

Southwest Planning Region Program Year 16-17 Transitional Regional Plan

- 1.1 Provide the following:
- A. A reference name for the planning region;
 - B. Identification of the local workforce development areas that comprise the planning region;
 - C. Identification of the county(s) each local workforce development area serves;
 - D. Identification of the key planning region committee members charged with drafting the regional plan;
 - E. Indication of the local workforce development area each committee member is associated with; and
 - F. A list of key planning region committee meeting date(s). [WIOA Sec. 106(a) and (c)]

A. The planning region will be called “the Southwest Planning Region.”

B. The Southwest Region is made up of five local workforce development areas:

- 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 oversee these local areas:

- Southwest Corner Workforce Development Board (SW Corner)
- Three Rivers Workforce Investment Board (3RWIB)
 - Allegheny County Workforce Development Area
 - City of Pittsburgh Workforce Development Area
- Tri-County Workforce Development Board (TCWIB)
- Westmoreland/Fayette Workforce Development Board (Westmoreland-Fayette)

C. The region serves nine counties:

- SW Corner – Beaver, Greene, and Washington Counties
- 3RWIB – City of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County
- Tri-County – Armstrong, Butler, and Indiana Counties
- Westmoreland-Fayette – Fayette and Westmoreland Counties

D and E. The regional planning committee responsible for drafting the regional plan included:

Name	Organizational Affiliation
Bill Thompson	Westmoreland-Fayette WDB
Ami Gatts	SW Corner
Fred Fornataro	TCWIB
Stefani Pashman	3RWIB

F.

January 28, 2016—Kickoff Meeting

March 16, 2016—Draft discussion (via e-mail)

March 29,2016—Draft finalization discussion (via e-mail)

May 16, 2016—Conference call to discuss comment incorporation into final plan

- 1.2 Provide a labor market and economic analysis of the workforce development planning region. This regional analysis must include:
- A. The economic conditions;
 - B. Labor force employment and unemployment data;
 - C. Information on labor market trends;
 - D. Workforce development activities;
 - E. The educational and skill levels of the workforce, including individuals with barriers; and
 - F. The development and implementation of sector initiatives for existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors or occupations for the region.

Indicate the sources of regional labor market and economic data. [WIOA Sec. 106(c)]

Regional Overview

The region is home to nearly 2,500,000 residents, which represents, about 20.0% of Pennsylvania’s population. Almost half (49.5%) of the region’s population resides in Allegheny County, followed by Westmoreland (14.6%), Washington (8.4%), Butler (7.4%), and Beaver (6.8%) Counties.

Regional Population by County, 2014		
County	Population	Share of regional population
Allegheny	1,229,172	49.5%
Westmoreland	362,587	14.6%
Washington	208,157	8.4%
Butler	185,034	7.4%
Beaver	170,124	6.8%
Fayette	135,376	5.4%
Indiana	88,301	3.6%
Armstrong	68,343	2.7%
Greene	38,171	1.5%
Total Regional Population	2,485,265	100%

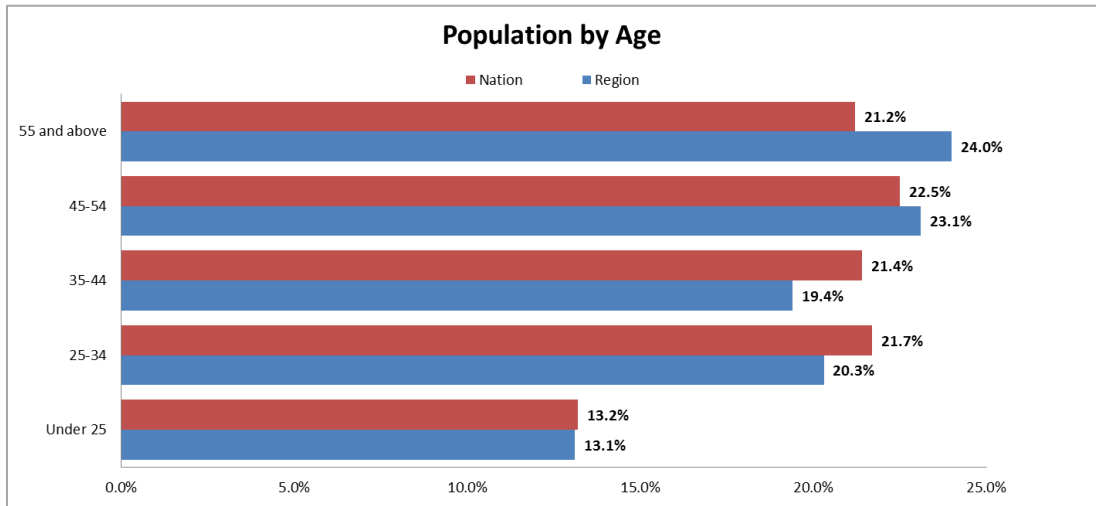
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014

The region is an economic driver for the commonwealth: one-fifth (20%) of Pennsylvania’s labor force resides in the region. Since 2012, the region’s labor force participation experienced moderate growth, while the state’s rate slightly decreased. Both the region and the state experienced decreasing unemployment rates since 2012, though the state experienced a slightly larger decrease. Increased employment and labor force participation indicate slow, but steady regional recovery from the fallout of the 2007-2009 recession.

Economic Indicator	Region		State	
	2012	2014	2012	2014
Unemployment Rate	7.7%	5.9%	7.9%	5.8%
No. of Employed Individuals	1,197,451	1,199,841	5,957,326	6,015,668
Labor Force Participation Rate	63.3%	63.4%	64.40%	64.1%

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics and United States Census Bureau, 2012 & 2014

While labor force participation and employment rates have grown slightly, the regional workforce is aging. Nearly one quarter (24%) of the region’s workforce is 55 or older, and will likely retire in the next 15 years. As older workers retire over the next decade, employers will need to turn to younger workers to fill skilled positions. The age of the region’s workforce, coupled with a low net in-migration (less than 1% from 2010-2014), means that growth of the labor force must come from up-skilling current residents rather than attracting new talent.



Source: Economic Modeling Specialist International, 2015

Industries

The region experienced 4% job growth from 2010-2015, the same percent growth as the state, representing a net increase of 49,745 jobs. Both goods producing and service industries are well represented within the region. The industries comprising the largest proportions of jobs in the region are: Health Care (196,444 jobs, 16.9% of jobs), Retail Trade (134,275 jobs; 11.5% of jobs), Government (123,051 jobs, 10.6% of jobs), Accommodation and Food Services (101,721 jobs, 8.7% of jobs), and Manufacturing (90,779 jobs, 7.8% of jobs).

Industries that represent opportunity for the region include those above and Mining, Quarrying, Oil, and Gas Extraction (location quotient: 2.8) and Management of Companies (location quotient: 2.1), both of which represent a higher concentration of industries in the region than in the nation as a whole.¹

Industries with the greatest expected growth in the region include: Health Care (25,757 new jobs, 16.7% increase), Professional Services (25,757 new jobs, 13.1% increase), Construction, Mining, Oil, and Natural Gas Extraction, (6,387 new jobs, 36.5% increase) and Management of Companies (5,655 new jobs, 14.3% increase). The region also recognizes that Manufacturing is an opportunity industry due to a significant portion of manufacturing workers (28%) being over the age of 55 and therefore approaching retirement.

¹ The location quotient measures how heavily concentrated an industry is in a region compared to the nation as whole. Any location quotient value greater than one indicates that an industry is more concentrated in the region than the nation. A value less than one indicates an industry is comparatively less concentrated in the region. Industries are vital to the region’s economy if they: (1) have higher location quotient values and (2) constitute a significant portion of jobs.

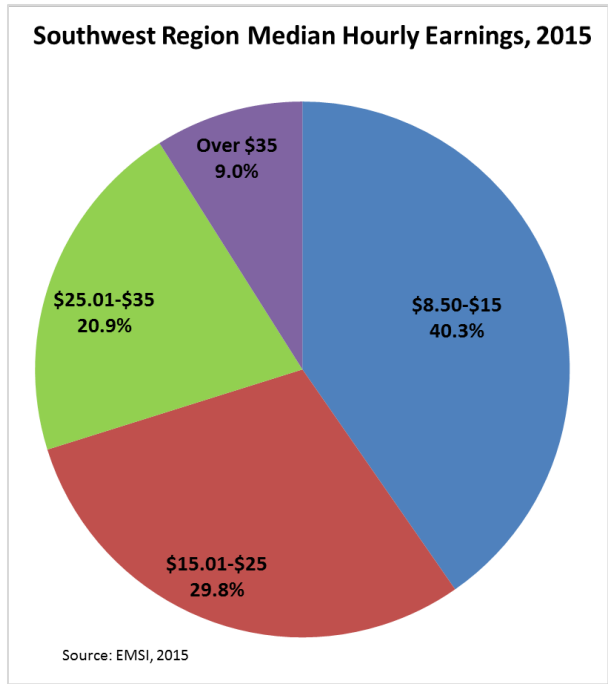
Industry	2015 Jobs	% of 2015 Jobs	2015 - 2025 Change	% Change	2015 Location Quotient
Health Care and Social Assistance	196,444	16.9%	25,757	13.1%	1.3
Retail Trade	134,275	11.5%	150	0.1%	1.0
Government	123,051	10.6%	-4,296	-3.5%	0.7
Accommodation and Food Services	101,721	8.7%	4,735	4.7%	0.9
Manufacturing	90,779	7.8%	-2,871	-3.2%	0.9
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	79,434	6.8%	10,620	13.4%	1.1
Finance and Insurance	56,074	4.8%	1,152	2.1%	1.2
Construction	55,117	4.7%	8,950	16.2%	1.0
Administrative & Support Services	49,575	4.3%	4,820	9.7%	0.7
Wholesale Trade	41,895	3.6%	1,501	3.6%	0.8
Other Services (except Public Administration)	40,295	3.5%	2,123	5.3%	1.1
Management of Companies and Enterprises	39,624	3.4%	5,655	14.3%	2.1
Educational Services	39,228	3.4%	1,726	4.4%	1.7
Transportation and Warehousing	38,186	3.3%	2,586	6.8%	1.0
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	22,090	1.9%	2,824	12.8%	1.2
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	17,516	1.5%	6,387	36.5%	2.8
Information	17,416	1.5%	-974	-5.6%	0.8
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	15,222	1.3%	1,195	7.9%	0.9
Utilities	6,630	0.6%	46	0.7%	1.4
Crop and Animal Production	1,255	0.1%	-118	-9.4%	0.1
Total	1,165,827	100%	71,968	6.2%	

Source: Economic Modeling Specialist International, 2015

Each local area has a slightly different industry mix, which mandates additional local autonomy in program development. 3RWIB has a larger share of jobs in Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (8.8%) and Educational Service (4.9%) than the other local areas (the next highest is SW Corner with 4.4% and 1.3%, respectively). Tri County, SW Corner, and Westmoreland-Fayette have significantly larger shares of jobs in Manufacturing (12.1%, 10.4%, and 12.2%, respectively) than 3RWIB (5.2%).

Wages

The region's jobs are concentrated in occupations that pay between \$8.50 and \$15 an hour. About 40% pay below \$15, while 9% pay over \$35 an hour. Nearly 30% of jobs overall, representing opportunities in the high growth industries previously described: HealthCare, Construction, Energy, and Information Technology, pay \$15.01-\$25/hr., which represents the self-sufficient wage held by each of the four local areas.



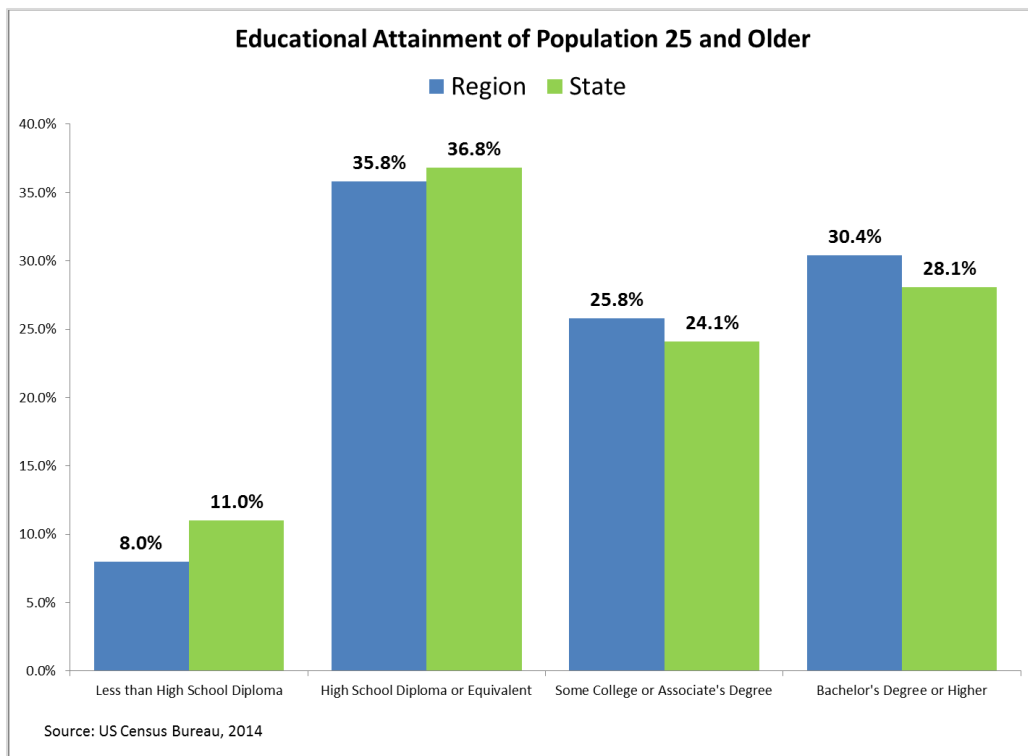
Workforce Development Activities

Each local workforce board in the SW Planning Region provides career services to Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth participants through the local PA CareerLink® system and a network of affiliated providers.

The four local workforce boards which make up the SW Planning Region are collaborating on strategic initiatives to align workforce development activities across the region, including: sectoral strategies, services to regional businesses, the connection with economic development, and improving opportunities for youth. Each of these activities is described in further detail below.

Workforce Skill Levels

The percent of the region’s residents with less than a high school diploma (8.0%) is slightly lower than that of the state (11.0%). In addition, the region has slightly higher percentages of residents with some college or associate’s degree (25.8%) and bachelor’s degree or higher (30.4%) than the state (24.1% and 28.1%, respectively). Almost half of the region’s population has education beyond the high school level.



There is variation in educational attainment within the region. The population served by 3RWIB has the highest level of educational attainment, 36.9% of the population over 25 possessing a Bachelor’s degree or higher and the lowest percentage with less than a high school diploma (6.7%). Each local area has between 24.7%-26.2% of its population with some college or an Associate’s degree, representing a significant opportunity in the region to upskill workers who already have a high school diploma. Larger shares of the populations served by TCWDB (40.5%), SW Corner (40.3%), and Westmoreland-Fayette (41.9%) have their high school diploma as the highest level of educational attainment than that served by 3RWIB (30.5%).

Educational Attainment by Local Area for the Population Age 25 and Above					
Education Level	3RWIB	Tri-County	Southwest Corner	Westmoreland-Fayette	Region
Less than High School Diploma	6.7%	8.8%	9.4%	9.4%	8.0%
High School Diploma or Equivalent	30.5%	40.5%	40.3%	41.9%	35.8%
Some College or Associate's Degree	25.9%	24.7%	26.2%	25.9%	25.8%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	36.9%	26.0%	24.1%	22.9%	30.4%

Source: United States Census Bureau, 2014

1.3 Based upon the regional labor market and economic condition analysis as described in Appendix A’s element 1.2 and *Pennsylvania’s Workforce Development Plan (PY 2016 – PY 2019)*, describe the planning region’s economic and workforce development oriented vision and strategic goals.
[WIOA Sec. 106(c) and Sec. 107(d)]

The Southwest Planning Region shares the Governor’s vision of serving Pennsylvania’s businesses through the creation of a skilled workforce. We embrace the Governor’s focus on promoting high-quality jobs and connecting job seekers with the training necessary to build the skills needed for viable, long-term, and family-

sustaining jobs. Strategic alignment at the regional level will lead to a stronger, more nimble workforce development system that concurrently and effectively serves both job seekers and business.

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 southwestern Pennsylvania but preserves local boards' flexibility to innovate in serving local workforce needs. The region agrees wholeheartedly with the Governor's conviction that an effective workforce development system will be built on a foundation of alignment, innovation, employer engagement, accountability structures and improved data. We have developed the following three regional goals, in alignment with the Governor's five state goals:

1. Enhance coordination between local boards

Regional collaboration must begin on the foundation of solid communication. While the Southwest Planning Region has begun to work together on several key initiatives, described below, growing our regional strengths and collaborations will require strengthening the coordination between our local areas. The Southwest Planning Region recognizes that a united workforce system leads to a more efficient system. We will seek opportunities to align services for employers and job seekers in the region and leverage diverse funding streams.

Improved regional coordination increases the opportunity to pursue competitive funding and pilot programs that can be brought to scale if effective. We have begun the process of breaking down the silos that separate workforce programs in the Southwest Planning Region through pilots of several regional projects that leverage diverse funding. The first model, the Veterans Value Initiative (VVI), shows promising practices for pooling capacity and funding to capitalize on economies of scale. In the second model, SW Corner and Westmoreland-Fayette WDB, will utilize National Dislocated Worker Grant funding (USDOL POWER grant) to reengage dislocated workers from the coal industry in the labor market through the USDOL POWER program. SW Corner, Westmoreland-Fayette WDB, and TCWIB are recipients of a SW Regional Energy Sector Strategic Partnership Project Grant. The partnership is working to develop and coordinate a continuum of programs and partnerships that connect the region's dislocated workforce, impacted by the coal industry decline, and transition into careers that offer self-sustaining wages and growth potential in the Energy Sector.

The VVI is 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. Through this initiative, promising practices for employer engagement, serving priority populations, and developing career pathways for high demand positions will be identified and replicated. VVI represents an ongoing regional collaboration between 3RWIB, TCWIB, and Westmoreland-Fayette WDB.

With the USDOL POWER Grant, SW Corner, Westmoreland-Fayette, and Southern Alleghenies WDBs will serve the nearly 1,100 workers in southwestern Pennsylvania affected by layoffs in the coal industry. This program seeks to develop effective best practices for retraining workers and aligning the skills of the workforce with those needed by employers today.

Utilizing the SW Regional Energy Sector Strategic Partnership Project Grant, SW Corner, TCWIB, and Westmoreland Fayette WDB will identify and implement best practices in training efforts for individuals in the Energy sector. The project will plan, identify, and align key partners, building a system of services to assist job seekers.

2. Streamline talent delivery and business services

Over half (56.9%) 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 (19.0%) leave Allegheny County to work. Regional residents cross county lines for employment and regional employers draw their workforce from all the counties in southwestern Pennsylvania. These regional labor market trends mean that the same employers may interface with multiple local boards. 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 explore these opportunities.

Each local board faces some of the same issues in their areas, including the need for orientation for 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® site administrators as appropriate to discuss customer flow and how to best meet customer needs. The Southwest Planning Region will ask for guidance from the Department of Labor and Industry to determine a method of sharing resources and reporting.

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

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 new requirements under WIOA, local boards in the Southwest Planning Region have prioritized services to out-of-school youth. We will share best practices in key areas, including techniques for identifying, recruiting and engaging disaffected youth and the design and delivery of effective work experiences and internships for OSY.

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. Westmoreland-Fayette WDB has implemented a college and career pathways model with Westmoreland County Community College (WCCC) to connect youth with education and the workforce. Tri County and SW Corner have implemented career fairs and work-based learning opportunities. 3RWIB is building the capacity of local providers through STEM programs and career exploration. The Southwest Planning Region will build on these and other efforts to cultivate employers in youth sector strategies and increase the awareness of high-growth occupations among area youth.

The Southwest Planning Region will actively examine other emerging opportunities for cooperation in serving employers. Through a Workforce Innovation Fund (WIF) grant, WFWDB and 3RWIB are working with Westmoreland County Community College and Community College of Allegheny County, respectively, on developing microcredentials along key career pathways. These pilots are designed to eventually be scalable for other community college partners. The smaller time commitment of microcredentials, along with their clear

alignment with employer needs, make them useful tools for engaging OSY and individuals with barriers to employment.

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 in the coming year.

1.4 Describe regional strategies used to facilitate engagement of businesses and other employers, including small employers and in-demand industry sector occupations. Describe methods and services to support the regional workforce system in meeting employer needs. [WIOA Sec. 106(c)]

The regional strategy is based on a strong relationship with local employers. The Business Service Teams (BST) across each local area provide PA CareerLink® services through personal visits and ongoing Job Gateway/CWDS 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 Region recognizes the importance of small businesses in the region and focuses particular attention on connecting them with the services offered through PA CareerLink® and sectoral strategies.

PA CareerLink® Site Administrators, Supervisors of the Business Services Teams and Specialists 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 PA CareerLink® staff, invitations to attend open houses and symposiums or events hosted by the PA CareerLink® Centers, and a menu of services available for business engagement, including training funds.

The region uses the generic term, "PA CareerLink® Specialist" to identify individuals who provide PA CareerLink® services to employers both large and small, and are members of their respective business service teams (BST). The PA CareerLink® Specialists are employed by the local Title I provider or Workforce Development Board depending on local board policy decisions, utilizing WIOA Title I funds. Additionally, each respective area has Commonwealth of PA, Bureau of Workforce Partnership employees performing this function depending on classification. These individuals are supported by Wagner-Peyser funds. PA CareerLink® Specialists from across funding streams work together to build relationships with businesses in the communities.

The PA CareerLink® Specialist will make personal visits to employers in his/her territory, and the employer will be working individually with their personalized PA CareerLink® Specialist. Each employer will be given an employer packet. This packet explains all of 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, presentations, etc.

Employers will be able to complete Job Gateway 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 will 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.

Sector strategies represent an additional opportunity for business engagement in the region. Each local board in the region pursues sector strategies in 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.

One such regional effort is the Greater Pittsburgh Metals Manufacturing Community (GPMMC), a region-wide partnership that pursues sector strategies in manufacturing. The designation, recently acquired through an Economic Development Administration *Investing in Manufacturing Communities Partnership Grant*, spans a twenty-county area including parts of PA and West Virginia and is anchored by the nine counties in our region. GPMMC responds to a mismatch between the skills that manufacturing employers need and the regional workforce's skills. In spite of the fact that the region is home to many educational institutions and workforce development organizations, regional industry employers continue to identify a number of workforce skills gaps. These include:

- Aging workforce with inadequate number of replacement workers: the manufacturing sector has a high average age (28% of workers are age 55 and above) compared to other sectors in our region's economy
- Lack of connections to and awareness of manufacturing within the K-12 system
- Misperceptions about manufacturing occupations among students and parents
- Inadequate links among career/tech education, universities, and continuing education
- Integration of new technological knowledge for workers at all levels
- Need for underrepresented populations, veterans, persons with disabilities to have opportunities for well-paying jobs in manufacturing

To remedy these skills gaps, the region will 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.

In addition to region-wide sector strategies, local boards have developed sector strategies in line with their labor markets. In addition to the shared regional priorities of advanced manufacturing, healthcare, and energy, TCWIB has sector strategies in information technology (IT) and transportation and logistics. 3RWIB also focuses on information technology (IT). Westmoreland-Fayette focuses on hospitality and tourism, logistics, and

transportation. SW Corner gives special attention to metals. As we explore regional collaboration, we will work to build on existing successes rather than creating programs from scratch.

The Southwest Region works with the Allegheny Conference on Community Development (ACCD) to connect workforce and economic development efforts. We are currently exploring ways to align efforts regarding higher education initiatives, increased demand for skilled labor driven by the cracker plant in the region, and work being done through the TechHire initiative. Further, our collaborative work includes working through the Southwest Region PREP Network. All local WDB's are non-funded members. This membership includes interaction, sharing, referral for services and working on regional initiative, such as the POWER Grant and the Greater Pittsburgh Metal Manufacturing Community.

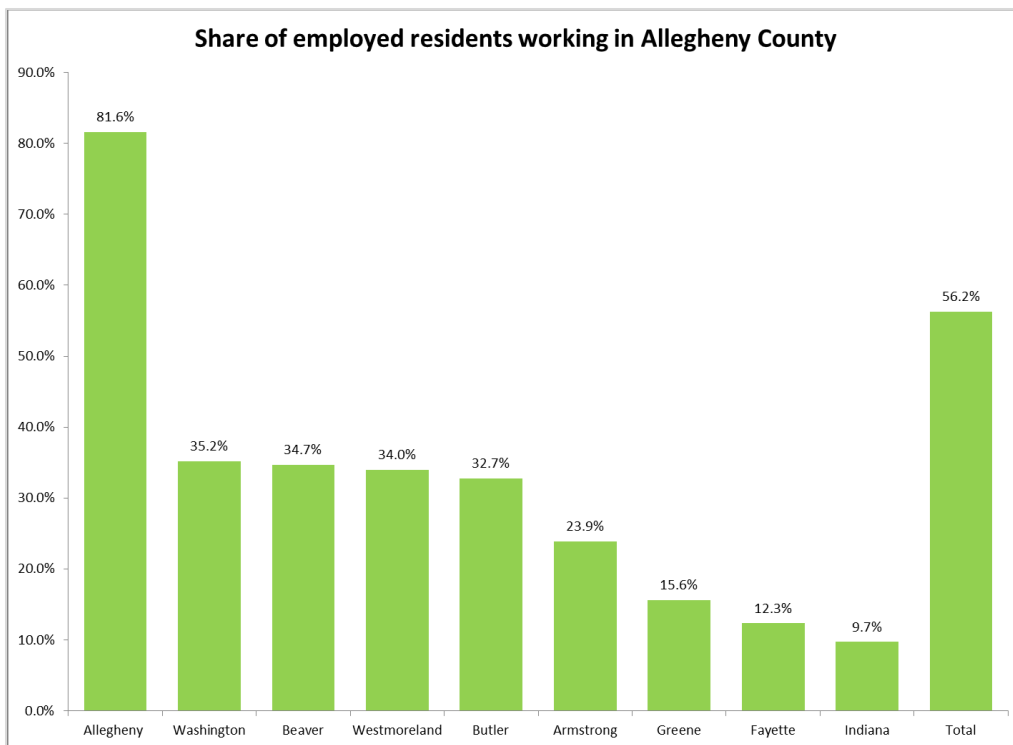
1.6 Describe how the planning region will define and establish administrative cost arrangements, including the pooling of funds for administrative costs, as appropriate, for the region. [WIOA Sec. 106(c)]

We will explore opportunities to define and establish administrative cost arrangements regionally in the next year. We have established several partnerships that are exploring opportunities to share costs on region-wide initiatives through the Veterans' Value Initiative (VVI), the USDOL POWER grant, and the SW Regional Energy Sector Strategic Partnership Project Grant. These programs to serve individuals in need of employment and training services and are implemented with an eye toward creating impact at a regional level and sharing administrative costs where possible. The Southwest Planning Region will continue to pursue diverse funding streams and explore innovations in cost-sharing with both formula and competitive funding where appropriate.

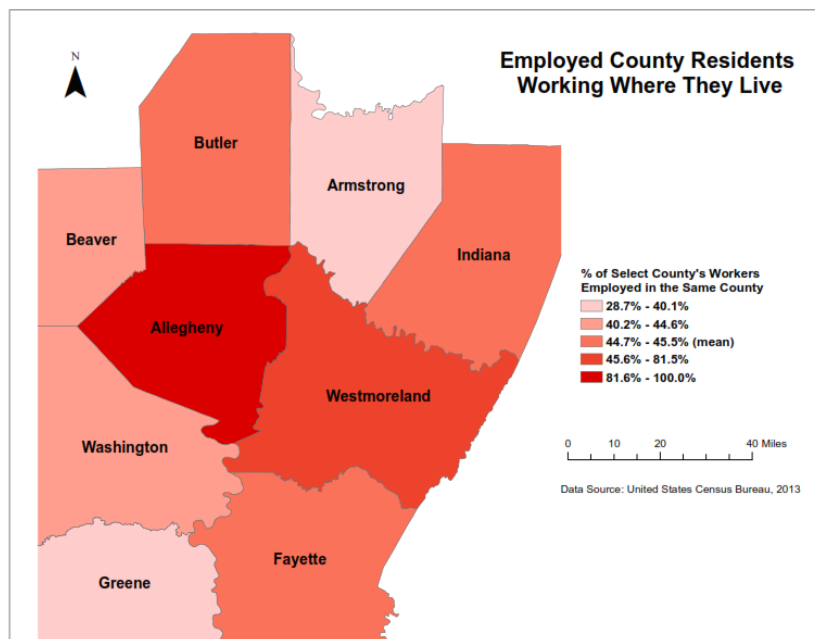
1.8 Outline regional transportation issues related to workforce development and ways the region will address needs identified. Include a description and/or map of the regional commuting patterns. [WIOA Sec. 106(c)]

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. 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 2015. More than half (56.2%) of the region's employed residents work within Allegheny County. Lack of strong public transportation infrastructure between Allegheny and some outlying counties and within the outlying counties mean that workers frequently must rely on cars and ridesharing to commute to work. Indeed, 13.8% of Allegheny County residents employed outside of the home took public transportation or walked to work in 2015, compared with 3.9% of residents employed outside of their homes in the outlying counties. Due to these variations in local transportation options, each local board determines the best method to provide transportation assistance.



Eight out of ten Allegheny county residents both live and work within Allegheny County. None of the other eight counties in the region retain more than half of their employed workforce within their county at jobs within the county. In the other eight counties, the percentage of residents who both live and work within their own county ranges between a low of 29% (Armstrong County) and a high of 45% (Westmoreland, Fayette, Butler, and Indiana Counties).



Lack of reliable public transportation across the region remains an issue that affects both job seekers and businesses, but is beyond the scope of local workforce boards to address systemically. To that end, the local

boards that make up the Southwest Planning Region will work to inform regional discussions about transportation with ways transportation issues affect the labor force. These efforts will include working with the Allegheny Conference on Community Development (ACCD), which recently unveiled the Regional Transportation Alliance of Southwestern Pennsylvania, a public-private initiative that will develop a ten-county transportation plan for the region.

1.9 Describe strategies and services the planning region will employ to coordinate workforce development programs/services with regional economic development services and providers. [WIOA Sec. 106(c)]

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. The PA DCED funding has been used for the four economic development programs that have been serving the SWPA community for approximately twenty years: 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 local workforce development boards to continue efficient and effective coordination of workforce and economic development. This new strategy will:

- Strengthen the collaboration and coordination of economic and workforce development services;
- Further engage regional employers via employer collaboration groups; and
- Train incumbent and future workers to prepare them for family sustaining middle skills and high skilled jobs.

The process employed to meet these objectives will include:

- Asset Mapping and Partnership Development – The core purpose of the collaboration will be to functionally establish a more formal information exchange between the region’s workforce development delivery system, the region’s economic development delivery system and the employer community.
- Business Outreach and Assessment - The analysis will include employment workforce training needs, hiring plans and needs, and also employer willingness to offer workplace learning opportunities to students.
- Employer Engagement, Training, and Hiring needs - Engage the employers in the healthcare, advanced manufacturing and energy sector and identify training needs to remediate skill gaps in the workplace to improve productivity and competitiveness.
- Common Training Programs - Training incumbent and unemployed workers in a critical part of this initiative, and resources are allocated to support employer training and hiring needs. Partners will be cross trained in resources available to employers and leverage existing training programs to meet employer needs.

1.10 Describe how the planning region will establish an agreement concerning 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 WIOA Section 116(c), for local areas and the planning region. [WIOA Sec. 106(c)]

Note: The Department, the local board and the CEO reach agreement on local targets and levels based on the negotiation process before the start of each program year. While the CEO remains ultimately responsible for ensuring the local area meets or exceeds such local targets and levels, performance negotiations must be coordinated regionally, requiring each planning region to establish an agreement describing how the region will collectively negotiate performance goals with the Department. [proposed 20 CFR 677.210(b) and (c)] and [proposed 20 CFR 679.510(a)(2)]

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 will negotiate performance measures with the Department for this initial transition year for its local area. Moving forward, we will identify a process for the collective negotiation of regional measures for performance. During the initial transition year into WIOA outcome measures, 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 regards to the local levels and we will provide supports to each other when needed.

1.13 Describe how the planning region will connect any regionally targeted populations to occupational demands, especially individuals with barriers to employment. [proposed 20 CFR 679.540(b)]

Local boards within the Southwest Planning Region seek to serve individuals with barriers to employment, including: veterans, low-income individuals, recipients of public assistance, individuals who are basic skills deficient, and out-of-school youth. 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 individuals with barriers to employment. Additionally, we have identified and implemented several promising practices for serving targeted populations outlined below: the Veterans Value Initiative and Veterans services through PA CareerLink®, services to low income individuals, microcredentialling and career pathway opportunities for individuals with barriers to employment, including out-of-school youth, and the collective impact model. The Southwest Planning Region will discuss possibilities for regionalizing or expanding these models.

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 veterans service providers, provides information about and referral to veterans programs, and reviews and analyzes veterans program to ensure compliance with veteran standards.

As previously described, the Southwest Planning Region has also undertaken an initiative to support workforce development for vets with competitive funding. The Veterans Value Initiative (VVI) is 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. Through the initiative, promising practices for "veteran friendly" employers and career pathways for high demand positions will be identified and replicated. The Southwest Planning Region considers VVI a promising model of serving priority populations.

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 explore opportunities to strengthen the partnerships between Title I WIOA services and EARN providers. Assistance from the commonwealth on integrating these data systems would help reach more priority of service populations and avoid duplication of services.

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 look to OVR to suggest additional opportunities for partnership moving forward.

As a core partner, OVR has the ability to collaborate with the local Workforce Development Board 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

Educational opportunities for groups with barriers

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.

Across the region as a whole, 28,205 youths between age 16 and 24 are neither enrolled in education nor employed. This represents nearly ten percent of the youth in the Southwest Planning Region. To help reengage this population with the workforce system, we are working on career pathways and implementing innovative program models.

One such innovation is being piloted through a Workforce Innovation Fund grant by Westmoreland-Fayette WDB in partnership with Westmoreland County Community College (WCCC) and 3RWIB with Community College

of Allegheny County (CCAC). These partners are working to develop stackable microcredentials in key career pathway, high priority occupations to reduce barriers to entry in high quality jobs. Westmoreland-Fayette and WCCC are building microcredentials in manufacturing. 3RWIB and CCAC are focusing on cyber security and health care. The best practices identified through the project will be shared across the region.

Collective impact

To connect regional populations to occupational demands across all targeted populations, the Southwest Planning Region has taken steps to build a collective impact system, which leverages the expertise and capacity of community-based organizations to increase the capacity of the public system. This model has been successfully piloted by 3RWIB in the Pittsburgh Works initiative. Regional partners will work together to explore the potential for implementation of this model in the area.

In 2012, 3RWIB launched the Pittsburgh Works initiative to address system fragmentation, reduce inefficient use of workforce development resources, and provide greater access to job placement services within the community. This innovative and nationally-lauded collaboration of more than 80 workforce development partners provides the framework needed to raise the quality of services provided to job seekers, respond to employer demand, and path more people into in-demand careers at family-sustaining wages. The Pittsburgh Works combination of tools and process provides an ideal platform to help our region identify regionally targeted populations and connect them to occupational demand. Westmoreland-Fayette and TCWIB are exploring ways to leverage the best practices learned through the collective impact model in their local areas.