

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

Local Workforce Development Area name: **Berks County Workforce Development Board**

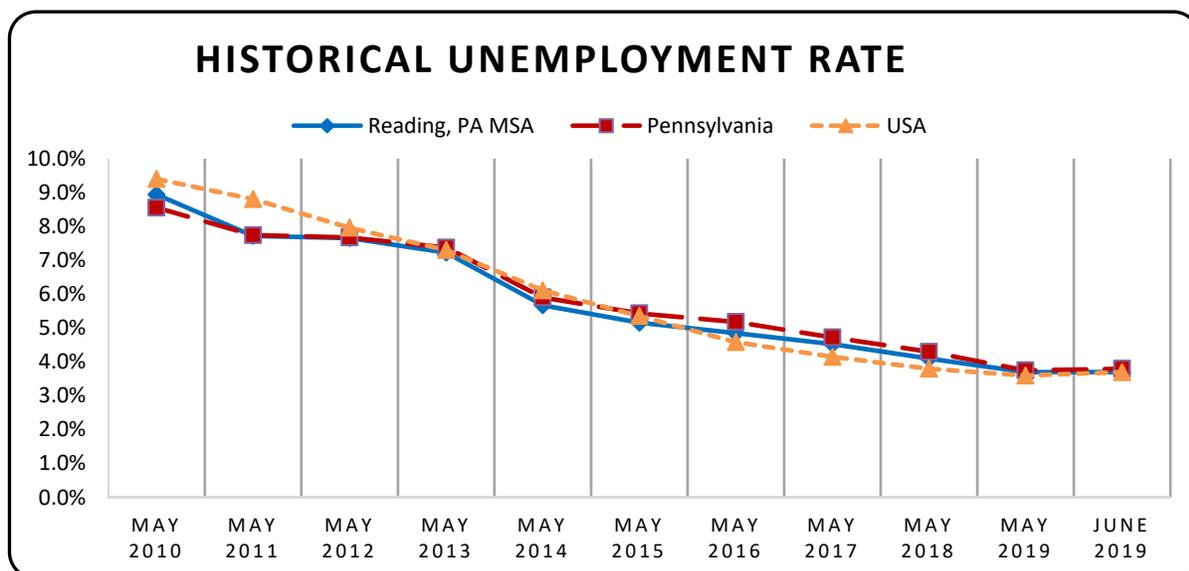
Effective Date: **January 1, 2018**

Modification effective: **January 1, 2020**

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

1.1. Identify the composition of the local area's population and labor force.

By the second quarter of calendar year 2017, the Berks County Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA) labor was fully recovered from the devastating recession of 2009-2010 when the LWDA's unemployment rate peaked at 9.3% in March 2010 with 19,600 individuals officially listed as unemployed. Data provided by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and Pennsylvania's Center for Workforce Information and Analysis (CWIA), show that since 2017 the LWDA has been in a sustained period of "functional full-employment". In June 2019 the local seasonally-adjusted (SA) unemployment rate stood at 3.7%, lower than the state (3.8%) and equal to the nation as a whole (3.7%). One must go back nearly two decades to find a lower local unemployment rate (3.6% in March 2000). Most importantly, this sustained improvement in the official local unemployment rate has taken place within a steadily growing labor force reaching 213,900 – an increase of over 7,100 resident workers and job-seekers from pre-recession records set in 2008. In fact, Moody's Analytics (May 2017) reported that the local labor force "spiked to an all-time high, helping to arrest the fall in the unemployment rate" with the labor force participation rate at 65.2%. Employment in the Berks County LWDA also stands near record high levels at 206,000 in June 2019 compared to 195,500 in 2007 – a significant increase of 10,500 more employed individuals. Just as impressively, the number of officially unemployed Berks County residents in mid-2019 consistently remained under 8,000 for the first time since mid-year 2000 when the labor force was significantly smaller. Berks County employers provided 181,400 (seasonally adjusted nonfarm jobs) that month, an increase of 1,400 jobs (+1.77%) from a year earlier and another record high. Local job openings continued at historically high levels in mid-year 2019, with monthly online job postings reaching 12,394. This is more than 50% higher than the local officially unemployed population (7,900) and equates to 0.64 unemployed persons per online job posting. Layoff activity in the County remains below historical averages.



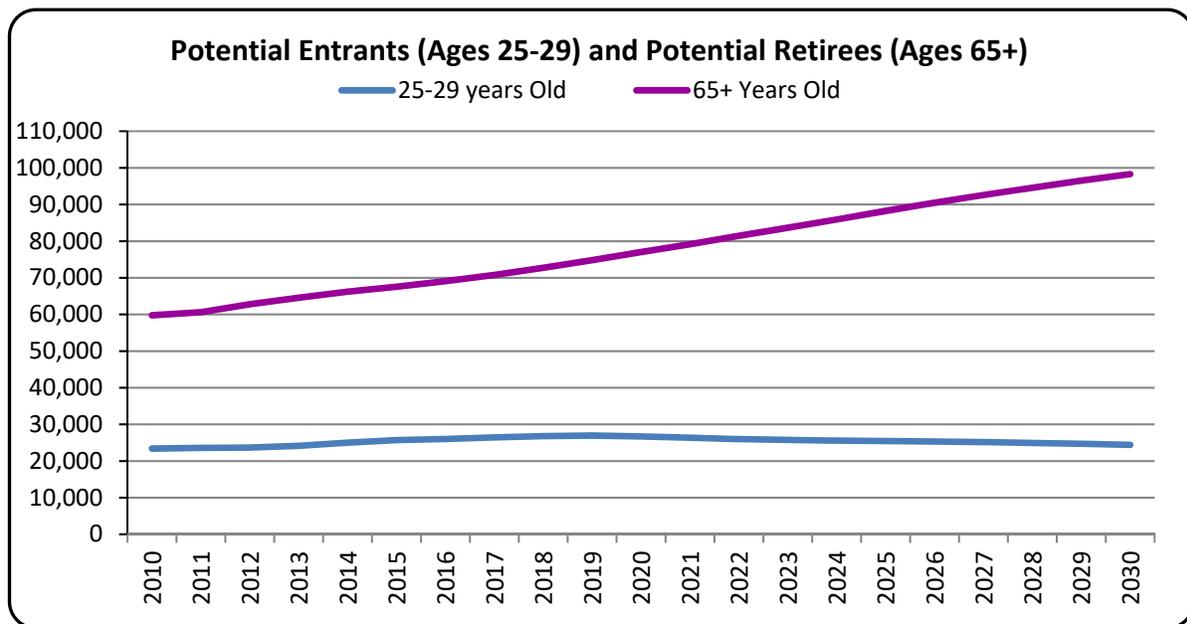
Source: US DOL Bureau of Labor Statistics

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

This period of sustained low unemployment has brought many employment opportunities for job-seekers looking to change jobs or enter the labor market. In fact, CWIA reports that 15,910 of Berks County employees during the second quarter of 2018 were “new hires”. This local rate of new hires (9.1%) by far led all 22 local workforce development areas in PA and likely indicates relatively greater local opportunities (mainly in manufacturing, construction and healthcare) for entry-level positions than in other regions in the Commonwealth.

In response to this increasingly competitive labor market, private sector average weekly wages in the Berks County LWDA rose to \$972 in the second quarter of 2018, marking a 31% increase over a low of \$741 in the first quarter of 2010. In March 2017, BLS ranked Berks County as 14th highest nationally (among counties with 75,000 or more residents) in annual average weekly wage growth at 9.2%. Local average weekly wages continued to grow at a 4.0% annual rate through mid-2018.

The most significant changes taking place within the Berks County labor market are the continued aging and the diversification of the local population and the available workforce. These shifts were documented in a Reading Eagle article (dated June 24, 2016) based on recent U.S. Census Bureau Data. The LWDA’s median age increased from 39.1 in 2010 to 39.8 in 2016. During this six-year period, the number of local residents age 65 and older has increased by 13% from 60,000 to almost 70,000. At the same time, the LWDA saw its population between ages 30 – 49 decline by more than 9,000. The article also reports that while whites remain the LWDA’s largest racial group (73%), their actual numbers have dropped slightly “while almost all other racial and ethnic groups have grown.”



Berks County has historically been characterized by a predominantly native-born population which has long supplied the region’s skilled talent needs, particularly for good paying middle-

- skill jobs in healthcare and in manufacturing. Most of this highly-skilled and experienced workforce combines at least a high school diploma with significant knowledge, skills and abilities acquired through decades on the job with local employers. From 2010 - 2030, the “potential retiree” population (ages 65+) is projected to grow by **63%** from approximately 60,000 to over 98,000. As a proportion of the total Berks County population, “potential retirees” will grow from 14.5% to 22.8% - from approximately 1 out of every 7 Berks County residents to more than 1 out of every 5! Over the same decade and a half, the population of “potential entrants” into the labor force (ages 25-29) is projected to remain essentially flat, growing from 23,399 to 24,411 – a mere 4.3% increase over two decades. As a proportion of the overall local population, this important labor-force entering 25-29 year age group will remain at approximately 5.7% Source: JobsEQ).

Another significant characteristic of the Berks County labor force is a distinctive education-level profile (EMSI Dataset Q42015). 17.2% of the County’s adult population (age 25+) has less than a high school diploma which is significantly higher than Pennsylvania (11.4%) and the U.S (14.1%). 38.4% of Berks County adults have a high school diploma or the equivalent and 15.4% of adults have “some college, no degree”. Therefore, a majority (53.8%) of Berks County adults successfully achieved a high school education but not an Associate’s Degree or higher. Only 30% of Berks County adults persevered with their formal education to complete an Associate’s Degree or higher. This profile may have been a good match for a 20th century economy, but it does not meet the needs of our region’s current and future technology-driven workplace.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (3-year ACS estimate 2011-2013), residents of the City of Reading in particular are often alarmingly under-educated. Less than two-thirds of adult city residents have earned a high school diploma, compared to more than 83% of adults in the County as a whole (including Reading) and 85% nationally. The city’s large Hispanic adult population has even lower educational attainment - with less than half of Hispanic adults over age 25 having earned a high school diploma or GED. As a result, Reading is home to a growing population of younger, less-skilled and less-educated workers and potential workers.

In March 2016 the O’Pake Institute at Alvernia University issued a timely *Brain Drain or Brain Gain – What’s Happening in Berks County* report as part of the *Berks Vital Signs* series funded by the Berks County Community Foundation (BCCF). This report delved deeply into the education levels, migration patterns, and economic circumstance with a focus on the county’s working age population and determined:

A. Education Levels

- “The percentage of 18 to 34 year-olds in the county with a Bachelor’s degree has risen steadily in Berks County but both the percentage and the growth curve lag behind both the state and the country.”
- After factoring out the low educational attainment levels in the City of Reading, the remainder of Berks County actually outperforms Pennsylvania and the nation as a whole.

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

- Both Latinos and White Non-Latinos residing in Reading fare worse in educational achievement than their counterparts in the nearby mid-size cities of Allentown, Lancaster and York.
- African American adults living in Reading are “roughly on par with their counterparts in the other cities in terms of schooling.”

B. Migration and Mobility

- Pennsylvania’s statewide population has declined since 1980, but Berks County has experienced modest population growth during the same time period.
- Some of the region’s increase over the last three decades is due to “normal replacement”, but much of the growth has resulted from positive net migration.
- In recent years, Berks County has benefited from a net influx of young adults (ages 25-34) “probably related to employment”.
- The County has experienced significant net in-migration from Southeastern Pennsylvania, particularly Montgomery County.
- There has also been “a significant migration of those with lower educational attainment to the Reading area from out-of-state and out of the country”
- The region is experiencing some out-migration of retirees.

C. Young Adult Employment and Poverty

- “Economic downturns in 1999-2001 and 2007-2009 adversely impacted job opportunities for young adults, more significantly in Berks County than in either the state or country as a whole.”
 - In 1990, over three-quarters of Berks County’s young adults were employed – well above state and national averages.
 - From 2009-2013 on average, just two-thirds of Berks County’s young adults were employed, only slightly higher than the state and national averages.
- Since 2002, the percentage of the County’s young adults (age 18-34) still living at home has increased from 24.3% to 33.1%. By 2013, “nearly 10,000 more young adults were living with their parents than had been the case a decade earlier.”
- Over the same time period, the percentage of the region’s young adults living in poverty rose from approximately 13% to nearly 20% (approximately 15,000 individuals). This disturbing trend saw Berks County’s young adult poverty rate rise from well-below to essentially equal to state and national averages.

Berks County’s Biggest Labor Supply Challenge: Barriers Faced by Disconnected Youth

The strategic planning process and analysis conducted by the WDB since 2015 for WIOA implementation has led to the inescapable conclusion that Berks County’s future prosperity is directly tied to our success in better connecting our youth and young adults with the great career opportunities that local industry sectors have to offer. In doing so, we must work collaboratively with all education and service providers to address the special challenges facing our

many Disconnected and Under-employed Young Adults and Out of School Youth (OSY). In 2016, the WDB's Youth Committee identified a unique and crucial role for the Board to serve as the key convener of local partners with the mission and capacity to meet the extensive needs of this large and challenging population.

The Youth Committee soon recognized that we currently lack comprehensive and current information regarding the size and critical characteristics of this elusive population. In order to proceed with the best information available, the WDB joined with the United Way of Berks County (United Way) to fund a project to research and profile disconnected and under-employed young adults. The resulting report was published in July 2017 and is expected to inform local priorities and programs going forward. Findings from the report include:

- The LWDA is currently home to between 3,000 – 5,000 disconnected individuals who meet the WDBs' definition of a disconnected young adult:
 - an individual age 16 – 24 who has neither been in school or employed for a period of at least six-months at the time of the study; or
 - a young adult age 21 – 24 who is underemployed (would like full-time work but has settled for part-time work or is employed in a position that is inadequate with respect to their skills/training).
- 90% of disconnected young adults reported experiencing life circumstances that are common barriers to employment or education.
- Disconnected young adults in Berks County often face multiple and varied barriers to gainful employment and education.
- Over half of disconnected young adults face more than one reason for being disconnected.
- The top barriers disconnected young adults in Berks County face include:
 1. Lack of Transportation
 2. Family Care Obligations
 3. Focus on “Making Money” vs. “Investing in a Career”
 4. Significant Barriers to Pursuing Education

Other Barriers to Employment (U.S. Census)

Besides the growing challenges of serious pockets of poverty and low-levels of education achievement, Berks County is home to many individuals with other significant barriers to employment. For example, over 17,000 residents speak English “less than very well” – a major barrier to gainful employment and to the education and training programs necessary to prepare for gainful employment.

Berks County is home to 48,990 individuals (age 16 and over) with a disability of which only 22.4% are currently employed. This leaves 38,000 individuals with disabilities and over age 16 not in the workforce. 22.2% of adult individuals with disabilities live below the poverty line - twice the rate of those with no disability.

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

Berks County is home to a large population of individuals with involvement in the criminal justice system and approximately 75% of all Berks County Jail inmates are unemployed upon release. The Berks County Adult Probation and Parole Office supervises over 9,800 individuals on either state or county parole living in Berks County.

1.2. *How are skills gaps defined in the local area? Provide a description of the skills that are required to meet the needs of employers in region/local area?*

In response to the historic challenges facing the Berks County economic region during the 2009 – 2010 recession, the Berks County Workforce Investment Board (WIB) joined seven other partners with primary responsibility for supporting effective economic and workforce development policies and programs in the region to develop the Berks County *Ride to Prosperity (RTP)* strategy. The *RTP* project helped regional leaders cultivate a deep understanding of the region's key industry clusters which has since informed RTPs evolving strategy and action plans.

With regional economic recovery well underway by 2013, the Berks County WIB, along with its RTP Partners issued a progress report and refined the strategy under the title of *Ride to Prosperity Version 2.0*. *RTP 2.0* built upon the original work plans and laid out a new vision for the coming years focused on regional collaboration in five key areas, including *Workforce and Talent Development*. Reflecting its reputation for local workforce development expertise and analysis and the importance that the partners placed on workforce and talent, the Berks County WDB was assigned the leadership role in developing RTP's Workforce and Talent Development strategies. The Chief Operating Officer (COO) of the Berks County WDB serves as co-chair of the RTP partners who continue to meet semi-annually to exchange the latest intelligence on economic growth and skills gaps in the local area.

The Berks County *Ride to Prosperity (RTP)* strategy project helped regional leaders cultivate a deep understanding of the region's key industry clusters and workforce needs and positioned the partners to respond to the changing economic conditions throughout the immediate post-recession recovery period from 2011- 2015. Since then, the Berks County WDB has further developed this sector-based analysis in determining workforce development sector priorities for Program Years 2015-2022. As a result, the Berks WDB is home to local labor market subject matter expertise in the knowledge, skills and requisite industry-recognized credentials needed to contribute to the growth of a qualified talent pool, the recruitment and retention qualified employees, and the upskilling of "home grown talent." The Berks County WDB verifies the relevance of the training activities associated with the targeted occupations through outreach to employers. The WDB develops a detailed understanding of the skills and experience related to current and future employment projections by utilizing print and on-line job ad analysis, employer surveys, employer feedback via in-person, phone and email interviews, and by active WDB participation in educational provider Occupational Advisory Committees and Industry Partnerships. Ongoing partnership with economic development agencies promotes the growth of a competent workforce in support of economic development initiatives.

In addition, the Berks WDB and the PA CareerLink® Berks County Business Services Team employ occupational research capabilities using workforce development software, Transferable Occupational Relationship Quotient (TORQ) comparison, O*net and CIP/SOC comparison, and pre-employment assessments, such as Work Keys®, of the fundamental knowledge, skills, and abilities required by employers

Manufacturing Industry Needs: Berks County’s singular Priority A Industry Sector is Manufacturing. Over the past two decades, many Berks County manufacturing employers have thrived in an increasingly competitive international economy by developing *world-class products, processes and people* – the defining characteristics of what we refer to as *advanced manufacturing*. During this period of turbulent transition, local employers benefited from a stable and experienced workforce which was able to adapt to the changing technological environment. Due to successful process improvement strategies and significant capital investment in new manufacturing technologies, local advanced manufacturing employers were able to increase output with the same number or even fewer employees. However, the retained employees need a higher skill level as reflected in advanced manufacturing’s highest priority skilled technical occupations. In particular, our region’s economic health is tied closely to our ability to maintain the historically-available supply of skilled precision machining occupations, industrial maintenance/mechatronics technicians, high-end welders and similar manufacturing “technologists”.

Precision Machining – Precision machining occupations are consistently identified by the PA Dept. of Labor & Industry as “High Priority Occupations” which are in demand by employers, have higher skill needs, and provide family sustaining wages. Many Berks County employers are recruiting candidates directly from the two local CTC and Reading Area Community College (RACC) programs even before graduation/program completion and are willing to provide on the job upskilling immediately upon hiring.

Precision Machining careers follow well-established career paths and/or ladders that can result in greater job responsibility and wages approaching \$30 per hour in time.

In early 2015, the Berks County WDB produced a comprehensive supply vs. demand study *Precision Machining Occupations in Berks and Surrounding Counties*. Extensive face to face interviews with Berks County precision machining employers in 2014-2015 combined with a structured survey provided valuable feedback on initial projections derived from labor market information systems. The consensus is that the initial projected demand numbers were much lower than the employers expected needs for the next five years. Some of the anticipated precision machining openings will be to expanding production expansion driven by added business and tool acquisition. However, much more hiring will be required for replacement of employees leaving through pending retirements.

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

Occupation Snapshot of Precision Machining in Reading, PA MSA											
		Current			Historical				Forecast		
		Four Quarters Ending with 2017Q1			Total Change over the Last 5 Years	Avg Ann % Change in Employed 2012Q1-2017Q1			Over the Next 10 Years		
SOC	Title	Employed	Avg. Annual Wages ¹	Location Quotient	Employed	Reading, PA MSA	Pennsylvania	USA	Total Replace Demand	Total Growth Demand	Avg. Annual Growth Percent
51-4011	Computer-Controlled Machine Tool Operators, Metal and Plastic	313	\$41,400	1.84	9	0.6%	-1.0%	0.6%	98	27	0.8%
51-4012	Computer Numerically Controlled Machine Tool Programmers, Metal and Plastic	53	\$50,700	1.70	3	1.1%	-1.0%	0.7%	15	5	1.0%
51-4041	Machinists	999	\$39,100	2.13	35	0.7%	-1.1%	0.6%	283	15	0.2%
51-4111	Tool and Die Makers	98	\$49,700	1.13	0	0.0%	-0.8%	1.4%	6	-19	-2.2%
	Precision Machining Total	1,463	\$40,700	1.93	47	0.7%	n/a	n/a	402	29	0.2%

Source: JobsEQ®

Data as of 2017Q1 unless noted otherwise

Preliminary research currently being conducted into an update of the 2015 Berks and Surrounding Counties Precision Machining Occupations report indicates that the supply versus demand skills gap could be worsening as a result of two significant contributing factors; improving economy-driven increases in production capacities that are required to meet customer orders AND declining enrollment in RACC and CTC Machine Tool Technology program enrollment. In an area where 25% of state’s precision machining occupations are concentrated, the unfortunate reality for local employers is that the Berks County CTCs and RACC cannot currently support

demand for entrants to precision machining due to low enrollment and future support is increasingly in doubt. Qualified completers are being recruited for multiple open positions prior to graduation. In response to this ongoing shortage, local employers report that they must attempt to recruit scarce talent from outside the region, lure incumbents from other local employers, settle for less qualified candidates, or have positions go unfilled for extended periods.

2019 Precision Machining Needs - Conclusion: Our ongoing monitoring of the precision machining occupation supply versus demand issue confirms that serious precision machining skills shortages will continue to grow for Berks and the surrounding region through at least 2020. This worsening shortfall carries a significant risk to the success of a key manufacturing sector in the region. The economic consequences of failing to find effective solutions are magnified by the concentration of machining employment in the seven-county regional manufacturing sector and the primary importance of this sector to our regional economy. Employers unable to recruit and develop the necessary talent will forfeit the opportunity for growth in customer orders or not receive appropriate return on investment in new technology and/or expanding production requirements.

It is the Board's policy to share occupational employment information with our economic and education partners and community-based organizations. The Board is an active partner in the innovative and impactful local Career Ready Berks initiative which supports career awareness through career pathway development and counseling resource tools with the Berks Business and Education Coalition, the Berks County Intermediate Unit, 18 school districts and five colleges and universities in the Berks WDA. The Board also actively participates in enhancing employer engagement in the promotion of CTC and RACC program enrollment and apprenticeship opportunities in programs relevant to the industry's needs and that will result in the attainment of industry recognized credentials such as National Institute for Metalworking Skills certification and Machine Tool Technology AAS.

Industrial Maintenance / Mechatronics Technicians – While precision machining employment is most often found in small or medium-size manufacturing employers focused on the production of parts and end-products, Industrial Maintenance / Mechatronics technicians are needed in nearly every manufacturing establishment and many non-manufacturing establishments as well. Consistent employer feedback from our PA CareerLink® Berks County Business Services Team (BST) and the Berks County WDB's Advanced Manufacturing Incumbent Worker Training Consortium indicates that employer demand and challenges in filling open positions around these occupations remains at a critical stage and is expected to continue for the next ten years as new job growth and replacement demand impacts a talent pipeline that is expected to struggle to meet employer needs. Several employers have reported that job openings are, in some cases, taking up to 18 months to fill.

This critical, in-demand Industrial Maintenance/Mechatronics Job Family of occupations has been targeted by the WDB through its Advanced Manufacturing Incumbent Worker Training Consortium for priority workforce development activity. Evidence of the Job Family similarity in the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for the efficient performance of these SOC job

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

functions is shown by the high level of Transferable Occupation Relationship Quotients within the SOCs that make up this job family.

The skill sets and key competencies for these targeted occupations closely match the skills local employers demand from graduates of Reading Area Community College’s Schmidt Training & Technology Center (RACC-STTC) Mechatronics program. RACC has been pro-active in its response to this employer demand for qualified candidates skilled in the Industrial Maintenance/Mechatronics competencies by partnering with the two Berks Career & Technology Centers in the creation of a 2+2+2 Mechatronics Technical Academy, devoted exclusively to nurturing this career-path talent pipeline beginning at the secondary school level. Employers looking to hire workers proficient, specialized, and ready to plug in “out of the gate” talent are constantly soliciting RACC for qualified job candidates.

Occupation Snapshot of IMT/Mechatronics Occupations in Reading, PA MSA													
SOC	Title	Current					Historical			Forecast			
		Four Quarters Ending with 2017Q1			2017Q1		Total Change over the Last 5 Years	Avg Ann % Chg in Empl 2012Q1-2017Q1		10 Year Projection			
		Employ	Avg Annual Wages ¹	Location Quotient	Unemployed	Unemployed Rate	Employed	Reading, PA MSA	Pennsylvania	USA	Total Replace Demand	Total Growth Demand	Avg Annual Growth Percent
17-3023	Electrical and Electronic Engineering Technicians	297	\$53,600	1.82	8	2.8%	21	1.5%	-0.1%	0.3%	67	-25	-0.9%
17-3024	Electro-Mechanical Technicians	16	\$52,200	0.89	0	n/a	0	0.4%	-0.3%	0.3%	3	-1	-0.6%
17-3026	Industrial Engineering Technicians	148	\$50,000	2.01	4	2.6%	6	0.8%	-0.6%	1.0%	39	-15	-1.1%
17-3027	Mechanical Engineering Technicians	97	\$59,400	1.72	3	2.8%	6	1.3%	0.3%	1.2%	23	-6	-0.7%
49-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Mechanics, Installers, and Repairers	622	\$68,600	1.14	20	3.0%	33	1.1%	0.5%	1.6%	123	-3	0.0%
49-2094	Electrical and Electronics Repairers, Commercial and Industrial Equipment	107	\$53,200	1.29	5	4.3%	1	0.2%	-1.2%	0.5%	17	-7	-0.7%
49-9041	Industrial Machinery Mechanics	649	\$53,600	1.57	19	2.8%	0	0.0%	-0.4%	0.7%	172	64	0.9%

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

49-9043	Maintenance Workers, Machinery	725	\$47,800	6.67	14	2.2%	39	1.1%	-0.3%	0.8%	112	-7	-0.1%
49-9044	Millwrights	77	\$53,400	1.55	4	5.5%	-2	0.4%	0.1%	2.1%	15	6	0.8%
49-9071	Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	1,667	\$40,300	1.01	69	3.5%	83	1.0%	0.7%	1.6%	436	-12	-0.1%
	IMT/Mechatronics Occupations Total	4,405	\$49,700	1.39	147	3.1%	186	0.9%	n/a	n/a	1,008	-6	0.0%

Source: JobsEQ® 2017Q1

IMT/Mechatronics Occupation Data – Our analysis confirms a continuing rise in the employer demand for qualified Industrial Maintenance/Mechatronics technician occupations suggesting that Berks employer’s percentage of growth in new jobs will match or outgrow the statewide percentage over time. This increasing demand is particularly evident when focusing on the growth of replacement jobs. Nearly 60% of the current Berks workforce occupying industrial maintenance occupations is 45 years or older compared to 47% of the regional workforce in all industries. By 2025, at least 25% to 30% of the total Berks County industrial maintenance workforce will be retired or near, at or above retirement age. In conjunction with the WDB’s layoff aversion/employment retention strategy, the Berks WDB Advanced Manufacturing Next Generation Industry Incumbent Worker Training Consortium has determined to circumvent the anticipated attrition’s toll by assisting employers through the utilization of WIOA Title I matching fund subsidies targeted to training qualified individuals that will assume these responsibilities in order to support continual demand from increased production requirements and acquisition of new technology. Employer judgments about their ability to fill these openings in the next 5-10 years will impact their expansion planning decisions regarding capital investment in technology. Simply put, *companies will not invest in equipment that they cannot operate and maintain.*

It is the Berks County Workforce Development Board’s policy to share occupational employment information with our economic and education partners and community-based organizations. The Board is an active partner in the innovative and impactful local Career Ready Berks initiative which supports career awareness through career pathway development and counseling resource tools with the Berks Business and Education Coalition, the Berks County Intermediate Unit, 18 school districts and five colleges and universities in the Berks WDA. The Board also actively participates in enhancing employer engagement in the promotion of CTC and RACC program enrollment and apprenticeship opportunities in programs relevant to the industry’s needs and that will result in the attainment of industry recognized credentials such as Advanced Material Integration Systems Technology (AM/IST) certification and Mechatronics Engineering Technology AAS.

Manufacturing Needs Conclusion: With the state’s movement to the Next Generation Industry Partnership (NGIP) model, NGIP grant funded incumbent worker training activity was placed in hiatus creating a temporary funding vacuum while core members of this new IP construct evaluated and identified the local industry’s collective priority issues to be addressed. Historically, the state’s annual WEDnetPA funds for incumbent worker training have proved too little and too

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

unreliable from budget year to budget year for the type of long-term planning and continuous improvement that is needed to sustainably address the region's manufacturing technical skills shortages "at scale".

Beginning in PY2016, the Berks WDB successfully secured additional sources of public and private matching funds to sustain and support needed advanced manufacturing technical skills training for incumbent workers. As a substitute resource in the absence of Next Generation Industry Partnership (NGIP) implementation grants, Federal WIOA Title I and Rapid Response funds, discretionary grants (including National Emergency Grants), are now "braided" into the WDB's incumbent worker training matching grants through an Advanced Manufacturing Employment Retention/Layoff Aversion Strategy adopted by the Berks County WDB. As a consequence of this "braided" funding approach, all WIOA and State incumbent worker and employer eligibility data collection requirements have been added to the Berks County WDB Work-based Training Policy (approved March 17, 2017) and incorporated into all related incumbent worker training applications and agreements. Effective July 1, 2019, the WDB expanded the Work-based Training Policy to include up to 75% reimbursement for qualified registered apprenticeship training costs incurred by small companies (with 100 employees or less) in manufacturing, construction and other key industry sectors.

As a -forward-thinking job retention, layoff aversion and economic development strategy, the Berks WDB supports a return to the historical practice of capitalizing on incumbent worker technical training to build advanced manufacturing worker competencies while matching newly-entering talent with experienced employees for knowledge transfer. Upskilling incumbent workers can lead to advancement opportunities which create entry-level opportunities for new entrants to these attractive career pathways.

It is the Berks WDB's policy that the training targeted with these "braided" funds is tied directly to a comprehensive training plan for industry recognized credential attainment developed in collaboration with a Berks County WDB Advanced Manufacturing Incumbent Worker Training Consortium and is the result of direct employer stated priorities of need in precision machining, industrial maintenance technician, welding, and quality systems incumbent worker upskilling activities.

Individual production and maintenance workers also benefit by avoiding future job losses and attaining broad-level employment security in the sector. In cases where upskilled workers do become dislocated, the enhanced technical skills provided by such training will enable them to be more quickly reemployed in similar well-paying jobs at other more successful local manufacturers.

Acknowledging a labor market shared regionally for these high demand occupations, the Berks County WDB has solicited feedback from neighboring WDB's in Southeastern PA to gauge their level of concern surrounding the supply versus demand talent gap issues for the aforementioned skilled opportunity occupations. Overwhelmingly, their response has confirmed that they and their employers share these priority needs. The Berks WDB, in partnership with and on behalf of

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

the SE PA PREP Partners, was the lead applicant in a collective regional petition initiative to have eight skilled production/mechatronics related SOC codes reinstated to and retained on the High Priority Occupations list in our six Workforce Development Area region (Berks, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia WDBs).

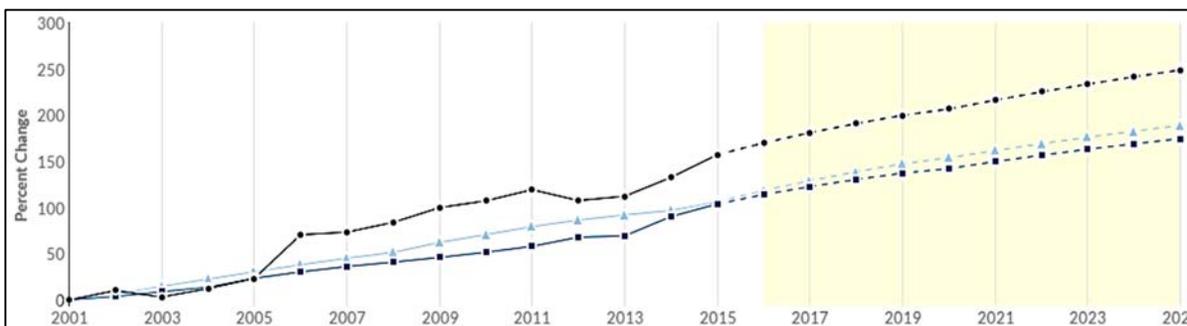
Healthcare Industry Needs – The Berks County WDB has identified the Healthcare sector as a “Priority B - Sustaining” Industry. The sector currently employs 25,100 workers (13.5% of local employment) and demonstrates steady employment growth that could likely approach manufacturing as Berks County’s largest employment sector by 2028.

Our two local hospital systems are among the top 10 employers in Berks County – Reading Health System (#2 - 6,673 employees) and Penn State-St. Joseph’s Regional Health Network (#6 - 1,623 employees). Together, these large health systems incorporate multiple industry sub-clusters under their provider “umbrella.”

Local labor market trends have led the WDB to focus particularly on the needs of the healthcare industry sub-cluster that encompasses home-aid and home healthcare services occupations. This industry is expected to show significant growth in the next several years, especially in the Home Health and Personal Care Aide occupations. However, evaluation and projections of these occupations is particularly challenging given the fragmented and changing environment. Unlike most other healthcare occupations, industry-recognized credentials in home healthcare are under-developed.

Industry Summary for Home Health Care Services Occupations		
2,118	55.5%	\$38,296
Jobs (2017)	% Change (2017-2027)	Avg. Earnings Per Job (2017)
17% above National average	Nation: 59.9%	Nation: \$30,281

Regional Trends: Home Health Care Occupations



PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

	Region	2017 Jobs	2027 Jobs	Change	% Change
●	Reading MSA	2,118	3,295	1,177	55.5%
■	Pennsylvania	60,763	93,716	32,953	54.2%
▲	United States	1,516,035	2,424,828	908,793	59.9%

Occupations Employed by the Reading MSA Home Healthcare Industry		
Description	Employed in Industry (2017)	% of Total Jobs in Industry (2017)
Home Health Aides	762	40%
Personal Care Aides	372	17.6%
Registered Nurses	269	12.7%
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	130	6.1%
Nursing Assistants	128	6.0%

Observations on Home Healthcare Occupations:

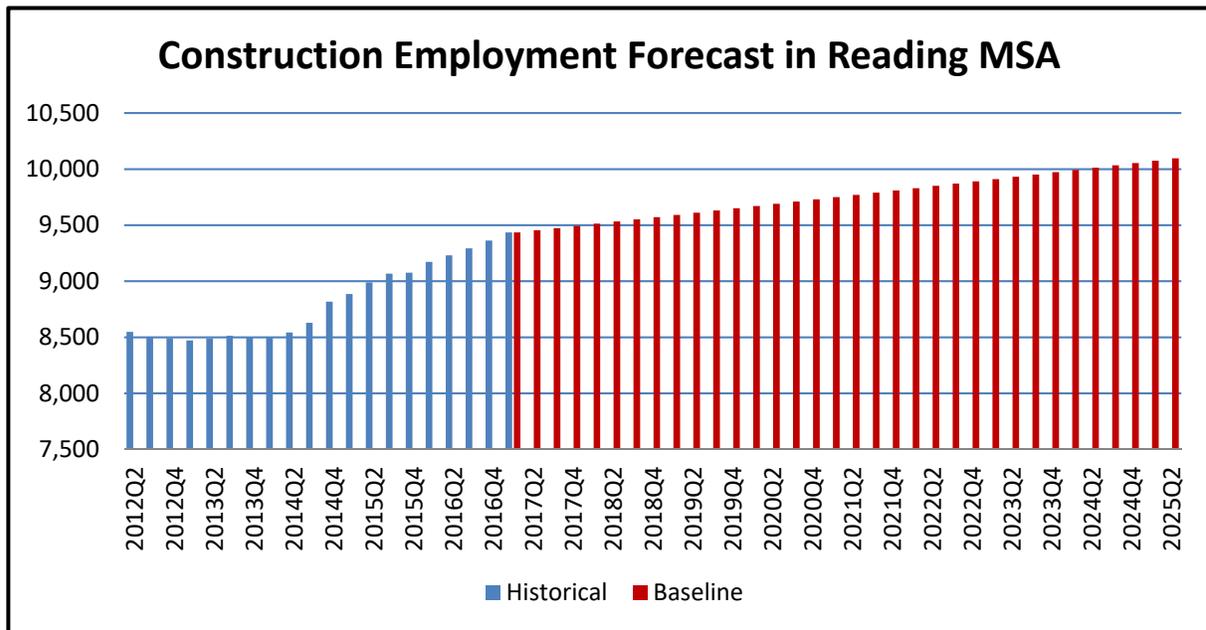
1. Registered Nurses (RNs) will remain one of the most attractive local occupations and career paths for the foreseeable future. However, many RN opportunities will develop outside of the traditional acute care hospital environment to include home healthcare
2. Local employer feedback indicates that due to the changes in healthcare delivery models in response to aging demographic and federal legislation (PPACA), the actual growth of home healthcare industry employment may well exceed already significant growth projections from current models.
3. There does not currently exist a sufficient training pipeline for qualified new entrants into most home healthcare occupations.
4. A primary focus in this sector will be to identify and screen career-oriented entrants with barriers to employment into training programs that lead to placement in homecare employment opportunities. Following placement, career development

planning will be critical to retain and grow new-hires and incumbents on pathways that result in better paying high-priority healthcare occupations.

Construction Sector Needs

The construction industry in Berks County was severely impacted by the 2008-09 recession with new home construction bottoming out in 2011. The industry has been slower than other major industry sectors in the MSA to recover but recent data indicates that the housing market is turning the corner and has entered an upward trend. With a 5% share of the Reading MSA Gross Domestic Product (GDP), a recent Reading Eagle economic outlook reports construction industry output increased by 1.4% from 2014 to 2015.

By the beginning of 2017, the construction industry recovered to approximately 85% of its pre-recession employment. In the period 2012Q1 through 2017Q1, the construction industry in Berks County increased employment by 854 jobs. This represents an average annual percentage change in employment of 1.9% or more than twice the average annual employment change when compared to state-wide growth (.8%) for the same period. Total employment has reached 9,435 or approximately 5% of the employment in Berks County and is projected to continue modest growth to over 10,200 by 2027.



While annual new job growth within the industry is forecast at a moderate 0.8% with slightly more than 800 jobs to be added over the next ten years, a particular concern is the need for replacement jobs within the sector in the same period. Currently 48% of those employed in construction occupations are included in the 45 years or older age demographic. Compounding this aging demographic issue is the reality that nearly 3,000 workers (31%) are employed in skilled trades and construction machine operating occupations that require long-term training, apprenticeships, and licensing certification. These high demand occupations include Carpenters,

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

Electricians, Plumbers & Pipefitters, HVACR Technicians, and Operating Engineers and Heavy Construction Equipment Operators.

10-Year Industry/Occupation Mix for Construction in Reading, PA MSA, Baseline						
SOC	Title	Current Employment	Regional Average Wage	10-Year Replacement Demand	10-Year Growth Demand	10-Year Total Demand
47-2031	Carpenters	988	\$41,800	165	45	210
47-2111	Electricians	721	\$51,700	127	105	232
49-9021	Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	397	\$46,100	70	56	126
47-2152	Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	394	\$61,400	60	36	96
47-2073	Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators	328	\$43,900	56	30	86

Average annual wages for construction occupations has increased to 123% of pre-recession wages. The 2017Q1 preliminary average wage data for construction occupations is \$57,680 per annum.



With this new focus on the industry as a potential workforce and economic development growth cluster, the Berks County WDB has adopted construction into its 2017-2021 Berks County

Industry Sector Strategy Priorities as a Priority B – “Recovering Industry” and the Board has recommended sustained support of the industry’s progress toward sustainable growth in employment and output. It is the Board’s policy to enhance ongoing employer engagement in the promotion of CTC program enrollment and apprenticeship opportunities in programs relevant to the industry’s needs. The Board has also assisted the Berks Connections/Pretrial Services (BCPS) community-based organization in the development of a successful US Department of Labor (US DOL) \$1.2 million re-entry grant opportunity. Beginning in July 2017, this highly successful 3-year grant has introduced ex-offenders to work-based experience and skills acquisition in construction trades occupations leading to family sustaining career pathways in this critical industry sector. By the end of 2019, it is expected that 150 local qualifying “returning citizens” will benefit from this innovative partnership know as *Rebuilding Reentrants and Reading (R3)* by the end of 2019. 74% of the first 104 R3 graduates are maintaining stable employment and 92% have not recidivated. In late 2018, R3 became the first registered pre-apprenticeship for reentrants in the Commonwealth with the Associated Builders and Contractors, Inc – Keystone Chapter serving as the registered apprenticeship sponsor.

Note: Recognizing that construction firms typically contract for projects that are regional and might require hiring outside of their local workforce development area, the Berks WDB takes into consideration the labor market shed in the Southeast PA region and has solicited feedback from neighboring WDB’s in Southeastern PA who share our level of concern surrounding the supply versus demand for these skilled occupations and the need for their continued classification as High Priority Occupations. Overwhelmingly, their response has confirmed that they and their employers share this priority need. The Berks WDB, in partnership with and on behalf of the SE PA PREP Partners, served as the lead applicant in a collective regional petition initiative for the inclusion of the Carpenters, Electricians, Plumbers & Pipefitters, HVAC/R Technicians, and Operating Engineers and Heavy Construction Equipment Operators SOC codes on the High Priority Occupations list in our six Workforce Development Area region (Berks, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia WDBs).

Transportation and Warehousing Needs

CDL/Driver Needs – The *Logistics, Transportation, and Warehousing Industry* has been identified as a “Priority C – Watch Industry” by the Berks WDB’s sector strategy analysis and is much smaller and less impactful than either the manufacturing or healthcare sector. However, within this sector the Berks WDB has identified a severe shortage of qualified **CDL Drivers** that threatens regional growth. In the period 2014 through 2024, the Center for Workforce Information & Analysis forecasts an employment change of 13.4% or 400 new Berks County job for *Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers* (SOC 53-3032). This forecasted increase is reflective of an annual opening intensity of **90**, the third largest employment growth for fastest growing occupations in the Berks WDA. However, examination of the escalating industry growth that is occurring in the WDA and the broader cross-industry need for these occupations, the Berks County WDB recognizes that this is likely an underestimated forecast.

Observations on CDL/Driver Occupations:

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

- In calendar year 2018, there were 2,200 total active on-line job postings for CDL drivers in the Reading MSA.
- JobsEQ datasets project substantial growth (>2,900) in both new and replacement job openings for CDL Drivers over the next ten years in the Reading MSA.
- A CDL certification may currently be the surest credential and shortest path for job-seekers in the region to attain gainful employment at family-sustaining wages.

Percentile Earnings for Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers (53-3032)

\$41,300/yr.	\$47,900/yr.	\$60,100/yr.
25th Percentile Earnings	Median Earnings	75th Percentile Earnings

- Ongoing shortages of qualified candidates with CDL certifications throughout Eastern Pennsylvania have led to upward movement of these wages. Sign-on bonuses in excess of \$5,000 and other incentives have become common recruitment practices in the region.
- By far, CDL training has been the topmost training activity in terms of local Individual Training Account (ITA) funding expenditure in recent years and this pattern is likely to continue.
- Reflecting a national industry reality, regional employers report very high turnover among CDL drivers – sometimes reaching 50-100% annual turnover. However, a 2014 Berks WDB review of CDL training participants determined that even if new entrants did not stay long in their initial position, participant wage records showed that medium-term earnings met or exceeded expectations. If new CDL entrants did not stay with their initial placement, they consistently are able to find comparable employment within or without the occupation and industry.
- The Berks Career & Technology Center (BCTC) has ramped up its’ CDL Training Program to abet reducing the demand versus supply gap by adding an English/Spanish Language CDL program that will tap into the significant Hispanic resident population in the Reading MSA. If successful, this and similar programs will provide qualified, licensed CDL Driver candidates to employers and family sustaining wages to a demographic that has traditionally experienced barriers to economic upward mobility.

Needs of the Regional Agriculture Food / Production Industry – The Berks WDB has identified *Agriculture* as a “Priority C – Watch Industry”, largely due to its close association with the larger region’s substantial food production and manufacturing sectors (Section 1.1). The WDB is now taking a closer look at local *Food and Beverage Manufacturing* in an effort to understand the current and future employment needs of this very important regional industry. With a combined Location Quotient of 1.77 or 1 ¾ times the percentage of regional to national employment in these industries, sustaining the 71 establishments that employ the 3,904 (Source: JobsEQ 2017Q1 dataset) occupations in Berks County is a major concern.

Industry Snapshot of Food Processing in Reading, PA MSA
--

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

		Current			Historical				Forecast		
		Four Quarters Ending with 2017Q1			Total Change over the Last 5 Years	Average Annual % Change in Employment 2012Q1-2017Q1			Over the Next 10 Years		
NAICS	Industry	Employment	Avg. Annual Wages	Location Quotient	Employment	Reading, PA MSA	Pennsylvania	USA	Total Approx Repl Demand	Total Growth Demand	Avg. Annual Growth Percent
311	Food Manufacturing	3,653	\$50,878	1.92	94	0.5%	1.0%	1.3%	879	-322	-0.9%
312	Beverage and Tobacco Product Manufacturing	251	\$27,071	0.83	168	24.7%	8.2%	6.1%	62	-4	-0.2%
	Food/Beverage Processing Total	3,904	\$49,348	1.77	261	1.4%	1.7%	1.9%	941	-326	-0.9%

Source: [JobsEQ®](#) 2017Q1

Observations on the Food/Beverage Industry:

1. The Crescent Region Industry Sector Partnership (CRISP) of the Berks, Lancaster and Lehigh Valley WDBs has adopted the Food and Beverage Processing Industry as a critical industry sub-cluster that closely aligns the three WDAs. Berks County is considered to be the keystone of the CRISP region’s Food and Beverage Processing industry sector.
2. A 2016-17 comprehensive study on the regional workforce and economic impact of the Food and Beverage Processing industry sector conducted by the Berks WDB on behalf of the CRISP Partners into critical occupations within the industry and its supportive Transportation and Warehousing businesses indicates that the two highest priority occupations needed to sustain the national and international market growth of the industry are Industrial Maintenance/Mechatronics Technician and Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers (CDL).
3. The CRISP study revealed that employment numbers for lower task Food/Beverage Batchmakers and Packaging/Filling Machine Operators occupations appear to be stable. However, preliminary data regarding the supply versus demand for replacement openings and the JobsEQ dataset projection of a general downturn in industry employment is troubling. On-site employer visits and surveys also indicate that training and regulatory certifications for high-priority entry-level jobs such as Food/Beverage Batchmakers and Packaging/Filling Machine Operators in food quality control and process improvement are a common industry need to be addressed through collaborative planning and consortia training
4. It is the Berks WDBs policy that regional collaboration with our neighboring CRISP WDAs will continue to assure equilibrium in the supply versus demand for critical Food and Beverage Processing and related transportation occupations for this vital regional industry sub-sector.

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

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

Berks County is a substantial (and growing) natural labor market area (LMA) which is contiguous with the federally-designated Reading Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) and the County serves as the focus of our regional community, government, economic and workforce development partners with a long track record of collaboration to develop and implement strategic economic strategies. The highly-successful *Ride to Prosperity (RTP)* project has helped regional leaders cultivate a deep understanding of the region's key industry clusters which has since informed RTPs evolving strategy and action plans as described above in Section 1.2

In mid-2015, the Berks County WIB was reappointed as the Berks County Workforce Development Board (WDB) just as our regional economy moved from *recovering* to *recovered* and the Berks County LWDA at or near “functional full-employment.” (see section 1.1)

Reason for optimism that the region's current economy is stable and likely to continue growing was documented in a September 2015 report from the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia – *Identifying Opportunity Occupations in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware*. The report finds that the Reading MSA has the highest percentage of “opportunity occupations” of all eleven MSAs in the Philadelphia Fed's three-state region. The Philadelphia Fed report went on to say that over a third (33.6%) of Berks County jobs meet their standards for “*opportunity occupations*” *characterized by above-average pay for workers without a bachelor's degree* and concludes with:

It is true that certain broad occupational categories - such as healthcare practitioners; production; installation, maintenance, and repair; and construction and extraction – are more likely to offer work at an above-average wage for those without a college degree than others.

Economies that include higher levels of employment in these fields will offer more and better opportunities for workers with lower levels of education.

At the same time, Berks County employers and the Berks County Workforce Development Board (WDB) face significant workforce challenges driven by economic transformation and most notably by rapidly-changing local demographics. Berks County as a whole is characterized by an older, predominantly native-born white population which has long supplied the region's skilled talent needs, particularly for good paying middle-skill jobs in healthcare and in manufacturing. Most of this highly-skilled and experienced workforce combines at least a high school diploma with significant knowledge, skills and abilities acquired through decades on the job with local employers. However, much of the County's most available current and future talent resides within the City of Reading and has significantly different demographic characteristics.

Reading's population has been growing for the last two decades and reached 87,812 at the time of the 2010 Census - making it the fifth largest city in Pennsylvania with a population density of 8,951 people per square mile. This highly urbanized core city was also identified by the 2010

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

Census as having the highest percentage of citizens living in poverty in the nation. Besides being disproportionately poor, Reading residents are also often under-educated. Less than two-thirds of city residents have earned a high school diploma, compared to more than 85% nationally. Reading's demographic make-up has changed remarkably over the past twenty years; with fewer non-Hispanic white residents, a slow-growing black population (13%) and a Hispanic population that now makes up nearly 60% of the city's population. The *New York Times* reports that this change has been due primarily to a large influx of Hispanics from New York and other large cities and that many of these new residents have been drawn by cheaper housing and prospects for a better life. Reading's Hispanic population is much younger than that of the city and Berks County as a whole. The city's Hispanic adult population has low educational attainment - with less than half of Hispanic adults over age 25 having earned a high school diploma or GED. As a result of these changes, Reading is now home to a growing population of younger, less-skilled and less-educated workers and potential workers.

Despite the many challenges that the City faces, there is reason for optimism going forward. In 2015, the Franklin & Marshall College Local Economy Center (LEC) published the *Reading Economic Report* outlining the roots of Reading's economic crisis but also pointing to a particular advantage: *Reading still has a production-oriented workforce, and despite a long period of decline, manufacturing has shown some post-recession resilience both nationally and in Berks County. This sector, which provides more jobs than any other industry for Reading households, provides an important foundation for the City's economic future. The strength of this production base is still present, even as the City and Region continue to transition into a more diverse service-based economy.*

With retirements from the local baby-boomer workforce now accelerating, Berks County will prosper if we can successfully prepare and connect the City of Reading's younger, less-educated workforce with the great career opportunities generated by these retirements and continued regional economic growth over the next decade.

In January 2017, the Berks County Workforce Development Board (Workforce Development Board or WDB), together with the United Way of Berks County (United Way), contracted Thomas P. Miller & Associates, LLC (the Research Team) to conduct a mixed-methods research study on the disconnected young adult population of Berks County, Pennsylvania. The primary objectives of the study were to better understand the reasons young adults are disconnected, how they pay for what they need, and to provide a context for developing strategies to engage and assist disconnected young adults.

The data gathered through this research project is intended to build a foundation for the Workforce Development Board to better market to, assist, and create programs for disconnected young adults in Berks County.

Three major themes emerged from the study: 1) young adults face multiple and varied barriers, 2) there is an information disconnect between young adults and service providers, and 3) the data from this study is consistent with national research.

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

Reflecting these realities and a thorough local analysis of all regional industry clusters, the Berks County Workforce Development Board in June 2017 formally approved workforce development sector priorities for Program Years 2017-2021. As part of this 2019 modification the Board has reviewed and is updating these priorities as follows for the period 2019-2021:

i. Priority A (*Driver Industry*): Manufacturing

- Largest sector by annual economic output (2017) = \$4.2 Billion (21.5% of Berks GDP)
- Largest sector by employment: 32,200 (17.2% of local employment).
- Led local post-recession recovery with 4,200 new jobs added in the period 2009Q4 to 2018Q4 (+15.2% growth versus -1.0% PA).
- *Average Weekly Wages for local manufacturing workers grew 4.0% in one year (4th Quarter 2017 – 4th Quarter 2018) per the US DOL Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS).*
- Average 2018 annual earnings = \$61,628 (*JobsEQ[®] 2018Q4 dataset*)
- 517 establishments (including 1st and 3rd largest employers^① – East Penn Manufacturing and Carpenter Technology Corp.)
- Very Strong Location Quotient (LQ) = **2.10** (projected to remain fixed through 2023)
- Local Manufacturing Sector is broad-based but with some significant concentration in certain sub-sectors. Top three manufacturing sub-sectors by employment (51.3% of total sector employment):

Industry Sub-Sector	LQ	Employment	% Industry
1. Electrical Equipment, Appliance, and Component Manufacturing	17.94	8,542	26.6%
2. Primary Metal Manufacturing	9.56	4,310	13.5%
3. Food Manufacturing (does not include Beverage & Tobacco)	1.84	3,593	11.2%

- Significant multiplier effect supports many jobs in supply chain and other sectors
- Continued productivity growth will drive increased economic output with moderate decline in manufacturing job growth (i.e. Berks will remain successful if we retain ≈30,000 manufacturing industry jobs thru 2024).
- 53% of manufacturing workers are age 45 or older – need ≈7,000 new entrants by 2024 to maintain current workforce level due to exit forecast.
- Increasing number of alerts from employers bypassing orders due to overextended workforce. Critical current and future skills shortages for technical occupations, especially precision machining, industrial maintenance/mechatronics technicians, welders and quality systems professionals. Entry-level production worker hiring/retention increasingly difficult
- Failure to address talent pipeline/skills shortages and incumbent talent upskilling will lead to reduced business investment and lower economic output with a significant negative impact on local economic prosperity.

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

II. Priority B (*Sustaining Industry*): Healthcare (excludes Social Assistance)

- 2nd largest sector by employment: 25,100 (13.5% of local employment)
- 2nd largest employer (Reading Hospital) along with the 10th (Tower Health Medical Group) and 11th (Penn State Health - St. Joseph Medical Center) largest employers^①
- Steady job growth - 300-500 per annum total growth demand through 2028
- Top five Healthcare occupations by employment - annual growth percentage:

Occupation	Current Employed	% Annual Growth
1. Registered Nurses	3,420	1.0%
2. Nursing Assistants	1,921	0.08%
3. Personal Care Aides	1,436	3.2%
4. Licensed Practical & Licensed Vocational Nurses	946	1.0%
5. Home Health Aides	898	3.7%

- Average 2018 annual earnings = \$56,900 (*JobsEQ[®] 2018Q4 dataset*)
- 2019 Location Quotient = **1.17**, slightly above national average
- Excellent system of industry-recognized licenses and credentials driving education & career pathways. Good opportunities for middle-skill jobs and career paths
- Slightly less than 10% of Berks GDP = \$1.9412 Billion (2017)
- Service industry with limited jobs multiplier effect

III. Priority B (*Expanding Industry*): Construction

- Approximately 9,200 jobs (≈5% of Berks total employment)
- Annual economic output (2017) = \$1 Billion (5.2% of Berks GDP)
- Location Quotient (LQ) = **0.87**, below the national average but comparable to PA (0.91)
- Average 2018 annual earnings = ≈\$59,000. Significant upward pressure on wages expected to continue through 2023.
- Top five Construction Trades occupations by employment - 5-year wage progression/regression percentage (*BLS 2013 versus 2018 Occupational Employment Statistics Data*):

Occupation	Current Employed	5 Yr. Wage % Δ
1. Construction Laborers	1,133	9.4%
2. Carpenters	917	3.9%
3. Electricians	624	-12.7%
4. Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	460	39.3%
5. HVAC/R Mechanics & Installers	426	12.4%

- 667 new jobs in the period 2013Q4-2018Q4 (7.8% growth)
- 49% currently employed at or above age 45 years
- Employment forecast – 10,000 by 2028Q4. Lagging talent pipeline poses a threat, however, *the Berks construction industry currently has 49 distinct employer-sponsored*

apprenticeship “earn and learn” training models with well-defined career and wage progression to recruit, train, and retain workers.

IV. Priority C (Watch Industries):

A. Transportation and Warehousing:

- Approximately 8,200 jobs (2,000 new jobs in last five years). Otherwise, relatively flat new job employment growth projections thru 2028
- 8th largest employer^① – Penske Truck Leasing
- Average 2018 annual earnings = \$46,737 (*JobsEQ*[®] 2018Q4 dataset)
- 2019 Location Quotient = **1.00**, at the national average
- New facilities on I-78 and across the larger region in competition for available workers
- Predominantly low-skill entry-level positions. Sector lacks strong career ladders
- Ongoing, increasing demand in 2016-2028 for CDL Drivers (200 on-line ads in April 2019)

B. Agriculture

- Legacy industry - approximately 3,600 jobs (2% Berks employment)
- Relatively stable employment – +0.4% average annual % change last 10 years
- Average 2018 annual earnings = \$41,000 (*JobsEQ*[®] 2018Q4 dataset)
- \$325.5 Million annual output (2017), projected moderate growth
- 2019 Location Quotient = **1.33**, above the national average
- Tied closely to food production (manufacturing sub-sector) with “locally-sourced” advantage
- Related regional demand for mechanics/technicians to service increasingly sophisticated farm and production equipment – including electronic, hydraulic and diesel technicians.

Information Technology Occupations: The local supply of talent in Information Technology (IT) occupations has largely been in balance with demand for the past decade and the region has seen some actual decline in IT companies and closely-associated large financial services companies. However, many IT occupations are also critical to the successful implementation of technology-based improvements strategies in key local sectors like advanced manufacturing, healthcare and logistics. Current job postings and recent interviews with local employers indicate that IT skills shortages are surfacing and will continue to grow over the next five years.

Workforce Delivery System Working with Regional Employers

Manufacturing is Berks County’s largest employment base and is considered the WDBs’ Priority A-Driver Industry. Berks County has been home to an Advanced Manufacturing Industry Partnership (AMIP) since 2007. The primary function of the partnership has always remained advancing the strategic importance of this targeted industry cluster by providing a partnership structure and an interactive forum for Berks manufacturers in support of the industry partnership’s mission of workforce enhancement opportunities, transfer of technology and understanding of best business practices, and the advancement of market innovation.

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

In July 2017, the Berks WDB solicited the collaboration of the Greater Reading Chamber Alliance (GRCA) to coordinate the transition the AMIP to the PA Department of Labor & Industry’s (PA DOLI) new concept format as a “Next Generation” Industry Partnership (NGIP). With the successful acquisition and support of a PA DOLI grant, the Greater Reading Advanced Manufacturing NGIP was launched in April 2018 and quickly established a much broader focus on industry needs than solely incumbent worker upskilling. It is, however, anticipated that a need for this activity will remain as a NGIP impetus in the long-term.

As a forward-thinking job retention, layoff aversion and economic development strategy, the Berks WDB has consistently supported a return to the historical practice of capitalizing on incumbent worker technical training to build advanced manufacturing worker competencies while matching newly-entering talent with experienced employees for knowledge transfer. Upskilling incumbent workers can lead to advancement opportunities which create entry-level opportunities for new entrants to these attractive career pathways

The Berks WDB looks to its industry partners for input and guidance as to the best and most effective focus in the pursuit of, and ultimate expenditure of, federal and state funding opportunities to support the upskilling of incumbent workers to increase productivity and efficiencies, and for the rapid “on-boarding” of new hires through well-defined on-the-job training activities. As subject matter experts, the industry partners are consistently surveyed for their priority training needs and these survey results are aggregated to represent industry needs in the form of a consortium training plan as shown below.

The Berks WDB has effectively used this methodology throughout the existence of the former Berks Advanced Manufacturing Industry Partnership to upskill well over 1,200 incumbent workers trained in industry recognized competencies and continues to utilize this industry expertise as a benchmark for consortia training.

2018-19 Berks Advanced Manufacturing Incumbent Worker Training Consortium Training Plan		
Name of Training (Specific)	HPO SOC Code	HPO SOC Title
Industrial Maintenance/Mechanics: Hydraulics, Pneumatics, Motor Controls, PLCs, Electrical Circuits, Mechanical Drives, Robotics, Refrigeration Systems, Maintenance Master Certification	17-3024	Electro-Mechanical Technicians
	17-3026	Industrial Engineering Technicians
	49-1011	Supervisors-Mechanics, Installers & Repairers
	49-9041	Industrial Machinery Mechanics
	49-9043	Maintenance Workers, Machinery
	49-9071	Maintenance & Repair Workers, General
CNC Machine Operation: Milling, Turning, Lathe, Grinding, Engineering Graphics, CAD/CAM, CNC Programming, Electrical Discharge Machining Technician, 3D Printing	51-1011	Supervisors-Production & Operating Workers
	51-4011	Computer-Controlled Machine Tool Operators, Metal & Plastic
	51-4012	Computer Numerically Controlled Machine Tool Programmers, Metal & Plastic
	51-4033	Grinding, Lapping, Polishing & Buffing Machine Operators, Metal & Plastic
	51-4041	Machinists

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

	51-4081	Multiple Machine Tool Setters, Operators & Tenders, Metal & Plastic
Welding Technology/Metal Fabrication	51-4121	Welders, Cutters, Solderers & Brazers
Quality Systems: Advanced Statistical Process Control, Failure Mode Analysis, Root Cause Analysis, Global Standards for Plastics Certification, Lean Tools Workshop Series, Lean Master Certification, Lean Six Sigma Green Belt, Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) Certification	17-2112	Industrial Engineers
	51-1011	Supervisors - Production & Operating Workers
	51-2092	Team Assemblers
	51-4011	Computer-Controlled Machine Tool Operators, Metal & Plastic
	51-4041	Machinists
	51-9061	Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers & Weighers
Six Sigma Black Belt	17-2112	Industrial Engineers

With the state’s movement to the Next Generation Industry Partnership model, grant funded incumbent worker training activity was placed into hiatus while core members of this new IP construct collectively evaluated and confirmed the local industry’s priority issues to be addressed. Historically, WEDnetPA funds for incumbent worker training have proved too little and too unreliable from budget year to budget year for the type of long-term planning and continuous improvement that is needed to sustainably address the region’s manufacturing technical skills shortages “at scale”.

Beginning in PY2016, the Berks WDB sought additional sources of public and private matching funds to sustain and support needed advanced manufacturing technical skills training for incumbent workers. Federal WIOA Title I and Rapid Response funds, discretionary grants (including National Emergency Grants), have been “braided” as a substitute in the absence of Pennsylvania Next Generation Industry Partnership (NGIP) implementation grants through an *Advanced Manufacturing Employment Retention/Layoff Aversion Strategy* adopted by the Berks County WDB. As a consequence of this “braided” funding approach, all WIOA and State incumbent worker and employer eligibility data collection requirements have been added to the Berks County WDB Work-based Training Policy (approved March 17, 2017) and incorporated into all related incumbent worker training applications and agreements.

As follow-on to this new strategy, in PY 2016 the Berks WDB requested and received Rapid Response Additional Funds in the amount of \$50,000 to be used solely for the purpose of incumbent worker training. This funding availability enabled the WDB to subsidize, on a 1:1 company matching basis, technical skills training during employer “windows of opportunity” without the restrictions that fiscal year to year funding can impose.

Based on the success of this initial employment retention strategy implementation, for PY 2018 and 2019 the Berks WDB approved allocation of its WIOA Title I funds in the amount of

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

\$100,000 annually as a 1:1 company matching subsidy to continue incumbent worker training activity in support of its manufacturing employer base.

As the WDB researched additional opportunities for similar workforce development in its other priority industry sectors, the WDB focused its attention on the rapidly increasing workforce needs of the Construction industry sector. The WDB has determined, through extensive LMI examination and personal dialogue with employers, that this industry is in the throes of a talent pipeline deficit that mirrors that of the manufacturing sector. An aging incumbent workforce and an inadequate talent pool for new and replacement jobs represent the real and present danger of critical skills needs insufficiencies that threaten to constrain the industry's rapidly expanding economic growth.

To mitigate the aforementioned looming construction employment issues, as well as other barriers such as those related to local and state regulatory policy, the Berks WDB has entered into a collaboration with its neighboring Lancaster WDB for the development of a regional Construction Sector NGIP that will engage employers residing in both WDAs. With the Berks WDB's assistance and partnership, the Lancaster WDB successfully submitted a PAsmart Convening Grant application in support of the newly formed "Lancaster Berks Construction Connection" Next Generation IP. An award in the amount of \$40,000 has been received and the NGIP launch was held July 24, 2019 with the Lancaster WDB and the Associated Builders & Contractors (ABC), Keystone Chapter acting as co-conveners.

In another follow-on to this expanded funding strategy, the Berks WDB entered into a partnership with its neighboring WDBs, Lancaster and Lehigh Valley, to pursue resources for a regional focus on occupational employment needs. The partnership designated "Crescent Regional Industry Sector Partnership" (CRISP) and funded by a PA Department of Labor & Industry grant, is charged with identifying clusters important to the economic competitiveness of the region and is conducting this research project to investigate the occupational demand vs. supply in this labor sharing region. The result of this regional investigation is a CRISP consortium report that identified comparative industry sub-clusters in which all three workforce areas share a comparable presence and interest. In this report, Manufacturing and Transportation and Warehousing industry sectors were both examined for their respective economic impact on the CRISP region. Identified as *traded industry clusters*, both sectors contribute significant value because their combined regional domestic products serve national and global markets bringing financial wealth back into the regional economies.

Of the sub-clusters examined during an industry cluster analysis, Food Processing and Manufacturing represents the highest LQ (2.45) for a traded industry in the CRISP region. Breaking down the sub-cluster even further, shows that there is a true comparative relationship within the CRISP consortium in an industry group comprising the manufacture of food and beverage products and its related transportation and logistics sector.

Having identified the comparative industry focus, employment issues emerged. Staffing pattern analysis of current and projected in-demand occupational needs within the Food and Beverage

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

Manufacturing industry group, as well as direct employer verification from interviews and survey results, isolated the greatest 10-year employment recruitment challenges to be addressed. Of these, two particular opportunity occupations require the CRISP consortium's attention: ***Industrial Maintenance Technician and Commercial Truck Driver***. These two occupations alone are most critical to production output and delivery to market. Our investigation confirms that current shortages in these two occupations will continue to grow for the CRISP region through 2020. As noted in section 1.2, these two occupations have been designated as High Priority Occupations for the Berks County Workforce Development Area.

The initiatives described above are just three examples that showcase the Berks County Workforce Delivery System's ongoing interaction with regional employers. The Berks WDB, working with our local employers, economic and education partners, PA CareerLink® Business Services Team, community-based organizations, regional WDB peers and state government resources continually looks to identify workforce development issues and opportunities where informed and effective solutions can be employed. The Berks WDB recognizes the value of data but does not consider it to be the end point of analysis. Outreach, feedback and interaction with the aforementioned agencies and the business community is required for true labor market intelligence and the Berks WDB will continue to utilize these "boots on the ground" techniques to ensure that our workforce development focus continues to be relevant and timely.

1.4. Provide an analysis of local area workforce development activities, including education and training.

Due to ongoing forward-thinking and progressive business, educational and political leadership, Berks County is home to possibly the most comprehensive and accessible career and technical training and education (CTE) infrastructure of any region in the Commonwealth. With the encouragement and guidance of the Berks County WDB and fellow RTP partners, over the past seven years **Reading Area Community College (RACC)** reached back to the County's two excellent high school career and technology centers - **Berks Career and Technology Center (BCTC) and Reading Muhlenberg Career and Technology Center (RMCTC)** - to build comprehensive Technical Academy career pathways and the associated articulation agreements for high school CTE students to earn college credit for high-end technical coursework. In effect, the Technical Academy serves as an *honors program* for qualified CTC students, allowing them to acquire up to 27 college credits at no cost prior to high school graduation. Such focused and talented students are highly sought after by local employers for paid internships during the school year, while on summer break and again upon high school graduation. Once hired, Technical Academy graduates may receive financial support from their employers while they complete their Associate's degree programs at RACC. RACC has been particularly effective in assisting qualifying students to access federal Pell grants to cover tuition costs. If the students wish to continue their technical training and education beyond RACC, they may do so at aligned 4-year institutions (e.g. **Penn State – Berks**) through additional articulation agreements that are part of the Technical Academy pathway.

While many regions in the state allowed advanced manufacturing and similar programs at their secondary Career and Technical Education Centers (CTCs) to wither or close, Berks' local leadership's commitment to excellence in such crucial programs remained rock-steady. As a result, **Berks Career and Technology Center (BCTC) and Reading Muhlenberg Career and Technology Center (RMCTC)** provide state of the industry facilities, equipment and instructors to all high school students in Berks County who are interested and qualified for high-demand careers in Mechatronics, precision machining, welding, health care technology, information technology, etc. BCTC operates two campuses, one at the east end of the County and one at the west end of the County. RMCTC is located at the center of the County, adjacent to the City of Reading and neighboring Muhlenberg Township where the school has developed a unique core competence in meeting the needs of the rapidly-expanding (and mostly young) Hispanic population of both municipalities. BCTC and RMCTC also provide excellent adult education and training programs and are often the providers of choice for displaced workers looking to retool for re-entry into the local job market.

Reading Area Community College (RACC) is geographically well-positioned at the center of the County (95% of RACC enrollees are County residents) and within the City of Reading (nearly 40% of enrollees are City residents) to serve the region's evolving future workforce. In fact, RACC is the only institution of higher education in the Commonwealth to be designated by the federal government as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) with 32% of the student body self-identifying as Hispanic.

RACC is also programmatically well-positioned to meet the education and workforce development needs of key regional industry sectors and employers. Recognizing that 21st Century careers require significant training and education beyond high school, local employers worked with and donated to Reading Area Community College (RACC) to launch the **Schmidt Training and Technology Center (RACC-STTC)** in 2006. Since its founding, RACC-STTC has become widely-acknowledged as the best advanced manufacturing training facility in the Commonwealth, with expanding programs (both *for credit* and *non-credit*) serving the needs of employers and students/job-seekers alike.

In addition to its world-class manufacturing programs, RACC offers a number of programs to meet the needs of Berks County's large and growing healthcare industry. For-credit programs include Associate degrees in Nursing, Medical Laboratory Technology, Respiratory Care and Electronic Health Records Technology as well as a clinical-based Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN) program. Seven additional non-credit career training programs are offered including Certified Nurse Aid (CNA), Phlebotomy with EKG Training, and Dental Assistant.

RACC is the Title II education coordinator for the Berks County region and partners with other adult education providers such as the **Literacy Council of Greater Reading-Berks** to meet the extraordinary needs for GED and ESL (English as a Second Language) in Reading and the surrounding municipalities.

In keeping with Berks County's history of a local economy oriented to middle-skill occupations, Berks County is not home to a major research university. For some regions, this would be seen

as a major deficiency but our employers know this to be a competitive advantage to be located in a region that can produce educated job-seekers with skills that better match their actual needs. For example, **Penn State – Berks** is a centrally located and thriving institution with a long tradition of providing high quality education relevant to the needs of local employers. Originally founded by local textile industrialists in 1933 as the Wyomissing Polytechnic Institute, the school became part of the Penn State system in 1958. Along with its growth as a full-scale academic institution to include resident student housing and the conferring of four-year degrees, Penn State – Berks continues to enroll large numbers of traditional and working adult students in rigorous degree programs (e.g. Electro-Mechanical Engineering Technology) geared toward the needs of Berks’ strong regional industry sectors of advanced manufacturing and healthcare. Berks County is fortunate to also be home to three other colleges – **Kutztown University, Albright College, and Alvernia University** – each with robust ties to local industry, strong programs, and expanding articulation agreements to meet those needs.

The School of Health Sciences at Reading Hospital offers a highly-regarded Registered Nursing program which is accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN) and approved by the Pennsylvania State Board of Nursing. The school also offers accredited programs for many other health care occupations in association with Tower Health, the region’s largest employer. In 2015, Berks County’s St. Joseph’s Regional Health System joined the Penn State Health system and became Penn State Health St. Joseph. This merger is anticipated to bring even more opportunities for our local workforce to access training and education programs to grow along with this steadily expanding industry sector. Alvernia University has a popular BSN – Nursing program while Penn State-Berks and RACC offer LPN-Nursing certifications.

In February 2019 our local capacity to educate and train highly-skilled professionals for the regional healthcare industry took a giant leap forward with the signing of 20-year academic agreement between Tower Health (West Reading) and Drexel University College of Medicine (Philadelphia) allowing the first cohort of twenty third-year Drexel medical students to begin their core clinical rotations at Reading Hospital in May 2019. In June 2019, Tower Health and Drexel University held a groundbreaking ceremony for the **Drexel University College of Medicine at Tower Health** four-year regional campus at the Knitting Mills development in West Reading. At the ceremony, Drexel University President John Fry stated “Our relationship with Tower Health and this four-year regional campus creates an excellent destination for our medical students to build the emerging skills required by today’s physicians to meet the ever-growing needs within health care.

The District Administrator for the **Berks-Schuylkill District Office of Pennsylvania’s Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR)** is a member of the Berks County Workforce Development Board and OVR is a partner in the PA CareerLink® Berks County. Beginning in 2015, local OVR staff members have been particularly active with the Berks County WDB’s Youth Committee and local education providers to implement OVR’s new transition policy in reaching out to youth with disabilities and their families beginning at age fourteen (14) and at least two (2) years before graduation. Summer 2019 was the fourth year of this partnership between WDB,

OVR, and Goodwill Keystone Area. As detailed in the State's WIOA Plan, OVR entered into a first in the state Interagency Agreement with the Berks Career and Technology Center (BCTC) effective in 2014 *to provide school-to-work transition services to OVR eligible youth with disabilities who are enrolled in approved training programs at the BCTC and attend one of the 16 public school districts within Berks County associated with BCTC.*

The *Committee on Increasing Opportunities for Individuals with Disabilities* is a new standing committee of the board recommended by a working group consisting of board members (including the District Administrator for the **Berks-Schuylkill District Office of Pennsylvania's Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR)** who co-chaired the group) and off-board members with expertise in human resources or serving/advocating for the community of individuals with disabilities. The group reviewed the impact of Board activities on individuals with disabilities. The focus of this committee is to increase the percentage of individuals with a disability in the workforce by offering meaningful employment opportunities through strong partnerships with businesses in greater Reading and Berks County. The committee began meeting in program year 2017 and as its' first task held the 1st Annual Employer Symposium on September 12, 2018. The agenda for the event included the keynote address by the visionary Craig Poole, General Manager at the Double Tree by Hilton / Reading Hospitality Management LLC, the presentation of the Hiring People with Disabilities How-to-Guide by OVR staff, and a Panel discussion addressing practical concerns associated with hiring people with disabilities moderated by Karyn Troxell. The meeting space to hold this event was provided at no cost by Cabela's. While we originally hoped to attract fifty attendees the final attendance was sixty-five individuals, most of whom are Human Resource professionals, attended the event. Planning for the 2nd Annual Employer Symposium, to be held September 11, 2019, is underway.

The Berks WDB Youth Committee collaborates closely with OVR and with the **Berks County Transition Coordinating Council (BCTCC)**, a highly successful public-private regional partnership serving the region's population with significant barriers to employment. BCTCC brings together individuals with disabilities, educators, employers and service providers with the mission of assisting students with disabilities and their families' transition from secondary school to the post-secondary school world including post-secondary education and employment. BCTCC is a unique resource focused exclusively on students attending the 18 school districts located within Berks County.

The **Berks County Intermediate Unit (BCIU)** coordinates additional educational services for Berks County's eighteen public school services within Berks County and is also represented on the Berks County WD Board as well as the Board's Youth Committee. The **Berks Business Education Coalition (BBEC)** is chaired by a local business leader and the BBEC's membership includes the County's five colleges and the eighteen public school districts as well as business leaders. The BBEC is an active partner with the Berks County WD Board on programs to facilitate employer-educator collaboration and to provide local students with valuable work-based learning opportunities throughout the County. The BBEC's Executive Director is a member of the Board's Youth Committee. Both the BCIU and the BBEC partner with the Berks County WDB and our 18 local school districts to promote career awareness and preparation programs

including *Project Lead the Way*, STEM Academies, STEM competitions, and employer engagements geared to the many career opportunities available within the region.

Berks County is also home to a comprehensive network of community-based organizations (CBOs) that cooperate with the local workforce development board to leverage private and public funding to assist job-seekers and their families reach economic prosperity. Many of these service providers receive financial support and coordinate efforts through the **United Way of Berks County** whose Executive Director serves on the Berks County WDB. Leaders from a number of workforce-focused CBOs also have been appointed to and served on the Berks County WDB, including **Olivet Boys and Girls Clubs of America, Threshold Rehabilitation Services, Inc., Opportunity House and United Community Services (UCS) for Working Families**. Olivet runs highly successful after school and summer programs to help disadvantaged youth, primarily but not exclusively with the City of Reading, discover and achieve their career and educational goals. Threshold Rehabilitation Services, Inc. provides individualized person driven supports to individuals with disabilities in Berks County. Opportunity House is located in the City of Reading and has been recognized for its innovative “green” recycling programs to provide jobs to local residents with significant barriers to employment while raising revenue by providing important services to the community. Located within the City of Reading and founded by the United Labor Council of Reading and Berks County, UCS has been awarded ongoing and highly-competitive federal YouthBuild grants to provide out of school youth with industry training and GED preparation. UCS was also recently awarded a federal AmeriCorps grant in coordination with its YouthBuild program.

Weaknesses in the local workforce development System. The most significant weaknesses in Berks County workforce development programs result from two primary systemic factors: (1) a lack of sufficient, reliable and flexible federal and state public funding and (2) often conflicting statutory and regulatory requirements to balance the competing needs and capacities of two very different customer types – (a) employers and (b) job-seekers, particularly those with barriers to employment.

- **Weaknesses due to funding challenges.**

With the possible exception of special Congressional actions such as the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009* in response to extreme circumstances, the local public workforce system historically receives funding well below what is required to help all eligible job-seekers reach the level of qualifications required by employers with family sustaining jobs. As a result of this mismatch of needs between employers and available job-seekers, the Berks WDB is tasked with setting priorities for use of available funds. What makes this disconnection even more challenging to close is that federal funding comes to the WDB in various programmatic streams, each with its own restrictions. As a result, it is not uncommon for the Board to have funding for some programs with little local need while other programs have great local need and little available funding.

Annual core WIOA Title I federal funding is allocated to local workforce

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

development boards via a somewhat complex formula that makes it nearly impossible for the Berks WDB to anticipate funding for the new program year (beginning July 1) prior to an annual allocation notice generally received only 8-10 weeks before the end of the current program year. For example, in early May 2015 the Berks County WDB learned that it would receive \$562,745 less for its three core WIOA Title I programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth) in PY2015 than it received in PY 2014 – a 19.2% reduction. This led to significant staff cuts and other cost cutting measures being implemented at the WDB and at our PA CareerLink® Berks County one-stop American Job Center (AJC). The following program year (PY2016), the Berks WDB received another 8.0% reduction in these critical formula funds. Though funding improved for PY2017 and significantly improved in PY2018, the Berks WDB still finds ourselves in PY2019 with 3.2% less funding than five years earlier and no reliable method for predicting our funding for PY2020.

While the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania typically appropriates little annual funding for workforce development programs, the historic 9-month state budget impasse which began on July 1, 2015 led to the stoppage of most workforce development federal pass-through funding well into PY 2015. As a result, local Berks County WDB partners were delayed payments for contracted services. The local delivery system did not shut down, but the uncertainty driven by the budget impasse damaged our ability to reliably deliver anything beyond the most basic services to job-seekers and employers alike. In particular, activities sponsored by the Berks WDB's well-regarded Advanced Manufacturing Industry Partnership (IP) slowed to a crawl at a time when the training needs of participating employers grew increasingly acute.

The board has aggressively applied for discretionary grants issued by the Commonwealth. The WDB has been successful in securing discretionary / competitive grants totaling over \$607,500 in PY2018. Recent successes include two Business Education Partnership grants totaling \$245,544 and two Pre-apprenticeship/Apprenticeship Grant in conjunction with IBEW Local 742 totaling over \$145,000. Securing such grants help the WDB remain effective and relevant despite significant cutbacks in formula funding over the past three years.

- **Weaknesses due to conflicting statutory, regulatory and customer requirements.**

The initial implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 has led to positive steps forward for the public workforce system in many ways. However, WIOA does not resolve many of the conflicting statutory and regulatory requirements that require local WDBs to constantly balance the sometimes competing needs and capacities of two very different customer types. Employers always seek and need the best talent available, but local WDBs are often required by regulation and policy to fund programs and services designed to “place” job-seekers, particularly those with barriers to employment. As a result, local employers often have difficulty viewing the public workforce system as a demand-driven system

focused on their needs rather than one overly-focused on the needs of job-seeker customers. Given this reality, the Berks County WDB has a good track record of balancing these sometimes contradictory priorities and keeping local employers engaged in the process.

In early 2015, the Berks County's WDB identified an opportunity for improvement in working with the area's large ex-offender population. By mid-2019 significant progress has been made in working closely with Berks Connections/Pretrial Services to serve this population. The WDB no longer considers this to be a weakness.

2. STRATEGIC PLANNING QUESTIONS: Vision and Goals

2.1. What are the local board's strategic vision and goals for preparing its workforce?

The Berks County Workforce Development Board's (Berks County WDB) vision is to support the development and maintenance of a skilled and competitive workforce in alignment with the broader economic development efforts to attract, retain and grow business in Berks County. In support of this vision the Berks County WDB has established a reputation for offering effective services and programs and for continuously improving the quality of services and programs. In response to the needs of local employers and job-seekers and in alignment with new WIOA requirements, the Berks County WDB has developed implementation and improvement strategies for Program Years 2017 – 2019.

Six areas of focus for the period covered by the plan (PY2017 – PY2020) to promote economic growth and economic self-sufficiency were approved by the WDB on March 17, 2017 remain in effect and are hereby approved for extension through the end of PY2020. The six are:

I. *Meeting the Needs of Employers / The Retirements of Baby Boomers*

From 2010-2014, much of the work of the Berks County WDB focused on the unique needs of unemployed and under-unemployed workers during a time of high unemployment and general labor surpluses. The extraordinary needs and numbers of displaced workers, long-term unemployed individuals, struggling veterans and individuals with barriers to employment were generally well-met in Berks County. However, since mid-year 2015, the local workforce development area has experienced a dramatic shift to a general labor and skills shortage environment. As a result, the priorities and services of the Berks County WDB have shifted accordingly (see Section 1.1).

The growing shortage of qualified candidates for critical "opportunity" occupations is especially acute and local employers need help. While some of the current skills shortage results from the long, steady cyclical recovery from the Great Recession of 2009-2010, an underlying wave of baby-boomer retirements will drive continuing shortages even if regional economic growth stalls. Our employers have never seen anything like this in the past and the Berks County WDB will play a crucial role in

continuing to develop and implement long-term solutions along with our Business Services Team (BST) and local partners.

Under-employment in Berks County is significantly less acute in 2019 than in was even as late as 2017 when many residents still found themselves in part-time positions but seeking full-time employment or in positions whose requirements (and compensation) were below their full capability. Sustained job growth in our key industries of manufacturing, healthcare and construction have significantly lessened this problem. In addition, the WDB's strategy to emphasize assisting local employers with good jobs in key industries further develop the skills of their incumbent workers has borne fruit. Along these lines, the WDB has continued to connect local employers with valuable sources of funding beyond the state Next Generation Industry Partnership and WEDnetPA funding which has been too little and too unreliable from budget year to budget year for long-term planning and continuous improvement. Beginning in PY2017, the Board began to take advantage of the permissible use of adult and dislocated worker funds allocated to the Board for training activities associated with incumbent workers. This focus on incumbent worker training can be especially attractive to small and medium-size employers with similar needs and scarce training resources. The strategy will help proven, trained incumbents develop and grow with the companies and allow the hiring of less-skilled new hires into these attractive career pathways. Many of these new hires may also need assistance from other WDB-sponsored programs (e.g. OJTs) in order to take advantage of these proven regional career opportunities.

II. *Ongoing support for Career and Technical Education Pathways / Technical Academies*

A majority (53.8%) of Berks County adults have successfully achieved a high school education but not an Associate's Degree or higher. (Only 30% of Berks County adults persevered with their formal education to complete an Associate's Degree or higher.) This profile may have been a good match for a 20th century economy, but it does not meet the needs of our region's current and future technology-driven workplace (see Section 1.1). Our local Technical Academy model is possibly the most affordable and well-constructed pathway from high school CTE to community college education and higher; however, we need to encourage more students to elect this pathway.

III. *Local Industry Sector Priorities and Strategies*

During a time of continuing constraints on available resources, these clearly established priorities guide the Board and staff in making sure that local employers with the attractive career paths get connected with the best available talent. Accordingly, the WDB approved industry sector priorities for 2017 – 2021 on June 16, 2017 (see Section 1.3) and will complete our regular biannual update of these priorities as part of our 2019 review of this local plan by October 2019. With the manufacturing sector clearly identified as the Berks region's singular *Priority A – Driver Sector*, we will

continue to work with our local economic development partners to expand and promote **Annual Berks County Manufacturing Summit** events and prioritize advanced manufacturing pipeline development efforts as described above. The GRCA's Greater Reading **Advanced Manufacturing Next Generation Industry Partnership (NGIP)** will remain our flagship IP but with the significant support of the Berks WDB Advanced Manufacturing Incumbent Worker Training Consortium for training activities as part of the board's employment retention/layoff aversion strategy implementation. These and other local industry sectors will continue to be evaluated bi-annually by the Board to ensure that federal and state workforce funds are most effectively spent where they can have the greatest long-term impact for employers and job-seekers alike.

IV. *Leading Local Initiatives for Disconnected and Under-employed Young Adults*

The Youth Committee of the Berks WDB has identified a unique and crucial role for the Board as the key convener of local partners with the mission and capacity to meet the extensive needs of the County's Disconnected and Under-employed Young Adults and Out of School Youth (OSY). The Youth Committee also recognized that we currently lack comprehensive and current information regarding the size and critical characteristics of this elusive population. In order to proceed with the best information available, the WDB joined with the United Way of Berks County (United Way) to fund a project to research and profile disconnected and under-employed young adults. The resulting report was completed in July 2017 has informed local priorities and programs going forward. Findings from the report include:

- The LWDA is currently home to between 3,000 – 5,000 disconnected individuals who meet the WDBs' definition of a disconnected young adult. (See section 1.1, Berks County's Biggest Labor Supply Challenge: Barriers Faced by Disconnected Youth.)
- 90% of disconnected young adults reported experiencing life circumstances that are common barriers to employment or education.
- Disconnected young adults in Berks county often face multiple and varied barriers to gainful employment and education.
- Over half of disconnected young adults face more than one reason for being disconnected.
- The top barriers disconnected young adults in Berks County face include:
 - Lack of Transportation
 - Family Care Obligations
 - Focus on "Making Money" vs. "Investing in a Career"
 - Significant Barriers to Pursuing Education

V. *Promoting Work-based Experience tied to Career Pathways for In-School Youth (ISY), including Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) and Internship Opportunities*

While Title I Youth funding will largely be dedicated to OSY programs as appropriately required by WIOA, a major priority of the Berks WDB will be to sustain the

gains of our successful In School Youth (ISY) initiatives focused on Summer Youth Employment Programs (SYEPs). Our local OVR office is now having great success in working directly with one of the Board's summer youth contractors *Goodwill Keystone Area* to identify ISY with special needs/disabilities who can be funded for summer jobs under OVR's new transition policy (see Section 1.4). Additional funding for youth who can participate without qualifying based on family income will be an important priority. Summer programming increasing is tied to youth career interests. The WDB has used the State Local Internship Partnership (SLIP) as an integral portion of a work experience program built around providing youth with ever more career focused experiences. Reflective of this career focus is the privately funded RMCTC and BCTC summer internship program that provides work experience to enrolled youth – wages are paid by the employer with a program funded stipend paid to the youth at the successful completion of the internship.

VI. *Underemployment: Increasing Employment Opportunities for Individuals with Barriers to Employment, including:*

1. Individuals with Disabilities
2. Individuals with Histories of Convictions

In addition to the five priorities detailed above, the Berks County WDB will also need to expand and upskill the overall talent pool of existing adult workers to meet the needs of our key industry sectors. The Committee on Increasing Opportunities for Individuals with Disabilities is a new standing committee of the board recommended by a working group consisting of board members (including the District Administrator for the Berks-Schuylkill District Office of Pennsylvania's Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) who co-chaired the group) and off-board members with expertise in human resources or serving/advocating for the community of individuals with disabilities. The group reviewed the impact of Board activities on individuals with disabilities. The focus of this committee is to increase the percentage of individuals with a disability in the workforce by offering meaningful employment opportunities through strong partnerships with businesses in greater Reading and Berks County. The committee began meeting in program year 2017 and as its' first task held the 1st Annual Employer Symposium on September 12, 2018. The agenda for the event included the keynote address by the visionary Craig Poole, General Manager at the Double Tree by Hilton / Reading Hospitality Management LLC, the presentation of the Hiring People with Disabilities How-to-Guide by OVR staff, and a Panel discussion addressing practical concerns associated with hiring people with disabilities moderated by WDB member Karyn Troxell. The meeting space to hold this event was provided at no cost by Cabela's. While we originally hoped to attract fifty attendees the final attendance was sixty-five individuals, most of whom are Human Resource professionals, attended the event. Planning for the 2nd Annual Employer Symposium, to be held September 11, 2019, is underway.

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

As described in Section 1.4 The Berks County’s’ WDB identified an opportunity for improvement in working with the area’s large ex-offender population. As a result, Berks County WDB has reached out to community leaders experienced in working with this challenging population as well as to local employers with success in hiring individuals with this particularly onerous barrier to employment. In July 2015, we included representatives of two Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) with specialized expertise in working with ex-offenders to join the newly-constituted Berks County WDB to help address this weakness. As a result, in March 2016 we were awarded a state CBO grant to expand and coordinate proven best practices among these partners that has shown great promise. Our new CBO pre-apprenticeship grant awarded to Berks Connections/Pretrial Services will fund Rebuilding Reentrants and Reading (R3) through the 2019 program year. This program was originally funded through the U.S. Department of Labor. This registered pre-apprenticeship program offers an opportunity for individuals with a criminal history to acquire skills in the construction trades that lead to gainful employment and assists with the renovation of the City of Reading's most blighted neighborhoods.

Relation of Goals to Negotiated Performance Measures. The Berks County WDB is widely recognized for sustained competence in developing and implementing strong processes to insure the proper oversight of its publicly-funded programs and has a proven track record of meeting annual negotiated performance measures. The Berks WIB (predecessor to the Berks WDB) met or exceeded all nine measures in the last year under WIA (PY2014) and never missed achieving the same negotiated WIA common performance standard in consecutive years. In the first year of reporting under WIOA the Berks WDB met or exceeded all fifteen negotiated measures.

2017 Final	Adult				Dislocated Worker				Youth				Average Indicator Score
	Numerator Denominator	Actual Performance	Negotiated Goal	% of Goal Achieved	Numerator Denominator	Actual Performance	Negotiated Goal	% of Goal Achieved	Numerator Denominator	Actual Performance	Negotiated Goal	% of Goal Achieved	
Employment Rate (2nd Quarter)	40/48	83.3%	62.0%	134.4%	140/157	89.2%	72.0%	123.8%	59/75	78.7%	59.0%	133.3%	130.5%
Employment Rate (4th Quarter)	21/25	77.8%	62.0%	125.4%	64/73	87.7%	73.0%	120.1%	25/31	80.6%	55.0%	146.6%	130.7%
Median Earnings (2nd Quarter)	-	\$7,837	\$5,000	156.7%	-	\$8,015	\$7,000	114.5%	-	\$2,637	Baseline	-	135.6%
Credential Attainment Rate	5/6	83.3%	55.0%	151.5%	16/28	57.1%	57.0%	100.3%	23/29	79.3%	60.0%	132.2%	128.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	12/35	34.3%	Baseline	-	47/102	46.1%	Baseline	-	10/23	43.5%	Baseline	-	-
Average Program Score	142.0%				114.7%				137.4%				✓

3rd Quarter 2018	Adult				Dislocated Worker				Youth				Average Indicator Score
	Numerator Denominator	Actual Performance	Negotiated Goal	% of Goal Achieved	Numerator Denominator	Actual Performance	Negotiated Goal	% of Goal Achieved	Numerator Denominator	Actual Performance	Negotiated Goal	% of Goal Achieved	
Employment Rate (2nd Quarter)	24/25	96.0%	80.0%	120.0%	74/92	80.4%	85.0%	94.6%	40/55	72.7%	75.0%	97%	103.8%
Employment Rate (4th Quarter)	21/24	87.5%	72.0%	121.5%	100/116	86.2%	85.0%	101.4%	36/52	69.2%	75.0%	92%	105.1%
Median Earnings (2nd Quarter)	-	\$8,468	\$7,800	108.6%	-	\$7,913	\$8,000	98.9%	-	\$3,294	Baseline	-	103.7%
Credential Attainment Rate	2/4	50.0%	75.0%	66.7%	43/53	81.1%	57.0%	142.3%	31/38	81.6%	65.0%	126%	111.5%
Measurable Skill Gains	16/42	38.1%	Baseline	-	26/59	44.1%	Baseline	-	15/18	83.3%	Baseline	-	-
Average Program Score	104.2%				109.3%				105%				✓

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

Acknowledging the existing regulatory reality as the entire system has transitioned to full implementation of WIOA, the Berks WDB is confident that the strategic priorities and goals included in this local plan are the right ones for local employers and job-seekers alike. In particular, the priority given to meeting the challenges local employers currently face with the wave of experienced “baby-boomer” worker retirements now underway will position the WDB to meet any new metrics designed to determine the WDB’s *effectiveness in serving employers*. In particular, the emphasis that the Berks WDB will place on WIOA’s permissible use of adult and dislocated worker funds allocated to the Board for training activities associated with incumbent workers will be especially attractive to small and medium-size employers with similar needs and scarce training resources. This will facilitate a closer and more consistent engagement with these employers, thereby allowing the WDB to understand and meet their recruitment and training needs. This strategy will help proven, trained incumbents develop and grow with the companies and allow the hiring of less-skilled new hires into these attractive career pathways. As a result, the WDB’s performance will be enhanced against the more traditional employment, retention and earning metrics for eligible Adult, Dislocated and Youth job-seekers.

The Berks WDB’s commitment to continuing our proven industry sector priorities and strategies will further support attainment of negotiated measures. In particular, this commitment will help the Berks WDB understand which *key credentials* are valued by industry and which credentials are not. At the same time, the WDB will continue to develop a broader expertise in understanding and *measuring skill gains* attained through a variety of training strategies, programs and partnerships.

The Berks WDB recognizes that perhaps its biggest challenge will be building strong programs and partnerships to help the region’s disconnected young adults and under-employed young adults get sustainable career pathways to family-sustaining occupations with local employers. As mentioned above, experience has proven that this elusive population is difficult to find, to keep engaged and to stay connected with following program participation. As a result, the Berks WDB’s determination to establish a leadership role within the region is essential to achieving negotiated Youth performance measures in all six specified areas of measurement.

Finally, a candid look at the root causes of the mismatch between the needs of current employers and the skills and qualifications of the available workforce leads the Berks WDB to the inescapable conclusion that too many Berks County residents, while they were still in our elementary and secondary school systems, did not receive the education, workplace skills and career knowledge that they need to succeed in our rapidly-changing economy. This is a national, state and local problem, but we know that many other developed countries do a better job in this area – particularly in providing in-school youth (ISY) with high quality work-based learning opportunities. By expanding and sustaining local summer youth employment programs (SYEPs), the Berks County WDB will help create the conditions for our current Youth (ISY) and future Adult and Dislocated Worker job seekers to more easily navigate the inevitable labor force disruptions they will encounter in their careers and to *find and maintain* gainful employment leading to *family-sustaining earnings*. This will promote wide-spread *economic self-sufficiency in accordance with WIOA 116(b) (2) (A)*. As a result, these individuals will also more likely become life-long

learners who acquire *industry-recognized credentials* and are able to demonstrate *measurable skill gains* throughout their working careers. A local workforce with such qualities will serve as a competitive advantage for employers seeking to expand in or relocate to Berks County, the foundation of economic growth as targeted by the performance measures described in WIOA 116(b)(2)(A).

2.2. *What is the local board's strategy to work with the entities that carry out the core programs to align resources available to the local area, in order to achieve the strategic vision and goals for the local area?*

Title I Youth, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs are managed by two third-party contractors procured by the County of Berks through a competitive process planned and managed by the Berks County WDB and the County of Berks Purchasing Department. The Berks WDB *One-Stop Oversight Committee* and *Youth Committee* provide oversight and policy guidance over the course of the contract period.

Staff employed by the PA Department of Labor & Industry (L&I) Bureau of Workforce Partnership and Operations (BWPO) are located at the PA CareerLink® Berks County and provide Wagner-Peyser program services under the supervision of the Career Services Team Supervisor who in turn reports to the Administrator – PA CareerLink® Berks County.

The Berks-Schuylkill District Office of Pennsylvania's Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) is a partner in the PA CareerLink® Berks County. The District Administrator for OVR is a member of the Berks County WDB and vice-chair of the Committee on Increasing Opportunities for Individuals with Disabilities.

As described above in Section 1.4, the Berks County WDB closely collaborates with both local Career and Technical Centers (BCTC and RMCTC) and Reading Area Community College (RACC) to ensure that training programs align with industry needs and high priority occupations. All three schools are PA CareerLink® Berks County partners. In addition, the Berks County WDB COO serves on Executive Advisory Boards for both BCTC and RMCTC and reviews requests for state equipment grants, providing letters of support as appropriate. The Berks WDB COO and staff also participate on annual Perkins review committees for all three schools.

As described above in Section 1.4, the Berks County WDB and fellow *RTP* partners facilitated an innovative 2+2+2 pathway from technical high school, to community college to 4-year institutions – *The Berks Technical Academy*. RACC has partnered with the County's two high school career and technical centers - Berks Career and Technology Center (BCTC) and Reading Muhlenberg Career and Technology Center (RMCTC) - to build comprehensive Technical Academy career pathways and the associated articulation agreements for high school CTE students to earn college credit for high-end technical coursework. In effect, the Technical Academy serves as an *honors program* for qualified CTC students, allowing them to acquire up to 27 college credits at no cost prior to high school graduation. Such focused and talented students are highly

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

sought after by local employers for paid internships during the school year, while on summer break and again upon high school graduation. Once hired, Technical Academy graduates may receive financial support from their employers while they complete their Associate's Degree programs at RACC. RACC has been particularly effective in assisting qualifying students to access federal Pell grants to cover tuition costs. If the students wish to continue their technical training and education beyond RACC, they may do so at aligned 4-year institutions (e.g. Penn State – Berks) through additional articulation agreements that are part of the Technical Academy pathway.

The best practice Berks Technical Academy is the most developed, but not the only example of how the Berks WDB local board coordinates education and workforce investment activities with relevant secondary and postsecondary education programs and activities to coordinate strategies, enhance services, and avoid duplication of services. The Berks County WDB regularly partners with other local WDBs in the Commonwealth in securing competitive state and national grants, such as the *Sector Partnership National Emergency Grant (NEG)*, the Business Education Partnership Grants and the Teacher in the Workplace Grants. These funds have been effectively used from 2016 - present to develop the highly-successful CRISP comprehensive study on the regional workforce and economic impact of the Food and Beverage Processing industry sector (see Section 1.2), to support local participants in high-level occupational training, and to provide co-ordination and expansion of programs designed to educate and enhance Berks County grade 6-12 teacher and student awareness of and exposure to diverse, but realistic, education and career opportunities here in the greater Berks County region.

RACC is also the local *WIOA Title II Adult Educational and Literacy* program contractor for the Berks County Workforce Development Area. RACC's President was a long-standing member of the Berks County WDB, reflecting the primary importance of coordinating WIOA Title I and Title II program services and strategies to avoid duplication and maximize our limited local resources. Following the President's retirement at the end of Program Year 2017, RACC's Director of Career Training, Community Education & Professional Development who leads RACC's Title II program services was appointed to the WDB where she serves on the WDB's One Stop Oversight Committee. The Executive Director of one of RACC's key Title II sub-contractors, the *Literacy Council of Reading-Berks* also is a non-Board member of the Berks County WDB's *One-Stop Oversight Committee*. He also is a former President of the Pennsylvania Association for Continuing Education (PAACE) and is recognized as a statewide expert on adult education and literacy and how to coordinate Title I and Title II programs. As a result, both Committee members are well-positioned to help coordinate local Title I and Title II services and strategies with all of our PA CareerLink® Partners.

In March 2016 the Berks WDB was the lead applicant awarded a \$400,000 Innovation Grant for the *Greater Reading – Lancaster Partnership for Youth Careers* to promote career and technical education (CTE) in Berks County and Lancaster County. Berks Career and Technology Center (BCTC), Reading Muhlenberg Career and Technology Center (RMCTC) and the Lancaster County Career and Technology Center (LCCTC). The Lancaster County WDB was also a partner in this grant. Under the grant, the five partners successfully coordinated a broad arrange of

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

programs in PY2016 in both counties including 8th grade technical career explorations camps, summer work-based experience, and employer visits focused on CTE student retention and motivation.

The Berks WDB also works closely with the Berks County Intermediate Unit (BCIU) which coordinates additional educational services for Berks County's eighteen public school services within Berks County and is also represented on the Berks County WD Board's Youth Committee. The Berks Business Education Coalition (BBEC) is chaired by a local business leader and the BBEC's membership includes the County's five colleges and the eighteen public school districts as well as business leaders. The BBEC is an active partner with the Berks County WD Board on programs to facilitate employer-educator collaboration and to provide local students with valuable work-based learning opportunities throughout the County. Specifically, in PY2015 the Berks County WDB provided the BBEC with \$90,000 from the state Business Education Discretionary Grant program. The BBEC's Executive Director is a member of the Board's Youth Committee. Both the BCIU and the BBEC partner with the Berks County WDB and our 18 local school districts to promote career awareness and preparation programs including *Project Lead the Way*, STEM Academies, STEM competitions, and employer engagements geared to the many career opportunities available within the region.

In addition to the career awareness partnership initiatives described above, the Berks WDB, BCIU and BBEC have, again, come together to champion the **Career Ready Berks Alliance Pathways** initiative as a means to promote wider-scale cooperation between educators, business partners, and workforce and economic development. The purpose of the Alliance is not to dictate a "one-size-fits-all" county-wide career pathways model but, rather, to offer well-researched recommendations and supports to enhance and expand K-12 career education. Through an innovative and well-strategized model of oversight, the Alliance has brought 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 Career Ready Berks Alliance was formed in 2016. This group of regional stakeholders have been meeting regularly for over two years with the intention of strengthening and expanding collaboration among all 18 Berks County school districts, career and technical centers, postsecondary institutions, employers, workforce agencies, and other community stakeholders in order to create a countywide, self-sustaining framework that builds and supports rigorous career pathways for all learners; leverages and aligns resources; coordinates and expands communication among stakeholders; and supports regional workforce needs.

Finally, the Berks County WDB maintains a close working relationship with the Higher Education Council of Berks County whose membership includes the presidents of the County's five non-profit and public institutions for higher education. The Higher Education Council of Berks County also serves as the nominating entity for education sector representatives appointed the WDB. The Berks WDB COO also serves on the Kutztown University Business Advisory Council where he provides guidance and recommendations on programs and local labor market information (LMI).

- 2.3. *How will the local board's vision and goals align with, support, and contribute to the governor's vision and goals for the commonwealth's workforce development system, as well any the goals and strategies articulated in the regional plan?*

The Berks County WD Board's vision and goals align well with the governor's visions and five broad goals for the Commonwealth's workforce development system.

- **Establishment of Career Pathways** – The Berks WDB supports the development of career pathways, but cautions that career pathways are best nurtured within a well-established industry sector strategy as developed and promoted by the Berks WDB. In our experience, career pathways independent of a robust local industry sector too often lead to occupational dead ends for job-seekers and unfilled positions for employers. This is especially detrimental for job-seekers with barriers to employment who have much less room for recovery from ill-advised training programs. The Berks WDB's focus on the needs of employers, strong sector strategies and sustained summer-employment programs for in-school youth all emphasize the mutual benefits of career pathways leading to high-priority occupations within expanding industry sectors. The Berks WDB COO serves as a founding member of the newly-formed *Berks County Career Pathways Alliance* coordinated by the BCIU.
- **Expanding the Pipeline of Workers for Targeted Industry Sectors** – There is nearly 100% alignment from the governor's goal and the Berks WDB emphasis on Local Sector Strategies and Priorities described above in Section 1.3.
- **Increasing Opportunities for Youth to Participate in Work-Based Learning** - Here again, there is significant alignment between the governor's goal and the Berks County WDB's priority for the expansion and sustaining of Summer Youth Employment Programs for In-School Youth (ISY). We also will continue our increased local emphasis on work-based training and pre-apprenticeship programs for disconnected and under-employed young adults. However, local employers outside of the construction sector remain reluctant to adopt the registered apprenticeship models actively promoted by the State Plan. The Berks WDB understands the proven value of apprenticeships and will seek to promote adoption over time.
- **Engaging Employers Directly to Ensure Closing of the Skills Gap.** Engagement of employers, particularly small to medium-size employers in key sectors like manufacturing is best accomplished at that local level through frequent and sustained personal contacts. The two priorities of the Berks County WDB that focus on supporting the needs of employers through funding incumbent worker training as authorized by WIOA and our emphasis on sector strategies support this goal. In addition, many Berks County employers are fully engaged in the Career Ready Berks Alliance Network to support career awareness and growing and sustaining summer youth employment programs.
- **Strengthened Data Sharing to Understand Outcomes** – This is less of a priority at the local level, but the Berks WDB looks forward to working with state initiatives in this area.

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

2.4. *What are the local levels of performance that have been negotiated with the governor and chief elected officials?*

How will the local board's goals relate to the achievement of these measures?

As described in Sections 2.1 and 2.3, the Berks County Workforce Development Board (WDB) goals are aligned with the broad WIOA goals of placement in employment or education/training, credential attainment, retention in employment/education/training, and effectiveness in servicing employers.

During the first year of WIOA implementation in PY2015, the WDB began to transition the year-round youth program to serve primarily out-of-school youth, in alignment with WIOA emphasis on serving this group. Beginning in program year 2016, the WDB used WIOA youth funding exclusively to serve out-of-school youth through programs that offer GED and access to post-secondary education and training through individual training accounts, work-based learning opportunities tied to employer needs, and follow-up services that engage youth with continued supportive services and practical training (budgeting, etc.) that are aimed at ensuring their continued success after program exit.

Focusing on the manufacturing, healthcare and construction sectors is meant to ensure that job-seeker customers of the PA CareerLink® Berks County are provided access to and information concerning the most promising jobs in the county, while benefiting employer customers through recruitment efforts targeted towards job-seekers meeting their skill requirements. This focus is translated at the PA CareerLink® Berks County to services such as individualized job development for adult and dislocated workers and the extensive use of work-based training to bring the job seeker and employer together. This two-pronged approach is meant to increase the likelihood of employment and retention for the job seeker while meeting the hiring needs of the employer customer.

The WDB negotiated PY2018 local levels of performance for the federal measures are found in Appendix A.

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

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

Please see Appendix C: Organizational Chart.

Local Workforce Development System

The Berks County Workforce Development Board (WDB) was appointed effective July 1, 2015 by the Berks County Board of Commissioners. The Board continues the work begun in 1999 by its predecessor organization the Berks County Workforce Investment Board (WIB). Federal

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

funding under the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014* provides most of the financial support for Board activities and programs.

The purpose of the Berks County Workforce Development Board is to identify the long-term, strategic workforce development needs of the community; propose strategies to meet those needs; set priorities; build partnerships to align resources in support of those strategies; test specific initiatives to advance those ends; and measure and evaluate results. We support the development and maintenance of a skilled and competitive workforce in alignment with the broader economic development efforts to attract, retain and grow business in Berks County.

WDB members are unpaid members of the local community. By federal law and state policy, representatives of the local business community must constitute a majority of the Board's membership. Local labor organizations, community-based organizations, economic and community development entities and educational institutions are also represented on the Board. The Board normally holds public meetings once each calendar quarter and members also serve on Committees which meet regularly. Board Committees may also include non-Board members with particular workforce development experience and expertise.

The Board designates the operator(s) and oversees the operation of the PA CareerLink® Berks County (one stop delivery system).

Berks County is a single-county Workforce Development Area. The Chief Elected Official is the elected Chair of the Berks County Board of Commissioners, a body consisting of three Commissioners, elected for four-year terms as specified by the Third Class County code. The Berks County Board of Commissioners has entered into a partnership with the WDB for the planning and governance of workforce activities authorized under WIOA with respective roles and responsibilities delineated in the partnership agreement effective July 1, 2016. In general, the WDB is responsible for the administration of these activities and acts as a convener and facilitator for broader workforce issues in the county and collaborates with neighboring boards on issues of importance that cross county borders or have mutual benefit to their respective workforces.

WDB staff are County of Berks employees reporting to the Chief Operating Officer/Director of Workforce Development, who in turn reports to the full WDB and administratively to the County's Chief Administrative Officer. Staff assist the board in the development of its strategic vision and plans and manages the implementation of board initiatives; develop and facilitate community partnerships which advance the goals of the board; maintain relationships with Federal, Commonwealth, and other funding sources; and assures the flow of information to assist the board in oversight and decision-making processes.

The County has elected not to designate a Fiscal Agent for funds received under WIOA and therefore this role is maintained at the County level.

The Board is composed of the required mix of leaders from business, labor, education, community-based organizations, and economic development entities as defined in WIOA and

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

subsequent Federal and Commonwealth guidance. The Board meets quarterly to approve policy and conduct other high-level functions. The “heavy-lifting” work of the board is conducted in the committees of the board:

- *Executive Committee* which has responsibility, directly or through delegation to the Chief Operating Officer, for setting Board operating procedures and Board management issues; making recommendations to the Chief Elected Official on Board membership; tracking, through the Committee structure as appropriate, implementation of the Board’s plans; maintenance of required working relationships with the Chief Elected Official, State and Federal authorities, and the Pennsylvania Workforce Development Association; setting broad policy direction for the Board; coordinating the work of the various committees; and Performance Appraisal of the Chief Operating Officer. Executive Committee meetings are advertised in advanced through public notice and allot time on the agenda for public comment.
- *Finance Committee* reviews budgets for the broad allocation and distribution of funds and make recommendations to the full Board, as well as identifying and obtaining additional and/or more flexible funding to advance the Board’s priorities.
- *Policy, Planning and Priorities Committee* has primary responsibility for working with Board staff to develop strategic plans for review and approval by the full Board. In particular, the Committee will develop and periodically review the Board’s local plan(s) to ensure alignment with federal guidelines under WIOA, state policy and the Board’s priorities. The Committee will provide input into other required plans, including WIOA regional plans.

The Committee conducts analysis of the current state of the local labor market: identifies and analyzes gaps; recommends priorities and strategies for Board action and support; and identifies opportunities for future priorities and strategies in need of further exploration. The Committee regularly reviews and updates the Board’s industry sector strategies and priorities in conjunction with the Training and Industry Partnership Committee and makes recommendations for approval by the Board. The Committee has the principal responsibility for guiding and tracking implementation of the Board’s plans, including development and maintenance of alliances, partnership and key working relationships – particularly those leading to regional planning efforts.

The Committee coordinates closely with the Board’s Youth Committee (which has similar related planning responsibilities for youth programs overseen by the Board) and incorporates input from the Youth Committee into the overall planning process. The Committee assists in the development of local and regional economic development, community development and education and literacy plans as appropriate.

The Committee develops and reviews general Board policies, including the Board’s By-Laws and governance agreements as required.

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

- *Committee on Increasing Opportunities for Individuals with Disabilities* is a new standing committee recommended by a working group made up of Board members and non-Board industry and community representatives that reviewed the impact of Board activities on individuals with disabilities throughout PY2016. The focus of this committee is to increase the percentage of individuals with a disability in the workforce by offering meaningful employment opportunities through strong partnerships with businesses in greater Reading and Berks County.
- *One-Stop Oversight Committee* has primary responsibility for discharging the Board’s responsibilities toward the “one-stop” system. These include making recommendations to the Board on:
 - the selection and retention of the One-Stop Operator; and
 - the approval of the Memorandum of Understanding between the One-Stop Partner organizations; and any major modifications to this agreement; and
 - the selection and retention of the Business Services subcontractor; and
 - the selection and retention of the Employment Advancement and Retention Network (EARN) subcontractor; and
 - policies integral to PA CareerLink® Operations as appropriate (e.g. On-the-Job Training, Priority of Service policies, etc.)

This Committee regularly reviews usage and performance of the PA CareerLink® Berks County system through performance information, meetings and consultation with the One-Stop Operator management, and monitoring by Board staff. Through this process the committee may, from time to time, make recommendations to the One-Stop Operator on changes or improvements.

- The *Youth Committee* assists in the development of those portions of the Board’s plan which pertain to youth and young adults; recommends to the Board priorities for the expenditure of Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act youth funding; recommends selection of youth and young adult service providers; and provides coordination and oversight of youth and young adult workforce development activities. In addition, the Youth Committee serves as a convening and coordinating body for larger community partnerships for youth and young adult workforce development.
- The *Training and Industry Partnership Committee* is charged with understanding employer training needs, particularly relative to key regional industry sectors and with making recommendations to the Board to meet those needs. This includes oversight of any Industry Partnerships (IPs) in which the Board may be engaged, particularly as they relate to incumbent worker training activities and funding. In addition, this Committee will review progress on performance on local and regional grants related to industry training needs and priorities. This group will assist with the development of regional sector-based training strategies to include career pathways and the identification of high priority occupations.

The Committee may also make recommendations to the Board regarding training provider qualifications or significant gaps in training capacity. The Committee will make recommendations regarding Board training policies in coordination with the One-Stop Oversight Committee as appropriate. The Committee may also be asked to review training vendor performance.

Equal Opportunity Officer

John W. Moser
Berks County Workforce Development Board
1920 Kutztown Road, Suite G
Reading, PA 19604
610-988-1358
jwmoser@countyofberks.com

- 3.2. *What are the programs included in the local workforce delivery system and how will the local board work with the entities carrying out all workforce programs to support service alignment?*

Please see Appendix B: Program Partner/Provider List

The WDB ensures the workforce-related needs of employers, workers, and job seekers in Berks County are met, to the maximum extent possible with available resources.

The WDB will, at a minimum:

- In cooperation with the CEO, design and approve the PA CareerLink® Berks County. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - Adequate, sufficient, and accessible one-stop center,
 - Sufficient numbers and types of providers of career and training services (including eligible providers with expertise in assisting individuals with disabilities and eligible providers with expertise in assisting adults in need of adult education and literacy activities),
 - A holistic system of supporting services, and
 - One competitively procured one-stop operator.
- In collaboration with the CEO, designate through a competitive process, oversee, monitor, implement corrective action, and, if applicable, terminate the one-stop operator,
- Approve annual budget allocations for operation of the PA CareerLink® Berks County,
- Help the one-stop operator recruit operational Partners and negotiate MOUs with new Partners,
- Leverage additional funding for the PA CareerLink® Berks County to operate and expand one-stop customer activities and resources, and

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

- Review and evaluate performance of the one-stop operator.

WDB Staff specific responsibilities include, at a minimum:

- Provide operational and grant-specific guidance to the one-stop operator,
- Investigate and resolve elevated customer complaints and grievance issues,
- Prepare regular reports and recommendations to the WDB, and
- Oversee negotiations and maintenance of MOUs with one-stop Partners.

Three standing committees of the WDB focus to varying degrees on partner collaboration and service alignment within the local workforce delivery system:

Policy, Planning and Priorities Committee

The Board's Policy, Planning and Priorities Committee has primary responsibility for working with Board staff to develop strategic plans for review and approval by the full Board. In particular, the Committee will develop and periodically review the Board's local plan(s) in alignment with federal guidelines under WIOA, state policy and the Board's priorities. The Committee will provide input into other required plans, including WIOA regional plans.

The Committee conducts analysis of the current state of the local labor market: identifies and analyzes gaps; recommends priorities and strategies for Board action and support; and identifies opportunities for future priorities and strategies in need of further exploration. The Committee regularly reviews and updates the Board's industry sector strategies and priorities in conjunction with the Training and Industry Partnership Committee and makes recommendations for approval by the Board. The Committee has the principal responsibility for guiding and tracking implementation of the Board's plans, including development and maintenance of alliances, partnership and key working relationships – particularly those leading to regional planning efforts.

The Committee coordinates closely with the Board's Youth Committee (which has similar related planning responsibilities for youth programs overseen by the Board) and incorporates input from the Youth Committee into the overall planning process. The Committee assists in the development of local and regional economic development, community development and education and literacy plans as appropriate.

The Committee develops and reviews general Board policies, including the Board's By-Laws and governance agreements as required.

One-Stop Oversight

This Committee has primary responsibility for discharging the Board's responsibilities toward the "one-stop" system. These include making recommendations to the Board on:

- the selection and retention of the One-Stop Operator; and
- the approval of the Memorandum of Understanding between the One-Stop Partner organizations; and any major modifications to this agreement; and

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

- the selection and retention of the Business Services subcontractor; and
- the selection and retention of the Employment Advancement and Retention Network (EARN) subcontractor; and
- policies integral to PA CareerLink® Operations as appropriate (e.g. On-the-Job Training, Priority of Service policies, etc.)

This Committee regularly reviews usage and performance of the one-stop system through performance information, meetings and consultation with the One-Stop Operator management, and monitoring by Board staff. Through this process the committee may, from time to time, make recommendations to the One-Stop Operator on changes or improvements.

Youth

The Youth Committee assists in the development of those portions of the Board's plan which pertain to youth and young adults; recommends to the Board priorities for the expenditure of Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act youth funding; recommends selection of youth and young adult service providers; and provides coordination and oversight of youth and young adult workforce development activities. In addition, the Youth Committee serves as a convening and coordinating body for larger community partnerships for youth and young adult workforce development.

The one-stop Memorandum of Understanding is executed between the WDB, PA CareerLink® Berks County One-Stop Partners and the Chief Elected Official of the County of Berks. The Memorandum of Understanding is developed to confirm the understanding of these parties regarding the operation and management of the PA CareerLink® Berks County. Further detail concerning the governance of the one-stop can be found in section 4.1.

Workforce services available to special populations include:

Veterans and covered persons are given priority of service. We notify all visitors of Priority of Service through posters at our entrance. At all points of service delivery, we distribute flyers in English and Spanish that fulfill several functions: 1) describe who is eligible for the entitlement of Priority of Service, 2) list all the USDOL programs and services at the PA CareerLink® Berks County, and 3) provide contact information for each program. When the veteran/covered persons apply for positions on Job Gateway, they are identified with an American Flag, enabling staff to prioritize those referrals. Walk-in veterans and covered persons verbally disclose eligibility. Program areas request veteran status on their applications or enrollment forms. All veterans/covered persons who attend our Welcome/RESEA Orientation receive an initial intake and assessment. Veterans and covered persons decide whether they are interested in WIOA Individualized Career Services and/or Training Services. Veteran/covered persons are at the head of the group to be scheduled for WIOA registration and case management appointments. When applications for WIOA Individual Training Accounts are reviewed, those from veterans and covered persons are reviewed first. Staff may also refer a veteran to the OVR or other social service agencies for help with disabilities or more comprehensive needs.

Individuals that are basic skills-deficient have their educational needs met by the Adult Basic Education Title II provider, Reading Area Community College (RACC) or their subcontractor, The Literacy Council of Reading-Berks. Services include a CASAS assessment, Test for Adult Basic Literacy (TABE), Adult Basic Education (ABE), English as a Second Language (ESL), math and English remediation courses, as well as General Equivalency Diploma (GED) classes.

Individuals who receive public assistance are helped through the Employment, Advancement, and Retention Network (EARN) for employment services. EARN staff, services and clients are located at the PA CareerLink® Berks County. An income maintenance caseworker from the Berks County Assistance Office (BCAO) is located at the PA CareerLink® Berks County to provide orientations to BCAO-referred “A Project” clients, providing case management and advising them of the requirements to maintain eligibility for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits. The income maintenance caseworker also provides information to TANF-eligible clients in the Young Adult program, which is also located at the PA CareerLink® Berks County.

Low-income individuals may access Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) home assistance and weatherization programs that help eligible families make minor home repairs and/or reduce energy consumption and overall energy bills through the installation of cost-effective energy conservation measures. The Berks Community Action Program, Inc. administers these programs in the local area.

Older individuals who may be eligible under Title V are referred to the Senior Community Services Employment Program (SCSEP) offered by AARP. In addition, the PA CareerLink® Berks County often serves as a host agency.

Returning citizens receive guidance and counseling to prepare for employment through Berks Connections/Pretrial Services (BCPS). Staff from the PA CareerLink® Berks County volunteer at BCPS job fairs to assist returning citizens to prepare for successful participation in the event. BCPS runs a “Tips for Job Seekers with Criminal Records” workshop at the PA CareerLink® semiannual job fairs. The PA CareerLink® Berks County will run dedicated “How to Identify Your Skills” sessions upon request for referrals from Berks County Domestic Relations Services. The Board is also working to build stronger partnerships with local Probation Offices, the Warden, and the Clerk of Court Officer as representatives of the President Judge. The Board is reaching out to the Berks County Criminal Justice Advisory Board (CJAB) to better understand the needs of incarcerated individuals prior to their release. The WDB, through a competitive process spanning Spring of 2019, has committed to fund the BCPS operated Rebuilding Reentrants and Reading (R3) through the 2019 program year. This program was originally funded through the U.S. Department of Labor. This registered pre-apprenticeship program offers an opportunity for individuals with a criminal history to acquire skills in the construction trades that lead to gainful employment and assists with the renovation of the City of Reading's most blighted neighborhoods.

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

BCPS partners with Habitat for Humanity of Berks County (HFHBC) and the Reading Muhlenberg Career and Technology Center (RMCTC) to provide the three components of the training; classroom instruction at RMCTC, hands on learning on site at HFHBC properties and an employment focused cognitive curriculum delivered by BCPS staff. BCPS developed this innovative model which is based on best practices of reentry programming and adult career and technical education. The combination of best practices - classroom learning, hands-on experience, and cognitive interventions - not only improves employment outcomes for participants, it significantly reduces recidivism as well.

The training portion of R3 occurs over the course of 8-week cohorts. BCPS provides case management, mentoring, and support for one year following graduation. The comprehensive case management includes financial literacy and coaching as well as job search, placement, and retention support. The Associated Builders and Contractors, Inc., Keystone (ABC Keystone). is the Registered Apprenticeship sponsor for this pre-apprenticeship program. Participation in R3 gives graduates 6 months credit toward one of ABC Keystone's 7 apprenticeship programs.

Individuals with disabilities are provided equal access to services at the PA CareerLink® Berks County. Staff receives Equal Opportunity training semiannually. Customers choose whether or not to disclose disability information. Appropriate referrals are made to the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) for evaluation and OVR has an office at the PA CareerLink® Berks County. Eligible OVR customers receive multiple individualized services such as, diagnostic testing, vocational counseling and guidance, vocational evaluation, restoration, occupational training, and job placement. Under WIOA, OVR provides both eligible and potentially eligible youth with pre-employment transition services (PETS) to better prepare these students for life after high school. PETS include paid work experience, job shadowing, workplace readiness training, and career guidance. (The WDB partners with OVR to provide work experience to high school eligible youth through a summer youth work experience program.) OVR also provides multiple services to the business community designed to assist with onboarding of pre-screened qualified employees with disabilities. OVR business representatives are a vital part of our Employer Outreach Team.

Underemployed individuals are referred to Welcome Orientation, where they receive labor market information, resume guidance, and a full description of our Basic Career Services, Individual Career Services, and Training Services. Individuals complete an initial assessment and choose their next steps by completing an Initial Plan.

Unemployed individuals are identified through Rapid Response activities and RESEA claimant lists. Individuals are referred to Welcome Orientation, where they receive labor market information, resume guidance, and a full description of our Basic Career Services, Individual Career Services, and Training Services. Individuals complete an initial assessment and choose their next steps with their Initial Plan. Trade Adjustment Act (TAA) dislocated workers participate in a Benefits Rights Interview (BRI) meeting and subsequent Enrollment/Assessment meetings to develop an Individual Employment Plan to pursue employment.

Migrant or Seasonal Farm Workers (MSFWs) access services through PathStone. They receive the full range of employment services, benefits and protections, including counseling, testing, and job and training referrals. PathStone has a staff member in the PA CareerLink® center one day a week.

3.3. *How will the local board work with the entities carrying out core programs to:*

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

It is the policy of the WDB that no individual receive program services until the applicable eligibility requirements for said program have been documented and verified by appropriate workforce staff. This ensures that only those individuals for whom funds are targeted receive services.

Definitions:

- Verification means to confirm eligibility requirements through the examination of documents or speaking to the representatives of authorized agencies.
- Documentation means to maintain physical evidence, which is obtained during the verification process, in participant files. Documentation is used as the basis to verify eligibility.
- Self-Certification is a statement signed by an individual used to verify eligibility items requiring documentation that may cause undue hardship for the applicant to obtain or that may be unavailable due to loss of the documentation for the following reasons:
 - Natural or man-made disaster.
 - Eviction from residence resulting in a loss of supporting documentation.
 - Individual is fleeing or has fled an abusive or untenable home situation.
- Telephone/Electronic Verification is the verification of documentation through a telephone contact or email contact with a recognized governmental or social service agency. This form of verification is to be used as the last step prior to the use of self-certification.
- Document Inspection Verification is the verification of documentation through inspection of a document when the document can either not be copied or copying of the document is not possible.

Eligibility Determination

1. Eligibility Determination Prior to Program Enrollment. The WDB administers programs from multiple funding streams with varied eligibility requirements. Under all circumstances program eligibility must be verified by the appropriate staff prior to enrollment of a participant. Failure to do so may result in contractor disallowed costs.

Eligibility to receive services under WIOA Title IV may only be determined by a qualified OVR Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor. OVR Counselors work with customers to develop an Individual Plan for Employment, providing services necessary to meet their specific vocational goal. Examples of services include diagnostic assessment and evaluation, counseling and guidance, restoration, training and placement services. OVR often collaborates with other workforce program partners to provide services, outreach and

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

assessment. Training for OVR staff is at the discretion of the local OVR District Administrator. OVR staff supervision and direction is the responsibility of the local OVR District Administrator.

2. Eligibility Documentation. Documentation required to determine eligibility is defined by the funding stream. If not defined by the funding stream or in cases where the funding stream is not clear the WDB will define the documentation requirement. Documentation requirements will be made available by the WDB to program operators as applicable to operator responsibilities.
3. Eligibility WDB Review. The WDB is the final arbitrator of eligibility verification. All WIOA Title I funding applications are reviewed and approved by WDB staff prior to program enrollment.

Self-Certification

1. Allowable Use. Self-Certification is only to be used as a last resort and will only be accepted as verification of eligibility for the following elements:
 - a. WIOA Title I Adult
 - i. Homeless
 - b. WIOA Title I Dislocated Worker
 - i. Date of Dislocation
 - ii. Displaced Homemaker
 - iii. Reemployment Opportunity is Poor/Unlikely to Return to Work
 - iv. Permanently or Temporarily Laid Off as a Consequence of the Disaster
 - c. WIOA Title I Youth
 - i. English Language Learner
 - ii. Homeless
 - iii. In/Aged Out of Foster Care System
 - iv. Offender
 - v. Pregnant or Parenting
 - vi. Requires Additional Assistance
 - vii. Runaway
 - viii. School Status at Time of Registration
2. Random Sampling. The use of self-certification will be monitored by the WDB. The use of self-certification to verify eligibility will be recorded by WDB staff at the time of the eligibility review for inclusion on a monthly report. 20% of self-certifications each month or all if less than five will be reviewed for use as the last resort of documentation for an eligibility element. Review may include an interview with the case manager determining eligibility, a search for applicable documentation not already in the file, and an interview with the participant. Failure to properly use self-certification may result in contractor disallowed costs.

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

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

Program co-enrollment where permissible and practical will be supported through the active cultivation of a referral system among the one-stop Partners. The WDB through the One-Stop Oversight Committee and regular WDB staff technical assistance will ensure one-stop Partners:

- Familiarize themselves with the basic eligibility and participation requirements, as well as with the available services and benefits offered, for each of the Partners' programs represented in the PA CareerLink® Berks County,
- Develop materials summarizing their program requirements and making them available for Partners and customers,
- Develop and utilize intake, eligibility determination, assessment, and registration processes,
- Provide substantive referrals to customers who are eligible for supplemental and complementary services and benefits under partner programs,
- Regularly evaluate ways to improve the referral process, including the use of customer satisfaction surveys,
- Commit to robust and ongoing communication required for an effective referral process, and
- Commit to actively follow up on the results of referrals.

Reading Area Community College (RACC, Title II) and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR, Title IV) are long standing partners of the PA CareerLink® Berks County and are represented on the Board. The referral strategies discussed above will be applicable to these partner programs. The one-stop operator and partners will also develop and implement a strategic outreach plan to market all one-stop programs.

Reading Area Community College (RACC) is the Title II contractor with the PA Dept. of Education; RACC subcontracts with the Literacy Council of Reading-Berks for adult literacy services.

The Literacy Counsel's CASAS competency-based assessment is held the first Monday of the month and is a 3-hour assessment. Welcome Orientation is now able to directly refer to the CASAS competency-based assessment. The participants who are assessed through CASAS will then be referred to the Literacy Council's English as a Second Language Class at the PA CareerLink® office. This class will run two days a week (Tues. & Thurs.) for a total of four hours a week.

The Literacy Council will assist customers to prepare for the WorkKeys® assessments every Wednesday. WorkKeys® assessments are done every Friday.

The TABE 11/12 is very staff intensive. The Young Adult team will provide 3 – 4 staff to assist. The Literacy Council's TABE Reading & Reading locator are held once a month on Thursdays and are open to partner referrals. The TABE Math & Math locator are held once a month on Fridays and are open to partner referrals. Career Services Team customers need only the Reading assessment for referral to training providers. EARN Team customers will need both the Reading and Math for referral for GED services.

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

The Literacy Council will hold a two-days a week, 2-hour a day (Mon. & Fri.) class at the PA CareerLink® office covering basic math and basic reading (ABE). This will be an open entry, open exit class. The target audience is young adults who do not assess at a level enabling them to enroll in our Young Adult program's GED class as well as adults from the general population. The curriculum will run on a 4-week rotation. The instruction will enable attendees to move on to a GED class or pass an employer's pre-employment assessment. Adult Basic Education (ABE) classes are not currently in session due to participants not needing the service at this time. When a referral is made to ABE, contact will be made to the Literacy Council to begin classes again.

Career Pathways have been developed in conjunction with designated Berks WDB staff through teamwork with our one-stop Business Services Team, Title I and Title II staff, educators and local employers to determine high priority career opportunities in the Berks County Workforce Development Area. This connection helps ensure that our Career Pathways are well-grounded in key local industry sectors (see Section 1.3) and our local (and regional) high priority occupation (HPO) needs. Care is taken to identify "on ramps" for customers depending on their skills levels, training needs, etc. These pathways are then explained to the customers. A viable education and training plan is created, focusing on raising basic literacy skills, building employability skills, and developing sound study skills (in the case of a student pursuing post-secondary training).

Going forward, Title II staff and local educators are now positioned to better contextualize these skills as much as possible to better prepare the students for their specific on ramps. For example, the Title II staff may provide an LPN bridge program or a manufacturing math curriculum. To expedite postsecondary training, customers may co-enroll in certain trainings (i.e., enroll in welding training while also attending adult literacy classes to brush up math skills). The title II provider may offer non-traditional class hours to accommodate adults attending daytime post-secondary training or refer students to Pennsylvania's Distance Learning Project.

The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation is the sole WIOA Title IV provider of programs under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. In that role, OVR staff provide technical assistance regarding the provision of disability related services to one-stop staff and partners. The vocational rehabilitation program is mandated to provide vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities based on the program's authorizing statute. Eligible OVR customers receive multiple services from qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors that may include but not be limited to; diagnostic, vocational counseling and guidance, vocational evaluation, restoration, training, job placement and pre-employment training services for eligible and potentially eligible high school students with disabilities. OVR also provides multiple services to the business community designed to assist businesses with onboarding pre-screened qualified employees with disabilities.

The WDB sets aside WIOA Title I funds for occupational and work-based training by funding stream. Additional Rapid Response training funds are available for dislocated workers – if exhausted the WDB requests additional rapid response funds from the PA Department of Labor &

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

Industry. The WDB, along with the Lehigh and Lancaster boards was awarded a Strategic Innovation Grant from the state for PY2017. The Berks portion of the award (\$55,000) will be targeted to under-employed adults, ex-offenders, and other individuals with barriers – supplementing WIOA adult and youth funds set aside for training. The WDB will continue to search for alternative funding sources to supplement adult and youth training funds.

The career pathways model was introduced with the Sector Partnership NEG (see Section 2.2) funding for Individual Training Accounts and On-the-Job Training. Based on the initial enrollment in an ITA training program or OJT occupation, customers are provided with a comprehensive career pathway for that career, showing the occupation where they started on the pathway through to significantly higher positions that could be obtained with additional training and/or experience. This is incorporated into their Individual Employment Plan/Individual Service Strategy. Customers benefit from understanding how they can progress in their career areas beyond the initial training they receive. Pathways were created by WDB staff or Business Services Team members. Current career pathways include career areas such as Auto Diesel Technician, Building Property Maintenance, CDL-Transportation, Health Services, Industrial Maintenance Technician, Manufacturing Production Operations, and Information Technology.

3.4. *What strategies will be implemented in the local area to improve business/employer engagement that:*

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

The Berks WDB believes that recruiting and retaining the right local business leaders to serve on the WDB is the most important factor in sustaining the engagement of employers, including small employers and employers in in-demand sectors or who employ workers in high priority occupations. This strategy is reflected in the diversity and positive contributions of the WDBs seventeen business sector representatives. The WDB's six manufacturing employer representatives on the Board range from the County's top HR executive for the largest employer with over 7,000 local employees to the HR manager of a small urban firm employing less than 50 full-time employees. The urgent and specific needs of our rapidly-expanding Construction sector are represented by the owner of one of the County's premier mechanical contractors as well as by two experienced joint labor-management registered apprenticeship leaders for the IBEW Local 743 and for the Plumbers Union Local 690. The County's second largest employer is a regional health system represented on the WDB by its top HR executive and the President of the region's other health system is also on the WDB - helping us understand and respond to the region's rapidly-changing healthcare delivery system. With the WDB's continued emphasis on the *Agriculture/Food Production* and *Transportation & Logistics* sectors, members with specialized experience in these areas serve on the WDB as well. Other key business sectors represented on the Berks WDB include *Financial Services* and *Business & Professional Services*. The *Greater Reading Chamber Alliance (GRCA)* serves as the nominating entity for the Berks WDB and has been instrumental in identifying and recruiting an excellent cross-section of business representation on the WDB.

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

The Berks County WDB has also been successful in assisting local eligible employers engage with RACC and Kutztown University's Small Business Development Center (KU SBDC) to access WEDnetPA reimbursement funding for qualifying higher-technology incumbent worker training needs. In 2018-2019, preliminary WEDnet data indicates that 39 local employers were awarded over \$298,300 from this valuable program to help offset the costs of training and upskilling over 1,232 employees.

As described in Section 2.1, a key emphasis of the Berks WDB will be placed on assisting local employers with good jobs in key industries further develop the skills of their incumbent workers. A major challenge will be to prioritize sources of funding beyond the state Next Generation Industry Partnership and WEDnetPA funding which has been too little and too unreliable from budget year to budget year for long-term planning and continuous improvement. Beginning in PY2017, the Board has taken advantage of the permissible use of adult and dislocated worker funds allocated to the Board for training activities associated with incumbent workers. This focus on incumbent worker training will be especially attractive to small and medium-size employers with similar needs and scarce training resources. The strategy will help proven, trained incumbents develop and grow with the companies and allow the hiring of less-skilled new hires into these attractive career pathways. Many of these new hires will need assistance from other WDB-sponsored programs (e.g. OJTs) in order to take advantage of these proven career opportunities

The Berks WDB collaborates closely with economic development partners such as *the Greater Reading Chamber Alliance (GRCA)* on an ongoing basis to plan and sponsor activities that facilitate annual employer engagement in school-to-work activities. For example, in October 2016, the second annual *Berks Manufacturing Day* was held at RACC and offered the public the opportunity to meet with representatives from 20 diverse local advanced manufacturing workplaces. In March 2017, over 300 high school juniors and seniors from twenty area high schools attended the third annual *Berks Young Leadership Conference – Building Tomorrow's Leaders Today* at Penn State – Berks where they were given the opportunity to network with dozens of local business leaders and explore topics of leadership and career preparation. Also in PY2016, the WDB supported the County's first annual "What's So Cool about Manufacturing?" video contest sponsored by the local Manufacturers Resource Center (MRC) which paired 19 area middle schools with a similar number of local manufacturing employers. This highly successful project culminated in an awards ceremony and celebration attended by over 600 students, educators, parents and employers. In PY2017, the WDB will be providing funding to the MRC through our current PA Business Education Partnership (BEP) grant award to double the number of local middle schools and employers participating the programs' second year.

The WDB also works with the Berks Business Education (BBEC) in support of the annual *Berks County Students Interacting with Business* project. In September 2016, this project included 26 local employers hosting facility tours for nearly 3,803 high school freshmen from 16 area high schools. The WDB and BBEC have worked closely with local school districts to expand career-targeted industry internships for high school students. In PY2017, the WDB is providing the

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

BBEC with funds from the BEP grant to support and expand formal internship programs and raise participation to 12 of the County's 18 school districts.

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

The Berks County local workforce development system has proven that it can adjust to the changing needs of local businesses as local conditions change. From 2010-2014, much of the work of the Berks County WDB focused on the unique needs of unemployed and under-employed workers during a time of high unemployment and general labor surpluses. During this time period, most employers had few open positions and high retention rates. Beginning in late 2014, the Berks WDB identified a dramatic shift underway to a general labor shortage in our local region and the priorities and services of the Berks County local workforce system shifted accordingly. As just one specific example, PA CareerLink® Berks County brought back its popular semi-annual Job Fair in October 2014 and has organized ten subsequent job fairs. Participation in the job fairs during this time period has grown from 50 employers to over 90 employers, most seeking to fill a large variety of open positions.

Over the years and across the business cycle, the PA CareerLink® Berks County Business Services Team (BST) has established a reputation as a trusted partner with local employers. The region's growing shortage of qualified candidates for critical and "opportunity" occupations is especially acute and local employers need help. While some of the current skills shortage results from the long, steady cyclical recovery from the Great Recession of 2009-2010, an underlying wave of baby-boomer retirements will drive continuing shortages even if regional economic growth stalls. Our employers have never seen anything like this in the past and the Berks County WDB will play a crucial role in continuing to develop and implement long-term solutions along with our Business Services Team (BST) and local partners.

In order to avoid "employer fatigue" from multiple outreach activities, in late 2015 the PA CareerLink® Berks County and Berks County WDB formed an Employer Outreach Team that meets regularly to share information, coordinate employer outreach, maximize available resources, and tailor responses to the specific needs of individual employers. This team is comprised of individuals from Business Services, EARN, Young Adult, OVR and the WDB who come together monthly to discuss and share business/employer intelligence. The goals of the team are to ensure employers receive a consistent message from the team members, that employer visits are coordinated to maximize outreach efforts, diminish employer program fatigue, and to maximize job seeker placements through the sharing of hiring information.

Rapid Response is also another important avenue of business engagement here in Berks County. Our Rapid Response team's proactive and coordinated efforts include access to Pennsylvania's economic development assistance resources, such as helping businesses that are at risk of closing to keep their doors open, as well as helping employers reduce the size of, or prevent a layoff.

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

It is important to note that the state-assigned Rapid Response representative works with the PA CareerLink® Berks County BST to identify the labor needs of new and existing employers. During layoff events, BST representatives often attend initial fact-finding meetings to learn about the dislocating workforce and identify suitable new employment opportunities for that group. Knowledge of the skill sets of the available dislocated workers is valuable to the BSTs in helping them to market to those employers who are hiring. Business Service Team members also assist the Rapid Response staff to coordinate dedicated job fairs for large groups of dislocated workers with the goal of returning the dislocated workers to suitable new employment as soon as possible.

Beginning in PY2016, the Berks WDB approved and implemented a pro-active Employment Retention/Layoff Aversion strategy to support local employers and incumbent workers in our top priority advanced manufacturing sector (see Section 1.3) As a result of this strategy, the Berks WDB received Rapid Response Additional Funds in the amount of \$50,000 to be used solely for the purpose of incumbent worker training. Based on the success of this initial employment retention strategy implementation, the Berks WDB allocated WIOA Title I funds in the amount of \$100,000 as a 1:1 company matching subsidy to continue incumbent worker training during PY2018 in support of the Berks County manufacturing employer base.

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

Berks County WDB has a proven track record of coordinating workforce development programs with regional economic development partners. For example, in 2015, the Berks County WDB worked closely with local RTP Partners (see Section 1.2) to launch an updated version (2.0) of the award-winning *Careers in 2 Years* public awareness campaign in support of the County's many "opportunity occupations" open to qualified Career and Technical school graduates as our local good producing industries.

Reflecting its historically strong reputation for local workforce development expertise and analysis and the importance that the partners placed on workforce and talent, the Berks County WDB has been assigned the leadership role in developing RTP's Workforce and Talent Development strategies. In 2016, the COO of the Berks WDB was elected co-chair of the Berks County *Ride to Prosperity* project which will continue to coordinate all of the regional economic development partners to efforts and resources in support of workforce and talent development initiatives.

The RTP partners are:

- The Greater Reading Chamber Alliance (GRCA):
 - The Greater Berks Development Fund (GBDF)
 - The Greater Reading Economic Partnership (GREP)
 - The Greater Reading Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GRCCI)
- The Berks County Industrial Development Authority (Berks County IDA)
- The City of Reading

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

- The Berks County Planning Commission
- The Greater Reading Convention and Visitors Bureau
- The Berks County Workforce Development Board (Berks County WDB)
- The Small Business Development Center at Kutztown University (SBDC – Kutztown U.)

Obviously, the successful collaboration among the Berks County *RTP* partners is more than just about developing written plans - it is real, vital and evolving. In January 2017, the Greater Reading Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GRCCI) formally joined with the Greater Reading Economic Partnership (GREP) and the Greater Berks Development Fund (GBDF) to form the Greater Reading Chamber Alliance. There is no doubt that with this merger, the economic development leadership of the Berks County region will accelerate and further integrate efforts leading to even greater prosperity. They will focus on regional workforce development as a strategic priority and work hand-in-hand with the region's community, education and workforce development partners, including the Berks County Workforce Development Board.

In August 2017 the WDB successfully submitted a application for a Next Generation Advanced Manufacturing Industry Partnership (NGIP) Convening Grant and was awarded funding by the PA Department of Labor & Industry to initiate the NGIP development. With the rollout of the FY 2017-2018 Next Generation model, this innovative revamped IP model provided an opportunity to expand our highly-successful Advanced Manufacturing IP beyond the previous primary focus of incumbent worker training. The fundamental goal of the new model is business-owner centric, allowing business owners to be at the very core of the discussion on what their needs will be, and creating actionable ways to present solutions, championed by the businesses themselves. C-Level individuals sit directly at the table, rather than sending their departmental directors to the conversation. These decision-makers now lead through the process and commit to be a part of action teams that will rollout solutions, and work with public partners to create long-term economic competitiveness for the region. Through this process, employers will identify needs that may not be on the community's current radar. As a result of this re-launch, longstanding, recurring issues can be addressed with *new* perspective and creative problem solving. The most effective way to accomplish these goals with one voice is to utilize the Next Generation model and allow it to be housed under the Greater Reading Chamber Alliance (GRCA, formerly the Greater Reading Chamber and Economic Development Corporation). With the adoption of the 2017-2018 Next Generation model for Industry Partnerships, Greater Reading's economic and workforce development leaders recognize that the GRCA is uniquely positioned and staffed to build capacity and strengthen the partnership's ultimate reach.

As a result of this newly constituted Greater Reading Advanced Manufacturing NGIP, the GRCA, with the assistance and fiscal administrative support of the Berks WDB, successfully applied for continued funding in PY2018 in the form of a NGIP "Implementation" Grant that supports the inauguration of campaigns targeted to two critical priorities identified by the core NGIP partners; New Talent Attraction to Berks County for manufacturing career opportunities and; Growing the Manufacturing Talent Pipeline within Berks County through incumbent worker upskilling and promotion/expansion of in-school programs to build the next generation of professionals. GRCA followed this implementation success with a new PAsmart NGIP Convening

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

Grant award that will enable the Greater Reading Advanced Manufacturing NGIP to continue this important work in PY2019.

As the benefits of this movement to the new “Next Gen” IP model now become evident statewide, the Berks WDB has researched additional opportunities for similar NGIP development in its other priority industry sectors (see Section 1.3). The WDB focused its attention on the rapidly increasing workforce needs of the Construction industry sector. The WDB has determined, through extensive LMI examination and personal dialogue with employers, that this industry is in the throes of a talent pipeline deficit that mirrors that of the manufacturing sector. An aging incumbent workforce and an inadequate talent pool for new and replacement jobs represent the real and present danger of critical skills needs insufficiencies that threaten to constrain the industry’s rapidly expanding economic growth.

To mitigate the aforementioned looming construction employment issues, as well as other barriers such as those related to local and state regulatory policy, the Berks WDB has entered into a collaboration with its neighboring Lancaster WDB for the development of a regional Construction Sector NGIP that will engage employers residing in both WDAs. With the Berks WDB’s assistance and partnership, the Lancaster WDB successfully submitted a PAsmart Convening Grant application in support of the newly formed “Lancaster Berks Construction Connection” Next Generation IP. An award in the amount of \$40,000 has been received and the NGIP launch will take place in late July 2019 with the Lancaster WDB and the Associated Builders & Contractors (ABC), Keystone Chapter acting as co-conveners.

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

The local area complies with the Commonwealth’s Register for Work and Work Search law by helping unemployed individuals register on the PA CareerLink® system. It also provides telephones in the PA CareerLink® Berks County so that Unemployment Compensation (UC) Claimants can call the statewide toll-free UC number regarding any benefits questions they may have. Additionally, individuals who are likely to exhaust their benefits are identified by the State through the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program. These individuals are directed to come to the PA CareerLink® Berks County for job search assistance.

At the PA CareerLink® Berks County, they are provided with an orientation of services and are given an initial assessment to determine their specific workforce needs. Based on their unique circumstances, they may be referred to additional services and resources, such as job search workshops, staff-assisted job search activities, partner programs, supportive services, and/or training activities to help them secure a new job or begin a new career.

Any potential UC eligibility issues identified during RESEA, or any other UC Claimant interaction are referred to the State’s Unemployment Insurance department for resolution.

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

Moreover, the UC Workforce Development Representative conducts several seminars throughout the year at the PA CareerLink® Berks County for employers to learn more about UC Programs. Typical seminars include: UC 101; Separation Issues; UC Appeals and Hearings; Suitable Work; Relief from Charges. A best practice of receiving preapproval from the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) for HR recertification credits is also in place.

A specific example of the Board's pro-active steps to strengthen the PA CareerLink® Berks County service delivery system's relationship with UI is as follows:

With the layoff of UC staff at the end of 2016, the PA CareerLink® Berks County was inundated with individuals needing to utilize the dedicated UC phone to talk to a UC representative and avoid long on-hold times from home. Further, not all services can be performed online, and some UC claimants are not computer-comfortable. Heavy claimant traffic, however, resulted in wait lines. Individuals arriving a few hours after opening found themselves waiting all day only to not be able to have their turn on the phone before UC closed for the day.

With the assistance of PA Secretary of Labor & Industry Jerry Oleksiak in March 2018 the WDB was able to add a second UC phone line to the PA CareerLink® Berks County resource room.

The WDB will continue to work with the Commonwealth to ensure our mutual UC customers receive meaningful access to this required one-stop partner.

- *Describe how the local board can improve strategies and practices to increase business and employer engagement over current levels*

In an effort to align Business Services to the needs of business and employers the WDB yearly reviews and updates performance measures for the Business Services Team (BST) at the PA CareerLink® Berks County. BST performance metrics for Program Years 2017 and 2018 consisted of Market Penetration (Overall, Manufacturing and Healthcare) measured as unique employer contacts, PA CareerLink® Berks County on-site employer recruitments, and placement of individuals in on-the-job training. In PY 2018, noticing an increase in employer attendance but a decrease in the number of individuals attending our twice-yearly job fair Job Fair Job Seeker Participation was added. This emphasis led to an almost two-fold increase in job seeker attendance from the Fall 2018 to Spring 2019 Job Fair (687 to 1179). For PY2019 the metric for on-the-job training has been removed (employers are just not interested in the current economy) and replaced with employer specific recruitment and intelligence gathers for the state of apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship in Berks County. The BST also produces a twice monthly Business Intelligence Report that details assistance with employer hiring needs and potential expansion/movement in the county.

As stated earlier in this section the Berks WDB has entered into a collaboration with its neighboring Lancaster WDB for the development of a regional Construction Sector NGIP that will engage employers residing in both WDAs. With the Berks WDB's assistance and partnership, the Lancaster WDB successfully submitted a PAsmart Convening Grant application in support of the

newly formed “Lancaster Berks Construction Connection” Next Generation IP. An award in the amount of \$40,000 has been received and the NGIP launch will take place in late July 2019 with the Lancaster WDB and the Associated Builders & Contractors (ABC), Keystone Chapter acting as co-conveners.

The PA CareerLink® Berks County Administrator produces a “By the Numbers” report quarterly. This report is shared with the one-stop partners, the One-stop Oversight Committee of the WDB and the full board at each of these groups’ respective quarterly meetings. The report includes the following metrics: number of individuals signing in to use the PA CareerLink®, number of individuals attending orientation, number of individuals accessing the UC phone and RESEA, number of new Individual Training Accounts, number of new work-based training contracts, number of individual businesses served, number of employer recruitments and the number of job seekers attending these recruitments, and the number of job seekers attending the Spring and Fall Job Fairs.

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

The WDB is an active participant in the Southeast PA PREP, working with it on regional economic development opportunities that support the local occupations on the High Priority Occupation list. The Board has also built partnerships with local economic development organizations/groups (discussed in section 3.4) to better coordinate ongoing economic development and workforce activities.

For example, the PA CareerLink® Business Services Team members and economic development personnel work together at the regional level to discuss employer expansion plans, new business markets, and equipment purchase options that support growth.

Moreover, as part of its ongoing regional workforce development efforts, the WDB has formed regional partnerships with the other WDBs of the Southeast Region that includes Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia. It also participates in a number of regional economic development and workforce initiatives that include the Lancaster County WDB, such as the Crescent Region Industry Sector Partnership (CRISP) – (see Section 1.2) *Pathways to Middle Class Jobs That Pay* and the *Expanding Career Pathways to the Middle Class for Post Millennial Youth*.

Entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services should provide the basics of starting and operating a small business. Some examples of such skill development include, but are not limited to, the following abilities:

- Taking initiative;
- Creatively seeking out and identifying business opportunities;

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

- Developing budgets and forecasting resource needs;
- Developing a customer-centered environment;
- Understanding various options for acquiring capital and the tradeoffs associated with each option; and
- Communicating effectively and marketing oneself and one's ideas.

The strategic priorities of the WDB are reflected in the allocation of limited funds via the annual program year budget. While entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services are important economic development strategies, they are not necessarily a major workforce need in the Berks County WDA as compared to the needs of existing enterprises in our key industry sectors for which the WDB prioritizes funding (see above).

Although the WDB provides a variety of workshops each week that include many employment-related topics, the Board has not identified a specific career track for entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services. Rather, individuals who are interested in self-employment are referred to our community partners, such as the Kutztown University's Small Business Development Corporation (SBDC) and its associated Jump Start Incubator located in the City of Reading, to receive specialized assistance that includes:

- Entrepreneurship education that provides an introduction to the values and basics of starting and running a business. These programs often guide individuals through the development of a business plan and may also include simulations of business start-up and operation.
- Enterprise development which provides support and services that incubate and help individuals develop their own businesses. Enterprise development programs go beyond entrepreneurship education by helping individuals access small loans or grants that are needed to begin business operation and by providing more individualized attention to assist in the development of viable business ideas.

4. OPERATIONAL PLANNING QUESTIONS: Local Area Workforce Delivery System

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

PA CareerLink® Operator

The Operator provides guidance and oversight to the PA CareerLink® Berks County Administrator.

The PA CareerLink® Administrator manages the center's day-to-day operations with the assistance of a management team which is comprised of the various functional Team Managers.

When fulfilling services for the PA CareerLink® Berks County service delivery system, all Partners are under the functional direction of the PA CareerLink® Berks County Administrator. Those Partners who may be co-located but not providing services through the PA CareerLink®

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

Berks County service delivery system are not under the functional supervision of the PA CareerLink® Administrator. At the time that a co-located Partner begins to provide such services, co-located staff fall under the functional direction of the PA CareerLink® Berks County Administrator, in accordance with the formal PA CareerLink® Administrator Job Description.

Management of the PA CareerLink® Berks County shall be the responsibility of the Operator, acting through the PA CareerLink® Berks County Administrator who reports to the Operator. The one-stop operator, through the PA CareerLink® Administrator, will, at a minimum:

- Manage **daily operations**, including but not limited to:
 - Managing and coordinating Partner responsibilities, as defined in this MOU,
 - Managing hours of operation,
 - Coordinating daily work schedules and work flow based upon operational needs, and
 - Coordinating staff vacations/unscheduled absences with the formal leader to ensure service coverage by center staff.
- Assist the WDB in establishing and maintaining the PA CareerLink® Berks County. This includes but is not limited to:
 - Ensuring that State requirements for center certification are met and maintained,
 - Ensuring that career services such as the ones outlined in WIOA sec. 134(c)(2) are available and accessible,
 - Ensuring that WDB policies are implemented and adhered to,
 - Adhering to the provisions outlined in the contract with the WDB and the WDB Business Plan,
 - Reinforcing strategic objectives of the WDB to Partners, and
 - Ensuring staff are properly trained by their formal leadership organizations and provided technical assistance, as needed.
- Integrate systems and coordinate services for the center and its Partners, placing priority on customer service.
- Integrated Workforce Service Delivery, as defined by WIOA, means organizing and implementing services by function (rather than by program), when permitted by a program's authorizing statute and as appropriate, and by coordinating policies, staff communication, capacity building, and training efforts.
- Service integration focuses on serving all customers seamlessly (including targeted populations) by providing a full range of services staffed by cross-functional teams, consistent with the purpose, scope, and requirements of each program.
- The services are seamless to the customer, meaning the services are free of cumbersome transitions or duplicative registrations from one program service to another, when avoidable, and there is a smooth customer flow to access the array of services available in the workforce center.
- Oversee and coordinate partner, program, and PA CareerLink® Berks County performance. This includes but is not limited to:
 - Providing and/or contributing to reports of center activities, as requested by the WDB,

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

- Providing input to the formal leader (partner program official) on the work performance of staff under their purview,
 - Notifying the formal leader immediately of any staff leave requests or unexcused absences, disciplinary needs, or changes in employee status,
 - Identifying and facilitating the timely resolution of complaints, problems, and other issues,
 - Collaborating with the WDB on efforts designed to ensure the meeting of program performance measures, including data sharing procedures to ensure effective data matching, timely data entry into the case management systems, and coordinated data batch downloads (while ensuring the confidentiality requirements of FERPA, 34 CFR 361.38, and 20 CFR part 603),
 - Ensuring open communication with the formal leader(s) in order to facilitate efficient and effective center operations,
 - Evaluating customer satisfaction data and propose service strategy changes to the WDB based on findings.
- Assist the WDB with cost allocations and the maintenance and reconciliation of one-stop center operation budgets.

The functional direction of the PA CareerLink® Berks County Administrator does not supersede a Partner organization's personnel or labor relations policy. For example, all pay and benefits will remain as dictated by those organizational policies. All discipline, performance appraisal and similar issues will be handled by an employee's organizational manager or supervisor. All requests for leave will be handled by an employee's organizational manager or supervisor, in coordination with the functional Team Manager. All Partners retain exclusive authority to supervise and manage their employees, conduct any investigation and administer any discipline to its employees.

Educational Data Systems, Inc. (EDSI) was chosen to be the one-stop operator and provider of Title I adult and dislocated worker services effective July 1, 2017 through a competitive process beginning February 3, 2017 with the release of a Request for Proposal for the PA CareerLink® Berks County One Stop Operator & Provider of WIOA Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker Services. A pre-proposal conference was held February 10, 2017 with a number of interested entities attending in person or via conference call. Two proposals were submitted by the submission deadline of March 13, 2017. These proposals were reviewed by an ad hoc committee of the WDB One-Stop Oversight Committee made up of three WDB staff members and three board members. After initial scoring was complete the two bidding agencies were interviewed by the ad hoc committee on April 7, 2017. Based on the interview responses the ad hoc committee recommended to the board that EDSI be awarded the contracts for the one-stop operator and provider of adult and dislocated worker services. The award letter was issued May 12, 2017. A contract for the operation of the one-stop (PC-574808-17) was executed with EDSI to begin July 1, 2017. A separate contract for the operation of Title I adult and dislocated worker services (PC-574809-17) was executed with EDSI to also begin July 1, 2017.

WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Programs

Adult and Dislocated Worker

EDSI provides the following job seeker services as the provider of Title I adult and dislocated worker services at the PA CareerLink® Berks County (the competitive process for this contract is described above):

Basic Career Services

- Outreach, intake and orientation to the information, services, programs, tools and resources available through the Local workforce system
- Initial assessments of skill level(s), aptitudes, abilities and supportive service needs
- In- and out-of-area job search and placement assistance (including provision of information on in-demand industry sectors and occupations and non-traditional employment)
- Access to employment opportunities and labor market information
- Performance information and program costs for eligible providers of training, education, and workforce services
- Information on performance of the Local workforce system
- Information on the availability of supportive services and referral to such, as appropriate
- Information and meaningful assistance on Unemployment Insurance claim filing
- Determination of potential eligibility for workforce Partner services, programs, and referral(s)
- Information and assistance in applying for financial aid for training and education programs not provided under WIOA

Individualized Career Services

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

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

Training

- Access to occupational skills training through Individual Training Accounts (ITA)
- Access to On-the-Job Training (OJT) and Transitional Employment (TE)

Youth

ResCare Workforce Services is the provider of youth services at the PA CareerLink® Berks County. These services can be broken down to four broad activities: case management, GED instruction, work experience and job placement, and access to occupational skills training through ITA and access to OJT and TE. The following youth elements are available either directly through the youth services provider or other one-stop partner or through referral to community agencies (The bullets under each element detail how these services are accessed):

1. Tutoring, study skills training, instruction, and evidence-based dropout prevention and recovery strategies that lead to completion of the requirements for a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent or for a recognized post-secondary credential.

- Daily tutoring and small group instruction is available on site at the PA Career-Link® Berks County.
- The program provides GED instruction and attachment to post-secondary education/training as appropriate for the individual.

2. Alternative secondary school services or dropout recovery services.

- Referrals to alternate secondary schools if the participant's needs cannot be met in the program. Linkages are established with "I LEAD" Charter School (a charter school in the Reading School District designed to provide a high school diploma for youth who have dropped out of the district) to expedite the process as required.
- Staff meet, on an ongoing basis, with Community in Schools, a non-profit organization that has contracted with the Reading Area School District to reduce dropout and re-engage disconnected 9th and 10th grade students.

3. Paid and unpaid work experiences that have as a component academic and occupational education.

- Paid work experience is offered to GED participants. Work experience exposes youth to various aspects of industry and entrepreneurship while providing hands-on skills instruction and "on-the-job experience."
- Transitional employment is offered as an available option to individuals.
- Job shadowing is accomplished via group field trips and one on one field visits based upon students' career goals.

4. Occupational skill training.

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

- Youth are exposed to post-secondary environments, including opportunities for advanced training. Visits to college campuses and other post-secondary training institutions are accomplished. Assistance in completing entry applications and financial aid applications is also provided.
- Youth ITA's are available.

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

- Workforce and career readiness are offered as part of the GED curriculum. Small group instruction is provided for those individuals who have a GED/high school diploma.

6. Leadership development opportunities.

- Leadership skills are developed through workshops including decision making, conflict resolution and community service skills. Civic leadership is enhanced through the community service projects, voter registration and community awareness projects i.e. current events.

7. Supportive services.

- Supportive services in the form of bus passes, uniforms etc. are available to youth enrolled in the program. Staff coordinate with other youth service organization to facilitate a two-way referral network for youth in need of services beyond those offered in-house. In addition, the program provides a nutritional snack for youth during the morning break and in some cases upon arrival. These snacks enhance the participants ability to successfully participate in classroom activities

8. Adult mentoring for duration of at least twelve months.

- Adult mentoring in an on-going activity of program staff, employers and takes place concurrently with other program activities. Examples include but are not limited to guest speakers, worksite supervisors and program staff.

9. Follow up services.

- The program facilitates a combination of counseling, and workshops to motivate and engage exited youth. The Follow-Up Coordinator offers post-secondary guidance, and job searches for youth who have been exited with placement. In addition to contacting youth via mail and phone calls; a variety of other methods are used to contact youth such as Facebook, e-mail, and text messages to follow up with students. The Follow-Up Coordinator also provides incentives to youth every

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

three months that continue to stay in post-secondary education and/ or retain a job to ensure progress towards retaining a year (plus) employment and/ or educational goals.

10. Comprehensive guidance and counseling.

- Individual and group counseling is provided throughout program participation to discuss personal and career goals. Problems identified are addressed by staff immediately. If specialized counseling is required i.e. health, drug etc. referrals to the appropriate agencies is provided.

11. Financial literacy education.

- Financial literacy is incorporated using the FDIC Money Smart program and is proved by a representative of Visions Credit Union.

12. Entrepreneurial skill training.

- Entrepreneurial skill training is incorporated in the GED curriculum. Examples include a mock “Shark Tank” activity in which youth create a product and market it to program staff and an activity in which youth create a business and must develop a business plan.

13. Labor market information.

- Labor market information is provided to program participants during individual and group counseling when personal and career goals are discussed.
- Such information is brought back to the program through staff participation on the Employer Outreach Team (EOT) and through WDB provided information.

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

- These are also incorporated in the regular individual and group counseling sessions and include topics associated with financial literacy, building support networks and ensuring secondary and tertiary back-ups for issues such as transportation and child-care.
- College tours and assistance in completing the FASFA.

ResCare Workforce Services (ResCare) was chosen to be the provider of Title I youth services though a competitive process beginning January 20, 2019 with the release of a Request for Proposal for WIOA Youth Education and Workforce Services Program. A pre-proposal conference was held February 15, 2019 with a number of interested entities attending in person or via conference call. One proposal was submitted by the submission deadline of March 11, 2019. The

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

proposal was reviewed by an ad hoc committee of the WDB Youth Committee made up of three WDB staff members and two board members. Based on review of the proposal the ad hoc committee recommended to the board that ResCare be awarded the contract for provider of youth services. The award letter was issued June 2, 2019.

WIOA Title II Adult Education and Literacy Programs

Reading Area Community College (RACC) is the Title II contractor with the PA Dept. of Education; RACC subcontracts with the Literacy Council of Reading-Berks for adult literacy services.

The Literacy Council's CASAS competency-based assessment is held the first Monday of the month and is a 3-hour assessment. Welcome Orientation is now able to directly refer to the CASAS competency-based assessment. The participants who are assessed through CASAS will then be referred to the Literacy Council's English as a Second Language Class at the PA CareerLink® office. This class will run two days a week (Tues. & Thurs.) for a total of four hours a week.

The Literacy Council will assist customers to prepare for the WorkKeys® assessments every Wednesday. WorkKeys® assessments are done every Friday.

The TABE 11/12 is very staff intensive. The Young Adult team will provide 3 – 4 staff to assist. The Literacy Council's TABE Reading & Reading locator are held once a month on Thursdays and are open to partner referrals. The TABE Math & Math locator are held once a month on Fridays and are open to partner referrals. Career Services Team customers need only the Reading assessment for referral to training providers. EARN Team customers will need both the Reading and Math for referral for GED services.

The Literacy Council will hold a two-days a week, 2-hour a day (Mon. & Fri.) class at the PA CareerLink® office covering basic math and basic reading (ABE). This will be an open entry, open exit class. The target audience is young adults who do not assess at a level enabling them to enroll in our Young Adult program's GED class as well as adults from the general population. The curriculum will run on a 4-week rotation. The instruction will enable attendees to move on to a GED class or pass an employer's pre-employment assessment. Adult Basic Education (ABE) classes are not currently in session due to participants not needing the service at this time. When a referral is made to ABE, contact will be made to the Literacy Council to begin classes again.

WIOA Title III Wagner-Peyser Programs

The Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry is the provider of Wagner-Peyser services at the PA CareerLink® Berks County.

Job search and placement assistance is done by conducting matching within PA CareerLink®, either from within a job seeker's folder or within an employer's job posting. It is also done through the advertising of employer recruitments and completion of employer job applications located in the Resource Room. Career advising is accomplished through staff discussions of job

seeker qualifications against job posting requirements. Welcome Orientation and the Career Decision Making / Hidden Job Market workshop include information on in-demand industry sectors and occupations. Nontraditional employment opportunities are available through postings on PA CareerLink®. Information on specific employer worker needs, recruitment activities at our facility, and recruitment activities outside of our office are widely shared via flyers and emails to individuals as well as community agencies.

This team also manages the RESEA orientation.

WIOA Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation Programs

The Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation is the provider of Vocational Rehabilitation services at the PA CareerLink® Berks County.

Eligible OVR customers receive multiple services from qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors that may include but not be limited to; diagnostic, vocational counseling and guidance, vocational evaluation, restoration, training, job placement and pre-employment training services for eligible and potentially eligible high school students with disabilities. OVR also provides multiple services to the business community designed to assist businesses with onboarding pre-screened qualified employees with disabilities. OVR on-boarding supports for a qualified new hire can include: reasonable accommodation consultation, initial probationary period wage reimbursement (On-the Job Training-OJT), referral on tax credits or deductions. OVR also offers no-cost consultation on the Americans with Disability Act (ADA), accessibility standards and helping a business to retain current employees following an accident, injury or disability.

Equal Employment Opportunity and Civil Rights Protection

John W. Moser, Assistant Director – Performance and Policy, Equal Opportunity Officer for the WDB ensures equal opportunity and civil rights protections are provided to customers of the PA CareerLink® Berks County. This is ensured through program monitoring for these specific requirements. He also works directly with the Office of Equal Opportunity as the need arises as an investigator in the Equal Opportunity complaint hearing process.

Advocacy Groups

The WDB includes advocacy groups in the workforce delivery system through active outreach to these groups.

An example is the board's long-standing relationship with the community of individuals with disabilities in Berks County. The WDB, since nearly the implementation of the Workforce Investment Act has partnered with the Berks County Transition Coordinating Council to offer summer work experience for youth with disabilities (recently expanded to a partnership with OVR). As discussed earlier in Section 3.1 the WDB has established a new standing committee to focus on increasing opportunities for individuals with disabilities with membership including representatives from this community.

Other Key Stakeholders

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

Other key stakeholders in the local workforce delivery system include economic development agencies (GRCA, GRCCI, GREP, GBDF, SBDC, etc.) discussed in detail in section 3.4 and the county education system (especially RACC and the two Career and Technology Centers) and community development (United Way of Berks County, Olivet Boys and Girls Clubs, Opportunity House and United Community Services (UCS) for Working Families) discussed in section 1.4.

4.2. *Identify the one-stop partners (required and other) authorized to provide required and other programs within the local area. Describe briefly the role(s) of the one-stop partners (required and other).*

Required Partners

- PA Department of Labor & Industry, Bureau of Workforce Partnership and Operations
 - Wagner-Peyser, Trade Act, Rapid Response, Jobs for Veterans State Grant, Foreign Labor Certification
 - Programmatic
- PA Department of Labor & Industry, Office of UC Centers
 - State Unemployment Compensation Programs
 - Programmatic
- County of Berks
 - WIOA Title I
 - TANF/EARN
 - Programmatic
- PA Department of Human Services
 - TANF
 - Programmatic
- PA Department of Labor & Industry, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR)
 - Rehabilitation Act Title I parts A and B programs
 - Programmatic
- Berks Connections/Pretrial Services (BCPS)
 - Second Chance Act of 2007
 - Programmatic
- Reading Area Community College (RACC)
 - Title II – Adult Education and Family Literacy Act
 - Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act
 - Programmatic
- United Community Services (UCS)
 - YouthBuild
 - Programmatic
- AARP Foundation
 - Senior Community Service Employment Program, Title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965
 - Programmatic

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

- PathStone Corporation
 - Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Program
 - Programmatic
- PA Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED)
 - Community Services Block Grant Employment and Training Activities
 - Programmatic
- Council of Three Rivers American Indian Center, Inc.
 - Native Americans Programs
 - Programmatic

Additional Partners

- ResCare Workforce Services
 - Job Corps
 - Programmatic
- PA Department of Labor & Industry, Apprenticeship Office
 - Programmatic

4.3. *How will the local board facilitate access to services provided through the one-stop service delivery system?*

Access to Services

As a tightly organized and integrated single county workforce development area, Berks County has no remote areas without ready access to one-stop services delivery. In fact, Berks County has a well-developed internal system of public and private transportation services with available public transportation connecting the core with the surrounding suburban communities. The PA CareerLink® Berks County is located within the central urban area with a bus stop directly in front of the building and free ample parking. Many Berks job-seekers take advantage of regular public bus route service provided by the Berks Area Regional Transportation Authority (BARTA) during their job search and once placed in new employment. BARTA also offers one-way trips via Special Services (Para transit).

As discussed in Section 3.1 the board has established a committee on increasing opportunities for individuals with disabilities. One of the areas of focus is access to services by this community.

Also, as discussed in Section 4.4 the PA CareerLink® Berks County is certified compliant with Equal Opportunity and Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility requirements through November 2017. As of this date, Berks County is in compliance with OEO and ADA requirements based on the most recent certification process.

PA CareerLink® Berks County, at no cost to Limited English Proficient (LEP) individuals or families, provides interpreter services to all LEP individuals or families applying for, participating in programs or receiving services/benefits through the PA CareerLink® Berks County the following means:

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

- Bi-lingual staff capable of translation and interpretation responsibilities.
- Telephone interpreting services.
- Translation services.
- TTY and sign language interpreters.

The interpreter services are provided in an efficient and timely manner so as not to delay a determination of eligibility for an individual or family, receipt of eligible services/benefits or participation in a Department run program beyond that of an English speaking individual or family. The PA CareerLink® Berks County makes this policy known to the LEP through the following methods (e.g. posters in other languages, Babel cards, etc.).

- Voicemail selections on the main office phone number
- the PA CareerLink® Berks County local website, www.careerlinkberks.com
- brochures and notices
- presentations at schools and community organizations
- presentations at dislocated worker meetings
- orientations for various PA CareerLink® programs
- outreach with Berks County Justice System agencies
- tag lines on materials, handouts, brochures

PA CareerLink® Berks County addresses phone calls and voice mail by LEP individuals in the following manner: The greeting on our main phone number directs customers to English or Spanish greetings. All Spanish speaking bilingual staff have English/Spanish voicemail greetings. Messages left in Spanish on non-bilingual staff voicemails are transferred to bilingual staff for interpreting. All non-Spanish non-English calls are interpreted through Propio Language Services or Language Line Solutions.

PA CareerLink® Berks County addresses walk-ins to the one-stop who are LEP individuals in the following manner: The receptionist is bilingual Spanish/English and can direct Spanish speaking customers. Non-Spanish speaking limited English proficient visitors are directed to the language assistance poster in the reception area and a staff member call Propio Language Services or Language Line Solutions for over-the-phone interpreting services using a dual-handset phone in room 301.

PA CareerLink® Berks County does not require, suggest or encourage LEP individuals or families to use friends, family members or minor children as interpreters. If an LEP individual or family insists that a friend or family member serve as interpreter, PA CareerLink® Berks County will document that choice. PA CareerLink® Berks County will then, on a case by case basis, consider factors such as: competence of the family or friend used as the interpreter; the appropriateness of the use in light of the circumstances and ability to provide quality and accurate information, especially if the interview could result in a negative effect on the individual or family's eligibility for benefits/services; potential or actual conflicts of interest; and confidentiality of the information being interpreted to determine whether PA CareerLink® Berks County should provide its own independent interpreter for itself.

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

The PA CareerLink® Berks County provides direct workforce services for public assistance recipients through its relationship with EARN. The EARN program provides comprehensive case management, remediation, education with special emphasis on individuals with limited English proficiency, skills training, work activities, job placement and retention activities, as well as providing supportive services, including payment for childcare. Included in EARN are services especially designed to meet the needs of out-of-school pregnant and parenting youth between the ages of 18 to 22, as well as non-assistance custodial or non-custodial fathers. Work activities in EARN include unsubsidized employment, subsidized employment, paid work experience, and community service. EARN staff are co-located in the PA CareerLink® Berks County and they are also active members of the PA CareerLink® Berks County Business Services Team. If it is determined that an EARN participant can benefit from training programs offered under WIOA, then co-case management occurs. The WIOA case manager determines eligibility and both WIOA and EARN case managers work together with the client to make sure they receive all services for which they are determined eligible.

To ensure that individuals participating in basic education and English learning programs have direct connections to career pathways leading to high-quality jobs, the Board works with its Adult Education partners, including RACC, to identify strategies that improve access. For example, it will explore the creation of a cross-referral process as well as the development of coordinated outreach efforts in the upcoming year. Additional information regarding coordination with Title II services and activities is included in the response to 3.3, 4.10, and 4.12.

The career pathways model was introduced with the NEG Sector Strategies funding for ITAs and OJTs. Based on the initial enrollment in an ITA training program or OJT occupation, customers are provided with a comprehensive career pathway for that career, showing the occupation where they started on the pathway through to significantly higher positions that could be obtained with additional training and/or experience. This is incorporated into their Individual Employment Plan/Individual Service Strategy. Customers benefit from understanding how they can progress in their career areas beyond the initial training they receive. Pathways were created by WDB staff or Business Services Team members. Current career pathways include career areas such as Auto Diesel Technician, Building Property Maintenance, CDL-Transportation, Health Services, Industrial Maintenance Technician, Manufacturing Production Operations, and Information Technology.

It is important to note that access is also provided to Unemployment Insurance Programs via the PA CareerLink® Berks County. As discussed in the response to 3.4, UC courtesy phones and UC PCs are available for those customers who need access to such services.

Management Information Systems

PA CareerLink® is the system of record for WIOA programs. Partner and program provider staff enter customer data into PA CareerLink® as necessary and required to track program activity, case notes, individual employment plans, etc. Data is entered within thirty days of occurrence as

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

required by commonwealth protocol. Monitoring is conducted by the board to ensure this time frame is met. OVR utilizes a module of PA CareerLink® that is not accessible by other program staff.

The board utilizes an additional system, PrimeWorks Plus, to track customers through WIOA services and non-WIOA grants. Data is entered by WDB staff off of a tracking sheet completed by program provider staff. Customers in WIOA are reconciled with PA CareerLink® on a quarterly basis.

4.4 How will entities within the one-stop service delivery system, including one-stop operators and the one-stop partners, comply with WIOA Sec. 188 (as applicable), and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101, et seq.) regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities?

Adaptive Equipment available at the PA CareerLink® Berks County:

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

Accessibility to the services provided by the PA CareerLink® Berks County and all Partner agencies is essential to meeting the requirements and goals of the PA CareerLink® Berks County. Job seekers and businesses must be able to access all information relevant to them via visits to physical locations as well as in virtual spaces, regardless of gender, age, race, religion, national origin,

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

disability, veteran's status, or on the basis of any other classification protected under state or federal law.

The one-stop will maintain a culture of inclusiveness and the physical characteristics of the facility, both indoor and outdoor, meet the latest standards of accessible design. Services are available in a convenient, high traffic, and accessible location, taking into account reasonable distance from public transportation and adequate parking (including parking clearly marked for individuals with disabilities). Indoor space is designed in an "equal and meaningful" manner providing access for individuals with disabilities.

The WDB will work with the Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry to ensure that job seekers and businesses have access to the same information online as they do in the physical facility.

All Partners agree that they will not discriminate in their employment practices or services on the basis of gender, gender identity and/or expression, age, race, religion, national origin, disability, veteran's status, or on the basis of any other classification protected under state or federal law. Partners must assure that they have policies and procedures in place to address these issues, and that such policies and procedures have been disseminated to their employees and otherwise posted as required by law. Partners further assure that they are currently in compliance with all applicable state and federal laws and regulations regarding these issues. Additionally, staff members are trained to provide services to all, regardless of range of abilities, mobility, age, language, learning style, or comprehension or education level. An interpreter will be provided in real time or, if not available, within a reasonable timeframe to any customer with a language barrier. Assistive devices, such as screen-reading software programs (e.g., JAWS and DRAGON) and assistive listening devices are available to ensure physical and programmatic accessibility within the PA CareerLink® Berks County.

The PA CareerLink® Berks County is certified compliant with Equal Opportunity and Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility requirements by the Office of Equal Opportunity, PA Department of Labor and industry effective November 19, 2014. This certification is in effect until November 30, 2017. A subsequent review has yet to be scheduled by the Office of Equal Opportunity. The PA CareerLink® centers and any affiliated sites are no longer certified every three years for compliance with EO/ADA requirements. The compliance reviews are completed annually.

The WDB also reviews compliance with Equal Opportunity and Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility requirements each year during the PA CareerLink® Berks County quality assurance review. All programs operating out of the PA CareerLink® Berks County are part of this review.

The PA CareerLink® Berks County provides twice per year training in Equal Opportunity and Americans with Disabilities Act requirements including the accommodations available at the PA CareerLink® Berks County. All on-site partners participate in this training. OVR has and will

continue to provide no-cost consultation on the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) and accessibility standards, as does the Office of Equal Opportunity.

Efforts related to Individuals with limited English proficiency are discussed under the Access to Services heading of Section 4.3.

4.5 Describe how the local board will ensure the continuous improvement of eligible providers through the system and that such providers will meet the employment needs of local area employers, workers, and job seekers.

The Berks County Ride to Prosperity (RTP) strategy project (see section 1.2) helped regional leaders cultivate a deep understanding of the region's key industry clusters and the Berks County WDB has further developed this sector-based analysis in determining workforce development sector priorities. As a result, the Berks WDB is home to local labor market subject matter expertise in the knowledge, skills and requisite industry-recognized credentials needed to contribute to the growth of a qualified talent pool, the recruitment and retention qualified employees, and the upskilling of "home grown talent."

The Berks County WDB verifies the relevance of the training activities associated with the targeted occupations through outreach to employers. The WDB develops a detailed understanding of the skills and experience related to current and future employment projections by utilizing print and on-line job ad analysis, employer surveys, employer feedback via in-person, phone and email interviews, and by active WDB participation in educational provider Occupational Advisory Committees (OACs) and Next Generation Industry Partnerships (IPs). Active partnership with economic development agencies is solicited to promote the growth of a competent workforce in support of economic development initiatives.

The Berks WDB Training & Industry Partnership Committee meets quarterly to review opportunities for occupational growth and outcomes of in-force training initiatives. The committee membership is made up of industry sector employers, educators, and labor representatives. WDB staff with industry sector expertise is assigned to support the work of the committee.

Active engagement of our economic development partners in identifying in-demand occupations that will support economic growth is continuously solicited.

All training activity, including Industry Partnership Incumbent Worker, Individual Training Account, New-Hire OJT and Transitional Work Experience, and Apprenticeships are linked to High Priority Occupations (HPOs), and their relevant wage and educational attainment levels, within the priority Industry Sectors as defined by the full board. Requisite credentials are industry-recognized and are in great demand.

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

The board reviews the new HPO list for relevance to local labor needs. Petitions are placed for occupations that may have dropped off the new list but that, due to a variety of factors (board business relationships, the number of past training completion and training related employment, other business intelligence), the board is confident are still in demand locally. Petitions are also placed periodically through-out the year for in-demand occupations that are brought to the attention of the board.

The WDB effectively manages the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) process by reviewing training submissions for adequate content description, alignment with the local High Priority List, and acceptable performance prior to approval. All training providers must have a Master Agreement for Training in place prior to the start of WIOA funded training. Customer satisfaction surveys of individuals in training are reviewed for satisfaction with the training experience, case manager, etc. These surveys are compiled by the PA CareerLink® Administrator and shared with the WDB and WDB staff. Program with sub-par satisfaction are provided technical assistance by the WDB

4.6 Provide a description and assessment of the type and availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities in the local area.

WIOA defines the types of employment and training activities to be offered in local workforce development areas. These include basic and individualized career services and training services. The board uses a competitive process to procure the basic and individualized career services. Training services consist of ITA, OJT and other work-based learning including incumbent worker training. The board currently does not see any discrepancies between adult and dislocated worker activities offered and what job seekers/employers require. The WDB currently has one provider of Title I adult and dislocated worker services.

The WDB partners with the County of Berks Purchasing Department to manage the RFP/contract process. This process is detailed in the County of Berks Procurement Policy as well as in the WDB's written policy.

While the Purchasing Department manages this process for the WDB, the WDB dictates conditions under which the process begins and makes the final decision on the award of contracts.

The following general process is used for the procurement of program services:

1. Board committee identifies a procurement need.
2. Board staff (staff) develops a statement of work (SOW) including summary, type of procurement, method of payment, services to be performed, expected outcomes, administrative requirements, and proposer response items.
3. Board committee reviews and approves SOW. Recommends approval to the board.
4. Board approves SOW.
5. Staff forwards SOW to County Purchasing Department (purchasing) for insertion into RFP boiler plate.

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

6. Staff and purchasing develop a timeline for RFP issue, bidder's conference, review, and award.
7. Purchasing issues RFP and all subsequent addendums as necessary.
8. Purchasing runs bidder's conference. Staff is present at conference to answer/clarify questions.
9. Proposals are submitted to purchasing.
10. Purchasing conducts technical review.
11. Purchasing forwards proposals passing technical review to review committee (staff and members of board committee identifying the contracting need).
12. Review committee members conduct reviews and submit evaluations to purchasing.
13. Budgets are reviewed by review committee and changes made to evaluations as necessary.
14. Proposer interviews are conducted if the review committee decides this is a necessity.
15. Review committee submits final evaluations.
16. Recommendation to award contract is made to full board.
17. Board approves recommendation.
18. Purchasing executes contract.

Proposers provide a response which becomes the main criteria for evaluation of the proposal. Beyond a general introduction to the agency detailing its capacity to provide services (including financial stability, past performance, etc.) and justification of cost the following specific questions were asked in the most recent procurement for adult and dislocated worker services:

1. Detail your organization's staffing plan for the proposed services. Please include the following:
 - a. Staffing table including number of staff, status (full or part time), location, job function, and case load ratio.
 - b. Job descriptions that include job titles, job duties, and minimum qualifications.
 - c. Resumes for key staff designated to oversee the proposed service delivery model. At a minimum resume should include education, work history, and any specialized training or certifications relevant to proposed job function. If staff will need to be hired as a result of contract award please outline the plan and timeline to hire qualified staff to deliver proposed services.
 - d. Describe diversity and inclusion plan to ensure staff reflects the composition of the target population and the broader community.
2. Describe how the Resource Room will be managed including anticipated staffing levels and hours of operation.
3. Describe how staff will work with job seekers to overcome barriers to employment. Provide a detailed overview of plans to address any or all of the following:
 - Literacy/education
 - Disability
 - Criminal history
 - Housing
 - Basic needs
 - Limited English Proficiency

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

- Other barriers not mentioned above
4. Describe how Rapid Response activities will be coordinated with other PA CareerLink® Berks County staff and state-wide efforts.

WIOA identifies four priority groups for service within the Title I Adult funding stream. Priority of service means those individuals in the priority groups are given priority over other individuals for receipt of individualized career services and training services. Priority of service does not guarantee that by virtue of his/her status an individual will always receive services. The individual must be eligible and able to benefit from the services. Once another participant is enrolled in a WIOA individualized career or training service, that participant may not be displaced by an individual who qualifies for priority of service.

The four priority groups are (within each group a veteran or eligible spouse of a veteran takes priority over a non-veteran):

- Recipients of public assistance
- Low income
- Basic skills deficient
- Underemployed

Priority is provided in the following order:

- *First*, to veterans and eligible spouses who meet the requirements for inclusion in one of the four priority groups.
- *Second*, non-veterans who meet the requirements for inclusion in one of the four priority groups.
- *Third*, to veterans and eligible spouses who **do not** meet the requirements for inclusion in one of the four priority groups.
- *Fourth*, non-veterans who **do not** meet the requirements for inclusion in one of the four priority groups.

Priority will be determined at eligibility for all individuals enrolled under the Title I Adult funding stream. Copies of all documentation used to verify priority must be included in the customer's file. See the WDB "Program Eligibility Policy" for further details.

The WDB has elected not to include additional local priority requirements. As such, no local requirements are included or inferred.

The WDB expects that at least 51% of all individuals served with Title I Adult funds will meet one of the priority target groups. Monitoring of progress toward and maintenance of goal will be conducted primarily through monthly reports generated from the local management information system.

While WIOA has expanded the definition of youth to include individuals through age 24 and many in the older age range meet the requirements for priority of service it is the general practice

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

to refer meeting that age demographic to the youth program which is better designed to meet a youth's (young adult) needs.

The decision to transfer funds between adult and dislocated worker is based on training and capacity requirements being faced by the one-stop. Such transfers are approved by the board.

Career Pathways have become an integral part of the occupational and work-based training individuals receive through the one-stop and are discussed under the Access to Services heading of Section 4.3.

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

The maximum obligation of funds under any individual ITA shall be \$6,000, which may be applied to those costs included in the "service cost details" section of the Eligible Provider List and the costs of obtaining certifications, permits, and licensures necessary to obtain and/or retain employment in the field for which training was conducted. In the event that testing is involved in the awarding of a certification, permit, or license, the cost of one "retest" may also be covered if the first attempt was unsuccessful. The "retest" is also subject to the maximum limitation. All training must be completed in twelve months of start of WIOA funding.

It is the policy of the Berks County Workforce Development Board to concentrate its training resources on key industry sectors and on training which prepares people to enter high priority occupations and/or which provides recognized and portable certifications or credentials for higher wage, higher skill jobs offering real opportunities for self-sufficiency. The cap is determined by a review of the cost/length of the most effective and utilized training available through training providers that provide services in the county.

Training that has been approved by the WDB and other locals in the Commonwealth are posted on the ETPL on PA CareerLink®. Training must be chosen from this list. Customers interested in occupational skills training must conduct market research (job availability after training, salary, etc.) prior to approval of training. Locally gathered data on the training provider and specific occupational skills training is also provided to customers.

Work-based training, including On-the-Job Training (OJT) and Transitional Employment (TE), has a maximum level tied to the maximum ITA level (currently \$6,000). OJT and TE will be available to participants of the PA CareerLink® Berks County who are eligible under the Adult, Dislocated Worker, or Youth WIOA funding streams and the Employment, Retention and Advancement Network (EARN) Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program. OJT agreements will only be executed for full time positions. Full time is considered 30 hours per week or more. Individuals whose training is paid with Trade Act funds will follow the wage and hour limits set by the PA Department of Labor and Industry. OJT for EARN and all TE have a

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

maximum training length of 520 hours (OJT) and 500 hours (TE) while OJT funded through WIOA (or discretionary grants as permitted) have a maximum length of 6 months with a unit price equal to 50% to 75% based on employer size or participant skill gap.

ITA, OJT, and TE maximums are subject to extension provisions as detailed in the appropriate Berks WDB policy.

4.8 *Provide a description and assessment of the type and availability of youth workforce investment activities in the local area.*

The Youth Committee is chaired by a Board member and is composed of both members of the Board who have special interest or expertise in youth policy (such as educators, employers, and representatives of human service agencies) and non-board members having the same interest or expertise.

The Youth Committee assists in the development of those portions of the Board's plan which pertain to youth and young adults; recommends to the Board priorities for the expenditure of Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act youth funding; recommends selection of youth and young adult service providers; and provides coordination and oversight of youth and young adult workforce development activities. In addition, the Youth Committee serves as a convening and coordinating body for larger community partnerships for youth and young adult workforce development.

At the committee meeting on August 5, 2015 the committee recommended that while in a perfect world there would be adequate funding to both support programs designed to keep youth in school and to assist those that, even with the best guidance, decide to drop-out, the youth committee recognizes that, with our limited funding, priority needs to be set on the following:

- WIOA funding will be used to provide programs designed to support youth who are either high school drop-outs or are high school graduates who find themselves underemployed/unemployed due to barriers they find in their life (out-of-school youth).
- TANF Youth funding (and any funds used to supplement TANF Youth funds) will primarily be used to support programs to in-school youth designed to provide work experience and exposure to careers.

At this meeting the committee also recommended the WDB (through the county) issue an RFP no later than early 2016 soliciting programs to serve out-of-school youth who meet the eligibility requirements found in WIOA. Discussed in Section 4.1 are the linkages to the fourteen youth elements provided by the current youth services provider.

At the January 19, 2016 meeting the committee recommended the issuance of an RFP for a study to identify who the out-of-school youth are in the county, where they live, the reasons for their situation, and to identify gaps in service in the community. This survey has recently wrapped up and was issued to a wide audience at the end of July 2017. Leadership Berks (a program operated by GRCA dedicated to developing, supporting, and connecting community leaders in Berks County) assisted the WDB in developing a road map for the implementation of the study results.

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

One outcome was the United Way of Berks County issuance of Venture Grants in 2018 totaling \$100,000. These grants were awarded to programs serving unaccompanied homeless youth and/or disconnected young adults. The recipients were: Reading School District - Red Knight Bridge to Success Program, Family Promise of Berks County - U-Turn, and Mary's Shelter - Youth Empowerment Supportive Services. The WDB is currently considering additional steps and partners.

Carole Homolash, District Administrator of OVR and WDB member, attended the meeting to update the committee on the partnership developing between OVR and the board around the summer youth employment program that is targeted to youth with disabilities. This is directly related to the WIOA Title IV requirement for pre-employment transition services. Summer 2019 is the fourth year of this partnership between WDB, OVR, and Goodwill Keystone Area.

The process for general Title I eligibility is detailed in Section 3.3. The Board has made the determination to focus all WIOA Title I Youth funds on Out-of-School Youth (OSY). The WDB has determined that an OSY who requires additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program or to secure or hold employment is documented as follows:

- Degree/Diploma/GED/Certificate Completers: A demonstrated inability to maintain full-time employment (30 hours per week) during the six-month period after the award of a high school diploma/GED or the award of a post-secondary degree/certification, or
- Degree/Certificate Non-completers: Youth with a high school diploma/GED who enroll but do not complete a full-time post-secondary education and are unemployed for a period of six-months following the withdrawal from the education program.

ResCare has a cooperative agreement with the local YouthBuild provider to accept referrals of youth in need of assistance with placement in employment and/or post-secondary education or youth who have completed their six-month term in YouthBuild but are still in need of completing their GED.

ResCare also has Job Corps placement staff on site at the one-stop. They are listed as an additional partner.

4.9 How will the local board coordinate workforce investment activities and ensure they are carried out in the local area with statewide rapid response?

The Berks WDB's Rapid Response Team is made up of experienced PA CareerLink[®] Title I and Wagner-Peyser staff, a local community-based organization with strong labor connections (UCS), and the state-assigned regional Rapid Response coordinator. Informal feedback from a focus group held with the Berks WDB Rapid Response Team and state regional Rapid Response staff on March 29, 2016 indicates that the Berks WDB Rapid Response Team is especially competent and assertive in meeting the needs of dislocated workers impacted by layoffs and plant closings. The team also coordinates efforts with the regional Strategic Early Warning Network (SEWN) Coordinator and to assist with this coordination, the COO of the Berks WDB serves on

the SE PA Regional SEWN Advisory Council. The Berks WDB will continue to support such effective local and regional coordination going forward.

However, there is room for local improvement by placing a greater focus on layoff aversion strategies such as incumbent worker training. The painful experience of the Berks County WDB has been that dislocated workers often lack the 21st century skills to give them confidence that they can navigate the economic, social and even psychological challenges associated with job loss. We have found this to be especially true among long-tenured manufacturing production workers who often entered employment in the sector decades ago in a very different world. Through experience, seniority, and consistent contributions with their employers, these workers over time often earned their way to top pay rates, excellent benefits including maximum vacation and leave, and attractive work schedules (e.g. day shift positions.) Unfortunately, too often the job skills and process knowledge these workers acquired with a single employer is often firm-specific and not valued by other potential employers, even within the manufacturing sector. By contrast, higher-skilled manufacturing workers such as machinists, industrial electricians, and mechanics often develop and retain transferable skills that are in demand and can more quickly make the transition to jobs that approximate what they had with the previous employer. By placing a greater emphasis on WIOA's permissible use of adult and dislocated worker funds to support targeted incumbent worker training as described in Section 2.1, the Berks WDB looks to assist local employers expand and leverage their investments in word-class technology and processes in order to avert layoffs. When layoffs do occur, employees who took advantage of such training should more quickly make the transition back to family-sustaining employment.

4.10 *How will the local board coordinate relevant secondary and postsecondary education programs and activities with workforce investment activities to support strategies, enhance services, and avoid duplication of service(s). Describe local board actions related to Perkins Act Section 134 biennial "CTE comprehensive needs assessment".*

The Berks County WDB closely collaborates with both local Career and Technical Centers (BCTC and RMCTC) and Reading Area Community College (RACC) to ensure that training programs align with industry needs and high priority occupations. All three schools are PA CareerLink® Berks County partners. In addition, the Berks County WDB COO serves on Executive Advisory Boards for both BCTC and RMCTC and reviews requests for state equipment grants, providing letters of support as appropriate. The Berks WDB COO also serves on annual Perkins review committees for all three schools.

Berks County WDB staff participated in a Perkins V State Plan Stakeholder Session held by the PA Department of Education in Harrisburg in April 2019. With the impending U.S. Department of Education implementation of the Perkins V legislation, the Berks County WDB is taking steps to ensure that the CTC and RACC Career and Technology Education programs are fully aligned with the WDB local plan priorities. As an initiative to guarantee this alignment and to assure compliance with Perkins V legislative requirements, the WDB is scheduling a planning meeting in the Fall 2019 to review this local plan and how its relevant elements will be incorporated into

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

BCTC, RMCTC and RACC comprehensive local needs assessments in advance of their December 2019 submission.

As described above in Section 1.2, the Berks County WDB and fellow *RTP* partners facilitated an innovative 2+2+2 pathway from technical high school, to community college to 4-year institutions – *The Berks Technical Academy*. RACC has partnered with the County’s two high school career and technical centers - Berks Career and Technology Center (BCTC) and Reading Muhlenberg Career and Technology Center (RMCTC) - to build comprehensive Technical Academy career pathways and the associated articulation agreements for high school CTE students to earn college credit for high-end technical coursework. In effect, the Technical Academy serves as an *honors program* for qualified CTC students, allowing them to acquire up to 27 college credits at no cost prior to high school graduation. Such focused and talented students are highly sought after by local employers for paid internships during the school year, while on summer break and again upon high school graduation. Once hired, Technical Academy graduates may receive financial support from their employers while they complete their Associate’s degree programs at RACC. RACC has been particularly effective in assisting qualifying students to access federal Pell grants to cover tuition costs. If the students wish to continue their technical training and education beyond RACC, they may do so at aligned 4-year institutions (e.g. Penn State – Berks) through additional articulation agreements that are part of the Technical Academy pathway.

The best practice Berks Technical Academy is the most developed, but not the only example of how the Berks WDB local board coordinates education and workforce investment activities with relevant secondary and postsecondary education programs and activities to coordinate strategies, enhance services, and avoid duplication of services. The Berks County WDB regularly partners with other local WDBs in the Commonwealth in securing competitive state and national grants, such as the recent *Make It in America H-1B* grant. These funds were effectively used from 2013 - 2016 to support nearly 100 local participants in acquiring high-level advanced manufacturing industry-recognized credentials at RACCs’ Schmidt Training and Technology Center and leading to hiring and promotional opportunities.

RACC is also the local *WIOA Title II Adult Educational and Literacy* program contractor for the Berks County Workforce Development Area. RACC’s President was a long-standing member of the Berks County WDB, reflecting the primary importance of coordinating WIOA Title I and Title II program services and strategies to avoid duplication and maximize our limited local resources. Following the President’s retirement at the end of Program Year 2017, RACC’s Director of Career Training, Community Education & Professional Development who leads RACC’s Title II program services was appointed to the WDB where she serves on the WDB’s One Stop Oversight Committee. The Executive Director of one of RACC’s key Title II sub-contractors, the *Literacy Council of Reading-Berks* also is a non-Board member of the Berks County WDB’s *One-Stop Oversight Committee*. He also is a former President of the Pennsylvania Association for Continuing Education (PAACE) and is recognized as a statewide expert on adult education and literacy and how to coordinate Title I and Title II programs. As a result, both Committee members are

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

well-positioned to help coordinate local Title I and Title II services and strategies with all of our PA CareerLink® Partners.

In March 2016 the Berks WDB was the lead applicant awarded a \$400,000 Innovation Grant for the Greater *Reading – Lancaster Partnership for Youth Careers* to promote career and technical education (CTE) in Berks County and Lancaster County. Berks Career and Technology Center (BCTC), Reading Muhlenberg Career and Technology Center (RMCTC) and the Lancaster County Career and Technology Center (LCCTC). The Lancaster County WDB was also a partner in this grant. Under the grant, the five partners successfully coordinated a broad arrange of programs in PY2016 in both counties including 8th grade technical career explorations camps, summer work-based experience, and employer visits focused on CTE student retention and motivation.

The Berks WDB also works closely with the Berks County Intermediate Unit (BCIU) which coordinates additional educational services for Berks County's eighteen public school services within Berks County and is also represented on the Berks County WD Board's Youth Committee. The Berks Business Education Coalition (BBEC) is chaired by a local business leader and the BBEC's membership includes the County's five colleges and the eighteen public school districts as well as business leaders. The BBEC is an active partner with the Berks County WD Board on programs to facilitate employer-educator collaboration and to provide local students with valuable work-based learning opportunities throughout the County. Specifically, in PY2015 the Berks County WDB provided the BBEC with \$90,000 from the state Business Education Discretionary Grant program. The BBEC's Executive Director is a member of the Board's Youth Committee. Both the BCIU and the BBEC partner with the Berks County WDB and our 18 local school districts to promote career awareness and preparation programs including *Project Lead the Way*, STEM Academies, STEM competitions, and employer engagements geared to the many career opportunities available within the region.

Finally, the Berks County WDB maintains a close working relationship with the Higher Education Council of Berks County whose membership includes the presidents of the County's five non-profit and public institutions for higher education. The Higher Education Council of Berks County also serves as the nominating entity for education sector representatives appointed the WDB. The Berks WDB COO also serves on the Kutztown University Business Advisory Council where he provides guidance and recommendations on programs and local labor market information (LMI).

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

Since 1999, the PA CareerLink® Berks County has shown the way in how to maximize staff coordination and services to the job seeker/employer customer through the functional alignment of staff. Integration at PA CareerLink® Berks County happens at both the staff and team manager

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

levels. Some teams have mixed staff from multiple partners. Some teams have staff from a single partner organization. All teams have a dedicated manager/supervisor. Integration occurs through twice-monthly full staff meetings, twice-monthly team manager meetings and various staff development activities. In addition, staff from other organizations work on teams and participate in integration activities. These include Goodwill Keystone Area, AARP and Reading Area Community College work-study program. Partners whose employees participate as integrated team members are: PA Department of Labor and Industry - Bureau of Workforce Partnership and Operation (PA L&I BWPO), EDSI Adult and Dislocated Worker, ResCare Youth Services, EDSI Business Services Team, and EDSI EARN program. Other partners with employees who do not participate as integrated team members are Berks Career and Technology Center (BCTC) and Reading-Muhlenberg Career and Technology Center (RMCTC). Functional supervisors/managers are individuals who make work assignments and supervise the work of individuals regardless of payroll attachment. Agency managers serve as liaisons for employer-specific information and issues. Responsibilities are kept separate by making all staff aware of the distinction, setting the expectation that everyone understands and implements the distinction, and enforcing it.

As detailed previously the one-stop operator provides functional supervision of the PA CareerLink® Administrator who acts as a functional leader within the one-stop. As such, they have the authority to organize and supervise Partner staff, in order to optimize and streamline service delivery efforts. Key functions include:

- Integrate systems and coordinate services for the center and its Partners, placing priority on customer service.
- Integrated Workforce Service Delivery, as defined by WIOA, means organizing and implementing services by function (rather than by program), when permitted by a program's authorizing statute and as appropriate, and by coordinating policies, staff communication, capacity building, and training efforts.
- Service integration focusing on serving all customers seamlessly (including targeted populations) by providing a full range of services staffed by cross-functional teams, consistent with the purpose, scope, and requirements of each program.
- Ensuring services are seamless to the customer, meaning the services are free of cumbersome transitions or duplicative registrations from one program service to another, when avoidable, and there is a smooth customer flow to access the array of services available in the workforce center.
- Oversee and coordinate partner, program, and PA CareerLink® Berks County performance.

Two examples of the integration of staff and programs currently taking place at the PA CareerLink® Berks County are the Welcome Function and Employer Outreach Team.

The Welcome Function consists of two components: a Welcome Orientation and an Initial Assessment.

- The Welcome Orientation is a group activity offered three times a week on a drop-in basis, alternating between morning and afternoon sessions for the convenience of customers' schedules. A PA CareerLink® staff member facilitates the orientation and uses a

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

PowerPoint presentation to reinforce the information presented verbally. Information is presented about a wide range of independent, expanded and comprehensive career services, including Resource Room services, explanations of PA CareerLink® registration and use, career exploration and labor market information resources, workshops, assessment tools, case management and career advising, training opportunities, pre-training/pre-employment workshops, structured soft skills preparation, structured job search preparation, self-assisted job search, Career Center for Young Adults, WIOA eligibility and PA CareerLink® events. All new PA CareerLink® Berks County customers are encouraged to attend a Welcome Orientation. Customers who choose not to attend a Welcome Orientation are offered a handout of independent career services they may participate in at any time, along with a schedule of Welcome Orientation events they may attend in the future.

- Immediately following the Welcome Orientation, each customer participates in an individual Initial Assessment with a PA CareerLink® Berks County staff member. Utilizing a specially-designed assessment form, staff members guide customers through an assessment of their labor force, Unemployment Compensation, Veteran and disability statuses, their career/employment goals, and their concerns about any factors that may impact their ability to achieve their goals. Considering the next type of service a customer may select, independent, expanded or comprehensive Career Services, the staff member guides them to participate in appropriate services. These may include PA CareerLink® registration, workshops, resume writing assistance, assessments, job referrals, case management and application for WIOA eligibility and services. Staff members may also arrange for referrals to community agencies to assist customers with concerns beyond the scope of services delivered at the PA CareerLink® Berks County services, including child care, housing, health care and legal/financial issues.

With so much activity underway, it is critical that employer outreach activities are coordinated and communicated among the various teams. This is accomplished through a structured Employer Outreach Team (EOT) that was established in 2016. The EOT is comprised of individuals from Business Services, EARN, Young Adult, OVR, the WDB, and other community agencies who come together monthly to discuss and share business/employer intelligence. The goals of the team are to ensure employers receive a consistent message from the team members, that employer visits are coordinated to maximize outreach efforts and diminish employer program fatigue, and to maximize job seeker placements through the sharing of hiring information.

Each Partner commits to cross-training of staff, as appropriate, and to providing other professional learning opportunities that promote continuous quality improvement.

Partners will further promote system integration to the maximum extent feasible through:

- Effective communication, information sharing, and collaboration with the one-stop operator,
- Joint planning, policy development, and system design processes,
- Commitment to the joint mission, vision, goals, strategies, and performance measures,

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

- The design and use of intake, assessment, referral, and case management processes,
- The use of common and/or linked data management systems and data sharing methods, as appropriate,
- Leveraging of resources, including other public agency and non-profit organization services,
- Participation in a continuous improvement process designed to boost outcomes and increase customer satisfaction, and
- Participation in regularly scheduled Partner meetings to exchange information in support of the above and encourage program and staff integration.

The primary principle of the referral system is to provide integrated and seamless delivery of services to workers, job seekers, and employers. In order to facilitate such a system, Partners agree to:

- Familiarize themselves with the basic eligibility and participation requirements, as well as with the available services and benefits offered, for each of the Partners' programs represented in the PA CareerLink[®] Berks County,
- Develop materials summarizing their program requirements and making them available for Partners and customers,
- Develop and utilize intake, eligibility determination, assessment, and registration processes,
- Provide substantive referrals to customers who are eligible for supplemental and complementary services and benefits under partner programs,
- Regularly evaluate ways to improve the referral process, including the use of customer satisfaction surveys,
- Commit to robust and ongoing communication required for an effective referral process, and
- Commit to actively follow up on the results of referrals.

Staff training occurs on a regular basis at the PA CareerLink[®] Berks County, encompassing training provider and community-based organizations providing overviews of their available services, team updates, regular EO/ADA/LEP training, and other training specific to the provision of services (case note training, case management, etc.). These trainings usually occur at the twice monthly full staff meetings. Additionally, "fun days" are also scheduled through-out the year (Holiday Luncheon, Cultural Food Day, Chocolate Fest, Staff Egg Hunt) to encourage staff cooperation and cohesion.

4.12 How will the local board coordinate WIOA title I workforce investment activities with adult education literacy activities under WIOA title II?

The state plan, consistent with federal WIOA guidelines, requires that as part of the WIOA Title II adult basic education application process, the local board receive opportunity to review applications for alignment with the local plan. Local boards are not directly involved in WIOA title II

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

solicitation and procurement; the title II competition is run solely by PDE, and all funding decisions are made solely by PDE. The local boards will review applications submitted to PDE for WIOA title II funds for alignment with the goals and strategies of the local area plan, and then provide recommendations to PDE on ways to improve alignment, if applicable.

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

In Spring of 2018 the WDB reviewed the only proposal for ABE Direct Services and the only proposal for Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education received for Berks County. The review team consisted of one board member and three board staff. The section reviewed in each was the “Alignment with Workforce” section. The review rubric was submitted to PDE on April 27, 2018. Award to RACC was announced via a press release on June 11, 2018.

Through the One-stop Memorandum of Understanding process the WDB is currently working with the local WIOA Title II service provider to design how local Title I and Title II activities will be coordinated.

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

The Welcome Orientation and Initial Assessment process was detailed under Section 4.11.

The Operator and its Partners will develop and implement a strategic outreach plan that may include:

- Specific steps to be taken by each partner,
- An outreach plan to the region’s human resources professionals,
- An outreach and recruitment plan to the region’s job seekers, including targeted efforts for populations most at-risk or most in need,
- An outreach and recruitment plan for out-of-school youth,
- Sector strategies and career pathways,
- Connections to registered apprenticeship,
- A plan for messaging to internal audiences,
- An outreach tool kit for Partners,

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

- Regular use of social media,
- Clear objectives and expected outcomes, and
- Leveraging of any statewide outreach materials relevant to the region.

Current outreach efforts include:

- All new applicants for unemployment compensation are directed to register on PA CareerLink® and told they can come to the PA CareerLink® office to accomplish this task. Claimants who are placed on PDLI's RESEA list are sent letters inviting them to an Orientation. From 07/01/18-06/30/19 2,564 letters were sent out and 1,278 attended orientation.
- Job seekers are invited to sign up for email notifications at orientation, at workshops, and with signage in the reception area and the resource room. Those who sign up receive information about job fairs and employer recruitment activities. On July 30th, 2019 there are 2,656 contacts on the list. 40% or 1,063 contacts are currently active. The average email open rate for July is 30%. Stats from mailings show that 49% of the emails are opened on mobile devices and 51% are opened on computers. The PA CareerLink® Administrator manages the Constant Contact outreach.
- Information about job fairs and recruitment activities is shared with any community organization that requests to be part of the email group. Organizations currently on the list include all of the libraries in the Berks County Library System, Reading Public Library, County of Berks Domestic Relations Office, Child Care Information Systems, Reading Muhlenberg Career and Tech Center, Berks Connections/Pretrial Services, Abilities in Motion, PathStone, Opportunity House, Reading Area Community College, County of Berks Veterans Affairs, Friend Inc., Hope Rescue Mission, Reading Housing Authority, Berks Community Health Center, Joseph's People, YMCA, United Way of Berks County, Berks County Intermediate Unit, Berks Community Action Program, AARP Senior Community Service Employment Program, Berks County Assistance Office, Berks Coalition to End Homelessness, Kutztown University, Berks County Jail System Community Corrections Center, New Person Ministries, and Clare of Assisi House, United Community Services, Service Access Management, OVR, UPMC Community Care, MRC, and the Hispanic Center of Reading/Berks.
- Two large job fairs are held each year and provide information to the public about PA CareerLink® Berks County services.
- Classified ads are placed in the Sunday edition of the Reading Eagle featuring selected postings on PA CareerLink®; this ad includes the PA CareerLink® logo and address.
- Staff members participate in regularly-scheduled community outreach activities throughout the program year. For example: County Human Services orientations (quarterly), Veterans Expos (one or two each year), Berks Agricultural Resource Network job fair (yearly), Berks Connections/Pretrial Services Community Resource Network (quarterly), Berks Connections/Pretrial Services job fairs (twice a

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

year), Berks Coalition to End Homelessness meetings (monthly Sept - May), Be Wise (yearly). Participation in these events is based on staff availability.

- Welcome Orientations, workshops, recruitments and job fairs are posted in PA CareerLink® "events".
- Staff participates in rapid response information sessions for dislocated workers as scheduled by Rapid Response Coordination Services in Harrisburg.
- In October 2016 a Twitter account was created to market the job fairs.
- The Business Services Team has goals for outreach and services to employers. Business Services uses various methods to perform outreach to employers including: attending regional networking events, cold calling / e-mailing points of contact, advertisement on social media, and employer visits.

A full discussion of the one-stop commitment to equal opportunity is found in Section 4.4.

As detailed earlier eligible OVR customers receive multiple services from qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors that may include but not be limited to; diagnostic, vocational counseling and guidance, vocational evaluation, restoration, training, job placement and pre-employment training services for eligible and potentially eligible high school students with disabilities. OVR also provides multiple services to the business community designed to assist businesses with onboarding pre-screened qualified employees with disabilities. OVR on-boarding supports for a qualified new hire can include: reasonable accommodation consultation, initial probationary period wage reimbursement (On-the Job Training-OJT), referral on tax credits or deductions. OVR also offers no-cost consultation on the Americans with Disability Act (ADA), accessibility standards and helping a business to retain current employees following an accident, injury or disability.

4.14 What services, activities, and program resources will be provided to businesses and employers, in the local area? Describe how businesses and employers engage with education.

The Business Services Team (BST) is a sub-contracted service currently provided by EDSI. The contract pays for two staff members who report to a local operations manager (Nicholas Shirk, who also provides management to the other EDSI provided services – EARN and WIOA Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker). Additionally, staff from other teams (EARN, WIOA Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker and Youth, Veteran’s program) also work cooperatively with this team (all are located in the same room to facilitate communication and cooperation).

The specific requirements of the Business Services Team in the PA CareerLink® Berks County are:

- Serve as a single point of contact for businesses, responding to all requests in a timely manner
- Provide information and services related to Unemployment Insurance taxes and claims

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

- Assist with disability and communication accommodations, including job coaches
- Conduct outreach regarding Local workforce system's services and product
- Conduct on-site Rapid Response activities regarding closures and downsizings
- Develop On-the-Job Training (OJT) and Transitional Employment (TE) contracts
- Provide access to labor market information
- Provide customized recruitment and job applicant screening, assessment and referral services
- Provide employer and industry cluster-driven Occupational Skills Training through Individual Training Accounts with eligible training providers
- Assist with the interpretation of labor market information
- Conduct job fairs
- Develop customized training opportunities to meet specific employer and/or industry cluster needs
- Use of one-stop center facilities for recruiting and interviewing job applicants
- Consult on human resources issues
- Coordinate with employers to develop and implement layoff aversion strategies
- Post job vacancies in the state labor exchange system and take and fill job postings
- Provide information regarding disability awareness issues
- Provide incumbent worker upgrade training through various modalities
- Provide information regarding workforce development initiatives and programs
- Provide information regarding assistive technology and communication accommodations
- Develop, convene, or implement industry or sector partnerships

As discussed earlier the Employer Outreach Team (EOT) was established in 2016. The EOT is comprised of individuals from Business Services, EARN, Young Adult, OVR, the WDB, and other community agencies that meet monthly to discuss and share business/employer intelligence. The goals of the team are to ensure employers receive a consistent message from the team members, that employer visits are coordinated to maximize outreach efforts and diminish employer program fatigue, and to maximize job seeker placements through the sharing of hiring information.

Much of the BST performance requirements is based on employer engagement and is measured through the following:

- Overall market penetration
- Manufacturing sector market penetration
- Healthcare sector market penetration
- Solicitation of employer on-site recruitment at the one-stop
- Job Fair job seeker participation
- A requirement to maintain at least one active WorkKeys profiler certification

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

- The production of a bi-monthly Market Intelligence Report providing “intelligence” gained through employer and other contacts

WDB staff administers the Next Generation Industry Partnership and incumbent worker training funds. BST and WDB staff cooperatively participate in new employer recruitment and often jointly participate in tours of employer facilities. After these initial joint efforts the relationship is “handed-off” to the logical staff (BST, WDB) to maintain based on employer level of engagement in the workforce system.

The Berks County WDB has a well-established best practice of working closely with our economic development partners to first understand the needs of local employers (see sections 1.2 and 1.3) which leads to ongoing collaboration with our education and economic development partners on multiple events and initiatives in response to those needs. In 2018 these included include the annual *Berks Manufacturing Summit*, the *What’s So Cool About Manufacturing?* video contest for middle school students (now entering its fourth year in Berks County), and the *Career Ready Berks Breakfast Symposium* every school year.

On October 18, 2017 the first annual *Berks Manufacturing Summit* was held at Reading Area Community College. The summit, held in conjunction with manufacturing month, was designed to celebrate the region’s robust manufacturing footprint by providing information on industry trends and peer to peer conversation. Summit partners included the Greater Reading Chamber Alliance, the Berks County Workforce Development Board, Reading Area Community College, Manufacturers Resource Center, Penn State Berks, and the Berks County Industrial Development Authority.

The following October (2018), purpose of the KU SBDC Building Pathways Between School and Work Symposium held November 30, 2017 at the regional Ben Franklin Technology Partnership joined Crowne Plaza was to launch the original planning team to sponsor our 2nd annual Manufacturing summit RACC with even more manufacturing employers in attendance. Highlights included a panel discussion of issues impacting today’s manufacturers with local manufacturing leaders, expansion financing Career Ready Berks Pathways Framework. This framework is based on the Pennsylvania Department of Education career education and capital equipment, workforce standards which include career awareness, work-based and post-secondary learning opportunities, and employability skills and financial literacy. This framework was developed by the Career Ready Berks Alliance (formerly the Berks County Career Pathways Alliance) which includes the following partners: Berks Business Education Coalition (BBEC), Berks Career & Technology Center (BCTC), Reading Muhlenberg Career & Technology Center (RMCTC), Berks County Workforce Development Board, Berks County School Districts, Greater Reading Chamber Alliance (GRCA), Northeast Berks Chamber of Commerce, National Center for College & Career Transitions (NC3T), Reading Area Community College (RACC), R.M. Palmer Company, and the Berks County Intermediate Unit (BCIU). a presentation from a national expert on changes experienced with our evolution to Manufacturing 4.0

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

Through utilization of four Business Education Partnership Grants in PY2018, the Berks County WDB has partnered with and provided funding for:

- The Manufacturers Resource Center (MRC) to expand the successful “*What’s So Cool About Manufacturing?*” video contest to become in March 2019 the largest of the 15 regional contests in the state in just our third year. The annual contest has grown to include thirty-five middle schools in twenty-three Berks County, involving. This career awareness program is designed in collaboration with employers and educators to help improve the image of manufacturing as a career choice and to recruit more young people to vocational and technical schools and community colleges that feed talent to the manufacturing industry. From October through mid-February students produced short video profiles of local companies and the career opportunities they offer. These videos are then judged by an expert panel and public voting in late-February with an awards ceremony in early March. The MRC is a nonprofit organization partially funded by the U.S. Department of Commerce’s NIST-MEP program, as well as the State of Pennsylvania’s Department of Community and Economic Development. MRC is dedicated to creating jobs and economic opportunity in eastern Pennsylvania’s Lehigh, Northampton, Schuylkill, Carbon and Berks counties.
- The Greater Reading Chamber Alliance to deliver Career Prep, a two-part program dedicated solely to high school students enrolled at Reading High School. Part one assigns 11th and 12th grade students to a volunteer (over 75 volunteers in 2018) from the business community, who provide information on careers and employment opportunities, personal goal attainment strategies, job seeker tactics, resume building and interview techniques. Part two is comprised of a “Career Prep Resource Fair” providing juniors and seniors with introductions to local employers, post-secondary education partners and social service resource organizations. GRCA also provides the CHOICES Program, a licensed interactive decision-making workshop that empowers teens to achieve academic success in pursuit of their career and life aspirations. The program provides much needed critical thinking and decision-making skills as well as the opportunity to be exposed to business professionals volunteering their time in the classroom. Volunteers from the local business community take students through real-world exercises about the consequences of dropping out/making bad choices, and the opportunities to be gained by staying in school.
- The annual *Career Ready Berks Symposium* held every school year since 2017 at the Crowne Plaza to launch, grow and sustain the Career Ready Berks Career Pathways Framework. This framework is based on the Pennsylvania Department of Education career education and workforce standards which include career awareness, work-based and post-secondary learning opportunities, and employability skills and financial literacy. This framework was developed by the Career Ready Berks Pathways Alliance which includes the following partners: Berks Business Education Coalition (BBEC), Berks Career & Technology Center (BCTC), Reading Muhlenberg Career & Technology Center (RMCTC), Berks County Workforce Development Board, Berks County

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

School Districts, Greater Reading Chamber Alliance (GRCA), Northeast Berks Chamber of Commerce, National Center for College & Career Transitions (NC3T), Reading Area Community College (RACC), R.M. Palmer Company, Reading Area Community College, the Manufacturing Resources Center (MRC) and the Berks County Intermediate Unit (BCIU).

- The Berks and Reading-Muhlenberg CTC to deliver Career Exploration Camps. At the conclusion of the 6th, 7th or 8th grades, students will have the opportunity to participate in a week-long Career Exploration Camp to take place at the career and technology center serving the students' school district – Berks Career and Technology Center (BCTC) or Reading Muhlenberg Career and Technology Center (RMCTC). The camp is a five-day program, offered after the school year ends in June, designed to engage youth in pathways through career specific hands-on activities and projects with a goal of generating interest among this group to attend the career and technology center. As defined by the PA Department of Education (PDE) and in alignment with the Career Ready Berks Alliance framework, Engineering/Industrial Technology and Health/Science Career Cluster pathways, including crossovers to Computer Systems/Information Technology, are considered primary clusters providing STEM related career advancement and will be the priority focal points of the camps.
- The BCIU for the placement of a Business-Education Career Pathways Partnership Liaison as part of the Career Ready Berks Alliance initiative. To build active partnerships, a business-education liaison will communicate needs and current initiatives among employers, educators and apprenticeship sponsors and facilitate active collaboration of with all stakeholders through meetings and events. A primary focus of the implementation liaison is the development of Pathway Advisory Groups in the five career clusters defined by the PDE. These Pathway Advisory Groups serve to advise educational organizations on workforce needs, skill needs, and suggested curriculum development. Additionally, the liaison will be responsible for identifying, recruiting and promoting business and educator contributions linking students, parents, and educators in all 18 Berks County school districts to hands on experiences and career awareness opportunities available through the application of an on-line “clearing house” platform known as Career Ready Berks. This project component implements elements of strategic planning that has been taking place under the collaboration of the Career Ready Berks Alliance, a group of regional stakeholders partnering to strengthen and enhance collaboration among school districts, career and technical centers, postsecondary institutions, employers, workforce agencies, and other community stakeholders to create a county-wide, self-sustaining framework that builds and supports rigorous career pathway exploration for all learners; leverages and aligns resources; coordinates and expands communication among stakeholders; supports regional workforce needs and strengthens our economy.

Through utilization of Teacher in the Workplace Grants in PY2018, the Berks County WDB has partnered with BCIU to provide the “Career Ready Berks Alliance: Capacity Building for the *Inside Berks Business* Educator Internship Program” project, an innovative approach to the

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

coordination and expansion of experiential programs designed to increase Berks County K-12 educator exposure to diverse internship opportunities in the greater Berks County region in both one-day workplace experiences during school year professional development/in-service days and a summer five-day format. These experiences serve as a perception-building exercise that will benefit a better understanding of how career-related curriculum development can positively impact the fundamental student knowledge, skills, and abilities that employers consider essential for successful employment. In school year 2018-2019, the partnership launched the Career Ready Berks website which includes current labor market information provided by the WDB, other career planning resources, and an innovative web-based matching platform to help connect local businesses interested in providing a broad range of career development opportunities with our 18 local school districts as well as private schools in the area.

4.15 How will the local board coordinate WIOA title I workforce investment activities with the provision of transportation and other appropriate supportive services in the local area?

PA CareerLink® Berks County WIOA employment planners are responsible for coordinating services and providing referrals to other state and local agencies offering supportive services such as:

- Linkages to community services,
- Assistance with transportation (normally through the provision of bus passes or gas cards),
- Child care and dependent care,
- Assistance with housing,
- Needs-related payments,
- Assistance with educational testing,
- Reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities,
- Legal aid services,
- Referrals to health care,
- Assistance with uniforms or other appropriate work attire and work-related tools,
- Assistance with books, fees, school supplies, and other necessary items for students enrolled in postsecondary education,
- Payments and fees for employment and training-related applications, tests, and certifications.

Providers of WIOA Title I services in the PA CareerLink® Berks County must develop a resource network insuring that the availability of supportive services in Berks County is made available to participants in the one-stop delivery system.

The PA CareerLink® Berks County WIOA employment planner will meet with each participant to assess the need for supportive services. The following are supportive service requirements:

- Participant must be a WIOA Title I eligible individual.

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

- Participant must be participating in WIOA Title I Adult/Dislocated worker training services or Title I Youth services.
- Participant must be unable to obtain supportive services through other programs providing such services.

Each participant will be given individualized case management services and plan development in order to eliminate possible dependency on supportive services. Supportive services award should be based on individual participant needs, plan development, and in compliance with this policy and WIOA and any subsequent Federal and/or Commonwealth of Pennsylvania clarifications

WIOA Title I Youth

The provision of support services is one of the fourteen youth elements in WIOA. It is the policy of the WDB that the provider of WIOA youth services in the PA CareerLink® Berks County will budget an appropriate amount of funds to provide those supportive services that may not be readily available from community resources.

WIOA Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker

It is the policy of the Berks County WDB to provide funds for supportive services that may not be readily available from community resources in the following cases:

- When funds have been specifically budgeted for supportive services.
- As a requirement of specific funding:
 - From time to time non-WIOA formula funding may be acquired by the WDB. If supportive services are to be offered as a requirement of such funding the WDB will ensure such services are offered and provided.

5 COMPLIANCE

5.1 *Describe the cooperative agreements that define how all local area service providers will carry out the requirements for integration of and access to the entire set of services available in the local area one-stop delivery system.*

In general the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is executed between the Berks County Workforce Development Board (WDB), PA CareerLink® Berks County One-Stop Partners (Partners), and the Chief Elected Official (CEO), of the County of Berks. They are collectively referred to as the “Parties” in the MOU.

This MOU is developed to confirm the understanding of the Parties regarding the operation and management of the PA CareerLink® Berks County. The WDB provides local oversight of workforce programming in Berks County.

The WDB, with the agreement of the CEO, has, through a competitive process in accordance with the Uniform Guidance, WIOA and its implementing regulations, and Local procurement laws and regulations, selected Educational Data Systems, Inc. as the one-stop operator for the PA CareerLink® Berks County.

The One-Stop Operating Budget and Infrastructure Funding Agreement establish a financial plan, including terms and conditions, to fund the services and operating costs of the PA CareerLink® Berks County. The Parties to the MOU agree that joint funding is an essential foundation for an integrated service delivery system and necessary to maintain the PA CareerLink® Berks County.

The Vision, Mission, System Structure, Terms and Conditions, One-Stop Operating Budget, and Infrastructure Funding Agreement outlined in the MOU reflect the commitment of the Parties to their job seeker and business customers, as well as to the overall success of the PA CareerLink® Berks County.

OVR will be signatory on the WDB/One-Stop Partners Memorandum of Understanding. This agreement encourages cooperation and collaboration among all partners in the effort to make the PA CareerLink® Berks County a seamless operation with regard to customer flow, service delivery and customer referral.

Two examples of the effort towards integration include:

- The OVR Job Developer in Berks County is a member of the Employer Outreach Team in the PA CareerLink® Berks County. This team is comprised of individuals from Business Services, EARN, Young Adult, OVR and the WDB who come together monthly to discuss and share business/employer intelligence. The goals of the team are to ensure employers receive a consistent message from the team members, that employer visits are coordinated to maximize outreach efforts and diminish employer program fatigue, and to maximize job seeker placements through the sharing of hiring information.
- OVR continues to be an active partner in the Summer Work Employment and Assessment Program (SWEAP) targeted to youth with disabilities through funding approximately 50% of the youth in the program.

The *Committee on Increasing Opportunities for Individuals with Disabilities* is a new standing committee of the board recommended by a working group consisting of board members (including the District Administrator for the **Berks-Schuylkill District Office of Pennsylvania's Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR)** who co-chaired the group) and off-board members with expertise in human resources or serving/advocating for the community of individuals with disabilities. The group reviewed the impact of Board activities on individuals with disabilities. The focus of this committee is to increase the percentage of individuals with a disability in the workforce by offering meaningful employment opportunities through strong partnerships with businesses in greater Reading and Berks County. The committee began meeting in program year 2017 and as its' first task held the 1st Annual Employer Symposium on September 12, 2018.

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

5.2 *What is the process the local board uses to ensure the collection of the debts of lower-tier sub-recipients as a result of audits?*

The Berks WDB requires all subrecipients subject to the Single Audit provisions of the **OMB Uniform Administrative requirements to submit a copy of the audit report and corrective action plan** to the board. The WDB will review the audit report and corrective action plan for any findings related to WIOA or state funds provided to the subcontractor to determine if it contains any questioned cost.

The WDB will issue, in writing, the results of its review, giving the audited entity 30 days from issuance of the letter to submit an appeal of any findings. That appeal will be a request for a formal review of the final determination before an impartial hearing officer of the Berks WDB. The debt collection process will be stayed pending a decision regarding the appeal. However, the debt becomes delinquent on the first day following issuance of the letter, whether or not an appeal has been filed.

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

If no appeal of the final determination is filed, a lump-sum repayment from non-federal funds is due to WDB within 30 days after issuance of the final determination. The board, with approval from the PA Department of Labor & Industry, Bureau of Workforce Development Administration (BWDA), may negotiate short-term installment agreements in lieu of lump-sum payment as long as the disallowed cost were not a result of:

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

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

If repayment of the outstanding debt is not received within 30 days after issuance of the second notice, a final notice will be sent by certified mail. The final notice will state that the board must receive repayment within 10 days of issuance. It will also list the amount of accrued interest due on the debt. The notice will also state that should repayment of the debt and interest not be

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

received, appropriate legal and/or programmatic sanctions may be instituted. Any legal action will be initiated by the County of Berks Solicitor's office.

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

The WDB will implement the actions necessary to become or remain a high-performing board once the Commonwealth has released guidance related to high-performing local boards.

The Board is currently functioning as a high-performing Board in that it consistently achieves the following:

- Attains the Governor's goals as described in the PA Combined Plan;
- Meets the local area negotiated federal performance goals;
- Sustains fiscal integrity;
- Receives successful monitoring reports and other evaluations by federal and Commonwealth oversight staff;
- Researches new and/or improved methods to assist individuals with barriers to employment;
- Achieves training expenditure targets; and
- Develops sector initiatives

In the future, it will implement the actions necessary to remain a high-performing Board in accordance with any guidance that may be issued by the Commonwealth. In the meantime, it is researching the following types of activities for action:

- Expanding its collaboration with the other local workforce boards that are contiguous to it, including those in the Northeast, South Central, and Lehigh Valley Regions, to implement broader-based regional workforce initiatives; and
- Increasing the use of technology to further improve access for customers, including returning citizens, those with disabilities, and others with barriers to employment.

5.4 *What is the process the local board uses to provide an opportunity to have input into the development of the local plan, particularly for representatives of business, education, labor organizations, program partners, public agencies, and community stakeholders?*

The WDB and its *Policy, Planning, & Priorities Committee* which is responsible for developing this plan includes experienced and engaged membership from a number of private employers representing various industry sectors, economic development, higher education, labor, community-based organizations (CBOs) and public service agencies. A 30-day public comment period (beginning July 17, 2017) and a public meeting (August 4, 2017) provided ample opportunity for

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

those entities not represented on the Policy, Planning, & Priorities Committee to provide input to the plan. A modification to this plan was posted for public comment on August 15, 2019.

In addition, the Berks County WDB's transitional local WIOA "one-year" plan as approved by PA L&I in December 2016 has been publicly posted throughout PY2016 (and continued to be posted as this plan was being developed). This has proven to be a quite useful practice in generating informal dialogue with and input from numerous interested parties over the past year. Much of this dialogue has informed the WDB's *Policy, Planning, & Priorities Committee* development of this local plan.

5.5 *What is the process the local board uses to provide a 30-day public comment period prior to submission of the plan?*

The Berks WDB posted the proposed local plan on the County of Berks website – Berks WDB page for public review and comment from July 17, 2017 to August 16, 2017. The posting of the plan was advertised by official public notice published in *The Reading Eagle* on July 16, 2017. The public notice also advertised the public meeting for comment held at the PA CareerLink® Berks County on Friday August 14 from 9:30-11:00 am.

The plan was additionally made available for public comment as part of the South East PA regional plan comment period to begin July 17, 2017.

The public notice of the plan specified that public comments be submitted to the designated WDB staff member at rstevenson@bccl.org. These comments were to be reviewed by Berks County WDB staff as they were received and a summary of the comments and any changes to the plan as a result of this comment were to be posted on the County of Berks website on the Berks WDB page.

Any comments that represent disagreement to the plan were to be summarized and included as an attachment to the Berks WDB local plan to be submitted to the state as part of the required South East PA regional plan no later than September 1, 2017.

No public comments were received.

A modification to this plan was posted for public comment on August 11, 2019. The public notice of the plan specified that public comments be submitted to the designated WDB staff member at rstevenson@bccl.org. These comments were to be reviewed by Berks County WDB staff as they were received and a summary of the comments and any changes to the plan as a result of this comment were to be posted on the County of Berks website on the Berks WDB page.

Any comments that represent disagreement to the plan were to be summarized and included as an attachment to the Berks WDB local plan modification to be submitted to the state as part of the required South East PA regional plan no later than October 1, 2019.

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

No public comments were received.

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

ATTESTATIONS

By checking the box adjacent to each line item, the local board attests to ensuring the compliance components/documents listed are (or will be) in place and effective prior to December 31, 2017.

Each of the following components/documents should be current and available to the Department at any time during the planning process and/or monitoring or auditing processes. At this time, the Department is not requiring copies of such documents be attached to regional or local area plans.

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

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

X Agreement between the local area elected official(s) and the local workforce development board.

X Local workforce development board policy and process that provides for nomination, appointment and removal of board members; resolutions; bylaws; code of conduct; and conflict of interest.

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

X Local area procurement policy – Must describe formal procurement procedures.

X Local area MOU.

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

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

X Human resources policy and process including employee classification; benefits; holidays and PTO; recruitment and selection; employee development; discipline; layoffs, terminations and severance; sexual harassment; and equal opportunity/non-discrimination.

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

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

Appendix A

WIOA Title I Programs

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

The *WIOA Title I Programs Performance Accountability Table* is for the benefit of the public and must be updated accordingly. Local boards must edit the table's two columns with the appropriate program year(s) to correctly match the **most recent*** LWDA-negotiated performance goals and attained performance results. This completed table must be publicly posted with the local plan. The LWDB does not need to perform a WIOA plan modification as this table is revised; an email notification to local area workforce development stakeholders will suffice.

LWDA Name: Berks County Workforce Development Board		
WIOA Title I Programs (Adult-Dislocated Worker-Youth) Performance Measures	LWDA's WIOA Title I Programs Negotiated Performance Goals - *Program Year(s): 2018 – 2019	LWDA's WIOA Title I Programs Attained Performance Results - *Program Year: 2018
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	Negotiated Goals	Attained Performance
Adult	80%	73.8%
Dislocated Worker	85%	76.6%
Youth	75%	78.7%
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	Negotiated Goals	Attained Performance
Adult	72%	85.7%
Dislocated Worker	85%	87.5%
Youth	75%	73.1%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)	Negotiated Goals	Attained Performance
Adult	\$7,800	\$9,501
Dislocated Worker	\$8,000	\$8,644
Youth	Baseline	\$3,620
Credential Attainment Rate	Negotiated Goals	Attained Performance
Adult	75%	87.5%
Dislocated Worker	57%	82.6%
Youth	65%	86.3%
Measurable Skill Gains	Negotiated Goals	Attained Performance

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

Adult	Baseline	50.0%
Dislocated Worker	Baseline	63.1%
Youth	Baseline	76.2%

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

Appendix B

Program Partner/Provider List

Program Name	Program Authorization	Local Area Partner/Provider
POC address	POC telephone	POC website/email
Wagner-Peyser, Trade, Rapid Response, Jobs for Veterans, Foreign Labor Certification	Wagner-Peyser Act, Trade Act, Rapid Response, Jobs for Veterans State Grant, Foreign Labor Certification	PA Department of Labor & Industry
1920 Kutztown Road, Suite F, Reading, PA 19604	610-988-1378	jnichols@pa.gov
Unemployment Compensation	State Unemployment Compensation Programs	PA Department of Labor & Industry
1920 Kutztown Road, Suite F, Reading, PA 19604	717-783-7107	karencam@pa.gov
WIOA Title I Adult/Dislocated Worker	WIOA Title I	County of Berks/EDSI
1920 Kutztown Road, Suite F, Reading, PA 19604	610-988-1305	jtoribio@bccl.org
WIOA Title I Youth	WIOA Title I	County of Berks/EDSI
1920 Kutztown Road, Suite F, Reading, PA 19604	610-988-1387	acolumbo@bccl.org
EARN	TANF	County of Berks/EDSI
1920 Kutztown Road, Suite F, Reading, PA 19604	610-898-3846	ereadinger@bccl.org
Berks County Assistance Office	TANF	PA Department of Human Services
1920 Kutztown Road, Suite F, Reading, PA 19604	610-898-6833	mcassidy@pa.gov
Office of Vocational Rehabilitation	Rehabilitation Act Title I parts A and B programs	PA Department of Labor & Industry
1920 Kutztown Road, Suite F, Reading, PA 19604	610-621-5800	cahomolash@pa.gov
Rebuilding Reentrants and Reading (R3)	Second Chance Act of 2007	Berks Connections/Pretrial Services

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

19 N. 6 th Street, 4 th Floor, Reading, PA 19601	484-260-3860	pkershner@bcpsreentry.org
Adult Education and Family Literacy	Title II-Adult Education and Family Literacy Act	Reading Area Community College
1920 Kutztown Road, Suite F, Reading, PA 19604	610-372-4271	abradley@racc.edu
Vocational Education	Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act	Reading Area Community College
10 S. 2 nd Street, Reading, PA 19602	610-372-4721	mmitchell@racc.edu
YouthBuild	WIOA Title I	United Community Services
1251 N. Front Street, Reading, PA 19601	484-755-5003	rbradley@ucswf.org
Senior Community Service Employment Program	Title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965	AARP Foundation
147 N. 5 th Street, 2 nd Floor, Reading, PA 19601	610-375-2575	lquinby@aarp.org
Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Program	WIOA Title I	PathStone Corporation
1920 Kutztown Road, Suite F, Reading, PA 19604	610-376-2850	lrodriguezperez@pathstone.org
Employment & Training Activities	Community Services Block Grant	Berks Community Action Program, Inc.
645 Penn Street, Reading, PA 19601	610-376-6571	lberringer@bcapberks.org
Job Corp Outreach/Admissions and Transition	WOA Title I	ResCare Workforce Services
1920 Kutztown Road, Suite F, Reading, PA 19604	Outreach/Admissions: 610-988-1391 Transition: 610-988-1381	Schaeffer.ronald@jobcorps.org Carlson.kim@jobcorps.org
Apprenticeship and Training Office		PA Department of Labor & Industry
1920 Kutztown Road, Suite F, Reading, PA 19604	610-988-1335	evicente@pa.gov

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

Native Americans Programs	WIOA Title I	Council of Three Rivers American Indian Center, Inc.
1855 New Hope Street Norristown, PA 19401	800-341-3577	lgarrett@cotraic.org

PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

Appendix C

Organizational Chart

The organizational chart is for the benefit of the public and must be used to describe the attributes of the local workforce development system. This chart should be reviewed annually for revisions. The local board may supplement this model with clarifying charts. If multiple pages are needed to represent the local system ensure that "Governance/Administrative" and "Service Delivery" information is displayed on separate pages respectfully. Use of model sub-titles is required. Publicly post the organizational chart with the local plan. A WIOA plan modification is not required when revision occurs with this document.

