

## Program Years 2021-2024 WIOA Multi-Year Regional Plan

Region Workforce Development Area name: Southeast Workforce Planning Region

Effective Date: 07/01/2021

### 1.1. Identification of the region.

- **Identification of the local workforce development area(s) that comprise the region**

- Berks County
- Bucks County
- Chester County
- Delaware County
- Montgomery County
- Philadelphia County

- **Identification of the key region committee members charged with drafting the regional plan to include organizational affiliation**

- Berks County: Dan Fogarty, John Moser
- Bucks County: Billie Barnes, Dianna Krall
- Chester County: Pat Bokovitz, Patricia Hennessy
- Delaware County: Kate McGeever, Karen Hofmann
- Montgomery County: Jennifer Butler, Jane Stein
- Philadelphia County: Patrick Clancy, John Daly, Meg Shope Koppel

- **A list of key region committee meeting dates**

**June 29, 2020:** Southeast PA Workforce Development Board Directors Meeting

**August 10, 2020:** SEPA WDB planning meeting with PA L&I Deputy Secretary Sheila Ireland

**August 24, 2020:** SEPA WDB planning meeting

**September 7, 2020:** SEPA WDB planning meeting

**September 21, 2020:** SEPA WDB planning meeting

**October 5, 2020:** SEPA WDB planning meeting

**October 19, 2020:** SEPA WDB planning meeting

**October 14, 2020:** Local & Regional Planning Technical Assistance call with L&I BWDA

**November 2, 2020:** Southeast PA WDB planning meeting

**November 16, 2020:** SEPA WDB planning meeting

**November 30, 2020:** SEPA WDB planning meeting

**December 14, 2020:** SEPA WDB planning meeting

**January 5, 2021:** Statewide LWDB Directors' data package review meeting with the Pennsylvania Center for Workforce Information and Analysis (PA CWIA) organized by the Pennsylvania Workforce Development Association (PWDA)

## Program Years 2021-2024 WIOA Multi-Year Regional Plan

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

The Workforce Development Board partners of the Southeast Pennsylvania region have a long history of working together to achieve maximum collective impact in producing a highly-skilled workforce available to existing and prospective employers on a regional scale. The partners embrace the vision of the Governor's Combined State Plan that sets a framework for multiple levels of government working efficiently and in concert toward shared goals ("government that works"), expanding the education and training routes that lead to skills documentation valued by employers ("schools that teach"), and the transition to higher wage jobs tied to higher skills in the workforce through stronger alignment of economic development and workforce development actions ("jobs that pay").

The partners enthusiastically support advancement of a state system built on two bedrock principles where Pennsylvania has been a national leader in creating best practices for the national workforce development system: *sector-based planning* through industry partnerships, apprenticeship programs, and other employer-led training programs with coalitions tied to engaged employers rather than county or regional boundaries; and *career pathways* as the language of the education and training system that focuses on short-term and long-term employment goals, while allowing for the flexibility of multiple structured on-ramps and off-ramps to skills development.

Since implementation of the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) in 2015, the Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Boards and the economic development partners of the Southeast Partnership for Regional Economic Performance (SE PREP) have regularly partnered to address common regional workforce challenges and priorities, developing a strategic plan for the region. This strategic plan is regularly reviewed and modified to meet current economic conditions in guiding ongoing cross-sector collaboration. The major regional challenges addressed in our planning process in the past have been compounded by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Addressing the aging workforce
- Engaging youth
- Coordinating employer needs with education and training programs in the region
- Job creation through small business development
- Developing a sustained and coordinated outreach and public relations campaign

Through strategic planning and development of specific regional goals, the Southeast Workforce Development Planning Region had made strides in the expansion of strong collaborations to enhance employer engagement and talent pipeline development through career pathways. Both locally and regionally, each workforce development board utilizes

## **Program Years 2021-2024 WIOA Multi-Year Regional Plan**

sector-based industry partnerships, advisory councils, apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeships, work-based learning and other programs to drive our business engagement efforts and increase the number of employers utilizing these services/programs to meet their workforce needs.

In particular, the Southeast Workforce Development Planning Region is committed to continuing our recent successes in promoting registered apprenticeships to employers across the region as a proven best practice for affordable long-term talent attraction, retention and growth. As such, we welcome the many significant process improvements presented by the Commonwealth's Apprenticeship and Training Office (ATO) in April 2021 to enhance the standard acceptance process for Registered Apprenticeship (RA) and Pre-Apprenticeship programs as described in their new guide to registration and making the registration documents themselves more user-friendly and inclusive of all program types. As a region we also look forward to assisting ATO's announced plans to build out a participant tracking system in CWDS. Finally, the region will continue expanded use of apprenticeship as a critical component of business engagement through Apprenticeship Expansion and Apprenticeship Ambassador initiatives that have raised employer awareness while better-equipping each area to guide employers and training providers through the process.

When large-scale layoffs occurred in the region, the partnership was prepared to collaboratively address both the economic and workforce impact. The region is ready to address new challenges now and moving forward through the economic and workforce recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Each local Workforce Development Board in the region works collaboratively with our respective Economic Development Organizations to support our regional economy while continuing ongoing regional planning. An example of this cooperative partnership is the Engage! Grant. This initiative, funded by DCED, encourages business retention and expansion by regularly and proactively interacting with targeted companies in the region. This industry-driven initiative features a robust team of experienced professionals who proactively listen to businesses across the state to identify their opportunities and challenges and offer targeted technical assistance and solutions. It is essential that all six local WDBs continue to support the Engage! grant business calling process as the most frequent request from regional companies is assistance in locating a skilled workforce. This joint project has aided data sharing between organizations and increased referrals between economic development and workforce development partners.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 had a sudden, devastating effect on the regional economy and workforce system in Southeast Pennsylvania. Industries that had been thriving in the region were halted while others struggled with supply chain and workforce needs to meet demand. This collaborative spirit proved critical as the region gathered quickly to assess the impact and begin an immediate plan of action. Leaders across Southeastern Pennsylvania, representing both economic and workforce development, convene regularly throughout the pandemic to strategize response and recovery. The Engage! framework

## Program Years 2021-2024 WIOA Multi-Year Regional Plan

proved vital as each area strove to understand and respond to the needs of employers across all industries.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Southeast Workforce Planning Region has revised our regional strategies to further align with the broad goals set forth in the combined state plan and allow ongoing response to the evolving impact of the pandemic.

The table below displays the Southeast Workforce Planning Region’s goals as they relate to the broad goals of the Pennsylvania Combined Workforce Development Plan.

### Southeast Workforce Planning Region Goals

Pennsylvania Combined WIOA Plan Broad Goals	Southeast Workforce Development Region Goals 2021
<p>1. <b>Career Pathways and Apprenticeship:</b> 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.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Promote Career Pathways as language of the system &amp; connection for education &amp; training to employers.</li> <li>2. Develop career awareness messages that can be used by all workforce areas, with emphasis on array of pathways for young adults.</li> <li>3. Work collaboratively with employers, industry partnerships, community organizations and educators to broaden the messaging.</li> <li>4. Develop regional framework for creating micro-credentials (competency-based certifications that verify attainment of specific skills) and positioning of credentials on Career Pathways.</li> </ol>
<p>2. <b>Sector Strategies and Employer Engagement:</b> 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.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Create a regional strategy for leveraging Rapid Response funds to address Incumbent Worker Training needs in key Industry sectors.</li> <li>2. Promote sector strategies and employer engagement as a regional activity through joint events (job fairs, career awareness events, etc.).</li> <li>3. Coordinate service approaches for key employer programs (OJT, incumbent worker training) to make them more user-friendly for employer customers.</li> <li>4. Align policies for Incumbent Worker Training and On-the-Job Training to ensure seamless access to job seekers and employers who have a presence in multiple local areas within the SEPA region.</li> <li>5. Increase frequency of regional Workforce Board Chairs and Directors meeting to quarterly through COVID-19 recovery; use meetings as venue for connecting to regional economic development groups &amp; industry sector leaders/associations.</li> </ol>

## Program Years 2021-2024 WIOA Multi-Year Regional Plan

<p><b>Sector Strategies and Employer Engagement (continued)</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Continue LWDB representation in SE Regional Economic Development PREP meetings to ensure close coordination and alignment with Economic Development Partners.</li> <li>7. Work directly with economic development partners and chambers of commerce throughout the region.</li> <li>8. Explore the option of a large-scale gathering (frequency TBD) of all SEPA LWDB members.</li> <li>9. Expand sector-based employer engagement via Industry Partnerships, apprenticeships, and other programs.</li> <li>10. Continue the proven best practices of jointly reviewing local High Priority Occupations (HPO) lists across the region to make sure that critical occupations in key industry sectors are identified and supported without regard to local boundaries.</li> <li>11. Streamline promotion of projects and partnerships.</li> </ol>
<p>3. <b>Youth:</b> 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.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop a plan to outreach to youth and young adults (16-24) who are off-track regarding education or employment.</li> <li>2. Develop a plan to address access to technology and connectivity issues for youth and young adults (align with plan to address this issue for adults and dislocated workers).</li> <li>3. Develop a plan to align existing apprenticeships to pre-apprenticeship opportunities, establishing a post-pandemic plan for ongoing alignment by July 2022</li> <li>4. Continue to regionally promote and support projects that develop a talent pipeline in high priority occupations (including exciting regional career-oriented student competitions such as the “What’s so Cool About Manufacturing?” video competition or the new “LibertyBots” battling robots competition).</li> </ol>
<p>4. <b>Continuous Improvement of the Workforce Development System:</b> Identify and enact system changes and improvements that enhance the collaboration and partnership between agencies and partners in the workforce development system.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Development and implement a plan to continuously review local service strategies, curricula and other resources to leverage when possible, including the ongoing review of provider best practices.</li> <li>2. Continue to partner with the PA Department of Labor and Industry to ensure consistency of guidelines and technical assistance/monitoring practices across the region to enhance leveraging opportunities.</li> </ol>

**Program Years 2021-2024 WIOA Multi-Year Regional Plan**

<p><b>Continuous Improvement of the Workforce Development System (continued)</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Expand train-the-trainer opportunities for service delivery staff from multiple areas.</li> <li>4. Continue SEPA Regional Director’s meetings on a minimum monthly basis.</li> <li>5. Identify strategies for regional data sets through alignment of data resources.</li> <li>6. Develop and implement a bi-annual regional report to highlight best practices, opportunities for collaboration and service delivery comparisons where appropriate, measuring regional versus local benefits.</li> <li>7. Work collaboratively to identify and pursue relevant funding opportunities and identify additional methods of revenue generation through fee-for-service programs that can allow for more flexible local and regional resources.</li> </ol>
<p><b>5. Strengthening the One-Stop Delivery System:</b> Implement improvements to one-stop service delivery to better serve all customers, including job seekers and employers.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop a plan to regularly review and leverage resources and best practices as well as challenges evolving from Title I provider contracts, especially in instances when the same provider is used for services (at least twice per year).</li> <li>2. Share resources for public &amp; employer awareness of programs &amp; services.</li> <li>3. Engage PA Department of Labor and Industry as a partner to advocate where appropriate for customers receiving Unemployment Compensation.</li> <li>4. Align regional messaging as relates to one-stop services.</li> <li>5. Plan to jointly address access to technology and connectivity issues for job seekers (align with plan to address for youth and young adults).</li> </ol>

**1.3. Describe the collection and analysis of regional labor market data (in conjunction with the Commonwealth)**

Prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Southeast Pennsylvania Regional Labor Market was a growing labor market for employers and sectors with comparatively low unemployment. While the labor market has begun to recover from the devastating impact of the pandemic, there is still ambiguity around the timetable and resultant landscape in Southeastern Pennsylvania.

Employers have struggled with business closures or reductions, supply chain disruptions, changes in consumer demand, and lack of a reliable skilled workforce. Workers struggled with job loss due to layoff or an inability to work. The Region also has populations with significant barriers to employment across a diverse labor force. Wage disparities exacerbated barriers

## Program Years 2021-2024 WIOA Multi-Year Regional Plan

during the pandemic, impacting reemployment options and raising the risk that our regional recovery will be “K-shaped”, with many families recovering quite well and others being left further behind.

Full and equitable recovery will require an ongoing analysis of all available data relative to economic growth, employer needs and skilled job seeker availability. This ongoing analysis and subsequent action planning will require a collaborative regional approach.

The following section will review the salient regional labor market data then overlay the labor market demographics with the region’s economic conditions, as articulated from the perspective of the Workforce Development Boards and their partner organizations, and then identify the key overarching in-demand employer needs.

### Regional Labor Market Overview

The Southeast Pennsylvania region is home to over 4,556,000 residents, which represents 35.6% of Pennsylvania’s population. A little more than one-third (34.8%) of the region’s population resides in Philadelphia, followed by Montgomery (18.2%), Bucks (13.8%), Delaware (12.4%), Chester (11.5%) and Berks (9.2%).

Local Area	Local Population	Percent of Regional Total
Berks	421,164	9.24%
Bucks	628,270	13.79%
Chester	524,989	11.52%
Delaware	566,747	12.44%
Montgomery	830,915	18.24%
Philadelphia	1,584,064	34.77%
<b>SEPA Total</b>	<b>4,556,149</b>	

*Source: Total Population: 1-Year ACS, 2019*

Our region is the economic driver for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. As the overall labor force has decreased over the past year in four of the six counties, and Pennsylvania overall, the Southeast region faces a changing labor market. The region now possesses a slightly higher unemployment rate (seasonally adjusted 6.9% as of preliminary November 2020 data) than the Commonwealth (6.8%). While some counties still have among the lowest unemployment rates in the Commonwealth, all counties have seen a dramatic increase from the end of 2019.

The average median age for the Southeast Region is 39.8, an increase from 39.7 in 2017. Comparatively, Pennsylvania’s median age is 40.8, an increase from 40.7 in 2017. This general demographic requires further investigation as a major concern of SE PA employers is to address the challenges brought on by the aging workforce. A large demographic cohort of experienced “baby-boomer” workers are aging out of their prime working years and are

## Program Years 2021-2024 WIOA Multi-Year Regional Plan

retiring from their current occupations, further compounded by the pandemic. Not only will that impact the challenge of filling those positions with skilled replacements but also require responses for second or post-retirement employment for those choosing to remain in the labor force but detached from their career. This could include the engaging of the Gig Economy, another priority noted later in this section. Already, 15.7% of the regional population (712,874) is over the age of 65, with an additional 13.4% (605,310) of the population between the ages of 55 and 64<sup>1</sup>.

Regarding education, 38.3% of the region's population has earned a 4-year degree or more (compared to the state average of 31.4%). 10.0% of the region's population has less than a high school diploma or equivalent compared to 9.5% across the Commonwealth. 29.0% of the region's population hold a high school equivalency and 22.7% have some college or an associate degree, both lower than the Commonwealth at 34.7% and 24.4% respectively, identifying an opportunity for the region to increase services to those with limited educational attainment backgrounds<sup>2</sup>.

The region is also home to the best concentration and access to publicly funded community colleges in the Commonwealth with five community colleges providing high quality and affordable education and workforce development programming at multiple campuses throughout the region. These five institutions are:

- Bucks County Community College
- Community College of Philadelphia
- Delaware County Community College (Chester County and Delaware County campuses)
- Montgomery County Community College
- Reading Area Community College

Strong local and regional relationships with the five community colleges encompass both partners and providers. Focus remains on helping regional community colleges meet the performance requirements of the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) while protecting student personal identifiable information.

The impressive proportion of our region's population with 4-year and even advanced degrees should not overshadow the troubling fact that too many residents lack the literacy and numeracy skills to thrive in our region's increasingly knowledge-based economy. Low numeracy in particular represents a significant barrier to local efforts to prepare or upskill adult residents to meet projected employer needs for skilled technology workers in the decade ahead. Based on extensive experience working with regional adult and dislocated workers, combined with consistent reports from local employers and training providers, we increasingly see that low levels of adult numeracy among incumbent workers and job seekers

---

<sup>1</sup> Demographic and Housing Estimates: 5-Year ACS, 2015 – 2019; 2013 - 2017

<sup>2</sup> Center for Workforce Information and Analysis: Educational Attainment of Population (Ages 25 and Older)



## Program Years 2021-2024 WIOA Multi-Year Regional Plan

alike is a skills gap of major concern that will require a concerted effort of regional stakeholders to effectively address.

Household income in Southeast Pennsylvania varies widely by individual county but collectively remains well above the Commonwealth average. The average household income in the region in 2019 was \$99,321, higher than the state average of \$84,849. Within the region, Chester County has a median household income of \$135,669, over \$50,000 more than the statewide average.<sup>3</sup>

Local Area	2019 Total Households	2019 Mean Household Income
Berks	154,712	\$82,739
Bucks	238,830	\$118,035
Chester	190,980	\$135,669
Delaware	207,257	\$105,826
Montgomery	316,206	\$125,928
Philadelphia	601,337	\$68,379
<b>SEPA Total</b>	<b>1,709,322</b>	<b>\$99,321</b>
<b>Pennsylvania</b>	<b>5,053,106</b>	<b>\$84,849</b>

*Source: Selected Economic Characteristics: 5-Year ACS, 2019*

While unemployment is often noted, the review of labor force participation and employment in the Southeast Region is important. As of 2019, the regional participation status for those over age 16 is 64.97% with 60.95% employed civilians and 35.03% that are not participating in the labor force. These metrics reflect a stronger regional labor market as compared to statewide data at only 62.69% in the labor force with 59.40% employed civilians, and 37.20% that are not in the labor force<sup>4</sup>.

Most employed residents in the region (69.7%) drive alone to work, with an estimated travel time to work of 29.5 minutes, while statewide, 75.9% of the employed population drives alone to work with a mean travel time of 27.2 minutes. Just over one in ten (11.1%) utilize public transportation with that percentage peaking in Philadelphia at 24.9%<sup>5</sup>. Access to reliable, affordable transportation remains a challenge. The major regional public transit authority, SEPTA, provides many spokes of the regional rail, high speed lines and buses that support regional workforce development. Parts of the system reflect historical investments when development of jobs was mainly in urban centers. Today, commuting patterns have changed and cross county travel is much more prevalent.

<sup>3</sup> Selected Economic Characteristics: 5-Year ACS, 2015 – 2019; 2013 – 2017

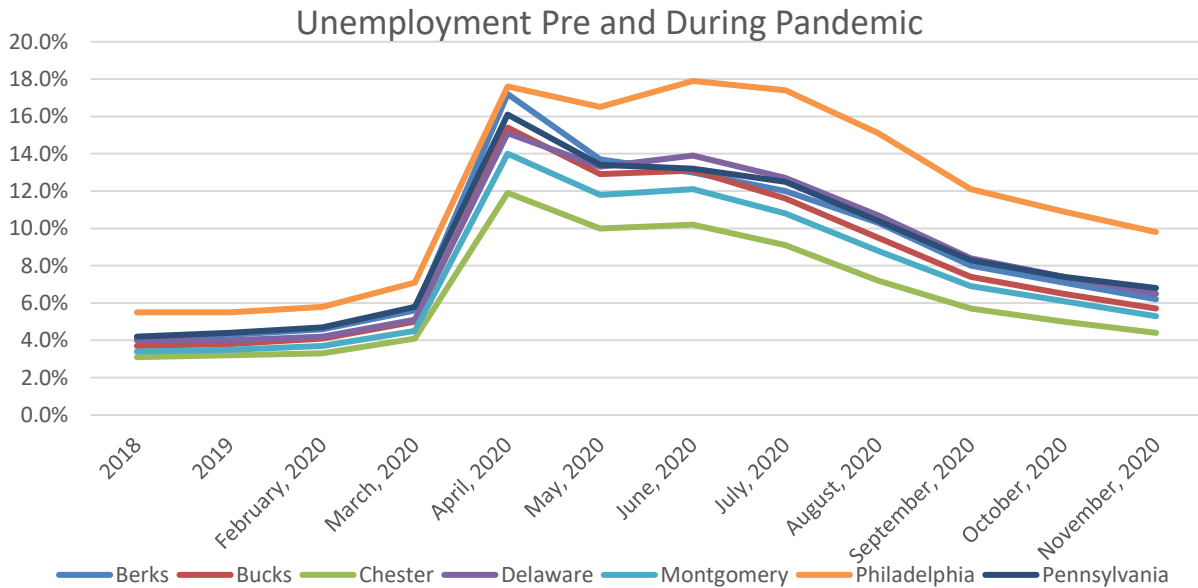
<sup>4</sup> Selected Economic Characteristics: 5-Year ACS, 2015 – 2019

<sup>5</sup> Selected Economic Characteristics: 5-Year ACS, 2015 – 2019

## Program Years 2021-2024 WIOA Multi-Year Regional Plan

Unemployment in the region was up slightly from 2018 to 2019 but remained at or near full employment until the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. While unemployment appears to have peaked in April 2020 (with the exception of Philadelphia which hit its peak in June 2020), the future economic climate is unknown, and the region faces the unfortunate fact that there are still many residents who have been left behind. Some of those most affected are those that had previously held employment in the accommodation and food services industry which has been highly impacted by the pandemic. Another group to note in the region are the older, formerly highly paid professionals who remain long-term unemployed or under-employed.

Area Name	2018	2019
Berks	4.1%	4.3%
Bucks	3.7%	3.8%
Chester	3.1%	3.2%
Delaware	4.0%	4.0%
Montgomery	3.4%	3.5%
Philadelphia	5.5%	5.5%
Pennsylvania	4.2%	4.4%



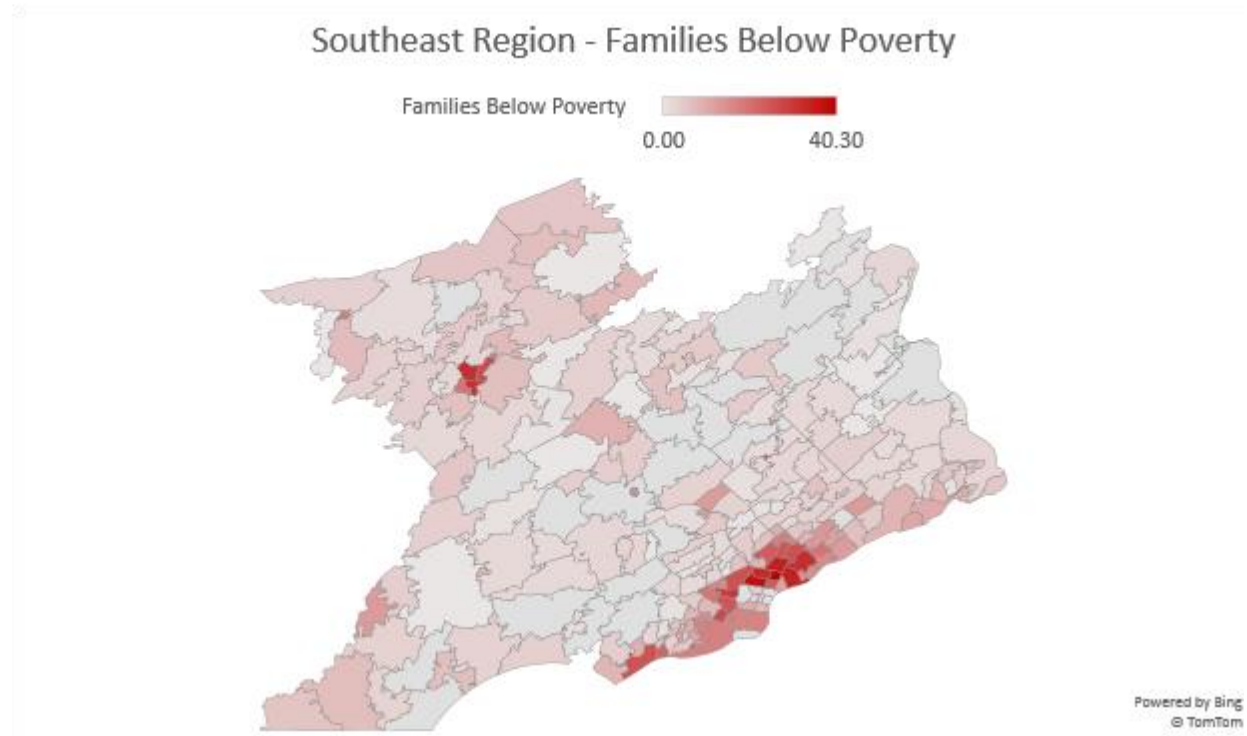
Given the volatility of the current economic environment and knowing that as of 2019, 35% of the regional population was not participating in the labor force, it is important to understand the barriers facing the historically harder to serve including regional residents that had not previously faced those barriers before the pandemic. These groups include those in poverty, immigrant population, and other populations with barriers (including ex-offenders; foster care; and individuals with disabilities). Regionally, we must address these barriers through research, planning, and collaboration in an effort to identify ways to connect potential workers with employer needs.

### Regional Population with Barriers

Poverty is often an indicator and contributes to the 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 region, almost one in ten (9.3%) families are living in

## Program Years 2021-2024 WIOA Multi-Year Regional Plan

poverty. Concentrations include a portion of Berks County (select Reading zip codes), Delaware County (Chester) and Philadelphia County (select Philadelphia zip codes) with poverty levels greater than 20%. Single female heads of families are more likely to be living in poverty, with nearly 22% of regional families having a female head of house with no spouse, 25.26% are living in poverty<sup>6</sup>. The labor force participation rate for individuals living in poverty in the region is 38.0%, slightly less than Pennsylvania overall (38.7%). Unemployment among this population is a particular concern at 26.1%, nearly 3% higher than Pennsylvania (23.3%)<sup>7</sup>.



Southeast Pennsylvania possesses an overwhelming percentage of the state’s immigrant population. According to the Selected Social Characteristics in the United States (ACS 5 – Year; 2015 - 2019), there were 512,635 immigrants in the region, accounting for 58.1% of the state’s immigrant population. Several local workforce areas already work closely with the Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians in addition to local community-based organizations with a mission to assist this demographic. Immigrants bring with them a wide range of educational and vocational backgrounds which can ease, or create barriers to, their entry into the local workforce. Basic English language communication skills are the foundation for successful integration into the workforce, however 6.79% of residents in the Southeast region report speaking English “less than very well”, significantly higher than the statewide average of 4.32%<sup>8</sup>. Another barrier to full labor market participation is difficulty

<sup>6</sup> Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months of Families: ACS 5 – Year, 2015 – 2019

<sup>7</sup> Center for Workforce Information and Analysis: Barriers - Poverty

<sup>8</sup> Center for Workforce Information and Analysis: Barriers - Language

## Program Years 2021-2024 WIOA Multi-Year Regional Plan

transferring credentials and professional licenses, resulting in underemployment. Finally, lack of knowledge of business permitting and licensing requirements slows entrepreneurship efforts which for many immigrants is the best on-ramp to employment.

According to the Urban Institute, most individuals released from prison held some type of job prior to incarceration and want legal, stable employment upon release. Some criminal justice research suggests that finding and maintaining a legitimate job can reduce former prisoners' chances of reoffending, and the higher the wage, the less likely it is that individuals will return to crime. While we are seeing a notable increase in the number of "Second Chance Employers" in the region providing more potential job opportunities for these individuals, most individuals re-entering our communities experience difficulty finding a job after release. During the time spent in prison, many lose work skills and are given little opportunity to gain useful work experience. A large proportion of former prisoners have low levels of educational attainment and work experience, and health problems that make them hard to employ. In addition to lack of skills and established work history, many reentrants must overcome other barriers including lack of proper identification (ID) and transportation. Our local one stop partners are especially effective at helping job seekers obtain legal ID and restored drivers licenses as a lack of transportation is a barrier for many workforce program participants. In the Southeast region, in 2019 there were 6,300 individuals released from the PA Department of Corrections<sup>9</sup> and in 2015, 69,136 released from a county jail.

Homelessness presents a significant challenge to employment and often is the culmination of several barriers. The Point-in-Time count, required by HUD to measure sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons, saw a regional decrease from 8,031 individuals in 2019 to 7,865 in 2019 with 73% in Philadelphia<sup>10</sup>. Of particular concern are the 1,803 (23%) homeless individuals under the age of 18. Additionally, as of the 2017–2018 report, of the 10,795 children served through the Foster Care system in the region, 35% of them were in the 13-20 age group<sup>11</sup>. These individuals are particularly vulnerable to not completing education or getting connected to employment. The services offered through WIOA Youth programming and the TANF Youth Development Program play a vital role in engaging and reengaging this at-risk population.

When looking at the 299,861 regional residents with a disability (10.7% of the population), we see the unemployment rate go up and the labor force participation rate go down when compared to residents without a disability. The connection with OVR to help overcome misinformation and guide individuals to the resources they need in collaboration with the local workforce development boards aims to reduce the drastic differences between unemployment and labor force participation. The region has a labor force participation rate of 41.5% among individuals with disabilities which is lower than the Commonwealth at

---

<sup>9</sup> PA Department of Corrections Calendar Year Releases; 2019

<sup>10</sup> HUD – 2007-2019 Point in time estimates by CoC

<sup>11</sup> Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children: Foster Care – Children served

<sup>11</sup> Table C18120: ACS 5 – Year, 2015-2019

## Program Years 2021-2024 WIOA Multi-Year Regional Plan

42.6%. Similarly, the regional unemployment rate for individuals with disabilities is 14.2% which is 1.5% higher than the Commonwealth at 12.7%<sup>12</sup>. Individual county breakdowns are as follows and demonstrate the need for further partnership development with OVR and other local and regional agencies focused on the disabled population.

County	Unemployment Rate		Labor Force Participation Rate <sup>13</sup>	
	No Disability	Disability	No Disability	Disability
<b>Berks</b>	5.3%	12.5%	84.9%	45.3%
<b>Bucks</b>	3.8%	8.7%	85.5%	47.4%
<b>Chester</b>	3.6%	10.0%	84.4%	52.1%
<b>Delaware</b>	5.1%	11.2%	82.7%	45.4%
<b>Montgomery</b>	3.9%	8.4%	85.8%	52.1%
<b>Philadelphia</b>	8.1%	19.9%	78.8%	34.8%

An additional barrier that may have previously been overlooked but has proven to be important since the start of the pandemic is access to computers and broadband internet. Regionally, just under 90% of households report having a computer and just under 84% report having a broadband internet subscription. Both of these figures are higher than the Commonwealth as a whole which reports 88% of households with a computer and 81.5% with a broadband internet subscription<sup>14</sup>. While schools and places of work have intermittently relied on remote engagement, lack of technological skills and resources need to be addressed regionally across southeast Pennsylvania.

This labor market summary provides the foundation for the six Local Workforce Development Boards (and their community and workforce partners) to design and implement programming that addresses the needs of the regional population. The ultimate goal of analyzing the population and labor force is to develop strategies aimed at mitigating barriers to attach individuals to the employers in the region that need positions filled.

### Regional Employer Overview

The Southeast Pennsylvania Region has a significant and growing employer base. Comparing the density of the employment concentration through Location Quotients, employment opportunities in the region, and historical and emerging sector trends help better understand the gaps for the employers and business across Southeast Pennsylvania.

Location Quotients (LQ) are a valuable way of quantifying how concentrated a particular industry, cluster, occupation, or demographic group is in a region as compared to the nation. The LQ can reveal what makes a particular region “unique” in comparison to the national

<sup>12</sup> Table C18120: ACS 5 – Year, 2015-2019

<sup>13</sup> Center for Workforce Information and Analysis: Barriers - Disability

<sup>14</sup> Selected Social Characteristics: ACS 5 – Year, 2015-2019

## Program Years 2021-2024 WIOA Multi-Year Regional Plan

average. While there are some outlier sectors with significantly varying LQs across the region, Health Care and Social Assistance has an LQ over one in each of the six counties, demonstrating its regional importance. Management of companies and enterprises has an LQ over one in five of the six counties, while Finance and Insurance is concentrated above one in four of the six counties. Of particular note is Philadelphia with a 4.41 Educational Services LQ. The June 2020 employment Location Quotients for the 2-digit NAICS Sectors by Local Workforce Area are as follows:

<sup>15</sup> NAICS Sector	Berks	Bucks	Chester	Delaware	Montgomery	Philadelphia
11 Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	<b>1.85</b>	.23	<b>2.23</b>	.03	.07	N/A
21 Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	.38	.18	.18	.09	.17	N/A
22 Utilities	<b>1.66</b>	.59	.64	.70	<b>1.32</b>	.63
23 Construction	.83	<b>1.24</b>	.91	<b>1.03</b>	.96	.31
31-33 Manufacturing	<b>2.13</b>	<b>1.22</b>	.85	.77	<b>1.13</b>	.31
42 Wholesale trade	.91	<b>1.37</b>	<b>1.05</b>	.78	<b>1.13</b>	.49
44-45 Retail trade	<b>1.03</b>	<b>1.23</b>	.99	<b>1.02</b>	.93	.63
48-49 Transportation and warehousing	<b>1.00</b>	.73	.67	<b>1.09</b>	.54	.95
51 Information	.25	.74	<b>1.55</b>	.46	<b>1.20</b>	<b>1.17</b>
52 Finance and insurance	.60	.79	<b>2.21</b>	<b>1.36</b>	<b>1.77</b>	<b>1.05</b>
53 Real estate and rental and leasing	.67	.72	.82	.80	<b>1.07</b>	.97
54 Professional and technical services	.62	.92	<b>1.59</b>	.66	<b>1.72</b>	<b>1.29</b>
55 Management of companies & enterprises	<b>2.08</b>	.66	<b>2.45</b>	<b>2.22</b>	<b>1.61</b>	<b>1.06</b>
56 Administrative and waste services	.83	.89	.74	<b>1.01</b>	<b>1.14</b>	.60
61 Educational services	.54	.79	.95	<b>2.75</b>	<b>1.23</b>	<b>4.41</b>
62 Health care and social assistance	<b>1.25</b>	<b>1.46</b>	<b>1.00</b>	<b>1.43</b>	<b>1.21</b>	<b>1.87</b>
71 Arts, entertainment, and recreation	.66	.90	<b>1.15</b>	<b>1.03</b>	.82	.96

<sup>15</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

## Program Years 2021-2024 WIOA Multi-Year Regional Plan

<b>72 Accommodation and food services</b>	.70	.84	.61	.74	.58	.62
<b>81 Other services, except public administration</b>	.85	.91	.87	.95	.81	.97

When digging a little deeper into the NAICS 4-digit industries, the highest concentrations in each county are as follows:

Berks County - 3314 Other nonferrous metal production at 17.72

Bucks County - 3259 Other chemical product and preparation mfg. at 4.69

Chester County - 5239 Other financial investment activities at 16.54

Delaware County - 3364 Aerospace product and parts manufacturing at 6.31

Montgomery County - 3254 Pharmaceutical and medicine manufacturing at 10.66

Philadelphia County - 6223 Other hospitals at 11.95

Regionally, the 2020 Location Quotients give us the top six NAICS 2-digit sectors with the highest concentration according to EMSI.

NAICS	Description	2020 Location Quotient
61	Educational Services	2.31
55	Management of Companies and Enterprises	1.50
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	1.43
52	Finance and Insurance	1.30
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	1.23
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1.10

Additionally, long-term industry projections for the Southeast Region provide a window into employer demand to match job seeker supply. Projected employment in Education and Health Services is expected to grow 12.3% through 2028, Construction 8.8%, Professional and Business Services 7.5% and as of now, while the post pandemic policies and procedures that would like play a huge role in growth have yet to be clearly defined, the Leisure and Hospitality sector is expected to grow 9.2%. As the industry with the fifth most jobs in the region, the workforce development boards will look to their counterparts in economic development agencies to identify local and regional ways to mitigate the impact of the pandemic.

When revisiting the projections from 2014-2024, Manufacturing was regionally expected to decline by 2.4% or 3,810. While the industry is still expected to decline through 2028, it is now expected to decline by only .7% or 1,090 jobs. The region's workforce and economic development agencies are continuing to work to identify strategies to attract and train talent to reverse the decline in manufacturing employment, but more immediately to find skilled replacement workers to take over for retiring baby-boomers.

## Program Years 2021-2024 WIOA Multi-Year Regional Plan

Long-Term Industry Projections for Southeast Pennsylvania (2018-28) <sup>16</sup>				
Industry	Employment (2018)	Projected Employment (2028)	Employment Change (2018-28)	
			Volume	Percent
<b>Total Jobs</b>	2,252,800	2,387,240	134,440	6.0%
<b>Goods Producing Industries</b>	249,590	255,820	6,230	2.5%
Agriculture, Mining & Logging	13,280	13,540	260	2.0%
Construction	80,380	87,440	7,060	8.8%
Manufacturing	155,930	154,840	-1,090	-0.7%
<b>Services-Providing</b>	1,888,870	2,015,790	126,920	6.7%
Trade, Transportation & Utilities	357,820	361,240	3,420	1.0%
Information	35,840	35,140	-700	-2.0%
Financial Activities	140,060	144,480	4,420	3.2%
Professional & Business Services	328,800	353,380	24,580	7.5%
Education & Health Services	591,820	664,800	72,980	12.3%
Leisure & Hospitality	201,880	220,520	18,640	9.2%
Other Services, Except Public Admin.	104,960	108,640	3,680	3.5%
<b>Federal, State &amp; Local Government</b>	127,720	127,590	-130	-0.1%
<b>Self-Employed Workers</b>	114,350	115,620	1,270	1.1%

Knowing the current industries in demand and the future industries of demand are both valuable resources but having an interim tool to measure growth or decline helps the region stay on track. Over the past five years, the industries that have shown the highest regional employment growth are Transportation and Warehousing, likely due to the addition of Amazon warehouses, and Health Care and Social Assistance.

NAICS	Description	2015 Jobs	2020 Jobs	2015 - 2020 Change	2015 - 2020 % Change <sup>17</sup>
48	Transportation and Warehousing	69,277	79,111	9,834	14%
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	379,803	425,193	45,391	12%
51	Information	36,165	39,523	3,359	9%
54	Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	177,873	188,655	10,782	6%
52	Finance and Insurance	117,364	123,483	6,118	5%

<sup>16</sup> Center for Workforce Information and Analysis; Long Term Industry Projections 2018 - 2028

<sup>17</sup> EMSI; All Industries in 6 Pennsylvania Counties Q1 2021 Data Set



## Program Years 2021-2024 WIOA Multi-Year Regional Plan

Equally valuable is knowing which industries have shown decline over the past five years. Retail Trade saw the biggest drop in volume while Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting saw the biggest drop in percentage.

NAICS	Description	2015 Jobs	2020 Jobs	2015 - 2020 Change	2015 - 2020 % Change <sup>18</sup>
11	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	17,316	15,084	(2,233)	(13%)
44	Retail Trade	224,051	204,231	(19,819)	(9%)
72	Accommodation and Food Services	156,298	148,347	(7,951)	(5%)
42	Wholesale Trade	77,882	74,085	(3,797)	(5%)
81	Other Services (except Public Administration)	129,616	124,328	(5,289)	(4%)

Occupational growth is an important measurement of where the region is headed and gives the workforce development region a vision to focus collaboration with employers and training providers alike. With a concentration of educational institutions and a prevalence for inter county travel, residents are not limited by providers or employers in their specific county. The region can use these projections to create or further develop partnerships that align with the future needs of the six workforce development areas individually and cumulatively.

Healthcare Practitioners, Technicians and Support remains the occupational cluster with the highest projected growth through 2028 at 14.6%. The Computer, Engineering and Science occupational cluster is expected to grow by 11,790 jobs by 2028 (8.9%). While Protective, Food, Building & Personal Service is expected to grow 10.2%, there is a similar caveat as the Leisure and Hospitality industry, as it is unclear at this time what the full impact of the COVID-19 pandemic will be on that occupational cluster. There are three occupational clusters expected to decline slightly by 2028 – Sales and Related (-0.3%), Production (-1.2%), and Office and Administrative Support (-2.6%).

Notably, Installation, Maintenance and Repair Occupations are also projected to grow by 5.5%, reflecting the critical role that these high quality jobs increasingly play in supporting the introduction of new technologies into our advanced manufacturing sector.

<sup>18</sup> EMSI; All Industries in 6 Pennsylvania Counties Q1 2021 Data Set

## Program Years 2021-2024 WIOA Multi-Year Regional Plan

The chart below represents the long-term projected occupational growth from 2018 – 2028.

Long-Term Occupational Projections for Southeast Pennsylvania (2018-28) <sup>19</sup>				
Occupational Title	Employment (2018)	Projected Employment (2028)	Employment Change (2018-28)	
			Volume	Percent
<b>Total, All Occupations</b>	2,252,800	2,387,240	134,440	6.0%
<b>Management, Business &amp; Finance</b>	252,360	269,740	17,380	6.9%
<b>Computer, Engineering &amp; Science</b>	132,130	143,920	11,790	8.9%
<b>Education, Legal, Social Service, Arts &amp; Media</b>	247,840	266,880	19,040	7.7%
<b>Healthcare Practitioners, Technicians &amp; Support</b>	232,610	266,630	34,020	14.6%
<b>Protective, Food, Building &amp; Personal Service</b>	425,940	469,250	43,310	10.2%
<b>Sales &amp; Related</b>	210,820	210,290	-530	-0.3%
<b>Office &amp; Administrative Support</b>	351,800	342,810	-8,990	-2.6%
<b>Farming, Fishing &amp; Forestry</b>	7,260	7,370	110	1.5%
<b>Construction &amp; Extraction</b>	76,790	82,650	5,860	7.6%
<b>Installation, Maintenance &amp; Repair</b>	78,160	82,420	4,260	5.5%
<b>Production</b>	98,660	97,450	-1,210	-1.2%
<b>Transportation &amp; Material Moving</b>	137,010	146,350	9,340	6.8%

Similar to the interim tool used to measure growth or decline in industry, that same method for analyzing occupational growth and decline over the past five years will help the region stay on track and be able to illustrate some of the short-term impacts of the pandemic. Among occupations with greater than 20,000 jobs, Home Health and Personal Care Aides; and Nursing Assistants, Orderlies, and Psychiatric Aides showed the highest growth at 30% or an additional 29,646 jobs from 2015 – 2020.

SOC	Description	2015 Jobs	2020 Jobs	2015 - 2020 Change	2015 - 2020 % Change <sup>20</sup>
31-1100	Home Health and Personal Care Aides; and Nursing Assistants, Orderlies, and Psychiatric Aides	98,141	127,787	29,646	30%
11-3000	Operations Specialties Managers	24,196	29,169	4,973	21%
11-1000	Top Executives	32,972	38,483	5,510	17%
53-3000	Motor Vehicle Operators	51,576	59,914	8,338	16%
11-9000	Other Management Occupations	49,342	56,509	7,167	15%

The past five years, and likely impacted by 2020, have seen steep declines in certain occupations as well. The greatest decline has been in Retail Sales Workers who saw a reduction of nearly 20,000 jobs (16%) from 2015 – 2020.

<sup>19</sup> Center for Workforce Information and Analysis; Long-Term Occupational Projections

<sup>20</sup> EMSI; All Occupations in 6 Pennsylvania Counties Q1 2021 Data Set

## Program Years 2021-2024 WIOA Multi-Year Regional Plan

SOC	Description	2015 Jobs	2020 Jobs	2015 - 2020 Change	2015 - 2020 % Change <sup>21</sup>
41-2000	Retail Sales Workers	122,134	102,516	(19,618)	(16%)
35-2000	Cooks and Food Preparation Workers	38,040	32,007	(6,033)	(16%)
43-6000	Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	63,585	54,209	(9,376)	(15%)
43-3000	Financial Clerks	49,564	42,372	(7,191)	(15%)
51-9000	Other Production Occupations	34,677	30,961	(3,716)	(11%)

Another element in identifying and analyzing the needs of employers is through online job posting data. The certifications required by employers in online job postings, as of December 2020, align with industries and occupations in demand, prioritizing licensing that relates to healthcare as four of the top 5 needs in the region. This data regularly be reviewed jointly to ensure staff efforts are appropriately aligned with the data trends.

Certification	December 2020 <sup>22</sup>
Driver's License	10533
Registered Nurse	2729
First Aid CPR AED	2756
Basic Life Saving (BLS)	947
Certified Nursing Assistant	957

Lastly, in an effort to align training opportunities, including workshops, we need to consider the projected in-demand job skills that are not necessarily specific to a given industry or occupation the way certifications tend to be. When looking at the tools and technology skills expected to be of utmost importance to employment in 2026, the top five for each of the six counties in the Southeast region are all computer related with very little variation in title or their respective order. They are: Spreadsheet software, Office suite software, Word processing software, Desktop computers, Notebook computers, Data base user interface and query software, and Personal computers<sup>23</sup>.

Analysis of the labor market and trends that indicate projections are the foundation of the region’s vision and goals. Moving forward to ensure a thriving post-COVID recovery, Workforce Development Boards will work to anticipate the needs of regional employers and align service delivery to meet those needs. The ongoing review and analysis of relevant regional data sets as relates to the overall health of the workforce system in Southeastern Pennsylvania will be central to recovery.

<sup>21</sup> EMSI; All Occupations in 6 Pennsylvania Counties Q1 2021 Data Set

<sup>22</sup> Center for Workforce Information and Analysis; Online Job Postings

<sup>23</sup> Center for Workforce Information and Analysis; Projected Job Skills 2016 - 2026

## Program Years 2021-2024 WIOA Multi-Year Regional Plan

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

The Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development region's economic and workforce development vision and goals are based upon regional economic development efforts and common needs of the priority industry clusters, their employers and their critical skill needs. The region has a strong and successful history of collaborating on regional economic and workforce development efforts. This collaborative spirit proved critical at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and has evolved to incorporate strategic recovery planning.

Economic development and business engagement strategies are often regional with employers and sectors crossing local workforce development areas geographic designations in order to obtain their needed skilled labor force. In response to the regional needs of employers, the six local workforce development board directors have a successful history of meeting at least monthly to develop programs, apply for funds, and implement regional efforts to address the needs of employers across the region. These partnerships for program implementation are in direct response to employer needs and consequently may be a full partnership of all six areas (with one usually accepting the lead role) or could be fewer than all six depending upon the locations of employers, type of industry, funds available and other factors.

The region coordinates workforce services with our economic development partners through the regular Southeast regional PREP meetings as well as in special initiatives including Engage!. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, economic and workforce development partners have convened regularly to share resources while collectively addressing needs and strategizing responses. The Engage! survey was modified to target COVID-specific solutions for employers.

The regional system effectively coordinates workforce services with economic development partners through the regular Southeast regional PREP meetings as well as in special initiatives. For example, the region's Small Business Development Centers present their services in information sessions with the area's Industry Partnerships. The Delaware Valley Industrial Resource Center (DVIRC) and the Manufacturers Resource Center (MRC) are critical partners in supporting the diversification of employers' manufacturing production and succession planning. These partnerships with economic development agencies provide a broader set of services to employers across the region.

This model of regional collaboration drives efforts toward growing pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship opportunities in the region. While each area has developed local plans to promote and grow registered apprenticeships, efforts have had a regional impact. Through the Philadelphia Workforce Development Board's (hereafter referred to as Philadelphia Works Inc.) Apprenticeship Ambassador grant, four areas had an opportunity to train key staff around the structural development of strong apprenticeship models. Apprenticeship PHL serves as a regional resource for employers, providers and job seekers. Through a

## Program Years 2021-2024 WIOA Multi-Year Regional Plan

comprehensive website and ongoing promotional events and professional development, these efforts have increased enthusiasm and access to resources in the region. While the region’s apprenticeship efforts have progressed, there is still room for growth. Ongoing access to grant funding and technical assistance will continue to play a prominent role in pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship development in Southeastern Pennsylvania.

Other specific projects represent responses to various industry clusters throughout the region and complement the local workforce development area efforts. Examples of these programs include Business-Education Partnerships across the region that connect employers to teachers, parents, and students. BEP activities focus on career readiness and create awareness of in-demand career pathways. Industry Partnerships convene industry leaders around shared goals and concerns. The Industry Partnerships listed below serve one or multiple workforce development areas in Southeastern Pennsylvania.

### Southeastern Pennsylvania Workforce Development Region Industry Partnerships

Name	Contact Entity	Website/More Information
Berks County Advanced Manufacturing Industry Partnership	Greater Reading Chamber Alliance	<a href="http://greaterreading.org">greaterreading.org</a>
Greater Philadelphia Healthcare Partnership	1199-C Philadelphia	<a href="http://greaterphilahealthcare.org">greaterphilahealthcare.org</a>
Healthcare Connect	CCEDC	<a href="http://ccedcpa.com">ccedcpa.com</a>
Hospitality and Entertainment Industry Partnership	Philadelphia Works Inc.	<a href="http://philaworks.org/heip">philaworks.org/heip</a>
ITAG – Innovative Technology Action Group	CCEDC	<a href="http://ccedcpa.com">ccedcpa.com</a>
Manufacturing Alliance of Bucks and Montgomery Counties	Manufacturing Alliance of Bucks and Montgomery Counties	<a href="http://Manufacturingalliancecpa.com">Manufacturingalliancecpa.com</a>
Manufacturing Alliance of Chester and Delaware Counties	CCEDC	<a href="http://ccedcpa.com">ccedcpa.com</a>
The Smart Energy Initiative	CCEDC	<a href="http://ccedcpa.com">ccedcpa.com</a>
Southeastern PA Manufacturing Alliance (SEPMA)	Philadelphia Works Inc.	<a href="http://philaworks.org/sepma">philaworks.org/sepma</a>

All six local workforce development boards will continue to emphasize and respond to the talent demands of employers throughout the region. To implement this, the Board Directors will continue to meet monthly and convene with their Workforce Development Board Chairs quarterly. These meetings will focus on improving the services to employers, industry clusters and skills sets necessary and in demand to complement and support local county-based efforts. Additional efforts beginning in 2021 will convene all six full boards to strategize and share best practices.

## Program Years 2021-2024 WIOA Multi-Year Regional Plan

The Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Region, as part of their plan, will discuss and consider the following topics (and others) as part of their meetings:

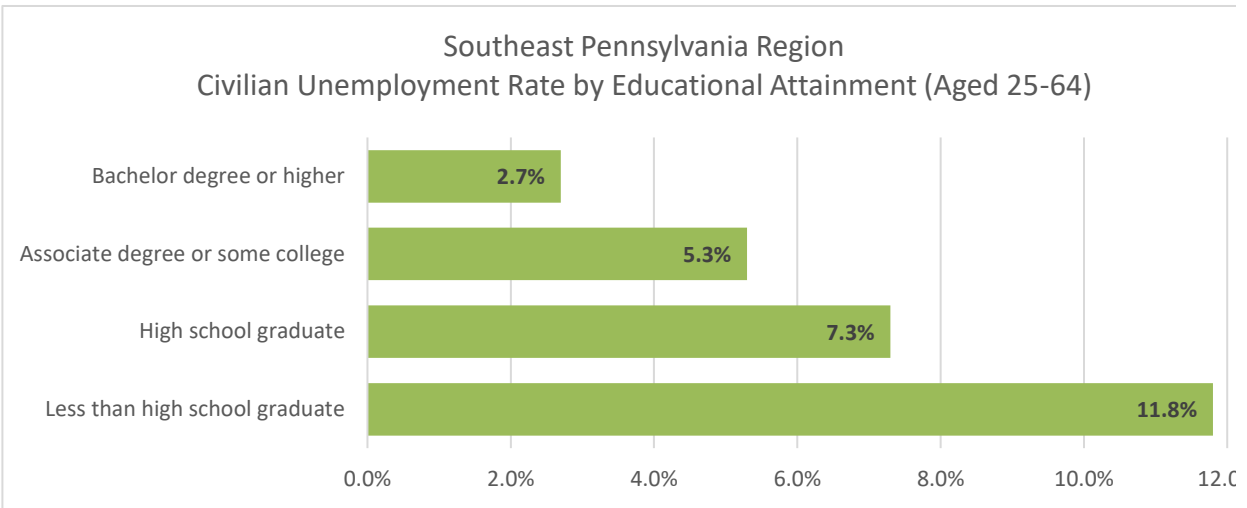
- ✓ Acquiring grants—the region has a successful history of acquiring grant funds to address critical regional needs and will continue to explore these opportunities as a region.
- ✓ Leveraging existing resources—in order to better serve employers, intermediaries, jobs seekers and others, the sharing of resources (such as curricula and service strategies), recruitment needed for skill needs in high demand for the region’s employers, and other related data and information.
- ✓ Incumbent worker policies—consider reviewing and developing consistent incumbent worker policies to best serve the region’s employers. This focus served the region well when in 2018 the region received a \$500,000 layoff aversion matching grant from PA L&I to assist regional employers’ effort to upskill their critical information technology (IT) workforce(s).
- ✓ Core partner procedures—consider development of protocols with partners such as OVR, Wagner-Peyser and Title II to better and more consistently serve employers and job seekers and as available with Youth Build and Job Corps.
- ✓ Train-the-Trainer—development of training packages in venues where staff can access this training including improved employer engagement and business service strategies.
- ✓ Review local employer engagement strategies—one of the opportunities is to improve consistency, performance and services to employers throughout the region by reviewing and sharing effective practices related to employer engagement strategies.

As part of the plan, the Directors will continue to reach out to the lead sectors throughout the region, work with intermediaries (such as Chambers of Commerce and Economic Development Organizations) both locally and regionally, and share labor market information in order to continually serve employers as effectively as possible. Additionally, the region is exploring how to market workforce services and increase our penetration rate across industries while attracting more career seekers into our centers for workforce services.

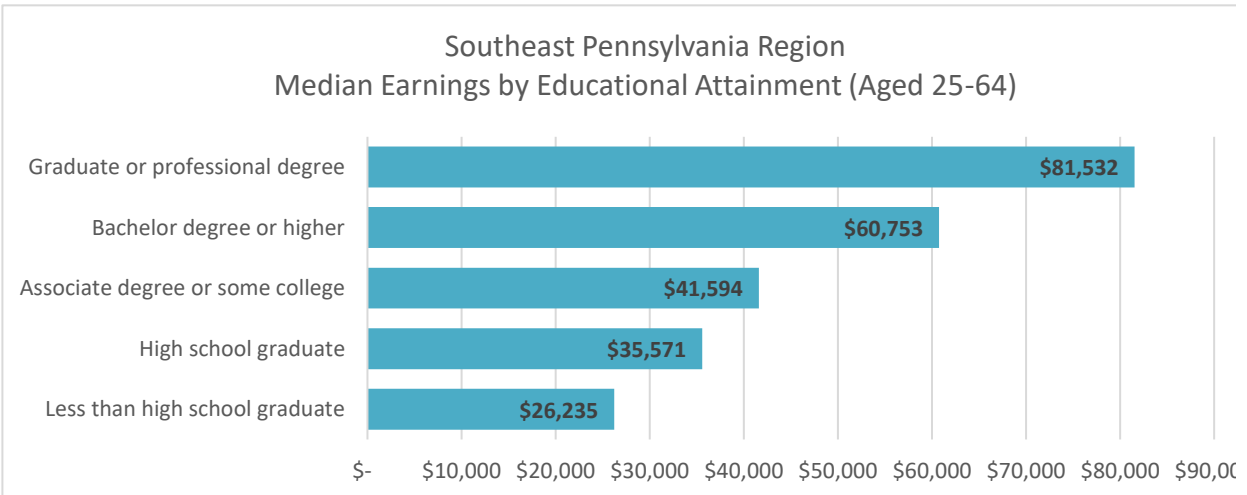
The Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Boards have a long successful history working with and partnering with post-secondary education. The regional community colleges are key resources in both post-secondary certifications and 2-year degrees that align with employer demand. As noted in the Jobs 1<sup>st</sup> funding initiative, and indicated in the table below, these national trends also apply to the SEPA region. A worker with an associate degree earns 21% more than a high school graduate. Just graduating from high school in the region leads to a 47% increase in median earnings over the earnings of a worker without a diploma. Workers without postsecondary degrees are also more likely to be unemployed than workers with an associate degree or higher. The unemployment rate from 2015 – 2019 is 11.8% for workers without a high school diploma which is down from 15.3% in the 2013 - 2017 dataset. The rate for workers with an associate degree or some college is just 5.3% in 2015 - 2019, down from

## Program Years 2021-2024 WIOA Multi-Year Regional Plan

6.4% in 2013 - 2017. While this data was gathered pre-pandemic, continued trending of these numbers is expected.



Source: *Educational Attainment by Employment Status: 5-Year ACS, 2015 – 2019*



Source: *Median Earnings in the Past 12 Months by Educational Attainment: 5-Year ACS, 2015 - 2019*

For these reasons, as well as the aging workforce and wage disparity further compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, offering training programs that meet the needs of employers and are accessible to all residents is more important than ever. As previously referenced, employers are facing waves of retirements, removing some of the most experienced and skilled workers from the workforce. Most of these openings will require workers with at least an associate degree and strong employability skills.

## Program Years 2021-2024 WIOA Multi-Year Regional Plan

Focusing and prioritizing assistance to support key industry sectors in Southeastern Pennsylvania has been a critical success factor in the regional planning process under WIOA. Specifically, two goals that have been successfully pursued since 2015 include “workforce and economic partners provide information about the needs of key industry sectors to training providers” and “students, educators, parents, and adult workers are aware of in demand skills and occupations on the region”. A continued strong connection to our world-class education and training infrastructure across the region will allow our residents to readily obtain these skills and their corresponding wages.

Regional Workforce Development Board members, staff and partners are aware that focusing solely on higher level education does not hit all areas needing to be addressed for higher level jobs. Thoroughly reviewing labor market information and available programs on the Eligible Training Provider List allow program staff to connect disadvantaged youth and adults to employment with family-sustaining wages. Additionally, each local area determines skills gaps against High Priority Occupations to develop local and regional programming that meets the needs of employers while ensuring all job seekers have access to services.

Each area has procured Title I Youth and Young Adult, Adult, Dislocated Worker and TANF providers and developed local policy and initiatives with partners to innovate programming that addresses both the unique and mutual needs of all job seekers:

- Incarcerated individuals, reentrants and justice-involved job seekers
- Job seekers with disabilities
- Job seekers with substance use disorders
- Public assistance recipients and economically disadvantaged job seekers
- Veterans seeking employment
- Job seekers with Limited English Proficiency
- Job seekers without a high school diploma
- Basic skills deficient job seekers
- Job seekers who have been denied equal employment opportunity because of race, color, sex, national origin, religion, age, disability, marital status, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, or any other non-merit-based factor

One of the goals of the Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Region involves the convening of providers, particularly when providers are common across multiple local areas, to leverage resources and share best practices or special initiatives. By comparing where gaps may exist in each area’s local workforce system and collectively brainstorming practical solutions, each area will be better poised to enhance service delivery for every job seeker.

As a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, one area of increased focus will be on developing effective regional responses to the challenges of disconnected young adults. This will involve coordination with our educational partners, community-based organizations (CBOs) and WIOA partners such as Job Corps and YouthBuild. Though data is not yet available to provide confirmation, communication with school districts across the region suggests a significant increase in youth disconnected from secondary education.



## Program Years 2021-2024 WIOA Multi-Year Regional Plan

The Directors will explore and then establish, as part of the regional effort, appropriate outcomes and results to collectively measure the work with employers and sectors. Developing the partnership framework for ongoing collaboration, developing sustained outreach campaigns for job seekers and employers alike, and engaging employers collaboratively is noted in and part of this regional plan per Section 1.2. Simultaneously, WDBs will continue to promote and develop strong local and regional workforce partnerships to connect youth and adults with barriers to employment to available resources, maximizing outcomes for local initiatives and programming.

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

While all the local workforce development boards in the Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development region maintain strong connections with their multiple local economic development organizations and chambers of commerce, as described in each local plan, the primary forum for connecting workforce development and economic development goals and services at the regional level has been the Southeast Pennsylvania Partnership for Regional Economic Performance (SE PREP). Since 2015, the core partners of SE PREP have brought together the region's 6 county-based economic development organizations, 6 workforce boards, 5 small business development centers, and 2 industrial resource centers to address regional priorities, establish a foundation for ongoing collaboration, and create strategic goals to guide the individual strategies and tactics of each participating organization. The planning that resulted from the process focuses on the intersection of interests, challenges, and opportunities of the partners. The planning does not supersede any other plans but rather provides an overarching framework to focus on the core issue of primary interest to the Southeast Pennsylvania partners – creating a more highly-educated and trained workforce in the region as an enabler of business expansion and attraction. Ongoing planning is reflected in the goals detailed in Section 1.2.

The platform of knowledge and trust among workforce development organizations and economic development organizations in the region has resulted, and will continue to result in, quick concerted action to respond to needs and seize opportunities. Coalitions in various geographic configurations provide customized approaches to address key issues, all under the regional SE PREP platform that is used to share information, expand and replicate successful models, and assess overall regional impact on employer and job seeker customers. This process allows for flexibility and speed in crafting solutions and in sharing leadership on key initiatives, while maintaining focus on regional impact of the collective efforts. This platform has been a critical partnership dynamic throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Shown below are examples of such coalitions and sector initiatives that are serving to advance workforce skills in the region and address challenges collectively. The list is a regional sampling, with additional local initiatives detailed in each LWDA's Local Plan:

## Program Years 2021-2024 WIOA Multi-Year Regional Plan

### **American Apprenticeship Grant**

**Purpose/Goals:** Build new apprenticeship structures and pipelines in the region, specifically creating registered apprenticeships in IT, Health and Behavioral Health, building strong career pathways. Create visibility for apprenticeship structures in the region to stimulate the growth of apprenticeships in other occupations.

**Timeline:** October 2015-March 2021

**Key Partners:** Philadelphia Workforce Development Board, Philadelphia School District, Communities in Schools, Youth Build, Job Corps, District 1199C Training & Upgrading Fund, OIC, PHA, Bucks County WDB, Bucks County Community College, Montgomery County WDB, Montgomery County Community College, CVS

**Coordinating Partner:** Philadelphia Works Inc.

### **Berks Business-Education Partnership / Career Ready Berks (CRB) Alliance**

**Purpose/Goals:** These coordinated demonstration projects employ an innovative, multi-faceted approach to the continuing coordinate and expansion of business-education programs. Through an innovative and well-strategized model, the Career Ready Berks (CRB) alliance brings together multiple stakeholders and their collective expertise to the table to coordinate the development and delivery of several distinct but complementary career exploration activities under one universal “enterprise umbrella”. The WDB has consistently applied for and received discretionary Pennsylvania Business Education Partnership (PA BEP) funding to advance the work of this partnership. As a result of the effectiveness of our work, this well-designed and fully scalable CRB model has been recognized by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) as a leading elementary and secondary education best practice that has been adopted and adapted to local business-education collaborative needs by other areas in the region. Expanding such structured and relevant career education opportunities will help us create, grow, and retain the next generation of workforce talent across the SE PA region.

**Timeline:** June 2018 – December 2021 (3 years of grants)

**Key Career Ready Berks Partners:** Berks County Intermediate Unit (BCIU), Reading Area Community College (RACC), Berks Career & Technology Center (BCTC), Reading Muhlenberg Career & Technology Center (RMCTC), Reading School District, Greater Reading Chamber Alliance (GRCA), Manufacturing Resource Center (MRC), the Berks Business and Education Coalition (BBEC), the Berks County Workforce Development Board (WDB)

### **Business & Education Partnership – Bucks County**

**Purpose/Goals:** To build and participate in workplace readiness training and career exploration activities such as Manufacturing Day, What’s So Cool About Manufacturing and ManuFest. The grant has provided funding for internships for high school students. The largest internship is with the Intermediate Unit, offering a paid internship to 60+ special needs students who are employed at various locations in the county. Additionally, funding provides educational programs and career exploration services to youth residing in the Juvenile Detention Center.

**Timeline:** January 2020 through December 2021

## **Program Years 2021-2024 WIOA Multi-Year Regional Plan**

**Key Partners:** Four Bucks County High Schools, Bucks County Intermediate Unit #22, Bucks County Juvenile Detention Center, Vita Education Services, PA Society for Biomedical Research, and several Bucks County employers

### **Business Education Partnership – Chester County**

**Purpose/Goals:** The Business Education Partnership local grant program provider is the Chester County Economic Development Council. The activity focus is to provide elementary through high school students from various socio-economic backgrounds the support and resources, as well as career awareness activities to pursue careers, post-secondary education or vocational training. Training opportunities prepare students for in-demand careers in the Healthcare, Technology, Manufacturing and Energy industries which have been identified as growing occupational areas in Chester County.

### **Business Education Partnership – Montgomery County**

**Purpose/Goals:** The primary goal of the Montgomery County BEP is generating student, parent and educator interest in high-priority occupations that pay family-sustaining wages in the area. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the culmination of BEP was a series of industry tours and two large-scale career expos that focused on the healthcare & social assistance, advanced manufacturing and construction trades. With strong partnerships in place, the partnership is developing virtual career experiences that can be archived to reach more participants.

**Timeline:** Ongoing partnership (since 2016)

**Key Partners:** Montgomery County WDB, Manufacturing Alliance of Bucks and Montgomery Counties, Montgomery County Intermediate Unit

### **Business-Education Partnership – Philadelphia - Career Awareness Project**

**Purpose/Goals:** Create pathways programs in manufacturing sector for 14-24-year old students and young adults. Provide career awareness and internship opportunities for over 300 youth. Enhance career awareness through real-time labor market information and mapping of pathways.

**Timeline:** June 2018 – December 2021

**Key Partners:** School District of Philadelphia, Philadelphia Youth Network, Collegiate Consortium, Office of Career & Technical Education, Industry Advisory Committee, Manufacturing Alliance of Philadelphia, Southeast Regional Manufacturing Alliance

### **Health Care Connect (HCC)**

Health Care Connect's mission is to advocate for the advancement of the health care industry through training, outreach and other industry strategies. In collaboration with participating hospitals, continuing care facilities, acute rehabilitation facilities, educational institutions, workforce development boards, and other resource providers, HCC develops programs, trainings, and workshops for individuals and companies to help recruitment and retention of health care workers.

## **Program Years 2021-2024 WIOA Multi-Year Regional Plan**

***Purpose/Goals:*** HCC Action teams have reaffirmed their focus on these regional healthcare industry priorities:

***Priority # 1: Behavioral Health Access:*** Understanding the potential issues related to drug abuse and/or mental health challenges and establishing available resources.

***Priority # 2: Training:*** Develop Trainings on the implications of insurance changes (Value-based, other), recovery.... Work with area politicians to make PA a compact state for licensure.

***Priority # 3 Transportation:*** Encourage flexibility with provider shuttles and other transit services to supplement potential public options. Work with TMACC and their partners to verify short and long-term solutions.

***Priority # 4: HCC Partnership Sustainability:*** Secure supplemental funding for imperative behavior health trainings and other HCC challenges from available grants, partners and new funding sources.

### **Innovation Technology Action Group (ITAG)**

***Purpose/Goals:*** Develop programs and workshops for individuals and companies, promoting the latest technology and best practices in using it. Create a pipeline of qualified technically-trained workers. Host an annual Tech Summit conference for IT leaders to share knowledge and experiences on leading trends impacting business. Administer the \$500,000 Layoff Aversion Incumbent Worker Training Grant for the region.

***Timeline:*** Ongoing Industry Partnership (since 2009)

***Key Partners:*** Workforce Development Boards of Southeast Pennsylvania

### **Manufacturing Alliances of Bucks & Montgomery Counties and Chester & Delaware Counties**

***Purpose/Goals:*** Connect manufacturers in the four counties to strengthen and grow the sector. Provide opportunities for increased networking, partnering, and sharing of information. Create and maintain a supply chain website. Raise money to support goals. Provide dedicated staff from the two Workforce Development Boards.

***Timeline:*** Ongoing platforms

***Key Partners:*** Bucks, Chester, Delaware and Montgomery County Workforce Development Boards, manufacturers in all four counties

### **National Dislocated Worker Grant - Economic Transition**

***Purpose/Goals:*** To provide dislocated workers with clear pathways to in-demand occupations with sustainable wages through degree completion or short-term training and enhanced supportive services.

***Timeline:*** January 2019-September 2021

***Key Partners:*** Berks County WDB, Chester County WDB, Delaware County WDB Montgomery County WDB (in partnership with Philadelphia and Bucks County WDB)

### **Next Gen IP: Hospitality, Leisure and Entertainment**

***Purpose/Goals:*** This partnership has 4 objectives: Provide consistent and portable skills training to entry-level workers; develop a pipeline of workers from high school to adult

## **Program Years 2021-2024 WIOA Multi-Year Regional Plan**

programs; change the image of hospitality jobs through education, apprenticeships and defining career pathways; and develop a strategic plan to implement for the industry. Administer the \$32,654 to benefit the IP and find match dollars.

**Timeline:** Starting Industry Partnership

**Key Partners:** Philadelphia workforce board, Montgomery County workforce board

### **PASmart Ambassador Grant for SE PA- ApprenticeshipPHL**

**Purpose/Goals:** To engage teachers and educators with businesses to better support such transitions, externships of teams of CTE and academic teachers will engage with employers on-site.

**Timeline:** February 2019 – June 2020, ongoing

**Key Partners:** Philadelphia Works Inc.

ApprenticeshipPHL (a collaborative of workforce boards, union and non-traditional apprenticeship programs, employers, and supportive systems)

### **Partnerships for Regional Economic Performance (PREP) and Engage!**

**Purpose/Goals:** Ongoing regional economic development effort to increase programs and participation. These goals are ultimately meant to increase sales within the immediate county, create jobs, retain jobs, assist with financing, and encourage startup companies to set roots locally. Engage! surveys connect partners to county-based businesses through in-depth documented conversations in order to gauge the needs of owners, to monitor any trends between industries and to expand on the communications between policy makers and the business community.

**Timeline:** Ongoing (Engage! through 12/31/2021)

**Key Partners:** Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Berks, Philadelphia and Montgomery County, Kutztown University, Temple University, Widener University

### **Re-Entry / Justice-Involved Programming – Chester County**

**Purpose/Goals:** Chester County Workforce Development Board (WDB) staff are proud to participate in WRAP (Women's Reentry Assessment & Programming Initiative (WRAP) committee meetings and see great potential for collaborative programming in years to come. WRAP is a specialized assessment and supervision unit of Adult Probation, Parole and Pretrial Services that integrates gender-responsive, risk/need assessment, supervision and programming in collaboration with community case management to reduce recidivism, decrease technical violations of community supervision and increase the health and well-being of justice involved women, their families and communities. Chester County WDB will continue to seek out funding opportunities like Strategic Innovation, when funds are made available. If given the opportunity, we would like to expand programming and continue to support and invest in re-entry services to justice-involved participants. This programming could include providing intensive workshops, skills training, On the Job Training, job placement, and follow-up services. We established two goals in a previous grant application; the first, to place justice-involved participants on a career path which will allow them self-sufficiency, the ability to pay fines and child support orders and arrears. The second goal is to

## Program Years 2021-2024 WIOA Multi-Year Regional Plan

engage employers, known as Second Chance Employers, who are open to hiring justice-involved individuals. We have an especially active Addressing Barriers Committee, with representatives from many different organizations and programs, including Chester County Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC) and Life Transforming Ministries. We look forward to continuing our support of programs like these and expanding available services for justice-involved individuals.

### **State and Local Internship Program (SLIP)**

**Purpose/Goals:** To offer paid internships to youth 16-24 years old to promote workplace soft skills training and valuable hands-on workplace experience. WDBs facilitate programming through this grant to meet the needs of local youth and employers.

**Key Partners:** Each participating WDB collaborates with schools, employers and other partners to facilitate programming.

### **Smart Energy Initiative (SEI)**

The Smart Energy Initiative (SEI) of Southeastern Pennsylvania is a public-private partnership focusing on energy efficiency, biofuels, geothermal, and solar industries. SEI services also focus on smart grid implementation and innovative use of traditional energy resources. Our mission is to promote the growth of the “smart” energy industry by providing comprehensive workforce and economic development services to partnering companies.

SEI is regional in scope offering public education programming, consulting, incumbent worker training, sector-specific working groups, project leads and financing, and a host of other business-related services. SEI has become a key resource for the region’s diverse, competitive energy industry.

**Purpose/Goals:** Identifying and addressing workforce development, human resource and other business needs - Developing an inter-connected “web” of resources that supports existing business and encourages new business - Providing public education/awareness programming aimed at promoting clean/renewable energy, energy efficiency and conservation, and demand-side management products/services - Developing linkages with education partners to establish programs and grow the pipeline of future workers - Providing information on regional and state-wide energy projects, initiatives, legislation, and financing.

### **Southeastern Pennsylvania Manufacturing Alliance (SEPMA)**

**Purpose/Goals:** Develop training plans and awareness initiatives to ensure a reliable pipeline of talent for the manufacturing sector. Increase employer membership. Support work-based learning for students, including summer internships. Develop a pre-apprenticeship manufacturing program. Develop on-site career coaching models. Map manufacturing career pathways to showcase education/training leading to high wages in the sector.

**Timeline:** Formed in 2007, work is ongoing

**Key Partners:** Workforce Development Boards of Philadelphia, Berks, Bucks, Montgomery, and Delaware Counties, 50+ employers, School District of Philadelphia, Philadelphia Youth Network, regional/local economic development agencies, labor organizations, faith-based organizations

## Program Years 2021-2024 WIOA Multi-Year Regional Plan

### **Two-Generation Career Exploration and Education Program of Delaware County**

**Purpose/Goals:** Connect Students and their Parents to a multitude of opportunities to connect to pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs. The Two-Generation Career Exploration program introduces individuals to Manufacturing and Health Care career pathways.

**Timeline:** February 2019 to December 2020

**Key Partners:** Delaware County Chamber of Commerce, Delaware County Workforce Development Board

As updated through meetings and discussions with the PREP Partners and other community stakeholders, the Southeast PA Workforce Development Areas have identified additional areas of focus on the regional level. These include but are not limited to:

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

The Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Region has used the Next Gen Sector Partnership opportunities to continue to grow and build effective sector partnerships. Working in collaboration with the Commonwealth, these Sector Partnerships provide an industry-led collaboration that serves as a vehicle for aligning workforce development, economic development and education around the needs of business from a targeted industry.

In addition to the sector strategies noted above, there is a big movement for Registered Apprenticeships across the region: in Bucks and Montgomery counties for metal working; Philadelphia and Bucks Counties in IT, Philadelphia and Chester County in Healthcare; and across the region in construction and welding. Unfortunately, despite ongoing regional efforts over the past four years to expand registered apprenticeships, our manufacturing sector employers have been slow to embrace the model. However, the Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Region remains committed to the coordination and growth of registered apprenticeship as a priority in manufacturing and our other key industry sectors over the next four years.

Given the size, diversity, and complexity of the broader Southeast PA region that includes over 1/3 of the commonwealth’s population, the approach of sponsorship of initiatives by varying combinations of geographic and industry partners has served the region well. Many of these efforts, as shown above, are ongoing and funded for multiple years. As such, they lay

## Program Years 2021-2024 WIOA Multi-Year Regional Plan

the foundation for region-wide sharing of knowledge and best practices, spawning new initiatives that can be expanded and replicated as needed.

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

Southeastern Pennsylvania will prosper if we can successfully prepare our working age adults (including young adults and all adults with barriers to employment) for the ample career opportunities generated by the many expected retirements described in section 1.4 (above) and planned regional economic growth over the next decade. As we look ahead to continued economic and labor market recovery from the pandemic, SE PA employers and local Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) together face significant workforce development opportunities and challenges. Fortunately, we have and will continue to implement effective joint strategies to meet these challenges.

The Southeast Workforce Development Region has significant regional populations in need of services and skills to meet the need of the region's sector employment needs. Each local workforce area has established Priority of Service policies to serve targeted groups in their area.

Ongoing regional labor market analysis expands our regionally targeted populations to include veterans, returning citizens, low-income individuals, low educational attainment individuals, persons with disabilities and limited English proficiency. This list of targeted populations will be regularly reviewed and updated to determine any gaps or services necessary. Additionally, each local area has spent extensive time and research documenting, reaching out, and serving to the best of their abilities many targeted populations, as identified in their respective local plans. With a region as large, extensive and diverse as the six local workforce areas comprising Southeast Pennsylvania, the regionally identified target groups could comprise sub-groups of areas or the entire region.

As a core partner, the PA Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) has the ability to collaborate with the local Workforce Development Boards to serve individuals with disabilities. Eligible OVR customers receive multiple, individualized services that may include but not be limited to; diagnostic, vocational counseling and guidance, vocational evaluation, restoration, training, and job placement. Under WIOA, OVR has the ability to provide both eligible and potentially eligible in-school youth with disabilities with pre-employment transition services (PETS) to better prepare these students for life after high school. OVR also provides multiple services to the business community designed to assist businesses with onboarding pre-screened qualified employees with disabilities.

Another area of focus continues to be on developing effective regional responses to the challenges of disconnected young adults. Regional efforts are underway to outreach to youth who have disconnected from secondary school during the COVID-19 pandemic, providing



## Program Years 2021-2024 WIOA Multi-Year Regional Plan

access to the range of services available through WIOA Youth programming. Through a network of public and private partners, youth will have access to services that will address barriers that may have been overlooked as well as those that have developed as a result of the pandemic.

Regional efforts around youth outreach highlight one of several ways that close collaboration has grown in an effort to best address the needs of underserved populations throughout Southeastern Pennsylvania during the COVID-19 pandemic. Shared resources have been integral in service delivery, with directors meeting bi-weekly, then at least monthly to address job seeker and employer obstacles and strategize best practices in real-time. An example is the identification of high quality virtual workshops that are promoted across area boundaries to expand job seeker options.

The Workforce Board Directors will continue to address obstacles, innovate solutions and explore best practices as part of their ongoing monthly meetings. The directors will also work in the context of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the Commonwealth’s Combined Plan, and other significant stakeholders in reaching out to identify and address ongoing target population needs. As appropriate, they will work closely with local organizations and agencies that have a keen and in-depth understanding of the critical challenges and opportunities in addressing these target populations.

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

Transportation is a critical factor to the success of an individual receiving education and training, getting to and from work, and a key success factor toward obtaining and keeping a job. This is particularly true for those individuals with barriers to employment, including but not limited to returning citizens, persons with disabilities, TANF recipients, veterans, and others. Additionally, many of the priority sector jobs available, such as health care, manufacturing, agriculture, retail sales, and management occupations require non-traditional working hours including evenings and weekend work. Managing these challenges while also including additional needs such as childcare, further education, and other activities further amplifies the need of reliable transportation.

<b>Southeast Pennsylvania Region Means of Transportation to Work</b>						
	Drive Alone	Carpool	Public Trans.	Walked	Worked from Home	Other
<b>Berks</b>	80.0%	9.0%	1.6%	3.3%	4.2%	1.9%
<b>Bucks</b>	81.9%	6.4%	3.3%	1.7%	6.0%	0.8%
<b>Chester</b>	79.0%	6.9%	2.6%	2.4%	8.1%	0.9%
<b>Delaware</b>	73.0%	7.4%	10.4%	3.4%	4.9%	0.9%
<b>Montgomery</b>	78.5%	6.4%	5.3%	2.2%	6.8%	0.8%
<b>Philadelphia</b>	50.3%	8.2%	24.9%	8.5%	4.2%	3.9%

## Program Years 2021-2024 WIOA Multi-Year Regional Plan

*Source: Means of Transportation by Age: 5-Year ACS, 2015 - 2019*

Transportation as a potential barrier to employment for underserved populations is reflected in the regional commuting patterns illustrated in the chart above. In Southeast Pennsylvania, the primary mode of transportation for most people is to drive to work alone. According to the five-year American Community Survey (ACS) 2015-2019, just over half (50.3%) of Philadelphia residents drove alone, but the number jumps even further in suburban counties, ranging from 73% to 81.9%. The survey reflects that additional but much smaller percentages of individuals carpool, take public transportation, walk or work at home. This clearly demonstrates that reliable transportation and most likely ownership or use of a vehicle is critical to the long-term career success of individuals throughout the region.

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

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

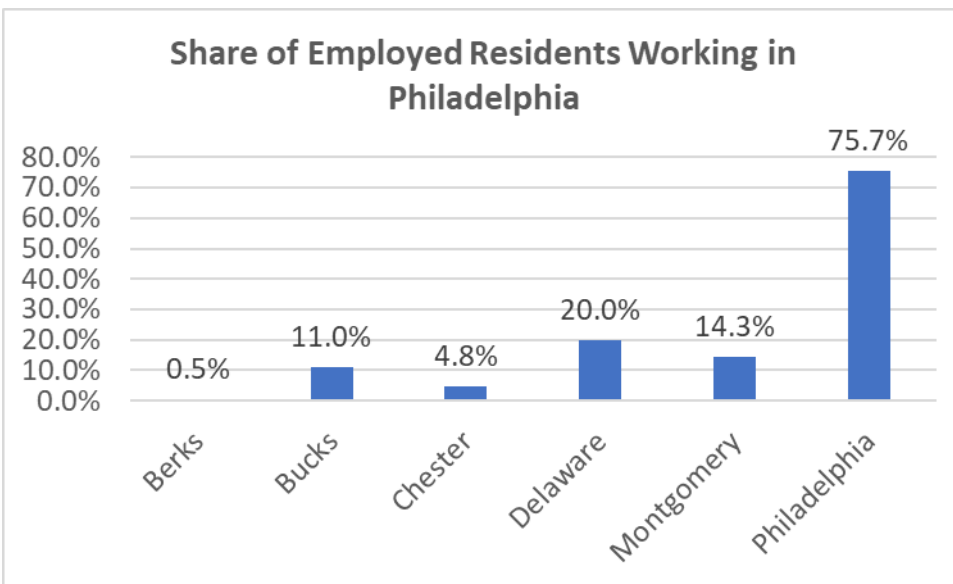
While the percentage of residents working from home is considerably low in the most recent ACS, percentages had risen an average of 1.2% across the six-county region from the 2011-2015 5-year ACS to the 2015-2019 5-year ACS. While the actual long-term impact of the pandemic on this percentage is unknown, it is anticipated to increase significantly. A June 2020 Monthly Labor Review published by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics estimated that 31% percent of workers employed in March 2020 had switched to a work-from-home model by April 2020. Of those workers, 67.5% held at least a bachelor's degree.

This is significant as the region plans through the duration and recovery of the COVID-19 pandemic. As employers consider work-from-home or hybrid models going forward, ensuring that those who commute to work have the resources to do so may become more

## Program Years 2021-2024 WIOA Multi-Year Regional Plan

complicated. The lasting impacts of the pandemic on the way employees work and how they get to work is still unknown, requiring ongoing review and strategic regional planning.

As is evidenced by labor market data, skill sets do not stop at county lines in Southeastern Pennsylvania. Economic development and employer engagement efforts must be a regional approach by all partners. Transportation results in commuting patterns demonstrating the labor shed across county lines (or in some cases state lines) to get to work. The analysis of the place of work versus the neighboring county or state illustrates a broad commuting pattern from suburban Philadelphia counties to Philadelphia while the Berks County labor force mostly works within Berks County. While this data was not updated for the 2015-2019 ACS, factors impacting these commuting patterns had not changed considerably prior to the pandemic.



Source: County Commuting Flows by Resident Geography: 5-Year ACS, 2011-2015

Comparing where a person's permanent residence is located versus where they work is also a manner of identifying commuting patterns. The vast majority of individuals work within their home county or contiguous county. Clearly a large number of residents in counties contiguous to Philadelphia are commuting to Philadelphia. The chart below shows the county of residence versus where persons are working. Although the data specific to inter-county commuting flows in Southeast PA was not updated for the 2015-2019 ACS, we again consider that factors impacting these commuting patterns had not changed considerably prior to the pandemic.

**Program Years 2021-2024 WIOA Multi-Year Regional Plan**

<b>Southeast Pennsylvania Region Comparison of Place of Work vs. Residence</b>				
<b>Local Area</b>	<b>Work in their county</b>	<b>Work outside their county</b>	<b>Work in PA</b>	<b>Work outside PA</b>
<b>Berks</b>	73.1%	25.9%	99.0%	1.0%
<b>Bucks</b>	55.4%	30.5%	85.9%	14.1%
<b>Chester</b>	63.4%	28.3%	91.7%	8.3%
<b>Delaware</b>	50.0%	42.7%	92.7%	7.3%
<b>Montgomery</b>	64.3%	32.7%	97.0%	3.0%
<b>Philadelphia</b>	74.8%	19.0%	93.8%	6.2%

*Source: Commuting Characteristics: 5-Year ACS, 2015 - 2019*

<b>Southeast Pennsylvania Region Count - County Worker Flows 2011-2015</b>							
	Berks	Bucks	Chester	Delaware	Montgomery	Philadelphia	Other
Berks	144,707	1,305	7,149	622	14,757	952	24,080
Bucks	379	177,422	3,179	2,614	46,192	34,582	50,787
Chester	2,825	1,251	162,557	19,164	30,061	12,297	27,743
Delaware	204	2,099	18,322	137,983	30,312	52,493	21,161
Montgomery	4,977	26,782	26,180	13,175	261,926	58,910	18,950
Philadelphia	281	27,148	7,637	17,676	61,038	473,604	38,609

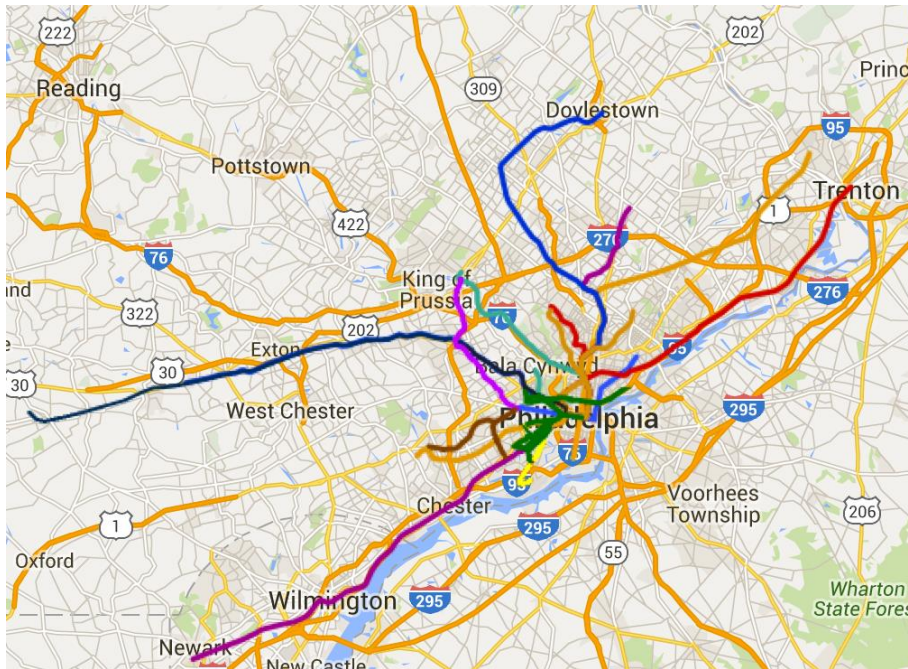
*Source: County Comuting Flows by Resident Geography: 5-Year ACS, 2011-2015*

Considering commuting flows with the knowledge that the vast majority of workers are driving themselves to work stresses the importance of a safe and reliable means to travel by vehicle. However, this goes beyond the vehicles themselves to ongoing improvement plans for the roads and bridges in Southeastern Pennsylvania. Each LWDB must be apprised of local and regional improvement projects with the capacity to interpret their impact. As an example, current ongoing PennDOT improvements along the US Route 422 corridor will increase capacity and enhance safety for a major artery between Berks County and King of Prussia in Montgomery County.

While planning around the number of workers who drive themselves to work as well as the increasing number who will continue to work from home, public transit has been and will continue to be a vital component of community life throughout much of Southeast Pennsylvania. The region is fortunate to have an extensive public transportation system through the Southeast Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA). (Berks County is served by a separate county-based public transportation system – BARTA). While the SEPTA map below (from their website) shows the transportation venues throughout the Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Area, the use of public transportation varies within the counties. For example, Philadelphia has the highest percentage of individuals using public transportation at 24.9% with 10.4% in Delaware County, 5.3% in Montgomery County and

## Program Years 2021-2024 WIOA Multi-Year Regional Plan

under 3% in the remaining three counties. These numbers further represent an approximate 1% decrease from the 2011-2014 ACS to the 2015-2019 ACS.



Source: <http://www.septa.org/maps/system/>

As can be seen from the SEPTA map of their routes, the services of SEPTA are concentrated in Philadelphia and Delaware County with limited services to other counties (and also neighboring states in some cases). While SEPTA is the sole provider in Philadelphia and Delaware Counties, the other counties have various local or county-based public transportation options that complement SEPTA services or addresses various county-specific needs.

The Job Access/ Reverse Commute (JARC) program funded by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) was established to address the unique transportation challenges faced by welfare recipients and low-income persons seeking to obtain and maintain employment. The JARC funding was used by SEPTA to provide additional service to passengers at times when regular transit operations would not be justified, such as the late evening, early morning, and on Sundays. Many low-income workers and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients in the region, particularly Philadelphia and neighboring counties, rely on transit in order to work night shifts and on weekends.

All this being noted, the Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Area works diligently to link with public transportation including ensuring that the PA CareerLink® centers and major contractors are on public transportation routes wherever possible. The LWDBs

## Program Years 2021-2024 WIOA Multi-Year Regional Plan

also work closely with employers and their sectors to address transportation issues, partnering to establish last-mile connectors or rideshare programs when possible.

The Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Areas will update and identify those regional transportation options identifying accessible transportation opportunities for persons with disabilities that cross county lines. Based upon the current data available, the Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Areas will work collectively with the available Human Services Transportation Plans within each county to best identify services offered to address accessible transportation for those with disabilities. Also, in the broader engagement of employers and coordination of services, the Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Areas will pursue available public transportation accessibility to serve employers' labor force needs during off-peak time periods (nights and weekends). This could include working with non-traditional carriers such as Uber or special arrangements with public dedicated transportation systems, such as county human services.

The Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Areas are aware of the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission Equity through Access, the DVRPC's update to the region's Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan (<http://www.dvrpc.org/ETA/>). Among the key gaps identified in the plan include:

- ✓ Infrastructure—Not all fixed-route service is American with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant.
- ✓ Service and funding—Existing routes and schedules are not always coordinated, flexible or convenient.
- ✓ Service and funding—There is inadequate funding to meet overall service demand among vulnerable populations.
- ✓ Data and coordination—There is lack of coordination between public transit services and Transportation Network Companies (TNC's) such as Uber and Lyft.

Based on this report, there is much to be done to improve both regional, intercounty and county based human services transportation to address job seeker and employer needs. The Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Areas will explore and work closely with all entities involved to better address these critical transportation needs.

Successful expansion of public transportation access in Southeastern Pennsylvania would contribute to the reduction of individuals who drive themselves to work. This would reduce an ongoing significant barrier to employment as well as CO2 emissions in the region. Such expansion would need to include ADA improvements, increased service schedules and geographic route extensions, particularly in the Suburban counties. As example, re-establishing regional rail connection between Reading and Philadelphia would help better integrate the Berks County workforce and employers into the regional labor markets while simultaneously decreasing the number of vehicles travelling along the Route 422 corridor.

A cause for optimism regarding a potentially "game-changing" regional transportation project began with a July 2020 study by Transportation Economics and Management Systems, Inc.,

## Program Years 2021-2024 WIOA Multi-Year Regional Plan

funded by Berks Alliance, which identified a strong case for the return of passenger rail service from Berks County to New York City and Washington D.C., via Pottstown, Phoenixville and Philadelphia. The Study found that restoring rail service would produce substantial economic benefits for all communities along the line, including jobs, income and property development opportunities. The Project would also generate benefits for travelers and could be effectively integrated into the Northeast Corridor rail services to both New and Washington D.C.

In early 2021, a Tri-County Rail Committee was formed by Commissioners from Berks, Chester and Montgomery counties to further explore the restoration of passenger rail service and to help begin implementing the next steps of the project. This committee not only brings promise to the region as a whole but demonstrates the cooperative efforts of leadership in the region.

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

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the value of online skills-based learning for eligible Adults, Dislocated Workers and Youth. The range of programs available on the statewide Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) has allowed individuals who lost their jobs due to the pandemic to retrain for more secure and family-sustaining employment. This highlighted the need to have an ample menu of training options available on the ETPL (both online and in-person).

The most critical step in growing ETPL offerings is establishing local skills gaps and projecting employment growth of High Priority Occupations. Each area has detailed plans for analyzing and addressing skills gaps within their local area in their Local Plan. With this knowledge in hand, staff review existing offerings, outreaching to local and more regional providers as needed. WDB staff have worked with providers to approve existing programs or to establish new ones as needed to address skills gaps.

A recurring obstacle to increasing participation on the ETPL has been the performance requirement of providing student social security numbers. This has decreased the number of programs listed by community colleges and other institutions of higher education who do not use social security numbers as classroom identifiers. A priority for LWDBs in Southeast Pennsylvania continues to be working with and advocating for providers of high quality higher education and vetted short-term training programs to increase ETPL participation.

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

The Southeast Workforce Planning Region has a long successful history of sharing resources. For many years, the Workforce Development Areas shared funds to employ a Regional Coordinator to address regional needs related to common job seeker and employer programs.

## Program Years 2021-2024 WIOA Multi-Year Regional Plan

Based upon experience, the six areas will use the groundwork from this past experience as a basis for sharing resources. In this case, the local areas employed evenly shared expenses based upon an equal division of the total costs shared among each of the areas. This was an appropriate and agreeable method for sharing costs based upon the scope of work. The regional directors are actively coordinating to recreate this effort as a response to the pandemic, specific to the manufacturing industry as driver of recovery efforts.

The Southeast Planning Region has experience working collaboratively with administering Industry Sector Partnerships, special workforce initiatives, and most recently the NDW Economic Transition grant. These programs are based upon employer or job seeker needs and the local areas have learned through this process to regionally prioritize activities to promote a broader impact. Toward that end, the six local areas will pursue funding opportunities, address economic development efforts, and explore cost-sharing and cost-saving initiatives through local, regional, national, philanthropic and other funds as appropriate. The specific determinations related to defining and establishing appropriate allocation of costs continues to be determined on a case by case basis. Additionally, the local areas convene around designation of a fiscal agent per special project, carefully considering the type of contract(s) required to administer the project, overall administrative capacity through the anticipated duration, partnership alignment and existing resources to promote sustainability. For any applications for grant funding that will be programmatically implemented by more than one LWDA but administered by one, the fiscal agent is identified at application, with that LWDA assuming responsibility for project outcomes and fiscal accountability.

Should this not be appropriate in the future, the local areas will agree upon a comparable formula to allocate funds. This could be based upon allowable methods based upon Generally Accepted Accounting Principles, Office of Management and Budget Circular, or similar guidance that is most efficient and effective for the circumstance. Every effort will be made with the interest of the efficient shepherding of public resources.

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

The Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Boards strive to meet or exceed all performance measures, acknowledging that these measures relate directly to successful outcomes for our customers – job seekers and employers. Issues related to performance outcomes have implications throughout the workforce system, including job seekers and employers as well as various agencies and intermediary organizations that help align services based on satisfactory performance outcomes.

As previously stated, the LWDAs in Southeastern Pennsylvania share resources and have a high concentration of workers flowing in and out of each county. However, each area is unique in terms of physical geography, real estate development, and transit access as well as



## **Program Years 2021-2024 WIOA Multi-Year Regional Plan**

demographics including tax base, poverty rate and average age. Each LWDA undergoes a negotiation process with the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry's Center for Workforce Information and Analysis (CWIA) to accommodate the distinctive characteristics of respective southeast counties.

These negotiated levels, which do vary by local area, are listed as part of each Local Plan. With those established goals in hand, the region plans around quality services to job seekers and employers, allowing the collected work to reflect in common measure performance and convening to review the process if it does not.

While performance levels are established individually, regional WDBs continue to work together to identify common trends to implement best practices and discuss and develop solutions to any deficiencies that may arise. This collaboration is reflected in our goals listed in Section 1.2 above. Each of those goals have a direct or indirect effect on performance outcomes and therefore serve as a guidepost for ongoing strategic planning.