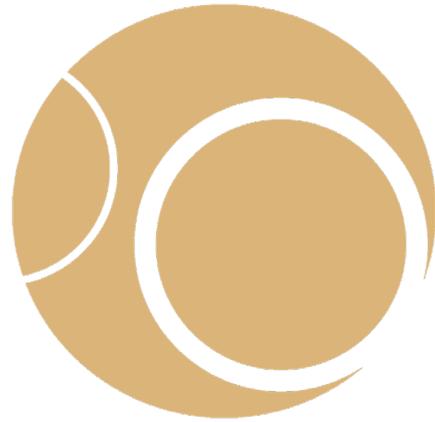


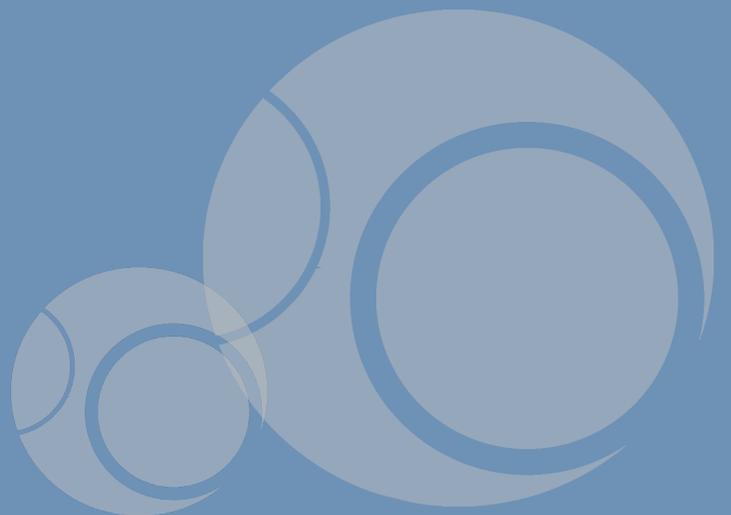
2020 WFWIB HIGHLIGHTS



WFWIB is an equal opportunity employer/program.
Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.

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LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Just a few months after the country began navigating the COVID-19 pandemic, our former WFWIB Executive Director Bill Thompson retired passing on the torch to me. Despite my enthusiasm and excitement, I knew that the next several months would be some of the most challenging that the WFWIB would soon face. While the COVID-19 pandemic has not ended, the WFWIB's staff, partners, providers, and program participants have continued to overcome challenges and barriers time and time again. I am proud of this organization and those connected to it for their ability to adapt and create new ways to develop our local area's workforce.

The 2020 WFWIB Highlights features the accomplishments, successes, and innovations achieved. Additionally, it highlights the WFWIB's diverse set of customers and major audiences of youth, educators, job seekers, employers, and more that are benefited by workforce development programs offered.

Our Experience Works! PLUS internship program found and connected internships when internships were scarce. The Teacher In the Workplace program worked to maintain teacher involvement when education was changing. WFWIB staff worked to ensure that local employers had options for training and retaining employees when layoffs were growing.

As more job seekers search for employment, as more employers search for talented workers, and as the workforce environment of Westmoreland and Fayette counties change, the WFWIB continues to apply for grants and funding, collaborate with partners and program providers, and identify the needs of the community.

I am optimistic that the workforce in the Westmoreland-Fayette area will continue to overcome the challenges it faces. The Westmoreland-Fayette Workforce Investment Board, in addition to our close partners at the local PA CareerLink® centers, are here to serve all job seekers and employers.

As we enter and work through the new year, we will continue to help those impacted by the pandemic and grow the programs offered to increase their reach and impact. Our efforts will continue until there is a job for every worker and a worker for every job.

JANET WARD

Executive Director, Westmoreland-Fayette Workforce Investment Board

EXPERIENCE WORKS! PLUS

The WFWIB hosted the Experience Works! PLUS internship program, primarily funded through the State/Local Internship Program (SLIP), for the third year in 2020. As with previous years, the goal of this program was to assist employers in implementing business improvements while providing valuable workforce experience to young people seeking a career opportunity. The WFWIB has designed the Experience Works! PLUS internship program to expose local post-secondary students to the growing workforce opportunities in Westmoreland and Fayette counties.

With the COVID-19 pandemic impacting the availability of internships, this program enabled employers more than ever to build a future workforce by giving students the opportunity to explore career opportunities that align with career interests. While helping these young adults develop meaningful skills and gain valuable experience, companies benefit from the no-cost intern assistance in identifying and implementing business improvements. With limited in-office internships and encouraged telework, interns were required to adapt and learn how to be flexible, be creative, and think critically with their worksites to keep operations moving.

The 2020 program year assisted 29 post-secondary education interns and 22 local worksites. Internships started in June and continued through the extended period of October with SLIP funding. Despite SLIP funding ending in October, the WFWIB was able to utilize additional funds from the Business-Education Partnership (BEP) to support several interns as they completed their time within the program through the end of December.

Normally internships would commence at the beginning of May. However, the COVID-19 contributed several challenges that needed addressing before interns could start their participation. To overcome these challenges, the WFWIB implemented and adjusted several new program components.

Rather than in-person program orientations for the youth and worksite meetings for worksite supervisors, the WFWIB implemented virtual orientations and worksite meetings. These virtual meetings established a



The second Experience Works! PLUS virtual session (seen left) hosted several industry leaders to share their experiences and advice on entering the workforce. Our leaders included Jarrod Trunzo from Latrobe Community Revitalization Program, Katie Hager from DMI Companies, Diane Liska from FirstEnergy, and George Carter from Seton Hill University.

Experience Works! PLUS intern Jarrett (seen right) worked with DMI Companies as their Automation Engineering and SharePoint Programmer. This was Jarrett's second time participating in the Experience Works! PLUS program. After his participation in the program, DMI Companies shared that they plan to keep Jarrett as a regular intern in the future and help him gain professional experience while he attends college.



relationship with the participants and the program manager, provided participants with the opportunity to freely ask questions regarding the program, and allowed the program manager to walk through the program and its requirements safely.

On an internal level, the WFWIB adjusted timesheets to be digitally compatible for easy completion. The new timesheets allowed interns and worksite supervisors to complete timesheets even when they were working remotely.

Finally, career readiness components were adjusted to address the changing times. In addition to having the interns complete a soft-skill worksheet, create a digital portfolio, and write an internship reflection and thank you letter, interns were required to join two virtual sessions. In previous years, the WFWIB would host a morning session at a local PA CareerLink® center to discuss various career readiness topics. These virtual sessions now focused on local resources, workforce opportunities, an employer panel of local industry leaders, and a career Q&A in a way that still followed safety guidelines.

The practice of virtual meetings, remote timesheet completion, and virtual sessions was so favored by worksites and interns, that it will most likely be used for future program years. These activities made completing program requirements easier and quicker and swiftly identified themselves as best practices for the program.

When evaluating PA's prioritized five broad goals for the workforce development system, the WFWIB's 2020 Experience Works! PLUS internship program directly targets Youth by providing opportunities for post-secondary education students to experience work-based learning and develop employable skills through internships.

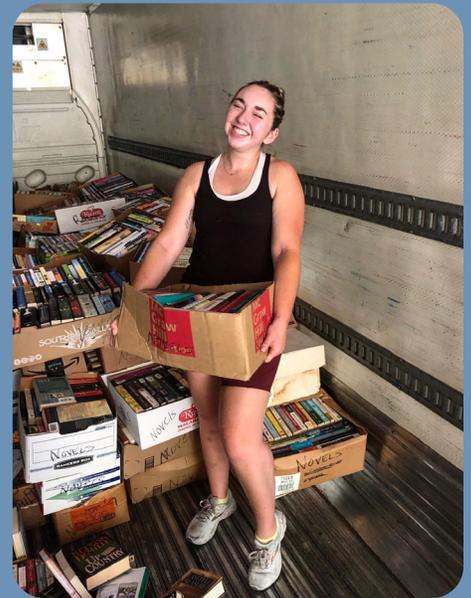
Ultimately, the 2020 Experience Works! PLUS internship program identified new best practices and provided post-secondary education students and local worksites with valuable internship experiences, growth opportunities, and workforce development despite COVID-19 challenges.

Thank you to all of the participating interns, worksites, and partners who made this program a success!



Shane (seen above) worked with Seton Hill University's Dance Department as their Marketing intern. Shane was one of the interns supported by BEP funding to continue her internship.

Experience Works! PLUS intern Tyler (seen below) worked with Derry Area High School as their IT intern. This was Tyler's first time participating in the Experience Works! PLUS program.



YWCA intern, Emily, interned with them for the second time in 2020 with the help of the Experience Works! PLUS program. She can be seen above assisting with their annual book fundraiser.

TEACHER IN THE WORKPLACE

In 2020, the WFWIB coordinated the regional Teacher in the Workplace (TIW) program on a county-wide basis to provide local educators and employers with the opportunity to collaborate. The goal of this collaboration was designed to enhance the partnerships between local educators and industry leaders to continually improve the workforce development and career pathway system for students. This goal connects with the workforce development system broad goal of “Continuous Improvement of the Workforce Development System.”

When considering PA’s other prioritized five broad goals for the workforce development system, the WFWIB’s TIW Program directly targets “Sector Strategies and Employer Engagement” and “Career Pathways and Apprenticeship.” The collaboration between educators and businesses improves the connection and responsiveness of workforce programs and services to labor market demand. Educators learn about employer and business challenges related to recruiting, training, and retaining talent. Educators are then able to strategically take that knowledge to support students in the classroom and advance their careers in the local workforce development area.

The TIW program was coordinated separately between Westmoreland County – Pathway Learning Community and Fayette County – Future Fayette Workforce. Each county’s TIW program was unique, yet they ultimately focused on involving teachers in the K-12 system with high-priority occupations in our local workforce development area. The 2020 goal was to engage 65 teachers from school districts in Westmoreland and Fayette county including the Career and Technology Centers (CTCs).

With program activities in both counties kicking off at the beginning of 2020, they were soon halted as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our main hurdle was to create alternative activities that followed safety guidelines and presented results. TIW program providers, in coordination with the WFWIB’s Business and Education Partnerships, worked to quickly and successfully develop virtual and remote program activities to maintain educator and employer involvement throughout the year. Such activities included virtual employer/ educator panels, virtual discussion meetings, and virtual guest speaker sessions held over Zoom.

While both TIW programs provided educators with the opportunity to learn more about the regional needs and provided employers with ways to impact change at local schools, the virtual activities heavily focused on how the COVID-19 pandemic has changed our local workforce development area. These virtual and remote events allowed both educators and employers to address changes and concerns as they were developing. In both counties, the TIW programs were able to successfully engage educators and local businesses.

In Fayette County, we had 25 teachers from seven school districts and CTCs with partners from over 20 local businesses and organizations. In Westmoreland County, we had 48 teachers from 13 school districts and CTCs supported by 30 local business and organization partnerships. Though the WFWIB’s 2020 TIW program faced several challenges, it was still able to impact a total of 73 teachers from 20 school districts and CTCs with 50 local business and industry partnerships successfully achieving our original goal.



Local educators and employers come together for Westmoreland County’s TIW Pathway Learning Community virtual session (seen left). Educators join Fayette County’s TIW Fayette Future Workforce employer panel to learn about ongoing workforce challenges (seen right).

ENGAGING THE AREA'S EMPLOYERS AND INDUSTRIES

Throughout the 2020 year, the Westmoreland-Fayette Workforce Investment Board has focused on re-engaging employers in the region. Continuing our innovative practice from 2019, the WFWIB has continued to utilize ENGAGE! surveys and reviews in 2020 as a tool to connect, re-engage, and enhance partnerships with local employers and industry leaders. We were focused on speaking with all employers in our counties, specifically with a focus on employers within our high-priority occupations (HPOs).

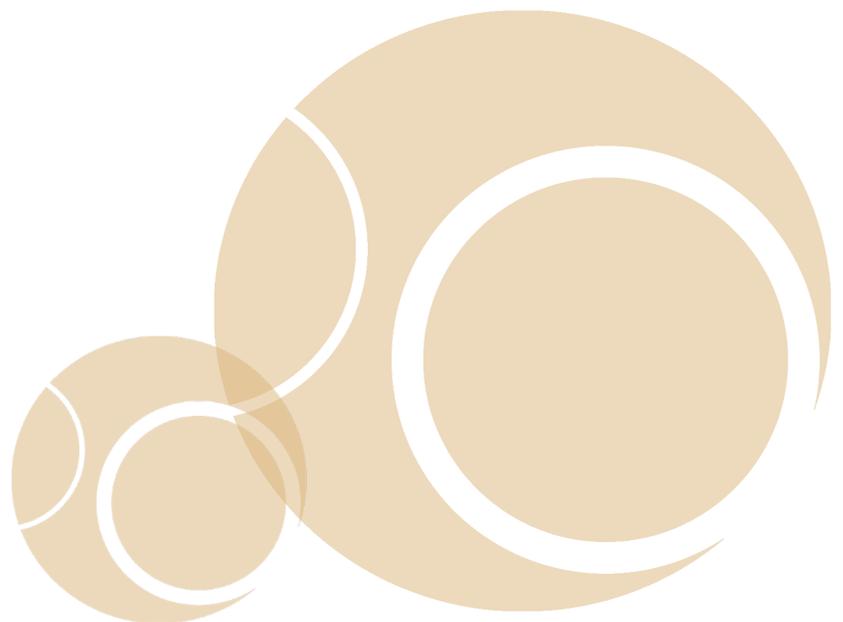
As an industry-driven initiative, ENGAGE! connected WFWIB staff with local businesses to assist in growing and/or sustaining their workforce. Through eight ENGAGE! surveys, the WFWIB was able to pro-actively promote programs to address employers' needs of remaining competitive in their specific industry and provide a pipeline to talented and skilled workers.

One program promoted to address employers' needs was the Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) Program. This program provides funding to help cover the costs of training needed to retain a competitive workforce. Such training assists with expansion, new technology, retooling, new services/product lines, and new organizational structuring. The IWT Program is also part of a layoff aversion strategy to keep employees with a company during hardship. Employers share in the cost of the IWT Program to form investments and partnerships.

The COVID-19 Pandemic has been critical hardship for many businesses, big and small. The IWT Program offered the option to employers to avoid layoffs, thus resulting in the development of five IWT Program contracts. These contracts ensured that incumbent workers were employed, met the Fair Labor Standard Act requirements for an employer-employee relationship, and had an established employment history with the employer for six or more months.

Additionally, the COVID-19 Pandemic required the WFWIB to improve the ENGAGE! and IWT Program application process. To streamline the application process, a digital application form and comprehensive handbook of available programs were created. Moreover, digital platforms such as Zoom and traditional conference telephone calls were utilized to replace in-person meetings and maintain safety. Being able to provide employers with detailed application materials and adapted conferencing helped us to avoid a drop-off in employer engagement. These new processes also identified new best practices for engaging with employers in the future.

The WFWIB's actions engaged employers through innovative strategies to improve the connection and responsiveness of workforce programs and services to train and retain talent aligning with PA's broad goal for the workforce development system of "Sector Strategies and Employer Engagement."



SUCCESS STORIES

Small Business Utilizes PA CareerLink® Alle-Kiski's Services

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought dozens of challenges, hurdles, and obstacles to small business owners across the country. However, PA CareerLink® Alle-Kiski was able to assist a small business grow during these unusual times.

While many companies have been forced to turn to layoffs, Dominick Romeo, owner of RIC Coatings in New Kensington of Westmoreland County, was looking to add employees to keep pace with a global clientele. Posting its first job opportunity on the PA CareerLink® website in early August 2020, RIC Coatings tapped into the plethora of free services available to employers and job seekers alike. In the ensuing months, the company has added three of its current staff as a result of its relationship with the PA CareerLink® Alle-Kiski and its 12 partner agencies.

Dominick Romeo spoke highly of the local PA CareerLink® center's resources and the work of the knowledgeable staff in helping his company locate and hire new employees. These new employees are tasked with prepping semi-finished goods to be painted and then re-packaging the items once dry for return to the manufacturer for sale or installation.

"[PA CareerLink® Alle-Kiski] has been unbelievable," Romeo said. "[PA CareerLink® Alle-Kiski], especially Phil and Sue, have taken a great interest. They take the burden off me to go out there to look for people. They are bringing candidates here. I like the fact that, the way I look at it, [PA CareerLink® Alle-Kiski] is paying for training."

PA CareerLink® Alle-Kiski helped Romeo connect with new employees and explained potential grant funding that is available to help offset the cost of training new hires and/or to upgrade the skills of his current workforce. RIC Coatings hired its first employee when it set up shop in downtown New Kensington and currently has a total of 15 employees at work on the first floor of its expansive facility that has been upgraded to include additional spray booths and room to grow even more.

"I've used Indeed, I've done Craigslist, I've done every possible scenario, and honestly [PA CareerLink® Alle-Kiski] has been a bigger help than paying for a service," shared Romeo.

Experience Works! PLUS Participant Earns Full-Time Career

Rose Lavelle first interned with the WFWIB during the 2019 summer. She assisted with office operations as it aligned closely with her post-secondary education major of Office Technology.

Performing well, she was invited to join the WFWIB and the PA CareerLink® Westmoreland County at Youngwood for the 2020 summer as an Experience Works! PLUS internship program participant. Working between the WFWIB and PA CareerLink® Westmoreland County at Youngwood as the Clerical/Customer Service Assistance, Rose quickly found her stride. She was responsible for helping customers to the Unemployment Compensation website, providing the necessary electronic and hard-copy information needed for customer appointments, making flyers and signs as needed, and more.

"Throughout my time this summer, I have gained many skills that I will use in my professional career," shared Lavelle. "In the very beginning, I was very hesitant as to what to say, how my tone would sound over the phone, and, overall, how to gear the conversations to sound inviting and welcoming. By the end of this summer, I feel that I have perfected my phone conversations with ease and confidence."

Impressed with her performance, the PA CareerLink® Westmoreland County at Youngwood decided to keep Lavelle as a part-time employee while she continued her education at Westmoreland County Community College striving towards an Associate in Applied Science degree. While Lavelle worked part-time gaining new skills and experiences and attending school, she was also looking for new opportunities to pursue. She soon found a full-time career opportunity with the Private Industry Council of Westmoreland/Fayette. While the PA CareerLink® Westmoreland County at Youngwood was sad to see her go, they shared that "she is an employee that never complains and never backs down from a challenge."

"Interning in a professional setting has opened my eyes to work world and what my supervisors expect of me," Lavelle shared. "The skills I have developed I will carry on to my next position, and I hope to one day climb the ladder of what position I aspire for!"

Transitional Employee Gain Full-Time Employment

The transitional employment program is twofold. It is designed to match an employer looking for basic skill needs with an individual/participant who has difficulty finding employment due to blemishes on their record, lack the work experience, or difficulty working full-time due to barriers.

To be eligible, employers need to pay \$11.99 and under and create a training plan for the individual to learn basic work skills. This allows for the employer to train someone with no financial responsibility to their company. This program assists an employer with making a match with potential candidates for their job opening. Employers are not required to hire the individual upon completion of the Transitional Contract. The participant is then able to use this opportunity as work experience on their resume to show that they have gained steady employment.

An excellent example is an employer that was renting housing to individuals who had a history of substance abuse. Several of the tenants were already working, but one individual was in need of a job. After careful consideration by the business and a thorough eligibility screening with the PA CareerLink® Fayette County staff, a transitional contract was put in place. Not only did it provide an opportunity for the individual to get back into the workforce and learn a skill/trade, but it allowed the employer to give someone with a barrier a chance. While transitional employers hold no responsibility of keeping the employee after the contract period, the employer hired the transitional candidate full-time after the completion of the program.

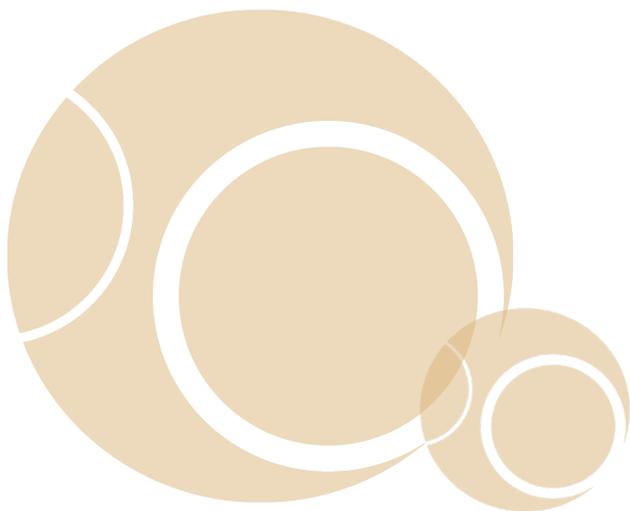
INNOVATIVE AND PROMISING PRACTICES

Many of the innovative practices that the WFWIB has engaged with are due to challenges created by the COVID-19 Pandemic. With in-person interaction extremely limited, schooling adjusted, and training halted, the WFWIB had to find ways to deliver services remotely and virtually.

Using technology and on-line platforms we innovatively found ways to engage employers, job seekers, individuals, and community partners. We increase outreach through social media, marketing, and communication with our board.

For example, we created social media videos of our normal services and programs offered and developed a newsletter to be shared with the public. Additionally, we utilized Zoom to hold meetings, interact with program participants, meet internally with staff, engage our Business Education Partnerships and Teacher in the Workplace Programs, and more. Zoom was particularly helpful with the State/Local Internship Program (SLIP), in which we held program orientations, career readiness activities, and worksite meetings.

Moreover, we focused on creating opportunities for work experiences to be virtual. We held virtual job fairs through technology that was easy to navigate and allowed for individuals to talk with representatives from companies. We assisted worksites participating in work experience programs with how to structure remote internships or job responsibilities. Finally, we modified our internal operations to be virtual and remote whenever possible to ensure the safety of staff and customers.



ABOUT THE WFWIB

The Westmorland-Fayette Workforce Investment Board (WFWIB) is a business, education, and community Board that is empowered to lead workforce development activities in Fayette and Westmoreland counties. As a workforce development leader, the WFWIB serves Westmoreland and Fayette county residents and local employers who are active members of the local labor force.

The WFWIB coordinates and oversees dozens workforce development programs and training/education opportunities pertaining to individuals as young as elementary school to as mature as adults. PA CareerLink® centers within Westmoreland and Fayette counties are overseen by the WFWIB in partnership with the Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry.

Website:

Let the WFWIB's website be your primary source of information regarding most recent news on new programs, funding awards, and WFWIB and community events. Click [here](#) to visit our website today.

Press Releases:

In the event of a major program, new WFWIB staff hire, or change in operations, the WFWIB will publish a press releases to share details of the development. To view published press releases, click [here](#).

Newsletters:

The WFWIB releases monthly newsletters to share with the public, board, and internal staff to keep its community up to date on workforce activities and operations. To view published newsletters, click [here](#). To join the mailing list to receive monthly newsletters automatically, please email Josie Manns at jmanns@westfaywib.org.

Social Media:

The WFWDB utilizes social media to share new and developing events immediately with the public. Additionally, the WFWDB utilizes social media to connect with audiences and build relationships around the WFWDB's brand. The WFWDB is always looking for success stories or exciting news regarding WFWDB funded programs to share on its social media. If you think you have an interesting update, please do not hesitate to reach out to Josie Manns at jmanns@westfaywib.org. To visit our social media pages, click the links and icons below!



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