

Southwest Planning Region

Local Workforce Development Areas

Allegheny County

City of Pittsburgh

Southwest Corner

Tri-County

Westmoreland-Fayette

Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act

Multi-Year Regional Plan

PY2021 - PY2024

Effective: July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2025

Workforce Development Region: Southwest Planning Region

Effective Date: July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2025

1.1. Identification of the region.

- Name of the Region: Southwest Planning Region
- Local workforce development areas that comprise the region:
 - Allegheny County Workforce Development Area (SW005)
 - City of Pittsburgh Workforce Development Area (SW095)
 - Southwest Corner Workforce Development Area (SW165)
 - Tri-County Workforce Development Area (SW110)
 - Westmoreland Fayette Workforce Development Area (SW045)
- Four local workforce development boards (LWDBs) oversee these local areas:
 - **TRWIB, Inc.**, also known as Three Rivers Workforce Development Board (TRWDB)
 - Allegheny County Workforce Development Area
 - City of Pittsburgh Workforce Development Area
 - **Southwest Corner Workforce Development Board (SCWDB)**
 - **Tri-County Workforce Investment Board Inc.**, also known as Tri-County Workforce Development Board (TCWDB)
 - **Westmoreland-Fayette Workforce Development Board (FWWDB)**
- Southwest Region – Regional Committee Members
 - Earl Buford, TRWDB
 - Fred Fornataro, TCWDB
 - Ami Gatts, SCWDB
 - Janet Ward, FWWDB
- Key Regional Planning Meeting Dates
 - November 5, 2020 (Regional Planning Meeting #1)
 - December 8, 2020 (Regional Planning Meeting #2)
 - January 12, 2021 (Regional Planning Meeting #3)

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

The Southwest Planning Region shares the Governor's vision of serving Pennsylvania's businesses through the creation of a skilled workforce. We embrace the priority goals outlined in Pennsylvania's WIOA Combined State Plan, with their focus on 1.) Career Pathways and Apprenticeship; 2.) Sector Strategies and Employer Engagement; 3.) Youth; 4.) Continuous Improvement of the Workforce System; and 5.) Strengthening the One-Stop Delivery System.

The Allegheny Conference on Community Development (ACCD), is a key regional economic development organization, which includes the Pittsburgh Regional Alliance, the Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce, and the Economy League of Greater Pittsburgh. The ACCD service area aligns with the Southwest Planning Region. ACCD released the report, *2020/2030 Next is Now: A 10 Year Vision of Vitality in the Pittsburgh Region*¹. The report notes that the regional economy has experienced slow growth compared to statewide growth in Pennsylvania and growth nationally. The report emphasizes making economic growth a priority and sets three core goals:

- **Thriving People:** Improve the standard of living by 25% for all populations. This goal includes two components, average wage and per capita GDP.
- **Quality of Place:** Reduce greenhouse gas emissions to meet Paris Accord targets and implement strategies toward UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- **Strong Economy:** Double the projected job growth, resulting in 75,000 new jobs. This measure prioritizes job growth over GDP growth to factor in talent attraction targets.

The Southwest Planning Region's work will also align with this vision of a thriving population and strong economy in the Pittsburgh region, as we establish strategies and goals to meet the needs of youth, job seekers, workers, and businesses across the Region.

The Southwest Planning Region recognizes the importance of a coordinated and innovative regional workforce development system. We strive to create a workforce system that presents a seamless face of public workforce throughout Southwest Pennsylvania but preserves local boards' flexibility to innovate in serving local workforce needs. We have developed the following three regional goals, in alignment with the Governor's five state goals and regional economic development priorities:

1. Enhance coordination between local boards

The Southwest Planning Region continues to strengthen regional coordination and collaboration. Since the development of our last regional plan, we have successfully implemented and completed several programs, which relied on our ability to effectively collaborate on a regional scale. The Veteran's Value Initiative (VVI) was a partnership between TRWDB, TCWDB, and WFWDB to deliver career services and training to veterans in the region as a part of a USDOL-funded grant. In addition, SCWDB, WFWDB, and TCWDB were recipients of a SW Regional Energy Sector Strategic Partnership Project Grant. This partnership worked to develop and coordinate a continuum of programs and partnerships that

¹ Allegheny Conference on Community Development, *2020/2030 Next is Now: A 10 Year Vision of Vitality in the Pittsburgh Region*, 2020

connected the region's dislocated workforce, impacted by the coal industry decline, helping to transition these workers into careers that offer self-sustaining wages and growth potential in the Energy sector.

As an additional example, in 2018, the local boards in the Southwest Region, along with several partner cities of Midwest Urban Strategies (MUS), were awarded a \$7.85 million USDOL Trade and Economic Transition Dislocated Worker grant. These funds have been used to implement a regional strategy to serve dislocated workers. As fiscal agent, TRWDB retained nearly \$2.5 million in programmatic and administrative funds to deploy in the Pittsburgh region in partnership and coordination with SCWDB, WFWDB, and TCWDB.

The PartnerUp program is a career-readiness program led by PNC Bank in partnership with a coalition of regional employers. This program prepares 11th and 12th grade students for careers after high school graduation. The PartnerUp program initially began as a pilot, funded through Business Education Partnership funding TRWDB received from PA Department of Labor & Industry. The initiative has now served 3,000 students, 10 employers, and 24 school districts across the Southwest Planning Region. The Southwest Planning Region will determine ways of further engaging with this program to effectively serve students and employers in the region.

Areas for continued alignment:

The Southwest Planning Region will continue to explore ways of working together on a regional level. The Tristate Energy and Advanced Manufacturing (TEAM) Consortium is one opportunity for future regional collaboration. TEAM was formed to effectively respond to the increased demand for workers in the Energy and Advanced Manufacturing industries in the Tristate area. The Tristate area of Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Ohio is one of the largest producers of natural gas in the world. Further, development projects such as Royal Dutch Shell's \$6 billion ethane cracker plant in Beaver County, have increased investment and demand for workers. TEAM convenes stakeholders from industry, higher education, and workforce and economic development to create clear and accessible pathways to jobs being created in these industries in the region. The Southwest Planning Region will engage more closely with TEAM to strengthen connections between this work and the public workforce development system.

Expanding Apprenticeship programming is another opportunity for regional coordination. As a recent example, local boards in the Southwest Planning Region coordinated with Presbyterian Senior Care, a regional employer, on the development of their Maintenance Technician Registered Apprenticeship Program, approved by the PA Department of Labor & Industry in October 2020. Recognizing the importance and value of apprenticeship programming, each local board in the Southwest Planning Region is committed to expanding apprenticeship opportunities within their respective workforce areas as well. For example, TRWDB connects the development of apprenticeship programming to their ongoing industry partnerships and sector strategies. A notable example is the PAsmart-funded Early Childhood Education (ECE) Registered Apprenticeship program, developed in partnership between TRWDB, Trying Together, Literacy Pittsburgh, Community College of Allegheny County, Carlow University, and multiple ECE providers in the Pittsburgh area. In addition, SCWDB was recently awarded a grant to expand apprenticeships in the region with a focus on promoting diversity.

2. Streamline talent delivery and business services

More than half (54.3%) of the employed residents of Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Washington, and Westmoreland counties leave their county of residence to work. Nearly 20% of Allegheny County employed residents (19.7%) leave Allegheny County to work². Regional residents cross county lines for employment and regional employers draw their workforce from all of the counties in Southwest Pennsylvania. These regional labor market trends mean that the same employers may interface with multiple LWDBs. While each board has developed the policies and procedures that best meet the needs of the businesses and job seekers they serve, opportunities for coordination to reduce the administrative burden may exist. The Southwest Planning Region will consider these opportunities. A more complete explanation of this is evident in the chart below.

Workforce Development Area (WDA)	Workers Living in Area	Workers Living in Area, but Employed Outside	Percent
Westmoreland-Fayette	160,332	93,430	58.3%
Tr-County	127,375	69,515	54.6%
SW Corner	187,432	95,285	50.8%
Three Rivers (Allegheny County WDA and City of Pittsburgh WDA)	511,026	100,864	19.7%

Each local board faces some of the same issues in their areas, including how to most effectively orient job seekers to the system, how to best align services in the PA CareerLink® system, how to serve individuals with barriers to employment, and how to engage businesses in the system. We will examine ways to develop and share best practices for program delivery across our local areas and seek out innovations to consolidate messaging and amplify our impact. Recognizing that some job seekers cross county lines to access PA CareerLink® services, the local areas will work with PA CareerLink® One-Stop Operators and Site Administrators as appropriate to discuss customer flow and how to best meet customer needs.

Beginning in March 2020, challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic have required workforce development areas and regions to expand infrastructure for delivering remote and virtual services to job seekers and employers. While health restrictions and other challenges imposed by the pandemic are temporary, this enhanced capacity to provide remote and virtual services will enable workforce development regions and areas to more permanently connect with job seekers, businesses, and partners outside of brick-and-mortar locations. The Southwest Planning Region will explore ways of leveraging technology for improved regional communication, coordination, and collaboration among our local boards, one-stop center staff, and other partners to the system. Virtual regional hiring events, employer roundtables, job seeker workshops, and staff training/professional development are all examples of potential collaboration. Access to broadband connections vary across counties in the Southwest Planning Region. Local boards will examine ways of addressing this challenge, such as partnering with local library systems, expanding Wi-Fi access at PA CareerLink® locations, etc.

3. Increase work related opportunities for youth and improve youth talent pipeline

² U.S. Census Bureau, Center for Economic Studies, LEHD (2018)

Given the region's aging workforce and the potential of area youth, investing in the future talent pipeline is a key area of focus for the planning region. The Southwest Planning Region believes that youth must be exposed to a range of available careers in order to start on a career path to a sustainable future.

In accordance with the requirements under WIOA, local boards in the Southwest Planning Region have prioritized services to out-of-school youth (OSY). Work experience is a key component to the professional development and long-term success of these youth and young adults and creates talent pipelines for regional employers. The local boards in our region will share best practices, including techniques for identifying, recruiting, and engaging disaffected youth and the design and delivery of effective work experiences and internships for OSY. This will include best practices in the virtual and remote delivery of services and creation of work experience opportunities during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. For example, TRWDB, along with program partners, delivered the Learn & Earn summer youth employment program in 2020 by pivoting to a hybrid model of virtual/remote and in-person services and work experiences. More than 1,600 young adults participated in the program despite challenges created by the pandemic. Best practices and lessons learned from this program will be shared regionally to help inform future programming, such as the annual State/Local Internship Program (SLIP) delivered by our region's local boards.

The development of career pathways and sector strategies for youth are promising areas for collaboration between local boards. Each of the local boards in the Southwest Planning Region is working to engage youth in career exploration. The Southwest Planning Region will expand efforts to support such youth programming on a regional scale. As an example, each workforce area in our region has developed and implemented Teacher in the Workplace and Business Education Partnership programs to strengthen connections between education and business, while enhancing work-based learning and work-readiness skills development in schools. TRWDB and WFWDB's Teacher in the Workplace programming has involved coordination among schools in their respective workforce areas. Also, as noted, the PartnerUp program led by PNC Bank, began as a part of Business Education Partnership programming and continues to expand to serve business and schools on a regional level. The Southwest Planning Region will utilize Industry Partnerships as another mechanism to support career exploration and career pathway development for youth and young adults. SCWDB, for example, manages the Freight and Logistics industry partnership, which extends across three workforce areas in our region. A key component of this partnership is to educate young adults, including high school students and other individuals, about job opportunities in the industry through informational materials, internships, job shadowing, etc. The partnership also works to develop employer-driven training that paths students to careers in the field.

Collaboration with higher education represents an opportunity to help prepare the region's workforce for the needs of employers. While each local board is partnering with representatives of higher education in their respective local areas, the Southwest Planning Region will explore ways to partner with higher education as a collective group. As a past example of regional collaboration, through a Workforce Innovation Fund (WIF) grant, WFWDB and TRWDB worked with Westmoreland County Community College and Community College of Allegheny County, respectively, to develop microcredentials along key career pathways. The curricula developed for these microcredentials continues to be implemented.

Sections 1.4 and 1.5 below describe in greater detail the efforts of the Southwest Planning Region to work with local economic development organizations to achieve our strategic goals, including

working with the Allegheny Conference on Community Development, Engage!, and our Southwestern PA Partnership for Regional Economic Performance (PREP) network.

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

The Southwest Pennsylvania regional labor market enjoyed a period of job growth prior to April 2020 and is currently experiencing a slow, but somewhat steady, recovery with a continued focus on innovation and technology. The Region has a declining population. A strong and collaborative regional approach, coupled with distinct local solutions, is required for successful matching of employer needs with job seeker skills in key sectors and priority occupations.

This part will review the salient regional labor market data, overlay the labor market demographics with the region's economic conditions, as articulated from the perspective of the LWDBs and their partner organizations, and then identify the key overarching in-demand employer needs.

Regional Labor Market Overview

The Southwest Planning Region is composed of Allegheny County Workforce Development Area (WDA), City of Pittsburgh WDA, Southwest Corner WDA, Tri-County WDA, and Westmoreland-Fayette WDA. The region includes nine counties: Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Washington, and Westmoreland. Overall, the area is home to 2,437,906 people³.

The population in the Southwest Planning Region continues to decline. Across the nine-county region, there was a decrease of 109,491 (-5%) residents between 2010 and 2019. Moreover, Butler County was the only one of the nine counties that saw an increase in population during this time period. However, the population across Pennsylvania grew by 8% between 2010 and 2019. While the Pennsylvania population is projected to continue to grow, most of the growth is expected to occur within the Harrisburg corridor, while the Southwest Planning Region is projected to lose an additional 1% of the population over the next 10 years⁴.

The median age for Pennsylvania is 37.9 years. The median age for the Southwest Planning Region is 44.5 years, while the average age for the region is 43.7 years and ranges from 39.8 years in Indiana County to 46.8 years in Westmoreland County⁵.

Education

Across Pennsylvania, 52.2% of residents who are 25 years old or older have received a high school diploma and 37.4% have a higher degree. Approximately 10% of Pennsylvanians over the age of 25 did not complete high school. Comparatively, 57.2% of the region's residents over the age of 25 have obtained a high school diploma or equivalent, 23.8% have obtained a higher degree and 9.3% did not complete high school. While 1.4% of Pennsylvanians over the age of 25 have obtained a

³ US Census Bureau, 2019 Quick Facts Tables. Census.gov.

⁴ Pennsylvania Population Projections 2010-2040. The Center for Rural Pennsylvania, The Institute of State and Regional Affairs, Penn State Harrisburg, 2014.

⁵ US Census Bureau, 2014-2018 Median Age in the United States by County. Census.gov.

doctorate degree, approximately 1% of the region’s residents have done the same⁶.

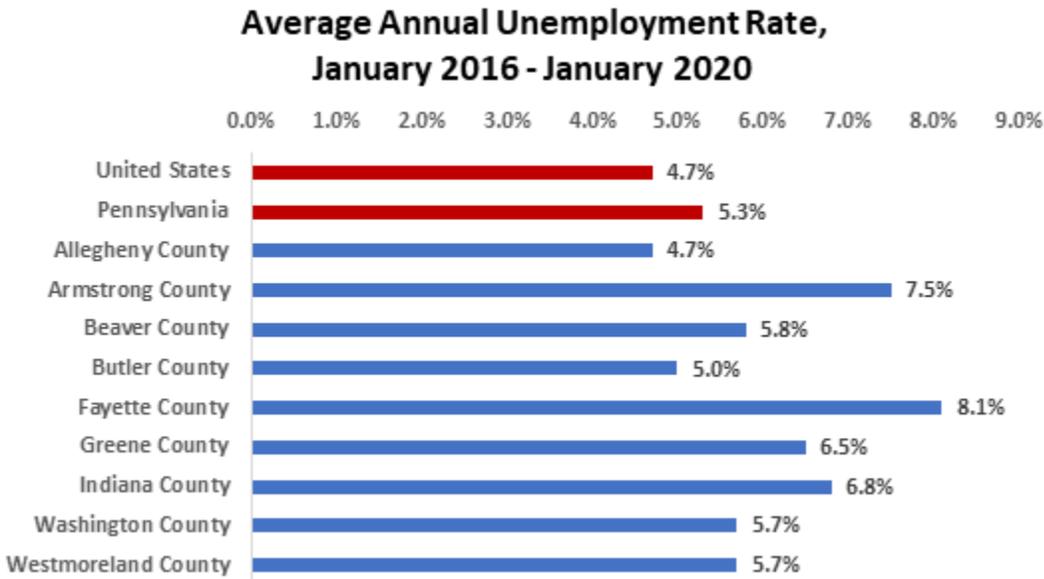
Income

The Pennsylvania median household income was \$59,445 according to the American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (US Census Bureau). During that same time period, the household median income for the region was \$55,828 and ranged from \$44,476 in Fayette County to \$68,472 in Butler County⁷.

Employment

An examination of the annual January unemployment across a five-year period (2016-2020) indicates that the average unemployment in the region (6.2%) was slightly higher than that across the U.S. (4.7%) or the state (5.3%). Regionally, the unemployment ranged from 4.7% in Allegheny County to 8.1% in Fayette County during that time (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Regional, State, and U.S. Unemployment



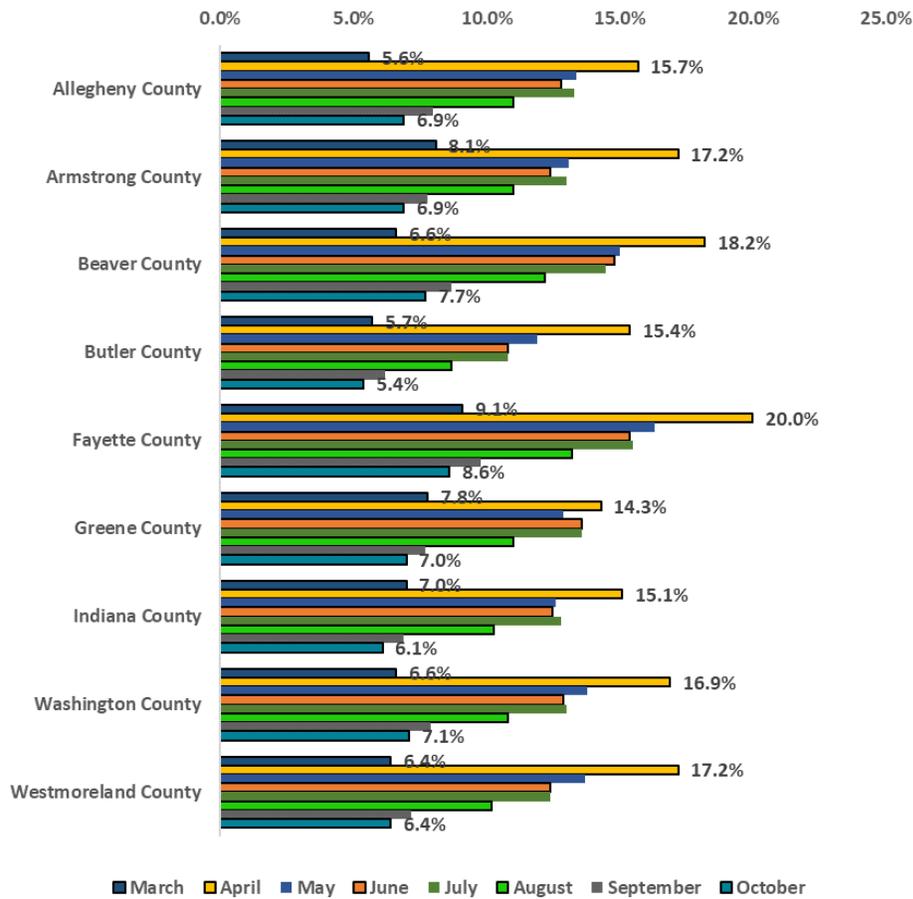
Beginning in March 2020, statewide health restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic forced the closure or limited activities of many businesses across the Commonwealth. This setback, alongside other factors, contributed to an increase in unemployment in the region (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Post-Pandemic Regional Unemployment

⁶ Statistical Atlas (data from the US Census Bureau).

⁷ 2014-2018 Median Household Income in the United States by County. US Census Bureau.

Monthly Unemployment Rates March 2020 - October 2020



Closures and job losses in March led to a spike in the April unemployment across the country (14.4%) and across Pennsylvania (15.6%). Regionally, unemployment ranged from 20% in Fayette County to 14.3% in Greene County in April.

The week of March 28, 56,926 Initial Unemployment Claims were submitted across the region. The data presented in Table 1 indicate that the hospitality and construction sectors were more negatively affected by the economic impact of the pandemic⁸.

⁸ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics. <https://www.bls.gov/regions/mid-atlantic/pennsylvania.htm#eag>. Retrieved 12/21/20.

Table 1. Initial Unemployment Claims by Sector, March 28, 2020

County	Initial Claims	Percent of Claims by Industry Sector				
		Accommodation & Food	Construction	Retail Trade	Manufacturing	Health & Social Services
Allegheny County	26,311	25.3	15.6	12.4	6.8	10.2
Armstrong County	1,656	11.3	18.4	8.9	14.7	12.4
Beaver County	4,461	16.8	19.3	10.6	10.3	13.1
Butler County	4,603	18.5	16.3	14.2	9.2	13.2
Fayette County	3,450	18.5	14.3	12.5	13.6	9.2
Green County	484	7.4	15.5	11.0	11.0	8.5
Indiana County	1,478	15.5	14.7	12.5	14.0	10.0
Washington County	5,005	16.3	20.0	11.3	7.6	11.4
Westmoreland County	9,478	16.8	15.1	14.7	12.1	11.6

Bold Numbers = Top three sectors impacted in each county.

While the COVID recovery is underway, the economy is expected to recover at a moderate rate and the job market is described as weak⁹. Together, Moody’s Analytics and CNN Business created a Back-to-Normal Index that is made up of 37 national and seven state-level indicators. A Back-to-Normal Index of 100% would indicate that the economy had returned to its pre-pandemic level in March. As of December 2020, the national Back-to-Normal Index is 82% and the Pennsylvania Back-to-Normal Index is 74%¹⁰.

Population with Barriers

Poverty

The 2019 Census Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates indicated that 12.3% of the U.S. population was living in poverty and 12% of those who lived in Pennsylvania were living in poverty prior to the impact of the pandemic. The percent of residents living in poverty in the region range from 7.8% in Butler County to 17.5% in Fayette County. In addition to those living in Fayette County, a larger percentage of the population living in Greene (14.2%) and Indiana (14.0%) Counties were living in poverty compared to the U.S. population or those living in Pennsylvania.

Re-Entry Population

Research conducted by The Brookings Institution, using the tax records of incarcerated individuals, indicated that for years prior to incarceration and for years following incarceration, offenders have a history of higher rates of unemployment and lower earnings when employed compared to those not

⁹ Moody’s Analytics and CNN Business, Tuesday, December 29, 2020. <https://www.cnn.com/business/us-economic-recovery-coronavirus>. Retrieved December 29, 2020.

¹⁰ Ibid.

incarcerated¹¹. In 2008, 20,206 and in 2018 11,573 Pennsylvanians 21 years old and younger were incarcerated¹².

In 2019, 2,208 Pennsylvanians were released from correctional institutions across Pennsylvania, and 1,794 of them were released on parole¹³. Across the Southwest Planning Region, the range of incarcerated persons released per 10,000 people was 5.5 in Butler County to 30.2 in Fayette County. Previously incarcerated individuals tend to have lower education attainment, employment experience, and skill levels. These personal characteristics, in addition to employers' reluctance to hire previously incarcerated individuals can lead to chronic unemployment and low wages.

Individuals with a Disability

Approximately 26% of those living in the U.S. and 25.8% of Pennsylvanians have a documented disability¹⁴. Nationally, 58.3% of those having a disability are employed full-time, year-round compared with 71.3% of those who do not have a disability. In Pennsylvania, 35.6% of those with disabilities are employed while 77.1% of those without disabilities are employed¹⁵. The median income for those with a disability is \$41,332 and \$47,279 for those who do not have a disability¹⁶. Across the Southwest Planning Region, the percent of the county-level population with disabilities ranges from 12.3% in Butler County to 19.3% in Fayette County¹⁷ and the percent those with disabilities who are employed ranges from 27.3% in Fayette County to 37.8% in Westmoreland County¹⁸.

Those with disabilities face a number of barriers to employment. Due to individual and systemic perceptions and prejudice, employers are often hesitant to hire people with disabilities. A supplement to the July 2019 Current Population Survey (CPS) was sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor's Chief Evaluation Office and focused on barriers to employment, prior work experience, career and financial assistance, and requested changes to the workplace by persons with disabilities. Approximately half of survey respondents with a disability and who were not employed (unemployed or not in the workforce) identified at least one barrier to employment. Seventy-nine percent of respondents identified their own disability as a barrier to employment, 12.2% cited a lack

¹¹ Looney, A. & Turner, N. (March 2018). Work and opportunity before and after incarceration. The Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C.

¹² The Pennsylvania Uniform Crime Reporting system, Office of Attorney General. <https://www.attorneygeneral.gov/open-data-urc-arrests-age/>. Retrieved 12/31/2020.

¹³ Pennsylvania Department of Corrections. <https://www.cor.pa.gov/Facilities/Pages/default.aspx>. Retrieved 12/31/20.

¹⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities, Division of Human Development and Disability. Disability and Health Data System (DHDS). <https://dhds.cdc.gov>. Retrieved 12/31/2020.

¹⁵ National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research. (2017). 2017 Pennsylvania Report for County-Level Data: Employment. <https://disabilitycompendium.org/compendium/2017-state-report-for-county-level-data-employment/PA>. Retrieved 12/31/20.

¹⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, Disability Tables, 2017. <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2017/demo/disability/acs-17.html>. Retrieved 12/31/20.

¹⁷ Institute on Disability. (2015). <https://disabilitycompendium.org/compendium/overall-prevalence-report/PA>. Retrieved 12/31/20.

¹⁸ National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research. (2017). 2017 Pennsylvania Report for County-Level Data: Employment. <https://disabilitycompendium.org/compendium/2017-state-report-for-county-level-data-employment/PA>. Retrieved 12/31/20.

of education or training, 10.6% responded that transportation was a barrier, and 9.9% cited the need for special features on the job as a barrier to employment¹⁹.

Pregnant or Parenting Youth/Young Adults

In 2018, 135,650 births in Pennsylvania were to teens 15 to 19 years of age and 17.8% of those births to teens occurred across the Southwest Planning Region. While 4.1% of the births in Pennsylvania were to teen mothers ages 15 to 19, comparatively, a lower percentage of births were to teen mothers in Allegheny (2.7%), Beaver (3.6%), Butler (2.7%), Indiana (3.8%), Washington (3.0%) and Westmoreland (3.1%) Counties. However, a higher percentage of births were to teen mothers ages 15 to 19 in Armstrong (5.5%), Fayette (5.9%), and Greene (6.0%) counties during that same time period²⁰. In addition, there are 48,455 single-parent households with children across the Southwest Planning Region²¹.

Opioid Crisis

Pennsylvania has identified opioid use as one of the commonwealth’s worst public health crises in almost a generation. Between January 2018 and November 21, 2020, 47,039 doses of Naloxone were administered by EMS and there were 29,681 Emergency Department visits for opioid overdoses across the commonwealth²². Moreover, 59,228 individuals 12 years old and older who are living in the Southwest Planning Region have been identified as having a drug abuse disorder. Pennsylvania data indicate that 892 individuals across the Region have died due to drug overdoses between 2012 and 2020²³.

Technology/Internet Access

Seeking employment has largely become a digital process which highlights the importance of having access to a computer and to the internet. U.S. Census data, 2015-2019, indicated that 90.3% of U.S. households have a computer and 82.7% of households have internet access and 88% of Pennsylvania households have a computer and 81.5% have internet access. Table 2 indicates that the percentage of households across the Southwest Planning Region with a computer ranges from 89.6% in Butler County to 81.5% in Fayette County and access to the internet ranges from 84.7% in Butler County to 73.9% in Indiana County.

Table 2. Southwest Planning Region Computer and Internet Access, 2015-2019

County	Percent of Households with a Computer	Percent of Households having Internet Access
Allegheny County	89.2	83.9
Armstrong County	82.9	74.9
Beaver County	86.3	80.8

¹⁹ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (May 2020). Persons with a Disability: Barriers to employment and Other Labor-Related Issues News Release.

https://www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/dissup_05012020.htm#:~:text=A%20person's%20own%20disability%20lack,duties%20because%20of%20their%20disability. Retrieved 12/31/20.

²⁰ PA Department of Health. Enterprise Data Dissemination Informatics Exchange (EDDIE).

²¹ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates; 2015-2019.

²² Opendata PA, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Opioid Data Dashboard. <https://data.pa.gov/stories/s/9q45-nckt/>. Retrieved 1/4/2021.

²³ Opendata PA, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Opioid Data Dashboard. <https://data.pa.gov/Opioid-Related/Estimated-Accidental-and-Undetermined-Drug-Overdos/apm5-9wfy>. Retrieved 1/4/2021.

Butler County	89.6	84.7
Fayette County	81.5	75.1
Greene County	84.9	78.3
Indiana County	82.3	73.9
Washington County	87.6	82.3
Westmoreland County	86.5	80.4

English Language Barrier

Finally, the inability to speak English while living in the U.S. can be a barrier to employment. The percentage of the population who have indicated that they speak English less than ‘very well’ ranges from 2.30% of residents of Allegheny County to .50% of residents of Green County²⁴.

Summary

In summary, the Southwest Planning Region data have demonstrated advantages and disadvantages regarding workforce participation.

- The population, compared to the population across the state, continues to decline and grow older.
- While a higher percentage of residents living in the Southwest Planning Region obtain a high school diploma than those residents across the state, a smaller percentage of the Region’s residents obtain higher degrees than those across the state. Further, the median household income for the Region (\$55,828) is lower than that of Pennsylvania (\$59,445).
- Prior to the pandemic the U.S unemployment rate was 4.7%, the Pennsylvania unemployment rate was 5.3% and unemployment rate across the region was 6.2%. The COVID pandemic has disrupted the economy. By April 2020, the average unemployment rate across the region was 16.7%. In November 2020, the average regional unemployment rate was 6.2%. While a recovery is underway, it is expected to be a slow recovery.
- While the percent of people living in poverty across the U.S. and across Pennsylvania is approximately 12%, as many as 17.5% of people living in Fayette County are living in poverty.
- In 2019, 2,208 residents of the Southwest Planning Region were released from correctional institutions. Under the best circumstances, there are a host of issues that interfere with once incarcerated people securing employment. The pandemic environment will amplify that interference.
- The data clearly indicate that having a disability decreases the likelihood of sustained employment. Persons with disabilities range from 12.3% of the population in Butler County to 19.3% of residents of Fayette County.
- Teen pregnancy and parenting present barriers to employment. While teen pregnancy continues to decline across the county, the percent of births to teen mothers who reside in the Southwest Planning Region range from 2.7% to 6.0%.
- Substance abuse can interfere with sustained employment. Across the Southwest Planning Region, 59,228 residents have been identified as having a drug abuse disorder.
- Access to a computer and the internet are necessary tools for job searches. The range of households with a computer across the Region is 89.6% in Butler County to 81.5% in Fayette County and the internet access range is from 84.7% in Butler County to 73.9% in Indiana County.

²⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates; 2015-2019.

Regional Employer Overview

Prior to the pandemic, the Southwest Planning Region enjoyed a growing economy and employer base. However, an examination of the data indicates that there was a 17.7% decrease in the employment volume of the Region between 2Q 2019 and 2Q 2020²⁵ and there is little projected growth in 2021 or by 2025²⁶. See Table 3 for changes in employment by industry.

Table 3. Employment Changes and Projections by Industry

NAICS Title	Employment Change	Projected Change	
	Q2 2019 - Q2 2020 ²⁶	2020-2021 ²⁷	2020-2025 ²⁷
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	N/A	0%	0
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	(21.6%)	3%	10%
Utilities	(12.8%)	(1%)	(6%)
Construction	(32.4%)	2%	8%
Manufacturing	(11.0%)	0%	(2%)
Wholesale Trade	(9.3%)	(1%)	(4%)
Retail Trade	(14.9%)	(1%)	(5%)
Transportation and Warehousing	(14.5%)	0%	0%
Information	(1.3%)	(1%)	(4%)
Finance and Insurance	(4.7%)	1%	2%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	(7.7%)	1%	3%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	(10.5%)	1%	4%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	(9.6%)	0%	0%
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	(4.1%)	0%	0%
Educational Services	N/A	1%	2%
Health Care and Social Assistance	(12.2%)	2%	7%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	(56.9%)	1%	3%
Accommodation and Food Services	(38.1%)	1%	3%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	(29.3%)	-1%	(2%)
Public Administration	(7.2%)	-1%	(3%)

Comparing the density of the employment concentration (through Location Quotients), concentrated employment opportunities in the region and historical and emerging sector trends help better understand the gaps for employers and business across Southwest Pennsylvania.

Location Quotients (LQ) are a valuable way of quantifying how concentrated a particular industry, cluster, occupation, or demographic group is in a region as compared to the nation. Per EMSI, LQ can reveal what makes a particular region “unique” in comparison to the national average. The Location Quotients for the 2020 key industry clusters as delineated by the Center for Workforce Information and Analysis are provided in Table 4 for the U.S., Pennsylvania and for

²⁵ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages.

²⁶ Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, Center for Workforce Information and Analysis

the Southwest Planning Region²⁷.

Table 4. Location Quotient Comparisons, US, Pennsylvania and Southwest Region

NAICS Title	US	Pennsylvania	Southwest Planning Region
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	1	0.63	0.18
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	1	1.04	2.77
Utilities	1	1.06	1.46
Construction	1	0.90	1.04
Manufacturing	1	1.14	0.90
Wholesale Trade	1	0.93	0.83
Retail Trade	1	0.99	1.02
Transportation and Warehousing	1	1.18	0.90
Information	1	0.77	0.78
Finance and Insurance	1	1.09	1.22
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	1	0.71	0.81
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	1	0.95	1.04
Management of Companies and Enterprises	1	1.42	1.97
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	1	0.86	0.73
Educational Services	1	1.71	1.91
Health Care and Social Assistance	1	1.30	1.32
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1	1.00	1.11
Accommodation and Food Services	1	0.86	0.94
Other Services (except Public Administration)	1	1.02	1.01
Public Administration	1	0.75	0.68

Comparatively, the data indicate the Southwest Planning Region is more concentrated than the nation or the state in the following areas: Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction; Utilities; Construction; Retail Trade; Finance and Insurance; Professional, Scientific and Technical Services; Management of Companies and Enterprises; Educational Services; Health Care and Social Assistance; and Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation. In addition, the data presented in Table 6, indicate continued projected growth through 2025 in the areas of Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction (10%), Construction (8%), Finance & Insurance (2%), Real Estate (3%), Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (2%), Educational Services (7%), Health and Social Services (7%), Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation (3%), and Accommodation and Food (3%).

An examination of the change in jobs between 2020 and 2025 projects an increase of 18,449 (1.44%) in the number of jobs available across the Southwest Planning Region. See Table 5 for the change in jobs by County.

²⁷ EMSI, QCEW Employees, Non-QCEW Employees and Self-Employed, 2020.

Table 5. Change in the Number of Jobs, 2020-2025, by County.

Region	2020 Jobs	2025 Jobs	Change	% Change
Allegheny County	768,350	773,730	5,379	1%
Armstrong County	18,467	18,649	181	1%
Beaver County	64,080	67,948	3,868	6%
Butler County	96,134	100,289	4,155	4%
Fayette County	43,588	44,444	856	2%
Greene County,	13,951	14,120	169	1%
Indiana County	33,488	33,795	307	1%
Washington County	96,090	99,556	3,466	4%
Westmoreland County	147,607	147,676	69	0%
Total	1,281,757	1,300,206	18,449	1.4%

A more detailed look at the change in the number of jobs by County and industry is provided in Table 6.

Table 6. Jobs Growth and Loss, 2020 -2025, by County and Industry.

Description	Allegheny County	Armstrong County	Beaver County	Butler County	Fayette County	Greene County	Indiana County	Washington County	Westmoreland County
Healthcare Support Occupations	4,428	175	317	754	360	34	202	660	545
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	3,586	(12)	43	442	24	(1)	22	67	(35)
Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	1,916	32	99	411	123	49	(7)	178	305
Computer and Mathematical Occupations	1,160	38	10	353	34	2	5	216	83
Management Occupations	1,111	15	257	348	53	29	23	296	84
Business and Financial Operations Occupations	716	19	107	411	38	19	24	282	117
Community and Social Service Occupations	705	13	20	104	51	31	79	53	65
Construction and Extraction Occupations	626	27	2,431	254	263	(55)	59	582	162
Personal Care and Service Occupations	519	6	(33)	120	(1)	6	0	141	64
Educational Instruction and Library Occupations	491	(123)	66	177	(34)	6	(73)	(17)	(182)
Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations	415	2	22	66	18	(4)	7	40	(32)
Legal Occupations	345	(5)	(42)	54	8	5	1	46	(19)
Architecture and Engineering Occupations	184	8	(10)	139	23	(17)	(1)	72	31
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	135	6	48	145	13	17	(1)	67	(11)
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations	116	(7)	23	69	(10)	10	(5)	72	15
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations	38	(20)	8	8	(3)	1	0	3	2
Protective Service Occupations	(58)	(9)	22	83	(6)	(5)	(11)	12	2
Military-only occupations	(59)	(4)	(10)	(3)	(9)	(2)	(5)	(6)	(19)
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	(767)	8	136	98	44	(29)	5	201	(9)
Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	(973)	16	256	64	158	82	104	385	160
Production Occupations	(1,300)	72	168	(168)	(33)	24	20	94	(113)
Sales and Related Occupations	(3,200)	(16)	(122)	4	(218)	22	(51)	59	(583)
Office and Administrative Support Occupations	(4,754)	(60)	50	221	(42)	(55)	(92)	(36)	(564)
Total	5,379	181	3,868	4,155	856	169	307	3,466	69

Table 7 provides commuting data. Other than in Allegheny County, there are a greater number of people who are traveling outside of their county of residence than there are people traveling into their county for employment purposes. All of the nine counties have some form of public bus transportation, with the exception of Greene County. Moreover, a county may have a form of public transportation, however, it may be in limited areas. For example, Butler County has public bus transportation but not in Cranberry Township. Cranberry Township is one of the most populated areas in Butler County and many of the residents work in Pittsburgh (Allegheny County).

Table 7. Commuting Data by Southwest Planning Region County

County	Incoming Commuters	Outgoing Commuters
Allegheny County	125,821	58,817
Armstrong County	4,527	15,254
Beaver County	6,907	34,187
Butler County	25,399	33,361
Fayette County	5,903	20,353
Greene County	4,867	5,353
Indiana County	4,556	8,883
Washington County	25,499	59,959
Westmoreland County	30,802	59,983

SUMMARY

- Between Q2 2019 and Q2 2020, all industry NAICS sectors saw job decreases across the Southwestern Planning Region.
- While industry projections for 2021 do not indicate a vast improvement in the Region, projections for 2025 indicate increases in the following industries: Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction (10%), Construction (8%), Finance & Insurance (2%), Real Estate (3%), Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (4%), Education Services (7%), Arts, Entertainment & Recreation (3%), and Accommodations & Food Services (3%).
- Projections for 2020 also indicate increases in jobs in each county across the Region.
- Most counties are projected to see increases in the following occupations: Health Care; Food Preparation and Services; Computer and Mathematics; Management; Business and Financial; Community and Social Services; Construction and Extraction; Sciences; and Building and Ground Maintenance.

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

A key strategy for achieving our vision and goals focuses on building strong relationships with employers in our region. The Business Service Teams (BST) across each local area provide PA

CareerLink® services through personal visits and ongoing PA CareerLink® online support. They connect with the local Chambers of Commerce and Economic Development agencies to keep pace with developments within the region. These BSTs regularly meet and communicate with each other to build relationships across the region. The Southwest Planning Region recognizes the importance of small businesses in the region and focuses attention on connecting them with the services offered through PA CareerLink® and sector strategies. BSTs are often composed of members from EARN, local community colleges, economic development organizations, and other appropriate partner and community organizations.

Site Administrators, Supervisors of the Business Services Teams, and Account Representatives will work to identify regional employer relationships that will prove critical to the success of the BSTs. These relationships will then be cultivated through individualized attention from Account Representatives, invitations to attend open houses and symposiums or events hosted by the various PA CareerLink® offices, and a menu of services available for business engagement, including training funds.

The region uses the generic term, “Account Representative,” to identify individuals who provide PA CareerLink® services to employers, both large and small, and are members of their respective BSTs. The Account Representatives are employed by all the partners, not just Title I or the LWDB controlled funds. Additionally, each respective area has PA Bureau of Workforce Partnership & Operation (BWPO) employees performing this function depending on classification. These individuals are supported by Wagner-Peyser funds. Account Representatives from across funding streams work together to build relationships with businesses in the communities.

The Account Representative will make personal visits to employers in his/her territory, and the employer will work individually with their personalized Account Representative. Each employer will be given an employer packet. This packet explains all the services that the PA CareerLink® can provide including but not limited to contact information, an OJT informational flier, labor market information, tax credit information, Unemployment Compensation Workshops and current job fairs, trainings, and presentations.

Employers will be able to complete PA CareerLink® registration on their own or contact the PA CareerLink® for assistance from a staff member. Job orders can then be placed on the PA CareerLink® website once the employer has been approved, where it can be viewed by thousands of interested job seekers. Recruitment assistance will be offered to employers in terms of promoting their recruitment events through advertisement at the PA CareerLink®, and resumes can be collected on their behalf. Recruitments and screening interviews can also be held on site at the PA CareerLink®. Additionally, labor market information will be available to employers including wage data, Equal Employment Opportunity compliance, industry and occupation projections, and new hire reporting guidelines. Employers can also receive information regarding the local and regional high priority occupations, receive information on State and Federal tax credits, or guidance concerning Federal Bonding.

Local areas within the region have implemented additional data tracking measures beyond those required by the law to understand in real time whether the system is adding value to local businesses. The success of the PA CareerLink® system in working with employers is measured in some areas by the number of job orders, placements, work-based training, and any job fairs that can

be set up for the employer. Local areas also consider the provision of additional business services to be key factors for the employers with which they work. This can include but not be limited to programs that provide cohort training for employers at a reduced cost, information on low interest non-traditional business micro-loans, grant research, technical assistance, and government procurement opportunities.

Industry partnerships and sector strategies represent an additional opportunity for business engagement in the region. Each local board in the region pursues sector strategies in industries such as Manufacturing, Healthcare, Energy, and Construction. Observing the overlap in these sectors, the Southwest Planning Region will explore opportunities to align local efforts into a region-wide effort. As an example, SCWDB led the development of the Freight and Logistics industry partnership, which extends across three workforce areas in our region. The partnership currently includes 16 companies, 3 Workforce Development Boards, the PA CareerLink®, and several other non-profit and educational providers.

In addition to industry partnerships on a regional scale, local boards have developed sector strategies and industry partnerships in line with their labor markets. TCWDB has industry partnerships in Healthcare, Manufacturing, and Information Technology (IT) and is currently developing strategies for Transportation and Logistics. TRWDB continues to develop and manage industry partnerships in Construction, Education, Financial Services, Healthcare, Information Technology, Manufacturing, Public Sector, Retail & Hospitality, and Transportation & Logistics. WFWDB focuses on Hospitality and Tourism, Logistics, and Transportation. SCWDB leads the previously mentioned Freight and Logistics industry partnership and also manages partnerships with Building and Construction Trades and Advanced Manufacturing industries. As we explore regional collaboration, we will work to build on existing successes rather than creating programs from scratch.

Another regional strategy will be to strengthen our connections and engagement with existing region-wide initiatives that align with our vision and goals. For example, the Greater Pittsburgh Metals Manufacturing Community (GPMMC) is a region-wide partnership that pursues sector strategies in Manufacturing. The partnership spans a twenty-county area including parts of Pennsylvania and West Virginia, and includes 1,636 metal manufacturing establishments that employ over 63,000 people and contribute \$2.1 billion in exports each year. GPMMC responds to a mismatch between the skills that manufacturing employers' need and the regional workforce's skills. The regional partnership works to facilitate industry-led development of a common curriculum for middle-skilled occupations as the foundation for new training programs, promote awareness of employment opportunities and shift perceptions among students and parents, and expand apprenticeships, internships and community college offerings for high-skills, high-wage metal jobs.

As another example, the Southwest Planning Region will collectively work to build stronger connections with the Tristate Energy and Advanced Manufacturing (TEAM) Consortium, which was formed to effectively respond to the increased demand for workers in the Energy and Advanced Manufacturing industries across parts of Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Ohio. The TEAM partnership includes educators, workforce and economic development organizations, state and federal agencies, and private industry.

The Pittsburgh region is fortunate to have an education environment that is both diverse and deep

in post-high school opportunities for credentialing, including 88 regional universities and post-secondary career, technical and vocational schools. These organizations together confer more than 45,000 degrees annually, including 12,000 technology degrees and certificates.²⁸ The Southwest Planning Region is currently exploring ways to align efforts regarding higher education initiatives and increased demand for skilled labor driven by the cracker plant and other developments in the region. This will include coordination with post-secondary Perkins partners, who are required one-stop system partners in each local workforce area. Further, each local board works closely with our Title II – Adult Education partner programs, which are core one-stop system partners. Further, the Southwest Planning Region will strengthen connections with community colleges in our region, as an important resource for education and training. The TEAM Consortium discussed above is an example of a region-wide initiative that involves close coordination with community colleges.

Expanding access to registered pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship opportunities will also be an important component of our regional strategy. Section 1.2 discusses current examples of ways in which the LWDBs in our region are developing and implementing apprenticeship programming, including programs in healthcare and early childhood education. The Southwest Planning Region will continue exploring ways we can partner with training providers, employers, and the Commonwealth’s Apprenticeship and Training Office (ATO) to expand apprenticeships in the region, including ways to connect women, people of color, and other populations to apprenticeship opportunities. As an example, Intro to the Construction Trades, which was developed in partnership between TRWDB and the Builders Guild of Western Pennsylvania, is a pre-apprenticeship that has helped to build a path to registered apprenticeships and employment for people of color across a wide range of occupations in the Construction industry.

The Southwest Planning Region works with the Allegheny Conference on Community Development (ACCD) to connect workforce and economic development efforts. Further, our collaborative effort includes working through the Southwest PA Partnership for Regional Economic Performance (PREP) Network. All LWDBs are non-funded members. This membership includes interaction, sharing, referral for services and working on regional initiatives, such as the Greater Pittsburgh Metal Manufacturing Community. We will continue to pursue opportunities to be more involved in regional Southwestern PREP activities, including referrals and outreach to employers on workforce development items moving forward.

A further description on how local boards engage with PREP and other DCED programming is available in Section 1.5. A detailed description on how local boards will coordinate to serve special populations and individuals with barriers to employment is available in Section 1.6.

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

As discussed, industry partnerships and sector strategies are a core component to effective business engagement in the Southwest Pennsylvania Region. Each local board in our region pursues strategies for engaging employers with a focus on in-demand industries. As a key example, SCWDB leads the Freight and Logistics industry partnership, which extends across three workforce areas in our region, and also manages industry partnership in Construction/Building Trades and Advanced

²⁸ Pittsburgh Regional Alliance (2020)

Manufacturing. TCWDB has industry partnerships in Healthcare, Manufacturing, and Information Technology (IT) and is currently developing strategies for Transportation and Logistics. TRWDB continues to develop and manage industry partnerships in Construction, Education, Financial Services, Healthcare, Information Technology, Manufacturing, Public Sector, Retail & Hospitality, and Transportation & Logistics. WFWDB focuses on Hospitality and Tourism, Logistics, and Transportation.

These sector strategies and industry partnership efforts have led to the development of occupational training programs that lead to quality jobs in the respective industries. For example, TRWDB has developed signature training programs connected to industry partnerships, including Bankwork\$, which is national training model leading to entry-level employment in the Banking and Financial Services industry, as well as Intro to the Construction Trades, which is delivered in close partnership with the Builders Guild of Western Pennsylvania.

The Southwest Planning Region also works to engage with ongoing region-wide programs and initiatives. As an example, the Southwestern PA Partnership for Regional Economic Performance (PREP) consists of the economic development partners of the nine-county Southwestern PA region working together to organize and achieve economic results for our region. PREP partners offer one-on-one counseling, specialized workshops, online training, and financial incentives to new businesses and existing companies looking to grow. The PA Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) funding has been used for the four economic development programs that serve the Southwest Pennsylvania community: the Local Development District; the Industrial Resource Center; the Industrial Development Corporations (county-based); and the Small Business Development Centers (university-based). In addition, the PREP funded partners have involved the four LWDBs to continue efficient and effective coordination of workforce and economic development. In 2019, this regional PREP served over 1,800 clients in over 7,800 separate counseling sessions. This resulted in over \$105 million in increased sales, over 920 jobs created and over 3,000 retained.

The local boards in our region also plan to coordinate and collaborate with Engage! program partners. Engage! is a PA DCED business retention and expansion (BRE) program designed to interact with targeted companies. Engage! works to retain existing businesses in a community and to help them grow and expand by building relationships with business owners or key decision makers and economic and workforce development partners. Engage! programs work closely with businesses to:

- Identify needs and match resources to help existing businesses and industries address their challenges to become more competitive and successful.
- Demonstrate to local businesses and industries that the community recognizes and depends on their contributions to the local/state economy.
- Build business and community capacity to sustain growth and development.
- Understand and address the common themes articulated by PA businesses in order to drive policy and the menu of PA DCED and partner services for long range business retention and expansion efforts.

As an additional example of coordination with economic development, the SCWDB is a member of the Beaver County Action Team (BCAT) along with representatives from the Beaver County Corporation for Economic Development, Beaver County Chamber of Commerce, Beaver County

Regional Council of Governments, Beaver County Commissioners, and the Community College of Beaver County. This team is leveraging workforce and economic development resources to attract new businesses to the area, retain and support expansion of existing businesses and foster new business creation through entrepreneurship programs. The SCWDB and Title I service provider in Washington and Greene counties also participate in both the Greene County COVID Economic Development Task Force.

As noted, the Southwest Planning Region will also work to more closely connect with other sector-focused, region-wide initiatives like the TEAM Consortium (Energy and Advanced Manufacturing) and the Greater Pittsburgh Metals Manufacturing Community (GPMMC) to support and ensure alignment between these initiatives and the strategies and services of the public workforce development system.

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

Discussed in Section 1.2, the Allegheny Conference on Community Development released the report, *2020/2030 Next is Now: A 10 Year Vision of Vitality in the Pittsburgh Region*. The development of report was led by a 35-member steering committee of regional leaders and was informed by obtaining feedback from 1,000 stakeholders in ACCD's 10-county region, as well as a summit of 1,000 stakeholders during summer 2019. The report notes a key regional challenge is that the economy has experienced slow growth compared to statewide growth in Pennsylvania and growth nationally. The report emphasizes making economic growth a priority and highlights several strategies, including but not limited to scaling talent attraction and retention efforts; removing barriers to opportunity to ensure people are not excluded from the benefits of increased economic growth; and creating a regional investment and growth environment that encourages business investment, job creation, high quality of place and opportunity for all.

Addressing barriers to employment and connecting individuals to quality career opportunities is core to the work of the Southwest Region. Local boards within the Southwest Planning Region seek to serve special populations, such as veterans, and individuals with barriers to employment, including low-income individuals, recipients of public assistance, individuals who are basic skills deficient, out-of-school youth, and the re-entry population. Through the PA CareerLink® offices, the Southwest Planning Region aligns programming to meet the state and federal requirements for priority of service; more than 51% of those served will be priority of service populations under WIOA. The following are examples of how the Southwest Planning Region will continue to implement strategies for serving individuals with barriers to employment:

Veterans

Veterans receive priority of service at PA CareerLink® offices, meaning that a veteran or qualified spouse receives priority access to services and training opportunities. Additionally, Title I staff within the PA CareerLink® system work closely with Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVER) in each local area. The LVER provide services geared specifically towards veterans, including intensive job development activities, the initiation of referrals to social services, and regular follow-up to ensure that the veteran receives the support needed. Additionally, the LVER coordinates with local veteran service providers, provides information about and referral to veterans programs, and reviews and analyzes the veterans program to ensure compliance with

veteran standards. As previously described, the Southwest Planning Region implemented an initiative to support workforce development for veterans with competitive funding. The Veterans Value Initiative (VVI), now completed, was a regional approach designed to increase veterans' access to career services and work-based training programs, and to increase employer use of work-based training programs as incentives to hire veterans. Our region will consider possibilities for future regional collaboration to effectively serve veterans.

Low-Income Individuals and Recipients of Public Assistance

Low-income individuals and recipients of public assistance are identified at the point of entry at local PA CareerLink® offices and informed of their entitlement to priority of service. In order to better serve this population, local boards within the Southwest Planning Region will determine ways to strengthen the partnerships between Title I WIOA services and TANF Employment Advancement and Retention Network (EARN) providers. Local boards recently collaborated with the PA Department of Human Services (DHS) on developing and implementing re-designed TANF EARN and Work Ready program models, shifting toward a more holistic service model that works to meet both the workforce and human service needs of individuals. Updates to these programs include:

- Expanded services beyond the Work First approach to promote more access to education and barrier remediation, recognizing education is often required for family-sustaining jobs.
- Incorporation of counseling services and a stronger case management/coaching component to provide consistent, comprehensive support.
- An extended timeframe to provide retention services to help navigate the transition into the workforce and address elements of the “benefits cliff.”
- A new focus on people who have needed TANF the longest and often face significant barriers. The Work Ready programs will now be serving the extended TANF population, and DHS is revising policies to increase flexibility for serving this population.
- Revised program evaluation measures and pay-for-performance items to reflect and incentivize long-term outcomes.

Additionally, WIOA OSY, ISY, and TANF Youth Development Fund programs each set income eligibility requirements to ensure services are reaching individuals who are low income and/or individuals with other barriers to employment. Further, each local workforce area sets a self-sufficiency wage standard, as a target entry-level wage for participants served. This standard serves as a guide for service delivery and job placement, to help focus on training and jobs that lead to economic self-sufficiency for the participant.

Individuals with disabilities

Eligible individuals who self-identify as having a disability are referred to the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) staff at PA CareerLink® for additional services. Eligible OVR customers can receive vocational counseling and guidance, vocational education, restoration, training, job placement, and individualized supportive services. Job seekers with a disability are also served through Title I staff at the PA CareerLink®. This dual enrollment would be more effective and would better serve job seekers and employers with increased data sharing from OVR and enhanced program alignment. The Southwest Planning Region will work with our OVR partners to determine additional opportunities for partnership and coordination moving forward.

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

Re-Entry Population

As noted in our regional analysis, previously incarcerated individuals and individuals with a criminal background experience barriers to obtaining and retaining employment. Each local workforce area in the Southwest Planning Region has developed specialized workforce programming to assist these individuals in overcoming barriers. TCWDB, for example, is currently piloting a youth re-entry project in Butler County for young adults, ages 18-24 who were incarcerated or were subjected to the justice system. TCWDB is partnering with several county agencies, PA CareerLink®, and other partners to connect participants to a variety of services, including case management, financial literacy, adult education, and certification programs. The program also facilitates connections to PA CareerLink® for additional career, training, and job placement services upon program completion. TRWDB has developed and implemented several federal and state funded re-entry programs. These include STRIVE, which is a USDOL-funded program that provides career, training, job placement, supportive, and follow-up services to justice-involved young adults. The state-funded Career Pipeline program is another youth re-entry initiative currently being implemented. In addition, Pathway Home, currently in the planning phase, is a USDOL-funded initiative working to deliver both pre-release and post-release employment and training services to inmates in the Allegheny County Jail.

Adult Education

Individuals with basic skills deficiencies who enroll in Title I services through PA CareerLink® will be co-enrolled with Title II Adult Basic Education where appropriate. PA CareerLink® staff identify individuals who are basic skills deficient through an intake process, then refer these customers to appropriate literacy programs, including GED review classes, ESL, and math and English remediation courses.

Employer Engagement and Industry Partnerships

Recognizing that employer skills needs do not stop at county lines, the Southwest Planning Region will continue to utilize regional efforts in the development of sector strategies and industry partnerships. This will enable our region to regularly and effectively engage and interact with employers in identifying and connecting employer needs with the regional labor force.

Our Region will also leverage industry partnerships and employer engagement capacity to connect special populations and individuals with barriers to career opportunities. This may include educating employers on the benefits of hiring individuals with certain barriers to employment and incentives, such as Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) and Federal Bonding programs that are available. This may also include working with our industry partners to develop specialized training

to connect individuals to employment along career pathways within their respective industries. As an example, the support of participating employers in TRWDB’s Financial Services Industry Partnership helped to bring the national model Bankwork\$ to the Pittsburgh area. This 8-week program provides career readiness and occupational skills training to qualify participants for entry-level employment in the banking industry (tellers, customer service representatives, etc.). Past Bankwork\$ participants have included both WIOA priority of service customers and TANF EARN clients.

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

The Southwest Planning Region has a diverse geographic landscape, from rural, sparsely populated areas like Greene and Indiana Counties, to suburban, moderately populated areas like Westmoreland and Butler Counties, to the urban, densely populated City of Pittsburgh. Each county has unique transportation needs and varying levels of public transportation systems.

Commuting patterns and business density also vary widely throughout the region. As noted, more than half of employed residents in the region, except those in Allegheny County, commute outside of their county for work. The economic influence of Allegheny County often draws residents of neighboring counties into Allegheny County for work. Allegheny County was home to nearly 60% of the jobs in the Southwest Planning Region in 2020²⁹. Table 8 displays average commute times and modes of transportation for the Southwest Planning Region. The average commute time across the region for workers 16 and older is 27.1 minutes, which is similar to commute times across Pennsylvania (27.2 minutes) and the nation (26.1 minutes). Additionally, the majority (72.7%) of commuters across the region drive to work alone and 2.3% use public transportation.

Table 8: Regional Commute Times and Transportation Methods³⁰

County	Average Travel Time to Work in Minutes	Drove Alone to Work Percent	Took Public Transportation to Work Percent
Allegheny County	27.2	70.6	9.5
Armstrong County	30.7	82.3	0.5
Beaver County	26.3	83.0	1.4
Butler County	27.0	84.6	0.4
Fayette County	27.1	83.8	0.2
Greene County	28.4	75.6	5.8
Indiana County	24.0	80.9	0.1
Washington County	26.7	83.7	1.2
Westmoreland County	26.6	83.4	1.2
Pennsylvania	27.2	75.6	5.8
United States	26.1	76.3	4.9

Lack of strong public transportation infrastructure between Allegheny County and some outlying counties and within the outlying counties mean that workers frequently must rely on cars and

²⁹ EMSI, QCEW Employees, Non-QCEW Employees and Self-Employed, 2020

³⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 ACS 5-Year Data Profile.

ridesharing to commute to work. Due to these variations in local transportation options, each local board determines the best method to provide transportation assistance. Transportation will continue to be a barrier and a challenge to job seekers being successfully employed in long-term employment. The Southwest Planning Region workforce boards will continue to explore transportation options to assist job seekers in meeting their education, training and employment needs.

Access to affordable and quality childcare also continues to be a significant obstacle to obtaining and retaining employment in the region. This challenge has been heightened during the COVID-19 pandemic that began in 2020, which forced the temporary closure of both childcare facilities and schools at different points during the pandemic. The Southwest Region will work to ensure our programs are able to facilitate the appropriate connections to childcare services for participants in need. Our region will also explore ways of partnering with existing organizations and agencies, such as the United Way of Southwestern PA, state and local human services agencies, community-based organizations, and others to address the challenge of childcare as a barrier to employment.

An additional barrier to education and employment for many individuals in the Southwest Region, particularly in rural locations, is access to internet and broadband connections. As discussed, the percentage of households with access to the internet ranges from 73.9% in Indiana County to 83.9% in Allegheny County. This barrier has intensified as a result of the pandemic, which has required many education, training, and employment opportunities to shift to remote/virtual formats. The Southwest Planning Region will explore ways of addressing this challenge for job seekers in our region, coordinating and sharing best practices as needed. TCWDB, for example, has been working to address technology and internet connectivity as a barrier within the three counties in its workforce area. TCWDB has extended Wi-Fi to the PA CareerLink® parking lots so customers can access the internet without having to walk into physical locations, a particular need during the pandemic. TCWDB has built partnerships with libraries and senior centers to provide job seekers with access to computers and the internet. These services have been promoted to PA CareerLink® customers and TCWDB is working to build additional community partnerships to connect customers to the internet.

Regarding coordinating supportive services, the key to successful work outcomes is often the delivery of supportive services consistently across the region. This may include childcare, transportation, and other services necessary to meet the job seekers' needs in support of successful work experience. While supportive services are based upon local policies, the Southwest Planning Region LWDBs will continue to review supportive services as needed based on common needs of employers and job seekers.

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

Each local board in the Southwest Planning Region has established processes for review and approval of training providers and programs to the WIOA Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). Local boards strive to maintain a robust menu of quality training opportunities on the ETPL aligned with High Priority Occupations (HPOs) in the region and each respective local area. Training programs are assessed based on their alignment with an HPO, past performance outcomes (including job placement, median earning, credential attainment, and program completion) and various other factors. The local boards in the Southwest Region also regularly engage employers in in-demand industries through industry partnerships and sector strategies to assess employer priorities and hiring needs and develop training/credentialing programs aligned with labor market demand. The

Southwest Planning Region has also previously collaborated in petitioning for occupations to be added to the HPO list on a regional scale based on our knowledge of regional hiring needs, informed by employer engagement. The Region will continue to explore opportunities for collective outreach efforts to enhance the menu of quality training options in our region, while ensuring alignment with regional demand.

1.9. *(Planning Regions Only) Describe how the region established administrative cost arrangements, including the pooling of funds for administrative costs, as appropriate, for the region.*

The Southwest Planning Region will explore opportunities to define and establish administrative cost and resource sharing arrangements regionally. As mentioned, while health restrictions and other challenges imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic are temporary, the enhanced capacity our region has developed to provide remote and virtual services will enable our region and local areas to more permanently connect with job seekers, businesses, and partners outside of brick-and-mortar locations. The Southwest Planning Region will determine ways of leveraging technology for improved regional communication, coordination, and collaboration among our local boards, one-stop center staff, and other partners to the system. Virtual regional hiring events, employer roundtables, job seeker workshops, and staff training/professional development are all examples of potential collaboration.

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

Each local area will negotiate individually with the Commonwealth.

The negotiated levels of performance for the Southwest Planning Region have many implications for individuals and employers accessing workforce development services. The region is committed to assisting all of its job seekers to find success in their careers while driving the workforce development system to meet performance outcomes. Each local board in the region has negotiated performance measures with the Department for PY 2020-PY2021 for its local area. Moving forward, we will identify a process for the collective negotiation of regional measures for performance. Each local board will report on negotiation of performance measures and subsequent performance to the other locals. Local boards will discuss any concerns which may arise in regard to the local levels and we will provide support to each other when needed.