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Contact: Janet Ward | Executive Director | 724-755-2145

Westmoreland-Fayette Workforce Investment Board Receives Funding to Support Local Students, Educators, Employers, and More.

As 2022 begins, the Westmoreland-Fayette Workforce Investment Board (WFWIB) looks forward to a promising year of workforce development opportunities for youth, employers, educators, and others in the local area. With funding provided by the Richard King Mellon Foundation, the WFWIB will soon kick off another program year of its Westmoreland-Fayette Business Education Partnership (WF-BEP) and Teacher In the Workplace (TIW) for Westmoreland County residents.

The WF-BEP provides opportunities for youth and young adults to gain relevant workforce knowledge and skills, as well as experiences that align with their career interests. Youth and young adults supported can be as young as elementary school to as mature as post-secondary education students. These opportunities are typically in the form of career summer camps, training programs, work experiences, internships, job shadowing, and industry tours. These activities, when applicable, will primarily focus on the high priority and in-demand occupations in the Westmoreland County area. By better equipping youth with the skills and knowledge required by growing industries, these youth will be able to remain and thrive in the local area. Correspondingly, local businesses benefit from the growing number of individuals with valuable workforce abilities entering the workforce. Ultimately, the WF-BEP addresses challenges of the local economy by focusing on supporting youth and their career goals.

Beyond the engagement of youth and local businesses, much of the previous success accredited to the WF-BEP stems from the high involvement of educators and parents/guardians. Many schools in the Westmoreland County area provide programs to their students through the WF-BEP. Moreover, all WF-BEP programs are encouraged to involve the parents/guardians of participants in programming to ensure parents/guardians learn the opportunities that exist in the local area. Engaging youth, parents/guardians, educators, and local businesses creates innovative opportunities that change the regional culture to support career-related experiences.

To support workforce demands and labor needs further, the WFWIB's TIW initiative is designed to help school districts keep pace with future workforce and economic needs. Specifically, TIW will provide K-12 educators and administrators with the opportunity to discuss the relevant industry and education needs with industry leaders and local employers. Through industry tours, job shadowing, and discussion sessions, educators and administrators are immersed in industry knowledge and experiences designed to assist with curriculum development. TIW will primarily provide opportunities for educators and administrators to learn about in-demand and growing industries in the region. For instance, the WFWIB intends for upcoming TIW activities to focus on manufacturing, healthcare, business, information technology, and other industries of interest.

In addition to industry tours, participating educators and administrators will tour their school districts' local career and technology centers (CTCs). During this experience, CTC educators will discuss the various career pathways and training CTCs offer to prepare students to enter the workforce. This opportunity will allow for collaboration between CTC and K-12 educators and administrators on how they can best support the various career interests of students.

TIW not only supports the area's schools, but also supports the area's employers. During TIW activities, employers will share industry needs and what would help in growing the workforce. Additionally,

employers can share what skills, knowledge, and experiences are valuable for individuals entering the workforce. By hearing the needs of industry representatives, educators and administrators will be stronger in developing relevant curriculums for their students. To support employers even further, the WFWIB's TIW will offer local organizations opportunities to visit participating schools and share industry needs and information directly with students and educators in the classroom.

Following tours, shadowing experiences, and discussion sessions with employers and CTC educators, K-12 educators and administrators will convene separately. During convenings, lessons learned, new best practices, and ways to share new understandings with co-educators and districts will be discussed.

The execution and scaling of these opportunities and programs would not be possible, however, without the funding generously provided by the Richard King Mellon Foundation.

The Richard King Mellon Foundation is the largest foundation in southwestern Pennsylvania and one of the 50 largest foundations in the world. Striving to improve the competitive position of the region through economic development, economic mobility, health and well-being, conservation, organizational effectiveness, and social-impact investments, the Richard King Mellon Foundation holds a core belief in helping the people of southwestern Pennsylvania achieve greater opportunities and prosperity.

Under the Richard King Mellon Foundation's economic mobility initiative, the WFWIB proposed to scale its WF-BEP in Westmoreland County with a specialized focus on youth experiencing systemic and programmatic inequities and barriers such as poverty. Specifically, the WFWIB will ensure equal opportunity efforts for youth of economically disadvantaged families are made. Additionally, funding provided by the Richard King Mellon Foundation supports the WFWIB in providing opportunities for Westmoreland County youth that may struggle to meet the eligibility requirements of state and federal funding. Similarly, the WFWIB's TIW holds a mission that aligns closely to the Richard King Mellon Foundation's economic development in seeking to evolve the workforce development system through school districts in helping students prepare for the jobs of today and build pipelines to employment.

The WFWIB's WF-BEP and TIW recruitment and outreach efforts across Westmoreland County will provide an equal opportunity for all youth, parents/guardians, schools, and businesses across the area. The WFWIB holds the goal of equally supporting the Westmoreland County community and sustaining workforce development successes for all participating residents.

Westmoreland County includes numerous school districts, CTCs, post-secondary education institutions, organizations from workforce and economic development, chambers of commerce, and local businesses that the WFWIB intends to support. Through WF-BEP and TIW, the WFWIB ultimately hopes to scale both initiatives beyond previous capabilities and build on established successful outcomes to support students, educators, employers, parents/guardians, and all residents of the Westmoreland County area better than ever before. The WFWIB's WF-BEP and TIW activities are to begin later this year.

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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.