

Westmoreland-Fayette Workforce Investment Board Received Business Education Partnership Grant to Maintain Workforce Development for Local Students

The Westmoreland-Fayette Workforce Investment Board (WFWIB) will continue their Westmoreland-Fayette Business Education Partnership, or WF-BEP, initiative with Business Education Partnership Program Year 2022 funding provided by the Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry.

The WF-BEP is a network of educational institutions, employers, and community partners dedicated to assisting youth with remaining in the local area to fulfill workforce needs and develop connections between education and workforce. Furthermore, the WF-BEP works to inform residents and parents/guardians of High Priority Occupations and PA In-Demand Occupations through outreach, thus changing regional understandings and perceptions of the local area's strongest employment options. Over the past several years, the WFWIB has supported dozens of WF-BEP programs serving thousands of local students.

With this specific funding, the WFWIB intends to provide numerous career awareness opportunities for students and even educators. While all WF-BEP efforts will provide career awareness and readiness activities that connect business to education, the majority of activities are expected to be industry tours, career camps, career fairs, leadership and entrepreneurship training, essential skills development, and job shadowing opportunities for students in the area's K-12 public schools. Opportunities to participate in work-based learning, such as pre-apprenticeships, registered apprenticeships, internships, and work experiences, are also anticipated to be offered to high school students.

"As we continue to grow and our workforce ages to retirement, we will be required to add numerous employees that will hold various levels of machinist positions and skill, as well as administrative support staff," stated General Carbide Corporation's Human Resource Manager Jessica Gardner. "It is vital that we bring in the next generation of our workforce into our daily operations."

Beyond activities for students, the WF-BEP seeks to maintain the WFWIB's Teacher In the Workplace, or TIW, initiatives across the Westmoreland-Fayette area. This project allows educators to participate in job shadowing experiences with local employers and provide professional development activities involving Act 45 and 48 credits for educators on career pathway curriculums. Correspondingly, Teacher In the Workplace assists in the development of school districts' Counseling Plans as it supports school districts in understanding the importance of transferrable skills and workforce needs.

"We have been engaged in a number of strategies which includes collaborating and participating with the local workforce board initiatives, and maintaining contact and visibility within the schools when possible to promote job shadow, internship, and career opportunities within the healthcare industry," stated Redstone Presbyterian SeniorCare's Vice President of Human Resources Kathie Breaun.

Through these activities, the WF-BEP will include mentorship opportunities for students and will incorporate Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) within its outreach, promotion, and recruitment efforts. Specifically, DEIA efforts include specialized outreach to school districts with high

percentages of economically disadvantaged students, to those that face additional barriers such as disabilities, and to students of color.

Aligning with the mission of state, regional, and local plans, WF-BEP activities will primarily focus on high-priority occupations in the area's top industries of healthcare, manufacturing, information technology, transportation and logistics, and agriculture.

Utilizing this funding, WF-BEP activities are anticipated to commence fall of 2023 through to the summer of 2024. For more information regarding the WFWIB or WF-BEP, please contact WFWIB Executive Director Janet Ward via email at jward@westfaywib.org.

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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. For more information about the Westmoreland-Fayette Workforce Investment Board, please visit www.WestFayWIB.org. The Westmoreland-Fayette Workforce Investment Board is an equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. For federal funding information, visit www.westfaywib.org/resources/.