

Westmoreland-Fayette Workforce Investment Board (WFWIB)



2025 HIGHLIGHTS

WESTMORELAND & FAYETTE COUNTIES

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A Message from the Executive Director

As we reflect on 2025, we take pride in the progress made across Westmoreland and Fayette counties. Throughout the year, the Westmoreland-Fayette Workforce Investment Board advanced strategies that enhanced the local workforce development system, supported employers, and expanded opportunity for individuals and families across our service area.

This progress was reflected in key initiatives, including Build Back Better, WORC, and our Industry Partnerships in healthcare and manufacturing. Through this work, we brought employers, educators, workforce professionals, and community partners together to address workforce challenges with targeted solutions. These initiatives helped businesses meet their talent needs, connected individuals to career pathways, and reinforced a workforce system defined by partnership, innovation, and local leadership.

As we look ahead to 2026 and beyond, we are building on the vision of our 25th anniversary by continuing to invest in the workforce development system, our local communities, and the partnerships that make this work possible. Our value is rooted in bringing people together, responding to the needs of local employers and residents, and serving as a strong voice for the workforce priorities of Westmoreland and Fayette counties. We remain committed to creating opportunities that advance our local economy and sustain our communities for years to come. We are grateful to our staff, board members, partners, and community for making this progress possible.



**Executive Director
Westmoreland-Fayette
Workforce Investment Board**



About the WFWIB

What is the WFWIB

The WFWIB is a business, education, and community Board empowered to lead workforce development activities in Fayette and Westmoreland counties. As a workforce development leader, the WFWIB serves Westmoreland and Fayette County residents and local employers who are active members of the local labor force.

What does the WFWIB do?

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



What is the WFWIB's mission?

The WFWIB's mission is to lead regional workforce development activities in Westmoreland and Fayette counties to assist individuals in obtaining the skills needed for today's workforce and to help local employers retrain, hire, and retain skilled workers.

WFWIB Staff

Janet Ward

Executive Director

Thomas Whetsel

Chief Financial Officer

Melissa Keys

Controller/Equal
Opportunity Officer

Ryan Butter

Workforce Development Director

Michele Aston

Executive Assistant

Anna Bellan

Compliance Officer II

Mel Dean

Youth Services Manager

Cali Blair

Grants/Marketing Manager

Christina Fortunato

Accounting Clerk

Kerry Fagan

Contract/Data Coordinator

Caitlyn Slezak

Youth Program Specialist

Colin Sherbondy

Programs Assistant

Executive Committee & Board Members

Executive Committee:

Doug Decker

Board Chairperson/Youth Committee Chair

James Rugh

Board Vice Chairperson

Mandy Zalich

Board Treasurer

Lori Albright

Board Secretary

Brian Lawrence

Planning Committee Chair

Charlie Datz

Marketing/Government Relations
Committee Chair

Board Members:

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Byron Kohut

John Dalrymple

John Kline

Sarah DeCarlo

Don Martin

Rennie Detore

Shujuane Martin

Jeffrey Dick

Muriel Nuttall

Marge Duranko

George Rattay

Brianne Eidemiller

Randy Roadman

Kim Hawk

Jeffrey Smail, Jr.

Julian Imbrescia

Don Travis

Robert Kahl

Ed Yankovich

WFWIB Programming

ARC Inspire

ARC INSPIRE strengthens recovery support and workforce development for individuals recovering from substance use disorders in Southwest Pennsylvania. The initiative helps participants achieve long-term stability through employment and supportive services.

Build Back Better Program (BBB)

The BBB Program expands access to careers in robotics and autonomous technologies for historically excluded communities in Southwestern Pennsylvania. It connects participants to training, credentials, and in-demand career opportunities.

Experience Works! Work Experience Program (EW!)

EW! provides paid, hands-on work opportunities for youth in Westmoreland and Fayette counties. The program helps participants build workplace skills, confidence, and career awareness.

Experience Works! PLUS Internship Program (EWP)

EWP supports students completing unpaid internships by providing wages and career readiness training. The program removes financial barriers while helping students gain practical experience.

Industry Partnerships (IP)

Industry Partnerships are employer-led collaborations that align workforce training with real industry needs. They help businesses grow while creating clear career pathways for workers and students.

Teacher in the Workplace (TIW)

TIW places educators in local industries to build real-world understanding of current workforce needs. Teachers bring that insight back to the classroom to better prepare students for careers.

Westmoreland-Fayette Business Education Partnership (WF-BEP)

The WF-BEP connects schools, employers, and community partners to align education with workforce needs. It creates career exposure and work-based learning opportunities for students.

Westmoreland-Fayette Youth Re-Entry Program (WF-YREP)

The WF-YREP Program helps justice-involved young adults transition successfully back into education, training, and employment. Participants receive individualized support, career planning, and access to workforce services.

WIOA Youth Employment & Training Programs

WIOA Youth programs provide eligible young people with employment, education, and training services that support long-term career success. Services may include paid work experiences, tutoring, occupational skills training, and career coaching.

2025 At a Glance

3 New Board Members

joined our Board, committed to supporting local workforce development.

26 Educators & 31 Organizations

actively involved in the WFWIB's Teacher In the Workplace (TIW) program.

46 Interns & 46 Worksites

participated in the WFWIB's Experience Works! PLUS internship program.

50+ Healthcare & Manufacturing Employers

involved in the WFWIB's Industry Partnerships.

15,491 Social Media Engagements

The WFWIB generated 15,491 social media engagements across LinkedIn and Meta in 2025, reflecting a strong audience reach.

18,682 Total Email Deliveries to WFWIB Subscribers

The WFWIB's 2025 email outreach reached scale and engagement, with 18,682 emails delivered and strong audience interaction across campaigns.

Over \$1,125,551 in funding received

outside of standard TANF & WIOA funding through different grant initiatives:

- Teacher in the Workplace
- Experience Works! PLUS
- Manufacturing & Healthcare Industry Partnerships
- Southwest Corner ARC Arise
- Tri-County ARC Inspire

Workforce System Impact

July 1, 2024- June 30, 2025 Summary

COUNTY PROFILE METRICS

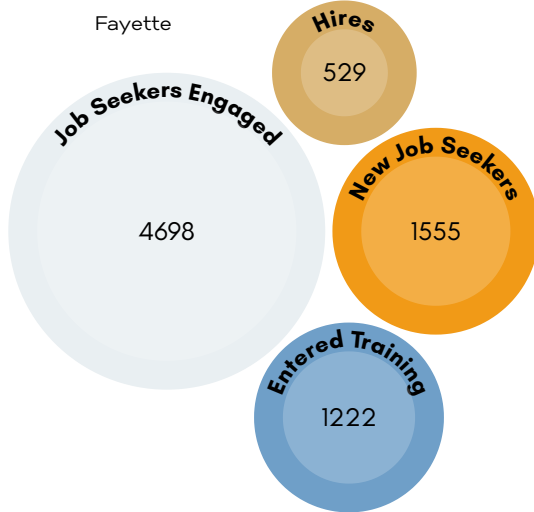
County	Population	Median Age	Unemployment Rate	Online Job Postings	Average Annual Wage
Westmoreland	353,345	47.1	3.9%	5,841	56,516
Fayette	126,967	45.4	4.8%	1,749	51,064

* Center for Workforce Information & Analysis. Fayette & Westmoreland County Profiles. February 2026. Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry.

PA CAREERLINK® LOCATION ENGAGEMENT

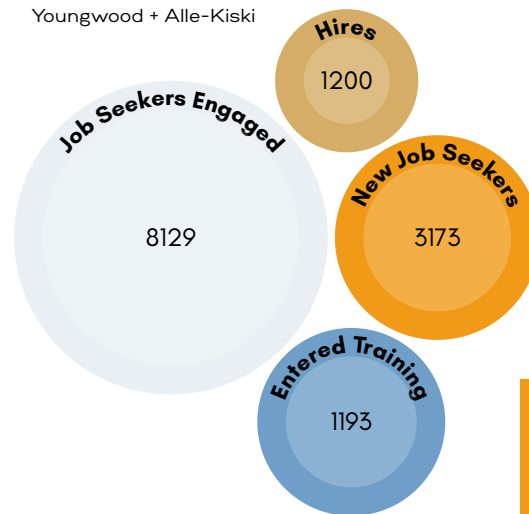
FAYETTE COUNTY

Fayette



WESTMORELAND COUNTY

Youngwood + Alle-Kiski



VETERANS



578

VETERANS SERVED
AT PA CAREERLINK®
LOCATIONS

BUSINESSES SERVED



461

* PA CareerLink®. CareerLinks Performance Standards PY 2024-2025 - Fayette, Westmoreland, and Alle-Kiski. Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry, 2026.

TRAINING & EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) Investment at a Glance



\$915,837.50
Invested



Strategic funding to enhance workforce development skills through ITAs.



159 Individuals
Supported



Empowering residents with training opportunities to achieve career growth.

On-the-Job (OJT) Investment at a Glance



\$486,237.30
Invested



Direct support to employers for hands-on workforce training and skill-building.



80 Individuals
Supported



Equipping workers with job experience and pathways to long-term employment.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT HIGHLIGHTS

Youth/Young Adult Work Experience and Career Readiness

- **2,510+** students engaged in fairs, tours, or camps
- **92** WIOA youth/young adults served
- **637+** students toured local employers
- **46** interns placed through Experience Works! PLUS
- **87** youth and young adults engaged in Experience Works!
- **81** unique Experience Works! worksites (employers)
- **26** educational partners within Westmoreland and Fayette counties

Top Accomplishments

1

Advancing Employer and Industry Collaboration



The WFWIB advanced employer and industry collaboration by connecting employers, educators, workforce partners, and regional stakeholders to align workforce strategies with labor market needs. Key efforts included participation in the Tri-State Apprenticeship Summit, collaboration on the Southwestern Pennsylvania Healthcare Expo, and the launch of the 2025-2026 Teacher in the Workplace cohort through BEP grant support. Collectively, these initiatives expanded awareness of apprenticeships and career pathways, strengthened partnerships between education and employers, and supported a more robust talent pipeline in high-priority sectors.

2

Youth Workforce Preparation and Career Exposure



Youth-focused workforce efforts this year centered on creating clear, supported pathways into high-demand careers. Through BEP, Experience Works!, and Experience Works! PLUS, youth and young adults explored high-demand industries, participated in paid work-and-learn and internship opportunities, and reported strong gains in career pathway understanding and essential employability skills, while employers reported positive organizational impact and strong talent retention outcomes. Additional initiatives, including youth CDL pathways, drone-based applied learning, and healthcare career exposure programs, expanded access to emerging and in-demand fields, strengthening workforce transitions for young people across Westmoreland and Fayette Counties.

3

Supporting Workforce Stability Through Strategic Training Investments

The WFWIB supported workforce stability through employer-aligned training investments, including ITAs, OJT, and sector-based credentials. Healthcare and manufacturing partnership training produced strong credential and incumbent worker outcomes, while youth pathways in transportation, Nurse Aide, and Drone Education contributed to employment exits and skill attainment. Together, these efforts strengthened workforce entry, advancement, and retention across the region.



Featured Success Stories

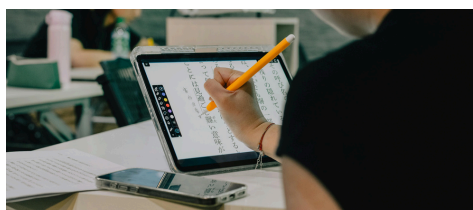
Breath of Success: Fayette County Healthcare Career Pathways

In fall 2023, students began Laurel Technical Institute's Respiratory Therapy Program with support from WIOA ITAs and PA CareerLink® Fayette County staff. Through training and clinical experience, they built the skills needed for careers in respiratory care. By 2025, every participant passed the NBRC exam and secured employment, with graduates serving both major hospital systems and rural communities. Their success reflects the impact of employer-aligned training and individualized career guidance.



EARN in Action: Flexible Workforce Solutions for Long-Term Stability

C.J., a Westmoreland County resident, enrolled in the EARN program in October 2024 after losing her job at a daycare where she had worked for 25 years. After her daughter was diagnosed with cancer, C.J. needed a job that offered more flexibility so she could continue supporting her through treatment. With help from her Career Navigator, C.J. received one-on-one support, regular check-ins, and encouragement as she worked toward her employment goals. She also participated in virtual job clubs and completed healthcare, childcare, and employment readiness coursework through Alison.com and Google Classroom. These services helped her rebuild confidence and prepare for a career change after more than two decades in the same field. In November 2024, C.J. secured employment as a behavioral health technician with Attain ABA Therapy, which offered the flexibility her family needed. She remained employed through her daughter's December 2024 double craniotomy and recovery, gradually increasing her hours and adding a second client by February 2025. C.J. reached her six-month employment retention milestone on May 23, 2025, around the time her daughter entered remission, and achieved her twelve-month retention milestone on November 21, 2025. Today, she continues working as a behavioral health technician in the Plum and Thomas Jefferson School Districts. Her story shows how EARN can help individuals stay connected to work, rebuild confidence, and move forward during difficult times.



Employer Success Story: Heartland Fabrication, LLC

Heartland Fabrication, LLC, located in Brownsville, Fayette County, is a leading inland barge manufacturer with a longstanding presence in the community. In 2025, the company employed 418 full-time workers and increased employment by approximately 40-50 positions during the year, contributing nearly \$28 million in payroll to the local economy. More than 99% of materials used at the facility are American-made, and the majority of contractors supporting plant improvements are based locally, further strengthening the county's economic impact. Heartland Fabrication collaborated closely with PA CareerLink® Fayette County to recruit and hire workers through job postings, referrals, hiring events, and OJT opportunities. In 2025, 26 job openings were posted through PA CareerLink®, resulting in 20 hires, both subsidized and unsubsidized. Six OJT contracts were executed for Welder 3 positions, while additional candidates were hired directly. This partnership allowed the company to expand its workforce while providing job seekers with access to stable, long-term employment opportunities in a high-demand industry. The company's state-of-the-art training center provides eight weeks of hands-on welder training and ongoing skill development at no cost to employees. Workers are encouraged to advance through multiple classifications, each advancement results in a \$6 per hour wage increase, with opportunities for additional pay through dual classification and cross-training. This supports employee retention and long-term career growth within the facility. Heartland Fabrication offers family-sustaining wages, comprehensive benefits, and clear career pathways. Heartland Fabrication demonstrates how employer-driven training and career advancement strategies can successfully meet local workforce needs while supporting economic stability in Fayette County.



Major 2025 Events

PA CareerLink® Job Fairs Expanded Connections

Across 2025, PA CareerLink® centers in Fayette, Alle-Kiski, and Westmoreland delivered recurring job fairs, employer recruitment events, and practical career services that helped job seekers build skills, connect with hiring organizations, and pursue new employment opportunities. This year-round work was highlighted during PA CareerLink® Awareness Days, where job seekers, employers, and partners came together for events featuring direct hiring connections, service-provider networking, and workforce workshops that reinforced the value of accessible, community-based support.

Industry Partnership Highlights

The WFWIB's Manufacturing and Healthcare Industry Partnerships served as working forums where employers addressed real-time operational and workforce challenges together in 2025. Meetings and events focused on priorities such as cybersecurity compliance (CMMC), AI adoption, effective healthcare hiring, leadership resilience, and expanding access to overlooked talent pools, giving participants practical strategies they can apply immediately. This sustained employer collaboration helped align workforce solutions with industry needs in Westmoreland and Fayette.

PWDA Youth Summit Strengthened Youth Workforce Strategies

In March, the WFWIB team participated in the PWDA Youth Summit Conference, where workforce leaders, nonprofit organizations, and employers came together to discuss how best to support the next generation. Panel discussions addressed youth mental health, workforce trends, and successful program models, including perspectives from former program participants.

BotsIQ Competitions Advanced STEM and Manufacturing Career Awareness

In March and April, the WFWIB volunteered at the BotsIQ Preliminary and Finals competitions in Southwestern Pennsylvania. The events gave students hands-on exposure to STEM and manufacturing, highlighted technical and creative skill development, and helped strengthen the future talent pipeline for local employers.

PWDA Annual Conference in Hershey, PA

In May 2025, the WFWIB attended the PWDA Annual Conference in Hershey, PA, where staff connected with workforce leaders from across Pennsylvania, reviewed key policy updates, and brought back practical ideas to strengthen local workforce services. The conference also celebrated Makayla S., recipient of the 2025 Governor's Individual Achievement Award. A Fayette County resident and Governor's Award winner, Makayla, completed the Experience Works! program and built a rewarding career through consistent effort, dedication, and perseverance.



Teacher in the Workplace Connected Educators to Industry Needs

The WFWIB's Teacher in the Workplace (TIW) initiative gave educators direct exposure to career pathways, industry operations, and employer expectations through hands-on site visits and structured program days. The program featured learning experiences, educator-industry engagement, and year-end reflection activities designed to help teachers bring real-world workforce insights back to students.



Experience Works! PLUS Elevated Career Readiness

The WFWIB's Experience Works! PLUS (EWP) program delivered a strong summer of paid internship opportunities that connected young adults to real-world work experience, employer mentorship, and career-focused skill development. From recruitment through the Internship Summit, EWP helped participants enhance communication, teamwork, and workplace readiness while building clearer pathways from education to employment across the region.



Tri-State Apprenticeship Summit Advanced Talent Development

The WFWIB joined regional apprenticeship leaders and employers to promote earn-and-learn pathways that support both talent development and retention. The summit reinforced apprenticeship as a strong strategy for meeting workforce demand.



SWPA Healthcare Expo Showcased High-Demand Career Pathways

More than 1,000 students from across nine counties explored healthcare careers through direct engagement with employers and training partners at the SWPA Healthcare Expo. The event expanded awareness of high-demand occupations and strengthened sector-based career exploration.



Looking Ahead to 2026

Developing Social Capital Through Early Industry Engagement

In 2025, the WFWIB advanced early industry engagement as a key initiative to build social capital and career awareness among youth and young adults. Through BEP and IP grant funding, 2,542 students across 17 school districts and three career and technical centers participated in career awareness, exploration, and work-and-learn activities that connected them with employers, educators, and community partners. Of those served, 637 students participated in industry tours and hands-on learning across sectors, and 32 took part in work-and-learn activities in construction, skilled trades, and culinary arts. College and career fairs engaged 1,873 students, while Little Scrubs Summer Camp and BotsIQ Girls Exploring Tech Day introduced younger students to career pathways. Feedback showed results, with 94% of BEP respondents reporting a better understanding of career pathways. These efforts support the WFWIB's vision for a strong workforce system in Westmoreland and Fayette counties.

Evolving Targeted Outreach

State-funded initiatives supported WFWIB's blended outreach efforts to increase awareness of PA CareerLink® services across Westmoreland, Alle-Kiski, and Fayette County while advancing statewide priorities and connecting employers and job seekers to High Priority Occupations. Early-year Statewide Activities funding backed an outreach campaign promoting no-cost services, training, and job search support through advertising and digital billboards. Additional social media outreach launched in May, with email and print efforts continuing throughout the year to promote workforce services and participation in healthcare and manufacturing initiatives. Later in the year, LinkedIn advertising funded through industry partnership outreach expanded employer engagement and promoted Industry Partnership activities through the fall and winter.

Workforce Alignment Across Southwestern Pennsylvania

Collaboration with neighboring workforce development boards strengthened coordinated strategies, shared learning, and collective problem-solving across Southwestern Pennsylvania. Ongoing engagement with partners—including the Southwest Corner Workforce Development Board, the Tri-County Workforce Investment Board, and Partner4Work—helped align priorities, coordinate joint events such as the Tri-State Apprenticeship Summit and the Southwestern Pennsylvania Healthcare Expo, and share emerging best practices. Regular touch-base meetings provided a consistent forum to discuss regional workforce trends, employer needs, and service delivery challenges while deepening professional relationships. Collaboration also extended to joint planning for anticipated funding opportunities, including expanded coordination with the Southern Alleghenies Planning & Development Commission to support potential grant initiatives. These partnerships reflect a proactive, relationship-focused approach that strengthens regional capacity and supports a unified response to evolving workforce needs.



Connect with Us

Stay connected with your local workforce development board throughout the year!

Press Releases





In the event of receiving grant funding, hiring new staff at WFWIB, implementing operational changes, or any significant updates, WFWIB proactively issues press releases to keep stakeholders informed. For past press releases, please visit the Publications page on our website at www.westfaywib.org.

Newsletters

Be sure to check out WFWIB's bi-monthly newsletter, which highlights workforce development activities and shares inspiring program stories! If you're interested in exploring previous newsletters or would like to join the WFWIB mailing list to receive updates automatically, please visit our website at www.westfaywib.org/publications/.

Social Media

Stay informed about all WFWIB events, activities, and news by keeping up with us on social media!

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