

**For Immediate Release – February 2022**  
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**Westmoreland-Fayette Workforce Investment Board to Support Local Healthcare and Manufacturing Industries Through Industry Partnerships**

With growing staffing needs, increasing online job postings, and an unemployment rate slightly higher than the state average, supporting the Westmoreland-Fayette area's strongest industries is critical to a successful workforce and economy. With funding provided by the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry (L&I), the Westmoreland-Fayette Workforce Investment Board (FWWIB) will soon host two Industry Partnerships for the Westmoreland-Fayette area's Healthcare and Manufacturing industries.

For the Westmoreland-Fayette Workforce Development Area (WFWDA), occupations within and surrounding the healthcare and manufacturing industries are considered high priority occupations (HPOs). These HPOs play a critical role in supporting the WFWDA's economy and providing numerous career opportunities for residents. Occupations such as registered nurses, nursing assistants, CNC machine operators, and more are in high demand in the local area. However, local employers are struggling to fulfill their staffing needs.

To support the local area's employers, the FWWIB has designed its Healthcare Industry Partnership and Manufacturing Industry Partnership to increase regional collaboration among industry representatives and businesses to develop solutions to critical industry needs and challenges. These Industry Partnerships will welcome partners from workforce development, business, education, and economic development to identify available resources and best practices for employers to increase hiring and retainment. Conversations during partnership convenings will be employer-driven, prioritizing the most relevant needs facing the industries. As a result of high employment needs, the FWWIB anticipates that conversations will focus on best recruitment practices, promising retainment methods, and how to effectively reach job seeker populations.

Beyond conversations and identifying best practices and resources, the Industry Partnerships will assist employers with implementing internships, work experiences, and job shadowing at their organization. Additionally, Industry Partnerships will help employers develop career awareness events such as job fairs, meet-and-greets with employers, and activities with the Westmoreland-Fayette PA CareerLink® centers. Participating employers will also receive the opportunity to attend employer workshops and seminars, listen to guest speakers, and learn information about community events. Specifically, Industry Partnership employers will gain an in-depth understanding of the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in their workforce. DEI activities will touch on several subjects such as sensitivity and appropriateness in the workplace, how to accommodate those with disabilities, and how having a diverse workforce can assist employers in creating a stronger organization.

In addition to supporting local employers, the FWWIB's Industry Partnerships will collaborate with education partners to develop and enhance curriculums that can upskill job seekers looking to enter or advance within the manufacturing or healthcare industry. In combination with employer activities, the FWWIB's Industry Partnerships create a communication channel between employers and those with connections to job seekers and current workers with applicable career interests, experience, and training.

Overall, the WFWIB's Industry Partnerships open the door for employers to gain a greater sense of community within their industry and develop connections with partners outside of their industry. These new connections and understandings will help struggling employers identify ways to overcome crucial challenges and grow their organizations. Similarly, Industry Partnerships assist the WFWIB and community organizations in best creating and developing resources and programming that can be directly applicable to industry challenges. Ultimately, employers will be equipped with strategies, new understandings, and partnerships that will work to directly address their industries' primary needs.

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### **About the Westmoreland-Fayette Workforce Investment Board**

The Westmoreland-Fayette Workforce Investment Board (WFWIB) is a non-profit entity consisting of appointees from the business, education, and labor sectors of Westmoreland-Fayette counties. The board is empowered to lead workforce development activities in Fayette and Westmoreland counties. The WFWIB is funded by the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA), which provides funding to federal workforce programs and local Workforce Development Boards. The WFWIB oversees the three PA CareerLink® centers that are located in Westmoreland and Fayette counties: PA CareerLink® Westmoreland County at Youngwood, PA CareerLink® Fayette County, and PA CareerLink® Alle-Kiski. The Westmoreland-Fayette Workforce Investment Board is an equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request for individuals with disabilities. For more information about the Westmoreland-Fayette Workforce Investment Board, please visit [www.WestFayWIB.org](http://www.WestFayWIB.org).