.3% of families are living in poverty. Single parents are more likely to be living in poverty, with 25.9% of households in the county considered single parent households, which is a 3.5% increase from 2014. Aside from the barrier of poverty there are also many individuals who are impacted by a disability. When looking at the Northwest, 40.3% of those employed have a disability, while 12.7% of those unemployed have a disability.

Source: Center for Workforce Information and Analysis, EMSI Q4 2020 Data Set

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

Expectation: Narrative is not expected to be data-heavy and must focus more on policy, best practices and knowledge of workforce. Narrative must explain how the local area identifies skills gaps that exist between regional employers' needs and the existing local area workforce qualifications. Narrative must highlight specific local examples of these gaps such as a workforce with insufficient and outdated skills, a workforce with skills that exceed job demand, a lack of training programs for needed skills and other factors unique to your local area.

The local area may support the narrative by:

- Focusing on the specific talent (knowledge and skills) believed to be needed by employers in the local area region;
- Speaking to employability skills, as well as hard skills – consider the focus on serving individuals with a barrier (or multiple barriers) to employment; and
- Identifying the certifications, degrees or fields of study most in-demand in the local area.

An analysis of skill gaps begins with a look at current and projected skills demanded by employers in the region and the local workforce development area. Labor Market trends can be examined by looking at Long Term Industry Projections as well as other Labor Market information. Regarding Long Term

Industry Projections from 2020 to 2025, employment in the region is projected to decrease by 0.6%, following a historical decrease (from 2015 to 2020) of a 3.1%. Healthcare and Agriculture are both expected to experience the greatest percent increase at 4.9%, however Agriculture is only expected to account for 370 additional jobs where Healthcare is expected to account for 1,909 new jobs. On the other hand, Manufacturing the industry sector that is expected to experience the largest decrease from 2020 to 2025 of 5.0% or 1,568 jobs. With these changes and a shift in some of the historically growing industries in the Northwest region it is important that the local workforce development board (LWDB) stay engaged with employers needs and defining the local skills gaps.

According to data pulled by EMSI from November 2019 to November 2020, 85% of the jobs posted for the Northwest Workforce Area required 1 year or less of experience and 75% require education of either a high school diploma (GED) or some sort of short/long term training or less to be eligible. Currently, only 38.2% of the workforce is showing to have their GED so that will need to be a key skill focus to meet employer demands. Regarding hard skills, Flatbed truck operators, Merchandising, and Nursing are the top three hard skills that were found in job postings during the November 2019 to November 2020 timeframe.

The largest barrier to employment in the Northwest is poverty, with 39.0% of individuals in the labor force below the poverty level and 64.2% at or above the poverty level. Providing barriered individuals with the capability to obtain these hard skills will allow them to upskill and hopefully work towards a more family sustaining wage.

The local workforce development board (LWDB) uses a number of resources to collect data including the U.S. Census, Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), and the PA Center for Workforce Information and Analysis (CWIA). Private sector business members of the NWPA Job Connect Board serve as sources of real time data and members of the GR8T Manufacturing Industry Partnership.

Source: EMSI Q4 2020 Data Set

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

Expectation: Local area plans must incorporate strategies that reflect local leaders and boards considering how to optimize the available opportunities and minimize the structural weakness presented by the current workforce system environment for the betterment of regional employers and the labor force. Narrative must also include incumbent worker training and how the local workforce delivery system will work with regional employers to fill the entry-level positions created by upskilling incumbent workers.

The local area may support the narrative by:

- Describing when leaders, board members and stakeholders met and any subjects or resolutions that came to fruition; and
- Summarizing any number of reports commissioned to research and determine recommended actions that are of concern to local area and regional workforce system leaders and stakeholders. Examples include studies indicating strategies and tactics that will increase employers' ability to attract, hire and maintain regional and local area labor force participants in

gainful employment, or evaluating best practices for serving individuals with barriers to employment.

In working to align labor force skills and education and training with the needs of employers the northwest workforce area is faced with the challenges outlines below. To address these challenges committees of the NWPA Job Connect Board have been tasked with evaluating and implementing sector strategies and career pathways to employment in in-demand occupations and post-secondary education credentials. This is being achieved in collaboration with Erie Together and through meetings of the Business Solutions Team which occur weekly and where everyone engages in discussions across partners to identify employer needs. Local board staff also participate in PREP meetings with the local development district office, Northwest Commission, as well as meetings and initiatives of the Erie Regional Chamber and Growth Partnership. Additionally, the local workforce development board is finishing up a workforce needs assessment on the six counties that make up the Northwest. The results of this assessment will be a crucial tool for employers, economic development and workforce partners to use while planning not only for the current workforce needs but also the needs of the future workforce pipeline.

Declining and Aging Population

The local workforce development area has seen a 3.4% decline in its population between 2015 and 2020 and is projected to have a further decline of 2.3% over the next five years. This is exacerbated by the aging of the population in the LWDA, meaning that many of those that are currently in the workforce area are/will soon be shifting out of the workforce all together. Employers will be challenged to find new solutions to filling skill gaps through both attraction of workers and advancing the skills of the workers they have.

Engaging Employers

With the backdrop of declining population levels, it is critical that employers engage directly with educators and others in finding creative solutions of filling key skill gaps. Educators will need to promote high quality job opportunities along with affordable pathways for acquiring the skill, starting with partnership with K-12 schools to expand thinking about career options. In addition, employers will need to expand work-based training partnerships including internships, on-the-job training, apprenticeships, and other solutions. Such work-and-learn programs will meet employers' needs for skills while also meeting job seekers' needs for income while learning.

Promoting Multiple Career Pathways

High quality jobs can be accessed by a wide array of Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs available at Career and Technical Centers (CTCs) in the local area. A primary challenge is increasing public awareness, particularly among students and their parents, of the benefits of CTE as both immediate value for employment and an affordable route to traditional college for those who desire that. Changing public perceptions that CTE is "non-college" remains a daunting task, but one that is crucial for building the talent pipeline for multiple local industry sectors.

Addressing Barriers to Employment

Job seekers with barriers face challenges of geographic access and access to a wide array of supportive services needed to address their needs. Geographic access is being addressed by the Board via creative virtual outreach approaches. The access to broader services is being addressed through expanded partnerships of service providers under the leadership of the new one-stop operator. The challenge will

be to optimize access and outcomes through braiding of funding sources under the control of multiple collaborating organizations.

Source: EMSI Q4 2020 Data Set

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

Expectation: Narrative must present an analysis that includes the strengths and weaknesses of workforce development activities including education and training activities; the workforce system's capacity to provide activities necessary to address the workforce's education and skill needs, including individuals with barriers to employment and employers' needs; and how apprenticeship programs can be leveraged to address these needs when it comes to individuals with barriers to employment, individuals in underserved communities, diversity of individuals and employers' needs.

The local workforce development board in the Northwest local workforce development area (LWDA) currently contracts the WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth program services to Equus Works for the six-county LWDA. Equus is a multi-billion-dollar company with over 400 locations across the United States. Equus brings over 50 years of experience, expertise and best practices to deliver a pipeline of talented workforce professionals to local businesses through coordinated training and support services for Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth customers with a business-driven approach. Partnerships have been developed and collaboration occurs with other community agencies which help to connect job seekers to the business community (i.e. the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, adult education and literacy agencies, housing authorities, Veterans counselors, Job Corps, community service agencies, and employer on-the-job training programs as well as registered apprenticeships). Program service providers in the community are active partners in the workforce development system in the region. Data analysis is conducted to ensure continuous improvement and to assist the local workforce board in strategic decision-making. Methods of referrals exist to ensure that access to needed services is available. Where possible, Next Generation Industry Partnership or similar models are used to support the local workforce development system to gather input from private sector employers in identifying and meeting the needs of businesses in the local area.

Our strengths include increased focus on proactive off-site outreach services to customers, especially individuals with barriers to employment, through enhanced collaboration, coordination, and partnership development with our local community agencies. These efforts have allowed for a more tactical PA CareerLink® system, especially in the virtual setting, that provides improved access to workforce development services for our customers, including targeted populations such as ex-offenders and disengaged, out-of-school youth.

Additionally, development of improved employer outreach strategies incorporating local economic development partners benefits both employers and job seekers in the local area. Tapping into the experience and skill of our local economic development partners, we can more effectively engage with employers in key, high-demand industries, and better coordinate on-the-job training programs to provide training in these high priority occupations and offer "new" ideas for training including apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships. Committees of the NWPA Job Connect Board have been tasked with evaluating and implementing sector strategies and career pathways to provide accelerated pathways to employment in in-demand occupations and post-secondary education credentials. This is being achieved in collaboration with Erie Together who is providing information and advice to assist the

local workforce development board and its partners on the development of effective career pathways that include traditional training as well as opportunities for work-based learning including apprenticeships. The committees of the LWDB also regularly discuss employer needs both regarding their current and future workforce. They review the number of incumbent workers that have received training because of the LWDA's manufacturing industry partnership and healthcare collaboration. They understand how these sector partnerships benefit the community, local business and industry through supporting the skill development of their existing employees and, in many instances, providing a career ladder within the industry that promotes current employees, thereby opening opportunities for the hiring of additional entry-level workers. The study that was done for the State Apprenticeship Expansion Grant highlighted the need to raise awareness of registered apprenticeships with employers, economic developers, parents, and students about the benefits of registered apprenticeships for employment opportunities and hiring. The local workforce area will do outreach to schools, community-based organizations, neighborhoods, and employers to encourage registered apprenticeships as a prospect for gainful employment. A pre-apprenticeship program for early childhood has been implemented with Early Connections and Edinboro University to increase the possibility of individuals that are not interested in additional schooling the chance to be successful in the industry. This effort will build a pipeline boosting the number of early childhood workers, substitute teachers and teachers for the local area.

The local board partners with nine (9) Career and Tech Centers in the 6-county area as well as Mercyhurst University that receive Perkins Funding. As a local workforce board staff attends the comprehensive needs assessment meetings, some occupational advisory committee meetings, shares information about the High Priority Occupation and In-Demand Occupations, and votes on programs and expenditures. Often board staff is invited to planning meetings This helps to ensure the connection to local jobs and family sustaining wages.

Opportunities for improvement include the development of a soft skills program for K-8 to assist with preparing youth for employment. The NWPA Board, through its committees, is working collaboratively to enhance the youth workforce system that builds a youth pipeline to support employer need. They understand the importance of boosting youth interest, education, and skills for the current occupational openings as well as the emerging occupations of the future. The Youth Committee will work to support the WIOA Title I program services contractor to expand outreach and recruitment of out-of-school youth. Strengthening partnerships and coordination with adult literacy and education providers will be a focus of the NWPA Board to provide eligible individuals with job readiness and life skills necessary to transition them into post-secondary education or employment. In addition, providing education and training to the NWPA Board on the requirements of changing legislation will also be an important focus in the coming year. The LWDB is working on additional initiatives to continue to improve on the virtual service delivery model. Lastly, the NWPA Board through its employer partnerships will also look to expand the apprenticeship opportunities by increasing awareness of the benefits of apprenticeships with schools and career and tech centers, economic developers, parents, students, and media to get the word out about programs offered in the local area. Two business solutions staff will become Apprenticeship Navigators in the local area to share the benefits with the employers. As the labor participation rate continues to decline in the local area it will be important to identify individuals that are looking for affordable ways to become educated and find family sustaining employment. The number of jobs in the local area that require on the job training as opposed to actual secondary training allows for increased discussions about the benefit of continuing education while earning and apprenticeship. The partnerships afford a great opportunity to have these discussions and show employers the benefit of the apprenticeship pipeline.

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

Expectation: Narrative must describe and analyze regional labor market data to articulate the region's economic conditions and employers' employment needs.

Factors being considered include, but are not limited to:

- Identifying existing and emerging in-demand industry sector(s);
- Identifying existing and emerging in-demand industry sector(s) occupations;
- Providing data describing the location quotients (LQ) of the local area(s); and
- Describing employers' employment needs in existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations.

The in-demand industry sectors for the Northwest workforce development area include Professional, Scientific and Technical services with a 5.4% projected increase by 2025, Healthcare with a projected increase of 4.7%, and Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting with a 3.5% increase. However, regarding in-demand sector occupations healthcare support occupations and healthcare practitioners and technical occupations are in the lead by a significant amount by both their exit and emerging levels. From 2015 to 2020 Healthcare practitioners and technical occupations had 1,000 job openings and are projected to have an additional 210 from 2020 to 2025. Where, healthcare support occupations had 860 job openings from 2015 to 2020 and are projected to have an additional 1,380 by 2025. In second place for the highest percentage of anticipated growth by 2025 are Computer and Mathematical occupations. From 2015 to 2020 there were 78 openings and an anticipated 139 in the next 5 years. Where farming, fishing and forestry jobs are expected to have the third highest growth from 2020 to 2025, but they are only balancing out the 4.2% loss of jobs from 2015 to 2020.

Production occupations are showing the highest location quotient (1.85) both currently and projected in 2025. The Northwest has a high concentration of individuals employed in this field; however, the industry has experienced and is continuing to show a projected decline. It will be important for the Workforce Board to stay engaged with these employers to make sure they are receiving the skilled workforce that they need while working with them on how to manage this decline properly. The second highest occupation location quotient is in Farming, Fishing and Forestry (1.33), but as discussed above due to decline in the past 5 years, and the rather limited number of jobs (1,214), in comparison to production which has 24,514, there is not a huge demand for additional workers but rather just maintenance of the skilled workforce that is already employed.

Based on job postings from November 2019 to November 2020 the top common skills among employers are communication, customer service, management, and sales. These are items that the Title I staff needs to keep in focus when developing workshops and programming for clients and when placing youth in work experiences (WEX). Also, when looking at the top qualifications found throughout that same timeframe CDL was highest by a very large margin, with LPN and CNA following next. These are important for the LWDB to be aware of when reviewing the training programs that are available locally and present on the ETPL list.

Source: Economic Modeling Specialists, Incorporated 2020.4 Class of Worker; QCEW Employees, Non-QCEW Employees & Self-Employed

2. STRATEGIC PLANNING: Vision and Goals

Consider the local area analysis developed in Section 1. Local Area Workforce and Economic Analysis, the goals established by the governor as outlined in the state plan and the goals established regionally. Each local area plan will provide narrative to the prompts outlined in this section. Responses will identify the local area's strategic vision and goals created by chief elected officials, the local board and the local workforce system stakeholders.

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

Factors being considered include, but are not limited to:

- Local board's strategic vision;
- Local areas associated with Planning Regions must also consider their respective regional plan goals and strategies, list appropriate goals and strategies to maintain alignment; and
- Identifying any additional local board goals and strategies.

The NWPA Job Connect (Northwest Workforce Development) Board, appointed by the local elected officials of the six counties of Northwest Pennsylvania, is charged with strategic planning, policy development, oversight of the workforce system, and establishing priorities for serving employers and job seekers in the local area. The shared vision of NWPA Job Connect and the local elected officials is:

Vision: Northwest Pennsylvania will have a skilled workforce that is responsive to the current and future needs of the region.

To achieve the vision, the NWPA Job Connect maintains a strategic plan with multiple goals including:

Goal 1: Visionary Leadership

- Educate NWPA Job Connect members and stakeholders as to the changes in the legislation while implementing a structure for ongoing education
- Identify types of convening sessions (workforce discussions and forums) among stakeholders that should occur. Then be the convener/hold the convening sessions
- Ensure the administrative office has adequate resources, has knowledgeable staff, is visible, and is held to results-oriented performance measures for policy development

Goal 2: Establish Identity as the Workforce Experts

- Brand the workforce system
- Advertise and celebrate successes to promote the brand
- Review service delivery to allow the one-stop centers to become the flagship product
- Participate in partner events that are workforce development related
- Comply with all new requirements for WIOA, aligned with state, regional, and local plans

Goal 3: Partnership Development

- Needs analysis – gather from economic developers, state employment data, to evaluate current data to identify the location of stakeholders in the six-county area to determine the “supply and demand” needs and bring the stakeholders to the table to develop action steps

- Board development – provide training in the foundation of the board to be more knowledgeable about the goals and purpose in order to make these members advocates of NWPA Job Connect and its future in order to make informed decisions
- Committee structure – to have board members serve on a minimum of one committee and a minimum of one “champion” or liaison to the board
- Encourage and seek non-board members to serve as information experts

Goal 4: PA CareerLink® Improvement

- Review and reassess labor market needs (e.g. employment services) - eliminate old, unnecessary ones
- Clean up, update, redact outdated policies / procedures
- Enhance efficiency of services for jobseekers (improved customer service), especially individuals with barriers to employment
- Strengthen collaboration between local boards in the region and state (e.g. training list) - even across state borders whenever possible

Goal 5: Sector Strategies

- Provide purposeful education and training to develop meaningful career paths in coordination with employers
- Provide baseline cognitive assessment for all jobseekers
- Identify acceptable attainment levels for targeted industries in conjunction with employers in those industries
- Develop a soft skills program and implement in the K-8 grades
- Develop a sector advisory committee to meet regularly

Additional goals include:

- Continue to enhance and update our plan for meeting availability and accessibility of services, especially for those individuals who do not have access to proper technology at home. Virtual services will help to further enhance our ability to provide services through technology such as Skype, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, WebEx, and Ring Central.
- Identify and meet the demand for adapting existing occupations, as well as emerging occupations recognized as important for the post-pandemic economy.
- Provide support for the Northwest PA CareerLink® Lean Governance Council via the competitive bid and contracting of a facilitator to assist the council in moving from discussion to recommendations for service improvements.
- Review and implement the results of the Workforce Needs Assessment project to better understand our demographics and the depth of our labor pool to increase outreach and service delivery for underserved areas and targeted populations in our local workforce development area.

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)]

Expectation: Considering the local board’s responses to prompts at Section I, Regional Workforce and Economic Analysis, the narrative will describe the strategy developed by the local board to carry

out the core programs and the programs of required and additional partners. Narrative will address how this strategy assists in aligning all available resources to achieve the local area's strategic vision and goals.

One of the most important business services that the local workforce development system provides is connecting employers to qualified candidates. Staff are knowledgeable and responsive to the business and workforce needs of the local area and services provided are aligned to local board strategies and goals. The needs of businesses and workers drive workforce solutions. Businesses inform and guide the local workforce system through their leadership and participation in developing and improving education and training, work-based learning, career pathways, and sector partnerships. The local board embraces local employers through their strategies to ensuring the local workforce system is job-driven and matches employers with skilled individuals.

Job placement and recruitment activities include a feedback mechanism between the local workforce system and the employers. Employer surveys and focus groups are used to solicit employer feedback on validating the readiness and quality of referrals for job openings. The local board uses this data to monitor employer satisfaction outcomes and make adjustments to local career and training services based on the employer feedback received at the local level.

The recent pandemic identified the need for the local board to re-evaluate its strategies for improved service delivery, quickly adapting to a changing work environment, and aligning the available services to meet local need. The changing work environment provided opportunities for re-igniting the board's desire to expand outreach and service provision out into the communities that we serve. Technologies such as Ring Central, Atlas AI, Formstack, LinkedIn Learning, and Google Classroom have been identified and implemented to better support overcoming the challenges of transportation and the lack of technology accessibility across the local area. Internet connectivity has been expanded across the service area through partnership with Information Technology Disaster Resource Center and technologies have been secured to expand service delivery and alleviate transportation challenges as well as availability issues resulting from COVID-19 mitigation strategies.

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

Expectation: Narrative must indicate that the local board adopted the governor's vision and all goals as articulated in the WIOA Combined State Plan; it is expected that local board's goals and strategies are reasonably aligned with the WIOA Combined State Plan, as well as any appropriate regional plan goals and strategies (wherever the local area is part of a planning region).

Factors being considered include, but are not limited to:

- How the local area will connect adults, dislocated workers and other targeted populations, especially youth and individuals with barriers to employment, to in-demand occupations;

The local board is conducting a local Workforce Needs Assessment to identify underserved and targeted populations to connect them with services that lead to training and skills needed to gain employment in in-demand occupations. This assessment will also enhance outreach by providing a locally tailored tool to continually update local workforce needs in real time.

- How the skill gaps (addressed in the narrative to prompt 1.2 above) will be eliminated or narrowed;

The local board's efforts in developing a career pathways model for the local area in conjunction with local experts will better prepare individuals for the skills that are required for local occupations/employers, building off the successful in-school initiative created by the Career Pathways Alliance in Erie County to expand these opportunities to the other counties within the local workforce development area.

- How the local board will target services efficiently to educate and increase its workforce's knowledge and skill sets;

The local board will work collectively with all partners as a one stop system to increase the education and skill sets more efficiently and effectively of local participants toward self-sustaining employment in in-demand occupations. This includes working closely with secondary and post-secondary education institutions in the local area through relationships established through the Career and Tech Education Advisory Committees, local board committees, and other local initiatives.

- How the local board will develop and implement a comprehensive Career Pathways plan (including both employment and education components, as well as adult education) throughout the local area;

A consultant was hired for the local area with experience with the development of career pathways with the Erie County Career Pathways Alliance. This consultant can bring lessons learned in that experience to the development of career pathways to serve all counties in the local workforce development area. This initiative builds on the experiences and successes with the Erie County career pathways project. The career pathways initiative is also strengthened by increased collaboration with the adult education partner in the local workforce development system. This partner provides comprehensive assessment services to support the local one-stop system.

- How the local area will coordinate with secondary and post-secondary institutions (including programs authorized by the Perkins V Act) to align strategies, enhance services and avoid duplication of services (including specific reference to adult education, community colleges and community education councils);

A representative of the Northwest Pennsylvania Regional College is a member of the local board. Mercyhurst University is a partner on the local memorandum of understanding representing Perkins Act post-secondary institutions. The adult education provider is represented on the local board and a partner in the local one-stop system assisting with implementing the local board's strategies and providing comprehensive assessment services. Having the adult education partner manage the assessment process and provide high school equivalency training and testing programs reduces duplication of services. Keystone Community Education Council participates on the Local Management Committee for Department of Human Services programs and works with the local board to increase apprenticeship and training opportunities in the local area.

- How the system will improve access to services and to activities that lead to a recognized postsecondary credential;

Significant work has been done to provide technology enhancements for improving access to services and activities. This includes the implementation of technologies such as Ring Central, Atlas AI, Google Classroom, and LinkedIn Learning to provide safe and secure methods of communicating with participants and expanding access to services. Program offerings such as the Academy as well as a local tool being developed by the WIOA Title I program contractor to track credential attainment will assist participants in gaining a recognized post-secondary credential.

- How the local area will expand upon work-based training goals and strategies such as transitional jobs and leveraging existing apprenticeship programs or working with employers in the local area to develop new programs;

The local area has been awarded an Apprenticeship Expansion Grant and a Pre-Apprenticeship Grant to increase apprenticeship program activities in the local area. Additionally, a federal OH-PENN grant and WORC grant has been awarded to the local area in partnership with our regional partner, West Central Job Partnership. These grants assist the local area in expanding apprenticeship opportunities. The PA Department of Labor and Industry also has an Apprenticeship and Training Office that provides information and resources on apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship and is collaborating with local areas to expand these opportunities. A campaign to provide information to parents, schools & teachers, students, employers, economic developers, and the public at large will be utilized to provide information about the benefits of registered apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships. The campaign will leverage resources from the partners listed above to ensure collaboration with employers. Transitional jobs are also being evaluated as a work-based training strategy. The COVID-19 pandemic has slowed some of these activities, but the local board continues to move forward on these initiatives.

- How will local area business service strategies be employed (i.e. Business Service Teams, or BST); and

Through the Business Solutions Committee of the local board, business services to employers are prioritized and opportunities for increasing employer engagement and satisfaction are discussed and implemented. Business services are analyzed and discussed at biweekly meetings. Business Solutions Team meets weekly to engage in discussions across partners to identify employer needs. Business Solutions WIOA Title I staff participate on the local board's Business Solutions Committee to increase awareness of employer needs and to assist in achieving the goals and strategies of the local board. The statement of work, as part of the contract for the WIOA Title I program service contractor, includes benchmarks for achieving expected outcomes in business services to employers. This is evaluated quarterly and provided as a report to the local board. Two Title I business solutions staff will participate in the KDP Apprenticeship Training program to become local experts working with employers to encourage the use of registered apprenticeship to train incoming employees when appropriate.

- How the goals support economic growth and economic self-sufficiency for the local area.

Partnership with local economic development includes their membership and participation on the local board and collaborations with grant awards across both workforce and economic

development, such as Engage! Local board staff participate in PREP meetings with the local development district office, Northwest Commission, as well as participation in meetings and initiatives of the Erie Regional Chamber and Growth Partnership.

The NWPA Job Connect Board has reviewed, discussed, and supports the Governor's five broad goals as outlined in the WIOA Combined State Plan and as outlined below. The NWPA Job Connect Board is focused on providing the necessary skills and training for employment in high-priority and in-demand occupations for the area's job seekers and employers. The local board recognizes that many job seekers come to the workforce development system unprepared to enter such high-skill occupations. In support of this, the board has formed committees to develop and expand the career pathways process. The committee composition includes private sector business leaders, adult literacy and education coordinators, post-secondary education leaders and other community agency members and partners.

The committees work collaboratively on this effort, with additional focus on the development of soft skills that are a necessary foundation of career pathways. Career pathways developed in collaboration with adult education and literacy partners as well as key partners in the Career Pathways Alliance in Erie County align with and integrate education, job training, counseling, and support services to create accelerated pathways to post-secondary education credentials and employment in in-demand occupations, especially for individuals with barriers to employment. Also, the board committees have been charged with supporting and advising the board in the enhancement and delivery of services to individuals with barriers to employment.

The Governor has prioritized five broad goals for the workforce development system as defined in Pennsylvania's Combined State Plan:

Goal 1: Career Pathways and Apprenticeship: Develop a comprehensive career pathways system in PA and expand career pathways as the primary model for skill, credential, degree attainment, with an emphasis on assisting individuals to address barriers to employment, earn a family-sustaining wage, and advance their career.

Goal 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.

Goal 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 experiences in the workplace, including developing employability skills.

Goal 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.

Goal 5: Strengthening the One-Stop Delivery System: Implement improvements to one-stop service delivery to better serve all customers, including job seekers and employers.

NWPA Job Connect board's vision and goals align and support the Governor's five broad goals in the following ways:

Goal 1: NWPA Job Connect is moving forward with developing a career pathways model for the local area in collaboration with local experts to better prepare individuals for the skills that are required for local occupations/employers, building off the successful initiative created by the Career Pathways Alliance in Erie County to expand these opportunities to other counties within the local workforce development area.

In addition, work will continue toward increasing the number of apprenticeship opportunities available in the local area through local grant awards and activities. Grant awards supporting this effort include the state Apprenticeship Expansion Grant, Pre-Apprenticeship grant, and the federal WORC grant with our regional partner, West Central Job Partnership. NWPA Job Connect will prioritize educating customers about career pathways and continue to increase opportunities for these programs through grant applications and program service delivery. Apprenticeships are effective models that expose young people to career pathways, prepare youth for success in the workplace, and further their education after high school. Apprenticeships combine on- the- job training with related instruction to progressively increase workers' skill levels and wages. NWPA Job Connect supports the leveraging of apprenticeships for WIOA Youth Program participants to maximize youth opportunities and their outcomes.

Goal 2: NWPA Job Connect supports and promotes Next Gen Industry Partnerships funding through Industry Partnership grants to provide a local focus on the needs and priorities of local manufacturers. This relationship with the local business community assists in providing training programs and resources that are aligned to the needs of employers in the local area.

NWPA Job Connect collaborates with the local development district agency, Northwest Commission, with the Engage! Program and PREP activities. The Executive Director of Northwest Commission sits on the local board and participates in multiple committees of NWPA Job Connect.

Through the Business Solutions Committee of the local board, business services to employers are prioritized and opportunities for increasing employer engagement and satisfaction are discussed and enacted. Business services are analyzed and discussed at bimonthly meetings, resulting in focus on priorities and goal progress.

NWPA Job Connect requires a statement of work for its WIOA Title I program service contractor annually that includes benchmarks for achieving expected outcomes in business services to employers.

Goal 3: NWPA Job Connect prioritizes Youth Program services for out-of-school youth including support for youth with barriers to employment. These services include but are not limited to work experience opportunities, skills training, and supportive services. Youth are co-enrolled in core and partner programs as appropriate. Partnerships with Job Corps and AmeriCorps provide additional referral options for youth. The WIOA Title I Youth Programs locally promote awareness of the 14 required WIOA youth program elements.

Goal 4: NWPA Job Connect understands the importance of continuous improvement and evaluating and adapting to new and changing priorities and needs. An example of this is the move toward identifying and implementing strategies to offset the challenges of the recent COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the ongoing challenge with lack of technology and transportation to effectively serve customers without close access to comprehensive PA CareerLink® locations.

Service delivery benefited, not only throughout the COVID-19 pandemic but in a more traditional work environment, by the implementation of Ring Central technology that allows for safe and secure virtual communication and transfer of required documentation as well as meeting support and call analytics, etc. Formstack was implemented to track and analyze traffic through the local PA CareerLink® system and to conduct real-time referrals. Atlas AI technology provided an effective method of conducting automated follow-up and outreach, and virtual job fair platforms were implemented to safely connect job seekers with employers and education programs. These newly implemented technologies will continue to help effectively maintain service delivery at a critical time for supporting economic recovery from the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The use of social media like Facebook and Twitter provides a broad and aggressive communication avenue for local workforce system events and services. Further outreach to promote one stop services, programs, and partners will be needed to provide ease of access and navigation. The local board continues to update their website and other virtual technologies will continue to be identified and implemented in the local workforce system to increase access to services in the local area.

We will use this application data, along with the Workforce Needs Assessment tool, to recognize trends that impact program outcomes as a tool to evaluate the effectiveness of our local workforce development programs, initiatives, and strategies as we move toward continuous improvement of our local workforce development system.

Goal 5: The NWPA Job Connect board will support the collective efforts of all partners as a one stop system to increase the education and skills sets more efficiently and effectively of local customers toward self-sustaining employment in high priority and in-demand occupations. This includes working closely with secondary and post-secondary education institutions in the local area through relationships established through the Career and Tech Education Advisory Committees, local board committees, and other local initiatives such as the Career Pathways Alliance in Erie County.

Partnership with Title II adult education, Northwest Pennsylvania Regional College and Keystone Community Education Council through grant awards and participation on the local board and/or its committees has assisted in strategy development, enhancing services, and avoiding duplication of services.

The development and implementation of a formal, local workforce needs assessment project has been undertaken in the local workforce development area to assist the local workforce system in identifying underserved and targeted populations to connect them with services that lead to training and skills needed to gain employment in high priority and in-demand occupations. It will also increase our outreach and awareness goals for reaching underserved and targeted populations in the local area.

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)]

Expectation 1: Local area plans must reference and include a completed WIOA Title I performance measures table found within the fillable template (i.e. Attachment 1: Local Area WIOA Title I Programs Performance Accountability template). This table incorporates the local levels of WIOA negotiated performance goals and the previous year attained performance measures.

Expectation 2: Narrative must describe how the local board's goals will assist in achieving the negotiated performance levels, and to what extent the local board's goals are impacted by such levels. Narrative must address how performance levels are used to measure local area performance.

The current negotiated performance levels are included in Attachment 1.

NWPA Job Connect's goals support the achievement of federal performance accountability measures through increased focus on informing and educating the NWPA Job Connect board on the changes in legislation to support informed decisions and strengthening oversight of the local workforce development system. Improving customer service and strengthening collaboration among partner agencies enhances participant training and opportunities for placement into employment, especially for individuals with barriers to employment. The NWPA Job Connect board and its committees are working on the development of meaningful career pathways to increase the opportunity for participants to gain and preserve self-sustaining and family-sustaining employment. It is anticipated that career pathways for the local area will be completed and implemented by June 2021. NWPA Job Connect goals are committed to reducing the number of long-term unemployed in the area and reducing barriers to employment, including lack of adequate skills and credentials. Beyond the performance required under WIOA, NWPA Job Connect has developed and implemented local performance measures as part of the local WIOA Title I program services contract. These local performance measures are developed and evaluated by an ad hoc committee of the board as needed. Local board strategies to meet performance goals include working in partnership with Title II Adult Education and Literacy to conduct comprehensive assessments that measure individual skills, interests, and qualification for more effective service strategies. WIOA Title I staff can help guide informed decisions in career pathways and training options. Meetings to discuss credential attainment, measurable skills gains, and educating staff in understanding the appropriate codes needed to properly record outcomes are strategies to assist in achieving performance goals as well.

The negotiated levels of performance for the local workforce development area include goals for Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth for employment, median earnings, credential attainment rate, measurable skill gains, as well as effectiveness in serving employers. The levels are indicative of the local success of providing quality workforce development services and placing participants into jobs. These levels of performance are negotiated with the Commonwealth, taking into consideration the challenges of serving certain demographics, in implementing new Priority of Service structures, as well as variations in the local economy. It is expected that the local workforce development area will continue to meet and/or exceed the local performance levels negotiated under WIOA.

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

The following responses will expand on the previous section's visions and goals including how the local board designs strategies to reach those goals.

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

Expectation 1: Narrative must include a description of how local elected officials, advocacy groups, LWDB, and other key stakeholders interact within the local workforce system. This description must include the respective roles and functional relationships of the following entities, as well as other entities, that compose the local workforce system.

Factors being considered include, but are not limited to Governance and Administrative functions:

- The local elected officials in the governance of the local workforce system (i.e., local board), as well as the day-to-day operations of the local workforce delivery system;
- The identity and role of the entity responsible for the disbursement of grant funds (i.e., fiscal agent entity) as determined by the chief elected official(s);
- The role of the LWDB as the governing body responsible for the governance, strategic planning, fiscal and oversight of the local workforce system;
- Include a listing of each committee of the board (executive committee, if applicable, and each standing committee (required and ad hoc)]. Provide a brief description of the function of each committee;
- The identity and role of the entity responsible for providing staff to the local board (i.e., administrative entity); and
- The identity and role of the individual(s) responsible for ensuring equal employment opportunities and civil rights protections.

Expectation 2: Each local board must reference and include a completed organizational chart depicting a clear separation of duties between the local board and programmatic and service delivery entities (i.e., Attachment 2: Local Workforce Development System Organizational Chart model).

Structure Exceptions Note: Consistent with Workforce System Policy (WSP) No. 02-2015, Local Governance Policy, Dec. 18, 2015, Section VI.F., Restrictions, in cases where career and training services are provided by an interrelated agency (i.e., county agency, commission structure, or corporation) that is also the employer of the LWDB staff and fiscal agent staff, the service and training provider staff must report to a supervisor that does not oversee local board or fiscal agent staff. L&I has determined that any one of the interrelated agencies listed above must have separate departments to ensure a clear separation between governance and the day-to-day operations, and that each department head must report to a different local elected official. This structure is only allowable through written approval by the department.

If the local area has an approved structural exemption, the chief elected official(s), in collaboration with the local board, must reference the approved structure exemption and address any structural issues in this section of the local area plan. The narrative must articulate that when career and training services are provided by an interrelated agency that is also the employer of the local board staff and fiscal agent staff, that separate departments, internal controls and appropriate supervision for each department is in place.

An organizational chart is provided as Attachment 2.

In the Northwest Pennsylvania local workforce development area, each of the six counties (Clarion, Crawford, Erie, Forest, Venango, and Warren) is represented by a Chief Local Elected Official (CLEO). The Chief Local Elected Officials are the grant recipient for WIOA Title I funds. The role of the Chief Local Elected Officials includes but is not limited to establishing a local workforce development board (LWDB); entering into a written agreement with the NWP Job Connect that details the partnership of the two entities for governance and oversight of the workforce development system; authorizing the establishment of a standing Youth Committee of the NWP Job Connect; and the designation and/or certification of PA CareerLink® operators in collaboration with the NWP Job Connect. The Chief Local Elected Officials work in cooperation with the NWP Job Connect to develop and approve the Regional Plan, Local Plan, and the local workforce area budget. A chairperson of the Chief Local Elected Officials is elected by a majority vote of the six members of the Chief Local Elected Officials. Officers serve a one-year term. Four members constitute a quorum. Each member has one vote with no proxy. Matters before the Chief Local Elected Officials can be resolved by a simple majority of the total votes present at each meeting.

The Chief Local Elected Officials have designated the Venango County Commissioners as the fiscal agent for the local workforce development area. The Venango County Commissioners, as fiscal agent, covers the responsibilities of accounting, budgeting, financial and cash management functions, procurement and purchasing functions, property management functions, contracting and audit functions. The fiscal agent works with a committee of the NWP Job Connect and the Chief Local Elected Officials to develop the budget, which is provided to the full board for review and approval. There is a standing NWP Job Connect agenda item on the regular board meeting agenda for the fiscal agent to provide financial reports and various details outlining funding streams, PA CareerLink® expenses and revenues, as well as overall funding expenditures and balances.

Partners for Performance, an entity created and governed by the Chief Local Elected Officials as the administrative support agency to the NWP Job Connect, provides staff support for the board responsibilities of development and submission of the Regional and Local Plans, selection of one-stop operators, selection of youth providers, identification of eligible providers of training services, program monitoring, negotiation of local performance measures, assisting the Governor in developing the statewide employment statistics system, developing employer linkages, promoting the participation of private sector employers through connecting, brokering and coaching activities, and NWP Job Connect staff personnel management functions. The NWP Job Connect contracts out the provision of all program services via a competitive bid process. No program services are provided by Partners for Performance or its staff.

The NWP Job Connect guides policy, establishes a budget, and provides oversight to the local workforce development system. The role of the NWP Job Connect is to act as intermediary to bring the various components of the system together for collaborative and innovative purposes. The NWP Job Connect plays an important role, working with private industry, public and non-profit sectors to create a positive economic environment that is conducive to economic growth that ensures a skilled workforce to meet the needs of business and industry. Currently the board's structure allows for no less than 19 member representatives on the NWP Job Connect board (Northwest Pennsylvania Workforce Development Board). Appropriate groups in the local area nominate representatives from local central labor councils, community-based organizations, local economic development agencies, local education entities, and others as appropriate per commonwealth guidance. Private sector business members are nominated by organizations such as the local Chambers of Commerce for consideration of appointment

by the Chief Local Elected Officials. Board appointment terms are from two to four years and are staggered.

One Next Gen industry partnership is being convened in the region representing Advanced Diversified Manufacturing. Industry partnership employers are partnering with NWPA Job Connect toward identifying workforce needs, educational requirements and career pathways.

The NWPA Job Connect conducts its business through the committees listed below. Policy decisions are reviewed first by the appropriate committee and then are reviewed by the Executive Committee; policy recommendations of the committees are then presented to the full board for approval. All board members are encouraged to serve on at least one committee. The current standing committee structure which includes some non-board members is listed below:

Executive

The Executive Committee acts on behalf of the full NWPA Job Connect board, when necessary, with ratification of approvals by the full NWPA Job Connect board at the next meeting. The Executive Committee also recommends priorities, goals, objectives, projects and strategies to address local workforce development needs. Other duties of the Executive Committee include NWPA Job Connect committee oversight, liaison to the Chief Local Elected Officials, and board development.

Business Solutions

The Business Solutions Committee engages the private sector to identify and address skill gaps, education and credential needs, and workforce requirements to recommend strategies to meet private sector labor market demands; aligns with economic development, education and community stakeholders; industry partnership coordination; reviews eligible training provider list and analyzes training outcomes; enhancing customer experience and satisfaction.

Communications

The Communications Committee assists the NWPA Job Connect in the development of an outreach and communications plan that includes promoting engagement with job seekers, employers and partners, the local website, branding, public relations, and overseeing community outreach.

Fiscal/Monitoring

The Fiscal/Monitoring Committee ensures system accountability and transparency through fiscal oversight, audit, and program system monitoring, including performance measures, and certification of one-stop centers; develops and recommends the workforce budget, negotiates with the Commonwealth on local performance measures; conducts oversight of the program contractor(s); conducts oversight of Equal Opportunity Compliance; oversees industry partnership resources and other grants.

Governance

The Governance Committee ensures compliance to NWPA Job Connect bylaws and other governing documents; makes recommendations to Executive Committee and the NWPA Job Connect for policy changes as needed; and makes recommendations for appointments, removals, and nominations of NWPA Job Connect members and partners to the CLEOs.

Workforce Solutions

The Workforce Solutions Committee continuously reviews and improves the one-stop system to eliminate barriers that inhibit job seekers from attaining the education and training needed to gain family sustaining wages; establishes program goals; and promotes career pathways for adults.

Youth Committee

The Youth Committee assists the NWPA Job Connect with developing, implementing, and oversight of a comprehensive plan for at-risk youth, both in-school and out-of-school, that coordinates services, training, and work-based learning; provides policy input for youth services; promotes career pathways for youth; develops innovative ideas for pipeline development.

The NWPA Job Connect Chair also has the authority to create ad hoc committees, as needed or required.

The Equal Opportunity Officer for the local workforce service delivery area is:

Debra O'Neil

NWPA Job Connect

920 Water Street, Suite 32B

Meadville, PA 16323

(814) 333-1286

The Equal Opportunity Officer duties include but are not limited to accomplishing the responsibilities under WIOA Section 188 and the WIOA non-discrimination regulations; ensuring the local PA CareerLink® sites are compliant with all Equal Opportunity and Americans with Disabilities Act laws; receiving inquiries regarding complaints from staff and OEO; providing complaint forms for those wishing to file complaints and investigating such complaints; participating in EO compliance reviews; investigating EO complaints; completing quarterly EO logs and submitting to the Office of Equal Opportunity at PA Department of Labor and Industry; ensuring that training is provided on EO/ADA regulatory requirements; functioning as the contact person regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Section 188 of WIOA.

Equal Opportunity Liaisons (EO) related to the local PA CareerLink® workforce system include:

Joe Miceli

Bureau of Workforce Partnership & Operations

PA CareerLink® - Erie County

1647 Sassafras Street, Suite 300

Erie, PA 16502

(814) 455-9966

Samuel Fulmer

Bureau of Workforce Partnership & Operations

PA CareerLink® - Oil Region

255 Elm Street

Oil City, PA 16301

(814) 678-5050

Equal Opportunity Liaisons duties include but are not limited to ensuring that the PA CareerLink® site is in compliance with all Equal Opportunity and Americans with Disabilities Act laws, receiving questions about complaints, assisting in the completion of complaint forms, investigating EO complaints, assisting

during EO compliance reviews, and completing quarterly EO logs and submitting to the Office of Equal Opportunity at the PA Department of Labor and Industry.

3.2 What are the programs included in the local workforce development 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)]

Factors being considered include, but are not limited to:

- Describe each local area workforce system's required and additional partner programs by referencing and including the completed program-partner list template (i.e., Attachment 3: Local Workforce Development System Program Partner-Provider List). This list identifies the programs, the program provider(s) and where in the local area the programs may be accessed;
- How will the local board collaborate with each required and additional partner in the PA CareerLink® service delivery system promoting service alignment; and
The local board uses a competitive bid process to procure a one stop operator who will implement the strategies of the board to integrate all partners to deliver a comprehensive array of services and reach the outcomes of employment, education, skills gains, and earnings. Regardless of the platform used in serving customers, each partner remains vested in the development and implementation of an integrated service delivery aligned to connect customers to available resources. The one stop operator is charged with promoting and accomplishing service alignment among the partners and provides regular reports to the local board.
- How will alignment of such programs support the strategy identified in the state plan, the regional plan (if applicable) and the local area's strategies?
The local workforce system and its partners ensure that customer services are aligned to common goals and the customer experience is seamless, regardless of funding streams. Each customer is mutually regarded as a shared customer, with all programs operating at the site or through virtual platforms, having a vested stake in that customer's success. Integration of programs is incorporated into planning, intake, assessment, registration, service processes, information sharing, resource decisions, actions, results, and analyses.

The Workforce Service Delivery System Program Partner/Provider list is included as Attachment 3.

The NWPA Job Connect collaborates with required and additional partners in the PA CareerLink® system to promote service alignment through both strategic and operational efforts. These partners were recruited to participate in this local plan process and the development of the NWPA Job Connect's strategic goals. This participation has led to more meaningful goals and better strategic alignment. This strategic alignment is maintained through operational efforts including Provider/Partner meetings held at least quarterly, invitations to attend NWPA Job Connect meetings, and shared information about programming trends and best practices. Partners are encouraged to participate in professional development and cross training at the local level and through participation in statewide conferences and convenings. The NWPA Job Connect's partners are made aware of the state and regional plans during the local planning process. NWPA Job Connect's strategic goals align with the state plan and regional plan to boost the impact for all initiatives.

The NWPA Job Connect ensures the provision of WIOA Title I, Title II, Title III, and Title IV programs and services that align with the Governor's vision and strategy for the commonwealth's workforce

development system, as well as local and regional strategies. WIOA Title I programs are competitively bid and awarded to a program services contractor. Currently, Equus Workforce Solutions is the program services contractor for WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Programs. The WIOA Title I, Title II, Title III, and Title IV program providers are collaborating partners within the local PA CareerLink® system, with coordination of services directed by the procured one-stop operator.

All required federally mandated programs have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to define roles within the local PA CareerLink® centers. Career services for Adult, Dislocated Workers, and Youth, as well as training services are provided through the local PA CareerLink® system. Bureau of Workforce Partnership and Operations staff provide employment and training services as a partner member of the local PA CareerLink® system authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act, Trade Act of 1974, Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program, as well as programs authorized under state unemployment compensation laws. Staff of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation also provide employment and training services authorized under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as a partner member of the local PA CareerLink® system.

There are two comprehensive PA CareerLink® sites in the local workforce development area. These centers are located in Erie and Venango Counties.

In concurrence with the CLEOs, the NWPA Job Connect competitively procured a PA CareerLink® one stop operator for the local area. An evaluation committee that included NWPA Job Connect members evaluated the proposals received and made a recommendation for award of contract for the successful bidder to the NWPA Job Connect. The selected one stop operator, Equus Workforce Solutions, will coordinate the services and resources in the MOU and the Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) among, at a minimum, the core programs identified in WIOA. The one stop operator is responsible to focus resources on individuals with barriers to employment and ensure that the minimum funding requirements and performance goals are on track in the local workforce system. The overall goal for the system is to provide excellent service consistently to customers of the system, both job seekers and businesses. This will be accomplished through better coordination, increased communication, leveraging of resources, and reducing duplication. Some examples will include, but not be limited to, monthly partner meetings, functional alignment of area teams with regularly held meetings, staff training, and standard processes/procedures and forms. The use of technology such as Ring Central, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, etc. will enable these meetings to occur across the six counties, ensuring the same message and efficient use of staff time.

Since Equus Workforce Solutions was selected as both the WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth program services contractor as well as the one stop operator, a memorandum of understanding between the NWPA Job Connect, the CLEOs, and Equus Workforce Solutions was executed that clarifies how Equus Workforce Solutions will carry out its responsibilities to perform the functions of both the one stop operator as well as the WIOA Title I program services contractor to ensure that the appropriate firewalls are in place and that no conflict of interest exists in the performance of the contracted services. The one stop operator will work to ensure alignment and integration of partner programs and services into the local workforce development system through the following:

1. Equus shall develop, implement, and ensure compliance with proper internal controls and firewalls to maintain transparency and integrity to ensure that no conflict of interest exists in its performance of the duties as WIOA Title I Program Services Contractor and WIOA Title I One Stop Operator. This information will be submitted to and monitored by the NWPA Job Connect;

2. Equus shall develop, implement, and ensure compliance with a separate reporting structure within the organization which meets the requirements for separation of functions under WIOA. This information will be submitted to and monitored by the NWPA Job Connect;
3. Equus shall be responsible to render impartial decisions and perform the duties of the WIOA Title I Program Services Contractor and One Stop Operator in an objective way;
4. Equus shall not convene system stakeholders to assist the NWPA Job Connect in the development, preparation, and submission of Local Plans, competitive processes for selecting one stop operators, terminating one stop operators, career services providers, or youth providers;
5. Equus shall not be responsible for the oversight of itself or other operators;
6. Equus shall not negotiate local and/or regional performance accountability measures;
7. Equus shall not develop or submit budgets for activities of the NWPA Job Connect.

The NWPA Job Connect and the CLEOs agree on the following expectations (regarding the responsibilities of the One Stop Operator) to include, but not necessarily be limited to:

- Serve as an intermediary with all of the one stop partners;
- Know and understand the parameters under which the partners provide services;
- Know and understand each partner's performance measurement goals;
- Ensure that an effective partner referral mechanism is in place for the benefit of individuals and the partner's performance;
- Facilitate and participate in one stop partner meetings;
- Possess knowledge of community events and ensure that all appropriate partners are made aware of upcoming and/or relevant events in which they may wish to participate;
- Act as an ambassador for the one stop system within the community;
- Provide a bridge to business services and resources;
- Ensure compliance with the Commonwealth's and the NWPA Job Connect's one stop center certification criteria which is essential for receipt of infrastructure funding;
- Ensure that the Commonwealth's "Non-Discrimination Plan" is enacted and maintained;
- Ensure that all relevant equal opportunity and civil rights measures are complied with;
- Recommend, maintain and retire technological equipment and related IT services necessary for the operation of the one stop center; and
- Track and implement the negotiated one stop partner Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

The NWPA Job Connect evaluated the One Stop Operator within the initial six (6) months after the first contract start date with the implementation of WIOA, and then at least annually thereafter. The evaluation includes (but is not limited to) contract provisions, participating partner surveys, performance measures developed by the NWPA Job Connect, and any applicable PA CareerLink® certification requirements.

The local one-stop also conducts mobile and virtual service delivery. The mobile service delivery model is proactive and meets the needs of individuals with barriers to employment that are engaged with social service providers, educational institutions, and employers that would otherwise not engage with PA CareerLink®. The mobile service delivery model also allows partnerships with community organizations who provide access to their clients, gratis use of their facility to delivery individual and group-level workforce programming to provide a wrap-around holistic counseling to shared or dual enrolled clients. Virtual service delivery eliminates the need for clients to meet in-person with a

representative of PA CareerLink® for workforce services, if they have an internet-capable device and connectivity to a mobile network. If a client is not equipped to work with PA CareerLink® in a virtual manner, supportive services may be used to procure a smartphone (or similar device) and service for the purposes of interfacing with the partners of PA CareerLink® for workforce services.

Building upon the success of the previous mobile service delivery model and faced with the challenges presented to workforce delivery systems from the COVID-19 pandemic, PA CareerLink® services are now being offered via virtual service delivery. This includes services for Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth. Utilizing flexibility under state policy regarding electronic signature of documents, coupled with the adoption and implementation of Ring Central technology for the secure transmission of documents, has created transition from the traditional brick-and-mortar models used previously to a digital model that is navigable for participants.

The local workforce development area, as previously described, includes the six core programs mandated under WIOA. Program service delivery covers Clarion, Crawford, Erie, Forest, Venango and Warren Counties and includes partnerships with many community agencies. Workforce development services provided to the public through the service delivery network are funded by a combination of WIOA funds and other grant funds that are applied for by the NWPA Job Connect and/or its partners. The purpose of each PA CareerLink® is to create a seamless system of service delivery that will enhance access to the individual program services while improving long-term success. The core program partners (Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Adult Education and Literacy, Wagner-Peyser, and Vocational Rehabilitation) work together to effectively serve job seekers and employers. Although each program has defined activities and responsibilities by law, they work to leverage services and reduce duplication for optimum outcomes.

The service delivery network is coordinated by the PA CareerLink® Operator and includes both mandated and voluntary partners. The PA CareerLink® centers also maintain working relationships with various community-based and other organizations including organizations such as St. Benedict Education Center and the Steel Valley Authority in Erie. These relationships enhance services provided to job seekers and employers. The NWPA Job Connect will continue to evaluate and develop strategies for high-quality career services, training and education, as well as the supportive services needed to assist customers with placement into family-sustaining employment, along with help for employers in finding skilled workers and access to training for their current workforce. The NWPA Job Connect Board, as well as its committee membership composition, includes career and technical center directors and Title II adult education supervisors.

The PA CareerLink® centers also have partnerships and work collaboratively with their local Chambers of Commerce, economic development, the Senior Community Service Employment Program under Title V of the Older Americans Act (SCSEP), County Assistance Offices, County Office of Drug and Alcohol, OEO, Erie Together, local training providers, local career and technical centers, local high schools and colleges, as well as Community Education Councils to name a few. Local Community Service Block Grant agencies participate in the delivery of workforce development services in multiple ways including: participation in local and regional planning groups; engaging in business service delivery; distribution of materials in the PA CareerLink® centers; providing computer links to partner organizations; holding meetings at PA CareerLink® centers as needed; participating in sessions for employers with partner agencies; and working with partners to leverage grant funding opportunities.

As mentioned previously, the WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Program services are currently contracted to Equus Workforce Solutions for the six-county local workforce development area, as awarded through a competitive bid process conducted in 2017. Partnerships are developed and collaboration occurs with other intermediary entities which help to connect job seekers to the business community (i.e., the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, Veterans counselors, Job Corps, county human service agencies, employer on-the-job training programs, Erie Together, Big Brothers and Big Sisters and Girl Scouts/Boy Scouts, Community Education Councils). Equus is also contracted to provide workforce development services to eligible participants through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program designed to help needy families achieve self-sufficiency. This includes referrals to partner agencies and/or community agencies for assistance such as drug and alcohol counseling, housing, and other assistance in removing barriers that may prevent them from attending training or obtaining and/or retaining employment. Customers entering the PA CareerLink® can receive a full array of career services from any or all partners. Career services must be tracked in PA's workforce development system of record.

Customers requiring individualized services are evaluated and recommendations are made based on the initial assessment of knowledge, skills and abilities. Based on this initial assessment, the customer begins job search activities or moves into a more individualized service process, as appropriate. If a customer cannot obtain employment through these services, they are evaluated for training services. Training services may include skill training or on-the-job training. Referrals between partnering agencies are provided to ensure that needed services are made available. The customer is exited upon securing suitable employment or choosing to no longer participate in PA CareerLink® services, at which time follow-up services are conducted for no less than twelve months. PA CareerLink® staff members are trained to assist employer customers with employment needs such as recruitment assistance, assessment and testing, and labor market information.

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 local board will continue to work closely with its workforce systems partners to better coordinate and increase awareness of the workforce partner services and resources available in the local area in an effort to expand access to these services. This is particularly important for individuals with barriers to employment. The Lean Governance Council comprised of local PA CareerLink® staff was implemented to develop service delivery improvements and expand access to services across all partners.

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

The local board is in the process of developing career pathways for the rural counties that will benefit from the experiences of the Erie County Career Pathways Alliance. These career pathways will include on-ramps from Title II adult education. Co-enrollment is currently being conducted where appropriate for the needs of the participants. The Title II adult education partner currently conducts local workforce system comprehensive assessments. Individuals receiving services from the Title II adult education partner are provided with information on WIOA Title I programs, and

referrals provide eligible Title II participants with on-ramps for career pathways to eliminate barriers to employment and gain employability skills leading to family-sustaining employment.

Factors being considered include, but are not limited to:

- Describing the local board's methods of validating the eligibility of individuals, including the use of telephone verification and documentation inspection verification, especially in consideration of individuals with barriers to employment; (see bullet below)
- Outlining the steps staff will take to verify eligibility prior to self-certification;

The local board has in place an eligibility policy posted at www.nwpajobconnect.org that outlines eligibility verification prior to self-certification for participants. With the exception of out-of-school youth, the use of self-certification must be limited and only available as a last resort after all other sources of eligibility verification are exhausted. Criteria elements and steps to be taken by staff for self-certification are also outlined in the policy. Family income level may not be self-certified in any case.

- Describing strategies and operational elements established to ensure the participant "co-enrollment" across relevant programs is practiced;

The local board places an emphasis on planning across multiple partner programs to ensure alignment in service delivery. The development of effective partnerships across programs and community-based providers provides individuals with employment, education, training and support services that they need. This is critical to maximize resources and align services with career pathways and sector strategies. The local board's program services contractor determines the appropriate level and balance of services based on the service needs of the participant and if the participant is career ready. This is based on an assessment of their occupational skills, prior work experience, employability, and the participant's needs. The Title II Adult Education and Literacy provider conducts comprehensive assessments for WIOA Title I participants and provides a feeder for co-enrollment between Title II and Title I programs.

- Describing strategies and operational elements established to increase awareness and access to WIOA Title II programs;

The local Title II Adult Education and Literacy provider is an active partner in the local workforce system. The Title II provider conducts the comprehensive assessments for participants in the local area which provides an awareness of their services to participants as well as an opportunity for individuals to receive adult education services while at the same time receiving services funded by WIOA Title I. This allows Title I programs and Title II programs to coordinate the development of career pathways and co-enroll participants, so they receive the full spectrum of services for their education and employment needs.

- Describing strategies and operational elements established to increase awareness and access to the WIOA Title IV programs, and that operational compliance concerns are addressed (e.g. qualified Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, or OVR, counselors determine eligibility for services).

WIOA Title IV programs are an integral part of the local workforce system. Individuals with disabilities are entitled to the same full range of services as anyone else and should be offered the

same menu of services as other customers. Through the course of the delivery of services, PA CareerLink® staff may become aware that a customer has a disability. The staff may not make unnecessary inquiries into the existence of a disability and it is a completely voluntary decision by the customer concerning whether or not to supply any disability information. If the customer discloses a disability, then staff can provide information on WIOA Title IV programs and provide a referral to the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR). OVR staff must be responsible for determining eligibility for vocational rehabilitation programs and determine the order of selection for such services.

Since WIOA merges many different workforce programs and establishes a system to meet the needs of all job seekers, there are many priority populations and individuals to be served. Advocacy efforts are essential to ensure that the needs of individuals with disabilities are not overlooked and that individuals with disabilities are well served under WIOA. Through creating understanding among other PA CareerLink® staff concerning the services of OVR, other one stop partners can utilize the expertise of OVR to meet customer needs and refer individuals to OVR who could benefit from their services.

As part of the local board's efforts to provide universal access, outreach to both the general public as well as targeted populations including individuals with disabilities is accomplished through strategies of advertising the one stop system's services in local media outlets, as well as consulting and collaborating with community service and advocacy groups. These strategies help the local one stop system to improve its outreach and services to individuals with disabilities and broadens the pool of people using one stop services.

- Describing efforts to identify and improve access to activities leading to a recognized postsecondary credential; and

The local board works to identify, develop, and feed sector pathway programs in their local area. These programs and activities should result in the attainment of industry-valued and recognized post-secondary credentials that are aligned with employer workforce needs. The local board works toward improving access to activities leading to a recognized post-secondary credential, including a credential that is an industry-recognized certification that is portable and stackable. The local board supports training for credential programs that are affordable and readily available at places and times convenient for working adults; those that clearly articulate costs and prerequisites and are clear regarding the skills, knowledge, and abilities that are benchmarked by a given credential; those that are stackable or in other words, are one of multiple parts that add up to a more substantial credential and do not require starting over at each step; they are transferable; and they are linked to a job or an educational pathway

- Describing operational elements the local board has developed to address the systemic process created to develop and promote Career Pathways.

The local board competitively bid the services of a qualified and experienced career pathways consultant in May 2020 to develop a career pathways process for eligible adults and out-of-school youth to facilitate the movement of these individuals from entry level positions through credentialed training resulting in self-sustaining employment. The focus of these career pathways will be for targeted industry sectors such as advanced manufacturing, healthcare, building and construction. The development of these career pathways will benefit from the experiences and

successes of the career pathways developed by the Erie County Career Pathways Alliance that were previously successfully implemented in 11 school districts in Erie County.

The NWPA Job Connect ensures that the local workforce system is universally accessible, customer centered, with training that is job driven. Customers entering the PA CareerLink® can receive a full array of career services. Career services are tracked in PA's workforce development system of record. Customers requiring individualized services are evaluated and recommendations are made based on the initial assessment of knowledge, skills and abilities. Based on the initial assessment, the customer begins job search activities, moves into the individualized career services process, and/or they are evaluated for training services. The WIOA Title I program services contractor staff is responsible to review and sign off on all registration paperwork for completeness and accuracy when determining participant eligibility and maintain a centrally controlled file for each program applicant and registrant which contains copies of all documents collected. The NWPA Job Connect requires a documented secondary staff review of eligibility determination for all WIOA participants. All data must be entered into PA's workforce development system of record for tracking the participant registration and eligibility. The staff secondary eligibility review must be documented in the participant file. NWPA Job Connect local policy allows for self-certification as a source for documenting eligibility for WIOA Title I program participants, with the exception of out-of-school youth but must be limited and only available as a last resort after all other sources of eligibility verification are exhausted. Family income level may not be self-certified in any case. WIOA Title I program service contractors are encouraged to use telephone verification prior to self-assessment for Adult, Dislocated Worker, and In-School Youth by verifying eligibility criteria through phone calls with recognized governmental or social service agencies. Information obtained through this method must be documented. The NWPA Job Connect will use a random sampling methodology to monitor self-certification and self-attestation usage.

Training opportunities for customers are supported through the NWPA Job Connect's Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). Perkins post-secondary programs are part of career pathways aligned to high priority occupations and credentials and they are included on the eligible training program list. Training services may include skill training or work-based options such as on-the-job training, customized training or incumbent worker training. There is no sequence of services required for a job seeker to obtain training. Supportive services are offered to assist eligible participants toward successfully completing their training. The customer is exited upon securing self-sustaining employment or choosing to no longer participate in PA CareerLink® services, at which time follow-up services are conducted for no less than twelve months. PA CareerLink® staff members are trained to assist employer customers with employment needs such as recruitment assistance, assessment and testing, and labor market information.

Co-located partners operate under a unified set of core values, vision, and mission that creates the foundation for how services are provided by guiding behavior, organizing the work environment and creating an opportunity for presenting positively and professionally to customers and partners. WIOA Title I staff and Bureau of Workforce Partnership and Operations staff share the responsibilities of career services for all customers. This includes conducting initial assessment of customer needs, presenting workshops, assisting customers in the Career Resource Center, and conducting more in-depth assessments based on customer needs. Partner agencies work together to ensure that participants have access to strategic co-enrollment to support their overall career goals.

The NWPA Job Connect places importance on increased focus on individuals with barriers to employment as well as focus on individuals entitled to priority of service. The NWPA Job Connect will

encourage the local one stop system partners to continue to identify opportunities to expand access to workforce development services and explore co-enrollment for eligible individuals. Strengthened partnerships with local Title II adult literacy and education partners will support this effort, as well as strengthened relationships with OVR staff. The Mobile Service Delivery and virtual services initiatives have increased outreach efforts and expanded service access to individuals with barriers to employment through partnerships with social service agencies, digitization of service through laptops and mobile internet capability, as well as posting of informational YouTube videos, etc. This effort assists individuals with barriers to employment that might be reluctant to come into the physical PA CareerLink® centers in the LWDA to access services.

Individuals eligible for both Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) funding are provided with services to assist in removing barriers that may prevent them from attending training and/or retaining employment. These recipients will also be referred to partner and/or other community agencies for assistance in other areas such as drug and alcohol counseling, housing, etc. Implementation of video doorbells provides greater access to workforce development services for TANF and SNAP recipients.

Eligibility to receive services under WIOA Title IV may only be determined by a qualified OVR Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor. Vocational rehabilitation counselors determine eligibility for and work with customers to develop an Individual Plan for Employment, providing services necessary to meet their specific vocational goal.

Committees of the NWPA Job Connect are re-evaluating targeted industry sectors to develop and promote career pathways as a key workforce development strategy. A career pathways initiative has been undertaken by the NWPA Job Connect board to create career pathways that will align and integrate education (including Adult Basic Education and English as a Second Language), job training, counseling and support services to create accelerated pathways to postsecondary education credentials and employment within in-demand occupations. Information from the experiences of the Career Pathways Alliance in Erie County will support this initiative. Efforts to facilitate employer engagement will include an assessment of what employers want and not what staff thinks they want them to know to build positive working relationships. The appointment of a NWPA Job Connect member representing apprenticeships augments the focus on the opportunities of apprenticeships in the local area.

Driven by identified sector needs, the Business Solutions Team, which includes local economic development agencies staff, coordinates outreach efforts to job seekers and employers by all partners. Wagner-Peyser and other partners refer customers to the Title II adult education and literacy partners as customer need is identified. Individuals with low basic skills who would like to upgrade their skills to attend postsecondary training are referred to Title II programs to enhance their English, math, and literacy skills. This includes English Language Learners. NWPA Job Connect board has identified opportunities for facilitating the development of career pathways and co-enrollment with the Title II partners across the local workforce development system, reducing duplication and improving access to activities that can lead to a recognized postsecondary credential. Title II partners seamlessly refer customers to the PA CareerLink® system through both comprehensive sites. Title II partners administer assessment testing and remediation to job seekers at the PA CareerLink® centers in the local workforce development area. PA CareerLink® staff conduct outreach to the Adult Education and Literacy providers and high school equivalency (HSE) credential classes to promote PA CareerLink® services to interested job seekers.

Community Education Councils serve as an intermediary and broker of training programs in the local workforce development area based on identified need and demand. Community Education Councils provide a more targeted regional approach to workforce development where there are fewer postsecondary resources through leveraging other state and local funding to implement sector-based training through educational institutions in rural communities where campus locations are non-existent, to ensure access to credential-bearing training opportunities. The Community Education Councils network aligns training development efforts with the overarching strategies of the NWPA Job Connect for increasing education and training delivery to the rural areas of the local workforce area.

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

Factors being considered include, but are not limited to:

- Describing the local board's strategies and key operational elements that frame the following initiatives:
 - Work-based training opportunities, including but not limited to: incumbent worker training programs, on-the-job training, or OJT, programs, customized training programs and the use of apprenticeship models to support these programs;

Employers are provided with opportunities to meet their workforce needs and opportunities for worker training with increased reimbursement rates for on-the-job training and customized training. An incumbent worker training pilot project with Green Line Polymers manufacturing firm was conducted by reserving \$30,000 in WIOA funding to meet the specific skill need for this employer. Two Title I business solutions staff will participate in the KDP Apprenticeship Training to become apprentices of apprenticeship and share the benefits of pre- and registered apprenticeships with local employers. A model for early childhood education has been implemented for pre-apprentices in an in-demand occupation with a career pathway to education where we need teachers and substitute teachers. The effort was funded with PA Smart dollars to provide a pipeline into high demand occupations that are not part of the local High Priority Occupation List. Pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship allows an individual with barriers to employment to enter a field affordably where to move up a career pathway to higher responsibility and wage positions. The local board will continue to gather employer input and feedback to inform the need for incumbent worker training and will make available opportunities as appropriate.

- Industry and sector strategies;

The local board will promote the use of industry and sector partnerships to address the workforce needs of multiple employers within an industry. We have partnered with the

Northwest PA Industrial Resource Center to facilitate and further the work of the local manufacturing industry partnership.

- Career lattices and pathways initiatives (including how they are connected to adult education);

A career pathways initiative is being conducted by a consultant who will create career pathways for the local area based on the experience and successes of the Career Pathways Alliance in Erie County. It is anticipated that the career pathways will be rolled out in early 2021.

- Expanding apprenticeship models to include development of pre-apprenticeship programs to serve as a feeder to existing registered apprenticeship programs or in concert with development of new registered apprenticeship programs;

Apprenticeships help to recruit and develop a highly skilled workforce, they improve productivity, reduce turnover costs, and increase employee retention. By filling talent shortages and closing skill gaps, apprenticeships allow companies to expand, innovate, and thrive. Pre-apprenticeships enable better support of communities who have been underrepresented, such as women, people of color, persons with disabilities, and veterans to enter and earn college credit. The local board has been awarded grants such as the Pre-Apprenticeship Grant and the PA Smart Apprenticeship Grant, as well as federal apprenticeship grant participation with our regional partner, West Central Job Partnership, to provide access to programs that build skills and support solutions for overcoming barriers. These partnerships will help the local area leverage resources to expand the use of pre- and registered apprenticeships in the local area.

- Utilization of effective business intermediaries; and

The local board has partnered with the Keystone Community Education Council as well as the Northwest PA Industrial Resource Center who act as business intermediaries for the successful implementation of initiatives and projects in the local workforce area. The Northwest PA Industrial Resource Center was also contracted to facilitate the Lean Governance Council to work with key staff toward continuous improvement activities within the local one-stop system.

- Other business services and strategies designed to meet the needs of regional employers;

The WIOA Title I program contractor has assigned Title I Business Solutions staff to geographic areas or by sector, as well as identifying Title I Business Solutions staff as “recruiters” for specific focus on employers to better develop relationships and understand the employers’ needs. Two Title I Business Solutions staff will participate in the KDP Apprenticeship training to become apprentices of apprenticeship and share the benefits of apprenticeship with local employers.

- Describing who facilitates employer engagement in workforce development programs, including small employers and employers operating within in-demand industry sectors and occupations;

Employer engagement is facilitated by the Business Solutions Team and WIOA Title I staff on the BST following strategies and goals shared by the local board, and the local board's Business Solutions Committee.

- How will the local board engage employers within in-demand industries and ensure that the employment and training activities in the local area meet the needs of its employers;

The local board includes members who represent in-demand industries and they provide input and feedback regarding employer engagement. The Business Solutions Team and the Title I Business Solutions staff engage employers within in-demand industries through providing business services such as virtual job fairs, recruiting events, mock interview sessions, assessing business needs, posting and distributing employer job listings, sourcing and screening candidates, development of internships, on-the-job training, Rapid Response assistance for business closures and layoffs, wage industry/economic trends, employment law, etc.

- Describing entity(s) tasked with the management and administrative roles of the business engagement services function (which includes employer case management, tracking of services and data research and analysis) as well as tracking which entities are making employer visits and the collaboration that occurs during these visits;

Equus Workforce Solutions is the WIOA Title I program services contractor charged with the management of business engagement services for the local area. Equus is currently developing a tool for managing business engagement services and providing outcomes to be shared with the local board and stakeholders. Employer visit information is captured in the Executive Pulse system that is viewable by all BST members and economic development partners.

- Describing the roles and responsibilities of local board staff hired and contracted entities primarily tasked with business engagement related activities and services;

The local board is the leader in connecting industry with training and education to meet industry need. Sector-driven strategies include cultivating employer engagement in workforce development, assessing employer needs through business intelligence, as well as influencing and investing in the education system and other pipeline sources. Local board staff support the board's Business Solutions Committee that shares the board's strategic direction and goals with Equus Workforce Solutions, the WIOA Title I program contractor charged with providing business engagement activities and services to local employers.

- How will the local board continue to develop appropriate ways to measure and benchmark employer outcome results;

The local board's Business Solutions Committee discusses employer outcomes at each meeting and requests additional detail or reporting as needed. The WIOA Title I program contractor's contract includes a Scope of Work addendum that requires focus on employer engagement and satisfaction. The Department of Labor & Industry is currently developing a dashboard for PA's workforce development system of record that will provide valuable employer outcome information to local areas as well. Additionally, the local board has assigned 31% of its pay for performance incentive money to employer engagement and outreach efforts. This includes tracking and reporting on the

number of unduplicated businesses who were served by the WIOA Title I program staff during the program year, with an emphasis on showing at least a 5% increase per quarter as well as the number of services that were provided.

- How will the local board improve key economic development partner relationships;

The local board collaborates with various local economic development agencies, including the Northwest Commission, the Erie Regional Chamber and Growth Partnership, and the Warren County Chamber of Business and Industry. The Northwest Commission is the local development district that coordinates economic development efforts across the six counties of our Northwest local area, as well as the two counties of our regional partner, West Central Job Partnership. The Northwest Commission's Executive Director and the Warren County Chamber of Business and Industry Executive Director serve as members of the local board as well. The local board also connects individually with the other local economic development offices regarding business outreach, support issues, and initiatives.

- How are programs and services being adopted by businesses and employers;

Local businesses and employers participate on the Next Gen manufacturing partnership; they have participated in incumbent worker training local area pilot programs; they participate in the local area's Manufacturing Day as well as on-the-job training and work experiences for youth.

- If the local area has Industry Partnerships, how will the partnership employers influence not only the industry partnership training, but also that of the entire area;

The local board looks to prioritize training investments where overall economic returns are likely to be highest, specifically in those sectors that generate gains in terms of jobs and income. The board looks for input from industry partnerships to influence effective training strategies that result in the most impact for the use of training dollars. These strategies benefit not only our local area, but that of our regional partner, West Central Job Partnership, since these industry partnerships serve both local workforce areas. Industry partnership input helps to steer investments toward ensuring that programs align with labor market trends and needs based on patterns of job growth.

- How will the local board improve strategies and practices to increase business and employer engagement over current levels;

The Business Solutions Committee of the local board will continue to review and discuss business services and employer satisfaction to develop and recommend new strategies to increase employer engagement. The WIOA Title I program contractor will be held to benchmarks in their statement of work and pay-for-performance contract language. It is hoped that the new dashboard being created in PA's workforce development system of record will provide a resource to local areas for data collection and trend analysis in this regard.

- How will the local board better coordinate regional workforce and economic development strategy;

There has been a recent economic shift due to the COVID-19 pandemic that has necessitated even stronger alignment of economic and workforce development strategies. As local economic

development entities develop long-term plans for regional economic growth, the local board will work to provide workforce development expertise to align strategies and identify opportunities. This action starts with the joint collaborative meetings held on December 10, 2020, as well as local board staff participation on economic development's PREP meetings.

- If the local area has the Engage! Program, how will Engage! further strengthen the relationship between workforce and economic development; and

The Northwest Commission was awarded an Engage! grant in our local workforce area to support a systematic business retention and expansion (BRE) program to assist in the identification and targeting of PA companies, the engagement of those companies through various outreach methods, the assessment of the needs of those targeted companies, and assisting the targeted companies through referrals and direct technical assistance. These services are provided to retain existing businesses in the community and to help them grow and expand by building solid relationships with business owners or key decision makers and economic and workforce development partners and their representatives. The local board partners with Northwest Commission to provide support as the workforce development intermediary in the local area. The local board and the local workforce system uses its expertise and resources to assist in identifying needs and matching resources to help existing businesses and industries address their challenges to become more competitive and successful.

- With the knowledge that Unemployment Compensation (UC) representatives are not available to be deployed in the PA CareerLink® sites and only UC courtesy phones and PCs are provided, describe the local board's strategies and operational elements it utilizes to support unemployment insurance programs and resources employed for the benefit of local area businesses and citizens:
 - Describe how UC claimants are provided reemployment services, including a brief overview of how the local board manages the "Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment" (RESEA) program;

Currently, Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) sessions are conducted virtually, and in person when required, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to the required RESEA information and individual plans, additional information on PA CareerLink® workshops, job fairs, and resource referrals are provided.

- Describe how the local board supports UC claimants, indicating they are complying with Pennsylvania's UC law "Register for Work and Work Search"; and

The local board has processes in place to assist the claimants in fully registering on the PA CareerLink® system, and an ongoing plan of assisting in the claimant's job search efforts. The local board is developing local procedures and planning for participation in a UC Exhaustees Strategy Initiative to be launched in February 2021. This process provides a methodology for the PA CareerLink® staff to outreach to UC claimants to increase customer engagement and encourage access to additional services such as workshops, labor market information, and referrals to programs and supports.

- Indicate how the local board identifies and refers to UC for adjudication, listing any potential UC eligibility issues identified during RESEA or any other UC claimant interaction.

PA CareerLink® staff are knowledgeable on UC requirements for PA CareerLink® registration. If a claimant is missing any component needed to meet UC requirements, staff will assist the claimant with contacts for the appropriate resources to complete the missing steps. Staff is also familiar with the UC claimant's work search requirements and can provide guidance to the claimant regarding keeping track of their work search. During the RESEA interview, the staff member would note any questionable statements made by the claimant, such as vacation, injury, etc. The information would be provided to the UC office for investigation as instructed in the RESEA manual.

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

One of the most important business services that the local workforce system provides is connecting employers to qualified candidates. Business services offered through the local workforce system add value by supporting local sector strategies and investment priorities. Staff are knowledgeable and responsive to business and workforce needs of the local area and how these align with local sector strategies, as well as accessing recruitment processes and other services. The Business Solutions Team provides appropriate recruitment and other business services in the local area.

Businesses inform and guide the local workforce system and help to influence workforce investments and build a pipeline of skilled workers. Their engagement includes input into the development of education and training, work-based learning, career pathways, and industry sector partnerships.

The committees of the NWSA Job Connect board evaluate targeted industry sectors to develop and promote career pathways as a key workforce development strategy. The committees identify career pathways that align and integrate education (including Adult Basic Education and English as a Second Language), job training, counseling and support services to create accelerated pathways to postsecondary education credentials and employment within in-demand occupations. Efforts to facilitate employer engagement include a discussion of what employers desire in services from the system. A NWSA Job Connect member has been appointed representing apprenticeships and his perspective assists in bringing additional focus to the availability and opportunities of apprenticeships in the local workforce development area.

Input gathered from private sector participation on NWSA Job Connect and its committees is incorporated into the strategic direction of the local board. This is the basis of an employer-led board, comprised of local business leaders in small to large companies in in-demand sectors that comprise high-priority occupations in healthcare, manufacturing, building construction and other industry sectors in the local area. Where possible, Next Generation Industry Partnerships or similar models can be used to support the local workforce development system to gather input from private sector employers in identifying and meeting the needs of businesses in the local area.

Additionally, the NWSA Job Connect plans to reserve funds allocated to the local workforce development area to pay for the Federal share of the cost of providing training through a training program for incumbent workers to support targeted industry sectors. Employer payment of the non-

Federal share for employers participating in the program will be established by taking into consideration such other factors as possibly the number of employees participating in the training, the wage and benefit levels of the employees at the beginning and anticipated upon completion of the training, the relationship of the training to the competitiveness of the employer and employees, and the availability of other employer-provided training and advancement opportunities. These activities will be further strengthened through the engagement of industry partnerships, both existing industry partnerships as well as those to be developed based on analysis and demand.

The committees of the NWP Job Connect board are collaborating to bring together local employers, youth providers, career and technical centers, adult education and literacy providers, and other interested stakeholders to identify and develop career pathways that lead youth and adult job seekers from entry level positions to occupations with stackable credentials. Lessons learned and the experiences of the Career Pathways Alliance in Erie County will assist in developing career pathways to be available across the local workforce development area.

For WIOA funding, smaller employers with limited resources can be reimbursed at a higher percentage than larger employers. The Business Solutions Team, which benefits from the participation of an OVR business service representative, discuss talent acquisition and development needs and then shift to the identification of services and programs that will be of benefit to the employer. Work-based training, workforce readiness, and targeted recruitment events are some of the many services that can be offered to assist the employer. The Business Solutions Team promotes the PA CareerLink® available services and programs not only to employers, but to other organizations that have business members and customers.

Employers in manufacturing are engaged in Next Gen industry partnership meetings conducted regularly within the local workforce development area.

Business Solutions Team representatives promote the area's workforce development programs and services to local employers and provide employers to a pipeline of qualified talent, recruitment assistance, retention and up-skilling of their existing workforce through referrals and joint visits with local economic development agencies. Members of the Business Solutions Team attend and support the industry partnership meetings to assist the employers with acquiring and retaining skilled talent. As a strategy to improve practices to increase business and employer engagement over current levels, Equus increased staffing for the WIOA Title I Business Solutions services. In addition, Equus identified specific Business Solutions staff as "recruiters" with focus on engaging new employers and assigned Business Solutions staff to specific geographic areas within our local area to avoid overlap, reduce travel, and strengthen business relationships.

The NWP Job Connect is partnering with our Partnership for Regional Economic Performance (PREP) partners on an Engage! grant that enables the tracking of engagement with employers, as well as participating on lead economic development teams in both Crawford and Erie Counties, and working closely with the Small Business Development Centers (SBDC) in both Clarion and Erie. Additionally, the NWP Job Connect has embraced efforts to address business and employer needs through Next Generation Sector opportunities. With Next Generation Sector Partnerships, the opportunity exists to expand engagement of additional industry sectors even beyond manufacturing to potentially include healthcare, building and construction, and hospitality. The Business Solutions Team aligns with the NWP Job Connect's local and regional sector strategy by assisting in the recruitment and development of business customers to participate in industry partnership activity for key industries in

the local area. The mission of the Business Solutions Team is to provide guidance, resources, and strategic workforce solutions to employer customers. The PA CareerLink® Business Solutions Team and local economic development work together to increase awareness among employers about resources available through the public workforce development system including but not limited to on-the-job training, customized training, work-based learning, incumbent worker training, expansion, new business markets, opportunities for equipment purchases, etc.

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

The Business Solution Team provides recruitment activities that attract, select, and refer suitable candidates through activities that are customized to a specific employer or occupational need. This includes supporting skills validation, training, and career placement functions to access the talent pool for the position being recruited. These services will support targeted populations and sector strategy recruitments. Business Solutions will coordinate with the employer prior to the start of recruitment and then send qualified candidates. Job postings in the system of record will serve as a tool to screen applicants. Customized training and incumbent worker training can also be considered to meet the specific skill needs of local employers.

Business Solutions staff also provide occupational descriptions, job/industry growth patterns, economic trends/forecasts, and wage/benefits information to local employers.

Equus is developing a local employer engagement tool as part of their accounting software to assist in improving employer engagement and provide outcome reports for review by the local board.

To further the important work of the NWPA Job Connect in increasing apprenticeship opportunities in the local workforce development area, the board continues collaborating on an American Apprenticeship Grant with the West Central Workforce Development Area. The US Department of Labor awarded a \$2.9 million American Apprenticeship Grant to West Central Job Partnership to build *The Greater Oh-Penn Manufacturing Apprenticeship Network*. The Network is comprised of industry-led sector partnerships including 137 very actively engaged businesses (Mahoning Valley Manufacturers Coalition, Erie Regional Manufacturer Partnership and Portage County Manufacturers Coalition); five Workforce Development Areas (WDB Areas 17, 18, & 19 in Ohio; Northwest PA Area; and West Central PA WDB Area) as well as the Ohio Apprenticeship Council, the PA Department of Labor & Industry, multiple community colleges, universities, career and technical centers, Adult Basic Education providers, and other partners through the American Job Centers. The Network includes the 6 counties of the Northwest workforce development area, along with 8 other contiguous counties on the border of Pennsylvania and Ohio (Lawrence, Mercer, Erie, Crawford, Venango, Clarion, Warren and Forest in PA and Trumbull, Mahoning, Columbiana, Portage, Geauga, and Ashtabula in Ohio). The Network aims to markedly increase manufacturer's ability to meet their needs for high-skilled and credentialed employees and willingness to use customized registered apprenticeship models. The Network will focus on methods to ease the apprenticeship process for manufacturers by creating a multi-employer group sponsorship apprenticeship platform and streamlining apprenticeship and employee candidate recruitment, assessment, and pre-screening operations with different service providers and "on-ramps," facilitating the process of matching appropriate candidates with manufacturers' needs.

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

Partnerships with economic development officials have been strengthened and include regular communication and strategic interactions. The Board and its staff are active partners in the efforts of the Northwest Pennsylvania Regional Planning and Development Commission's Partnership for Regional Economic Performance (PREP) which connects local and regional workforce development activities with other business service providers, such as the Northwest Industrial Resource Center (NWIRC). The Executive Director of the Northwest Pennsylvania Regional Planning and Development Commission is a member of our NWPA Job Connect board. The PREP partners work collaboratively to identify and address key workforce issues through the PA CareerLink® Business Solutions Team and through implementation of action strategies in the Keystone Edge Regional WIOA Plan.

Meetings were held on December 10, 2020 with local economic development representatives and local legislators to inform and educate regarding workforce development and economic development services and strategies. Given the recent COVID-19 pandemic, these services are priorities for local businesses. An even stronger alignment of economic and workforce development strategies is needed to develop long-term plans for regional economic growth. The local board will continue to align its workforce development strategies with those of its economic development partners to find workforce solutions that meet the needs of local and regional employers.

Development and implementation of local board Communications Protocol by the Communications Committee of the local board provided an effective tool for creating a more coordinated messaging approach in the local workforce area.

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

The Office of UC Service Centers Customer Services Section conducts seminars on UC topics that assist employers in understanding their rights and responsibilities with regard to UC. Mandatory work registration and work search requirements of the PA Unemployment Compensation Law assists employers in reducing their UC costs. PA CareerLink® staff are knowledgeable on the UC requirements for PA CareerLink® registration. Unemployment insurance programs have provided a phone in the PA CareerLink® centers for use by claimants. However, those phones are not currently in use due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its restrictions for health and safety reasons. The local PA CareerLink® system provides customers with the required information on the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program. In addition to the required information for the RESEA Program, information is provided on workshops such as resume writing, computer basics, etc. Upcoming hiring events are discussed. Claimants are provided with a review of the claimant's PA CareerLink® registration, resume and preferences. A job search may also be conducted if the claimant is unsure of the process. An assessment of the claimant's goals and potential barriers to employment is conducted. The claimant will be instructed to attend a workshop or other services that will assist in their reemployment.

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? [20 CFR 679.560(b)(4)]

Factors being considered include, but are not limited to:

- How will the local board strategically coordinate with regional economic development and employer partners in the local area to identify and fulfill industry needs;

The local board is working with local economic development agencies to inform and educate regarding each other's strategies and participate in grants and/or projects. Coordination is challenging covering a large geographic region with both urban and rural needs, with most of these areas working on their own economic plan. The local board works to provide workforce development expertise to align strategies and identify partnership opportunities. The local Business Solutions Team have access to regionalized labor market information to connect businesses to a full range of partner services. Local meetings were held virtually on December 10, 2020 to bring together local legislators and economic development experts to maximize the services to businesses and coordinate planning across partners. The Executive Director of the local development district covering our eight-county regional area (Northwest Commission) is a member of the local board and provides significant insight and collaboration between economic development and workforce development to benefit businesses and delivery solutions.

- Describing regional and local area DCED supported activities (e.g. Small Business Development Centers, or SBDCs, which are PREP agencies) that collaborate with interested entities;

The local development district, Northwest Commission, was successful in their application for an Engage! grant to cover the eight-county region that includes our regional partner, West Central Job Partnership, as well as PREP programs serving the area and the availability of Executive Pulse as a tool for more effectively serving employer customers. See information on SBDC below.

- Describing what resources the local board will use to promote entrepreneurial and microenterprise services

Professional and personal networks, education, and funding are considered important to successful entrepreneurship. The Small Business Development Corporation (SBDC) is a local partner providing skills, funding, and networking to assist in this effort. The local public library system can also provide programs and tools. Entrepreneurship is one of the youth 14 program elements provided in the local area.

- How is the local board measuring employer outcome results; and

The local board has pay-for-performance measurements for employer services in the contract with the Title I program services contractor. In addition, the local board may analyze the results of focus group meetings, industry partnership meetings, local employer surveys, business solutions representative meetings with employers, discussions with chambers and economic development agencies, state labor market information data, and data mined from local initiatives such as the local Workforce Needs Assessment currently being conducted to inform employer outcome results.

- How will the local board support and promote a training strategy that leads to self-employment? How might this strategy be used to help individuals or participants with barriers to employment (e.g., persons with disabilities and ex-offenders)?

Entrepreneurship and small business development have been identified as an important employment option for populations that have barriers to employment. Self-employment can offer individuals with disabilities greater workplace flexibility and income opportunities. These individuals may work locally, even at home, to contribute to economic growth. Youth can benefit from the leadership and financial management skills provided by entrepreneurship work experience, especially during a tight labor market. By partnering with the Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs), the local board provides access to more resources for prospective entrepreneurs and small business owners such as debt financing and equity financing via a number of financial assistance programs. The local workforce system provides access to unemployed workers, knowledgeable staff, and funding support through SBDC partners. Customers are informed about opportunities for self-employment and staff help customers understand the demands of entrepreneurship and what is likely to be required. Assessments help to determine whether their financial skills, attributes and experience make them good candidates for starting a business.

4. OPERATIONAL PLANNING: Local Area Workforce Delivery System

Prompts in this section require greater detail and must focus on how the local board will execute the strategies in section 3. The responses in this section must be more explicit: expanding on the roles of all partners, including examples of specific employment and training activities, as well as specific employer engagement methods.

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

Expectation: Narrative must include a description of how local elected officials, advocacy groups, the LWDB, required and additional partners and other key stakeholders interact within the local area workforce service delivery system. This description must include the respective roles and functional relationships of the following entities, as well as other entities, that compose the local workforce service delivery system.

Factors being considered include, but are not limited to Programmatic functions:

- The identity and key role(s) of the PA CareerLink® operator(s) in the local area. Include a summary of the competitive process used (or will be used) to procure such entity;
- The entity or entities identified to provide WIOA Title I programs and activities in the local area. Include a summary of the competitive process used (or will be used) to award the subgrants and contracts;
- The entity or entities that provide WIOA Title II, Adult Education and Literacy programs and activities in the local area;
- The entity or entities that provide WIOA Title IV, Vocational Rehabilitation programs and activities in the local area;
- The identify and role of the individual(s) responsible for ensuring equal employment opportunities and civil right protections;
- Advocacy groups in the local area; and
- Other key stakeholders that compose the local area workforce delivery system network.

The NWPA Job Connect first selected a one stop operator by following a competitive procurement process in 2017 following the implementation of requirements under WIOA. On March 10, 2017, the NWPA Job Connect issued a request for proposals (RFP) for both the one-stop operator and the program services provider for WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Programs in the local workforce development area. Following receipt of proposals by April 14, 2017, an evaluation committee that included NWPA Job Connect members evaluated the proposals received and made a recommendation for award of contract for the successful bidder to the NWPA Job Connect. Equus Workforce Solutions (formerly ResCare) was awarded the one stop operator contract as well as the WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth program services contract and assumed these roles on July 1, 2017. The contract included annual evaluation and renewal up to a four program year period. Since the one stop operator must be procured every four years under WIOA, a new competitive process for the one stop operator was undertaken in March 2021, with award of contract for one stop operator services approved by the board at their public meeting on May 14, 2021 for an effective date of July 1, 2021. A review team met to develop the request for proposals (RFP) for release. The RFP was released in March and proposals were accepted for 30 days. A review team then met to evaluate and score the proposal received, resulting in a recommendation to the full board for Equus Workforce Solutions for award of contract. The contract will be for a one year period beginning July 1, 2021, with the option to renew for up to a total of four years. A memorandum of understanding between the NWPA Job Connect, the CLEOs, and Equus Workforce Solutions was executed in 2017 that clarified how Equus Workforce Solutions will carry out its responsibilities to perform the functions of both the one stop operator as well as the WIOA Title I program services contractor to ensure that the appropriate firewalls are in place and that no conflict of interest exists in the performance of the contracted services. The one stop operator ensures alignment and integration of partner programs and services into the local workforce development system through the following:

- ❖ Equus shall develop, implement, and ensure compliance with proper internal controls and firewalls to maintain transparency and integrity to ensure that no conflict of interest exists in its performance of the duties as WIOA Title I Program Services Contractor and WIOA Title I One Stop Operator. This information will be submitted to and monitored by the NWPA Job Connect;
- ❖ Equus shall develop, implement, and ensure compliance with a separate reporting structure within the organization which meets the requirements for separation of functions under WIOA. This information will be submitted to and monitored by the NWPA Job Connect;
- ❖ Equus shall be responsible to render impartial decisions and perform the duties of the WIOA Title I Program Services Contractor and One Stop Operator in an objective way;
- ❖ Equus shall not convene system stakeholders to assist the NWPA Job Connect in the development, preparation, and submission of Local Plans, competitive processes for selecting one stop operators, terminating one stop operators, career services providers, or youth providers;
- ❖ Equus shall not be responsible for the oversight of itself or other operators;
- ❖ Equus shall not negotiate local and/or regional performance accountability measures;
- ❖ Equus shall not develop or submit budgets for activities of the NWPA Job Connect.

The NWPA Job Connect and the CLEOs agree on the following expectations (regarding the responsibilities of the One Stop Operator) to include, but not necessarily be limited to:

- ❖ Serve as an intermediary with all of the one stop partners;
- ❖ Know and understand the parameters under which the partners provide services;

- ❖ Know and understand each partner’s performance measurement goals;
- ❖ Ensure that an effective partner referral mechanism is in place for the benefit of individuals and the partner’s performance;
- ❖ Attend and participate in one stop partner meetings;
- ❖ Possess knowledge of community events and ensure that all appropriate partners are made aware of upcoming and/or relevant events in which they may wish to participate;
- ❖ Act as an ambassador for the one stop system within the community;
- ❖ Provide a bridge to business services and resources;
- ❖ Ensure compliance with the Commonwealth’s and the NWPA Job Connect’s one stop center certification criteria which is essential for receipt of infrastructure funding;
- ❖ Ensure that the Commonwealth’s “Non-Discrimination Plan” are enacted and maintained;
- ❖ Ensure that all relevant equal opportunity and civil rights measures are complied with;
- ❖ Recommend, maintain and retire technological equipment and related IT services necessary for the operation of the one stop center; and
- ❖ Track and implement the negotiated one stop partner Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

The NWPA Job Connect evaluates the One Stop Operator at least annually. The evaluation includes (but is not limited to) contract provisions, participating partner surveys, performance measures developed by the NWPA Job Connect, and any applicable PA CareerLink® certification requirements.

Equus Workforce Solutions has developed and implemented an internal control policy to ensure the firewall between the one stop operator and the WIOA Title I program services contractor is in place and to ensure that no conflict of interest exists in the performance of their duties. Equus Workforce Solutions has developed, implemented and ensured compliance with a separate reporting structure within the organization which meets the requirements for separation of functions under WIOA. The agreement between the NWPA Job Connect, the CLEOs, and Equus Workforce Solution’s internal control policy will hold Equus accountable for rendering impartial decisions and performing their respective duties as the one stop operator and the WIOA Title I program services contractor in an objective way. Please see section 4.2 below that describes the roles and relationships within the local workforce development system.

The identity and role of the individuals responsible for ensuring equal employment opportunities and civil rights protections can be found in prompt 3.1 on pages 22-23.

Program partners are shown on the Workforce Service Delivery System Program Partner/Provider list in Attachment 3.

There are currently two comprehensive PA CareerLink® centers in the local workforce development area:

PA CareerLink® - Erie County
1647 Sassafras Street, Suite 300
Erie, PA 16502

Phone: (814) 455-9966

Hours of Operation: Normal Hours are Monday – Friday 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.; However, the COVID-19 pandemic may alter those hours

Type of Site: Comprehensive, Full Service

PA CareerLink® - Oil Region
255 Elm Street, Oil City, PA 16301
Phone: (814) 678-5050

Hours of Operation: Normal Hours are Monday – Friday 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.; However, the COVID-19 pandemic may alter those hours

Type of Site: Comprehensive, Full Service

The COVID-19 pandemic restrictions required a closure of the brick-and-mortar facilities at the height of the pandemic. Services continued to be provided to customers via virtual technology. The PA CareerLink® comprehensive locations are expected to re-open to regular hours once the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic have been lifted and the risks of the pandemic have been mitigated.

Required one-stop program partners include:

U.S. Department of Labor

- ❖ WIOA title I programs: Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth formula programs;
- ❖ Job Corps;
- ❖ YouthBuild;
- ❖ Native American programs;
- ❖ Migrant Seasonal Farmworkers (MSFW) that includes the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP);
- ❖ Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act (29 U.S.C. 49 et seq.), as amended by WIOA title III;
- ❖ Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) authorized under title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965;
- ❖ Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) activities authorized under chapter 2 of title II of the Trade Act of 1974;
- ❖ Unemployment Compensation (UC) programs;
- ❖ Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) programs authorized under chapter 41 of title 38, U.S.C.;
- ❖ Reentry Employment Opportunities (REO) programs (formerly known as Reintegration of Ex-Offenders Program (RExO)) authorized under sec. 212 of the Second Chance Act of 2007 (42 U.S.C. 17532) and WIOA sec. 169;

U.S. Department of Education

- ❖ Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) program, authorized under WIOA title II;
- ❖ Career and technical education programs at the postsecondary level, authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins);
- ❖ The State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services program authorized under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 720 et seq.), as amended by WIOA title IV;

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

- ❖ Employment and training programs;

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

- ❖ Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program authorized under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.), unless exempted by the Governor under 20 CFR 678.405(b).

U.S. Department of Community and Economic Development

- ❖ Employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) programs (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.)

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)]

Expectation 1: Narrative must list each of the one-stop partners, as well as describe their roles and the resource contributions to the local area workforce delivery system. Examples of resource contributions may include but are not limited to in-kind and programmatic contributions.

Expectation 2: Local boards are required to reference and include the completed program partner-provider list (i.e. Attachment 3: Local Workforce Development System Program Partner-Provider List). This list identifies comprehensive and affiliate PA CareerLink® sites, specialized centers and the programs available at each.

Program partners are shown on the Workforce Service Delivery System Program Partner/Provider List in Attachment 3.

Primary partner roles and their respective programs for the local one-stop system include:

Adult Basic Education and Literacy – WIOA Title II Adult Education and Literacy (AEFLA)

Partner(s):

Northwest Tri-County IU5

Adult basic education is a critical partner in establishing career pathways for adults who are deficient in basic skills. These programs provide a full range of adult basic education services, from beginning level literacy through high adult secondary, including individuals with intellectual disabilities, and transition activities to support college and career readiness. These services include English language acquisition, basic skills instruction in work readiness, workplace preparation, and career awareness. Programs provide case management services by helping students address barriers to participation in adult basic education programming, as well as prepare and plan for entry onto a career pathway through employment and/or postsecondary education/training. Adult literacy and education classes are designed for participants needing basic skills remediation, allowing participants to successfully work toward their goals of high school equivalency (HSE) credential preparation, post-secondary education and/or employment. In partnership with the PA CareerLink® centers, the Title II adult education and literacy partners conduct Department of Education approved assessments in an effort to reduce duplication within the PA CareerLink® system and provide focus on career pathways and skill development for job seekers. Monetary contribution on our Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) is obtained based upon usage of our facility and is recognized as a part of the facilities cost.

Career and Technical Education – Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 1973

Partner(s):

Mercyhurst University

The career and technical centers in the local area work as partners with the local PA CareerLink® system. They provide students with the academic and technical skills, knowledge and training necessary to

succeed in future careers and to become lifelong learners. Career and technical centers prepare learners for the world of work by introducing them to workplace competencies and make academic content accessible to students by providing it in a hands-on context. Many school districts in the local area have embraced the Worldwide Interactive Network® (WIN®) software. WIN® is an internet-based curriculum to prepare individuals to take the WorkKeys® assessment that leads to a credential known as the National Career Readiness Certificate®. Career and technical center leadership and personnel participate as members of the NWPA Job Connect or various committees of the Board as well. Monetary contribution on our Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) is obtained based upon usage of our facility and is recognized as a part of the facilities cost.

WIOA Adult – WIOA Title I, Subtitle B

Partner(s):

Equus Workforce Solutions

The WIOA Adult program is one of three Title I core programs to assist participants in finding self-sustaining employment. WIOA Adult programs provide basic and individualized career services, as well as various training services as appropriate. Priority of service is provided to Adult program participants based on criteria as required by WIOA and state requirements. WIOA Adult program services are provided through the local PA CareerLink® system by a competitively bid program services contractor.

The NWPA Job Connect Priority of Service Policy includes four groups of individuals that the commonwealth requires to be targeted for priority when providing individualized career services and training services in the WIOA Title I Adult program. These four targeted groups are public assistance recipients; other low-income individuals; individuals who are basic skills deficient; and individuals who are both underemployed and low-income. An additional local requirement has been added to the NWPA Job Connect Priority of Service Policy that an individual's residency must be considered in determining an individual's priority of service, given the local area's close proximity to both Ohio and New York state borders. Incumbent Worker Training is also offered to upskill current employees for new opportunities, potentially creating an opportunity to backfill with other WIOA participants. Monetary contribution on our Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) is obtained based upon square footage and staffing at the PA CareerLink® and is applied toward applicable line items.

WIOA Dislocated Worker – WIOA Title I, Subtitle B

Partner(s):

Equus Workforce Solutions

The WIOA Dislocated Worker program assists individuals either prior to or after a layoff and provide career services and training services such as occupational skills training, on-the-job or customized training, as well as apprenticeship opportunities to assist these individuals in reemployment. WIOA Dislocated Worker services are provided through the local PA CareerLink® system by a competitively bid program services contractor. Monetary contribution on our Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) is obtained based upon square footage and staffing at the PA CareerLink® and is applied toward applicable line items.

WIOA Youth – WIOA Title I, Subtitle B

Partner(s):

Equus Workforce Solutions

WIOA Youth program services provide eligible youth with services such as case management support for educational attainment, career guidance and exploration, work experiences, supportive services and skill training as appropriate. Youth program participant services prepare youth for either entry into post-secondary education or family-sustaining employment in in-demand occupations. Since December 2019, WIOA Youth program service priority has been on Out-of-School Youth to ensure meeting the 75% Out-of-School Youth expenditure requirement under WIOA and ensuring that funds are expended on those youth with the most barriers to employment. To that end, the local area, as part of a grant award with its regional partner, West Central Job Partnership, was awarded a Youth Re-Entry Grant that is aimed at those youth with some involvement with the justice system. WIOA Youth program services are provided through the local PA CareerLink® system by a competitively bid program services contractor. Monetary contribution on our Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) is obtained based upon square footage and staffing at the PA CareerLink® and is applied toward applicable line items.

Wagner-Peyser – WIOA Title III

Partner(s):

PA Department of Labor and Industry

Bureau of Workforce Partnership and Operations (BWPO) staff provide employment and training services as a partner member of the local PA CareerLink® system authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act, Trade Act of 1974, Jobs for Veterans State Grants program, as well as programs authorized under state unemployment compensation laws. These services include but are not limited to job search and job placement assistance; career counseling; needs and interest assessments; proficiency testing; workshops; development of an individual employment plan; and case management. Services to employers include assistance in developing and posting job orders; referral of qualified job seekers to job openings; and organizing and supporting local job fairs. Monetary contribution on our Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) is obtained based upon square footage and staffing at the PA CareerLink® and is applied toward applicable line items.

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation – WIOA Title IV

Partner(s):

PA Department of Labor and Industry

The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) provides services to individuals with disabilities to help them secure and maintain employment and independence. These services are designed to ensure individuals with disabilities become qualified trained members of the workforce increasing regional workforce diversity and the overall number of skilled workers available to business in the region. Additionally, OVR provides multiple services and technical assistance to the business community designed to assist them with hiring and retaining employees with disabilities. Monetary contribution on our Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) is obtained based upon square footage and staffing at the PA CareerLink® and is applied toward applicable line items.

Unemployment Compensation Programs

Partner(s):

PA Department of Labor and Industry

Unemployment Compensation Programs provide a dedicated computer and telephone for individuals to open claims or telephone the call centers for assistance.

The co-located partners in comprehensive sites operate under a unified set of core values, vision and mission that creates the foundation for how services are provided by guiding behavior, organizing the work environment and creating an opportunity for presenting positively and professionally to customers and partners. WIOA Title I staff and Bureau of Workforce Partnership and Operations staff share the responsibilities of career services for all customers. This includes conducting initial assessment of customer needs, presenting workshops, assisting customers in the Career Resource Center and conducting more in-depth assessments based on customer needs. The Business Solutions Team coordinates outreach efforts to job seekers and employers by all partners. Wagner-Peyser, as well as other partners, refer customers to the Title II Adult Education and Literacy partners as customer need is identified. The Title II partners administer assessment testing and remediation to job seekers at the PA CareerLink® centers in the local workforce development area. Space is provided to the Title II partners at the PA CareerLink® centers to conduct these services. PA CareerLink® staff conduct outreach to the Adult Basic Education and high school equivalency (HSE) credential classes to promote PA CareerLink® services to interested job seekers. Monetary contribution on our Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) is obtained based upon usage of our facility and is recognized as a part of the facilities costs.

Indian and Native American Program

Partner(s):

Council of Three Rivers American Indian Center, Inc.

The Indian and Native American (INA) Employment and Training Program helps qualifying American Indians, Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians obtain employment in occupations that provide a wage that leads to self-sufficiency. These programs include more fully developing academic, occupational, and literacy skills, and entrepreneurial skills training to make individuals more competitive in the workforce. Furthermore, the program promotes economic and social development in accordance with the goals and values of the community. The INA program also provides financial assistance for education, career and training services, and other supportive services that will help individuals obtain occupational skills, industry recognized credentials, and postsecondary education that provide knowledge and skills necessary for better paying jobs. Resource contributions are based on a programmatic/in-kind relationship as needed.

Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Program

Partner(s):

PathStone Corporation, Inc.

The National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) is a nationally directed, locally administered program of services for migrant and seasonal farmworkers (MSFW). The program partners with community organizations, state agencies, and State Monitor Advocates to provide appropriate career and training services, youth services, housing assistance services, and related services to eligible MSFWs and their dependents. NFJP grantees partner with the one-stop system for integrated services for farmworkers and their families. Resource contributions are based on a programmatic/in-kind relationship as needed.

Job Corps

Partner(s):

*Equus Workforce Solutions
PA Outreach and Admissions*

Job Corps is a national program that operates in partnership with states and communities, LWDBs, one-stop centers and partners, and other youth programs to provide academic, career and technical education, service-learning, and social opportunities primarily in a residential setting, for low-income young people. The objective of Job Corps is to support responsible citizenship and provide young people, ages 16-24 with the skills that lead to successful careers that will result in economic self-sufficiency and opportunities for advancement in in-demand occupations or the Armed Forces, or enrollment in postsecondary education, including an apprenticeship program. Monetary contribution on our Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) is obtained based upon square footage and staffing at the PA CareerLink® and is applied toward applicable line items.

Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)

Partner(s):

*Greater Erie Community Action Committee
PathStone Corporation, Inc.
AARP*

The SCSEP is a community service and work-based job training program for older Americans, authorized by the Older Americans Act. The program provides training for low-income, unemployed older Americans and supportive services that allow them to participate in the training. Participants also have access to employment assistance through American Job Centers (PA CareerLink®). Participants must be at least 55 years old, unemployed, and have a family income of no more than 125% of the federal poverty level. SCSEP participants gain work experience in a variety of community service activities at local non-profit and public facilities, including schools, hospitals, day-care centers, and senior centers. Nationally, the program provides over 40 million community service hours to public and non-profit agencies, allowing them to enhance and provide needed services. These sites are referred to as “host agencies.” Participants work an average of 20 hours per week and are paid the highest of federal, state, or local minimum wage, or the comparable wage for similar employment. This training serves as a bridge to unsubsidized employment opportunities for participants. Monetary contribution on our Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) is obtained based upon usage of our facility and is recognized as a part of the facilities costs.

Trade Adjustment Assistance Activities

Partner(s):

PA Department of Labor and Industry

Trade Act programs are focused on getting participants reemployed and ensuring those individuals maintain employment. The TAA Program was first established at the USDOL by the Trade Act of 1974 and has been amended several times. Individual workers who are members of the certified worker group apply for benefits and services at a PA CareerLink® office. Individual workers who meet the qualifying criteria may receive job training; income support in the form of Trade Readjustment Allowances (TRA); job search and relocation allowances; Health Coverage Tax Credit (HCTC) as determined by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS); and for workers age 50 and older, a wage supplement in the form of Re-Employment Trade Adjustment Assistance (RTAA; (ATAA)). Additionally, all workers covered by a certification are eligible for employment and case-management services, including basic

and individualized career services either through the TAA Program or through and in coordination with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and the Wagner-Peyser Act. Monetary contribution on our Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) is obtained based upon square footage and staffing at the PA CareerLink® and is applied toward applicable line items.

Jobs for Veterans

Partner(s):

PA Department of Labor and Industry

Jobs for Veterans is a PA Department of Industry administered program which assures the commonwealth will be able to provide special individualized services to disabled veterans. Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) staff work in conjunction with PA CareerLink® partners to identify veterans and establish an appropriate plan to meet the individuals' employment and training needs. These specialized counselors work directly with disabled veterans in the provision of labor exchange services, securing appropriate training services and obtaining appropriate employment at a family sustaining wage. In addition, the Jobs for Veterans allows for Local Veterans Employment Representatives to do employer outreach and promote veterans as job seekers who have highly marketable skills and experience. Monetary contribution on our Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) is obtained based upon square footage and staffing at the PA CareerLink® and is applied toward applicable line items.

Community Service Block Grants

Partner(s):

Community Action, Inc.

PathStone Corporation, Inc.

Venango-Crawford Office of Economic Opportunity

Warren-Forest Economic Opportunity Council

Community Action Association of PA

The mission of the Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) is to provide a full range of services and activities having a measurable impact on the cause of poverty in a community or those areas of a community where poverty is a particularly acute problem. Only federally designated Community Action Agencies (CAA) receive funding. Ameliorating the causes and conditions of poverty take on a variety of community engagement activities and collaborative activism to remove obstacles that block the achievement of self-sufficiency; i.e. employment and training resources; community stakeholder collaboration; literacy activities; obtaining adequate housing; grassroots activities that provide intervention to the causes of poverty; addressing the needs of youth through programming and coordination; and increased engagement in community planning and improvement activities. Monetary contribution on our Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) is obtained based upon usage of our facility and is recognized as a part of the facilities costs.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

Partner(s):

Clarion County Department of Human Services

Crawford County Department of Human Services

Erie County Department of Human Services

Forest County Department of Human Services

Venango County Department of Human Services

*Warren County Department of Human Services
St. Benedict Education Center*

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program is designed to help needy families achieve self-sufficiency. States receive grants to design and operate programs that accomplish one of the purposes of the TANF Program. The four purposes of the TANF Program are to: 1) Provide assistance to needy families so that children can be cared for in their own homes; 2) Reduce the dependency of needy parents by promoting job preparation, work and marriage; 3) Prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies; 4) Encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families. WorkReady and the Employment and Retention Network (EARN) are the TANF employment programs in Pennsylvania. Monetary contribution on our Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) is obtained based upon square footage and staffing at the PA CareerLink® and is applied toward applicable line items.

Rapid Response

Partner(s):

PA Department of Labor and Industry

Rapid Response services include early intervention business services that assist workers and employers during the entire business layoff cycle. Rapid Response coordinates layoff aversion and outplacement services for employers and workers impacted by layoffs, plant closures, or natural disasters. Monetary contribution on our Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) is obtained based upon square footage and staffing at the PA CareerLink® and is applied toward applicable line items.

Foreign Labor Certification

Partner(s):

PA Department of Labor and Industry

Services include H2A (Temporary Agricultural Program) and H2B (Temporary Non-Agricultural Program) to help United States employers fill jobs while protecting United States and foreign workers. Monetary contribution on our Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) is obtained based upon usage of our facility and is recognized as a part of the facilities costs.

Re-Entry Employment Opportunities Program

Partner(s):

Equus Workforce Solutions

The Re-Entry Employment Opportunities Program is designed to assist individuals who have been involved in the criminal justice system. A Youth Re-Entry grant was awarded in 2020 in collaboration with our regional partner, West Central Job Partnership to provide services to justice-involved youth through our program services contractor, Equus Workforce Solutions. When grant funding is not available in the local workforce area, PA CareerLink® staff serve the ex-offender population with a range of support activities. Resource contribution on our Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) is obtained based upon square footage and staffing at the PA CareerLink® and is applied toward applicable line items.

Department of Housing and Urban Development – Employment and Training Activities

Partner(s):

Clarion County Housing Authority

At the time of development of this local plan, only one housing authority in the local workforce development area, Clarion County Housing Authority, has received employment and training activity funding from the Department of Housing and Urban Development. We continue to coordinate with Clarion County Housing Authority, with PA CareerLink® staff working with this agency to provide job search services and participate in meetings. The housing authority offers space to conduct these activities as an in-kind contribution. Resource contributions are based on a programmatic/in-kind relationship as needed.

YouthBuild

Partner(s): N/A

The local workforce development area does not have a YouthBuild Program. Resource contributions would be based on a programmatic/in-kind relationship as needed.

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)]

Expectation: The narrative must explain how the local board plans to facilitate access to services provided through the one-stop service delivery system, with evidence of efforts to expand access regarding the provision of employment, training, education and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly concerning individuals with barriers. Consideration must be given to ways that technology, transportation and information sharing help expedite service access to customers, especially to remote and rural areas, target populations and individuals with disabilities. Available training programs and outreach activities must be described regarding services that partner agencies provide, and how to access such services.

The narrative must describe specifically how the local board facilitates service access with a consideration of the following:

- Plans to leverage resources and expand capacity within the local area workforce delivery system;

The local board leverages partner programs to provide more customer services and has expanded access through building relationships with existing community infrastructure. These partners can provide access to online resources to increase customer flow and provide career services to the broader community. This is further enhanced by the Ring Central technology that has been implemented in the local area, thereby providing a platform for communicating and transferring documentation in a safe and secure environment. Ring Central is a global provider of cloud-based business communication and collaboration solutions that provides increased accessibility. It allows for secure transfer of documentation, as well as accessible connection on devices. It provides a platform where individuals can communicate and collaborate, taking into consideration all hearing, vision, mobility, and cognitive disabilities. It has capability for customizable fonts for easier legibility, quick navigation for those with vision limitations, visual voice messages for the hearing impaired, and closed captioning. The introduction of this technology to the local workforce system increases access to programs and services, especially in the more rural areas, as it can be used with mobile devices. The local board will continue to expand access and use of technology to increase opportunities to serve individuals with barriers to employment so they can enter into a career pathway.

- Facilitates access to services provided through the one-stop delivery system (including facilitating access in remote areas);

The local board leverages partner programs to provide more customer services and supports. In an effort to achieve broader outreach, the local workforce system has developed relationships with community organizations that include but are not limited to Community Resources, Inc., Voices for Independence, UPMC's Diversity and Equity Division, Climate Changers, and others that can benefit from or contribute to local workforce system services and staff facilitate smooth linkages of new customers to PA CareerLink®. The implementation of Ring Central technology has benefited access to services, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. The experiences of using Ring Central during the pandemic has opened up opportunities to expand our outreach post-pandemic as well.

- Describes efforts to provide quality services to remote and rural areas using technology and other means;

Ring Central technology and the increased availability of community-accessible broadband through partnerships with ITDRC have expanded access to employment, training, education, and supportive services in our local workforce area, especially in the more remote areas that have had limited access in the past. The safety and security of using Ring Central has created opportunities to continue service delivery during the most restrictive phase of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- In conjunction with a WIOA participant's interaction with the one-stop delivery system, and program case managers in particular, describes how and when participant or employer information is entered into PA's workforce development system of record. If a program case manager does not enter some or all of the participant and employer information, describe who enters the information. Describe when the participant or employer information is entered into PA's workforce development system of record in relation to the time services were actually performed.

WIOA participant information is entered into PA's workforce development system of record by the case manager and/or career advisor within the timeframe required by the PA Department of Labor and Industry.

- Describes other state-owned case management information system(s) employed in the local area that WIOA participants' information is entered and stored (examples include, but are not limited to Unemployment Insurance, Adult Education and OVR). The local area must indicate the program partner that is the responsible entity that uses the case management information system;

Each program partner is responsible for entering their respective participant information into PA's workforce development system of record for those with authorizations. Title II enters information into the PA Department of Education database system (E-data). Results of CASAS assessments are provided to Title I and Title III staff for entering scores into PA's workforce development system of record.

The Title II Adult Education and Literacy provider conducts the CASAS assessments needed for participants in the local workforce area. Through the comprehensive level of coordination in that

effort, the Title II provider is able to identify early in the process any participants who would benefit from their services. Additionally, through individual interviews, including discussions about barriers, education, and education goals, PA CareerLink® staff are able to identify participants in need of Title II Adult Education and Literacy services. PA CareerLink® staff have a strong collaboration with the Title II provider, and a strong referral system exists to ensure the participants receive needed services to assist them in their employment and training activities. PA CareerLink® staff use PA's workforce development system of record to submit referrals to the Title II provider, and this system is used to communicate referral status. Using this customer-focused approach increases access to services and barrier mitigation.

- Describes the process that identifies participants not provided with WIOA Title I and Title III career and training services but are enrolled in other WIOA programs. Describe how and when these WIOA participants' services and activities are entered into PA's workforce development system of record;

All Labor Exchange services provided by WIOA Title I and Title III are entered into PA's workforce development system of record within the timeframe required by the PA Department of Labor and Industry. Referrals are made within PA's workforce development system of record with Title II adult basic education as well as Title IV Office of Vocational Rehabilitation services, respectively.

- Lists non-Commonwealth owned and leased information management system(s) employed in the local area to aid in the management of WIOA programs (include information management system(s) used by contracted service providers). If such system(s) is used, describe the process the local area uses to align the WIOA participant information entered into the local area's additional non-Commonwealth owned and leased case management information system(s) with PA's workforce development system of record. The local board must provide a rationalization for why this data alignment process with PA's workforce development system of record is an optimum utilization of time, effort, and funds;

No non-Commonwealth information management systems are being used in the local workforce area; the only system being used is PA's workforce development system of record.

- Participates in the development of Career Pathways that provide access to employment and training for individuals in adult education programs;

A career pathways development initiative is currently underway in the local workforce area. The career pathways are being developed using the experience and successes of the Career Pathways Alliance of Erie County to develop similar career pathways for implementation across the six-county local workforce area. It is anticipated that the career pathways will be available for implementation by June 2021. In close relationship with the Career Pathways Alliance of Erie County, the local workforce system is afforded opportunities to tap into the strong relationships with multiple school districts in developing career pathways that are recognized and implemented in the local school districts. The strong relationship with Erie Together, who manages and facilitates the Career Pathways Alliance, further assists in increasing outreach and access and expands opportunities for those individuals with barriers such as poverty.

- Utilizes partners' program information sharing in ways that stress the importance of getting the information to customers quickly, as well as ensuring that communication is accessible;

The local board hired a Communication Specialist to improve the ability to communicate information to customers as quickly as possible and to enhance the information being made available to the public. The local board is working with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and other divisions of the PA Department of Labor and Industry to ensure that the information is ADA accessible as well, given the shift to virtual communications and services as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, partner meetings are held monthly to share information and discuss system improvements to continue to increase access to programs and services. This includes but is not limited to the One Stop Operator, Title II Adult Education, EARN, Title I WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Programs, Youth Re-Entry Programs, TANF Programs, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, Veterans Services, Wagner-Peyser Services, etc. Meetings are held as well with front line PA CareerLink® partner staff to discuss program challenges and opportunities, increasing access through technology, etc.

- Identifies strategies for better meeting the needs of individuals with barriers to employment (such as improving digital literacy skills); and

The local board is evaluating ways to increase opportunities to serve individuals with a barrier to employment to enable them to enter into a career pathway and participate in the labor market. The local board is partnering with advocacy groups and community organizations with expertise in serving individuals with barriers to employment and leveraging community services to develop career pathways. The local board continues working toward identifying physical and programmatic barriers and recommending ways to improve access to ensure more job seekers can connect with a career pathway and a family-sustaining job.

- Ensures access to services, i.e. interpreters and translated documents, for English language learners, as well as for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing.

The local board continues to evaluate ways to improve access to services through partnering with community agencies with expertise in serving individuals with disabilities and those with barriers to employment, ensuring that reasonable accommodations are available to assist those individuals in accessing the services of the local workforce system.

There are two (2) comprehensive PA CareerLink® sites in the local area where any client in the area may seek services. Public hours and locations for the comprehensive sites are advertised in PA's workforce development system of record at www.pacareerlink.pa.gov.

The PA CareerLink® has developed partnerships with many local community agencies that work in partnership with PA CareerLink® to provide support and assistance to individuals with barriers to employment. St. Benedict Education Center, the Employment Advancement and Retention Network (EARN) local program contractor, provides job training to address soft skills for individuals who are referred through the County Assistance Offices. Through EARN, clients participate in multiple core and non-core activities and abide by the corresponding program criteria. Where appropriate, the services of PA CareerLink® and other partners are utilized to achieve client goals. Such partnership building has resulted in improved outreach to these special populations, especially individuals with barriers to employment.

Partnerships with the Senior Community Service Employment Program agencies provide an opportunity

to enhance skills under the Older Americans Act through programming for eligible individuals who are in need of additional training to re-engage the workforce.

Co-enrollment has occurred, based on eligibility, with programs such as the Youth Re-Entry grant designed to assist individuals with significant barriers to employment by providing short-term, modular training with stackable credentials. These training opportunities are created and implemented using input from employers in targeted industry sectors, as well as expertise in developing curriculum from adult literacy and education providers, career and technical centers, Community Education Councils, etc. Further, partnering with Title II adult literacy and education partners and the services they provide will serve to increase and enhance the opportunities for success for individuals with barriers to employment.

Virtual services/technology has been implemented and continues to be evaluated to allow case managers to more effectively provide services off-site, in rural areas with limited or no internet connectivity.

Programs and facilities within the local workforce development area are compliant with WIOA Section 188 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. This is ensured through regular program/facilities monitoring conducted by the NWPA Job Connect staff monitor and EO Officer, as well as through state ADA compliance reviews conducted annually. PA CareerLink® staff training sessions are conducted regularly to ensure that staff members are prepared to provide the best services possible to individuals with disabilities. Resources include but are not limited to Test Telephone or Teletypewriter for the Deaf (TTY), ADA accessible desks, computers, etc. The TTY telecommunication device as well as the availability, upon request, of a PA certified American Sign Language interpreter assists in communication access for Deaf and Hard of Hearing participants. Coordination with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) helps to maximize service and funding opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

The committees of the NWPA Job Connect Board support and advise the board in the establishment and delivery of services to individuals with barriers to employment, including individuals with disabilities.

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)]

Expectation: The narrative must indicate how compliance with WIOA section 188, including the civil rights and equal opportunities, and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 will be assured for those that avail themselves to the services and resources (and that resources are at an appropriate reading level for the general population) of the local area one-stop delivery system (including regional designated services locations and “mobile” one-stops).

Factors being considered include, but are not limited to:

- Listing key technology and materials available for individuals with disabilities to use at the one-stop;

The local board ensures that the one-stop system includes assistive technology available for individuals with disabilities. Examples of this include Dragon Naturally Speaking, Windows 10 has an

“Ease of Access Center,” low glare monitor screen, adjustable workstation, alternate mini keyboard, alternate trackball mouse, foam wrist rests, TTY phone, Ring Central system with closed caption capability, chat room, amplification features, large screen monitors, and intercom allowing hands-free peer-to-peer use.

- Describing operational support for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities;

The needs of individuals with disabilities are supported through the provision of reasonable accommodations and assistive technology. This includes the many assistive technologies identified above, as well as Propio language services, interpreters, Braille, ADA accessibility reviews, and staff training to ensure equal opportunity compliance and best practices. Additionally, the one-stop system and local board are working to help employers realize the individual talents of individuals with disabilities and to help all workers realize their full potential in the workplace.

- Describing the efforts to address the needs of individuals with limited English proficiency, or LEP;

LEP plans are in place that ensure the services and information are provided to LEP individuals to help bridge the language barrier between staff and all customers. LEP plans are updated to include any new or relevant information to assist individuals with limited English proficiency. Our Title II Adult Education partner conducts assessments for PA CareerLink® participants and plays a key role in providing comprehensive LEP services in the local workforce development area to assist in meeting the LEP needs of participants, partners, and employers. Local supports such as a language line are in place to assist in addressing LEP needs in the local workforce area. This language line enables PA CareerLink® staff to connect individuals with translators capable of speaking to customers in multiple languages.

- If applicable, describing program partner(s), as well as other stakeholder(s) actions related to the subject matter of this question;

The local board hired a consultant, Synergy Consulting Partners, LLC, to develop an Accessibility Protocol and training for staff on ADA accessibility in 2018. The purpose of the Accessibility Protocol guide that was developed was to provide guidance for implementing operational requirements under WIOA. The protocol document was distributed as a resource for the local board, as well as one stop partners and any other interested party. It provided a better understanding for ensuring a fully integrated service delivery system in the areas of physical, communication, and programmatic/service accessibility compliance under WIOA. The goal of the project was to gain widespread understanding of the Americans with Disabilities Act requirements under WIOA and to ensure meaningful accessibility for all customers. The Accessibility Protocol is in use and part of the memorandum of understanding among the partners. We continue to investigate best practices and ways to embrace barrier removal and universal accessibility of the services provided via virtual technologies that have become necessary due to the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure accessibility for individuals with disabilities. Additionally, the local board was awarded a digital literacy grant from the PA Department of Labor and Industry to provide workstations and technology at local agencies in the community such as Voices for Independence and Community Resources for Independence to provide virtual connections to PA CareerLink® staff and services to assist individuals with barriers. These workstations will be approved by the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation to ensure that they are accessible for individuals with disabilities. The local board is also partnering with the University

of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC) Foundation and their Diversity and Inclusion Division and Center for Social Impact to assist populations with barriers to gain access to services and employment. This project is currently in preliminary stages of development and the group will be working closely with the local board and its one stop service delivery system to identify its actions and goals. A new local board member has also been recently appointed in Erie County representing the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, a major healthcare provider serving the local communities. This new board member will strengthen the commitment for this project as well.

- Describing local area staff trainings related to the subject matter (e.g. civil rights, equal opportunity, LEP, physical and programmatic accessibility, disability etiquette and sensitivity training) presented in this section and indicate when the trainings occurred;

The local board requested technical assistance from the PA Department of Labor and Industry's Equal Opportunity Office to increase the quality and frequency of local training on equal opportunity, limited English proficiency, physical and programmatic accessibility, sensitivity training, etc. The local board participated in equal opportunity training conducted by the Office of Equal Opportunity in Harrisburg on April 15, 2021 to ensure the local board was aware of its responsibility for equal opportunity in the local workforce development area. An equal opportunity training plan has since been developed and implemented to ensure equal opportunity training is provided to the one stop partner staff on topics that may include but not be limited to effective communication strategies, EO policy and complaint procedures, hiring practices involving disability, increasing outreach to underserved groups, diversity and inclusion, etc. Trainings will be conducted regularly beginning in early 2021.

- Listing the One-Stop program partners participating in local staff training indicative of the subject matter noted in this section; and

Those individuals participating in the training as outlined above will be documented and reports of such training will be submitted to the Office of Equal Opportunity annually with the EO Compliance Review of the local area.

- Describing L&I's Office of Equal Opportunity annual compliance reviews and any technical assistance provided.

The local board will complete and submit the required compliance documentation to the Office of Equal Opportunity as requested. Any technical assistance provided by the Office of Equal Opportunity will be included in the required compliance review.

The NWPA Job Connect Board requires that the PA CareerLink® centers in Erie and Venango Counties and any affiliated sites are fully accessible to any individuals who may be interested in accessing employment and training services. Each site is certified for compliance with EO/ADA requirements by the Office of Equal Opportunity, PA Department of Labor and Industry. Compliance reviews are completed annually. All public access sites including any special sites that may be developed will be fully accessible with reasonable accommodations. The system will be encouraged to partner with agencies that serve individuals with ADA needs, reducing the need for special equipment and/or software, etc., and leveraging available resources. Overall, the local board promotes full accessibility by requiring that its One-Stop Operator and One-Stop Partners:

- Conduct and participate in training of staff members and partner personnel regarding services to individuals with disabilities;
- Provide outreach and referral to agencies within the local area, such as the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation that offer services to individuals with disabilities;
- Maintain an updated list of resources available within the local area for use by staff and customers in accessing needed services;
- Advocate for individuals with disabilities and barriers to employment by advising and informing them about resources available within the PA CareerLink® sites and throughout the local area and coaching them on how to apply for needed resources;
- Provide access to bi- and multi-lingual personnel to assist customers with language barriers;
- Provide assistive technology items for persons with disabilities, such as adaptive keyboards and/or adjustable work stations;
- Conduct a physical inspection of all assistive technology/equipment to ensure functionality on a regular basis;
- Coordinate staff training on assistive technology and equipment to ensure that personnel are fully trained in usage and application, with assistance from OVR staff;
- Help individuals with disabilities who may require additional assistance with the registration process, making referrals as appropriate to OVR while maintaining access to all services for the individuals;
- Maintain required federal and state notices and postings at all service sites;
- Provides access to American Sign Language interpreters upon request.

ADA and sensitivity training for PA CareerLink® and partner staff is provided by OVR staff. All PA CareerLink® staff and partners will be required to participate in these trainings and any Office of Equal Opportunity trainings and other regular trainings on various EO topics as well. Any required changes to the system will be implemented. Additionally, the Office of Equal Opportunity in Harrisburg conducts annual compliance reviews within the local workforce development area and submits a report to NWPAs Job Connect's EO Officer, who facilitates the completion of any needed EO changes or improvements. Technical assistance is provided by the Office of Equal Opportunity as needed. The local board's Fiscal and Monitoring Committee conducts oversight and ensures compliance for the equal opportunity functions of the board and makes recommendations to the full board on equal opportunity responsibilities and actions.

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)]

Expectation: Narrative must describe how the local board determines the variety, quantity and quality of workforce services (i.e. employment, education and training activities), the service providers and the activities that support this endeavor.

Factors being considered include, but are not limited to:

- Explaining the local board's periodic process that may employ regional and local area labor market information, High Priority Occupation list, as well as stakeholder input to help inform and meet workforce activity goals and objectives;

The local board competitively bids the services of a one stop operator for the workforce development area. The one stop operator oversees one stop operations and meets regularly with

partner management to discuss service access, service delivery, staffing, any complaints, and local workforce initiatives. The Business Solutions Team of the local one stop system meets biweekly and is responsible for addressing the needs of employers. The local board's Workforce Solutions Committee is responsible for oversight of the service needs provided to job seekers in the local area to assist in helping them to become employed in family-sustaining employment. The Business Solutions Committee of the local board is responsible for ensuring that quality services are provided to meet the needs of businesses in the local area. The local board reviews and discusses local workforce services through its committees, as well as during the workforce development discussion at its public meetings to ensure continuous improvement of the local workforce system and the services of its contracted providers. The local board continues to oversee efforts to promote continuous improvement and quality service delivery in the one stop system through its local monitoring activities as well.

The local board conducts outreach to local employers and legislators annually during the High Priority Occupation petition period. Stakeholders are invited to provide evidence-based recommendations to add occupations to the high priority occupation list. This provides an opportunity for review of regional and local labor market information, in-depth review of the current High Priority Occupation list, as well as opportunities for stakeholders to provide input on occupational critical needs in the local area such as emergency medical technicians and paramedics. This is an important process for local businesses to position their company and our region to receive the state support needed to prepare candidates for in demand, hard-to-fill jobs, as well as providing a process for local legislators to identify constituent needs, which also include employer needs.

- Describing how the board projects the needs of employers, workers and jobseekers, including completion of pipeline needs;

The local board partners with local economic development on skills gap strategic planning and studies to identify local workforce and pipeline needs such as the recent workforce needs assessment being conducted by procured consultants. The local board also coordinates with education to identify new courses of study to meet employer and jobseeker demand. Representatives of local education are included on the local board and its committees.

- Describing the local board's outreach plan designed to better understand employers and their needs as well as service providers (e.g., employment, training and education);

The local board has enhanced its communications effort by hiring a Communications Specialist who posts regularly via website, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, etc. Employer and job seeker blogs are posted to encourage employer and service provider input into the workforce development services provided, as well as those needed by the communities in the local area. Job fairs, including virtual job fairs, recruitments, surveys, and focus groups are used in an effort to hear the voice of the customer. The local board also has a standing agenda item at its regular board meetings for workforce development discussions. Board staff participate on Next Gen industry partnership meetings to ensure communication from local employers gets back to the local board. This input is discussed at the board committee level as well to provide recommendations for informing board strategies and planning.

- Describing how the local board will ensure sufficient numbers of quality eligible providers that meet the needs of employers and individuals;

The local board incorporates a competitive bid process for awarding its WIOA Title I program services contract for the local area. This is well advertised and reaches out beyond the local area and the state of Pennsylvania to ensure that there are sufficient numbers of potential eligible program services providers to provide the services needed by job seekers and employers. The most recent competitive bid process awarded the WIOA Title I program services contract to Equus Workforce Solutions, as well as a separate and distinct contract for the one stop operator function that included all appropriate firewall assurances. The one stop operator meets monthly with all partners to oversee operations and discuss service access, service delivery, staffing, complaints, and one stop initiatives. The one stop operator staff also convenes the Business Solutions Team meetings biweekly. The Business Solutions Team is responsible for addressing the needs of businesses.

Workforce development in Northwest PA is partnership focused. It draws resources and momentum from multiple entities to provide a collaborative talent development system that engages employers and job seekers at the local level. Through regular, structured, cross-agency meetings of the partners and Business Solutions Team, information is shared and strategies are developed, as appropriate, to address any deficiencies or concerns and ensure that the services meet the needs of local employers and job seekers.

- Briefly explaining how the local board employs the procurement process cycle to support continuous improvement;

The local board used the procurement process to gather bids for providing a local workforce needs assessment to identify underserved and targeted populations to connect them with services that lead to training and skills needed to gain employment in in-demand occupations. This assessment will also enhance outreach by providing a locally tailored tool to continually update local workforce needs in real time. This process will provide guidance for increasing training opportunities in the local area and thereby continuous improvement of the local workforce system.

- Describing the local board's oversight roles assigned to the board and how it is implemented throughout the workforce service delivery system to support continuous improvement;
- Describing the local board's assessment and monitoring process of the service providers; include the review of training provider's performance data as well as qualitative information;

Members of the local board that participate in the Fiscal/Monitoring Committee are involved in the monitoring of the one stop centers, one stop operator, fiscal agent, state monitoring of the local area, etc., to ensure compliance. Monitoring will be done frequently to determine early on any risk or weaknesses so that technical assistance can be provided to ensure the success and longevity of the contract. As part of this process, the committee and members of the board are involved in the evaluation of the providers and make recommendations to the board regarding quality of performance. A committee of board members, CLEOs, and partners are involved in the selection of providers. A separate committee determines pay-for-performance measures for WIOA Title I contracts and evaluates the provider's performance. The results of these monitoring activities are shared with the full board.

- Describing the local board’s review, tabulation and consideration of customer satisfaction surveys; and

The Fiscal/Monitoring Committee will be involved in ensuring the firewall between the Operator and Title I provider to include surveys of the partners. The Fiscal/Monitoring Committee will review the surveys of customers done by the staff of the NWPA Job Connect that include job seekers and employers. These are done in addition to satisfaction surveys by the PA CareerLink®.

- Describing the local board’s application of L&I’s Eligible Training Provider policy; include strategies to grow in number and improve the overall quality of eligible training provider participation in the statewide eligible training provider list.

The local board recognizes the critical role training providers play in providing inclusive, equitable, and effective service delivery for individuals with barriers to employment. The local board is working within its level of authority under state policy to avoid imposing burdens that would inhibit the participation of quality training providers. The local board works toward providing a comprehensive list of quality training providers that meet performance standards and provide training to program participants in a manner consistent with industry needs in the local area. NWPA Job Connect annually reviews the High Priority Occupation (HPO) list from the commonwealth. Training providers must meet requirement criteria to be approved for eligibility. They can petition the NWPA Job Connect to add programs to the High Priority Occupation List if they can provide documentation of local job availability and wages for an occupation. Training programs must meet performance benchmarks regarding program completion, job placement rates, earnings, and credential attainment of students. Program applications must include a program description, program length, tuition and costs, prerequisites, and credentials that can be attained. The NWPA Job Connect provides information sessions for any interested area training providers for navigating the eligible training provider state system. This provides an opportunity for input to identify any new courses of study to meet employer and job seeker demand, to discuss labor market changes, performance and employer needs. Email communication is conducted regularly with training providers, blast emails are distributed annually to ensure local eligible training providers are aware that they may apply to be on the ETPL list. Through communications with its providers, the NWPA Job Connect ensures that schools providing training in demand occupations apply to be included on the ETPL. Input from private sector employers on the NWPA Job Connect, as well as the economic development partners, helps the NWPA Job Connect to understand employers needs and identifies any new or emerging occupations to be placed on the HPO list as needed. The NWPA Job Connect will continue to engage employers to identify skill sets that job seekers need and work with the schools and training providers to ensure that the training provided meets the needs of the employer or industry cluster.

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)]

Expectation: Narrative must describe all WIOA Title I adult, or A, and dislocated worker, or DW, employment and training activities in the local area, including those involving basic literacy skills, and how activities are assessed. Additionally, the narrative must reflect how the local board selects and determines availability of A and DW activities for the benefit of participants, including individuals with barriers to employment.

Factors being considered include, but are not limited to:

- Describe how the local board identifies and then determines the types of A and DW employment and training activities that will be needed in the future;

The local board has undergone several recent evaluations with regard to A and DW employment and training activities in the local workforce system. Two of those evaluations were prescribed and funded by the PA Department of Labor and Industry. The first was a value stream analysis in 2018 and the second evaluation targeted focus groups of individuals either using or employed within the local workforce system. The value stream analysis resulted in the development of a Lean Governance Council that meets regularly to identify opportunities for continuous improvements for service delivery to customers. The second evaluation by the state's consultant has been postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The local board also embarked on a Workforce Needs Assessment funded through the PA Department of Labor and Industry to enhance a local board strategy to best meet the needs of employers and job seekers who participate in the local workforce system. This assessment will help to identify underserved and targeted populations to connect them with services that lead to training and skills needed for employment in in-demand occupations. It will further enhance outreach efforts by providing a locally tailored tool to continually update local workforce needs in real time. Although progress on this assessment has been slowed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the consultant's work has continued with focus groups and surveys of employers and job seekers, with an added component of capturing information about working virtually and addressing communications and childcare due to COVID-19 closures. The results of this local Workforce Needs Assessment will facilitate improved operations and better outreach as well as outcomes for workforce program participants. It is anticipated that an initial summary of the findings will be available by the third quarter of the PY2020 program year.

The local area has also conducted a Core Values Session as part of the continuous improvement effort. This process promoted the development of core values to provide the foundation for how we deliver services in the local area. The core values are consistent with the local board's mission and vision and include Display Professionalism; Communicate Proactively; Command Knowledge; Collaborate Actively; Extend Respect and Protect Privacy; and Perform Reliably.

The local board understands the need to support "pivoting" due to changing labor markets or partner dynamics, especially due to the recent COVID-19 pandemic and how this pandemic will likely affect how workforce development must evolve in the future. The local board will remain open to the emergent nature of employer-voiced skill needs and how the local workforce system can adapt to fill those needs.

The local board, through its committees, works toward understanding, analyzing, and implementing workforce development policy and planning that identifies key growth industries and promotes high-quality employment and family sustaining wages for workers, families and communities. The local board considers the impact of technology on work, workers, employers, jobs, and society and strives to promote improvements through technology to ready the workforce for the jobs of the future through lifelong learning. Through this process, Adult and DW activities are evaluated for any gaps in existing program activities that will be needed in the future.

1. Identify the local board's key assessment criteria and processes used to select A and DW employment and training activities (include key procurement steps that lead toward a complete assessment of the activities);

As noted above, the local board recognized the priority for conducting a local Workforce Needs Assessment to move from status quo to the employment and training activities that will be needed to support changing labor markets and employer workforce needs. The local board's procurement process was followed to contract with a talented and experienced consultant to improve outreach and the provision of employment and training services, especially for individuals with barriers. The consultant is continuing to move through each project phase by using technology and it is anticipated that an initial summary report will be available in the third quarter of this program year, with a final report to follow that will allow for implementation of the findings in the next program year.

- Explain the local board's consideration of future revisions and adoption of A and DW activity assessment criteria and processes;

The local board currently awaits the results of the local Workforce Needs Assessment for developing and implementing strategies and objectives for continuous improvement of program services. The local board embraces the importance of evaluation of program services and will develop strategies and targets based on the findings of the local Workforce Needs Assessment and as additional information gathering and learning dictates.

- Articulate the board's effort to attract a greater quantity of Title I A and DW training providers including online providers;

The local board works to solicit training providers in order to fill specific gaps in current training offerings identified through part of our work with the local area's employers. The local board promotes the addition of training providers to the ETPL through publicizing the process for training provider approval through our website; soliciting training providers for specific needs related to an industry, occupation, or location; and accepting applications from training providers throughout the program year for career training for occupations on the high priority occupation list. Board committees review and discuss the eligible training provider list to ensure enough training choices for customers.

- Identify key employment and training activity discrepancies (if any) and solutions the board is considering and planning to implement;

Based on full board and board committee discussions, as well as community and stakeholder discussions, it was determined that there is a critical need for training emergency medical technicians (EMTs) and paramedics within the local area. Details on the HPO petition process for adding occupations critically needed within the area was shared to add these critical occupations to the HPO list, as well as identify eligible training providers in the area. Work continues on this effort during the development of this local plan.

- Explain how the local board determines the quantity and quality of available A and DW employment and training activities;

The local board committees review and discuss the Adult and Dislocated Worker employment and training activities in the local area to ensure quantity and quality of services available to customers. Performance information on training providers listed on the ETPL are also evaluated and an illustrated breakdown is provided on the NWSA Job Connect website. The ETPL and the High Priority Occupation lists are regular agenda items for both the Workforce Solutions Committee and the Business Solutions Committee of the local board.

- Explain the local board's WIOA Title I Priority of Service policy in brief terms (do not attach the policy). Explain how the board is continuing to review local area labor force data to support local area discretionary priority groups;

The NWSA Job Connect Priority of Service Policy includes four groups of individuals that the commonwealth requires to be targeted for priority when providing individualized career services and training services in the WIOA Title I Adult program. These four targeted groups are public assistance recipients; other low-income individuals; individuals who are basic skills deficient; and individuals who are both underemployed and low-income. An additional local requirement has been added to the NWSA Job Connect Priority of Service Policy that an individual's residency must be considered in determining an individual's priority of service. Given the local area's close proximity to both Ohio and New York state borders, requests are sometimes received from out-of-state residents for individualized career services and training services in Northwest Pennsylvania. This significantly impacts the amount of funding available for the priority of service individuals residing in the local workforce development area. Given the significant number of layoffs and closures in Northwest Pennsylvania, the NWSA Job Connect determined that a residency priority be added to its policy. Individuals will be evaluated by PA CareerLink® staff for eligibility for priority of service and documentation will be included in the participant file of all individuals who are deemed eligible for priority of service.

The local board is conducting a Workforce Needs Assessment via a consultant that will identify priority populations that may currently be underserved. Through this process, the local board will increase awareness and outreach to those underserved populations of the services that are available through the local workforce system. In the interim, the local board committees continue to review and discuss the local labor market pool information as part of a standing meeting agenda item.

- Articulate the new emphasis WIOA has placed on the need to provide services to older youth and how the local board has responded to this requirement;

The local board is working with its partners to increase outreach and priority focus on out-of-school, disconnected youth. Meetings are held regularly with the WIOA Title I program contractor to enhance the outreach and recruitment of disconnected youth through the WIOA Out of School Youth program, as well as co-enrollment with a Youth Re-Entry Grant. The local board is looking to further develop a partnership with AmeriCorps to access other service providers in the local area that serve foster care youth, homeless youth, juvenile justice youth, and dropout youth. AmeriCorps members are often close in age to the target youth population and serve as peers to provide guidance and referrals.

- If used, explain the process implemented to transfer program funds between A and DW programs (as needed) to help ensure sufficient training opportunities for eligible participants; and

The local board may request from the PA Department of Labor and Industry a transfer of funds between the adult and dislocated worker funding streams to provide greater flexibility in meeting the workforce needs of the local area. Any such transfer of funds will be driven by a demonstrated need in a specific program and will be based on the ability to use these funds more effectively to achieve the objectives of the local area. For such transfer of funds to be approved, the transfer must not adversely impact the local area's capacity to adequately provide appropriate services to individuals due to the reduced funding in any given funding stream. The transfer must not adversely impact the local area's ability to achieve program performance measures as well.

- Describe the board's operational position and current actions relative to the development and promotion of Career Pathways, co-enrollment of participants across multiple WIOA programs, and work-based training activities such as apprenticeships and OJT.

The local board has contracted with an experienced career pathways consultant to develop career pathways for the rural counties of the local workforce area that align with those created and implemented in 11 school districts in Erie County through the work of the Erie County Career Pathways Alliance. This career pathways development process will benefit from the experiences of the Erie County project and result in a process for individuals to map their career path. Co-enrollment of participants is occurring with participants across the youth, adult, Trade, and Re-Entry grant funding streams. The local board was awarded an Apprenticeship Expansion grant that increased awareness of apprenticeship opportunities with local employers. A Pre-Apprenticeship Grant was also awarded that supports pre-apprenticeship development in the local area, as well as regional apprenticeship grants received and implemented with our regional partner, West Central Job Partnership. The local board has implemented the state's waiver for a sliding scale for OJT employers to assist in promoting and sustaining these services in the local area.

A primary focus of the PA CareerLink® is to provide comprehensive workforce development services, accessible to all employers, job seekers, including individuals with barriers to employment, as well as incumbent workers, that result in economic self-sufficiency and a workforce trained to employer specifications and prepared to compete in a global economy. Career services, both basic and individual, are available for eligible individuals. Training options include individual training accounts and on-the-job work-based training. Incumbent worker training options may be evaluated in the local workforce development area. Several committees of the NWPA Job Connect Board evaluate supply and demand and service offerings to provide oversight and recommend system improvements. Best practice research will be conducted as well. Committee recommendations are brought to the full board for consideration. System improvements often are implemented based on the work and recommendation of the NWPA Job Connect committees. PA CareerLink® system partners attend NWPA Job Connect meetings to provide valuable input and ensure that the strategic direction of NWPA Job Connect is aligned and implemented within the service delivery system.

Through partnership development and collaboration among PA CareerLink® partners under the leadership of the PA CareerLink® Operator, quality career services are made available to the Adult and Dislocated worker population. Service offerings include:

Career Services

- Determination of individual eligibility for services
- Outreach, intake, and orientation to the system
- Referral to PA CareerLink® partners, as well as other agencies as appropriate
- Computer-assisted assessment of skill levels, aptitudes, abilities, interests and values mapped to the needs of local employers
- Information on supportive services and community resources
- Provision of employment statistics information, including the provision of accurate information relating to local, regional, and national labor market areas
- Information on certified education and training providers; local performance outcomes of service providers
- Information regarding filing claims for unemployment compensation
- Information on the eligibility requirements for all partner employment and training programs
- Information on how the local area is performing on the local performance measures
- Information regarding resource room usage
- Internet browsing for job, information, and training searches
- Up-front triage that informs and directs customers to the services
- Job search assistance workshops, placement assistance, and career counseling
- Staff-assisted job development
- Staff-assisted workshops and job clubs
- Job matching and referral (i.e. testing and background checks)
- Staff-assisted, customized assessment of knowledge, skills, abilities, and interests
- Development of an Individualized Employment Plan
- Group counseling
- Individual counseling and career planning
- Internships and work experience linked to careers
- Financial literacy services
- English language acquisition and integrated education and training programs
- Follow-up services, including counseling regarding the workplace, for participants in workforce activities authorized under this subtitle that are placed in unsubsidized employment, for not less than 12 months after the first day of the employment
- Case management
- Short-term Prevocational Services, including development of learning skills, basic computer literacy, communication skills, interviewing skills, punctuality, personal maintenance skills, and professional conduct, to prepare individuals for unsubsidized employment or training

Training Services

Training services are defined as services designed to equip individuals to enter the workforce and retain employment. Training services may be provided, as appropriate, to WIOA eligible adults, dislocated workers, and youth who have met the eligibility requirements. The NWPA Job Connect Board sets the policies for Individual Training Accounts (ITAs). Training Services for eligible individuals may include:

- Occupational skills training, including training for nontraditional employment, provided through ITAs for adults and dislocated workers. This includes both individual and cohort-based training models
- Transitional jobs
- On-the-Job Training
- Apprenticeships
- Programs that combine workplace training with related instruction, which may include cooperative education programs
- Skill upgrading and retraining
- Entrepreneurial training
- Job readiness training
- Adult education and literacy activities, where they are integrated with other training services
- Customized training conducted with the commitment to employ the individuals upon successful completion of the training

Workshops have also been developed and implemented in partnership with other providers. Efforts continue toward strengthening partnerships with community agencies, as well as the evaluation and implementation of other effective services to enhance the probability of hire for eligible participants, with focus on those with barriers to employment.

Supportive services are available to eligible participants throughout the local workforce development area. Such services include assistance with transportation and childcare, referral to medical services, assistance with work-related clothing and tools, housing assistance and linkages to community services. NWPA Job Connect has a local supportive services policy and has provided training to PA CareerLink® staff on interpreting and implementing this policy.

For people with limited English proficiency, interpretive services are provided through Propio Language Services and assistance is also available from Interpretive Services of partnering community agencies. The limited English proficiency participants are also referred to Title II adult education and literacy partners.

When there is a hearing-impaired person in need of on-site interpretive services, state certified Sign Language Interpreters are contacted to provide assistance. All PA CareerLink® staff are trained on the use of the TTY line. Materials will be made available in alternate format, Zoom text and JAWS. Handicap parking is available at all PA CareerLink® locations. Signage includes Braille for the visually impaired. Staff, through interaction with participants, are able to assess particular needs and make appropriate referrals or arrangements for special assistance to ensure that there is universal access to all services.

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

Expectation: Narrative must include how ITAs and contracts, as outlined in WIOA Sec. 134 will be used in a coordinated manner to provide such services in the local area.

Factors being considered include, but are not limited to:

- Describe the ITA cap for the local area, as well as the methodology used by the local board to determine the cap;

The local board's Individual Training Account (ITA) Policy sets the cap for ITAs at \$5,500. This was determined by evaluating the number of participants eligible and opting for such training, the average cost of the training, and the total amount of training funding available in the local workforce area.

- Describe how the local board will determine the circumstances in which contracts will be used instead of ITAs; and

When circumstances arise where the NWPA Job Connect determines that there is a need to facilitate the training of multiple individuals in in-demand occupations or sectors (incumbent workers), or instances where there are training services programs provided by community-based organizations or other private organizations that benefit the needs of individuals with barriers to employment, contracts for services may be used instead of ITAs as identified in 20 CFR 680.320.

- Describe how the local board will ensure informed customer choice in the selection of training programs regardless of how the training services are to be provided.

The WIOA Title I program contractor uses a process of requiring participants to evaluate three training providers when requesting training for an occupation. This allows customer choice for the participant but ensures an informed choice by evaluating similar offerings for the same training and determining the best fit for their particular circumstances.

Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) are a primary strategy for providing occupational skills training to WIOA participants. The ITA must be for an in-demand occupation on the High Priority Occupation List in the local workforce development area. The Training Provider's program needs to be within a reasonable commuting distance that the customer has agreed to, or in an area where the occupation is in demand and the customer is willing to relocate. Documentation of the customer's willingness and ability to relocate must be provided. Preference must be given to local occupations on the High Priority Occupation List and programs submitted by the Northwest regional training providers when making this determination. The NWPA Job Connect has a local policy that caps ITAs at an amount up to \$5,500 per participant in training. The NWPA Job Connect reduced the maximum funding amount for ITAs several years ago to increase the number of participants that can receive ITAs, given reduced levels of WIOA funding coming into the local workforce development area. However, per a local board ITA policy revision in 2019, the amount of an ITA may be increased based on specific grant requirements, if needed.

The Commonwealth's High Priority Occupations depict areas within selected industry clusters that are considered in demand by employers, require high levels of skills, and are more likely to provide family-sustaining wages. The High Priority Occupations are identified by the Center for Workforce Information and Analysis (CWIA). Courses and programs funded by Individual Training Accounts must appear on the Northwest PA Workforce Development Area's Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). To meet the needs of business and industry, the NWPA Job Connect manages a local High Priority Occupation list, which drives the submission of quality programs for the ETPL. Based on labor market analysis as well as employer input from NWPA Job Connect members, industry partnership members, some occupations may be limited by the NWPA Job Connect to funding via an Individual Training Account (ITA). Examples of

reasons that occupations may be subject to this funding limitation are lack of a self-sustaining wage, low annual openings, and occupation saturation. In addition, programs/courses submitted by training providers must be of primary importance and the training required to gain employment in the occupation(s). The NWPA Job Connect will continue to develop and strengthen connections with its industry partnerships and higher education institutions to ensure that training conducted in the NWPA Job Connect is what employers are looking for, as well as to help educators to identify needed changes in curriculum, to identify gaps and the skills needed for current and emerging occupations.

When circumstances arise where the NWPA Job Connect determines that there is a need to facilitate the training of multiple individuals in in-demand occupations or sectors (incumbent workers), or instances where there are training services programs provided by community-based organizations or other private organizations that benefit the needs of individuals with barriers to employment, contracts for services may be used instead of ITAs as identified in 20 CFR 680.320. The NWPA Job Connect will solicit training providers, including but not limited to, work-based and cohort training providers and registered apprenticeship program sponsors, within and outside of their respective local areas in those cases to ensure a competitive market designed to promote consumer choice and achieve successful implementation of data-driven career pathways and sector strategies on the Local Training Provider List (LTPL). Eligibility of a provider and/or program will be based solely on measurable factors and shall include the criteria in Commonwealth's Workforce System Policy. Information must be entered into the formal system of record, PA's workforce development system of record. The NWPA Job Connect will develop, maintain, and distribute the Eligible Training Provider List, working closely with the commonwealth and in compliance with the Commonwealth's Eligible Training Providers policy.

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)]

Expectation 1: Narrative must describe established priorities of the local board that allow for the service of as many eligible youth as possible, especially out-of-school youth (OSY), older youth and young people who are at most risk of not acquiring the necessary skills and abilities to attain meaningful employment, including individuals with a disability. Successful models of activities must be included.

Factors being considered include, but are not limited to:

- Describe the makeup of the local board's Youth Standing Committee and its role in youth program design, including making the 14 Program Elements available to participants;

The Youth Committee membership has included representation from community-based organizations that serve youth, juvenile justice, Title II education, career and technical education, K-12 education, public housing authorities, as well as the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation. The Youth Committee assists the local board with planning and oversight of operational youth programs, promoting career pathways, as well as helping to identify any gaps in services and developing a strategy to address the unmet needs of youth. The Youth Committee helps to ensure quality program services are provided that include the 14 youth program elements of WIOA.

- Describe how to prioritize recruitment and services to OSY (WIOA 75 percent expenditure requirement);

The local board is outreaching to federal, state, and local community-based organizations and networking with partner agencies to increase recruitment of OSY. WIOA Youth Program staff co-enroll with WIOA Adult Programs and other youth services. In addition to the day-to-day efforts to recruit OSY, WIOA Youth Program staff work with and receive referrals from programs such as TANF, EARN, as well as the Business Solutions Team.

- Describe how to increase work experience opportunities for youth (WIOA 20 percent expenditure requirement);

The local board will continue to seek assistance of the Youth Committee, Business Solutions Team, and PA CareerLink® partners to conduct outreach to employers through social media platforms in addition to holding targeted youth career/job fairs offering work experience information to employers and eligible youth. The local board will continue to reach out and form a relationship with community agencies for referrals and for potential work experiences within these agencies.

- Describe how to develop strong Career Pathways;

Career pathways should be constructed in a way that leads learners in attainable and incremental steps toward higher levels of education and work. Strong career pathways should include on-ramps for disadvantaged and diverse populations including those with limited basic skills and barriers to employment; be stackable in design, allowing each course and program to prepare students for the next step; contextualize basic skills and technical content to the knowledge and skills needed in a specific occupation or group of occupations; focus on careers in demand that provide family-sustaining wages and ongoing advancement opportunities; and include work-based opportunities through structured experiences. Career pathways development must include active participation by employers, innovations in program content and delivery; integrated support services; and multiple ways to enter and exit pathways.

The local board has hired a consultant to develop career pathways for the rural counties of the local area that build on those created and tested in Erie County across 11 school districts. To expand the opportunities for career pathways across the local area, the local board will benefit from the knowledge and experiences of the Erie County Career Pathways Alliance. This will lead to the creation of stronger career pathways that will address employers' workforce pipeline needs and help students to succeed, including those who are disadvantaged and have barriers to employment.

- Describe how to increase the co-enrollment of youth into partner programming in alignment with the participant's individual service strategy and goals; and

The WIOA Title I program services contractor will co-enroll eligible youth with other programs such as WIOA Adult, Youth Re-Entry, and EARN to provide comprehensive services to the youth based on their Individual Service Strategy (ISS) goals. The local board has developed a network of non-profit community agencies that offer services that they will partner with to develop a strategy to overcome barriers that often prohibit youth from reaching their career goals.

- Describe how to leverage TANF Youth Development funding (YDF) to offer workforce activities to even more local area youth;

The local board, along with the TANF Subcommittee of the Youth Committee and the TANF provider, will develop a career navigator position to work with local school districts and ISY to assist with career pathways/portfolios and career activities. The career navigator will have contact with significant numbers of youth throughout the six-county local area to provide a pipeline of eligible candidates to the WIOA OSY program. When a current in-school youth TANF participant is ready for the next level, the TANF program will work closely with the WIOA OSY program to coordinate a warm hand-off to enable a seamless transition of services. The TANF Youth Program subcontracts with providers that offer programs based on the 14 WIOA Youth elements to assist ISY. These providers report out to the TANF Subcommittee of the Youth Committee on their program outcomes.

- Indicate which of the 14 WIOA Youth Program Elements will be provided, the local provider organization providing the programming activity time (i.e. year-round or summer only) and the goals for the total number/percentage of TANF youth anticipated to receive a WIOA Youth Program Element;

The local board will focus on priority youth populations to primarily serve youth who are at risk of dropping out of school; have a disability; are court-involved or at risk of involvement; are pregnant or parenting; are an English language learner; or need additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program or to secure and hold employment. We plan to collaborate and contract with local agencies and schools in our six counties to provide program services incorporating the 14 WIOA youth elements. 100% of the youth served with 2020 funds will be from TANF households and our goal is to serve 845 youth with these services. The youth will receive services in career exploration and career awareness. This will occur through Industry Clubs, STEM/STEAM clubs/camps, and occupational training leading to industry-recognized credentials. Older youth will be supported in finding employment, when appropriate. Funding will provide year-round youth programming. Our goal is for 825 youth to receive career exploration; 400 youth will receive paid work experiences at an hourly rate of \$10.35; 300 youth will receive occupational skills training; 150 will participate in Industry Clubs; 150 will participate in STEM or STEAM clubs/activities; 200 will receive tutoring; 200 will receive study skills education ; 200 will receive dropout prevention; 100 will receive dropout recovery; 200 will receive leadership development, 845 will receive financial literacy education, 100 will receive mentoring; and 200 will receive supportive services.

- Describe who is responsible for TANF Youth Development program participants, methods used for recruitment, and collaboration with local County Assistance Office(s), or CAOs, the Department of Human Services' Employment and Training providers, PA CareerLink®, and other WIOA funded programs. Explain any agreement regarding or referral of youth to be served with WIOA funds;

Contracted agencies have access to youth, and most are already providing other services to them. This relationship helps to encourage participation in TANF programming and to obtain needed documentation for eligibility approval. Many of the contracted agencies are currently working with youth, most of whom are eligible under TANF. Agencies utilize current youth enrollment along with flyers and Facebook to recruit youth. Schools utilize Welcome Nights for parents, as well as receive referrals from teachers and counselors. Some agencies connect with schools to address their specific TANF youth programs. The TANF Youth Team is supportive in helping the agencies to locate youth. Since all potential participants and documentation are approved by the state and we are using youth income instead of household income, the local

CAOs are not providing eligibility verification. CAOs are still engaged in the youth recruitment and referral process.

Some of the current TANF youth programs work directly with OVR to provide additional services to those youth. WIOA Title I staff discuss TANF and WIOA programs with subcontractors, as well as the youth who are participating in the TANF Youth Program. Several of the contracted agencies are working directly with Human Service agencies to recruit youth via flyers and discussions with counselors.

- Describe how work experiences, enhanced by high-quality academic and workforce development programming will be prioritized for TANF youth;

Many youth ages 14-24 will receive a work experience opportunity at a local agency, school, or employer after receiving leadership development, soft skills, financial literacy education or occupational training. Opportunities will be in a variety of industries and occupations, including maintenance/repair workers, management/supervisory, teaching, automotive and sales. Beginning in PY2018, all work experience wages were increased to \$10.35 per hour and this rate will also be paid in PY2020.

- Describe in detail any job placement where the LWDB plans to increase the hourly wage (the Department strongly encourages a minimum of \$10.35 p/hr.) that it has typically previously offered participants for work experiences;

Beginning in PY2018, all work experience wages were increased to \$10.35 per hour and this rate will also be paid in PY2020.

- Describe who is responsible for recruiting employers/organizations for work experiences, building and maintaining these connections and what methods are used for recruitment;

The contracted agencies are responsible for recruiting employers/organizations for work experience. Contracted agencies utilize previous work sites for their current work experiences. Many of the work experiences are conducted at the contracted agency's site. The TANF Youth team is supportive in helping the agencies to locate work experience sites.

- If applicable, identify the prospective businesses, as well as any community, education and workplace partners, that will support TANF Youth programming. Briefly describe any expected monetary and/or non-monetary contributions to the local board's youth project(s);

The local area plans to contract with approximately 20 local agencies, community/neighborhood centers, and school districts to provide TANF youth programming. Many of the contracted agencies will provide staffing, space, administrative, and other services at no additional cost to TANF so that more TANF funding can be used to directly support the youth.

- If the local board plans to use a portion of TANF funding to offer incentives to TANF youth, describe in detail the type of incentive offered. Outline how the local board will clearly explain and make this incentive opportunity available to TANF-eligible

youth. Explain how to accurately measure achievement of the established incentive requirements to ensure fair and equitable disbursement of any incentive awards to TANF youth program participants;

Incentives may be offered based on the local board's Youth Incentive Policy. The policy provides details on the type of incentives allowable, the documentation required, and the amounts allowable for each incentive. This information is shared with the youth participants as they are provided the TANF program services. The local board's policy was approved by the state.

- Provide the name, phone number and email address of the LWDB staff member responsible for implementation, tracking and reporting TANF YDF activities and expenditures;

Julie Price
Program Specialist-Youth
920 Water St Suite 32B
Meadville, PA 16335
Phone: (814) 333-1286, Ext. 108
Cell: (814) 853-2134
Fax: (814) 333-1754
jprice@nwpajobconnect.org

- Provide the following contact information for *each TANF Youth Development Program-Youth Provider Sites in the LWDA: (1) Name, email and phone number of the Designated TANF Provider Contact Person(s) and (2) Name and Address of Provider's Office Location/Worksite;*

The TANF Program Provider List is included as Attachment 5 to this local plan.

- Provide the name, phone number and email address of the LWDB staff member responsible for the compilation and submission of the DHS Qualification Spreadsheet on DocuShare; and

Designated LWDB Staff: Jackie Hamilton Senior Administrative Assistant
Phone Number of LWDB Staff: 814-333-1286, Ext 102
Cell: (814) 573-3028
Email Address of LWDB Staff: jachamilton@nwpajobconnect.org

- Describe how the LWDB monitors local providers and who is responsible for the monitoring.

The local board applies its Local Monitoring Policy and Local Monitoring Plan for program oversight monitoring. TANF program monitoring will be conducted by the Youth Program Specialist.

Expectation 2: Local boards must outline and define WIOA youth eligibility documentation requirements, including the "requires additional assistance to complete an education program or to secure and hold employment" criteria. (See below)

Expectation 3: Narrative must include a description of WIOA title IV Pre-Employment Transition Services provided to potentially eligible and eligible in-school youth with disabilities. (See below)

Expectation 4: Narrative must include local board strategies and collaborative actions with stakeholders to expose more youth support to YouthBuild, Job Corps and AmeriCorps programs and opportunities (if applicable). Data measuring the number of youth, and specifically opportunity youth, enrolled in these programs must be provided to support the narrative, as appropriate. (See below)

The NWPA Job Connect and its committees envision an effective workforce development system for youth with programs in partnership with educators and employers. The Youth Committee of the local board developed a mission to *“Assist youth as they define personal career pathways. Help them identify intermediate goals and access resources of support as they work to attain personal growth and economic success.”* This effort requires partnerships with youth programs, educators, employers, and other stakeholders to provide effective opportunities for career exploration, work readiness, work-based learning and work experience opportunities. The committees of the local board are collaborating in an effort to identify and develop career pathways for youth. The NWPA Job Connect has developed strategic objectives in youth programs that produce desirable outcomes, established linkages with career and technical centers to align programs with career pathways and labor market demand, and to continue to grow summer youth employment efforts. Research of national best practices will be conducted to support the development of the most comprehensive and enriching array of program services for eligible youth.

The local board engages private sector and other employers to connect employers to the youth workforce population and recognizes that a successful youth employment strategy must engage employers in supporting talent acquisition efforts. This strategy includes shifting employer perceptions about young adults from social liabilities to economic assets; educating employers about how to provide employment pathways and refining the business case for employment pathways to increase employer investments; and engaging employers to support career pathways as a talent solution for business.

Expectation 2:

There are youth who need additional assistance to enter or complete an education program or to secure or hold employment. The NWPA Job Connect Eligibility Policy includes guidelines for the use of this “Requires Additional Assistance” criteria for youth eligibility. The “Requires Additional Assistance” requires that youth meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Has an Individualized Education Program (IEP);
- Has a letter from a guidance counselor asserting their need of additional assistance to complete an educational program or to secure or hold employment;
- Is currently credit deficient (i.e. one or more grade levels behind peer group);
- Has a poor work history (been fired from 1 or more jobs within the last six months, OR has a history of sporadic employment, such as “has held 3 or more jobs within the last 12 months, and is no longer employed”);
- Has actively been seeking employment for at least 2 months but remains unemployed or underemployed. This includes a youth with no employment history, with limited work experience, and/or actively seeking full-time employment, but have only achieved part-time employment; or
- Has incarcerated parent(s)

Any of the above criteria used for serving youth under “requires additional assistance” must be fully documented and justified in the participant file and will be reviewed during NWPA Job Connect monitoring of participant files.

No more than 5% of In-School Youth served in a program year may be deemed eligible based on the “requires additional assistance” criterion. The NWPA Job Connect’s WIOA Title I program services contractor(s) will include the number of In-School Youth participants determined and documented to be eligible under the “requires additional assistance” criterion on their regular reporting to the NWPA Job Connect to ensure that this 5% limitation is not exceeded. It will also be included as part of the NWPA Job Connect monitoring of its WIOA Title I program services contractor(s).

Expectation 3:

The Youth Committee membership has included representation from community-based organizations that serve youth, juvenile justice, Title II education, career and technical education, public housing authorities and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR). As a core partner, OVR has the ability to collaborate with the local workforce development board to provide in-school youth with disabilities opportunities to participate in pre-employment transition services (PETS) to better prepare these students for life after high school. These skill gains will help to meet one of the intentions of WIOA, to better prepare in-school youth with disabilities to graduate high school and work toward meaningful careers. PA CareerLink® centers in the local area are handicap accessible and include accommodations for individuals with disabilities.

As a core partner, OVR collaborates with the NWPA Job Connect Board 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 NWPA Job Connect Board 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 own strengths and skills, while exploring vocational possibilities and removing barriers from employment.

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

- Counseling and guidance from professional vocational rehabilitation staff to explore career and training options as well as understand VR services.
- Independent Living Skills training will allow students to gain knowledge to perform the daily tasks essential for maintaining or obtaining independence. Independent Living Skills can include the following: household budgeting and financial management; utilizing public transportation; navigating through the social services system.
- Self-Advocacy Training to assist students with disabilities to gain knowledge on disability awareness, advocating during an IEP process, understanding transition processes, and advocating for themselves in post-secondary education, employment, and coordinating social services.
- Workplace Readiness Training will provide students with knowledge needed to find and maintain competitive integrated employment. Curriculums can include soft skills training, interview skills, job readiness, job-seeking skills, HR practices, and other skills needed to become “workplace ready”.

- Job Shadowing will provide students with disabilities a one-to-five-day job shadowing experience, for a maximum of 25 hours per school year, in an occupation of interest within a community integrated setting. Students will be provided an opportunity to shadow employees and obtain an overview of the knowledge, tasks, and abilities needed to work in a variety of occupational fields.

All partners of youth-serving agencies will make services available and will share the costs of providing services to youth with disabilities. If a youth chooses not to access services and programs that are available from OVR, the youth will remain eligible for all other services in accord with individual plans for employment and training.

Expectation 4:

The local board is working with its partners, including Job Corps, to increase outreach to out-of-school, disconnected youth. Meetings are held regularly with the WIOA Title I program contractor to enhance the outreach and recruitment of disconnected youth through the WIOA Out of School Youth program, as well as co-enrollment with the Youth Re-Entry Grant. The local board is looking to further develop a partnership with AmeriCorps to access other service providers in the local area that serve foster care youth, homeless youth, juvenile justice youth, and dropout youth. AmeriCorps members are often close in age to the target youth population and serve as peers to provide guidance and referrals. The local board will continue to develop these partnerships to increase enrollments for these services. Currently, there are no participants enrolled in AmeriCorps programs in the local area; YouthBuild programs are not currently available in the local area and there are two active participants in the Job Corps program locally.

Partnering agency tutoring programs are designed to develop math and reading skills which improve opportunities for secondary education, therefore assisting individuals to be better equipped for alternative secondary school programs. Such programs are offered through partnerships with community agencies, providing referral for high school equivalency (HSE) credential training. Post-secondary preparation and transition activities are provided through CASAS assessments, WIN Remediation, O*Net, Choices, and referral to other local community agencies for remediation services. Title II adult education and literacy providers conduct one-on-one or small group tutoring and/or instruction in both math and reading on as as-needed basis.

Occupational skills training is available through Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) that are presented as an option for youth participants to pursue. Through partnerships with agencies that focus on leadership development, as well as PA CareerLink® workshops and TANF programs, youth counselors can provide training in specific areas for youth with disabilities and barriers to employment. Supportive services are provided, as well as financial literacy education. The PA CareerLink® offers workshops that provide labor market information. WIOA Title I program staff work with school guidance counselors to keep them updated on current labor market trends, as well as present labor market information to high school students in a group setting. Individualized counseling on career opportunities is also part of the youth participant's individualized career plan. Training opportunities for high school equivalency (HSE) credential preparation and testing can be provided, if needed. Math, science, language arts and social studies training is offered for individuals who need additional assistance in those areas.

In addition, youth services benefit from the proximity of Edinboro University within our local workforce development area. Edinboro University has been deemed as one of the top five universities in the

nation with an exemplary commitment to providing accessible dormitory facilities and services to its students with disabilities.

The Youth Committee of the NWPA Job Connect Board is discussing, developing, and implementing strategies to provide eligible youth with high-quality, effective youth program services, provide career pathways programs, and establish linkages with career and technical centers and post-secondary institutions in an effort to align program offerings with career pathways and labor market demand. The NWPA Job Connect Board procured a consultant to develop effective career pathways for the five rural counties of the local area that mirror those that have been created and implemented in Erie County by the Erie County Career Pathways Alliance. This will ensure that all youth throughout the local workforce development area will have access to career pathways information to assist them with their career planning and career training activities.

Under WIOA, 14 program elements for youth are required to be provided including:

1. *Tutoring, study skills training and instruction and evidence-based dropout prevention and recovery strategies that lead to completion of the requirements for a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent (including a recognized certificate of attendance or similar document for individuals with disabilities) or for a recognized postsecondary credential*

This program element is provided for youth that are either working one-on-one with a career counselor or through a partnering agency that provides dedicated tutoring, remediation, or high school equivalency (HSE) credential services. Youth program staff work in conjunction with multiple agencies to ensure youth receive services. Examples of referral agencies include Upward Bound Program, Educational Talent Search, Job Corps and the Northwest Tri-County Intermediate Unit, etc. Appropriate OVR customer referrals are requested and accepted for participation in this program.

2. *Alternative secondary school services or dropout recovery services, as appropriate*

Alternative secondary school services are provided when youth who are enrolled in WIOA attend school at a public, non-traditional educational facility or program. The WIOA Title I youth program staff provide case management, attend meetings, and work closely with teachers and guidance counselors to foster success of the participant. Examples of partners providing alternative diploma classes include Warren Forest Higher Education Council, and Keystone Smiles. Appropriate OVR customer referrals are requested and accepted for participation in this program.

3. *Paid and unpaid work experiences that have as a component academic and occupational education which may include: (i) summer employment opportunities and other employment opportunities available throughout the school year; (ii) pre-apprenticeship programs; (iii) internships and job shadowing; and (iv) on-the-job training opportunities*

Based on a youth participant's Individual Service Strategy (ISS), WIOA Title I youth staff connect participants with employers that align with their individual service strategy, whether subsidized or unsubsidized. Placement of youth participants in paid and unpaid work experiences are aligned, whenever possible, with high-priority occupations. Work experiences may be coupled with soft skills training and career exploration prior to the beginning of the work experience to

maximize the placement opportunity. Internships and job shadowing are also available to the youth participants in the WIOA program. Youth in Erie County can also utilize the Career Street website to look for potential internships. Partnerships have been developed with community pre-apprenticeship programs for referral of eligible youth participants. Examples of local agencies providing paid and unpaid work experiences include the Charter School of Excellence, Hermitage House, and Keystone Smiles. Appropriate OVR customer referrals are requested and accepted for participation in this program.

4. *Occupational skill training, which shall include priority consideration for training programs that lead to recognized postsecondary credentials that are aligned with in-demand industry sectors or occupations in the local area involved, if the local board determines that the programs meet the quality criteria described in section 123*

Youth participants who enroll in a post-secondary school or training program that leads to a degree or certificate fulfill this program element. WIOA Title I youth staff provide information and assist, when needed, with the application process and provide the supports necessary for youth to participate in training programs that lead to a recognized post-secondary credential aligned with in-demand industry sectors or occupations. Individual training accounts can be written using WIOA funding for eligible youth participants. Appropriate OVR customer referrals are requested and accepted for participation in this program.

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

Youth participants will be provided with integrated education and training programs that provide adult education and literacy activities concurrently and contextually with both workforce preparation activities and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster. Such programming will be provided for the purpose of educational and career advancement. The NWPA Job Connect Board contracts with WIOA Youth program services contractors that link academic and occupational education. Appropriate OVR customer referrals are requested and accepted for participation in this program.

6. *Leadership development opportunities, which may include community service and peer-centered activities encouraging responsibility and other positive social and civic behaviors, as appropriate*

Leadership development programs are often subcontracted to partner community agencies supported by the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funding stream. These programs teach dependability, responsibility, positive work attitude, punctuality, good interpersonal skills, being a team player, building self-confidence, and self-motivation. This program element is also counted when youth are active participants in leadership programs such as Big Brothers Big Sisters and Girl Scouts/Boy Scouts. Examples of partners providing leadership development programs include Youth Leadership Institute, ACES, Urban Erie community Development Corporation, JFK Center, Bethany Outreach Center and Junior Achievement. Appropriate OVR customer referrals are requested and accepted for participation in this program.

7. *Supportive services*

Supportive services are provided to assist with eliminating barriers to training and employment.

WIOA programs provide supportive services in-house or refer participants to other partners for support service needs. Services are based on an assessment of need via the participant's Individual Service Strategy or through the case management process. WIOA Title I youth staff identify community resources and/or financial assistance for youth who need work clothing, supplies, driver's license, high school equivalency (HSE) credential testing, services such as eyeglasses, or other services such as transportation, etc. to assist eligible youth in obtaining and retaining employment. Appropriate OVR customer referrals are requested and accepted for participation in this program.

8. Adult mentoring for the period of participation and a subsequent period, for a total of not less than 12 months

WIOA Title I Youth staff provide primary focus for adult mentoring program services to youth over 18 years of age, for no less than 12 months to assist youth in succeeding in their education and employment. Youth under 18 can also receive adult mentoring program services, which are often provided by partnering agencies such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Girl Scouts/Boy Scouts, and other local mentoring programs. Appropriate OVR customer referrals are requested and accepted for participation in this program.

9. Follow-up services for not less than 12 months after the completion of participation, as appropriate

Youth participants who are exited from program participation receive follow-up case management for a period of not less than 12 months. Personal contact is made on a regular basis to ensure successful completion of education and employment retention. All Youth program contractors are required to provide all participants with follow-up services. Appropriate OVR customer referrals are requested and accepted for participation in this program.

10. Comprehensive guidance and counseling, which may include drug and alcohol abuse counseling and referral, as appropriate

Comprehensive guidance and counseling, including drug and alcohol abuse counseling is provided through collaboration with community agency partnerships. Through active case management, WIOA Title I staff can maintain open communication with youth participants on any issues identified in their needs assessment and staff can determine if interventions are needed. Interventions could include referrals to drug and alcohol counseling, counseling in the post-secondary or secondary school setting, mental health, family counseling or rehab counseling. Examples of partner agencies assisting with such comprehensive guidance and counseling include Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, Community Shelter Services, SafeNet, Stairways Behavioral Health, Office of Children and Youth, and school guidance counselors. Appropriate OVR customer referrals are requested and accepted for participation in this program.

11. Financial literacy education

Program service contractors partner with community agency partners to assist youth participants to discover the relationship between earning, spending and saving, as well as the value of money. This will provide youth participants with the ability to use knowledge and skills to make effective and informed money-management decisions. Examples of partners providing such services

include ACES programs, the Young Entrepreneurial Society and the Charter School of Excellence. Appropriate OVR customer referrals are requested and accepted for participation in this program.

12. Entrepreneurial skills training

Through effective collaborations with community agencies and partnerships, youth participants are provided the knowledge, skills and attitudes in entrepreneurial skills including understanding the characteristics of an entrepreneur, the risks of becoming an entrepreneur, and developing a positive attitude towards self-employment. The Young Entrepreneurial Society is one community partner that provides this program element. Appropriate OVR customer referrals are requested and accepted for participation in this program.

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

The PA CareerLink® staff offers customers updated labor market and employment information on in-demand industry sectors or occupations. Title I staff also work with school guidance counselors to provide them with current labor market trends, as well as present this information to high school students in a group setting. Individualized counseling on career opportunities is also part of the youth participant's individualized career plan. Appropriate OVR customer referrals are requested and accepted for participation in this program.

14. Activities that help youth prepare for and transition to postsecondary education and training

Title I program services staff partner with adult literacy and basic education agencies for transition classes to help prepare youth participants for post-secondary education. Work Certified®, a work readiness program that prepares out-of-school youth with the tools to obtain and retain employment, is also available. Appropriate OVR customer referrals are requested and accepted for participation in this program.

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)]

Expectation: Narrative must describe the strategy and role of the local area and regional (if applicable) business service teams with the Rapid Response services. In addition, describe how the board is using the Rapid Response Guidance and Rapid Response and Trade Guidance released in early 2017 to guide partners when providing rapid response services.

The purpose of the Rapid Response system is to provide comprehensive information and technical assistance leading to re-employment of dislocated workers affected by layoff, closure, and/or disaster. Rapid Response activities are provided to employers and workers when a layoff or closure is going to occur, is occurring, or has occurred, in compliance with state and federal regulations.

The Rapid Response Coordinator is the point of contact for Rapid Response activities and works with affected employers to determine the services needed and the service delivery approach

that best serves the needs of each employer and the affected workers. The Bureau of Workforce Development Partnership and Operations and WIOA Title I Dislocated Worker staffs work with the Rapid Response Coordinator to form a Rapid Response Team, providing Rapid Response sessions and Benefits Rights Interview (BRI) along with other services as determined to be needed. PA CareerLink® staff provide information at Rapid Response sessions to educate and inform job seekers of opportunities available through the PA CareerLink® system. WIOA Title I and Bureau of Workforce Partnership and Operations staff then begin the referral process to ensure that job seekers affected through Rapid Response receive eligibility determination and enrollment for appropriate services, with the goal of reemployment. NWSA Job Connect Board staff coordinates directly with PA Department of Labor and Industry, Bureau of Workforce Partnership and Operations (BWPO), along with the local Rapid Response Coordinator in applying for Rapid Response funds for local coordination with statewide Rapid Response activities.

NWSA Job Connect provides oversight and strategic guidance to the one-stop partners, as well as arranging for funding of transition activities of impacted workers and employers. The PA Department of Labor and Industry provides Rapid Response and Trade guidance that is used to assist in the provision of Rapid Response services in the local area. The WIOA Title I program contractor implements program services and resources provided by the board for specific activities. A Rapid Response Coordinator is located at the PA CareerLink® Erie County, who coordinates activities with training, educational, and community service providers.

Layoff aversion activities are also conducted in the local workforce development area in partnership with the Steel Valley Authority through their Strategic Early Warning Network (SEWN) working with and providing turnaround services to at-risk small to mid-size manufacturers throughout Northwest Pennsylvania. The Steel Valley Authority is a multi-municipality government authority addressing layoff aversion helping workers, their families, small manufacturers, and communities survive global economic change. SEWN obtains referrals to struggling companies through a variety of sources, including workforce development professionals, local workforce development boards, financial institutions, company customers, suppliers or vendors, industrial resource centers, unions, or affected workers themselves. Within 48 hours of receiving a referral, SEWN staff and/or Rapid Response Coordination Services will contact the company and attempt to establish a meeting and plant tour. SEWN staff has expertise in several areas of business turnaround and layoff aversion, including financial restructuring; buyouts; succession planning and ownership transition; labor-management relations; high-performance workplace strategies; operations; and cost management.

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

Factors being considered include, but are not limited to:

- Local board strategies to coordinate and enhance workforce services regarding secondary and post-secondary education. The description needs to include methods involved to avoid duplication of services;

The local board is committed to coordinating with and supporting the local career and technical centers (CTCs) as part of the Perkins V local comprehensive needs assessment process by providing workforce development and labor market information on in-demand occupations. Local board staff participate year-round in the local occupational advisory committees of the CTCs, as well as stakeholder committees for the Perkins V local needs assessment and other activities that support the completion of the local needs assessment. The local board partners with nine (9) Career and Tech Centers in the 6-county area as well as Mercyhurst University that receive Perkins Funding. As a local workforce board staff attends the comprehensive needs assessment meetings, some occupational advisory committee meetings, shares information about the High Priority Occupation and In-Demand Occupations, and votes on programs and expenditures. Often board staff is invited to planning meetings This helps to ensure the connection to local jobs and family sustaining wages. The local board has recently hired a consultant to develop career pathways for the rural counties that will benefit from the successful implementation of career pathways in 11 Erie County school districts by the Erie County Career Pathways Alliance. This process helps to avoid duplication of services and promotes additional ways to coordinate education and workforce activities. Career exploration activities are provided for in-school youth in Erie County through the Erie County CareerStreet Program. Other opportunities to provide similar career exploration activities for in-school students in the rural counties is being evaluated as an initiative to be funded in the local area.

- Accessibility improvement of post-secondary programs and expanding access to appropriate technology in career and technical education programs, especially to online training programs that may help to eliminate skill gaps;

The local board continues to work toward increasing training offerings of postsecondary educational institutions that train job seekers in skills for high priority occupations through outreach and encouragement of eligible training providers to apply for inclusion on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL), The local board also coordinates with the local Title II Adult Education partners to appropriately refer customers to critical Title II adult education services offered through their programs. Through partnership with the local workforce system, Title II adult education partners are committed to working with the one stop operator to develop more effective referral processes and contribute toward identifying opportunities for improved service coordination and co-enrollment of participants.

- Local board actions related to Perkins Act Section 134 biennial “CTE comprehensive needs assessment”; include the local board’s role with secondary, adult and postsecondary Perkins V recipients; (see above)
- Relevant education programs that include adult education, community colleges, community education councils, private licensed schools; and (see below)
- Basic skills training. (see below)

The committees of the Board include representatives of local education and various community agencies collaborating to develop effective youth programs and address barriers to employment. These committee members represent K-12 agencies, adult education and literacy agencies, career and technical centers, and others. By engaging relevant stakeholders from secondary and postsecondary education programs as NWPA Job Connect and committee members, the NWPA Job Connect ensures strategies that are well informed, coordinated, and that enhance rather than duplicate services. The Board’s committees are working collaboratively to align and integrate education, job training, counseling, and support services to create accelerated pathways to post-

secondary education credentials and employment in in-demand occupations. The Workforce Solutions Committee supports the NWPA Job Connect in ensuring that the PA CareerLink® system is entrepreneurial and includes coordination with secondary and post-secondary education programs and activities that are aligned with industry partnerships and ensures that participants are dually enrolled whenever possible to avoid duplication of services. NWPA Job Connect staff maintain an active role by being involved as members of local advisory committees for secondary and postsecondary providers. A relationship developed with the Title II adult education and literacy provider for coordinating assessments for participants enhances services, including basic skills training, and reduces duplication of effort. The NWPA Job Connect will review Title II adult education and literacy funding applications, when requested, for alignment with the NWPA Job Connect local plan.

As noted above, the NWPA Job Connect staff participate on career and technical center Occupational Advisory Committees and other annual meetings across the local area, including the meetings held by the career and technical centers to meet the requirements of their CTE comprehensive needs assessment. Career and technical center Directors are members of the Youth Committee or participate in committee discussions to provide expertise on technical training programs. The career and technical centers have training programs on the state's eligible training provider list as well. This ensures that the career and technical center programs are of sufficient size, scope, and quality to meet labor market needs in the local area.

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.

Expectation: The narrative must describe strategies to implement the one-stop system operational goals and how these strategies will maximize coordination among one-stop system partners. It must specifically describe how the required partners' activities and services are improved and duplication is avoided, as well as how merit staff and contracted service providers are coordinated. Additionally, the narrative must contain information surrounding the roles of the operator and site administrator(s) in coordinating local area program providers' efforts and improvement of services.

The workforce system is often a confusing alliance of private and public agencies, programs, and services. Through coordination and outreach, core partners coordinate system messaging to ensure consistent messaging, access, and understanding. The primary driver of coordination of system delivery is the one stop operator. The integration of core programs at the local level is somewhat limited given that customer tracking systems are not universally accessible to all partners and require service authorizations to access. However, some key strategies have been identified to integrate core programs including that system leadership is provided through partner management; co-enrollment is promoted by partners; partner program information is shared during orientation and intake sessions; and priority of service to veterans and low-income individuals is provided. Representatives from some WIOA core programs serve as mandated members of the local board. Local board representation allows for input on the direction of workforce activities and resource alignment. One stop partners convene regularly with the one stop operator to address partner activities, service integration, and the implementation of local workforce development initiatives.

Factors being considered include, but are not limited to:

- How the roles and responsibilities among partner programs are coordinated to achieve optimum results and avoid duplication of services;

The Bureau of Workforce Development Partnership and Operations (BWPO) programs are overseen by the PA Department of Labor and Industry. WIOA Title I staff and BWPO staff have a longstanding relationship centered on serving job seekers and businesses. Protocols are in place to reduce the duplication of services as appropriate to meet the needs of the customer and the limits of each program. In serving job seekers, Wagner-Peyser services are provided to job seekers looking for basic self-serve services such as access to labor market information and labor exchange services via a Career Resource Center. Frequently, employment services under Wagner-Peyser are provided to job seekers who need more intensive services. BWPO staff often refer job seekers in need of skill development to WIOA Title I programs.

In addition to employment services responsibilities, which include the state's labor exchange program, BWPO staff manage the RESEA Program, a program funded by the Department of Labor to specifically address the needs of unemployment claimants. The Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Program, which assists individuals who have lost employment due to foreign trade, is also operated by BWPO. WIOA Title I and BWPO staff work together to assist dislocated workers prepare for new employment through job search, supportive services, and training assistance as needed.

The Business Solutions Team includes participation by all partners in the local PA CareerLink® system, including WIOA Title I and BWPO staff. The Business Solutions Team functions jointly in their efforts to organize recruiting and hiring events, provided tailored business services, Rapid Response activities, and match employers to qualified workers. As required by WIOA, Wagner Peyser staff and WIOA Title I program staff are collocated in the local PA CareerLink® system and these staff contribute to shared customer engagement.

- The efforts that are or will be implemented to improve program partner integration at PA CareerLink® centers;

The local PA CareerLink® system will continue to focus on improving co-enrollment of job seekers into the Wagner Peyser and WIOA Title I programs to meet the primary expectation of serving customers seamlessly. Co-enrollment allows staff to more interchangeably share responsibilities for serving customers, with fewer administrative requirements.

- The one-stop delivery system's referral mechanism;

Internal cross-referral procedures are reviewed from time to time to ensure that high quality and convenient services are available to eligible customers of the local workforce system. The primary focus of the referral system is to provide integrated and seamless delivery of services to job seekers and employers. In order to facilitate such a system, the partners must familiarize themselves with the basic eligibility and participation requirements, as well as the available services and benefits offered for each of the partners' programs represented in the local workforce system. Referrals are entered into PA's workforce development system of record. The partners evaluate ways to improve the referral process, including the use of customer satisfaction surveys.

- The established minimum requirements for a PA CareerLink® career services orientation, the method used for directing basic career services customer flow, use of a customizable initial intake form and a customizable template for developing Individual Employment Plans to ensure consistency and support alignment of services across programs, thus reducing duplicate data among partners; and

Customers are initially assessed by Title I staff by asking questions to determine which partner is most appropriate to serve their needs. It is recognized that each customer's path to job readiness is unique and may involve self-directed services, basic career services, and/or individualized services. If a customer is a veteran, priority of service guidelines are followed and information is collected to determine if the individual is qualified for Veteran's Services. Customers may also be referred to workshops or triage for a further assessment to determine how the PA CareerLink® staff can assist them with seeking and locating self-sustaining employment. This is done by scheduling the individual for an appointment with PA CareerLink® staff for other individualized career services such as WIOA eligibility for Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Trade, RESEA, Job Corps, Title II Adult Education, OVR and other related services. Individual Employment Plans are established and updated as the individual receives services from a PA CareerLink® case manager or career advisor. The individual employment plan for adults and Individual Service Strategies for youth are developed within the system of record using the guide provided in PA's workforce development system of record.

- The program partner's staff development efforts designed to strengthen the professional skills of co-located partners' staff in PA CareerLink® centers, such as cross-program staff training. As a partner, adult education may participate in delivering training in professional skills.

Partner staff are provided staff development training to increase awareness regarding services provided by other community resource groups. This allows staff from differing programs to understand other partner program services and share their own expertise related to the needs of specific populations to better serve customers. PA CareerLink® partner leadership addresses with staff the core values, performance expectations, focus on customers and other stakeholders, empowerment, innovation, learning, and organizational direction of the system. An emphasis has been placed on the changes staff have encountered in working remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic and adapting to the many changes within the new work environment. Staff are trained on new technologies and how they benefit and enhance service delivery.

The Board has competitively procured Equus Workforce Solutions as the PA CareerLink® Operator for the local workforce development area. In that role, Equus has employed an individual as the one stop operator. As such, they will have the authority to organize Partner staff, in order to optimize and streamline service delivery efforts. Formal leadership, supervision, and performance responsibilities will remain with each staff member's employer of record. The one-stop operator will, at a minimum:

- ❖ Manage daily operations
- ❖ Managing and coordinating Partner responsibilities,
- ❖ Managing hours of operation,
- ❖ Coordinating daily work schedules and workflow based upon operational needs, and
- ❖ Coordinating staff vacations/unscheduled absences with the formal leader to ensure service coverage by center staff.

- ❖ Assist the NWPA Job Connect in establishing and maintaining the PA CareerLink® system structure. This includes but is not limited to:
- ❖ Ensuring that state requirements for center certification are met and maintained,
- ❖ Ensuring that career services such the ones outlined in WIOA sec. 134(c)(2) are available and accessible,
- ❖ Ensuring that NWPA Job Connect policies are implemented and adhered to,
- ❖ Adhering to the provisions outlined in the contract with the NWPA Job Connect and the NWPA Job Connect Regional and Local Plan,
- ❖ Reinforcing strategic objectives of the NWPA Job Connect to Partners, and
- ❖ Ensuring staff are properly trained by their formal leadership organizations and provided technical assistance, as needed.
- ❖ Integrate systems and coordinate services for the center and its Partners, placing priority on customer service.
- ❖ Integrated Workforce Service Delivery, as defined by WIOA, means organizing and implementing services by function (rather than by program), when permitted by a program's authorizing statute and as appropriate, and by coordinating policies, staff communication, capacity building, and training efforts.
- ❖ Functional alignment includes having one-stop center staff who perform similar tasks serve on relevant functional teams (e.g. Skills Development Team or Business Services Team).
- ❖ Service integration focuses on serving all customers seamlessly (including targeted populations) by providing a full range of services staffed by cross-functional teams, consistent with the purpose, scope, and requirements of each program.
- ❖ The services are seamless to the customer, meaning the services are free of cumbersome transitions or duplicative registrations from one program service to another and there is a smooth customer flow to access the array of services available in the workforce center.
- ❖ Oversee and coordinate partner, program, and PA CareerLink® system performance. This includes but is not limited to:
- ❖ Providing and/or contributing to reports of center activities, as requested by the NWPA Job Connect,
- ❖ Providing input to the partner program leadership on the work performance of staff under their purview,
- ❖ Notifying the formal leader immediately of any staff leave requests or unexcused absences, disciplinary needs, or changes in employee status,
- ❖ Identifying and facilitating the timely resolution of complaints, problems, and other issues,
- ❖ Collaborating with the NWPA Job Connect on efforts designed to ensure the meeting of program performance measures, including data sharing procedures to ensure effective data matching, timely data entry into the case management systems, and coordinated data batch downloads (while ensuring the confidentiality requirements of FERPA, 34 CFR 361.38, and 20 CFR part 603),
- ❖ Ensuring open communication with the partner program leadership in order to facilitate efficient and effective center operations,
- ❖ Evaluating customer satisfaction data and propose service strategy changes to the NWPA Job Connect based on findings.
- ❖ Manage fiscal responsibilities and records for the center. This includes assisting the NWPA Job Connect with cost allocations and the maintenance and reconciliation of one-stop center operation budgets.

Prior to the selection of the one-stop operator, core values sessions were held with all partner staff in the local area. Core values are the principles and standards upon which an organization builds its future

and they are used to shape the behavior of every person involved with the organization. A core values statement was adopted by the PA CareerLink® staff following the session. The purpose of this strategy and subsequent core values is to maximize coordination of services and avoid duplication of effort across partner agencies within the local workforce development system. The PA CareerLink® Operator is responsible to ensure that the core values are embedded into the day-to-day operations. Additionally, meetings are conducted with all co-located partner staff to discuss daily operations and to coordinate staff activities. Regular training is conducted to ensure staff members understand the roles and responsibilities of all partners, promoting coordination of services and process improvements, as well as Equal Opportunity and Americans with Disabilities Act requirements. Dislocated Workers who are eligible for Trade Act benefits are also co-enrolled in Wagner-Peyser, Title I, and Trade Act Programs to maximize the services available and reduce duplication across funding streams.

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)]

Factors being considered include, but are not limited to:

- Indicate if WIOA Title II adult education providers were involved in the development of the local area plan and the providers' involvement with the topics presented in Appendix C, prompt 4.11);

The WIOA Title II adult education provider has a representative that sits on the local board and participates on the local board's committees, including the Executive Committee. This provides opportunities for providing valuable input into the development of the local plan on partner program activities, service integration, and local workforce initiatives.

- Describe how the local board will carry out the review of applications to provide adult education and literacy activities under WIOA Title II for the local area to determine whether such WIOA Title II applications are consistent with the local area plan. The local board review must be consistent with WIOA Sections 107(d)(11)(A) and (B)(i) and WIOA Section 2332 to ensure alignment with its local area plan and the coordinating of the activities described in the local area plan. Applicants for WIOA Title II grants are required to demonstrate alignment of proposed activities with the local area plan as one of the 13 required considerations under WIOA Title II; (see below)
- Describe how the local board will ensure it will make recommendations, if appropriate, to PA Department of Education (PDE) to promote alignment with the local area plan; and (see below)
- Describe how the local board will coordinate WIOA Title I workforce activities with those Title II adult education and literacy activities designed to be associated with WIOA Title I (i.e. for when the individuals participating in Title I activities have basic education needs and when individuals in Title II programs have needs that may be addressed through Title I services or other services through the one-stop centers).

Post-secondary credentials and career pathways are a goal for many adult education and literacy students, incorporating career readiness and training in a student's pathway is integral to their success. Likewise, many WIOA Title I customers need adult education and literacy services, particularly education that is contextualized for work and relevant to developing career pathways.

Title II adult education and literacy and WIOA Title I program partners are committed to contributing to the local workforce system as outlined in the partner memorandum of understanding. It is important to integrate basic skills and literacy programs with in-demand industry training to support making viable career pathways attainable for job seekers. The local board continues to work toward deepening these partnerships and these partners work with the one stop operator staff and the local board on local workforce development issues and initiatives that help to support increased knowledge and awareness of mutual program services. The Title II adult education and literacy partner is integral in providing their expertise for customer assessment and addressing limited English proficiency.

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

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

Procedures announced by the PA Department of Education (PDE) call for the local Adult Education proposers for services in the local area to submit applications directly to the Department of Education (DOE). DOE performs an initial review to ensure compliance by the proposers with requirements established by the DOE. DOE will then share applications related to each workforce area with the appropriate workforce development board, along with the scoring framework that is being employed by the DOE. Local boards will then send recommendations regarding local Adult Education provider proposals to the DOE for consideration during DOE's final review, scoring, and selection process. DOE will make final decisions and inform the local board so that representatives of Adult Education providers can be included in service coordination meetings led by the one-stop operator.

The current local process calls for a committee of the NWPA Job Connect Board to ensure local procedures align with the state protocols for local program review, and then for inclusion of adult education providers in service coordination meetings led by the PA CareerLink® operator.

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?

Expectation: Narrative must list the services provided to participants beginning with universal services (e.g. Wagner Peyser Act based Employment Services) and concluding with a description of how individuals with a barrier(s) to employment are uniquely served.

Factors being considered include, but are not limited to:

- Describe how the one-stop delivery system employs a methodical process to intake customers, establish participant status, determine needs of the participant and identify any barrier(s) to employment;

An intake script is used by Title I staff during the initial call into the PA CareerLink® to determine the next steps for any customers contacting the PA CareerLink®. The one stop operator tracks intake data via a Formstack tool. Labor Exchange services and other reports are entered into PA's workforce development system of record by Title I staff, ensuring the information is entered within the state's requirement of 30 days from the date of the service.

- Describe how the one-stop delivery system employs a methodical outreach process that presents the benefits of the workforce development system to individuals and groups. A description of outreach activities may include information sessions regarding services that partner agencies provide and how to access such services. These outreach efforts may include presentations on available services that target certain populations, specifically individuals with barrier(s) to employment;

WIOA Title I and Title III have begun outreach to Unemployment Compensation (UC) exhausters using the model established by the PA Department of Labor and Industry. Title I also conducts outreach to UC claimants, using UC filer information in PA's workforce development system of record to target that population. In addition, Title I is beginning to outreach to non-profit organizations across the six-county area, seeking to establish a back-and-forth referral network of customers in-common across a wide spectrum of populations.

WIOA Title I staff have recently begun using the NWPA Job Connect board's social media policy and protocols to conduct social media outreach to various populations. Information on virtual career fairs is shared with employers and jobseekers alike, especially for a job fair with a concentration on a specific industry. Youth programs and work experience posts are shared with youth-friendly outlets as well as employers. Workshops available from PA CareerLink® are made known to a wide audience in an introductory fashion to those who may not be aware of PA CareerLink® or the services available. A system-wide outreach effort to non-profit organizations and social service agencies in the six-county area will begin in February 2021. This outreach will explain the value and benefits of the PA CareerLink® system to any agency that may have customers in-common with the PA CareerLink®, creating a mutually beneficial relationship.

- Describe how the one-stop delivery system provides the appropriate services and resources equally to participants; and

In addition to following the priority of service requirements and protocols, each participant is assessed individually to determine the next steps for service that meet their specific needs. Whether it is one partner, a combination of partners, or even agencies beyond the PA CareerLink® core partners, services and service delivery plans and the timing of those services are crafted as appropriate for each individual.

- Describe services provided to individuals with disabilities eligible for services under WIOA Title IV.

The PA CareerLink® system in the Northwest PA region provides career services that include but are not limited to outreach, intake and orientation, skill assessment, career counseling and job search, referrals to and coordination of activities, placement assistance and funding for training services. The region's PA CareerLink® sites provide services delivered by partner staff from a variety of federal and state employment and training programs such as WIOA Title I, Wagner-Peyser, Trade Act, Veterans Employment, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, Carl Perkins, Adult Education and Literacy, Unemployment Compensation, PA Department of Human Services, Community Service Block Grant, and programs funded through the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

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

Through a coordinated referral system, customers learn about and are connected to a variety of other agencies that may not be co-located in a PA CareerLink® but may be best positioned to meet a specific customer need. The special populations focus includes:

Services to Persons with Disabilities and Barriers to Employment

Efforts are made to ensure that individuals with disabilities receive access to all services provided within the PA CareerLink® centers. The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) will be focused on individuals with the most significant disabilities who are eligible under WIOA Title IV. WIOA Title I staff will assist individuals with disabilities who do not want or need OVR services or are not found eligible for OVR services. They will also play a role in recruitment and outreach to this population. Sensitivity training is provided for PA CareerLink® staff, as well as training on the various adaptive technologies used within the PA CareerLink® sites. As with other participant groups, referrals are also made, as appropriate, to other partnering community agencies to ensure full accessibility to needed services. The local board's committees support and advise the NWPA Job Connect in the establishment and delivery of services to this population. Also, by developing relationships and conducting outreach to local agencies such as Community Resources for Independence, and Voices for Independence, we are able to build on local expertise to benefit our customers with disabilities and barriers to employment.

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

Services to Veterans and Related Eligible Persons

Upon entering the PA CareerLink®, each individual is greeted and asked if they are a veteran. Once identified as a veteran, customers are apprised of the services available, including the veteran's

priority of service. Specialized veteran workshops have been developed to assist the veterans in meeting employer expectations, including a workshop designed to enable veterans to transfer their military occupational experience to civilian job descriptions. Job/Career Fairs have been held giving veterans preference via an early admission to events before the general public. A regional veteran's outreach plan has been created to enhance opportunities to connect veterans to products, services, and employment. PA CareerLink® staff members are trained to ensure that veteran's priority of service is always in effect, regardless of whether or not funding is limited, as long as the veteran or related eligible person meets the eligibility criteria.

Services to TANF Customers and Low-Income Individuals

Public assistance recipients may have multiple barriers to employment and require a range of services. These would include such services as case management, multiple support services, basic education remediation, vocational education, and job search assistance. Partnering with Employment Advancement and Retention Network (EARN) coordinates resources and services, as well as expanding case management and supportive services to this population. The NWPA Job Connect is working to further enhance service integration between the EARN Program and the PA CareerLink® system locally. All parties are committed to improving service integration and the leveraging of resources for the benefit of all job seekers.

Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers

Migrant and/or seasonal farm workers receive services equal to those provided to all other participants. Since these low-income workers often are lacking in both basic education and vocational skills that are necessary to obtain a family sustaining income, these customers seeking assistance may benefit from the many services that are available through partnership with local adult literacy and education agencies across the region. To address the communication barrier of limited English-speaking customers, local interpreters and dial up interpreters through Propio Language Services can be provided. Written materials of available services are also available in Spanish.

Services to Displaced Homemakers

Services are in place to assist this group by means of referral to partnering entities beyond PA CareerLink®. Displaced homemaker participants, most often women, sometimes lack marketable skills needed to provide for their own support. PA CareerLink® staff work with these participants using aptitude and interest assessments to assist them in making informed career choices. On-the-Job Training can be particularly beneficial for this population and outreach is conducted to both jobseeker and employers in the region regarding the benefits of On-the-Job Training opportunities. Adult literacy and education services partnerships will also benefit these individuals.

Services to Women and Minorities

Services to women are routinely made through referrals to local women's shelters, the Salvation Army, food banks, county assistance offices, Community Action, Inc., Community Services. Minorities often experience higher rates of high school dropouts and unemployment. Referrals for high school equivalency (HSE) credential preparation services are made. Job search assistance and other PA CareerLink® services are also made available.

Older Individuals

An active referral process exists between the PA CareerLink® and partner agencies for program information and assistance for mature workers. Resources are shared and appropriate services are

provided. For participants with little or no prior work experience, paid work experience opportunities can be provided.

Persons with Limited English Proficiency

Individuals with Limited English Proficiency are provided with interpreter services through Propio Language Services. Written materials outlining available services are also available in Spanish. Individuals wishing to improve their literacy can access services through local adult literacy and education partner agencies.

Ex-Offenders/Returning Citizens

Ex-offenders face special challenges in reentering the workforce. PA CareerLink® staff members are conducting ongoing conversations with the federal prison system, the county jails, local church groups and concerned citizens regarding assisting those who have completed their incarceration find employment. In Erie County, as part of the Unified Erie approach to violence reduction, a group of stakeholders including law enforcement, social service, religious, government and educational professionals and ex-offenders convened to explore the creation of a countywide “transitioning client” reentry strategy. The purpose of the strategy is to support the successful reentry of formerly convicted county, state, and federal offenders into the community so they can reach their highest potential. This group continues to meet regularly and is called the Erie County Reentry Services and Support Alliance (ECRSSA). The primary goals of the ECRSSA are to (1) increase access and connections to support services and assistance for transitioning and call-in clients; (2) to promote a responsible quality of life through positive family, spiritual and informal support connections; and (3) to achieve safer communities through reduced violence and recidivism. The local workforce development system supports this effort by making available employment services such as soft skills training, resume writing, interviewing skills, and other job seeker services available through the PA CareerLink®.

Refugee and Immigrant Population

The local workforce area has a diverse population that includes a refugee and immigrant population, located almost solely in Erie County that includes Bhutanese/Nepalese, Somalian, Sudanese, Eritreans, Bosnians, Ukrainians, Iraqis, and Asians. Many refugees and immigrants have suffered political or religious persecution and have spent decades in refugee camps, unable to return home. The PA CareerLink® has developed partnerships with the Multicultural Resource Center, the International Institute, the Urban Erie Community Development Corporation and Erie Homes for Children and Adults to provide this population with a wide range of collaborative language and cultural diversity supportive services to assist them in breaking down barriers to employment. These services include but are not limited to resettlement services, interpretation in over thirty languages, childcare, housing, transportation, overcoming past trauma and grief, managing money, understanding credit, driving simulation classes, and long-term follow-up support with employers. Many of these individuals possess skills needed by employers but need help re-establishing professional credentials in the United States and need help in their job search. On-the-Job Training opportunities are often provided to this population to assist them in their goal for employment to gain the self-sufficiency they desire for themselves and their families.

Dislocated Workers

Individuals who have been laid off or will be laid off due to plant closures or downsizing are eligible for career services through the PA CareerLink®. Dislocated workers that are determined to be job-ready receive job matching and job referral services. Any dislocated worker who needs additional

assistance will proceed through individualized or training services. Dislocated workers may receive training or, if eligible, Trade Act services. They will work with PA CareerLink® staff to receive the services for which they are eligible to obtain employment that leads to self-sufficiency.

Trade Act Eligible Individuals

Eligible individuals who have been laid off or will be laid off due to plant closures or downsizing from a trade-impacted company are provided a Benefit Rights Interview (BRI), the Trade Act eligible individual meets with the Trade Act staff, a WIOA Title I application for services is completed to accomplish dual enrollment and an assessment is conducted. Supportive services are available as needed to all eligible co-enrolled individuals.

Youth

WIOA program services are provided to eligible youth by the WIOA Title I program services contractor. WIOA requires a focus on out-of-school youth (OSY). Emphasis is placed on connecting youth to occupational learning and STEM through activities such as Industry Clubs, Career Camp, Career Day, and pre-apprenticeship program pilots, with the ultimate goal of gainful employment for youth involved and pipeline development for local industry sectors.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the local workforce development system necessitated discussions and planning to increase outreach to customers via virtual technology. The PA CareerLink® strategy prior to the pandemic was a mobile service delivery methodology that brought the workforce development services to the customer through partnership development with community agencies in a face-to-face setting. Such outreach benefited individuals with barriers to employment by meeting them in an environment where they are comfortable. Going forward, we continue to develop and implement processes that apply technology, as well as focusing on expanding customer access to that technology, throughout the local workforce development area. These changes, including the adoption and implementation of Ring Central technology that provides secure transmission of documents, has made transition away from the traditional brick-and-mortar model to a digital model that is navigable for participants. These technologies, along with support services, have a significant positive impact on serving individuals with barriers to employment.

4.14 What services, activities and program resources will be provided to businesses and employers in the local area? [20 CFR 679.560(b)(3)]

Factors being considered include, but are not limited to:

- Roles performed by the PA CareerLink® Business Services Team, or BST, within the scope of the region as a whole; describe the BST organizational structure and who manages the BST; describe coordination efforts amongst BST members as well as actions of the local board; and indicate the program providers that comprise the BST (e.g. Veteran program LVERs, OVR staff, Rapid Response staff);

The Business Solutions Team (BST) includes WIOA Title I, Title II, Title III, OVR, Rapid Response, and Veteran's Services. Efforts are coordinated in a weekly meeting of all partners convened by the one stop operator, in addition to daily interactions between individual team members, outside organizations such as local Chambers of Commerce, Steel Valley Authority, local county veteran representatives, and a small representation of Title I Talent Development Specialist staff are also invited to participate, enhancing the efforts of the group as a whole and eliminating duplication of effort.

- For program partners not specifically represented on the BST, describe how these partners are connected to employers (e.g. provision of adult basic education and workplace literacy information to employers);

EARN, AARP, SCSEP, and Job Corps staff work collaboratively with those represented on the BST. Information pertinent to employers and job seekers is shared with all partners.

- Describe regional coordination of messaging and engagement; which program providers are making employer visits and the collaboration that occurs during these visits; and the management of tracking business-related services and associated data analysis for all program partners to share;

WIOA Title I conducts visits with employers and collaborates with any and all partners prior to and after the visit, as appropriate. All services are entered into PA's workforce development system of record, and notes are viewable by all BST members and economic development partners via Executive Pulse. During the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual employer visits are being conducted. It is anticipated that in-person visits may be added when it is safe to do so.

- What WIOA Title III (Wagner-Peyser Act) employer-based services, as well as other services and resources made available from partners are made available to business customers; describe how the activities and services are accessed by business and employers or their legal representatives; and offer insight into how workforce-oriented programs and services are being adopted by businesses and employers in the region;

PA CareerLink® staff conduct employer assessments and connect them to identified services. Staff are knowledgeable and responsive to business and workforce needs. They align needs with sector strategies and provide access to recruitment processes, human resource needs, and other services. Employer-based services include but are not limited to providing access to labor market information and assisting with its interpretation; providing customized recruitment and job applicant screening, assessment, and referral services; consulting on human resource issues; posting job orders in the state's labor exchange system; conducting Rapid Response activities regarding closures and downsizings; coordinating with employers to develop and implement layoff aversion strategies; providing information related to Unemployment Compensation claims; developing on-the-job training or incumbent worker training contracts; use of PA CareerLink® facilities for recruiting and interviewing job applicants; providing information regarding workforce development initiatives and programs; providing information regarding assistive technology and communication accommodations; providing information regarding disability awareness issues; and conducting job fairs.

- What WIOA Title IV (Rehabilitation Act of 1973) employer-based services are made available to business customers;

For WIOA Title IV eligible customers, OVR provides these additional multiple services to the business community designed to assist businesses with onboarding pre-screened qualified employees with disabilities. OVR business services include reasonable accommodation consultation, OJT, referral on tax credits or deductions. OVR also offers no-cost consultation on the Americans with Disability Act

(ADA), accessibility standards and helping a business to retain current employees following an accident, injury, or disability.

- Describe how business and employers engage with education; and

Opportunities exist in the local area to enhance employer and business engagement with education. This is accomplished through participation in industry partnerships, an annual Manufacturing Day event, as well as the Teacher in the Workplace grant activities. The Teacher in the Workplace grant has provided a setting for educators to engage local employers in experiences that helps to inform student curriculum on local industries and their needs through a project-based learning process. In addition, participation on the NWPA Job Connect and its committees provides opportunities to engage businesses and employers with education. Employer feedback supports program development that meets the needs of the business customer.

Career Pathways also offer an effective and customer-centered approach to workforce development because they structure intentional connections among workers, employers, and service providers. Aligning educational opportunities that lead to the industry-recognized qualifications, skills, and academic credentials helps bring workers and employers into the training system on the front end. In turn, this transforms businesses from “customers” into “partners or co-investors” in the local workforce system.

- If there are local board innovative practices such as the use of board staff and contracted entities providing business engagement activities and services, the narrative must detail the administrative and operational relationship between the BST and the local board business engagement efforts as well as demonstrating the reduction of duplicative services and activities.

The local board staff does not provide direct business engagement activities and services.

Under the management of Equus Workforce Solutions as the PA CareerLink® Operator, a coordinated set of business services in collaboration with local economic development will be provided to local employers that include but are not limited to:

- Employer visits including maintaining existing business relationships, as well as connecting new employers to the local workforce development system that provide an assessment of business needs
- PA CareerLink®-support for creating business folders, uploading job postings, searching for potential employees, reviewing candidates, etc.
- OJT Program that engages employers with the local workforce development system that provides on-the-job training for job seekers in exchange for wage reimbursement
- Job Fairs, especially virtual job and career fairs, that are specifically targeted to business and industries to provide access to cohorts of skilled job seekers
- Industry Partnerships that assist targeted industries with similar training and employment needs
- Apprenticeships that engage employers in apprenticeship models such as those opportunities provided by the OH-PENN Grant in collaboration with West Central Job Partnership
- Incumbent Worker Training in that the NWPA Job Connect may reserve the right to use up

- to 20% of funds allocated to pay for the cost of providing training through a training program for incumbent workers
- Occupational assessments, such as WorkKeys
 - Unemployment Insurance information sessions and/or workshops

The one stop system partners will develop value-added employer services that separate the PA CareerLink® from a crowded field of providers (both publicly and privately funded) similarly serving employers in Northwest Pennsylvania region. It is the intent to increase the number of employers accessing and receiving business services, as well as to increase the quality and effectiveness of the services. With limitations on staff and funds, the resources are targeted toward existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and those industries that provide entry level jobs with a career pathway within an industry.

The NWPA Job Connect has embraced efforts to address business and employer needs through Next Generation Sector opportunities. With Next Generation Sector Partnerships, the opportunity exists to expand engagement of additional industry sectors beyond manufacturing that could potentially include healthcare, building and construction, and hospitality and tourism. The mission of the Business Services Team is to provide guidance, resources, and strategic workforce solutions to employer customers. The NWPA Job Connect is a partner in the Engage! grant awarded received by the Northwest PA Regional Planning and Development Commission on behalf of the PREP partners. Through this process, Business Services Team staff will be responsible to enter employer information into Executive Pulse and share information among all partners. Business Services Team staff will have access to the data stored in Executive Pulse so that they have informed meetings with business customers. Economic development is well represented on the local board. NWPA Job Connect and the Business Services Team staff will organize and staff job fairs and conduct assessments of potential employees for the economic development community and employers.

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 narrative must explain the local area's set of strategies designed to:

- Identify supportive services and resources (e.g. transportation, public libraries, childcare, legal aid, housing, mental health, refugee and immigration services, vocational rehabilitation services, independent living services, community reentry programs); and (see below)
- Coordinate supportive services and resources to allow customers to participate.

Information on the coordination of transportation can be found in the Keystone Edge Workforce Development Region Multi-Year WIOA Regional Plan. Supportive services must be available to support eligible participants during training and assist them to overcome barriers to training and employment. The area's PA CareerLink® centers work to establish strategic partnerships with local agencies to assist adults, dislocated workers, and youth in the local workforce development area with supportive service needs. In this effort, the board's supportive services policy was updated in 2015 to increase the provision of supportive service funding for participants to better enable them to participate in workforce-funded programs and activities to secure and retain employment. In

addition, training sessions have been provided to all PA CareerLink® staff in the local area to increase focus on the importance of supportive services for participants, as well as emphasize the importance of documentation of supportive services in participant files. Referrals are made to community agencies that may provide various support services to maximize the availability of supportive services in the LWDA. Discussions on supportive services are also conducted with the Local Management Committee, which includes representatives from the local County Assistance Offices within the local workforce development area.

Advances in telecommunications and technology allow for seamless, universal, and remote access to education, training, and other workforce development services. While technology cannot fix all barrier access problems, it helps staff to improve accessibility and offset the challenges of lack of transportation, especially in more remote, rural areas. Supportive services can be tapped to provide the availability of technology to participants such as internet, laptops and other technology.

5. COMPLIANCE

The prompts in this section are focused on the local area's compliance with federal, state and local government requirements.

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)]

Expectation: Narrative must include cooperative agreements (as defined in WIOA sec. 107(d)(11) between the LWDB or other local area entities described in WIOA sec. 101(a)(11)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 721(a)(11)(B) and the local office of a designated State agency or designated State agency or designated State unit administering programs carried out under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act (29 U.S.C. 720 et seq.) (other than sec. 112 or part C of that title (29 U.S.C. 732, 741) and subject to sec. 121(f) in accordance with sec. 101(a)(11) of the Rehabilitation Act (29 U.S.C. 721(a)(11)) with respect to efforts that will enhance the provision of services to individuals with disabilities and to other individuals, such as cross-training of staff, technical assistance, use and sharing of information, cooperative efforts with employers and other efforts at cooperation, collaboration and coordination.

It is anticipated that collaboration between the PA Department of Labor and Industry and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) will result in the development and release of guidance that includes an agreement template for use by all local workforce development boards. The NWPA Job Connect will work with the Commonwealth to ensure compliance and fulfill the responsibilities within the agreement. OVR is represented on the NWPA Job Connect and is a key PA CareerLink® partner. OVR is a party to the local Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and the Infrastructure Funding Agreement and operating budgets for the local PA CareerLink® system.

5.2 What is the process the local board uses to ensure the collection of the debts of lower-tier sub-recipients, because of audits?

Expectation: Narrative must describe the local board's debt-collection system and how grantees will utilize this system aggressively to ensure the collection of debts established because of sub-recipient audits. The narrative must also include procedures the grantee and fiscal agent will

follow, once the amount of disallowed costs' final determination is made. Once the final determination establishes the amount of disallowed costs, the grantee and fiscal agent must follow the procedures outlined herein to collect these disallowed costs.

The local area will follow the procedures for debt collection of lower tier sub-recipients due to audits as outlined in the PA Department of Labor & Industry Financial Management Guide. In complying with such, the local area requires lump sum payment in full within 30 days of final determination of any amounts owed when circumstances warrant. The payment must be made from a non-federal source. If the sub-recipient is unable to make the payment in lump sum, the local area may develop a short-term installment payment based on conditions. In all cases, repayment is mandatory regardless of category (i.e. fraud, illegal acts, apathy, or lack of careful and accurate recordkeeping).

In addition, should the sub-recipient dispute the amount to be repaid after final determination is issued, the local area may impose legal sanctions as deemed appropriate. Furthermore, the local area agrees to ensure proper notification to all appropriate federal funding agencies and oversight agencies including but not limited to the Excluded Parties List System.

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

Expectation: Narrative must address the fact that the local board will implement the actions necessary to become or remain a high-performing board once such guidance has been issued.

Factors being considered include, but are not limited to:

- Attainment of the Governor's goals as described in PA's WIOA Combined State Plan;

The local board has adopted and is working toward the five broad goals in the WIOA Combined State Plan that includes Career Pathways and Apprenticeship; Sector Strategies and Employer Engagement; Youth; Continuous Improvement of the Workforce Development System; and Strengthening the One-Stop Delivery System.

- Successfully performed by meeting the local area negotiated federal performance goals;

The local board has met performance year after year until the most recent performance reports. The local area has been challenged with youth performance, given changes to the performance measures following gathering baseline data over the recent past. The local board has implemented continuous improvement initiatives meant to maximize performance by identifying and focusing on the issues that typically impact performance across many local areas such as measurable skill gains and credential attainment. These focus points create a more in-depth understanding of the performance challenges and their solutions. Training retention and completion is enhanced by better planning, more effective training, readiness assessment, and better career path development. Program-related communication is reviewed and shared with partners and providers to ensure everyone is knowledgeable and up to date. When local policy and procedures need to be created or revised, timely action is taken to involve working with partners and providers to obtain their input. Regular meetings with Title I program contractors and other partners are conducted to discuss policies, performance, and training needs.

- Sustained fiscal integrity throughout the local area and all interactions on a regional level (include employment of appropriate fiscal practices such as the adoption of internal controls and more robust procurement policies;

The local board's fiscal agent, County of Venango, has stringent fiscal policies and practices in place based on WIOA and any associated internal control requirements for funding. There is strict oversight at the county and local elected official level. The fiscal agent is regularly monitored by the state's Oversight Division for fiscal integrity and compliance. The board has a more stringent procurement policy regarding procurement thresholds than those required federally and by the PA Department of Labor and Industry. In addition, reporting is done regularly to the local board including the local board's Finance and Monitoring Committee.

- Attainment of successful monitoring reports and other evaluations by federal and state oversight staff;

The local board has not had any significant findings on monitoring reports and other evaluations by federal and state oversight staff. Some minor findings are sometimes identified that require submission of a corrective action plan and they are rectified quickly by the local board. If there is an issue identified that requires study or analysis, an ad hoc committee may be created for that purpose. Ad hoc committees report back to the full board and have no authority beyond the purpose for which they were originally created. The local board will review areas for opportunity, even if a corrective action is not required, with appropriate documentation of the action kept on file for future federal or state monitoring visits.

- Creation and employment of workforce governance and service delivery "best practices" that may be modeled;

The local board is conducting a local workforce needs assessment to identify underserved and targeted populations to connect them with services that lead to training and skills needed to gain employment in in-demand occupations. This assessment will also enhance outreach by providing a locally tailored tool to continually update local workforce needs in real time. This local workforce needs assessment will provide guidance for increasing training opportunities in the local area and thereby continuous improvement of the local workforce system.

- Adoption and use of new and improved methods to reach and serve individuals with barriers to employment;

Implementation of new technologies include the ADA compliant Ring Central system to improve communications and secure transfer of documentation; also new program offerings such as LinkedIn Learning, Google Classroom, and The Academy are used to support individuals with barriers to employment.

- Adoption and use of new career and training services provided for the WIOA Title I programs;

New career and training services include virtual career and job fairs, LinkedIn Learning, Atlas AI, Google Classroom, and The Academy for individuals with barriers to employment.

- Attainment of Pennsylvania's training expenditure targets;

The local board has been successful in meeting Pennsylvania's training expenditure targets since their implementation.

- Successful regional coordinated employer engagement practices between local Business Service Team(s) and local board(s) direct activities; and

The regional coordination with employer engagement practices has benefited from the OH-PENN, WORC, and Youth Re-Entry grant awards. Such grants provide funding to increase awareness and development of new and existing apprenticeship opportunities across the Keystone Edge region.

- Sector initiatives measured through the employment of qualitative and quantitative measurements.

The ultimate measure of progress of a workforce development system relates to the value found in the workforce and the workplace. The difficulty in calculation of value is that reported impact is often subjective and anecdotal. To address specific local workforce issues and still provide some level of objectivity, the local board will use WIOA accountability measures of performance, business and industry feedback, actual program outcomes, and employment data provided through labor market information, surveys, and other reliable sources for measuring the impact of sector initiatives.

Multiple national groups and the U.S. Department of Labor have identified characteristics of high-performing workforce development boards. These characteristics cluster around the following general standards and specific criteria:

Standard I: Strategic Planning & Implementation

Criteria:

- Creation of a goal-oriented strategic plan that goes beyond the scope of WIOA funds
- Strategic plan that is developed from a broadly inclusive process including economic development, employer, education, human services, and other community leaders
- 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
- Adoption of a career pathway 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 MOUs as a primary line of business
- Board has its own business plan and manages its business in accord with the plan, including oversight of staff to implement the board's business strategies

The Board will work closely with the Department of Labor and Industry to meet all expectations for a high performing board that are currently under development. In line with the standards that are areas of focus for the state, the board is committed to:

- Support for attainment of the Governor's goals in the State WIOA plan as described in this local plan;
- Negotiating performance standards tied to local conditions and meeting or exceeding those standards;
- Maintaining financial practices that ensure that proper oversight is maintained by the Board and the local elected officials for fiscal integrity;
- Achieving the state's training expenditure targets;
- Employing quantitative and qualitative measurement tools to ensure high performance levels, with particular emphasis on measuring the outcomes for employers for services delivered by business services representatives;
- Maintaining program monitoring and oversight to achieve highest levels of performance; and
- Working with all partners to increase outreach, recruitment and integrated services for individuals with barriers to employment.

In addition to WIOA program excellence detailed above, the board continues to work closely with the chief local elected officials and community partners to work strategically toward higher levels of collective impact beyond WIOA-funded programs. Current leadership practices include:

- Creative partnerships with community organizations to expand access points for services;
- Expansion of sector-based strategies with employers in collaboration with neighboring workforce development areas, as new plans are developed for Next Generation Industry Partnerships;
- Maintaining broader strategic goals of the board and tracking attainment of goals in collaboration with PREP partners in economic development; and
- Selection of a nationally-recognized PA CareerLink® Operator and WIOA Title I service provider that will expand the board's work in business services, partnership development, technology applications, and connections to best practices in other regions.

A major priority for the NWPA Job Connect is to expand and diversify the funding base for programs and services in the local workforce area, working in partnership with other local organizations and with broader geographic coalitions as called for in the Keystone Edge Regional WIOA Plan. Employment and Training Administration (ETA) funds such as WWORC grants, Dislocated Worker Grant (DWG) funds and Trade Act funds are some examples of funding sources used to effectively augment WIOA Title I funds. NWPA Job Connect strategies will recognize and adhere to the funding restrictions of each funding stream, but will continue to seek out opportunities to leverage other available resources to increase services to the local area's eligible population, especially to those populations with barriers to employment. The use of formula-based investments with other funding such as Temporary Assistance for Needy

Families (TANF), Veterans (VETS) and similar funding allows comprehensive services to be offered to all eligible low-income populations under WIOA. TANF funding continues to support WIOA year-round services.

In addition, the US Department of Labor awarded a \$2.9 million American Apprenticeship Grant to West Central Job Partnership to build *The Greater Oh-Penn Manufacturing Apprenticeship Network*. The Network is comprised of five industry-led sector partnerships including 137 very actively engaged businesses (Mahoning Valley Manufacturers Coalition, Erie Regional Manufacturer Partnership, Advanced Materials Manufacturing Industry Partnership in NW PA, and Portage County Manufacturers Coalition); five Workforce Development Areas (WDB Areas 17, 18, & 19 in Ohio; NW PA WDB Area; and West Central PA WDB Area) as well as the Ohio Apprenticeship Council, the PA Department of Labor & Industry, multiple community colleges, universities, career and technical centers, Adult Basic Education providers, and other partners through the American Job Centers. The Network includes the 6 counties of the Northwest local workforce development area, along with 8 other contiguous counties on the border of Pennsylvania and Ohio (Lawrence, Mercer, Erie, Crawford, Venango, Clarion, Warren and Forest in PA and Trumbull, Mahoning, Columbiana, Portage, Geauga, and Ashtabula in Ohio). The Network aims to markedly increase manufacturer's ability to meet their needs for high-skilled and credentialed employees and willingness to use customized registered apprenticeship models. The Network will focus on methods to ease the apprenticeship process for manufacturers by creating a multi-employer group sponsorship apprenticeship platform and streamlining apprenticeship and employee candidate recruitment, assessment, and pre-screening operations with different service providers and "on-ramps," facilitating the process of matching appropriate candidates with manufacturers' needs.

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

Expectation: Narrative must describe the robust collaboration among the many stakeholders to inform the contents of the plan. While WIOA and its associated regulations pay particular attention to the representatives of business, education and labor organizations, the narrative must include a description of the multiplicity of stakeholders that make up the local workforce system.

Local board members, stakeholders, partners, and other community members were provided drafts of the plans during the development of the new WIOA Local and Regional Plans for 2021 - 2025, with updates to the plan sent to the same group. There was considerable outreach to solicit input throughout the planning process. Local elected officials, NWP Job Connect board members, the one stop operator and partners, and local board committee members that included other stakeholders also discussed and provided input into the plans. Discussion was held at public board meetings, as well as local board committee meetings, operator meetings, partner meetings, and other meetings such as the CTE needs assessment meetings as well. As noted below, the plans were posted on the NWP Job Connect website and public input was possible during the 30-day public comment period.

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

Expectation: Narrative must include a description of the process used by the local board (or planning region) to ensure the public had 30 days to review and comment on the contents of the proposed local area plan prior to its submission to the Commonwealth.

Both the Keystone Edge Regional Plan and the Local Plan were posted to the NWP Job Connect's website at www.nwpjobconnect.org on February 19, 2021. Chief Local Elected Officials, NWP Job Connect members, board committee members, program services contractors, Bureau of Workforce Partnership and Operations, Bureau of Workforce Development Administration, PA CareerLink® system partners, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, educational institutions, economic development agencies, community agencies, and other partners and stakeholders were notified via email that the Keystone Edge Regional Plan and Local Plan had been posted to the website for 30-day public comment. An opportunity to provide public comment was available by submitting in writing electronically at participate@nwpjobconnect.org until March 22, 2021 at 8:00 A.M. EDT. Alternative accommodations for reviewing the plans or providing comments were available by request at 814-333-1286 x102. No public comment was received during the 30-day public comment period. Therefore, no changes were required to the Keystone Edge Regional Plan or the Local Plan as posted.

ATTESTATIONS

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

Attachment 1: WIOA Title I Programs Performance Accountability Table

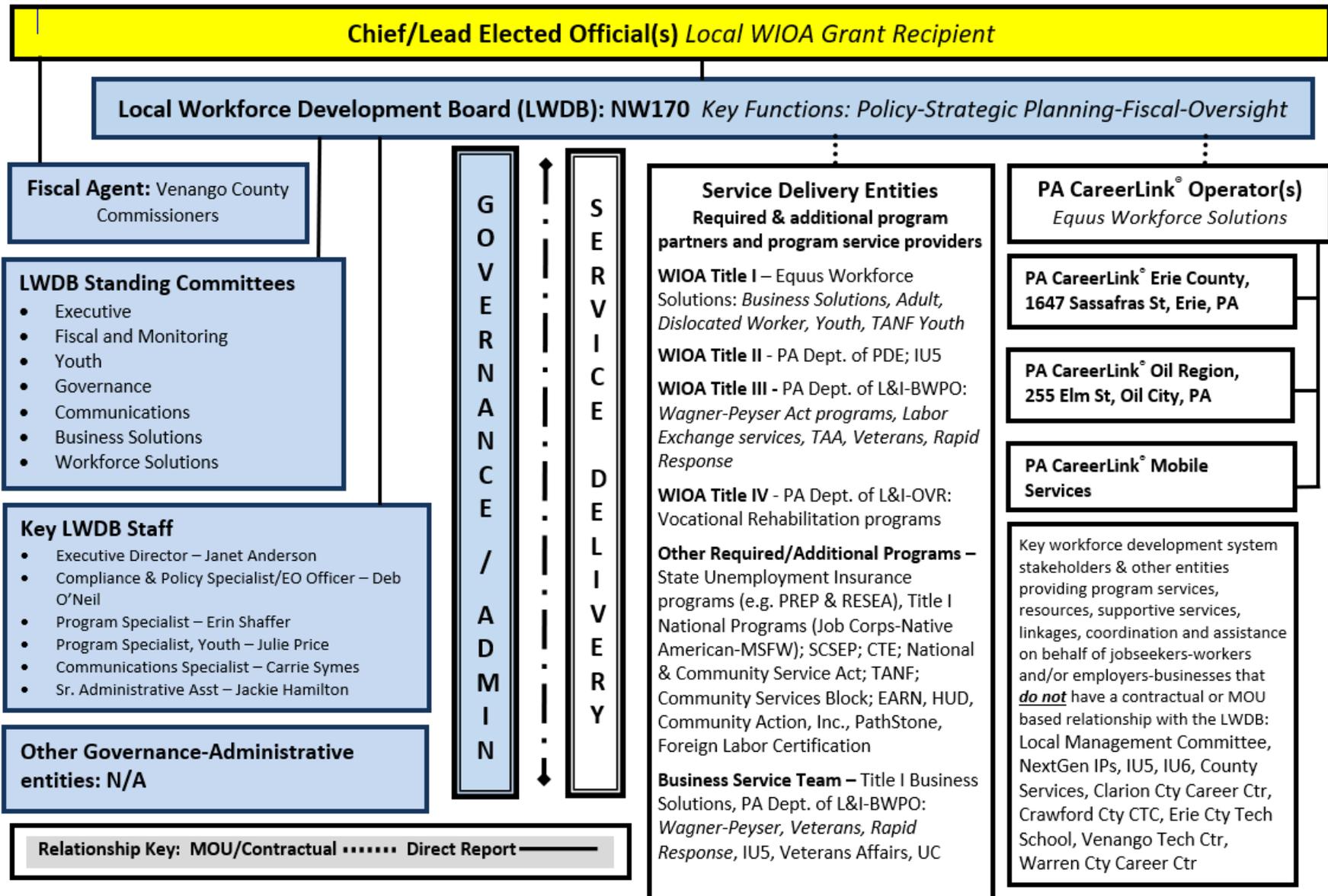
The Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry, or L&I, negotiates WIOA Title I programs performance goals with the U. S. Department of Labor on a two-year program cycle, which aligns with the WIOA planning requirement of reviewing WIOA Local Area Plans every two years. In an effort designed to meet 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: NWPA Job Connect (NW170)		
WIOA Title I Programs (Adult-Dislocated Worker-Youth) Performance Measures	LWDA's WIOA Title I Programs <u>Negotiated Performance Goals</u> - *Program Year(s): 2020 – 2021	LWDA's WIOA Title I Programs <u>Attained Performance Results</u> - *Program Year: 2019
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	Negotiated Goals	Attained Performance
Adult	79.0%	80.1%
Dislocated Worker	88.0%	88.1%
Youth	58.0%	60.7%
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	Negotiated Goals	Attained Performance
Adult	77.0%	77.1%
Dislocated Worker	87.0%	88.2%
Youth	67.0%	65.6%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)	Negotiated Goals	Attained Performance
Adult	\$6,000	\$6,370
Dislocated Worker	\$11,200	\$10,405
Youth	\$2,750	\$3,136
Credential Attainment Rate	Negotiated Goals	Attained Performance
Adult	74.0%	73.7%
Dislocated Worker	75.0%	80.4%
Youth	30.0%	33.3%
Measurable Skill Gains	Negotiated Goals	Attained Performance
Adult	70.0%	68.4%
Dislocated Worker	72.0%	71.7%
Youth	55.0%	55.6%

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: NWPA Job Connect (NW 170)

Effective Date: July 1, 2020

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.

WIOA Title I Youth/Adult/Dislocated Worker	WIOA, Title I, Subtitle B	Equus Workforce Solutions
1647 Sassafras St Erie, PA 16502	814-657-0930	Fadhail Ibraheem Fadhail.Ibraheem@nwpacareerlink.org
Wagner Peyser	Wagner- Peyser Act (29 U.S.C.49 et seq.)	PA Dept. of Labor & Industry
300 Indian Springs Rd, Indiana PA 15701	724-471-7235	Larry Fannie lfannie@pa.gov
Trade Adjustment Assistance	Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C.2271 et seq.)	PA Dept. of Labor & Industry
300 Indian Springs Rd, Indiana PA 15701	724-471-7235	Larry Fannie lfannie@pa.gov
Jobs for Veterans	Chapter 41 of Title 38, United States Code	PA Dept. of Labor & Industry
300 Indian Springs Rd, Indiana PA 15701	724-471-7235	Larry Fannie lfannie@pa.gov
Rapid Response		PA Dept. of Labor & Industry
300 Indian Springs Rd, Indiana PA 15701	724-471-7235	Larry Fannie lfannie@pa.gov
Foreign Labor Certification (FLC)		PA Dept. of Labor & Industry
300 Indian Springs Rd, Indiana PA 15701	724-471-7235	Larry Fannie lfannie@pa.gov
Unemployment Insurance Office of UC Service Centers	State unemployment compensation laws in accordance with applicable Federal Law	PA Dept. of Labor & Industry
651 Boas St, Room 625., Harrisburg, PA 17121	717-783-1951	Nsungwe Shamatutu nshamatutu@pa.gov

Adult Education and Literacy Activities	WIOA, Title II	Northwest Tri-County IU5
252 Waterford St, Edinboro, PA 16412	814-734-8426	Elizabeth Wilson Elizabeth_Wilson@iu5.org
Office of Vocational Rehabilitation	Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 720 et seq.)	PA Department of Labor & Industry
3100 Lovell Place, Erie, PA 16503	814-651-9607	Jack Hewitt jhewitt@pa.gov
PA Department of Human Services (DHS): TANF	Part A of Title IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.)	Erie County DHS
154 West 9 th Street, Erie, PA 16501	814-461-2262	Joseph Cintron jintron@pa.gov
PA Department of Human Services (DHS): TANF	Part A of Title IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.)	Venango & Warren Counties DHS
1 Dale Ave., Franklin, PA 16323	814-209-1654	Patricia Lyle plyle@pa.gov
PA Department of Human Services (DHS): TANF	Part A of Title IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.)	Forest County DHS
613 Elm Street, Tionesta, PA 16353	814-362-5378	James Keltz jkeltz@pa.gov
PA Department of Human Services (DHS): TANF	Part A of Title IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.)	Crawford County DHS
1084 Water St, Meadville, PA 16335	814-333-3400	Ryan Feczko rfeczko@pa.gov
PA Department of Human Services (DHS): TANF	Part A of Title IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.)	Clarion County DHS
71 Lincoln Drive, Clarion, PA 16214	814-226-1700	Shirley Michelotti smichelott@pa.gov
Community Service Block Grants	Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.)	Community Action, Inc.
105 Grace Way, Punxsutawney, PA 15767	814-938-3302	Susan Fusco sfusco@jccap.org
Community Service Block Grants	Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.)	Greater Erie Community Action Committee
18 West 9 th Street, Erie, PA 16501	814-459-4581	Danny Jones djones@gecac.org

Community Service Block Grants	Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.)	PathStone Corp.
1625 North Front Street, Harrisburg, PA 17102	717-234-6616	Nita D'Agostino ndagostino@pathstone.org
Community Service Block Grants	Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.)	Venango-Crawford Office of Economic Opportunity
1 Dale Ave., Franklin, PA 16323	717-432-9767	Kit Woods kwoods@co.venango.pa.us
Community Service Block Grants	Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.)	Warren-Forest Economic Opportunity Council
PO Box 547, Warren, PA 16365	814-726-2400	Robert Raible raible@wfeoc.org
Community Service Block Grants	Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.)	Community Action Association of PA
222 Pine St., Harrisburg, PA 17101	717-233-1075	Susan Moore susan@thecaap.org
Dept of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)	Family Self-Sufficiency Grant	Clarion County Housing Authority
8 West Main St., Clarion, PA 16214	814-226-8910	Penny Campbell pennycampbell@clarionhousing.com
Perkins Post-Secondary Institutions	Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006	Mercyhurst University
501 E 38 th Street, Erie, PA 16546	814-824-2585	Amy Danzer adanzer@mercyhurst.edu
Job Corps	WIOA, Title I: Job Corps	ResCare, Inc.
	216-570-0390	Andre King Andre.King@ResCare.com
Native American Programs	WIOA Title I, Native American Programs	Council of Three Rivers American Indian Center, Inc.
120 Charles St. Pittsburgh, PA 15238	800-985-8721	Rodney John rjohn@cotraic.org
Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Programs	WIOA, Title I: Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Programs	PathStone Corp.
421 McFarlan Rd Ste E, Kennett Square, PA 19348	717-234-6616	Nita D'Agostino Ndagostino@pathstone.org
Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSCEP)	Title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3056 et seq.)	Greater Erie Community Action Committee
18 West 9 th Street, Erie, PA 16501	814-451-5620	Danny Jones

		djones@gecac.org
Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSCEP)	Title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965	PathStone Corp.
421 McFarlan Rd Ste E, Kennett Square, PA 19348	610-925-5600	Nita D'Agostino Ndagostino@pathstone.org
EARN		St. Benedict Education Center
330 E 10 th Street Erie, PA 16503	814-452-4072	Nancy Sabol nsabol@stben.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.”

LWDA Name: Northwest 170

All data is cited in the local plan narrative.

Attachment 5 – TANF Program Provider List for NWPA Job Connect

AGENCY	CONTACT	EMAIL	PHONE	ADDRESS
Abraxas I	David Fitch	dfitch@abraxasyfs.com	814-927-6615	PO box 59 165 Abraxas Road Marienville PA 16239
All About Character Inc	Matthew Harris	matt@characterbeaboutit.org	814-882-8268	412 French St. Erie, PA 16507
Allegheny-Clarion Valley High School	Peggy Plowman	peggy.plowman@acvsd.org	724-659-4661	776 State Route 58 PO Box 100 Foxburg PA 16036
Booker T Washington Center	Shantel Hilliard	shilliard@btwcenter.org	814-453-5744	1720 Holland St Erie PA 16503
Charter School of Excellence	Asa McCullum	amccullum@phcs.e.org	814-440-3203	511 Peach St Erie PA 16501
Clarion Jr. Sr. High School/Clarion Area School District	Julie Johnson	jljohnson@clarion-schools.com	814-226-8112	219 Liberty St Clarion PA 16214
Forest Area School District	Lisa Banner	lbanner@forestar.easchools.org	814-755-4491	22318 Route 62 Box 16 Tionesta PA 16353
Multicultural Community Resource Center	Muqtar Ahmed	mahmed@mrcerie.org	814-772-6041	554 East 10th St Erie PA 16503
North Clarion County School District	Erika West	ewest@nccds.org	814-744-8544	10439 Route 36 Tionesta PA 16353
Oil City Area School District	Evan Basham	ebasham@mail.ocasd.org	814-657-8244	825 Grandview Road Oil City PA 16301
Riverview IU6	David Wolfe	dwolfe@riu6.org	814-512-6507	270 Mayfield Rd Clarion PA 16214
Sisters of Saint Joseph Neighborhood Network	Colleen Burbules	cburbules@ssjnn.org	814-454-7814	425 West 18th St Erie PA 16502
Taylor Diversion Programs	Michael Cummings	mcummingstdp@gmail.org	814-755-2422	1 Lighthouse Island
Titusville Area School District	Amy T. Herman	aherman@gorockets.org	814-827-0535	301 E Spruce St, Titusville, PA 16354
Warren County School District	Amy Stewart	stewart@wcsdpa.org	814-873-6900	6820 Market Street Russel PA
Youth Alternatives	Corrina J. Woods	corrina.woods@yavenangocounty.org	814-676-5785	1 Graff St Oil City PA 16301
Youth Leadership Institute of Erie	Edison Nicholson III	enicholson@ylierie.org	814-806-0103	1306 E Lake Rd, Erie PA 16507