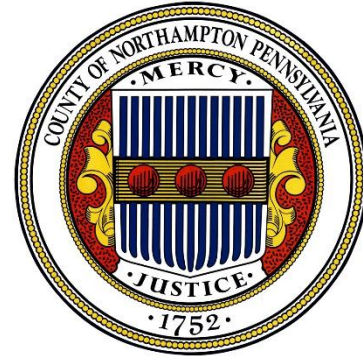




Phillips Armstrong  
Lehigh County Executive



Lamont McClure  
Northampton County Executive



**WORKFORCE  
BOARD**  

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**LEHIGH VALLEY**

**WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPORTUNITY ACT  
LOCAL PLAN  
PROGRAM YEARS 2025-2028**

**Release for Public Comment: July 3, 2025  
30-day Public Comment Deadline: August 1, 2025**

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## **ATTACHMENTS**

### **Attestation**

**Attachment 1:** Lehigh Valley WIOA Title Performance Accountability

**Attachment 2:** Lehigh Valley System Organizational Chart

**Attachment 3:** Lehigh Valley Workforce Development System Program Partner-Provider List

**Local Workforce Development Area name: Workforce Board Lehigh Valley**

**Effective Date: July 1, 2025**



## **INTRODUCTION**

The Workforce Board Lehigh Valley (WBLV) Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Local Plan serves as **Lehigh Valley's Workforce Development System Roadmap** that continues through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to serve as the catalyst for the strategic alignment and integration of Workforce Board Lehigh Valley's vision, mission and goals of a comprehensive workforce system, established by the Governor as outlined in the Pennsylvania State Plan, and developed through the expertise of WBLV's clearinghouse partners: the Bureau of Workforce Development Administration, Bureau of Workforce Partnership and Operations, Pennsylvania Workforce Development Association, the Pennsylvania Center for Workforce Information and Analysis (CWIA), the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission (LVPC), Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation (LVEDC), Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce (GLVCC), One-Stop Partners, employer and job seeking customers, and our Community Based Organizations in aligning workforce services, education, training, and employment opportunities as we reimagine services through the continuous improvement of Lehigh Valley's Workforce System.

On behalf of Lehigh Valley's Chief Elected Officials (CEOs) and the Workforce Board Lehigh Valley (WBLV), we WELCOME all to read, digest, and provide input on **Lehigh Valley's Workforce Local Plan**. This Plan provides a roadmap of local and regional data sources, labor market trends, skills gaps, challenges in aligning labor force skills, education, and training with employer needs, and identifies challenges in continuing to build and grow Lehigh Valley's Workforce System. The Plan outlines an analysis of programs planned, education and training opportunities, a regional economic analysis of economic conditions, industry sectors and demand occupations.

**The Plan** also provides the WBLV strategic vision and nine (9) goals for preparing a workforce, strategies for working with our one-stop partners, and also provides how the Boards goals contribute and support the Governor's vision and goals for the state's workforce system.

**The Plan** outlines our performance levels negotiated with the Governor and Chief Elected Officials, our Governance structure, stakeholders, Committee structure, core services and training programs, strategies to improve business and employer engagement, Apprenticeship models, an overview of Lehigh Valley's workforce system called PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley, operational plans, it highlights the five (5) titles under the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act (WIOA), introduces you to the one-stop program partners, compliance with applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act, continuous improvement of service and training providers, availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities, eligibility for individual training accounts, programs of study, youth activities, coordination with secondary and postsecondary education programs, and other contracts that fund work-based training. It outlines strategies for coordination and improving service delivery with Wagner-Peyser and all providers under the one-stop service delivery system.

Organizational charts are included, customer activities are documented, coordination with education and literacy providers, and describes the services, activities, and program resources provided to eligible participants, and the general public. It further defines the resources provided to business and industry and employers through WIOA including strategies for the PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley Business Engagement Services Team (BEST).

**The Plan** describes the coordination of WIOA with the provision of transportation and other supportive services in the local area, describes the agreements of service providers for the one-stop workforce system, the financial process and subsequent action, the actions taken to remaining a high performing board, and last but of most importance.....**THE PROCESS THE BOARD IS USING TO PROVIDE THE OPPORTUNITY FOR INPUT ON THE PLAN, PARTICULARLY THE REPRESENTATION OF BUSINESS, EDUCATION, LABOR, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, PLANNING, PROGRAM PARTNERS, PUBLIC AGENCIES AND COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS. WE WELCOME YOUR COMMENTS AND INVOLVEMENT!**

Consistent with guidelines issued by the PA Department of Labor and Industry, the WBLV Local Plan timeline includes: Public Comment period January 16, 2025-February 14, 2025 followed by Board approval, and submission to Labor and Industry on or before February 21, 2025, culminating in state approval and Local Plan finalization.

## **1. STRATEGIC PLANNING: Local Area Workforce and Economic Analysis**



### **1.1. Workforce Analysis – Provide an analysis of the regional workforce, including the composition of the local area’s population and current labor force employment data.**

The Lehigh Valley Workforce Development Area is a two-county workforce area directed by the Lehigh Valley Workforce Investment Board, Inc., Doing Business as Workforce Board Lehigh Valley (WLBV), under leadership of the Lehigh County and Northampton County Executives serving as the WBLV’s Chief Elected Officials. The WBLV Program Year 2025-2028 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Local Area Plan has an effective date of July 1, 2025.

The WBLV uses Workforce Intelligence and labor market data methodologies to develop and drive innovative and cost effective workforce development, educational and occupational training, and Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth programming. Our data portfolio, showcased within our WBLV Workforce Data Dashboard, serves as a clearinghouse for employers in benchmarking compensation packages provided for attraction and analyses for competitive worker retention, and includes information on age distribution, educational attainment, demographics, commuting patterns, barriers to employment, employment status, industry growth and occupational trends, to name a few. Our data is used to serve employers, job seekers and the community in showcasing jobs, skills, occupations, career pathways, training, education, and wages in high priority occupations and Lehigh Valley’s Targeted Industry Sectors of Healthcare, Manufacturing, Transportation/Warehousing, Finance and Insurance, and

Professional/Technical/Scientific Services. Lehigh Valley's workforce data and labor market information is available from the following Federal, State, and Local data sources.

It is noted here that the Workforce Board Lehigh Valley has entered an employment agreement with the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission in hiring an Economist that works jointly between the two organizations. This added a current, up to date data knowledge base which is instrumental in aligning workforce, training, housing, transportation, business and industry workforce needs, community needs, and workforce system demands within the Lehigh Valley. We keep our pulse on the data to ensure a data driven workforce system.

### **Federal Data Sources**

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

[www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov)

U.S. Census American Community Survey

[www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/](http://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/)

U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

[www.bea.gov](http://www.bea.gov)

National Association of Workforce Boards

<https://www.nawb.org/resources/labor-market>

Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia

[www.philadelphiafed.org/research-and-data/regional-economy/regional-charts](http://www.philadelphiafed.org/research-and-data/regional-economy/regional-charts)

### **State Data Sources**

Center for Workforce Information and Analysis: Lehigh Valley Profile

<https://www.pa.gov/content/dam/copapwp-pagov/en/dli/documents/cwia/products/wda-profiles/lehigh%20valley%20wda%20profile.pdf>

Center for Workforce Information and Analysis: Lehigh County Profile

<https://www.pa.gov/content/dam/copapwp-pagov/en/dli/documents/cwia/products/county-profiles/lehigh%20county.pdf>

Center for Workforce Information and Analysis: Northampton County Profile

<https://www.pa.gov/content/dam/copapwp-pagov/en/dli/documents/cwia/products/county-profiles/northampton%20county.pdf>

PA Chamber of Commerce

<https://www.pachamber.org>

PA Department of Education

<https://www.pa.gov/agencies/education.html>

PA Partnerships for Children

<https://www.papartnerships.org/resources-publications/mapping-tools/>

PA State System of Higher Education (PASSHE)

<https://www.passhe.edu/>

PA Workforce Development Association

<https://www.pawork.org>

## Local/Regional Data Sources

Workforce Board Lehigh Valley

[www.lvwib.org](http://www.lvwib.org)

Lehigh Valley Planning Commission

<https://lvpc.org/data/v>

Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation

<https://www.lehighvalley.org/get-the-data>

Penn State Data Center

<https://pasdc.hbg.psu.edu/>

Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce

[www.lehighvalleychamber.org](http://www.lehighvalleychamber.org)

Dr. Kamran Afshar

[www.kaa-inc.com](http://www.kaa-inc.com)

Dr. Jay Bryson, Wells Fargo

<https://www.wellsfargo.com/cib/insights/economics/ask-our-economists/>

Lehigh Carbon Community College

<https://www.lccc.edu/>

Northampton Community College

<https://www.northampton.edu/>

Society for Human Resource Management/Lehigh Valley Chapter

<https://www.shrmlv.org/page/Surveys>

Community Services for Children

<https://www.cscinc.org>

### Barriers to Employment

**Individuals with Disabilities.** The unemployment rate for individuals with disabilities in Lehigh County is 8.9% and Northampton County is 12.9%, compared to the state at 12.1% unemployment rate for individuals with disabilities. Labor Force Participation (LFP) rates for individuals with disabilities is significantly higher than those with no disability, as follows: Lehigh County 49.4% and Northampton County 41.9%, compared to PA at 46%. [Source: American Community Survey, 5-year est. 2019-2023]

**Single Parent Households.** As a percentage of Total Family Households with Children, 37% of Lehigh County households are Single Parents with Children, compared to Northampton County at 27% and the state at 31%. [Source: American Community Survey, 5-year est. 2019-2023]

**Individuals Below the Poverty Level.** The WBLV tracks the percentage of individuals below the poverty level, ages 16+, as follows: Lehigh County 9.8%, Northampton County 7.8%, PA 10.6%. Unemployment (UE) rates for individuals below the poverty level are significantly higher than overall UE rates: Lehigh County 24.4%, Northampton County 18.1%, PA 23.6%. Furthermore, Labor Force Participation (LFP) rates are measurably lower than overall LFP rates: Lehigh County 40.1%, Northampton County 37.2%, PA 36.3%. [Source: American Community Survey, 5-year est. 2019-2023]

**English Speaking Ability.** Another employment barrier data point is the percentage of individuals who speak English less than very well, as follows: Lehigh County 12.6% (which is the highest percentage in PA), Northampton County 5.1%, PA 4.7%. [Source: American Community Survey, 5-year est. 2019-2023]

**Educational Attainment of Working Age Population.** Lehigh Valley is generally comparable to Pennsylvania's educational attainment rates, as follows.

Less than High School: Lehigh County 9.7%, Northampton County 7.3%, PA 8.0%.

High School Graduates: Lehigh County 32.1%, Northampton County 32.9%, PA 33.2%.

Some College/Associate's Degree: Lehigh County 24.7%, Northampton County 25.9%, PA 24.2%.

Bachelor's and above: Lehigh County 33.3%, Northampton County 33.7%, PA 34.4%.

[Source: American Community Survey, 5-year est. 2019-2023]

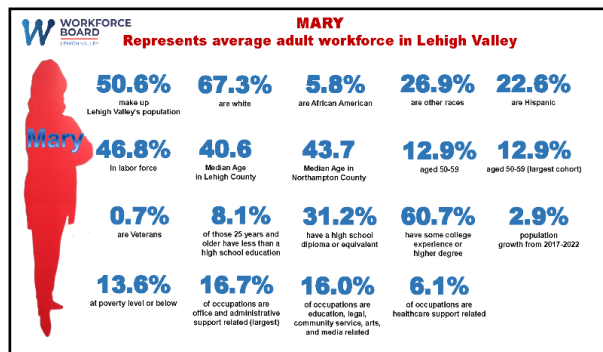
**Continued Unemployment Claims by Industry.** According to CWIA, Continued Claims by Industry data shows that workers in the Trades, Transportation, Utilities sector accounts for the highest percentage of claimants who collect unemployment benefits at 32.2%, followed by Professional & Business Services at 18.3%, and Education & Health Services at 12.7 % of claimants. [Source: PA Center for Workforce Information and Analysis, August 2024]

**Partnership with Lehigh Valley Planning Commission.** The WBLV shares an Economist staff position with the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission (LVPC) and uses LVPC data tools such as the *DataLV Population and Employment Forecast* that states:

"Lehigh and Northampton counties will add nearly 100,000 people by 2050, fueled by migration, employment opportunities and a quality of life. The Region will become more diverse as Hispanics that now make up 21% of the population will become 33% by 2050, while the Lehigh Valley adds an average of 3,308 more people a year, or a percentage increase of 14.4%. Employment will also grow even faster than the population, adding more than 74,108 new jobs by 2050, with healthcare, manufacturing and transportation/warehousing leading the way. However, the Baby Boomer generation exiting the job market will likely mean a struggle for businesses filling jobs in the long-term."

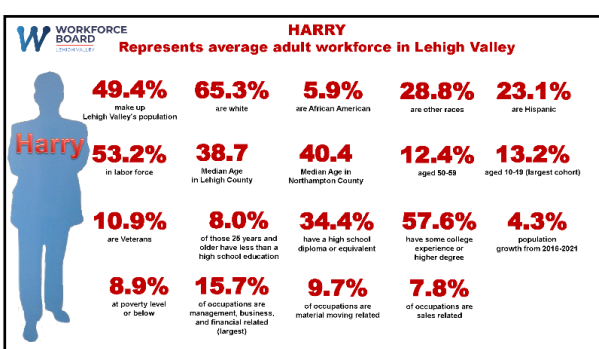
[Source: Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, <https://lvpc.org/datalv>]

**Characteristics of Lehigh Valley's Workforce.** The WBLV continues to illustrate characteristics of Lehigh Valley's workforce through its Mary and Harry Adult Worker charts, and Emily and Johnny Youth charts shown on the following pages. [Source: PA Center for Workforce Information and Analysis; American Community Survey]

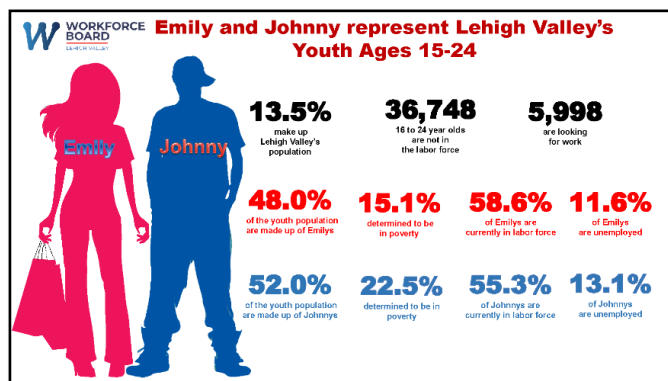


- Mary makes up 50.6% of Lehigh Valley's population
- Mary is 67.3% White, 5.8% African American, and 26.9% Other Race
- Mary is 22.6% Hispanic
- Mary makes up 46.8% of labor force
- Her median age in Lehigh County is 40.6 and 43.7 in Northampton County

- 12.9% are in 50-59 range; however, the largest cohort is 10-19 age range at 12.9%
- 0.7% are Veterans
- 8.1% which are 25 years and older have less than a High School education
- 31.2% have a High School diploma or equivalent
- 60.7% have at least some college experience or a higher degree
- Her population grew by 2.9% from 2016 to 2021
- 13.6% are at poverty level or below
- The largest occupational group Mary belongs to is Office and Administrative Support occupations at 16.7%, followed by Education, Legal, Community Service, Arts, and Media occupations at 16.0%, and Healthcare Support occupations 6.1%



- Harry makes up 49.4% of Lehigh Valley's population
- Harry is 65.3% White, 5.9% African American, and 28.8% Other Race
- Harry is 23.1% Hispanic
- Harry makes up 53.2% of labor force
- His median age in Lehigh County is 38.7 and 40.4 in Northampton County
- 12.4% are in 50-59 age range; however, the largest cohort is 30-39 age range at 13.2%
- 10.9% are Veterans
- 8.0% which are 25 years and older have less than a High School education
- 34.4% have a High School diploma or equivalent
- 57.6% have at least some college experience or a higher degree
- His population grew by 4.3% from 2016 to 2021
- 8.9% are at poverty or below
- The largest occupational group Harry belongs to is Management, Business, and Financial at 15.7%, followed by Material Moving occupations at 9.7%, and Sales occupations 7.8%



- Emily and Johnny are between the ages of 15 and 24
- They represent 13.5% (90,040) of Lehigh Valley's population
- Emily is 48.0% of youth population and Johnny is 52.0%
- 15.1% of Emily's and 22.5% of Johnny's population are at poverty level
- For youth 16-24 years old, 58.6% of Emily's and 55.3% Johnny's are currently in the labor force
- Of those youth in the labor force, 11.6% of Emily's and 13.1% of Johnny's workforce are unemployed; 5,998 youth are looking for work. They may have previous work experience at restaurants, grocery stores, amusement, recreation industries, and retailers.
- 36,748 youth are not currently in the labor force

### Labor Market Trends

Lehigh Valley labor market trends show that the top ranked skills are needed in the following fastest growing industries. The data and narrative on the next page details Lehigh Valley Long-Term Industry Projections within the 2022-2032 timeframe from the PA Center for Workforce Information & Analysis (CWIA).

| Top 10 Fastest Growing Industries<br>2022-2032                          | Employment<br>Change (Percent) |
|---|--------------------------------|
| Computer Systems Design and Related Services                            | 16.9%                          |
| Outpatient Care Centers   | 16.4%                          |
| Home Health Care Services   | 14.1%                          |
| Scientific Research and Development Services                            | 10.8%                          |
| Offices of Other Health Practitioners                                   | 10.7%                          |
| Data Processing, Hosting, and Related Services                          | 10.7%                          |
| Other Ambulatory Health Care Services                                   | 10.3%                          |
| Professional and Commercial Equipment and Supplies Merchant Wholesalers | 9.7%                           |
| Other Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services                  | 9.5%                           |
| Semiconductor and Other Electronic Component Manufacturing              | 9.3%                           |

[Source: CWIA Long-term Industry Employment Projections, 2022-2032]

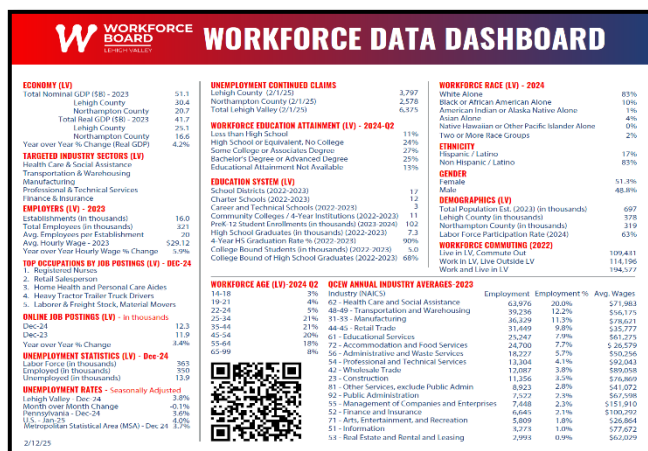
The latest Long-Term Industry Projection data from CWIA shows that Lehigh Valley Ten-Year Employment Projections (2022-2032) exhibits a trend that our region will experience a 1.9 % growth rate through 2032, growing from 336,470 jobs in 2022 to 342,760 jobs in 2032. Based on Long-Term Occupational Employment Projection data from CWIA, the region will experience a growth rate of 1.9% with an annual demand of 38,611 employment projection in 2022-2032.

## Current labor force employment, unemployment, and commuting data

CWIA has provided Annual Average Labor Force Statistics for the Lehigh Valley showing an annual average for 2023 of 3.6% unemployment rate. Preliminary Adjusted Labor Force Statistics for August 2024 also show an unemployment rate of 3.6% with 366,800 in the labor force, 353,700 employed, and 13,100 unemployed. [Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS)]

Regarding commuting data, the CWIA Inflow/Outflow report for the Lehigh Valley as of 2021 shows that 101,404 people are employed in the Lehigh Valley but live outside, a total of 166,573 are employed and live in the Lehigh Valley, and 95,706 live in the Lehigh Valley but are employed outside of our region. Therefore, the net commuting in/out data point is 5,698 that indicates that the Lehigh Valley has nearly 5,700 people working in our region but living outside, meaning a positive net inflow of commuters.

The Workforce Board Lehigh Valley also showcases ongoing data within its Workforce Data Dashboard, as shown below and available online at [www.lvwib.org/data](http://www.lvwib.org/data).



## 1.2. Economic analysis – Describe strategic planning elements including a regional analysis of economic conditions.

The WBLV uses labor market data and workforce intelligence provided by the PA Center for Workforce Information and Analysis (CWIA), Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, and other sources to provide the following Lehigh Valley regional analysis of economic conditions. [Sources: PA Center for Workforce Information and Analysis; Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages; Long-Term Industry Employment Projections, 2022-2032; American Community Survey; Lehigh Valley Planning Commission]

The latest Long-Term Industry data from CWIA shows that Lehigh Valley Ten-Year Employment Projections (2022-2032) exhibits a trend that our region will experience a 1.9% growth rate through 2032, growing from 336,470 jobs in 2022 to 342,760 jobs in 2032, compared to Pennsylvania with a 2.5% growth rate. Industry Employment comparing fourth quarter 2022 to fourth quarter 2023 shows a 1.4% growth rate for All Industries in the Lehigh Valley.

The Lehigh Valley as a region generally mirrors Pennsylvania which both have a diverse economy and are likely to not be impacted by booms or busts in a single industry. Data outlining existing and emerging industries, occupations and employer needs are described below.

### **Lehigh Valley In-Demand Industry Sectors and Location Quotients**

According to currently available data, Lehigh Valley's existing top ranked industry sectors by employment in 2023 were Healthcare with at 20.0% of total employment, Transportation and Warehousing at 12.2%, Manufacturing 11.3%, and Retail at 9.8%. According to the latest data available from CWIA, the Logistics and Transportation sector has seen the largest growth trajectory in the last 5 years, growing 38.3% from 2018 to 2023 with a 2.53% Location Quotient (LQ describes how concentrated an industry is within the Lehigh Valley, as compared to the concentration of that industry nationally). Other industries with notable LQs are Bio Medical with a growth rate of 16.7% and 1.30 LQ, and Healthcare growing by 8.0% and 1.26 LQ.

According to Lehigh Valley Ten-Year Industry Projections 2022-2032, Lehigh Valley's industry subsectors with the fastest growth, as a percent of Employment Change, are: Computer Systems Design and Related Services at 16.9%, and Outpatient Care Centers at 16.4. The top ranked subsector that will experience the fastest growth by volume change of employment is Warehousing and Storage with 570 more jobs by 2032.

### **Lehigh Valley In-Demand Occupations**

As of November 2024, Lehigh Valley's current top occupations, according to CWIA's Job Postings Dashboard, are Registered Nurses, Retail Sales, Heavy Tractor Trailer Truck Drivers, Home Health and Personal Care Aides, and Laborer & Freight Stock/Material Movers.

Based on the CWIA Long-Term Projections (2022-2032), the five fastest growing occupational groupings are: Computer, Engineering & Science; Healthcare Practitioners, Technicians & Support; Office & Administrative Support; Management, Business & Finance; and Protective, Food, Building & Personal Services with 4.5%, 4.0%, 2.3%, 2.2%, and 2.0% growth, respectively.

Lehigh Valley's occupations with fastest growth, as shown by Ten-Year 2022-2032 Employment Change Volume, are Home Health & Personal Care Aides (500 added jobs), Laborers & Material Movers (380 jobs), Registered Nurses (300 Jobs), and Fast Food & Counter Workers (160 jobs). The top occupation by total annual demand is also Laborers & Materials Movers with more than 2,000 opportunities available each year from 2022 to 2032.

Based on the CWIA Long-Term Projections (2022-2032), employers continue to need a more educated, technically skilled workforce. We believe that the new high school degree is an Associate's Degree and this statement is validated by CWIA's Lehigh Valley Employment Distribution by Educational Attainment data showing that employers require a workforce some postsecondary education or training beyond high school (16%) and Associate's/Bachelor's/Advanced degrees (26%).

Again, based on current Long-Term Projections, On-the-Job Training is still a dominant employer requirement, along with educational degrees, certificates, and credentials. The educational level projected to grow the most over the next ten years, according to business and industry's occupational needs, is an Advanced Degree at 3.1% growth rate, followed by Bachelor's Degree at 2.7%, and an Associate Degree at 2.6%.

As of the first quarter of 2024, current educational attainment for Lehigh Valley's workforce is estimated at 27% who have some college or an Associate's Degree, and 25% with Bachelor's Degree or higher. Less than a high school level is 11% of Lehigh Valley's workforce and high school graduates are estimated at 24%. The category of "Educational Attainment Data Unavailable" is at 13%.

Increased levels of Employability skills for the workforce across all industries continued to be required by employers. The WBLV Employability Skills Curriculum continues to be offered as a credit-bearing course in the Allentown School District's Program of Studies with nearly 3,000 high school students completing the class. Lehigh Valley's school districts, two community colleges, three career and technical schools, and two Intermediate Units have received the curriculum. The PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley workforce system has implemented Employability Skills into its menu of services for customers. Furthermore, the PA Department of Labor and Industry is reviewing this curriculum for scalability.

Since the Lehigh Valley is a corridor through Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, and beyond.... Workforce initiatives focus on "business and industries" current and projected skills training, and workforce needs. Key initiatives that support workforce development begin with Summer Jobs Programs, Work Experiences, On the Job Training, Job Fairs for graduating/high school seniors, all aimed at keeping potential job seekers in the Region.

Ensuring we have strategic alignment between Economic Development, Workforce Development, Education, Planning, and Business and Industry steers the Lehigh Valley toward successful growth, provides a platform for community involvement and development, standardizes training needs, and Provides alignment with State driven initiatives.

Key local initiatives include Business Education Partnerships having Workforce Coordinators in high schools and connecting students to PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley services, resources and apprenticeship career pathways.

Our Healthcare Pipeline Industry Partnership culminated in a Lehigh Valley Healthcare Strategic Plan coupled with our Youth inside Out Industry Partnership opening the doors of the Manufacturing and Supply Chain Industry.

The German American Chamber of Commerce under the umbrella of B. Braun Medical Inc. is operating the Industrial Training and Education Consortium (iTEC) Apprenticeship Model with a minimum of 27 apprentices and 27 pre-apprentices in Mechatronics Technicians and Industrial Mechanics Technicians with even more growth planned.

The Lehigh Valley is on an Pre-Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship fire...from the private sector to Community Colleges to perhaps our next stop...College?

**1.3. Skill Gap analysis – How are skills gaps defined in the local area? Provide a description of the skills that are required to meet the needs of employers in region and local area?**

The WBLV continuously reviews the needs of employers to identify and define skills gaps that exist in the workforce. The WBLV sees its role as a convener between business and the talent pipeline as vital to the continued growth of the workforce. We identify skills gaps and barriers to employment through the following methodology. Outcomes of the data analyses are applied to WBLV policymaking, as necessary.

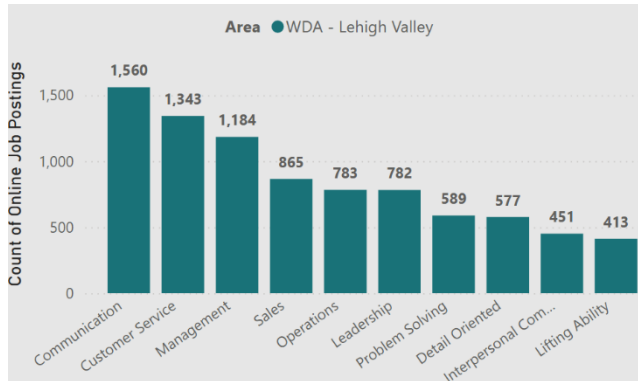
- Researches, collects, and analyzes data on skills needs and barriers to employment. Sources include, but are not limited to: PA Center for Workforce Information and Analysis, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Census Bureau, Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, Federal Reserve Bank of

Philadelphia, Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce, Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation, Society for Human Resource Management, and regional economists.

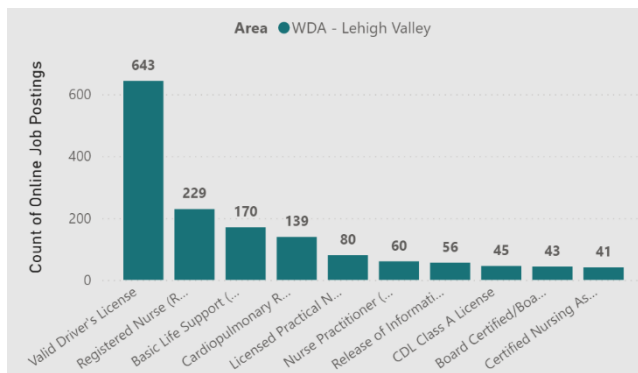
- Engages employers to analyze and define the top Knowledge, Skills, Abilities, credentials, certificates and degrees needed currently and in the future as showcased during PA Department of Community and Economic Development-sponsored Engage! Business Roundtables. Through customized Career Pathways developed with employers, the WBLV shows career advancement steps and workplace Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities.
- Partners with the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission (LVPC) to analyze information regarding workforce and population demographics and characteristics that identifies gaps in equitable access to housing, transportation, education, training, and employment data through LVPC's DataLV tool.
- Partners with the Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation to conduct Talent Supply Studies to assess our region's Talent Market, determine skills gaps, and define trends and shortfalls in the workforce and talent pipeline, resulting in a comprehensive analysis of education and workforce labor requirements.
- Uses the talent of the WBLV membership comprised of representation from business, economic development, education, community-based organizations, unions and workforce development.
- Collects real-time data from job seekers, customer satisfaction surveys, and PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley customer usage information through the workforce system's Digital Intake process. Data is collected through individuals filing for unemployment, individuals who have been dislocated from business, and people using the workforce system. The WBLV identifies required skills for job seekers to be competitive.
- Collects real-time workforce data from Rapid Response efforts with companies which are downsizing. Data is also collected through job openings, and employer recruitments at PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley.
- Coordinates with Lehigh Valley's education system including K-12, career and technical schools, and two- and four-year institutions. Information is exchanged regarding education, training, credentials, certificates and degrees required by employers, resulting in a greater understanding of the talent supply pipeline and career pathways that lead to high priority occupations in targeted industry clusters.
- Partners with the Lehigh Valley's two- and four-year institutions of higher education to identify employer education and training needs, Knowledge, Skills and Abilities, and to map workforce competencies to existing and future curriculum.
- We also ask every customer looking for training or a career pathway, what training are they interested in, and evaluate them based on skill level to enter the training and pass the required subject curriculum, and discuss the results and any remedial educational skills needed to be developed to ensure success before entering training.
- Works with neighboring regions to examine commuting patterns and shared labor markets.

In order to identify skills gaps, the WBLV utilizes the PA Center for Workforce Information & Analysis Online Job Postings Dashboard which features top-ranked industry-required skills including: Baseline, Certifications, Software, and Specialized Skills. The following information is as of November 2024.

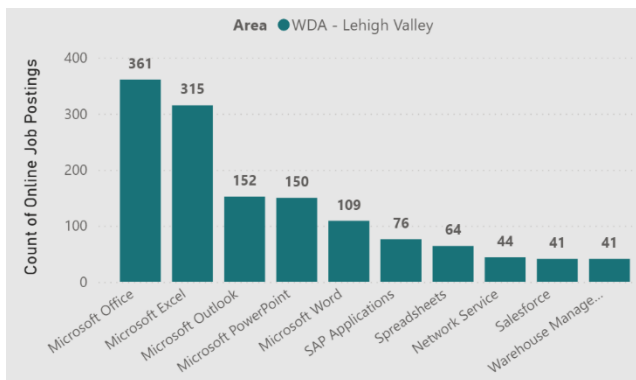
### TOP 10 BASELINE SKILLS, NOVEMBER 2024



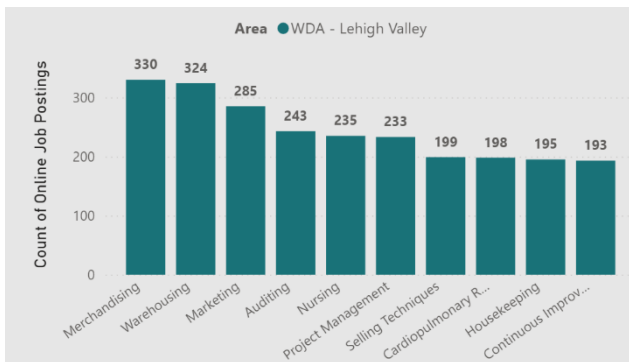
### TOP 10 CERTIFICATIONS, NOVEMBER 2024



### TOP 10 SOFTWARE SKILLS, NOVEMBER 2024



## TOP 10 SPECIALIZED SKILLS, NOVEMBER 2024



### WBLV Employer Career Pathways

The Workforce Board has developed more than 300 Career Pathways with employers across all industries, including Healthcare, Manufacturing, Transportation & Warehousing, Professional/Technical/Scientific Services, Finance & Insurance, and more. An analysis of our employer-developed Career Pathways show that the following Knowledge, Skills and abilities are required by employers: communication skills, attention to detail, teamwork, customer services, self-direction, motivation, multi-tasking, problem solving, flexibility, dependability, trustworthiness, and responsibility.

### Local Examples of Skills Gaps and Best Practices Based on Knowledge of the Workforce

Studies and data continue to indicate that, across all jobs in the Lehigh Valley, employers cite the need for employability skills. While these skills are not considered an occupational skill under WIOA, employers continue to be challenged regarding the lack of employability skills in their workforce. The WBLV has established an Employability Skills Curriculum in the Allentown School District resulting on more than 3,000 high school students completing the 21-module course that is aligned to the U.S. Department of Education Employability Skills Framework. PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley offers employability skills training and all eligible training providers are required to provide employability skills in their programs.

The following are examples of Best Practices detailing how employers are addressing skills gaps in partnership with the WBLV.

Industrial Education and Training Consortium (iTEC). Under the strategic leadership of B. Braun Medical Inc., a consortium of manufacturers directed by the Workforce Board Lehigh Valley -- in alignment with economic development, education, and community partners -- launched the Industrial Training and Education Consortium of the Lehigh Valley (iTEC) in October 2023, a regional apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship program established to address technical skills gaps in the workforce by providing industrial skills training and on-the-job training through Registered Apprenticeships in order to meet the growing workforce needs of the Lehigh Valley's manufacturing sector.

Morten Rasmussen, Corporate Vice President, Operations Human Resources for B. Braun Medical Inc. and Workforce Board Lehigh Valley Board Vice-Chair, serves as Chair of the iTEC Management Council states, "iTEC was envisioned as a way for local manufacturers and their training partners to simplify alternate career pathways and create a pipeline of skilled, diverse talent for the future workforce." A Pennsylvania nonprofit, iTEC is a private-public partnership providing related training instruction and On-the-Job Training through Registered Apprenticeships and Pre-Apprenticeships to fill the demand for technically skilled workers in advanced manufacturing.

To strengthen this employer-driven workforce initiative, the Workforce Board partnered with B. Braun Medical to implement the Lehigh Valley Apprenticeship Building America & PA (ABA) Grant received from the PA Department of Labor and Industry, with a focused goal of accelerating and enhancing the multi-employer iTEC model, thereby filling the skills gaps and increasing the pipeline of registered apprentices and pre-apprentices in high-priority occupations, such as mechatronics, industrial manufacturing technicians, laboratory testers, machinists, and more. The Workforce Board executed a contract with the German American Chamber of Commerce/ Philadelphia Chapter which serves as grant coordinator, sponsor and administrator of state-approved Registered Apprenticeships. Current iTEC employers include: B. Braun Medical Inc., OraSure Technologies, Inc., Hospital Central Services Corp., Julabo, Bracalente Manufacturing Group, Lutron Electronics Co., Inc., Heidelberg Cement, Oldcastle, Tyber Medical, Evonik, Hindle Power, and more in progress. To-date, more than 44 Pre-Apprentices and 8 Registered Apprentices are participating in iTEC.

Healthcare Pipeline Industry Partnership. The Workforce Board Lehigh Valley established a Healthcare Pipeline Industry Partnership in June of 2024 with over 30 employers, educators, and community stakeholders. The mission of the Lehigh Valley Healthcare Pipeline Industry Partnership is to identify and resolve key challenges related to hiring, training, and retention of workers across the Lehigh Valley healthcare sector through the creation and execution of a strategic action plan.

The healthcare industry in the Lehigh Valley is the largest employer with 20% or nearly 64,000 workers out of Lehigh Valley's workforce of 320,580. According to the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission's projections, by 2050, healthcare in the Lehigh valley is expected to grow up to 70,000 jobs. The Lehigh Valley Healthcare Pipeline Industry Partnership convened monthly at PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley between June and November of 2024. Developing of a Healthcare Industry strategic plan is underway in order to address the workforce shortage.

| <b>Lehigh Valley Healthcare Pipeline Industry Partnership Members (as of 12/11/2024)</b> |   |
|--|---|
| BrightStar Care® of Stroudsburg & Allentown  | Lutheran Senior Services                    |
| Bethlehem Area Vocational Technical School (BAVTS)                                       | LINC  |
| Career Institute of Technology (CIT)   | Macungie Ambulance Corps                    |
| Century Promise  | Manufacturers Resource Center (MRC)         |
| Cetronia Ambulance Corps   | Morningstar Senior Living                   |
| Equinox Benefits Consulting  | Muhlenberg College                          |
| Fellowship Community   | Northampton Community College               |
| KidsPeace  | Northampton County – Gracedale Nursing Home |
| Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce  | PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley                |
| Lehigh Carbon Community College (LCCC)   | Penn State Lehigh Valley                    |
| Lehigh Career & Technical Institute (LCTI)   | St. Luke's University Health Network        |
| Lehigh County – Cedarbrook Senior Care & Rehab   | Suburban EMS                                |
| Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation (LVEDC)                                   | TeamLogic IT                                |
| Lehigh Valley Health Network (LVHN)  | Valley Health Partners                      |
| Lehigh Valley Planning Commission  | Workforce Board Lehigh Valley               |

Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce as Intermediary. The Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce serves as the WBLV Business Intermediary to identify gaps in skills, talent supply, and hiring by obtaining feedback on skills needs from the Chamber's 5,000+ employer members, its Councils and industry-driven Committees.

Intermediary responsibilities include: engaging the business community to identify employers' skill needs; refer employers interested in providing On-the-Job and Work Experiences opportunities for job seekers; assist in identifying available jobs in the community; refer job openings to the PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley Business Services Team; encourage Chamber members to develop Career Pathways with the WBLV; and, provide multi-platform outreach and social media options to increase awareness of the PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley workforce system services.

In summary, the WBLV focuses on identifying and addressing skills needed by employers and skills gaps in the workforce through education, training, Career Pathways, and work-based learning opportunities that provide a clear and equitable access to all Lehigh and Northampton County residents, based on WIOA's priority of services. The priority of services policy includes veterans and their spouses, individuals who are eligible for WIOA funds, individuals with barriers and those who are basic skills deficient. Our goal is to increase access to training and employment through a customized service delivery approach.

**1.4. Workforce Development Activities analysis – Provide an analysis of local area workforce development activities, including education and training.**

In Pennsylvania, the unemployment continued to hover around 3.4% at the end of 2024 with a labor force of 6.6 million with only 224,000 unemployed, and a Labor Force Participation Rate estimated at 62%. The unemployment rate in the Lehigh Valley is 3.7% with 13,600 unemployed and 13,600 job openings – a job for every unemployed person. Although this data will change, it raises questions and concerns about workforce development strategies and activities and that also include the 38% not participating in the workforce. We must continuously upgrade and align with strategies and program development to include education and training for new entrants in the workforce, upgrading opportunities for current workers, a broad array of education and training options, funding opportunities, skilled labor occupational and skills-based training, on-the-job training, continuing education options, and career pathways....all included within a system called PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley.

Our vision is ensuring a robust workforce development system that aligns Lehigh Valley's workforce with Lehigh Valley's job and labor market demands. To ensure success, we focus our strategy on the alignment of economic development, workforce development, education and training, planning, and the community.

To ensure success of maintaining a robust workforce, we are looking at more efficient, effective ways to increase participation through the use of technology. We need to step up our workforce system's game and reach job seekers where they live, in their homes, so they do not have to enter a workforce center for services. We are developing an online initiative that includes outreach, agreements with community-based organizations that align eligibility, stack services from multiple organizations, share professional expertise, and braid funding.

The Workforce Board Lehigh Valley must increase our outreach to the 38% not participating in the workforce. This population is needed in the workforce. We are not just a workforce system for some, but for all, and we need to market the tremendous education, training and employment options available to ALL. Since we have a workforce system that includes 21 education, community based organizations and employment and training providers feeding into the system including One-Stop Partners we must ensure that we can reach all, even the hidden workforce.

We must continue to ensure job seekers have access to high-speed internet and digital devices. Increasingly, communities and businesses offer free Wi-Fi hotspots, which assist with access to virtual service for those who do not have internet service in their home. While most customers have at least a smartphone for accessing workforce services, it is preferable using workforce services computers and staff available for job seekers. Lack of a digital device will never be a barrier to receiving workforce program services. The WBLV will continue to work to require our service providers to ensure equitable, free, and for those with no technology, to provide easily obtainable online access.

The WBLV's business-driven approach highlights employer needs and requirements in all workforce development activities and must reach audiences walking through our doors or through the use of technology from intake and assessment interviews, case management, curriculum development instructional programming, training and upskilling options, job development and placement counseling and placement including ongoing retention support.

Through an Intermediary contractual relationship with the Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce, we develop and maintain close relationships with business owners, trade associations, labor management organizations, education and training providers, targeted industry sector requirements and needs, diversity participation in the workforce, and access to every new business entering the Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce. We are invested into the fabric of the Chamber, and share information and data to stay informed about employment trends, current in-demand workforce skills, skill gaps, training solutions, the knowledge, skills, and abilities, career pathways, and education and training required for employment.

Job seeker surveys are conducted through an automated system that drives continuous improvement. An "on-demand" orientation in the Welcome Center eliminates delays and expedites connections to designated staff who work personally with job seekers to explore career options and provide advice on supportive services, training and employment next steps. Employment barriers are discussed and referrals are made to appropriate internal or one-stop partners or other partner resources to stabilize the household at the outset of engagement. An integrated data management system streamlines tracked participant information and utilizes that same data across all programs and levels of service to eliminate duplicate inquiries and collection.

Basic and individualized employability skills are tailored to the needs of job seekers. Instructional staff modify and update curriculum to keep pace with the ever-changing landscape of employer and labor market demands. All program services are designed and delivered in accordance with federal, state and local regulations and guidelines.

Remote sessions are integrated into a comprehensive menu of workforce and training virtual offerings. Co-facilitation of live virtual events with employers and subject matter experts is a valued service that continues to grow.

Workforce partners, regional counterparts, and various departments and agencies at the state level frequently source the WBLV's expertise in program implementation and best practices. Initiatives such as the real-time Welcome Center, full integration of program services, the first American Job Center co-located within a hospital campus, workforce coordinators stationed in both secondary and post-secondary educational facilities, PA CareerLink® staff housed in our two county jails to deliver pre- and post-release programming, and apprenticeship programs continue to grow and serve as workforce models. We are working with the PA Office of Apprenticeship and Training to design an Apprenticeship Pathway for high school students. The Industrial Training and Education Consortium (iTEC) is a multi-employer workforce initiative that is building a pipeline of technically skilled workers through Pre-Apprenticeship and Registered Apprenticeship programming with foundational funding from member companies, as well as support from the Workforce Board's grant funding from the PA Department of Labor and Industry Apprenticeship and Training Office, and resources from the PA Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED).

Education and training efforts are based on industry knowledge and labor market information to determine the skill development needed to provide quality candidates who best match employers' needs. Training is individualized through initial assessment, one-on-one conversations with an Education and Training Advisor, career pathway exploration, current skills assessment and educational goal planning. A part of this process is identifying transferable skills gained through prior employment. When location, timelines, abilities, and personal circumstances are all taken into account, traditional classroom options are discussed and decisions made as to a career path and post-secondary engagement. Employers' immediate hiring needs and the increasing demand for a trained and skilled candidate pipeline remain unchanged. While training providers continue to develop and offer hybrid or virtual coursework, many prospective students have financial, time constraints, and may lack discipline to excel in a hybrid or virtual environment, challenging them from participating in and benefiting from programs. We continue to monitor the results.

Many people are experiencing long-term unemployment and can benefit from an "earn as you learn" option. This new work-based learning model shifts some training responsibilities to employers as they onboard new hires and upskill current workers through Incumbent Worker Training (IWT). This model is not only a win-win for the job seeker, but it is mutually beneficial for the employer that is filling vacancies and creating career pathways. An additional benefit for both parties is ongoing support to ensure employee retention and advancement.

Work-based learning including work experiences, internship options, on-the-job training, pre-apprenticeships, and Registered Apprenticeships. We offer work experiences for eligible, work-ready participants who lack a significant employment history, experience, or skill development in their desired field. We continuously develop opportunities in high-demand occupations to increase a pipeline of job candidates.

In partnership with the PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley Business Engagement Services Team (BEST), the WBLV nurtures employer relationships. PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley staff promote and develop on-the-job training, apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeships, paid work experience, and unsubsidized placement and advancement opportunities. Workforce system partners connect remotely or in-person with Chamber of Commerce members, DCED Engage! Employer Roundtables, Industry Partnership meetings, Economic Development organizations, Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), and during job fairs, specialized recruitment events, and business and industry tours.

The ongoing maintenance of an active job bank to develop work-based learning opportunities that align with the Lehigh Valley's targeted industry sectors is imperative. BEST Job Developers and Recruiters are assigned to career clusters that align with the high-priority occupations in diversified manufacturing, transportation and logistics, business and professional, healthcare, and customer service. Workforce Board Lehigh Valley has established a strategy for all workforce system offerings, to seek out those unemployed and workers in need of training in underserved communities, and those with barriers to employment. This strategy fosters strong employer connections with key staff members to grow career pathway opportunities for job seekers.

WBLV is expanding registered apprenticeships to all populations throughout PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley, which has a universal population of job seekers walking in the doors every day. An Apprenticeship Model within the workforce system focuses on marketing the value of Registered Apprenticeship Training. Workshops outline and encourage Apprenticeship options, and offer staff support to job seekers into Apprenticeship Pathways. The Registered Apprenticeship Strategic Plan Guide is the workforce guide of choice and used by trained staff. The Lehigh Valley is currently hiring an Apprenticeship Coordinator within our Lehigh Valley workforce system. Our Apprenticeship model is being discussed for implementation with our Lehigh and Northampton County Linking Employment Activities Pre-Release (LEAP) Programs.

#### **1.5. What are the local area challenges in aligning existing labor force skills and education, and training activities with the needs of regional employers?**

The Workforce Board Lehigh Valley convenes business and industry leaders, representatives from economic development, education, community stakeholders, and One-Stop Workforce System Partners to identify, discuss and offer solutions to challenges in aligning Lehigh Valley's labor force skills, and education and training activities with the needs of Lehigh Valley's employer base.

Workforce system challenges are focused on: stakeholder alignment, economic impacts, training needs, outreach, and engaging targeted populations, as outlined below. These challenges are derived from discussions during Engage! Roundtables held February through June 2024, in daily conversations with employers and workforce system stakeholders, and during WBLV Committees as follows:

Business-Education Partnership, August 5, 2024 and November 4, 2024; Workforce Solutions, August 7, 2024 and November 6, 2024; Business and Data, August 8, 2024 and November 7, 2024; Youth, August 14, 2024 and November 13, 2024; Chief Elected Officials, August 22, 2024 and November 14, 2024; Executive Governance, August 27, 2024 and November 26, 2024; and, Workforce Board Lehigh Valley, September 10, 2024 and December 3, 2024.

In collaboration with the Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation, the WBLV identifies workforce challenges from the Lehigh Valley Education and Talent Supply Council in discussing Talent Supply issues. A jointly-commissioned Talent Supply Study is planned to provide proactive insights and data into new challenges facing the workforce system, Lehigh Valley's Talent Supply and our economy.

#### **CHALLENGES**

1. Align workforce development, economic development, education and community planning in the Lehigh Valley to ensure a competitive economy.
2. Align positive and negative impacts of a growing Lehigh Valley economy with workforce needs.
3. Promote the value of training and upskilling in a skills-based economy.

4. Align Lehigh Valley's educational system, comprised of 17 school districts, with the Knowledge, Skills and Abilities needed in the workforce.
5. Develop a multi-platform strategic outreach plan.
6. Research, identify and engage targeted populations into Lehigh Valley's workforce system called PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley and ensure customer satisfaction and outcomes that lead to achieving US Department of Labor and PA Department of Labor and Industry negotiated performance standards.

## **2. STRATEGIC PLANNING: Vision and Goals**

### **2.1. Local Board's Strategic Vision and Alignment with the Governor's Strategic Vision – What are the local board's strategic vision and goals for preparing its workforce and its strategy for achieving the vision and goals? How will the local board's vision and goals align with, support, and contribute to the governor's vision and goals for the state's workforce development system, as well as any of the goals and strategies articulated in the regional plan?**

Lehigh Valley's ***Workforce Development System Roadmap*** is driven through strategies aligned with the Governor Shapiro's Vision and Goals, enabling legislation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), and through the governance of the US Department of Labor and the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry.

As outlined in the Pennsylvania WIOA Combined State Plan, Program Years 2024-2027, Governor Shapiro "prioritized the continuous improvement of a thriving workforce system where workers have access to stable careers with family-sustaining wages and employers have the talent the need to establish new and continue growing existing businesses while supporting communities across the Commonwealth. Governor Shapiro sees the Commonwealth's workforce system....as a vital cog in the machinery that powers Pennsylvania's economy of tomorrow and empowers the real freedom all Pennsylvanians yearn for and deserve."

Implemented by the U.S. Department of Labor, WIOA is landmark legislation designed to strengthen and improve our nation's public workforce system and help get Americans, including youth and those with significant barriers to employment, into high-quality jobs and careers and help employers hire and retain skilled workers.

The PA Department of Labor and Industry provides governance, guidance and policy under the WIOA legislation, governance of Pennsylvania's workforce delivery system called PA CareerLink®. As outlined in the PA WIOA Combined State Plan, the Pennsylvania Workforce Development Board is established and aligned with 22 Workforce Development Areas to ensure a comprehensive Workforce Development System for Pennsylvania.

Lehigh Valley's Workforce Development System Roadmap is driven by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to serve as the catalyst for the strategic alignment and integration of Workforce Board Lehigh Valley's vision, mission and goals of a comprehensive workforce system, established by the Governor as outlined in the Pennsylvania Combined State Plan, and developed through the expertise of WBLV'S clearinghouse partners: the Bureau of Workforce Development Administration (BWDA), Bureau of Workforce Partnership and Operations (BWPO), Pennsylvania Workforce Development Association (PWDA), Pennsylvania Center for Workforce Information and Analysis (CWIA), Lehigh Valley Planning Commission (LVPC), Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation (LVEDC), Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce (GLVCC), our One-Stop Partners,

employer and job seeking customers, and our Community Based Organizations in aligning workforce services, education, training, and employment opportunities as we continuously reimagine services through the continuous improvement of Lehigh Valley's Workforce System.

The Workforce Board Lehigh Valley Local Plan leads with community planning in alignment with the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, economic development with the Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation, business and industry strategies with the Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce, education and training providers, community based organizations, and the public we serve.

### **VISION: The Lehigh Valley has a world-class workforce**

The Workforce Board Lehigh Valley's vision supports economic growth through business and industry, worker self-sufficiency through education and training, mitigating barriers for adults, dislocated workers and youth, and is accountable to the Chief Elected Officials for the continuous improvement of a Workforce System that moves the Lehigh Valley toward our Vision.

### **MISSION**

Workforce Board Lehigh Valley supports an integrated system of partnerships, a private-sector led, regional workforce system aligned with community planning, economic development, business and industry, education and training, community based organizations, and the public. Working in collaboration with data experts such as the PA Center for Workforce Information and Analysis and the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, we ensure the Lehigh Valley workforce system has strategically positioned services for a universal population, with a focus on those most in need, to ensure Lehigh Valley has an educated and skilled workforce that meets business and industry's labor demands.

### **STRATEGY**

The WBLV's strategy is to continually prepare an educated and skilled workforce to support regional economic growth and economic self-sufficiency to ensure the Lehigh Valley has a world-class workforce. This begins with WIOA key provisions that create opportunities for economic and career success for workers, and opportunities to design and continuously improve workforce development, education and training systems.

WIOA works with all populations/people looking for employment through the PA CareerLink® one-stop workforce system, and strategically focuses on vulnerable populations including low-income adults, dislocated workers, Veterans, youth with limited skills, ex-offenders, and individuals with little or no current work experience and who face many personal and financial barriers as defined under WIOA. It requires the board to continue to implement a holistic in-service and virtual services approach within the workforce system, and to reshape and expand our workforce system partners, policies, and workforce and training options, supportive services, policies and practices. The new strategies emerging will lead to improving the services, education, and training, including the development of career pathways. These pathways provide on and off ramps, credential attainment, work experiences, mentoring, apprenticeships and wrap-around support services to mitigate barriers to employment and increase the skills and competitiveness of the workforce. The entire Country is working within a SKILLED BASED ECONOMY...our goals support this direction and supports those within our workforce system to ensure they have equal access to develop the skills needed to work and thrive in a SKILLED BASED ECONOMY.

## GOALS

The following Workforce Board Lehigh Valley goals align and support the Governor's six broad goals for Pennsylvania's workforce development system, as outlined in the WIOA Combined State Plan.

**WBLV Goal 1:** Meet and exceed PA Department of Labor and Industry negotiated Performance Standards for the Workforce Board Lehigh Valley.

**Aligns to Governor's Goal:** #4: Continuous Improvement of PA CareerLink® System

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**WBLV Goal 2:** Increase alignment with the Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation (LVEDC) and other economic development partners.

**Aligns to Governor's Goals:** #2: Sector Strategies and Employer Engagement; #4: Continuous Improvement of the PA CareerLink® System

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**WBLV Goal 3:** Commission and conduct a study on PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth workforce training and service structure, growth and next steps, in alignment with economic development growth. Based on study results, retool, train Adults, Dislocated Workers and Youth for employment centered on economic development growth and current employer needs, while mitigating barriers.

**Aligns to Governor's Goals:** #3: Youth; #4: Continuous Improvement of the PA CareerLink® System  
#5: Barrier Remediation; #6: Addressing Workforce Shortages in Critical Industries

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**WBLV Goal 4:** Increase alignment with the Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce to support Business and Industry's projected growth, training and employment needs. Increase the use of On-the-Job Training (OJT) opportunities, develop a Business & Industry workshop platform, and increase the use of the SkillUp™ PA training platform.

**Aligns to Governor's Goal:** #2: Sector Strategies and Employer Engagement

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**WBLV Goal 5:** Design economic and workforce data for job seekers, private sector employers, and the community, in alignment with the PA Center for Workforce Information and Analysis, Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, LVEDC, and other data resource users.

**Aligns to Governor's Goals:** #2: Sector Strategies and Employer Engagement; #4: Continuous Improvement of the PA CareerLink® System; #6: Addressing Workforce Shortages in Critical Industries

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**WBLV Goal 6:** Expand employer-driven Pre-Apprenticeship occupations and Registered Apprenticeship models; provide outreach to youth and job seekers; and, develop workforce pipeline apprenticeship training models for high school, career & technical education, community colleges, four-year colleges, and community-based organizations to increase job seeker interest in U.S. Department of Labor/PA Apprenticeship and Training Office Registered Apprenticeship training.

**Aligns to Governor's Goals:** #1: Apprenticeship and Career & Technical Education; #2: Sector Strategies and Employer Engagement; #3: Youth

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**WBLV Goal 7:** Align goals, strategies and next step services with the Pennsylvania Workforce Development Board, PA Workforce Development Association, Pennsylvania Commission for Community Colleges, Bureau of Workforce Development Partnership (BWDP), Bureau of Workforce Partnership &

Operations (BWPO), U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. Conference of Mayors, and other federal and state stakeholders.

**Aligns to Governor's Goal: #4:** Continuous Improvement of PA CareerLink® System

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**WBLV Goal 8:** Increase alignment of workforce system strategies with goals envisioned by WBLV Chief Elected Officials, Economic Development, Workforce Development, Education and Training Providers, Business and Industry, and Community Planning to expand economic competitiveness and increase the knowledge base of employers, job seekers, general public, and mitigate barriers for at-risk populations.

**Aligned to Governor's Goals:** #1: Apprenticeship and Career & Technical Education; #2: Sector Strategies and Employer Engagement; #3: Youth; #4: Continuous Improvement of the PA CareerLink® System; #5: Barrier Remediation; #6: Addressing Workforce Shortages in Critical Industries

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**WBLV Goal 9:** Develop an integrated systems approach to improving technological and digital experiences that meet the hardware/software/cloud-based/communication needs of internal and external customers of Lehigh Valley's Workforce System. Analyze the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the Workforce System with the PA Department of Labor and Industry. Increase strategic alignment between WBLV and BWPO to better align the Workforce Delivery System called PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley.

**Aligned to Governor's Goal: #4:** Continuous Improvement of PA CareerLink® System

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### **CORE PARTNERS**

To achieve the WBLV's strategic vision of a world-class workforce, Workforce Board Lehigh Valley WIOA Local Plan for Program Years 2025-2028 embeds our required core programs of: Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth; Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy; Title III Wagner-Peyser Act; and Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation into Lehigh Valley's workforce system, and collectively works to meet and exceed the performance and service standards of our core partners.

Our core partners are co-located and/or provide access to their programs within the Comprehensive PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley workforce system. As WBLV members, the core partners have the opportunity to contribute to strategy development, resource decisions, service alignment, and the tracking of participants to assure successful outcomes.

An on-site PA CareerLink® Administrator is held accountable to ensure our partners have access, have a voice, and keep us actively involved with community and workforce customer referrals that can benefit from the workforce services delivered through the Lehigh Valley Workforce System. Their voice and input is always heard and acted upon as appropriate.

The WBLV assures that partner coordination and alignment are documented through Memoranda of Understanding (MOU), interagency initiatives, and regular meetings. The WBLV also works with the core partners to monitor shared performance measures, leverage funds, dual enroll participants as appropriate, share information as allowable, and work together to assure customer success.

In accordance with WIOA and Labor and Industry Guidance, the WBLV negotiates its infrastructure and operational costs with core partners and includes the negotiation results in the MOU.

The following outlines the WBLV strategies in working with our core partners.

#### **Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth**

The WBLV competitively procures Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth programs. Currently our Title I provider is Educational Data Systems, Inc. (EDSI).

#### **Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Programs (AEFLA)**

The WBLV coordinates with programs in several ways through Lehigh Carbon Community College and Northampton Community College with representatives co-located virtually or in person within the comprehensive PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley workforce system. We operate a literacy program with the ProJeCt of Easton for literacy programming and work cooperatively with other adult literacy providers in the Lehigh Valley.

#### **Title III Wagner-Peyser**

Co-location of Wagner-Peyser and WIOA within Lehigh Valley's comprehensive workforce system continues to develop under guidance from the PA Department of Labor and Industry and its Bureau of Workforce Partnerships and Operations under Lehigh Valley's workforce delivery system called PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley.

#### **Title IV Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR)**

OVR is the sole WIOA Title IV provider of programs under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, providing technical assistance of disability related services, providing vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities based on the program's authorizing statute. Additional language provided by OVR is found at sections 3.7 and 4.1.

WBLV is strategically tied to our post-secondary education partners. They have space within PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley and offer recruitment, training, and post-secondary options including Registered Apprenticeships, and determine funding eligibility. Our post-secondary providers also offer pre-apprenticeship and Apprenticeship options to high school students and adults, and one of our post-secondary schools is the ITEC model, and Lehigh Career & Technical Institute has an Apprenticeship Navigator who interacts with customers at PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley on a weekly basis. Resources to build apprenticeships come from ATO grant funding, braided when possible, with federal or state resources.

#### **2.2. Negotiated level of performance – What are the local levels of performance that have been negotiated with the governor and chief elected officials? How will the local board's goals relate to the achievement of these measures?**

Negotiating local performance levels establishes an alignment between the Governor of the Commonwealth, Chief Elected Officials, and the WBLV, as well as an alignment with all workforce development boards across Pennsylvania against which local areas are judged. They also provide benchmarks to ensure we achieve our vision of a world-class competitive global workforce. The WBLV's local levels of performance for the required federal measures have been negotiated for PY2024 and PY2025, and are in *Attachment 1*.

The measures attainments for PY2024 and PY2025 were determined on September 9, 2024. The WBLV employs numerous strategies in meeting performance measures with a commitment to meeting and exceeding performance expectations.

Strategies that WBLV uses to assure attainment of the measures include, but are not limited to:

1. **Assessment:** Comprehensive assessment tools are utilized to measure individual skills, interests, aptitude, qualifications, and literacy levels if necessary, resulting in effective individual service strategies that participants are internally motivated to accomplish and align with common measures of educational and employment success.
2. **Informed decisions:** Case managers guide participants in making informed choices on career pathways and training options along their career pathway. Labor market information, career exploration, alignment of education to career pathways, continual opportunities for employer interaction, and local educational provider program details are all elements that drive participant's ability to make informed decisions in reaching their goals.
3. **Employer feedback:** Employers play a critical role in meeting performance measures, and their feedback is utilized to continually improve labor market trends, employer expectations presented to job seekers, capacity for work-based learning, technical assistance needed, and collaboration on hiring events and development of training models that solve for gaps in skilled talent.
4. **Counseling, Case Management, and Support:** Caring, experienced staff are trained across programs to provide integrated services with reduced burden. Reasonable caseloads allow case managers to connect frequently with participants and mitigate barriers to career goals. Integrated MOU and referral partners expedite resources that participants need as they progress in their employment goals.
5. **Data Management:** Collection of relevant data points, timely data entry, and data analysis allows for strategic insight into current operations, participant and employer needs, and trending outcomes. This insight then drives innovation, improvement, and re-adjusting of resources across the system to meet needs and achieve performance standards.
6. **PA CareerLink® WIOA Data Entry:** Staff understand the codes necessary to record outcomes, resulting in participants being credited for successes they achieve. Quality control provides reports that capture participants who count in denominators for common measures such as measurable skill gains and credentials to ensure outcomes are verified and entered in appropriate quarters of performance.
7. **Staff Training:** The WBLV provides guidance and required training and retraining to PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley staff in understanding the measures and the formulas for determining that performance levels are on target and on the track to be met. WBLV's service providers create and revise process flows that offer detailed technical training in all aspects of job functions. Staff are trained in the annual contract's scope of work with key attention to any changes from the prior year. Each program within the PA CareerLink® establishes monthly and quarterly goals which are reported on monthly. These trainings and ongoing feedback on outcomes ensure that performance goals are never a surprise.
8. **Partnership:** WBLV's integrated workforce ecosystem brings together a diverse range of expertise, strengths, and resources to help employers hire and retain talent, and to help job seekers remove barriers and upgrade skills to obtain and retain employment. Partnership is absolutely essential and the driving force behind many of WBLV's innovative practices that result in valuable credentials and strong employment outcomes.
9. **Performance Measures and Levels** are used as a gauge of our workforce system's performance. Performance data details out the narratives of what employers and participants need from the workforce ecosystem to drive their own success. Feedback loops from customer surveys and employer surveys as they engage in events and work-based learning services, along with performance data, enable WBLV to identify areas of improvement where solutions can be identified and implemented as well as identify areas of success that can be celebrated and used to showcase the story of our system's impact.

### **3. OPERATIONAL PLANNING: Local Area Workforce System and Investment Strategies**

#### **3.1. Local workforce system structure – Provide a descriptive overview of the workforce system structure, including key stakeholders and entities in the local area.**

Local governance begins with the Chief Elected Officials (CEOs) who in the Lehigh Valley serve as the Lehigh and Northampton County Executives. They have entered into a consortium of governments agreement to provide oversight and policy guidance to the local workforce area, and to address those areas requiring their sole decision-making authority or the exercise of their decision-making authority in concert with the WBLV, the majority private sector board they have appointed in accordance with WIOA requirements and Commonwealth guidance. By legislation, they are financially liable for the workforce funds allocated to the Lehigh Valley. The CEOs are also responsible for appointing local workforce development board members, approving the WBLV budget, and serving as the local grant recipient. The CEOs have designated the Lehigh Valley Workforce Investment Board, Inc. DBA Workforce Board Lehigh Valley (WBLV) as the administrative entity, fiscal agent, as well as their sub grant recipient, responsible for procurement, accounting, contracting, oversight, policy implementation and funds management.

The WBLV is responsible for the vision, strategy, policy, budgeting, oversight of programs and funds, and for developing a comprehensive workforce system. The WBLV, appointed by the CEOs and certified by the Commonwealth to meet WIOA, is an incorporated non-profit entity, which governs and makes decisions through a committee structure that aligns with Wagner-Peyser under the PA Department of Labor and Industry, who is responsible for the Resource Center of the workforce system, in partnership with the vendor organization(s) supporting the workforce and training programming under WIOA.

The WBLV, appointed by the CEOs and certified by the Commonwealth to meet WIOA, is an incorporated non-profit entity, which governs and makes decisions through a committee structure.

The WBLV is supported by staff whose responsibilities include:

- Overseeing implementation of WBLV policy decisions
- Conducting and reporting oversight activities
- Preparing the region's budget for elected officials and board approval
- Preparing board and committee agendas and proper back-up to make informed decisions
- Organizing studies, planning activities , grants and implementation
- Conducting procurements as necessary to support grant activities
- Using data as a predictor of employability skill requirements, training options, employment opportunities, and meeting performance standards as negotiated with the Department of Labor and Industry

The WBLV conducts its business through the committees listed below. Policy decisions are first assigned for review and recommendation to the appropriate committee and then are considered by the WBLV Executive Committee before coming to the board for a final vote. Board members can serve on any committee. All board members are encouraged to serve on one committee. Through the use of a committee structure, concerns can be addressed at a more molecular level so, by the time items are presented to the full board, there is significant support for the approval of most recommendations. This results in cohesive decision making.

The current WBLV committee structure, as outlined in WBLV By-Laws, may include non-board or ad hoc members required by WIOA and/or PA Department of Labor and Industry, as follows:

#### **EXECUTIVE**

Includes the WBLV Officers and Committee Chairs. Recommends priorities, goals, objectives, projects and strategies to address the long-term workforce development needs of the community and delegates actions approved by the WBLV to standing and special committees. This Committee negotiates with the Commonwealth on local performance measures, monitors performance outcomes, and ensures accountability and transparency of the workforce system.

#### **FINANCE**

Includes the WBLV Secretary/Treasurer who serves as Finance Committee Chair and is comprised of three WBLV members and two non-WBLV members, one from each of the two Counties' fiscal offices. Maintains oversight of the WBLV spending plan and reviews program budgets, conducts fiscal and financial oversight of programmatic and administrative entities, analyzes strategic plans to determine fiscal impact, develops and recommends fiscal policies, procedures and processes, and reviews audit reports and financial aspects of program monitoring reports, making recommendations as needed.

#### **STRATEGIC PLANNING**

Includes a minimum of eleven WBLV members and up to four non-WBLV members. The Strategic Planning Committee shall recommend program policy to the WBLV, serve as a Request for Proposals review committee, review the WIOA Local Plans and Plan Modifications and recommend adoption to the WBLV, assist in negotiation and monitoring of program performance, and shall address other program issues as assigned by the WBLV Chair.

The WBLV Chair also has the authority to create ad-hoc committees, as required.

The following EEO liaison is responsible for ensuring equal employment opportunities and civil rights protection in the Lehigh Valley's workforce delivery system and any complaints are directed to the following individual. If complaints are escalated, they are directed to the Equal Opportunity Officer.

Douglas Monroe  
Program Supervisor/EEO Liaison  
PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley  
Bureau of Workforce Partnerships and Operations  
PA Department of Labor and Industry  
555 Union Boulevard, Allentown, PA 18109  
Phone: 610-841-8320  
Email: [domonroe@pa.gov](mailto:domonroe@pa.gov)

Nanse Wolfington  
Director of Compliance  
EEO Officer  
Workforce Board Lehigh Valley  
555 Union Boulevard, Allentown, PA 18109  
Phone: 610-841-8332 Fax: 610-437-3527  
Email: [equalopportunity@careerlinklv.org](mailto:equalopportunity@careerlinklv.org)

Many of the key stakeholders are represented on the WBLV. In addition to the stakeholders represented on the WBLV, and our required and additional program partners detailed on **Attachments 2 and 3**, others include:

- One-stop partners in addition to the core partners which are represented on the board: Our partners are critical to coordination and integration efforts requested by WIOA. They are named in other parts of this plan along with our related activities, so they are not individually identified in this section of the plan.
- Our public education providers at the secondary school and postsecondary level including our literacy providers: It is the Governor's goal to serve basic skills deficient adults and to expend significant resources on participant training. To do this we must be able to build skills so participants can effectively complete postsecondary studies and we must be able to offer education that presents options for attainable goals.
- The GLVCC, LVEDC, Counties and Cities Economic Development Representatives: The Chamber and economic development entities are the WBLV intermediaries to the business community. Our excellent partnerships continue to open opportunities for our participants. We also count on them for feedback regarding workforce services so that we are aware of opportunities for improvement.
- Community Based Organizations (CBO): Often participants engage with grass roots organizations before accessing workforce services. Our CBO community partners provide services at acute times in participant lives and serve as a bridge between community wide social services and the workforce services offered through the PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley.
- Our Municipalities: The Lehigh Valley governments have recognized that workforce services are a key economic driver. As a result our municipalities are as heavily invested in our success as our County government stakeholders who bear the liability for program funds.
- Our plan aligns our workforce system with WIOA regulations. WIOA regulations require partners to collaborate to support a seamless customer-focused service delivery network within the one-stop workforce system.
- Improving the quality of the workforce, reducing welfare dependency, increasing economic self-sufficiency, meeting skills requirements of employers, and enhancing the productivity and competitiveness of the Lehigh Valley requires the involvement of key stakeholders and entities associated with administrative and programmatic and service delivery functions as depicted on the Workforce Board Lehigh Valley System Organizational Chart Model, see **Attachment 2**.

The Governor of Pennsylvania has designated Lehigh and Northampton Counties as a workforce region and has aligned workforce regions across Pennsylvania with the Partnership for Regional Economic Performance (PREP) partners. The WBLV will continue to develop the workforce system with our PREP partners including Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation, Lehigh University Small Business Development Center, Manufacturers Resource Center, Ben Franklin Technology Center, and industrial development authorities.

Please see L3.2 for the PA CareerLink® Operator's identity and roles, as well as a summary of the competitive process used to procure the operator.

**3.2. Programs included in local workforce delivery system – What programs are included in the local workforce delivery system and how will the local board work with the entities carrying out all workforce programs to support service alignment?**

WBLV's integrated and inclusive one-stop workforce system includes the following programs: Wagner-Peyser Employment Services which includes Labor Exchange, Trade Act, Veterans Employment and Training, and Foreign Labor Certification Services, WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs, WIOA ISY and OSY Youth programs operated by several providers, TANF and SNAP Employment and Training programs, Adult Education and Literacy, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, locally funded LEAP programs at Northampton Prison and Lehigh Jail, along with industry-specific and audience-specific programs based on partner involvement, employers and discretionary funding.

Wagner-Peyser Employment Services are provided by BWPO staff and services local and regional workforce and labor market information, job listings, career counseling on local in-demand occupation's earnings, skill requirements, and related career pathways, job search and job placement assistance, employer recruitment, information and referrals to specialized business services, and implementation of Trade Assistant Act (TAA), Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG), Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA), approval of new employers, contacts, and job postings into PA CareerLink® Online, approval of Foreign Labor Certification (FLC) job listings, and Rapid Response Services. Wagner-Peyser and Welcome Center staff from the Title I provider collectively conduct outreach, digital intake support and technical assistance in creating a complete PA CareerLink® profile, and orientation to core program services.

WIOA Title I program providers are selected through a competitive procurement process which is initiated by the development and subsequent posting of a Request for Proposal (RFP) that is made publicly accessible. EDSI is the currently procured provider for Adult, Dislocated, OSY, and ISY programming as well as the EARN and LEAP programs. St. Luke's Hospital provides an additional ISY program focused on healthcare careers, and Project Easton provides an OSY GED program.

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)/Employment Advancement and Retention Network (EARN)/Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is already a One-Stop partner. The current WBLV Title I provider, Educational Data Systems Inc. (EDSI), is also the EARN workforce services provider for TANF recipients.

Both Northampton Community College and Lehigh Carbon Community College serve as WIOA Title II providers and are vested partners in the one-stop system with co-location at the PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley site and offering on-site accommodations for Title I staff who engage in outreach and service delivery in community. Collaborating to serve customers jointly across locations helps expedite referrals across Title I and Title II services. As workforce solutions continue to emphasize training and work-based learning such as Registered Apprenticeships, Title II services will continue to be essential as a steppingstone for adult learners who require upskilling to meet eligibility and required knowledge for safety and success in specific occupations. WBLV continues to maximize its physical space at the PA CareerLink® to ensure program partner services can be offered on-site, such as upskilling and GED preparation courses.

WIOA Vocational Rehabilitation services are offered through the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation. On-site presence as well as active engagement in One-Stop partner coordinated meetings and trainings

ensures that staff are aware of the referral process to OVR services and can collaborate immediately to support those with disabilities.

The beauty of an integrated workforce system is that individuals can enter PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley and access all of these partner programs seamlessly. Digital intake captures initial demographic information as well as eligibility elements and barriers to employment for all first time visitors. A collective Wagner Peyser and Title I team provide guidance on digital intake, offer orientations, and individualized sessions to confirm needs such as literacy skills, numeracy, and English language proficiency, aptitudes, abilities, skills gaps, or for other support services, such as Vocational Rehabilitation under the Title I of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973 for identified needs. Where it appears customers can be better assisted by a one-stop partner, staff are knowledgeable and able to make referrals to and coordinate with our one-stop partner programs. To assure one-stop services are available to everyone, information about our PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley services, referral and support services are in accessible formats and languages.

The WBLV makes all basic career services available in the PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley and satellite offices. Many services are available in person and virtually, including resume assistance, employability skills, digital education, and assistance qualifying for high school credentials. For those needing training in order to obtain or retain employment, referrals to WIOA Adult/Dislocated Worker/Youth programs are done to provide education through Individual Training Accounts (ITAs). If basic career services are not sufficient to connect individuals with employment, they can receive the following individualized services through WIOA programs with a focus on career counseling, training and work-based learning opportunities that align and support each participant's Individualized Employment Plan.

The WBLV works through its One-Stop Operator to convene all required partners, establish in-kind and program service contributions to the system, ensure there are shared referral processes across programs, and provide ongoing education to all partners about system news and innovations that impact the collective work. The current One-Stop Operator, EDSI, was selected following a competitive procurement consistent with the process used to select WIOA Title I providers. The Operator is well-regarded by the community and has decades of experience in the Lehigh Valley workforce system. One-Stop Operator recommendations are made in a neutral environment that are acceptable to all partners. The Operator will continue to align and integrate partner programs and services into the Lehigh Valley's workforce delivery system by:

- Promoting and sustaining co-location of all partners at the One-Stop to provide expanded services to job seekers
- Ensuring a cohesive, streamlined integrated service delivery that is a true workforce system of partners
- Aligning the workforce delivery system to support both the Local Plan and the State Combined Plan
- Cross-training of all partner staff in program basics
- Establishing common forms, policies, and processes among partners
- Developing an MOU that outlines the services, programs, and individualized career services provided at the One-Stop
- Establishing the One-Stop as a clearinghouse for workforce, education, training, community, and employer services
- Educating the partners on labor market data to fill employer needs

- Serving on partners' Advisory Committees
- Aligning strategic initiatives among all partners and organizations to streamline services and reduce redundancy
- Ensuring the PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley is customer-centric
- Engaging employers through a targeted sector strategy
- Engaging employers in strengthening the workforce system

For a list of one-stop program partners, see **Attachment 3**.

**3.3. Adult and Dislocated Worker training activities – Provide a description and assessment of the type and availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities in the local area.**

WBLV's Adult and Dislocated Worker program is a large component of the local integrated system. Services within this program are designed to support a diverse range of adult job seekers, from those with low literacy levels and limited employment history to those who are facing lay-off or career changes. Information gathered through digital intake and initial basic services provides insight into the current needs of our residents. WBLV is dedicated to ensuring the program offers high quality, relevant services to support adult and dislocated workers with their individualized employment plans while leading to success in measurable skill gains, credential attainment, job placement, and job retention.

Adult participants begin their service experience through basic and individualized career services at the PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley's Welcome Center, as well as within the employment and training centers at satellite locations. Through in-person or virtual orientation along with a face-to-face appointment, determination of need and employability skills assessment are completed, leading to service plans that can include employability skills, staff-assisted job search, referral to individualized career and training services, and referrals to supportive services, community partner programs, and employment.

Dislocated workers often begin their services as a Rapid Response impacted individuals and Unemployment Compensation claimants. WBLV also identifies dislocated workers through the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program, where impacted workers receive information on how to access individualized career and training services. RESEA participants receive a one-on-one in-person or remote session for assessment and determination of needs in accordance with their career path. All new individuals complete the digital intake process which provides information that is then used for determining the types of services to be provided. The PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley Welcome Center provides live time troubleshooting and technology support for the digital intake process, which has helped increase accurate information capture. Job seekers interested in individualized services participate in an in-person or online information session to learn about benefits, eligibility requirements, and expectations for successful program outcomes. Early awareness of required documentation across Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth has helped individual's access services earlier on, rather than at the crisis point where service is urgently needed and eligibility then becomes a delay or roadblock.

**Priority of Service:** Federal priority of service is followed by giving Level 1 highest priority to veterans and eligible spouses who are low income (federal poverty level or 70% Lower Living Standard Income Level), basic skills deficient, or recipients of public assistance. Non-veterans who meet the same criteria fall into Level 2 priority. All other veterans and eligible spouses who meet the local adult eligibility (258% of the federal poverty level or below) receive Level 3 priority, and all remaining non-veterans meeting

local adult program eligibility are Level 4 priority. Level 5 includes individuals who do not meet the priorities. Staff training, particularly for staff in outreach work, satellite sites, and community resource center (CRC), highlights priority of service for early identification and referral with priority flagging to WIOA intake staff. Those engaging in outreach work will use the annual Recruitment and Enrollment Plan to strategically conduct outreach efforts with a focus on engaging priority of service individuals. Close collaboration with our local DVOP and local community partners that serve veterans will ensure those eligible for priority are aware of our programs and services. Scheduling co-location at the local County Assistance Office will further the strategic outreach to engage those in the priority of service categories. WBLV's service providers will ensure that an adequate level of staff are bilingual along with offering outreach and orientation materials such as Welcome to PA CareerLink® in Spanish. As an integrated delivery system, WBLV also works with Title II providers so that referrals to those adult education and ESL services can be coordinated quickly when appropriate.

Adult and Dislocated worker employment activities cannot be coordinated through participant assessment alone. The WBLV, through their deeply engaged relationships across employer communities, listens to employer feedback and combined with labor market data, identifies current talent demands as well as projected needs for skilled talent for high-priority occupations within targeted industry sectors, with particular attention to how those needs align with rapid response events where impacted workers can be engaged, upskilled, and coached to obtain technically skilled employment. Employers also provide input on upskilling needs to meet ever-evolving employability and occupational skills requirements, as well as trends on educational requirements for specific occupations. Data provided by the Pennsylvania Center for Workforce Information and Analysis (CWIA) and data sources such as the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation, Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce, Society for Human Resource Management and other workforce intelligence such as an organizational sharing of an Economist between Workforce Board Lehigh Valley and the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission is used to evaluate the high-priority occupations, targeted industry sectors, and employment gaps in the Lehigh Valley. The WBLV works with employers and training providers to ensure that the needs of the current workforce are met. Understanding the available job opportunities for adults, and dislocated workers and youth helps our system best prepare them to succeed in Lehigh Valley's labor market and beyond.

All job seekers are screened for cross-program eligibility and referred to core program services across Adult, Dislocated Worker, and SNAP E&T funding. Many Title I staff funded across multiple programs to ensure that provided services along with funding streams. Local procedures for WIOA Adult/DW eligibility include determining eligibility across either funding stream which provides WBLV with accurate eligibility data when reviewing Adult and DW caseload ratios and expenditure spenddown. Regular communication between program staff and participants ensures services are optimized and that duplication is eliminated. Dual enrollment is particularly advantageous for the older Out-of-School Youth population who may still benefit from youth specific life and soft skill sessions and interaction with adults in the adult programs. Working with adult peers who have stronger work histories and actual career experience can grow real workplace knowledge and the employability skills needed for older youth to find, retain, and succeed in a career path. Dual enrollment into the SNAP Employment and Training program is another successful example of leveraging program services to enhance and expand services for the individual. For SNAP E&T, those who are screened as potentially eligible can learn more about the benefits of that program, as well as the requirements. WBLV fully supports efforts to integrate orientations and eligibility to reduce participant burden, increase knowledge of available services, and dual enroll when it's appropriate for each individual.

Weekly Adult/DW Information Sessions are held to welcome program candidates, many individuals meeting the priority of service criteria for Adults. These overviews are co-facilitated by WIOA and DHS/EARN specialists who provide the group with expanded possibilities should they be eligible for co-enrollment into the SNAP E&T Program. Post session individual eligibility is reviewed with candidates and the Lehigh Valley team coordinates with both Lehigh and Northampton CAO staff to review the pipeline and expedite referrals and enrollments into the SNAP E&T Program or other appropriate DHS programs such as KEYS or TANF Youth. Co-enrollment allows DHS and DOL braided funding to support enhanced employment and training services for Adults/DW and DHS individuals on many fronts.

Engagement with CAO as a partner agency allows the issuance of special allowances to cover training and/or employment associated costs. Childcare expenses are another major cost covered through DHS programming that benefits the economically disadvantaged job seeker who is seeking to upskill and transition to employment and often lessens the “cliff effect” impact for the new student/hire. Lehigh Valley continues to practice from a human centered design and has allocated training dollars in DHS programs that can augment or replace WIOA training costs as strategic fiscal decisions continue to be made surrounding increased dollars earmarked for direct client services.

WBLV fully supports efforts to integrate orientation and eligibility to reduce participant burden, increase knowledge of available services, and dual enroll when it is appropriate for each individual. The Local Management Committee continues to convene in Lehigh Valley as a partner venue to advance integrated client services delivery across our communities. The LMC is co-facilitated by both Lehigh and Northampton County leadership and has provided space for strategic planning with KEYS, ELECT, EARN, SNAP, Title I and Title II partners who plan optimal access to both Basic and Individualized Career Services and critical services delivered by all of the committee members.

Enrollment into core programs is an operational area of ongoing improvement, as the system must meet compliance while meeting participants where their skill, educational levels, work history and experience fall. Reinforcing expectations of eligibility requirements and documentation in multiple interactions has been very effective. PA CareerLink® conducts rapid enrollment sessions multiple times and days each week for program eligibility where program documents and signatures in CWDS can be completed and collected on the same day. Participants meet their case manager and recruiter on that same day, creating a welcoming, holistic launch to program services while maximizing staff time. One added benefit of enrollment sessions is participants growing their peer networks, establishing familiarity with others who may be exploring similar career pathways or have experienced similar barriers to employment.

Feedback on this approach is highly positive, with participants expressing they get what they need in less time. Youth enrollment, when appropriate, has been integrated into this operational model to increase service efficiency and dual enrollments. Participants who meet core program eligibility based on income are generally the most time intensive and require the most documentation so these individual enrollment sessions are scheduled with intake specialists in a 1-1 setting.

One critical role in the integrated system is a Career Counselor Coordinator, who is trained in program policy and services across Adult, Dislocated, Youth, and TANF programs. This role helps with efficiencies across programs, supports specific programs when enrollment volume is higher in one program than others, and offers training to case managers in a comprehensive way. One Coordinator across all programs also provides a unique eye on each program’s strengths and areas of improvement, and can

both offer and implement recommended improvements in dual enrollment, reducing service redundancy, and team approach to integrated delivery.

The delivery of all individualized career services offered through the Adult and Dislocated Worker program is adaptive and has been expanded to incorporate in-person and virtual offerings, based on participant needs. These services include case management; development of an Individual Employment Plan (IEP); skills assessment and remediation through CASAS, and Essential Education; barrier resolution; individualized career exploration; advisement, career pathways counseling, job search and job readiness preparation; individualized job search; job development and placement assistance. Supportive services are available to ensure the successful completion of an Individual Employment Plan (IEP).

Training opportunities include work experience, pre-apprenticeships, apprenticeships, On-the-Job Training, and occupational skills training through Individual Training Accounts. All training opportunities are consistent with high-priority occupations and/or identified as occupations within Lehigh Valley industry sectors targeted for growth. These include Health Care and Social Assistance; Transportation and Warehousing; Manufacturing; Professional, Scientific and Technical Services; and Finance and Insurance. WBLV and business services operate with the strategy that the employer perspective and position serves as a highly valuable and relevant training provider when capacity and support is available and/or provide through training investment.

Responding to the need for nontraditional training delivery, we continue to work with training providers to increase distance, online, virtual, and hybrid programs approved on the statewide Eligible Training Providers List. Those pursuing training receive assistance to maximize financial aid. Tools such as CareerScope to assess interest and aptitude, and SkillUp™ which allows participants to experience online learning at no-cost and assess their comfortability and comprehension of learning through e-platforms while exploring career options. Case management and recruiting services continue through the completion of training, job search, placement and follow-up.

To assess and determine that Individualized Training Services are appropriate, multiple strategies are utilized to gather workforce intelligence and identify high priority trainings and local in-demand occupational strands. Job and labor market information is sourced regularly from CWIA and other independent agencies to survey local business and industry. Analysis of this data results in training services that align with industry need. For further assessment on what training services to offer, feedback from individuals themselves is also critical to ensure training services meet an individual's aptitude, interest, and career goals. As an example, the Training and Education Coordinator maintains a pipeline list of participants interested in training by occupation and credential, and researches providers when participant interest is not covered by existing ETPL providers. For online educational providers, research includes identifying the engagement structure, learning supports, and specific outcomes for programs or credentials that are from 100% online learning. The Training and Education Coordinator also hosts training program application sessions that are open to participants across all programs as a strategy to streamline access to training across participants regardless of current program of enrollment.

Individual participant academic readiness is also critical in implementing training services that lead to successful results. Remediation on-site, through close collaboration with Title II providers, ensures ease of service access and also strengthens communication on participant progress so they can work with case management and the Training and Education Coordinator on next steps in their IEP and career pathway. When possible, CASAS administration early on in participant services sets expectations and

helps identify where in a career pathway each individual would begin. Early testing also helps identify which individualized services are most appropriate to deliver next.

By engaging with employers through Industry Partnerships and organizations such as the GLVCC, SHRM, LVEDC, MRC, and Greater Lehigh Valley Building and Trades Council, WBLV and the Business services staff learn about the needs of employers. Listening and understanding employer needs drives collaborative creation of workforce solutions such as work experience, pre-apprenticeships, apprenticeships, and OJTs. Business services staff are also closely connected with case management staff to align job seeker's interests and needs with these opportunities. Connecting the pieces between employer job openings, labor market information, and Adult/DW caseload industries of interest, experience, and education help identify strong matches for job placement outcomes as well as gaps where upskilling and credentialed training is needed. Leveraging tools like ONet's My Next Move and local career pathway documents that visualize specific employers career pathways with required experience and education along the map help case managers to guide participants in their training service decision making. Staff also receive ongoing professional development through workforce webinars, conferences, and other educational offerings to understand how career pathways are evolving to align with new skilled labor needs, artificial intelligence, automation, and economic conditions.

Revisions in offered training opportunities can be driven by the data gathered around interest in training. Through digital intake data and individualized services provided by the Training and Education Coordinator, and Career Advisors, a pipeline of individuals interested in training is maintained. This projection allows WBLV and staff to anticipate training enrollments, where there are gaps between interest and training slot capacity, and project expenditures across both Adult and Dislocated worker funding streams. Understanding these projections also supports funding stream re-allocations should adult and dislocated worker training expenses need to be adjusted.

WBLV considers labor market trends, historic performance in training services, and available funding to set goals for quantity of training services funded. Quality of services is mapped out through training and work-based learning policies, ETPL approval processes, and monitoring training service outcomes to ensure completion rates, credential rates, and placement rates are in line with local area common measure targets.

### **3.4. Youth workforce investment activities – Provide a description and assessment of the type and availability of youth workforce investment activities in the local area.**

WBLV's youth workforce investment activities are delivered with a strategic focus on community and employer partnerships, access, and integration. Both WIOA and TANF youth services are based on the 14 Required Youth Program Elements as outlined in WIOA legislation. We continuously evaluate the latest innovations, community connections, service models, and program management to ensure they align with required program elements. WBLV's youth programs are designed to provide high-quality youth services to at-risk populations and those with barriers to employment, including In-School Youth (ISY), Out-of-School Youth (OSY), Older Youth, youth with disabilities, and re-entry youth.

By leveraging WIOA and TANF resources and securing public and private grant funding, WBLV's youth programs provide a person-centered experience to support youth with educational and career goals. Through coordinated partner resources, barrier resolution, alignment with employers' needs, relevant and meaningful secondary and post-secondary training opportunities, work-based training experiences ranging from career exploration to career launch, and caring staff who build rapport and trust, youth

receive a range of services to keep them engaged through the journey of achieving their goals. WBLV's youth programs, through strong enrollment and engagement outcomes, create the next generation of skilled talent to enter the workforce and continue post-secondary education.

WBLV has established itself as the experts in youth workforce development activities through utilizing local labor market data and customer surveys and implementing innovative engagement strategies alongside valued partners to connect with youth, particularly youth with disabilities and those who are justice-involved. The Youth Committee and Lehigh Valley employers are vehicles often utilized to review current programming, resulting in new projects that successfully advance youth initiatives.

Under the direction of the WBLV, key community partners are committed to establishing priorities that ensure a comprehensive community workforce development system for eligible youth. Beginning with career exploration and guidance and opportunities for work experience and skills training, youth activities are aligned to meet employer needs, assist youth in overcoming barriers to employment, exceed performance, and culminate with employment and/or enrollment in postsecondary education. WBLV continually searches for dedicated stakeholders who can invest grant funding, time, and experience to expand and diversify youth programming, particularly for targeted youth populations.

The Youth Committee includes a private sector chairperson, who serves as a member of the WBLV and its Executive Committee, and members of the community. The Youth Committee recommends policy to the Board to uplift a comprehensive youth workforce program that ensures a full range of services and job opportunities that align with the 14 program elements. The Youth Committee leverages resources; coordinates community services among schools, public programs, and community-based organizations; recommends eligible youth service providers; provides ongoing leadership and support for continuous quality improvement; and develops innovative ideas focused on pipeline development. All Out-of-School Youth, In-School Youth, TANF and special grant funded youth program services are competitively procured.

Through coordination and braiding of funds with WIOA core programs, TANF and federal, state and local grants and private funds, more young people with barriers receive fully integrated services to gain marketable skills necessary for a lifetime of employment. The workforce system's evidence-based youth programs are aligned to employer needs and include the 14 WIOA elements. Through the Individual Service Strategy (ISS) and a diverse range of available elements, youth address barriers, identify academic and career goals, and take action steps to make progress in goal attainment, all with support of a caring, collaborative team and a comprehensive ecosystem with multiple partners. The 14 WIOA elements are detailed as follows:

1. Tutoring, study skills training, instruction, and evidence-based dropout prevention and recovery strategies that lead to completion of the requirements for a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent or for a recognized secondary credential are available in ISY and OSY programming. ISY programs support youth with academic remediation and encourage youth to remain in school and obtain a diploma. OSY are assessed and prescribed either internal, short-term remediation or lengthier academic remediation services delivered by a Title II literacy partner.
2. Alternative secondary school services or dropout recovery services are coordinated with Title II providers and reengagement centers at public schools to encourage youth to return to school or obtain a high school equivalency or diploma.
3. Work experience through employer partners helps youth synthesize career exposure and employability skills training within a workplace environment, growing skills through practice vs just a

classroom setting, and leading to potential direct placements. Youth staff consistently check in on youth's progress while in work experiences to ensure career connected learning is active and benefiting youth's ISS goals.

4. By partnering with local training providers and employers, youth obtain marketable skills through ITAs, OJTs and apprenticeships resulting in advancement to higher paying jobs with industry recognized credentials. Awareness of these opportunities is available through orientations into the workforce system, youth intakes, and throughout employer engagement activities.
5. Education offered concurrently with workforce preparation activities, academic remediation and occupational skills training connect youth to high priority occupations and career pathways to transition into the workplace. Work-based learning attaches skill development and learning goals to real life experience. Title I and Title II service coordination links academics and workforce services.
6. Leadership development is initiated with the first case management appointment and is continued through career advisement coaching during the enrollment timeline. Leadership skills are practiced by youth through the introduction of community service projects, first-person exposure to postsecondary educational opportunities, and both virtual and in-person tours and conversations with employers in local business and industry. Youth have opportunities to share their stories to practice public speaking and serve as a role model while supporting representational outreach strategies.
7. Supportive services include technology hardware and internet, transportation, background clearances, physicals and screenings, driver's lessons, training related study guides, testing and credentialing fees, safety attire and uniforms, tools and equipment, and are documented in the Individual Service Strategy and Career Pathways Plan.
8. Adult mentoring services engage employers, community members, and professional organizations to provide career guidance, positive role modeling and mentorship for youth. Mentoring provides youth with additional adult support systems as they progress in their goals.
9. Follow-Up services are available through ongoing communication and support. Services available include leadership development, employability and problem-solving skills, transportation assistance, and enrollment into postsecondary education, job placement, career advancement and retention. WIOA youth providers utilize quality assurance processes to track cases in follow-up. These services also provide an ongoing safe, trusted space for youth while they further progress in their academic and career goals.
10. Comprehensive guidance and continuing barrier mitigation are provided through case management, referrals to licensed social workers and/or licensed counselors, and ongoing leveraged support of workforce system partner agencies to ensure a continuum of youth services leading to workplace success. Resource development across programs within the integrated system helps create a robust set of partners with barrier mitigation services.
11. Financial literacy education is delivered in a three-fold method to include a financial literacy component embedded in the youth specific employability curriculum, finance and banking workshops facilitated by employer partners, and hands-on financial and banking coursework is presented during paid work experience orientations by the Youth staff.
12. Entrepreneurial Skills Training is included by youth exploring and identifying business opportunities, developing business plans and budgets, and practicing effective, professional business communication. Additional exposure to entrepreneurial opportunities occurs through employer partner workshops and virtual and/or on-site visits to business locations. Staff advises and directs youth to state approved entities and coursework such as: Northampton Community College, Follett Family Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship; Lehigh Carbon Community College, Entrepreneurship and Small Business Specialist Credit Diploma; and Lehigh University, Small Business Development Center and the Baker Institute for Entrepreneurship.

13. Labor market and employment information services are provided across Youth programs by incorporating CWIA labor market data into industry specific Career Power Hours, Employer Spotlights, staff guided research, and partner sessions such as the EOC workshops “Matching My Skills” that educate youth on local high priority occupations in targeted industry clusters.
14. Multiple activities prepare youth for the transition to postsecondary education and training. Youth program participants take interest and skills assessments that are utilized to research education and training programs and providers on the approved statewide Eligible Training Provider List. EOC and on-site post-secondary education providers are strong partners who provide in-person and virtual real-time career advisement to youth. On day one of program orientation, a Training and Education Advisor is introduced to youth and continues to guide individual career path exploration. Throughout the development of the ISS this team member assists youth with the education and training decision making process.
15. We have been asked to occupy a workforce room at a newly renovated high school annex, which is partially funded through the Department of Community and Economic Development as a new initiative providing health care, education and workforce.

WBLV provides comprehensive services to participants while maximizing partner resources. With OSY as a WIOA primary focus, WIOA funding is used to design programs that serve majority OSY with targeted ISY aged 17-24 and TANF funding in collaboration with Department of Human Services (DHS), Bureau of Employment Programs (BEP) is used for ISY programming. OSY youth, particularly older youth, are prioritized through outreach that emphasizes work-based learning services and post-secondary credentials. While WIOA defines OSY as 16-24, PA Commonwealth Law 22 Code Section 11.13 requires 16-year-olds to have parental consent and be employed before leaving school. In addition, WBLV data shows an insignificant number of 16-year-olds requesting programming. Therefore, WBLV aligns with WIOA’s focus of serving older OSY ages 17-24.

WBLV has a history of success in securing public and private grant funding that increases opportunities to align career pathways with high priority occupations in targeted industry clusters. The expanded funding allows for the development of partnerships that align key stakeholders and supports co-enrollment in multiple programs to ensure youth have the opportunity to pursue the skills, training and education they need to obtain employment leading to financial stability for themselves and their families. Examples include Youth Re-Entry, Statewide Activity Business-Education Partnership, and private foundations such as the Century Fund, Bosch, and Air Products.

The WBLV workforce development youth services focus on at-risk populations with barriers to employment as well as older youth and the strategically designed activities include:

**Recruitment and Outreach:** Awareness, relevancy, and representation are all critical strategies WBLV deploys in recruiting youth. Through its integrated workforce system model, both adults and youth are informed of youth program services, creating awareness for role models who have relationships with youth which drives personalized youth referrals to program enrollment. Within the PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley office, youth are able to meet key program staff, including career counselors, instructors, training/education coordinators, and work-based training developers, early in their orientation to services to build trust and familiarity with program staff from the outset. The youth staffing model includes dedicated Youth Outreach and Engagement Specialists and a Youth Workforce Liaison who visits schools, community partners, youth organizations, and public events to connect with potential participants. These dedicated staff also build awareness with the staff at these entities to help identify

youth with barriers to employment and disengaged older youth who can benefit from services and connection to the labor force.

WBLV also implemented a program where every high school in the region had a student representative to champion career exploration, further education, and benefits of youth programs. PA CareerLink® staff visit high schools regularly to develop relationships with counselors, teachers, and administration, creating further referral pipelines from trusted adults who support youth. Relevancy and representation are also critical. When youth see immediate benefits with genuine caring staff advocating for their future successful selves, they will remain engaged. To remain relevant, youth program outreach focuses on flexible schedules for orientation and enrollment, communication methods through text and social media, highlighting local employer's fun and engaging culture, and elevating youth success stories so they see themselves represented in their community. Dual enrollment options support older youth who often have higher levels of financial responsibility, family commitments, and more persistent barriers to employment and educational success.

In-person and virtual recruitment methods are also implemented with attention paid to interagency communication and referral tracking, cross training and understanding of each other's agency missions and goals, and involvement in each other's events such as job fairs and graduations. Being present in the community builds rapport, familiarity, and trust. The dedicated youth staff attend community events at partner organizations, local businesses, high schools, and community colleges to promote ISY/OSY programming. They also coordinate and host informational sessions to provide clear and engaging overviews of PA CareerLink® programs, services, and training opportunities that benefit both youth and the adults in their life who support them and/or are within their households.

Targeted outreach aligned with eligibility criteria includes, but is not limited to, strategic partnerships with the school districts, literacy centers and community colleges, Early Learning Resource Center (ERLC), alternative school program choices such as the ELECT and Reengagement Programs, shelters, re-entry partners such as Lehigh and Northampton County Probation and Parole, Lehigh County Juvenile Probation, Domestic Relations and Justice Works, Valley Youth House, food banks, Communities in Schools, Promise Neighborhood, Easton Children's Home, and WIC. Staff conduct recruitment from the St. Luke's Employment and Training Center, community colleges, and high schools through a full-time presence or guest co-location schedule based on foot traffic trends. Career outreach sessions at high schools and partners sites also help promote benefits of service, what to expect, and how services can tie to individual goals. Targeted out of school and in-school youth recruitment also happens within Allentown high schools where the school district staff who work with students with barriers to employment, such as ESL or disabilities, can make intentional and warm referrals to WIOA Title I youth staff. Another method to connect to those with employment barriers is working with re-entry partners such as Justice Works, Juvenile and Adult Probation and Parole, and both Northampton County and Lehigh County Re-entry Coalitions, who can identify prime candidates for the WIOA OSY program or TANF ISY program. Across all of these targeted outreach approaches and referral partners, continual communication is critical to ensure effective program participation, relevant engagement from youth and their providers of other services, overall support, and success in educational and career progress.

**Eligibility:** Through strategic partnerships, a pipeline of youth flow through program contractors based upon ISY or OSY status. For youth who first engage while visiting the PA CareerLink® facility, they can immediately begin their service experience through digital intake and basic services. At pre-screening and determining eligibility, youth program representatives spend time to meet youth, listen, and find immediate value-add next steps to grow the relationship and trust. Youth are also encouraged to "bring

a friend” which supports peer comfort, peer learning, and increases volume of youth impacted through youth services. By speaking directly with referred youth at their first interaction with the workforce system, staff are able to understand their goals, challenges, and interests, ensuring programming aligns with their needs and expedite the eligibility process. A weekly group intake schedule also fosters a sense of community among OSY participants through cohort style enrollment. Engaging in the program with a peer cohort encourages team building and peer connection to promote mutual support and program engagement.

WBLV programs consider youth with barriers to employment as individuals who have dropped out of secondary school, are offenders, homeless, aging out of foster care, pregnant or parenting, have a high school diploma or equivalency and are basic skills deficient, or are an English Language learner. In addition, there are youth who need additional assistance to enter or complete an education program or to secure or hold employment. WBLV defines this barrier as youth without a significant work history, limited employment stability and youth with parents who are offenders.

Once eligibility is determined and documentation has been collected, youth are assessed to determine academic and skills level and to determine the service needs of each participant. Youth determined as qualified and likely to be able to successfully complete program activities are enrolled in provider programs and begin to receive services. Youth not enrolled in programs are referred to other PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley integrated programs. The category of “additional assistance” in eligibility review has not been implemented in Lehigh Valley, given the amount of youth who qualify through other eligibility barriers. Co-enrollment is also a consideration during eligibility. PA CareerLink® staff are trained across funding stream eligibility and can consider methods for dual enrollment to maximize services. As staff learn about a youth’s family and social support structure, opportunities are uncovered for adults in that youth’s life to also engage in programming for their educational and career goals.

**Work Experience Strategies:** Because WBLV’s larger ecosystem emphasizes inclusion of employer engagement as a driving lens for program operations, youth opportunities and services have a common theme of preparation for career launch in the region’s high demand occupations. Youth programming serves as a driving force to create the next generation of talent in alignment with industry growth and advancement. Providing program choices in training or apprenticeship helps guide youth into post-secondary upskilling and employment. WBLV has various youth models that emphasize work exposure and experience, such as their healthcare acceleration program, summer internships, year-round work based learning, and re-engagement strategy to encourage high school dropouts to obtain a high school diploma while participating in work-based learning that provides youth with direct employer connections to unsubsidized employment.

WBLV’s work experiences have both academic and occupational education components and can include summer employment and continuing employment opportunities throughout the school year. WBLV has updated the Work-Based Training Policy to increase paid work experience wages to a minimum of \$15.00 per hour and expanded allowable experiences to include ISY cooperative education (Co-op) based work opportunities before the school bell, with school personnel approval. Strategies such as these engage and increase full participation with as many eligible youth as possible.

Tailored career counseling is critical as well, ensuring that youth are engaging in work-based learning that resonates with their aptitude and interest. Youth staff assess participant’s interests, hobbies, skills, and openness to new experiences to provide career counseling that connects their passions to broader career pathways. Staff also encourage participants to explore how their career goals can align with non-

traditional opportunities to be creative in expanding opportunities. Work-based developers identify and negotiate new worksite positions at established worksite partners that align with participant needs and interests, and also utilize staff and organizational personal networks to expand worksite partnerships and develop a diverse range of employers. Collaboration with the larger business engagement strategy in the region helps expand the audience of employers who want to be part of growing the region's next generation of talent through worksite participation. Non-traditional approaches help match participant skills and interests to positions creatively, helping them gain experience in ways they may not have previously considered. Staff provide counseling to highlight how various roles can support long-term career development and transferable skills. Understanding that the career pathways is not always linear and within one employer or industry can help youth find creative access points to get the knowledge and skills they need.

In-person, virtual and hybrid experiences are developed and allow flexibility to both the youth and the employer base to customize work experience options to individual participant and employer circumstances. Pre-apprenticeship programs, internships, job shadowing, and On-The-Job training are fully explained to all program candidates in an effort to provide every participant with a tailored opportunity with an individualized timeline and learning experience that serves as a primer for either training or unsubsidized employment. Youth are presented with the larger vision that programming will support their growth and success in a professional career.

Employers, as with all workforce programming, are essential elements to success. Work Experience opportunities are promoted via business presentations, partner meetings, and community events. Strategic recruitment is conducted with both for-profit and non-profit employers in need of workers and eager to provide coaching and guidance to youth. One primary strategy is to showcase to employers the benefits of the program through mentoring youth to develop their own talent pipelines. Education on apprenticeship as a solution to talent is often well received by employers, particularly those who face an aging out workforce and recognize the value of training their next wave of talent.

**Career Pathways:** WBLV continues to be a leader in developing career pathways by working with employers and educators to define pathways with multiple entrance and exit points; assessing interests, skills and abilities; and developing career pathways plans outlining the need for additional training, and education. Pathways are presented to youth via social media and digital kiosks at high schools and local community partner sites. Pathways are also a valuable visual tool, helping youth see the benefits to be gained from the efforts made today in their career progress. The dedicated youth staff for outreach and engagement also offer basic services and practical workshops, always tying these services into careers.

Skill based workshops such as resume development, mock interviews, career readiness, and soft skills training prepare youth for employment opportunities within career pathways of high growth and need in the region. Youth representatives across local high schools have shadowed with local employers and hosted podcasts that explain local employer's career pathways, bringing a representational voice to the career pathway content available. Career pathways are also utilized while youth engage in work-based learning, offering them insight into the future opportunities within that industry where they gain experience. WBLV works closely with the Educational Opportunity Centers of PA (EOC) for Off-Site Career Learning Experiences. EOC brings exposure to local employers through organizing career exploration trips. These trips connect youth with Lehigh Valley employers in top, high-priority occupations and provide insight into real-world job opportunities and career pathways. Hands-on learning is provided through facilitated tours, interactive demonstrations, and Q&A sessions with employers to make career exploration engaging and informative. Real world experiences such as these

help youth make informed decisions to identify career fields of interest and understand the skills and training required for those careers.

In-School Youth program design offers unique elements to meet this particular youth population. Registration for WIOA or TANF funded ISY programs is flexible, with scheduling available at schools during school hours and after-hours sessions to accommodate both students and parents for increased accessibility. All ISY participants are able to become PA CareerLink® student representatives, which builds leadership skills and encourages active community involvement. Youth can also practice advocacy skills by empowering other youth within their schools to learn more about ISY programs. Meet and Greets are also coordinated, where Youth staff organize networking opportunities for participants to meet one another, fostering relationships and collaboration. Parents are invited to these meet-and-greet sessions to encourage engagement, support, and program buy-in from day one. Parents are also able to receive information about TANF and Adult programs for their own career goals. Additionally, close collaboration with School Counselors at the beginning of the school year/at time of enrollment has been an effective approach to establish clear communication channels for referrals, updates on student progress, and ongoing support for participants.

### **Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR)**

Further alignment with OVR and youth with disabilities enables opportunities, activities and programming designed to coordinate funding which allows additional participants to receive services. As a core partner, OVR has the ability to collaborate with the WBLV to provide referrals for ISY with disabilities the opportunities to participate in pre-employment transition services to gain skills and knowledge to enter the workforce. In partnership with the WBLV and Title I providers, OVR may provide both OVR eligible and potentially eligible ISY with disabilities services to enter competitive, integrated employment.

These opportunities allow ISY with disabilities to assess their own strengths and skills, while exploring vocational possibilities and removing barriers from employment. Work-based learning is an important experience for ISY with disabilities to engage in so that they may be afforded opportunities to discover career paths. Other services that may be provided to ISY with disabilities include:

- **Counseling** and guidance from professional vocational rehabilitation staff to explore career and training options as well as understand OVR services.
- **Independent Living Skills** training for students to gain knowledge to perform the daily tasks essential for maintaining or obtaining independence. Independent Living Skills can include the following: household budgeting and financial management, utilizing public transportation, and navigating through the social services system.
- **Self-Advocacy Training** to assist students with disabilities to gain knowledge on disability awareness, advocating during an IEP process, understanding transition processes, and advocating for themselves in postsecondary education, employment, and coordinating social services.
- **Workplace Readiness Training** provides students with knowledge needed to find and maintain competitive integrated employment. Curricula can include soft skills training, interview skills, job readiness, job-seeking skills, HR practices, and other skills needed to become workplace ready.
- **Job Shadowing** provides students with disabilities a job shadowing experience in an occupation of interest within a community integrated setting. Students are provided an opportunity to shadow employees and understand the knowledge, tasks, and abilities needed to work in this field.

### **Job Corps**

Although there is not a Job Corps residential facility located within the WBLV area, Job Corps

representatives are provided space within PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley bi-weekly to promote Job Corps programs. Virtual information sessions and tours are also offered.

### **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Youth Services**

The WBLV competitively procures service providers for TANF YDP In-School Youth (ISY) programming. TANF YDP ISY programming targets in-school youth aged 16-18 who are risk of needing welfare services. Eligible participants for the TANF YDP ISY programs must be either a youth receiving TANF; a youth receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI)-related cash assistance; a youth who has a household monthly gross income that is below 235% of the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines; or is a youth living in a High Priority Area with at least one barrier to employment. Activities include programming focusing on leadership development, financial literacy, post-secondary preparation and transition activities, tutoring and study skills training, paid work experience, mentoring, supportive services, and follow-up. Due to the region's volume of healthcare career opportunities, St. Luke's was procured to deliver a healthcare career exploration after school program. Closely coordinated efforts with Allentown School District have created unique summer work opportunities for rising juniors and seniors.

Using the integrated orientation approach and through cross-trained staff, parents and youth are both provided with details on programming, eligibility, and benefits of enrollment. Workshops are also geared to family members, creating welcome space for youth engagement to also create service opportunities for parents in TANF households.

### **Incentives**

WBLV policy dictates that incentives may be provided to youth and can be up to \$250 a year. Incentives must be defined in Individual Service Strategy, linked to an achievement and must be tied to training and education, work readiness and/or occupational skills attainment. Prior to issuing incentive payments, the program provider's incentive plan must be approved by the WBLV.

### **TANF Contact**

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(Compliance/Quality Assurance)

### **3.5. Coordination between Title I and Title II – How will the local board coordinate WIOA Title I workforce investment activities with adult education literacy activities under WIOA Title II?**

Title I and Title II programs serve individuals that can often benefit from both program's services and resources. As part of an integrated system, WBLV recognizes how coordination of these programs benefits the participants served as well as both program's performance outcomes. Title II partners are sourced to provide family literacy and ESL services to support disadvantaged populations of job seekers by offering customer-centric, holistic services that can stabilize households and ensure job placement and retention. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been negotiated to ensure the alignment of service delivery among Title I and Title II providers and to coordinate educational and community resources for participants engaged in Career Services to maximize the number of co-enrolled participants receiving shared services.

Title II providers such as Lehigh Carbon Community College and Northampton Community College were included in the development of our Local Plan through planning meetings, event planning, presenting college information and eligibility and through continuous communication that opens the educational

doors to our customers, and provides the opportunity for people to take classes as specifically needed for employment or work up to an Associate Degree. The pathway to a gold collar job in the Lehigh Valley is through Career and Technical education, coupled with advanced Community College courses. We are in a Skills Economy and need to obtain new, refresh existing, and grow toward technology advances as we begin and continue to grow our careers and enter the labor market.

The Division Chief for the PDE Bureau of Postsecondary and Adult Education provides the Grant Applications and Review Rubric, with particular attention paid to sections called “Alignment with Workforce.” Upon receipt and after review of the provider applications, the WBLV indicates the level of alignment with our Local Plan using the Rubric Methodology of Close, Partial, and No/Minimal, along with comments regarding strengths and weaknesses to provide recommendations in improving Local Plan alignment. Rubrics completed by the WBLV review team are submitted to the PDE Division Chief, along with conflict of interest statement forms.

The WBLV ensures that our recommendations for adult education literacy activities align with our Local Plan, especially with the WBLV Vision and Goals. This alignment also minimizes duplication of services, while ensuring compliance and performance. Data from the PA Center for Workforce Information and Analysis, as well as localized data from the Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation and Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, informs the Board’s recommendations. As required by law, WBLV is not directly involved in WIOA Title II solicitation and procurement of providers.

Title I participants, upon referral to Title II, will receive service priority with the Lehigh Valley Title II providers, to include Lehigh Carbon Community College, Northampton Community College, and ProJeCt of Easton. Across these providers, there exists a ranging level of services to meet participant needs based on their existing education, literacy levels, and ability to attend classes. Local adult education literacy providers facilitate in-person, remote, and hybrid modes of instruction to students regardless of residency. When there is virtual engagement, it allows for scheduling flexibility and mitigates transportation issues. After staff evaluation and/or a basic skills assessment is conducted, a formal referral is made through Title I and DHS staff directly to an appropriate adult education literacy provider.

The coordination of not just referrals, but schedule of programming is also important so participants are not making choices of which services to engage but rather determine services to attend based on their individualized employment plan, current literacy level, barriers to employment, and employment goals. Title II participants who meet program eligibility requirements may receive a direct referral to PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley for a prioritized assessment of training and career service needs, leading to core program enrollment. The WBLV and Title II providers will collaborate to determine eligibility requirements for the purpose of co-enrolling Title II job ready participants into Title I intensive placement and follow up career services. A system of cross referral is in place for Title II participants and PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley’s youth, adult, and dislocated worker participants for literacy, training, and employment services including concurrent programming, if applicable.

The following strategies are used to support collective programming across Title I and Title II providers:

1. Referral protocols are established between both Title I and Title II programs, reducing need for duplicate CASAS or other assessment testing while expediting orientations and enrollment.
2. Career pathways in High Priority Occupations in Targeted Industry Clusters are jointly established for Title II participants and employers.

3. A Definitions Map Directory is maintained and updated for staff reference to ensure consistency of services across WIOA programs. Staff are also trained on Title II programs, ranging from ongoing literacy to ESL to GED/HiSET preparation, to support appropriate referrals.
4. Title II providers collaboratively provide a bi-monthly virtual workshop at PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley on Adult Basic Literacy Education options.
5. Title II providers provide technical assistance and staff development in effectively serving participants with basic skill deficiencies. When the PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley identifies cohorts of individuals needing intensive remediation and/or completion of High School equivalency coursework, Title II providers are sourced to facilitate dedicated group instruction.
6. Title II providers assist with basic skills assessment and prescribed individualized education plans.
7. Direct linkage to program staff through technology to regularly coordinate referrals, enrollments, and progress toward educational benchmarks.
8. With participant consent, Title I and Title II providers share assessment results of all co-enrolled participants and agree to share all relevant data related to core outcomes.
9. PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley provides Title II staff and their customer base with community job and labor market information, career awareness, and access to PA CareerLink®, job fairs, and other employer recruitments.
10. PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley provides Title II staff with outreach services, information sessions, staff development and PA CareerLink® staff training.

**3.6. Wagner-Peyser Act – Describe the plans, assurances, and strategies for maximizing coordination, improving service delivery, and avoiding duplication of Wagner-Peyser Act 929 U.S.C. 49 et seq.) services and other services provided through the one-stop service delivery system.**

By integrating Wagner-Peyser and WIOA Title I services, the WBLV workforce system provides optimum results for both job seekers and employers, both expanding access to services while avoiding duplication of services.

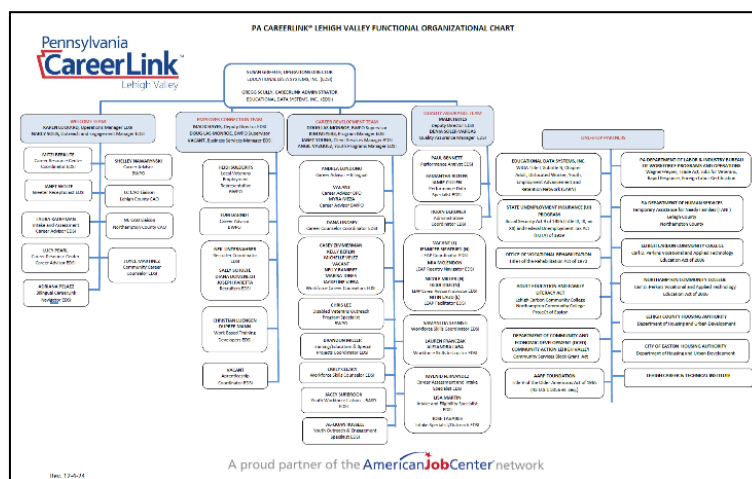
Wagner-Peyser acts as the front door to services available in PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley. Since WIOA Title I shares all the same employer performance measures with Wagner-Peyser other than the education measures, WIOA Title I and Wagner-Peyser rely on one another to mutually achieve employer measures. PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley has adopted a functional team approach, comprised of mandated system partners. Members are assigned to specific teams based on similar job duties and functions, and shared work areas are in place to support easy customer access and live-time communication among team members. WIOA and BWPO Leadership check-ins are conducted weekly by the Operations Director, and monthly all staff meetings facilitated by the Site Administrator maximize coordination by bringing all partners together virtually or in person as appropriate, to monitor processes, address concerns, offer staff education and professional development, and strategically plan service enhancements. These routine communication structures invite perspective across the one-stop system for ongoing continuous improvement.

Job seekers begin their experience on-site with digital intake, followed by customer service and services provided by the Welcome Center and/or Career Resource Center, operated by staff from both Wagner-Peyser and Title I. At this point in service flow, staff ensure participants have completed PA CareerLink® registration, a PA CareerLink® resume is created, and job preferences are completed. In the Welcome

Center orientation, participants learn about basic and intensive services and complete enrollment on PA CareerLink®. Directly after a video orientation, the customer meets with a member of the staff to review their digital intake, discuss career goals, training plans, barrier mitigation and program eligibility.

If the customer chooses to pursue a self-directed job search utilizing the basic services rather than registering for intensive services, the staff member guides them through the process of registering for events and enrolling in virtual workshops. Returning customers are required to update the digital intake information with each visit to the PA CareerLink® sites. This information is available to all pertinent staff for review prior to meeting with a client for the first time and all subsequent visits. At the conclusion of the welcome orientation and meeting individually with staff, participants will have a plan for basic, individualized, and/or support services. Determination of program eligibility and referral to community partners is also completed during this meeting. Employer recruitment events are coordinated by the Business Services Team and functional staff are informed of future hiring events in order to make appropriate referrals from the universal career services pool of job seekers.

Services offered through the Welcome Center, Career Resource Center, workshops, career exploration processes, and assessments are provided in collaboration with Wagner-Peyser staff. Rather than separate teams offering services where duplication could occur without a quality assurance mechanism in place, coordinating services with one integrated team ensures services are not duplicated. These services are available both in-person and virtually. Case managers utilize the Individual Employment Plan (IEP) embedded in PA CareerLink®, which provides consistency across the system. All required partners are involved in the offering of basic career services and administer assessments to job seekers as applicable, and collaborate to develop Individual Employment Plans. The familiarity and usage of the IEP across the integrated system also serves to reduce or eliminate duplication of data across workforce partners.



Involving all required partners through an integrated team helps reduce communication errors and improves accessibility to the range of services available in the one-stop system.

The role of the One-Stop Operator in the Lehigh Valley’s workforce development system encompasses the following duties, in coordination with PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley’s Site Administrator: serve as an intermediary to the public One-Stop Partners; coordinate all the WBLV One-Stop locations; work with One-Stop Partners to understand their program services and performance requirements of the one-stop partners and ensure continuous improvement of the One-Stop system; understand the

Commonwealth's one-stop certification criteria to assure the WBLV's compliance to areas identified below under deliverables; and work with the WBLV and their contracted communications consultant on technology and website issues.

Additional one-stop operator duties include: facilitate the development of the required one-stop MOU as described in WIOA section 121; address the one-stop's effectiveness, and customer satisfaction, to assure the WBLV meets and exceeds performance levels such as integration and coordination of services for participants and businesses, and by identifying new ways to coordinate between the one-stop, education and employers that involve all the One-Stop Partners; participate in the WBLV's Workforce Solutions, Accountability and Compliance Committee; and, prepare reports on a monthly basis to include actions taken with respect to each of the deliverables highlighting accomplishments, improvements, challenges and recommendations. One example of a One-Stop Operator function that maximizes coordination includes maintaining a list of organizations and points of contact available for program and partner staff to make referrals via email or phone. Key roles such as the Disabled Veteran Outreach Program Specialist (DVOP), Site Administrator, and programmatic outreach staff confirm referral agency availability and report any changes in available services or points of contact to the One-Stop Operator.

The One-Stop Operator does not manage or assist in future competitive processes for selecting operators, or select or terminate one-stop operators, career services providers, or Youth providers. The operator cannot negotiate local performance accountability measures or develop and submit budgets for activities of the WBLV. The WBLV is responsible for the negotiated performance measures, strategic planning, budgets, and One-Stop Operator oversight (including monitoring).

The One-Stop Operator role provides the workforce system with leadership capacity to coordinate and implement cross training for staff within programs and co-located partners, and identify both needs and gaps in professional development across all staff. With a diverse set of organizations participating in the One-Stop System, the Operator has a depth of knowledge and facilitation experts that can be leveraged to host cross trainings. Subject matter experts and educators with adult education partners, Title I program staff, and MOU partners can contribute to professional development that supports all staff and results in improved and further integrated service experiences for participants and employers. Examples of these trainings include Equal Opportunity, Entrepreneurship, OVR services, Protecting Personally Identifiable Information (PII), and Active Shooter Training.

The Site Administrator serves as the Functional Leader of the PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley Facility and is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the site with a focus on customer-centered service and alignment with the WIOA local plan. The Site Administrator manages daily activities, daily foot traffic, and resources available within the PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley with a priority of integration and functional alignment with One-Stop staff. The Site Administrator supports supervision of co-located partner agencies to ensure high quality integrated service delivery is experienced by participants and employers, targeted populations can easily access and receive services, and programs are supported in their attainment of performance goals. The Site Administrator also ensures compliance with laws, guidelines, rules, regulations, policies, and procedures pertaining to WIOA and PA CareerLink® services through proper training and technical assistance. Formal leadership, supervision and performance responsibilities remain with the employee's employer of record. The Site Administrator and One-Stop Operator collaborate closely on topics such as community outreach and systems structure. Improvements, complaints, and incident reports are managed and resolved by the Site Administrator.

**3.7. Core program facilitation – How will the local board work with the entities carrying our core programs to:**

- **Expand access to employment, training, education, supportive services, and co-enrollment for eligible individuals, particularly individuals with barriers to employment.**
- **Facilitate the development of Career Pathways in core programs (specify on-ramps from adult education).**
- **Improve access to activities leading to a recognized postsecondary credentials (industry-recognized certifications or portable and stackable certification).**

The WBLV leads an integrated one-stop system by sustaining a service delivery infrastructure that is inclusive of all core programs and mandated partners. Eligibility serves as a mechanism to ensure resources are appropriately designated to high priority populations and those with barriers to employment. Eligibility should not inherently be a barrier to access workforce development services. Because of the integrated model, awareness, access, referral on-ramps, and co-enrollment across programs is built into the day-to-day workflows across core and partner programs.

The WBLV works to expand access to employment, training, education and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly individuals with barriers to employment by:

- Serving as a convener of workforce partners and a leader in innovative thinking to work toward achieving the alignment and integration envisioned under WIOA
- Allocating resources for in-person and remote eligibility validation
- Investing resources allocated and awarded to the WBLV to achieve alignment and to assist our Title I provider and core partners to attain the performance measures negotiated for the local area
- Expanding technology resources for underserved populations in the community
- Co-locating services to meet individuals where they are, such as correctional facilities, higher education campuses, and community-based agency sites and infiltrating all 17 school districts with KIOSKS that offer training, work experience, higher education and employment career pathways.

The WBLV provides the program oversight needed to:

- Support the One-Stop Operator in initiatives established in One-Stop Partners' MOUs
- Assure high priority populations are served with innovative methods of reducing eligibility burden
- Assure the WIOA priority of services for adults
- Assure performance measures are met
- Reduce the TANF/SNAP rolls through participation in work activities and training options leading to self-sufficiency
- Ensure eligible training providers and their training coursework are effective and meet the demands of employers while providing needed credentials to job seekers and employed workers
- Develop and implement processes to virtually deliver services
- Identify and support technology needs to facilitate participant engagement in workforce activities
- Serve as ambassadors and intermediaries to employers to promote the one-stop workforce system
- Speak at meetings of other boards on which WBLV members serve about the benefits of the one-stop system to our local community Advisory Committees of strategic workforce partners Adopting targeted sector strategies to engage employers
- Serve on the Board's committees

Core partners are co-located at PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley centers and PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley staff also have an in-person and virtual presence at partner site locations to serve individuals and groups of customers. Wagner-Peyser, Title I, Title II, and Title IV core partners engage in combined initiatives, staff cross training, integrated customer information sessions, monthly PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley and functional team meetings, and joint community outreach to expand awareness of program services. Initial engagement with individuals focuses on finding the best fit by interest, goals, needs and eligibility match. Staff are trained on eligibility across core programs in the integrated system. Core partner staff facilitate cross referrals and dual enrollments to expedite customer access to the most appropriate services to support program participant outcomes and enhance performance across all programs, including increasing awareness of WIOA Title II program and services for customers and ensuring staff are well-versed in Title II-specific eligibility requirements. Specialized staff within each program focus on eligibility requirements, with an emphasis on all possible data validation documents prior to accepting self-certification.

The WBLV validates the eligibility of individuals through inspection and retention of required documents outlined in TEGL 19-16 including, but not limited to, original birth certificates, social security cards, selective service verification, public assistance and unemployment compensation records. In cases where the lack of hard copy verification would preclude delivery of services, telephone and/or self-certification is used as prescribed by program statutes. WBLV developed a process to sign electronic documents and provide virtual registration appointments and eligibility determinations when in-person visits are not feasible. Barriers to employment are determined and validated through assessments, inspection of customer documents and through one-stop partner collaboration.

Eligibility to receive services under WIOA Title IV may only be determined by a qualified OVR Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor. Vocational rehabilitation counselors determine eligibility for and work with customers to develop an Individual Plan for Employment, providing services necessary to meet their specific vocational goal. As a core partner, OVR provides Vocational Rehabilitation services for people with disabilities. Eligible OVR customers receive multiple services that may include but not be limited to, diagnostic, vocational counseling and guidance, vocational evaluation, restoration, training, job placement and pre-employment training services for eligible and potentially eligible high school students with disabilities. These individualized services are designed to prepare OVR customers to become qualified trained members of the workforce. OVR recognizes the value of customer access to various services and resources and encourages co-enrollment across programs as appropriate.

The WBLV continually works to facilitate the development and implementation of Career Pathways in core programs by providing a Lehigh Valley Career Pathway platform on the PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley website. This Career Pathway site hosts hundreds of local employer career pathways, offering job seekers a visual guide on the education and experience required to advance in their career goals. The site also hosts a starting template for employers to submit, leading to technical assistance from business services staff in designing their own career pathway. WBLV also analyzes labor market data, current ETPL providers, and hiring trends in core programs to identify and strengthen their strategy to promote Career Pathways. Co-enrollment across programs, including adult education and apprenticeship opportunities, enables customers to receive services that align with the experience and education they need to advance in their selected Career Pathway. Examples of specific ways WBLV nurtures strategies that support career pathways include:

- Monitoring compliance with MOU agreements for integration and cross referral
- Bringing successes and challenges in these areas to Board committees and the full board to find community-wide solutions and replicate strategy designs that work

- Seeking grant funds and leveraging partner funds to allocate the responsibility for developing career pathways and shared intake and enrollment processes so that no partner is required to undertake the full cost of development
- Engage with employers through the Greater Lehigh Chamber of Commerce and Industry Roundtables to help them establish unique career pathways within their own firms.
- Promote Career Pathways through digital signage across educational and community-based sites
- Co-locate services at community colleges to streamline the on-ramp of adult learners to Adult and DW core program services
- Entering into agreements with Adult Literacy providers to work together to move youth in secondary school credential training to completion of the credential and postsecondary training
- Entering into agreements with Adult Literacy providers to identify adults who will soon earn secondary school credentials for enrollment into WIOA training or employment assistance
- Reviewing Adult Literacy Provider applications and reporting to the PA Department of Education on suggested improvements to achieve desired outcomes
- Establish an Apprenticeship Coordinator to support the range of stakeholders required to design, implement, and grow successful apprentices in an increasing diverse range of industries. The Apprenticeship Coordinator works alongside Work-Based Training Developers, Recruiters, and the Training Coordinator to identify specific occupations and employers that could be a strong fit for apprenticeship. Tools such as ATO's Employer Needs Assessment as well as employers who historically utilized work-based-learning services help identify areas of opportunity. For employers who have elements of an apprenticeship and commitment to the talent solution an apprenticeship program provides, the Apprenticeship Coordinator can offer valuable perspective, helping the employer to build from their existing use of funded work-based training services such as Paid Work Experience and On-The-Job Training to create a structured apprenticeship program. The Apprenticeship Coordinator can tap into the expertise of Registered Apprenticeship Navigators within WBLV's vendor, EDSI, to build local support with helping employers gather all required elements, including pay structures, training curriculum, and required related technical instruction (RTI), to apply for registration of their apprenticeship program.

WBLV recognizes that growing a skilled labor pool requires industry specific and stackable credentials. Title I, Title II, the WBLV and Lehigh Valley employers collaborate regularly to develop classroom, distance, online, virtual, and hybrid education and training opportunities aligned with local high priority occupations that include multiple career pathway entry and exit points. The curriculum promotes portable and stackable certificates and post-secondary credentials, including industry-recognized certificates, certifications, and access to industry-recognized postsecondary credentials from Registered Apprenticeships. WBLV works across the Lehigh Valley's system of educational providers, including and not limited to community colleges and vocational technical schools, to establish partnerships where WIOA training and work-based training funds can be used to support apprenticeships. Industry Partnership grants infuse additional funding that can be leveraged for apprenticeship programs. Cohorts of students enrolled in programs are supported by a dedicated Training and Education Advisor who connects both individually and with the group to ensure barriers are mitigated and everyone remains on track. This dedicated role ensures that access to training programs, including those with work-based learning and credential components, is readily available for participants across programs within the One-Stop system. Both the Apprenticeship Coordinator and Training and Education Advisor have the ability to identify promising employers and training partners that can be connected to help grow work-based training activities that not only result in credentials but can be formalized into a registered apprenticeship program. Close engagement with employers to identify work-based learning,

On-The-Job Training, pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship opportunities is critical in building the skilled labor solutions that align with economic growth and employer demand.

**3.8. ITA Accounts – How will training services be provided using ITAs, fund programs of study, or through the use of contracts for training services that fund work-based trainings.**

WBLV cultivates a skilled workforce that fuels Lehigh Valley economic growth through strategic investment in training services across classroom, practical, and work-based learning methods. Industry specific trainings, degrees, certifications, credentials, and work-based learning opportunities are available through Individual Training Accounts (ITAs), including pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships.

Identifying and growing sources of relevant skilled trainings that align with high priority occupations, are industry recognized, and employer inclusive in their curriculum, facilitation, and post-training supports is critical for building the training network that Lehigh Valley needs to meet customers at their current skillsets and employers at their current skill needs. All ITAs for training opportunities are in High Priority Occupations which can be found on the statewide Eligible Training Providers List (ETPL) and also identified as occupations within Lehigh Valley industry sectors targeted for growth: Healthcare and Social Assistance; Manufacturing; Finance and Insurance; Professional, Scientific and Technical Services; and, Transportation and Warehousing. WBLV maintains relationships with open communication with all ITA providers both through the Director of Compliance and through the PA CareerLink® Education and Training Coordinator role. New providers applying to join the ETPL receive technical support with their applications and are walked through eligibility and expectations.

The WBLV provides occupational skills training through the Eligible Training Providers List and leverages relationships across the dense concentration of colleges, universities and local training providers to drive the growth of skilled workers for employment in high demand occupations. When a particular industry partnerships has specific training needs for current and projected vacancies or when one employer is hiring and training for multiple workers with similar job functions are confirmed, WBLV can contract for customized class-sized training for youth, adults, or dislocated workers. A request for information and/or employer-vetted provider are options to meet these unique demands. This coordinated effort for customized solutions decreases bureaucracy and expedites the referral process to training while providing a customer-centered recruitment approach. Leveraging assets within the existing One-Stop ecosystem can maximize coordination and efficiency in meeting employer skill needs.

The Workforce Board Lehigh Valley annually researches local training costs and builds policy by setting a tuition cap that covers the costs of the majority of ETPL training programs aligned with local targeted industry clusters. The maximum amount of an ITA is \$10,000 and determined by current WBLV policy. Funding for training-related support services is outlined in the Supportive Services/Incentives/Needs-Related Payments/Stipend Policy. For individuals seeking training services, all sources of financial aid are explored to coordinate funding and maximize the funding available to participate in the training program. In accordance with WIOA, when participants are PELL eligible and the course of training is certified for PELL grant awards, ITA packages will first apply PELL toward the published tuition. In conjunction with the Workforce Board Lehigh Valley, the Title I contractor sub-recipient is responsible for the primary approval of ITAs. Invoicing and participant reimbursements are initially processed and paid by the Title I contractor and then submitted monthly to the Workforce Board Lehigh Valley for payment. This structure enables customer exploration, choice, and enrollment to be fully supported by the integrated team, while any attendance roadblocks are identified through a case management and fiscal management collective.

ITAs are developed specifically for customers that are on a path to obtaining new skills to get employed, or learn advanced skills to ensure they are being trained and upskilled to move along their career pathway. Successful training with resulting employment begins with an individual's right fit within a training program. Prior to awarding training services, participants are assessed to determine their interest, aptitude, qualifications and skills to be successful in training. A dedicated Training and Education Coordinator supports these assessments, career exploration activities, and research on eligible training providers. If the assessment determines the individual is likely to secure and retain employment that leads to economic self-sufficiency or wages comparable to or at higher wages, engagement in direct placement services is recommended prior to training consideration. If needed in order to qualify for training, participants are offered remediation through Essential Education, CASAS, and/or connection to educational services with Title II providers. Reasonable accommodation for individuals with disabilities are implemented according to each assessment's guidelines and procedures.

Case managers determine participant support needs, whether they can financially support themselves through the completion of training, if their career choice is in a career pathway that will lead to self-sufficiency and whether they intend to work following completion of training.

The WBLV understands the importance of informed customer choice in the career counseling and advisement of the participant's selection of training courses. Training providers are invested in their student success as well and want to ensure enrolled students are set up for success. Both on-site and virtual visits to training provider sites are encouraged and facilitated by staff. Career exploration and training research are required to ensure the training choice is aligned with each participant's career goal, career pathway, and suitability for training. Exploration and aptitude assessments also create space to discuss in-demand opportunities that are not commonly known occupations.

Beyond ITAs for more traditional skills trainings, skill upgrading is accomplished through the use of on-the-job training contracts, incumbent worker training, paid work experiences and registered apprenticeship opportunities. Work-based training contracts are aligned with high priority occupations or targeted growth industries within the Lehigh Valley area. The WBLV promotes the registered apprenticeship model as a means of creating a trained employee pipeline and continues to assist employers with information on the state registration process, communication with ATO, and RAPIDS system usage. Dedicated business service staff offer concierge style navigation of apprenticeship program development and the process to become a registered model.

The WBLV partners with all approved training providers to ensure training programs are directly linked to employment opportunities in the local area that lead to economic self-sufficiency. Local training program outcomes are monitored, reviewed, and referenced throughout career advisement and the training selection process. The Title I provider tracks ITA enrollments, costs, credentials, and completions, providing a data-driven analysis of training investment in comparison to skilled labor needs. This data analysis also helps identify trends related to success and challenges, enabling the integrated system to respond.

### **3.9. Coordination with education programs – How will the local board coordinate relevant secondary and postsecondary education programs and activities with workforce investment activities to support strategies, enhance services, and avoid duplication of service(s).**

The recipe for growing a thriving skilled labor force to meet employer talent needs and economic growth includes adult educational providers as essential ingredients. Secondary, postsecondary education and

occupational training fuel the development of a talent pipeline for Lehigh Valley's priority and high grown skilled labor needs. WBLV recognizes the importance of including all levels of education institutions and providers in the region's workforce strategies. WBLV coordinates not only with secondary and post-secondary education programs and providers, but also considers the perspectives of education, economic development, workforce development, employers, and community-based organizations to build and implement an aligned strategy. Mechanisms for coordination across adult education, secondary education systems, pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship, community colleges, community education councils, private licensed schools, and employers include outreach strategies performed by both WBLV and their Title I service provider, MOU agreements, close monitoring of ITA and OJT obligations, education on career pathways so job seekers understand the map of education they need to reach their career goal, inclusion of employers in both strategic planning and hiring activities, and leveraging various committee and council participation to promote coordinating efforts. Dedicated capacity through youth workforce professionals, a Training and Education Coordinator, and outreach efforts at high schools, community colleges, and other adult education establishments ensure that career pathways to post-secondary education in high priority occupations in targeted industry clusters are clear and easily accessible. Inclusion of these adult education providers in the One-Stop system ensures collaboration, alignment, and reduces duplicity in services.

Title II partners are integral in preparing students for multiple opportunities to upskill and/or advance their education, and strong partnerships are maintained between the WBLV and program providers. Program presentations, designated points of contact and cross-training of available services continue to be an important piece of staff development for all partners. Reciprocal referrals avoid duplication of services by one organization providing expertise, while other partners handle transitions to career launch. Title II providers develop specific occupational coursework with guidance from and in partnership with workforce development to meet local employer needs. English Language Learners and GED graduates from Title II programs in both Lehigh and Northampton Counties are referred to Title I and DHS programs to engage in phase two of their education and career pathway plans. Customers whose assessment, such as CASAS, that are identified for remediation services can be easily connected to on-site Title II provider representatives. Throughout a student's individual education and training timeline, the Title I and Title II partner team confers regularly with the participant to ensure goals remain viable and any needed support is readily available.

The Lehigh Valley is a hub for education in the Commonwealth, housing 11 postsecondary institutions that generate an estimated 10,000 degree holders annually. Public and private training providers are also a part of the fabric of Lehigh Valley's educational and training system, often providing specific industry credentials to meet ever-changing employer needs. Lehigh Valley is home to 16 state approved training providers who offer hundreds of training programs for job seekers and incumbent workers. Participants are able to receive listings of this large range of offerings from the PA CareerLink® team, with workshops that offer navigation guidance and individualized appointments to align assessment and aptitude with the best next step in one's educational journey. Including education on public and private sector jobs and employability skill expectations that come after training completion is critical to setting up a map to success.

WBLV remains a champion for strategies that grow timely industry relevant skills in workers who establish their careers in the Lehigh Valley. WBLV partners with postsecondary institutes, stakeholders, and funders for innovative ways to expedite degree attainment, resulting in larger volume of skilled talent graduating and remaining in the region to grow their careers. Career pathways, another educational resource WBLV develops, can serve as another navigation tool for learners and help them

envision the future job. WBLV also recognizes that the youth are truly the next generation of talent that will lead the region in decades to come. Through dedicated Youth workforce professionals, WBLV works with career and technical education programs to coordinate career educational workshops, orientations to postsecondary and TANF/WIOA workforce services, employer connections, and ensuring CTE industry credentials align to the most up to date high priority occupations.

Certain populations have a deep well of occupational experience and may require upskilling or common language to showcase their talents. When working with Rapid Response events, WBLV considers what customized training is needed to re-equip workers with modern skills so they can return to their industry as an employee that adds immediate value. The integrated One-Stop System also includes Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) and Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVER) staff, who lead and educate fellow colleagues on how to create and offer a veteran friendly learning environment that respects functions and expertise from their time of service.

Access to education is a necessity in this strategy to grow a skilled labor force. WBLV partners with local education and training providers to develop programs that demonstrate measurable skill gains and are part of a clearly defined career pathways for individuals with barriers to employment. For individuals who are not physically visiting the PA CareerLink®, WBLV has provided large touch screen digital kiosks across the Valley that display career pathways and educational opportunities. These kiosks offer a visually appealing accessibility that encourages exploration, wonder, and excitement about the educational opportunities available, as well as how credentials and degrees increase economic power. Examples of locations include high schools, community centers, and correctional facilities. WBLV works to identify bridge programming and other transition models that support learners from secondary to postsecondary and from training to placement, as these models can provide a solution to job seekers whose barriers may create a roadblock in a traditional career map. Having financial support to access education is also critical. WBLV's strategic investment in ETPL programs along with offering financial aid education, such as PELL and PHEAA grants provides a range of options to support learners in the investment in their future selves.

Specific methods of collaboration with training providers that reduces duplication and increases access includes conducting training information fairs at PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley, scheduling tours where potential students can visit training sites or campuses, encouraging participants to tour training sites themselves, visiting training sites to offer live-time workforce support and monitor student progress, attendance, measurable skill gains, and collaborating with providers on placement efforts after course completion. WBLV and its system of providers prioritizes reciprocal referrals and leverages the One-Stop structure to train staff on adult education programs.

The WBLV also partners with the GLVCC to make a 6,000-member employer base available to work with secondary and postsecondary educators on curriculum development, employability and skills requirements, and to provide work-based learning opportunities for students and educators. This partnership includes collaboration between the WBLV, GLVCC, and the Title I provider to identify opportunities where the employer serves as the trainer and where Registered Apprenticeship, Pre-apprenticeship and OJT coordination may occur.

The WBLV is an active participant in the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Comprehensive Needs Assessment through membership in the Perkins Stakeholder Group Committees (PPPC), Lehigh Executive Council on Career and Technical Education and Occupational Advisory Councils for Secondary and Post-Secondary Career and Technical education providers within Lehigh Valley. The WBLV provides

connections to local employers to the education providers and councils ensuring career and technical education meets local employer current and future needs. Through the WBLV and local employers, career exploration and guidance information on employment opportunities are provided to students before enrolling and while participating in career and technical education to ensure the students have the most up-to-date information on high-skill, high-wage and in-demand industry sectors and occupations and education meets local and economic needs.

#### **4. OPERATIONAL PLANNING: Local Area Workforce Delivery System**

##### **4.1. Business and Employer Engagement – What strategies will be implemented in the local area to improve business and employer engagement that:**

- **Support a local area workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses in the local area;**
- **Manage activities or services that will be implemented to improve business engagement;**
- **Better coordinate regional workforce and economic development strategy, messaging, engagement and programs; and**
- **Strengthen linkages between the PA CareerLink® service delivery system and unemployment insurance (UI) programs.**

Employers bring perspective, action, and ultimately hire the skilled talent that comes through the local workforce development system. The WBLV facilitates the strategic engagement of employers with a founding principal of a private sector-led workforce system. Our strategy is and has always been that our primary customer is the employer and our aligning strategy is that we have a continuous improvement plan to ensure the employer remains our first customer. Without employers, there are no jobs; therefore, one of the WBLV's top priorities is to strategically engage employers to develop innovative workforce development programs and initiatives.

Our employer engagement strategy originates with our employer-led Board which is comprised of Lehigh Valley's business leaders in small, medium and large companies and in-demand industry sectors and high-priority occupations in healthcare, manufacturing, transportation and warehousing, finance and insurance, professional, scientific and technical services and other sectors who set the strategic direction of the Board and are engaged in Board committees and initiatives. WBLV values the employer perspective that the Board brings to strategic direction, performance oversight, innovations, and policy decisions.

The Lehigh Valley has over 15,000 employer establishments driving a \$50 billion economy. The WBLV's overarching strategy for employer engagement is to continuously improve our transparent and seamless one-stop workforce system for employers in high-priority occupations and targeted industry sectors. WBLV coordinates a regional workforce and economic development strategy by using workforce intermediaries and collaborating with employer-led organizations such as Partnership for Regional Economic Performance (PREP) partners, as well as the Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce (GLVCC) and Society of Human Resource Management/Lehigh Valley Chapter. The result of this coordinated strategy is comprehensive business outreach and engagement to meet the labor market demands and employment and training needs of employers through Lehigh Valley's workforce system and surrounding Pennsylvania counties.

To improve employer engagement and to identify new business leaders, the WBLV continues to strategically collaborate with the GLVCC, the sixth largest chamber in the U.S., as a workforce

intermediary to engage the Chamber's 6,000-employer membership base with a reach to 15,000 employers in the Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce database, increasing the Lehigh Valley's workforce system reach by connecting employers to workforce services. New businesses are also identified through talent-first focused research, where the WBLV's service providers take a job development approach to outreach and educate employers in the region who have specific occupations, work shifts, and hiring requirements that align with the job seekers served within the PA CareerLink® system. Examples include engaging employers who have robust internal language supports and credential-equivalency policies that increase access for immigrants to gain employment, and connecting employers to mid-level skilled talent experience layoffs through Rapid Response services.

Increasing employer saturation rates through small business and new businesses is another valued approach in the Valley. WBLV coordinates a unified business engagement strategy with PREP partners including the SBDC to connect small employers to the workforce system through business outreach, messaging and special initiatives. The LVEDC along with county, city and municipal economic development departments engage Lehigh Valley employers in WBLV workforce development initiatives and PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley employer services, whether the businesses are already located in the region or are considering relocating to the Lehigh Valley. The Manufacturers Resource Center (MRC), another PREP partner, also works to connect employers to the WBLV workforce system, partnering through the DCED Engage! Business Outreach Program. The WBLV's connection with the Society for Human Resource Management/Lehigh Valley Chapter is yet another engagement strategy, connecting their 900 members to innovative workforce programs including the Linking to Employment Activities Pre-Release (LEAP) Northampton County Prison and Lehigh County Jail programs, youth activities, and resume critiquing and interviewing skills workshops to prepare job seekers for job fairs. This strategy has multiple benefits for both human resource and recruiting professionals, job seekers, and entrepreneurs.

The Business Services team at PA CareerLink® works alongside WBLV to increase employer engagement, as identified by employers registered in the Commonwealth Workforce Development System (CWDS). New employer folders, data entered services, and approved job postings are metrics that WBLV will utilize to measure successful saturation rates of the employers across Lehigh Valley.

For industry-specific strategies, employers will continue to engage in Lehigh Valley's Industry Partnerships, comprised of targeted, in-demand industries and high priority occupations, which bring businesses together with workforce, economic development, education and the community to collectively address workforce needs, identify consortium-based incumbent worker training, share best practices, develop innovative workforce pipeline programs, gain access to workforce intelligence and labor market data, connect with the PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley workforce system, and participate in youth programming. WBLV has established Industry Partnerships with an agenda defined and driven by business leaders, versus public partners addressing answers to industry's needs by promoting their services. WBLV understands that investment and commitment that is grown within the business community is critical. This approach to industry partnership increases employer engagement by placing initiative and accountability for workforce solutions within the peer employer community. The Industry Partnership provides fertile ground for identifying training solutions, such as On-The-Job training, Pre-Apprenticeships, and Registered Apprenticeships.

This model is a three-tiered listening system where each tier informs the next, resulting in both industry and workforce implementation of employer-valued action items. Tier One-Business Driven Strategy:

Business leaders in the same industry sector convene to strategize and define priorities. The role of public partners is to listen to the business leaders' issues. Tier Two-Business Driven Solutions: Action teams, championed by business leaders, are created to address business strategies, priorities and solutions. Public partners support the identification of priorities, solutions and action items. Tier Three-Collective Action: Implementation of industry WBLV's strong relationship with our 6,000-member Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce, and our integrated service delivery with the Partnerships for Regional Economic Performance (PREP) partners, ensure that the WBLV's Industry Partnership is strengthened. As a best practice, we have integrated our Industry Partnerships with the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) Engage program to optimize employer engagement, resolution of business issues and connection to the PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley workforce system.

Action items that can be implemented through PA CareerLink® Business Services are introduced to the Business Services Team for next steps. Challenges in upskilling and generating the talent required for business success are shared with WBLV and training providers in the region to consider new program designs that generate the credentials and skills employers need.

In the Workforce Board Lehigh Valley's continuous quest for employer partnerships, through our Business and Industry Engagement Plan, we constantly review our strategies, practices, activities, and search out employer champions to lead workforce development initiatives in the Lehigh Valley. This strategy is designed to increase and elevate business and industry engagement over our current levels.

Employer voice, both through advocating for the benefits of workforce involvement, and providing success stories to motivate and inspire others, are appreciated and uplifted by WBLV. Social media recognition, award nominations, event speaking opportunities, along with the earlier mentioned engagement strategies through PREP, GLVCC, Industry Partnerships are all examples of how WBLV truly listens and leverages the expertise and leadership voices of employers in the system.

Career pathway tools have been created by WBLV in collaboration with the GLVCC. These online and QR accessible employer-specific pathways offer a visually appealing tool to help employers promote the benefits they provide to workers who wish to grow careers within one industry, while job seekers can better understand real-world examples of what a career ladder or lattice looks like at a local employer in their industry of interest. The pathways also serve as a tool for internal trainings and external recruitment. PA CareerLink® staff leverage these pathways as part of career exploration and coaching.

The WBLV has placed a strategic emphasis on creating both new and increased capacity of Lehigh Valley's Apprenticeships and Pre-apprenticeships which engage employers in developing a talent pipeline for business and industry through a structured Earn-While-You-Learn methodology.

Apprenticeships equip employers to serve as training providers while individuals grow skills while employed. It's truly win-win! Currently, the Lehigh Valley has 44 Registered Apprenticeships with the Apprenticeship and Training Office. WBLV will ensure identified local staff meet with the local ATO representative at least annually to review current Registered Apprenticeships in the local area.

Local staff at the PA CareerLink® have access and prioritize professional development and educational opportunities to expand their knowledge on apprenticeship, bringing that knowledge to both employers and job seekers. Expanding access and increasing awareness of Registered Apprenticeships and Pre-apprenticeships in the Lehigh Valley has been a proven pathway to attract and recruit new workers, while retaining and advancing incumbent workers.

The WBLV serves as the intermediary between employers, education and training providers with the Apprenticeship and Training Office to expand Registered Apprenticeships, as well as Pre-Apprenticeship programs that serve as feeder programs for our region's Apprenticeships. To increase awareness of apprenticeships within our future workforce and to build feeder systems for pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeships, the WBLV developed a high school Pre-Apprenticeship pathway, embedding the Apprenticeship model in high school classes, and providing youth with work-based learning opportunities. Focusing apprenticeships on youth has been an employer-preferred approach, as employers often see apprenticeships as an investment in talent they plan to retain for the lifetime of one's career. Youth also benefit by learning about expanded post-secondary education options outside of traditional college pathways.

Core partner collaboration within the one-stop workforce system is another mechanism to drive employer engagement, identify and deliver right-fit business services, implement services with attention to equity and access, and align industry skill needs with the individualized services job seekers receive. Core partners for employer services include OVR, LVERs, Unemployment Compensation, RESEA and Rapid Response.

As a core partner, OVR participates in Employer Engagement and provides multiple services to the business community designed to assist businesses with onboarding pre-screened qualified employees with disabilities. OVR on-boarding supports for a qualified new hire can include reasonable accommodation consultation, on-the-job training (OJT) wage reimbursement referral on tax credits or deductions. OVR also works with businesses through connecting students involved in OVR's pre-employment transition services. Services under pre-employment transition services include programs like paid work experiences, job shadowing, workplace tours. OVR also offers no-cost consultation on the Americans with Disability Act (ADA), accessibility standards and helping a business to retain current employees following an accident, injury or disability. Statewide business services staff can identify resources to assist any organization on how to improve access compliance and steps to diversify their workforce to include citizens with a disability. OVR meets the needs of businesses by providing no cost services to include ADA Awareness training, ADA Accessibility evaluations, accommodation recommendations for current employees and retention services. OVR also continues to partner with employers with On-the-Job Training (OJT), providing 100% wage reimbursement to businesses that hire OVR customers.

Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVER)'s primary mission is employer outreach for military veterans. Working in tandem with the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) Representative, the LVER connects employers with qualified Veterans, especially those who face barriers. The LVER is included within the business services team, functionally participating in the wider business services meetings, strategy, and ecosystem so their focus is built into the larger engagement strategy.

The PA CareerLink® system and Unemployment Compensation (UC) are closely linked through several operational strategies.

Unemployment Compensation (UC) representatives are currently deployed in all the PA CareerLink® comprehensive centers. Customers and/or claimants may call a designated number to schedule an appointment with an unemployment compensations agent either in person or on occasion virtually. In the event UC staff are not present, claimants can use the CRC to connect with the unemployment compensation filing system. A kiosk system is being deployed throughout the commonwealth to assist with ID.me connectivity issues some claimants have encountered. The kiosk will assist identification

verification in order for the claimant to have full access to their unemployment compensation claim dashboard on the state website.

Two on-site UC representatives meet one-on-one with individuals to address claim issues. All PA CareerLink® staff receive BWPO biweekly updates and are kept abreast of UC system changes as they occur. The information from these meetings is shared with the Site Administrator and BWPO supervisor. On arrival each participant who is new to the workforce system completes the digital intake process and the Welcome Center staff ensure their PA CareerLink® profile is complete as this can be an upfront roadblock to moving forward with receiving UC benefits. Technology support is provided right away to ensure this profile is fully complete. The participants are also provided with the work search requirements needed to maintain their UC benefits. When questioned, PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley staff will show the claimants where in the Pennsylvania Unemployment compensation handbook (UCP-1 REV 02-23) the information is located or how to access an electronic copy of the handbook on [www.benefits.uc.pa.gov](http://www.benefits.uc.pa.gov). For those UC Claimants looking to file an appeal, forms are provided and submitted via fax at no charge and with limited wait. Staff provide copies of the confirmation printout for all faxes sent on behalf of Claimant.

The RESEA program is managed through the BWPO supervisor and includes daily Personalizes Service Meetings (PSM) to accommodate required participants. During the mandatory one of one orientation follow up sessions, BWPO Career Advisors expand on the full range of services offered by the PA CareerLink®, including upcoming hiring events and an encouragement to enroll in the WIOA program for individualized services and further benefits. To further encourage WIOA participation the BWPO Career Advisors are instructed to use the WIOA information session as the default follow up session for the RESEA participants.

RESEA participants who are not compliant with the work search requirements are identified on the RESEA coversheet as instructed. The RESEA coversheet is returned to the Unemployment Compensation Service Center for further evaluation. Participants who do not attend the mutually agreed upon, mandatory follow up session, are marked as did not report on the PA CareerLink® event roster, and the RESEA follow up service, DNRAFA, is entered into PA CareerLink® indicating the participant did not attend the required follow up activity. This service entry prompts a failed action to the Unemployment Office. During the RESEA one-on-one interview, the staff member will annotate any questionable statements made by the claimant, such as the claimant stating they were on vacation. The information will be provided to the UC office for investigation as instructed in the RESEA manual. In the event a PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley staff become aware of any UC eligibility issues, information will be compiled and sent to the local Employment Security Specialist assigned to our workforce area through the BWPO supervisor or the PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley Site Administrator.

Rapid Response services also include business engagement components, both in serving the impacted business and offering opportunities for hiring employers to quickly connect to laid off workers, ideally maintaining their industry-specific expertise within the labor force. In coordination with PA Department of Labor and Industry Rapid Response Unit, PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley has a Rapid Response team that offers outreach and a full range of information, networking, and employment and training assistance to dislocated workers, and offers assistance to companies which are undergoing downsizing of their staff. This team is networked in the community and includes organizations that are funded to assist dislocated workers, along with community, government, educational, and private sector partners.

Members of the local team include representatives from: PA L&I's Rapid Response Unit, PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley staff including business services staff, Unemployment Compensation Service Center, United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley, Social Security Administration, PA Health Access Network Affordable Care Act, and Employee Benefits Security Administration. The PA CareerLink® Site Administrator is part of the initial Rapid Response fact finding meetings. The information gathered from these meetings, such as wage information and skills, gives the business services staff information for future placements of the dislocated workers. The Rapid Response Coordinator work with local businesses to host job fairs for the displaced employees that will be or have been impacted by the facility closing.

WBLV works in close cadence with PA CareerLink® Business Services Team, inclusive of Title I provider staff and BWPO staff, for the management, administration, and successful delivery of employer services. Services include posting employer's open positions on PA CareerLink®; helping employers add screening questionnaires in their job postings; providing assessment, recruiting and screening services; referring program connected job seekers through work-based training opportunities such as On-the-Job Training (OJT) and Paid Work Experience; participating in company-specific or targeted industry sector job fairs or hiring events in virtual, on-site, and in community settings, offering feedback to help improve candidate preparation and identify needed training solutions, coordinating guest speaking opportunities to promote their entity as an employer of choice, and connecting employers to a diverse community network. Specific services to support employer engagement and service delivery include the following:

1. **Social Media:** Through the use of technology and social media, employers and industry partnerships are highlighted, resulting in connections to employers that are immediate, brief and content rich. Both PA CareerLink® and WBLV media pages re-share and tag local and regional employers to increase audience, boost social media interaction, and grow social networking. Like us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter and connect to us on LinkedIn!
2. **Employer Relationship Development and Enhancement:** WBLV recognizes that employers, once initially engaged, require both relationship development and tangible outcomes to remain great champions of our system. Employers have access to staff at the WBLV level as well as direct business services staff for ease of access in getting questions answered and receiving services that are most time-urgent and valuable. Business services staff are uniquely placed in the workforce system to have direct access to vetted job seeker caseloads by industry, which expedites ability to assess talent pool, align with employer needs, and complete candidate referrals. The Business Services staff also connects one-on-one through strategic outreach, as well as follow-ups to relationship developed through the WBLV's Business and Industry Engagement Plan, to build new relationships. Communication is facilitated with local industry partners, CBOs, local business and economic development organizations, and the Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce in maintaining and connecting new employers to the One-Stop and the business service staff. Regularly throughout the year, WBLV and the business services team attend events, to include job fairs, workforce, business, and economic symposiums, town hall meetings, workforce and virtual or otherwise economic development conferences, industry partnership meetings and other networking events where the opportunity exists to meet with new employers and businesses and connect them with One-Stop services. Additionally, engaging local neighborhoods through satellite sites increases employer's awareness and connection to business services. Many employers prefer the ease of virtual connections so tele-conferencing platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and LinkedIn Chat along with email and text are all methods that staff use to keep communication with employers active and timely. Staff personally engage new business contacts and utilize employer educational materials that promote business services including the

Work Opportunity Tax Credit, federal bonding, reentry programs, customized recruitment assistance, labor market information, PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley website technical assistance, training, veterans programs, and work-based learning options. Benefits of services are highlighted in these interactions, with customized focus on the particular challenges each employer may be facing in their workforce and economic conditions.

3. **PA CareerLink® Online:** The business services team offers website training to companies to create business folders, upload job postings, create screening questionnaires, search for potential employees, review candidates, and provide ongoing technical assistance. Routine reports on open job orders and pending folders and orders ensure that approval actions are done timely, and technical support is provided to employers when needed. Review of every employer folder and job order using scam prevention protocols also ensure that legitimate employers are accessing and using these services.
4. **Work-Based Training:** Regional strategies mentioned earlier such as Industry Partnerships, education on apprenticeships, and collaboration across large employer communities like GLVCC and SHRM, create the potential for enthusiasm and capacity mapping for employers to offer work-based training. On-The-Job Training, Paid Work Experience, Apprenticeship models, Customized Job Training, and Incumbent Worker Trainings are all examples. WBLV engages employers in apprenticeship models such as the Industrial Training and Education Consortium (iTEC), Engineering, and Electromechanical registered apprenticeship programs. Business Services works with the employer on discussing their needs and how best to develop the apprenticeship, in coordination with the state's Apprenticeship and Training Office (ATO). Youth participant's career interests and ISS goals drive paid work experiences. The youth staff work closely with business services on work-based learning experience site development and matching to ensure employers who engage in this service benefit from developing incoming talent for future hiring needs who providing experience and mentorship to the young adult. The WBLV may use no more than 20% of WIOA funds allocated to pay for the cost of providing training through a training program for incumbent workers. Incumbent workers are defined by WIOA Section 134(d)(4).
5. **Recruitment:** As the "war for talent" and evolving job seeker expectations for an ideal job progress, WBLV remains committed to supporting solutions that grow a skilled labor pool for employers who are investing in their employee's career success. Recruitment innovations include:
  - **Recruitment/hiring events.** Going beyond job fairs, WBLV focuses on events that put the hiring employer and job seeker face to face for impactful interactions that jumpstart the application and interview process. Hiring events are a space where employers can benefit from quicker hiring outcomes, and job seekers do more than shake a hand and apply online. Hiring events can include space for on-the-spot interviews and supported computer labs to complete required hiring aptitude or skill assessments. These hiring events can be hosted at PA CareerLink®, at a community site, or virtually. Hiring events are often focused on a specific population, such as youth and soon-to-be high school graduates, individuals from the LEAP programs, or industry-focused such as transportation, logistics, and distribution or healthcare. Marketing of events with advance notice through in-person flyers, referrals from case managers, and virtual methods such as emails, texts, and social media posts help ensure a strong show rate to these events. The electronic flyers are distributed via email to all PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley staff and subsequently shared with job seekers. Hard copy flyers are available throughout the agency in classroom, public areas and staff workstations. Outreach materials include how to find the job postings on PA CareerLink® online which help drive virtual traffic to the website and encourage applications ahead of meeting the employers. For virtual events, job seekers register and receive a link to join the event space.
  - **Specialized recruiting approaches:** PA CareerLink® also offers unique methods of sourcing

candidates for job openings, such as pop-up Job Huts throughout the region, where staff were available to discuss hot job openings, guide candidates to apply, and pre-screen for direct referrals to employers, and where employers can sign-up candidates for on-site meetings and interviews at the PA CareerLink® facility, and holiday “job trees” where individuals can select an ornament highlighting a local employers and their career opportunities.

- **Industry specific recruiters:** Recruiters work face-to-face on-site, or virtually with job seekers receiving programmatic services. Each is assigned a high-priority industry focus which includes healthcare, manufacturing, transportation and warehousing, finance and insurance, professional, scientific and technical services. This industry enables each recruiter to have a caseload of active job searching individuals which helps create more knowledge of the unique needs each person has for their right fit job and expedites job matching.
- **Expanding candidate pool:** WBLV and the PA CareerLink® staff maintain relationships with community-based organizations through monthly meetings to exchange job postings, labor market trends and employer needs, PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley services and programs, and job fairs. Community Based Organizations (CBO) are routinely informed of events, such as information sessions to benefit their clients. Integrated trusted community partners increases the awareness of services for both job seekers and employers and can serve as an impactful vehicle to ensure services are promoted and accessibly for vulnerable populations, such as youth engaged in foster care, unhoused, those with disabilities, LGBTQIA+ communities, justice-involved, and those in addiction recovery.
- **Integrated Approach:** The business services team works with all system partners to understand challenges and match needs with opportunities. They examine local hiring and business trends, upcoming job hiring events, best practices, caseload data on industry of interest, employment barriers, and education levels, and employer events with the purpose of maintaining a comprehensive understanding of the workforce system and how employer voice and needs are included. The business services team also functionally operates with inclusion of the LVER, recruiters, work-based training developers, site administrator, OVR business services representative, and BWPO career advisors.

#### **4.2. Economic Development – How will the local board coordinate local area workforce investment activities with regional economic development activities that are specific to a local area? How will the local board promote entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services?**

As the Lehigh Valley Workforce Development Area is a single area region, the WBLV has established strong and lasting relationships with its economic development partners as described throughout the plan. Because regional and even County boundaries need to be flexible to meet employer needs, the WBLV maintains a close relationship with Lehigh Valley and Lehigh and Northampton County Economic Development partners and its sister workforce areas bordering the WBLV Workforce Region. County, workforce, even state borders are invisible to both employers and job seekers. To meet employer needs the WBLV reaches out to its neighboring workforce areas as partners in serving employer initiatives, to address employer needs which cross workforce boundaries, and to jointly plan as needed when a business is expanding or relocating and is seeking employees.

Coordination includes planning of available workforce, assessment of skill gains, and initiating a Workforce Action Plan to meet employer expectations. WBLV also understands that small companies represent the vast majority of business in the Lehigh Valley, and creating a fertile space to support entrepreneur’s goals ensures that businesses can start-up, thrive, and contribute to the local economy.

For those with persistent barriers to employment, entrepreneurship can be a fulfilling pathway to generating higher wages and specific to those who are justice-involved, owning a business can provide space for restorative justice principles such as volunteerism, community repair from harms committed, and obligation to others.

The community and financial resources the WBLV uses to promote entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services are: (1) the Community Action Lehigh Valley (CALV) who provides training for entrepreneurs and business start-ups; (2) the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at Lehigh University who provides workshops and technical assistance and training such as workshops on Start Your Business, financing, human resources, government contracting, and international trade; (3) the Manufacturers Resource Center who provides peer-to-peer networking and offers a training portfolio on leadership, supervisory, process improvement, quality, and a technical training portfolio targeted to employers; and, (4) WBLV hosts Industry Partnerships which includes training resources to assist entrepreneurs. WBLV also offers a comprehensive menu of services including on-the-job training resources, PA CareerLink® job postings, hiring assistance, recruiting, apprenticeships, roundtables, forums and provides the necessary data to start and grow a business.

The WBLV utilizes the business start-up and economic development resources in our two counties and three cities including: Lehigh County Department of Community and Economic Development, Northampton County Department of Community and Economic Development, Allentown Economic Development Corporation's Bridgeworks Center, Bethlehem Department of Community and Economic Development, and Easton Department of Community and Economic Development/Easton Economic Development Corporation.

WBLV collaborates with the SBDC to provide information, technical assistance and services for job seekers and customers considering entrepreneurial career pathways. PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley staff refer job seekers to the SBDC, which serves as our region's subject matter experts for small business start-ups. As a Partnership for Regional Economic Performance (PREP) partner, SBDC staff provides business workshops for job seekers and employers within our Employer and Educator Engagement Center at PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley. WBLV also coordinates SBDC to present to LEAP participants, with particular focus to those who had launched business prior to incarceration and those who are looking to build a business post-release. These customized presentations consider non-traditional loan and financial resources for individuals with criminal backgrounds. SBDC also trains PA CareerLink® staff on their services and overviews elements that make for a successful business start-up. This cross-training for staff ensures that they can guide appropriate next steps for participants with self-employment and entrepreneurial goals.

WBLV has a vested relationship with local school districts and entrepreneurship exploration is included in high schools through initiatives such as digital kiosks, Career Pathways, and summer youth employment. SBDC remains a partner for this community as well, serving as a speaker at high school entrepreneurial programming and as a resource for youth-specific events, such as our academic year-end hiring events. Youth work-based learning is another avenue to engage in entrepreneurship skills such as time management, critical thinking, communication up, down, and across, and identifying value-add behaviors and outcome that contribute to a project or business' goals.

The Community Action Lehigh Valley (CALV) and its Community Action Development Corporation (CADC) receives referrals from PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley for job seekers that are interested in CADC's entrepreneurial skills Start Your Business program, a 19-week training course designed to guide

individuals through the process of starting and operating a successful small business including business planning, tax preparation, outreach and the opportunity to apply for a micro-loan from the Rising Tide Community Loan Fund.

Entrepreneurial skills training is attached to many different occupational and educational career training are more and more imperative to have for not only hiring purposes, but for upward mobility within a job. We encourage entrepreneurial training as a component of all training, especially those occupations which can lead to self-employment and accommodate persons with disabilities and our second chance population.

Our major economic development partner is the Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation (LVEDC) “who markets the economic assets of the Lehigh Valley and creates partnerships that lead the recruitment, growth and retention of employers. The priorities of LVEDC are to market the assets of the Lehigh Valley economy that provides economic growth and opportunity for people of all skills and education and strengthens all our cities, boroughs and townships, Recruit companies in targeted economic sectors, promote and coordinate a skilled and prepared workforce, and expand public and private sector LVEDC investment and build partnerships for economic growth.”

As LVEDC’s workforce partner, the Workforce Board Lehigh Valley and our workforce system called PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley markets the assets of the Lehigh Valley’s workforce, and creates partnerships that lead the efforts of current and new occupational skills training, postsecondary education and higher education to ensure a workforce is available and trained for all jobs within Lehigh Valley’s economy. Companies existing, growing, and newly recruited have access to a universal workforce system lead by a private sector driven Board of Directors that ensures we have a skilled and prepared workforce based on business and industry needs and economic growth.

Our organizations are aligned throughout this plan because economic development drives the growth, WBLV drives our workforce system aligned to current and new business development, WBLV works with education to ensure youth are on educational pathways to employment, which ensure we have a skilled and prepared workforce bases on economic development growth.

The alignment of WBLV with LVEDC is imperative to our Region’s success.

WBLV measures success by industries added to our economy, number of new jobs created, educational attainment across all populations, and above all satisfying employers training and employment needs. We also meet our performance standards, aggressively research resources for innovative programming that includes our economic development partners, and work together to ensure the Lehigh Valley has a list of global employers and ensure:

#### THE LEHIGH VALLEY HAS A WORLD-CLASS WORKFORCE

#### **4.3. Business and Employer Program Support – What services, activities, and program resources will be provided to businesses and employers in the local area?**

WBLV and the PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley workforce system, specifically the functional business services team, deliver services, activities and resources to employers in the local area. Employer program supports are operationally designed and implemented based on the business engagement strategy described earlier in this local plan. Employer services ultimately grow solutions that support

business success while creating career homes where Lehigh Valley residents can thrive. WBLV and the Business Services Team works with employers, the Engage program, Industry Partnerships, Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce (GLVCC), One-Stop Partners, employer associations, other workforce organizations and educational entities, to assess and prioritize employer needs, which become the foundation for customized service delivery from the local workforce development system.

At the engagement and networking level, WBLV works hand in hand with the GLVCC who serves as the Business Intermediary and hosts monthly Chamber Connections Articles, Economic Outlook Events, Veterans Events, and Council Events. These events and services serve as a roadmap to connect businesses to the services and resources at PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley's Business Services team. This roadmap is further enhanced as large-scale investments such as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and CHIPS Act bring initiatives such as the Transportation Projects and the Lehigh Valley Semiconductor Plant to the region. Through deep business engagement relationships, WBLV is at the table to monitor these initiatives and integrate collaborative solutions that expand inclusion of local job seekers and employers.

The Business Services functional team is composed of the Recruiters and Work-Based Training Developers, Site Administrator, BWPO Wagner-Peyser staff, Local Veteran Employment Representative (LVER), Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) business representative, and local Rapid Response Coordinator. The team is managed by the Operations Director and Deputy Director and works closely with WBLV to align services with their employer engagement strategy. Monthly functional team meetings are held, and the Site Administrator and Recruiter Coordinator attend weekly Title I meetings to discuss how employer services relate and support core and grant based programming. Business services staff also attend all-staff meetings which include one-stop partners and co-located program staff in order to stay knowledgeable on updates across all partners as well as present on business services updates, events, and performance goals to date.

Services, activities and resources that the business services team collectively provide include:

1. **Navigation Support and Employer Service Reporting within CWDS:** The business services team offers CWDS training to companies to create business folders, upload job postings, create screening questionnaires, search for potential employees, review candidates, and provide ongoing technical assistance. Routine reports on open job orders and pending folders and orders ensure that approval actions are done timely, and technical support is provided to employers when needed. Review of every employer folder and job order using scam prevention protocols also ensure that legitimate employers are accessing and using these services.
2. **Assessing Need to Promote Appropriate Employer Services:** Business services staff utilize account management best practices to maintain ongoing contact with employers through phone, text, email, virtual meetings, and in-person meetings. Interactions are focused on growing trust, implementing listening skills that assess employer's values, pain points, goals, and needs. Through these interactions, staff are able to promote the unique services that are best aligned with that employer and are often how self-service translates into staff-assisted services. Utilizing tools such as the Employer Needs Assessment help Business Services Team gather insight into a business' projected growth, workforce growth or decline, labor relations, capacity to train employees, recruitment processes and pain points, and narrow down the most appropriate services. This assessment also identifies five (5) components that align with apprenticeship, enabling both employer and staff to understand through existing data whether that employer is a good fit for apprenticeship. Business services staff are also involved in roundtables and other employer gatherings, offering active

listening with implementation mindsets to help drive new creative service solutions.

3. **Existing Talent Education:** Business services staff also play a critical role in advocating for job seeker populations that are “successful employees” in the making. By promoting the marketing benefits of guest speaking, panel discussions, mentorship, and engaging in work-based solutions, the business services staff help make those connections between local business leaders and hiring managers and job seekers who have demonstrated interest and aptitude to succeed in those employer’s industries. Mentorship programs and events that encourage networking amongst a diverse audience of both job seekers and employers, particularly for youth and young adult job seekers, help establish connections that can lead to hiring success. Because the business services staff are deeply imbedded alongside core program case managers and partners, they can speak on current talent pools that are using PA CareerLink® services, highlighting upcoming cohorts of graduates with new credentials, those recently laid off with high-level skill experience, and sharing trends of occupational interest and diverse demographic groups that are ready for employment.
4. **Work-Based Learning and Training Services:** On-The-Job Training, Paid Work Experience, Apprenticeship models, Customized Job Training, and Incumbent Worker Trainings are all solutions that the business services team can provide. On-The-Job Training (OJT) continues to be a high value solution to specific occupations where there is candidate interest, recent credentials or transferable skills, and an employer with capacity and a culture that values professional growth. OJTs, particularly those that align with top credentials obtained through individual training accounts and those in mid-level occupations above \$15/hour, are strategic solutions for stacking education and work-based experience to create the skilled labor employers need to succeed. Work-Based Learning Developers specialize in identifying opportunities, developing the service, matching participants who will also take part in these services, formalizing through worksite or master agreements, executing and data entry of the services, and follow-up on service progress with both employers and participants. The Work-Based Learning Developers also work closely with fiscal staff who receive, review, and process invoice payments and timesheet verification for wage payments. When solutions call for an educational partner, business services staff collaborate with their one-stop partners or other training or postsecondary providers to help match academic, educational, and occupational training programs to the employer needs. These matches between employer and educational partner can also serve as fertile ground to discuss apprenticeship program design. The WBLV has created apprenticeship building opportunities through knowledge sharing, grant access, and technical assistance. Apprenticeships offer a unique earn and learn modality to support job seekers while they train and upskill for higher wage occupations. Business services staff strategically engage employers in Registered Apprenticeship and Pre-apprenticeship models, working in tandem with the WBLV and the Apprenticeship and Training Office (ATO) in developing registered apprenticeships. Employers with a history of utilizing OJT services are provided education and resources in how their existing internal training capacity can be expanded and strengthened through a registered apprenticeship model. The WBLV may reserve the right to use no more than 20% of WIOA funds allocated to pay for the cost of providing training through a training program for incumbent workers. Incumbent workers are defined by WIOA Section 134(d)(4).

The WBLV will ensure that Business Services Team (BST) members are provided the Registered Apprenticeship Desk Guide and the Apprenticeship Strategic Plan Guide for PA CareerLink® Staff.

5. **Rapid Response:** Business Services is an integral piece of the Rapid Response fact finding process to determine, design, and implement appropriate Business Services customized to the workforce being

dislocated. Services include industry targeted job fairs, job matching and staff assisted employment referrals to current employer job postings and opportunities, development of work-based training opportunities customized to skill sets, tailored job development and recruiter services for program eligible workers.

6. **Unemployment Compensation Seminars:** The business services team coordinates with the Office of UC Service Centers Customer Services Section to conduct seminars, either in-person or virtually, on UC topics for employers. Topics include assisting employers in reducing UC costs, employer rights and responsibilities, and PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley employer services information.
7. **Employer Workshops:** Business services staff also coordinate workshops on topics based on employer interest. Workshops are either hosted by business services using curriculum that WIOA providers have available or are coordinated with guest speakers who specialize in topics of interest. Examples include ADA Awareness Training, LGBTQIA+ Inclusion Best Practices, EEOC Compliance, and Re-Entry Hiring Benefits.
8. **Recruiting Talent:** Business services staff play a critical role in recruiting: the art of matching job seekers to vacancies. Understanding the nuances of an employer's culture, values, career pathways, capacity to serve as a training provider, and job requirements are critical, as is the connection to job seekers, either through direct interactions, candidate referrals in CWDS, or candidate referrals made by workforce system staff and partners. There are a range of services, events, and resources that support each employer's request for recruitment support.
  - 8.1. **Recruitment/hiring events.** Going beyond job fairs, WBLV focuses on events that put the hiring employer and job seeker face to face for impactful interactions that jumpstart the application and interview process. Hiring events are a space where employers can benefit from quicker hiring outcomes, and job seekers do more than shake a hand and apply online. Hiring events can include space for on-the-spot interviews and supported computer labs to complete required hiring aptitude or skill assessments. These hiring events can be hosted at PA CareerLink®, at a community site, or virtually. Hiring events are often focused on a specific population, such as youth and soon-to-be high school graduates, individuals from the LEAP programs, or industry-focused such as transportation, logistics, and distribution or healthcare. Marketing of events with advance notice through in-person flyers, referrals from case managers, and virtual methods such as emails, texts, and social media posts help ensure a strong show rate to these events. The electronic flyers are distributed via email to all PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley staff and subsequently shared with job seekers. Hard copy flyers are available throughout the agency in classroom, public areas and staff workstations. Outreach materials include how to find the job postings on PA CareerLink® online which help drive virtual traffic to the website and encourage applications ahead of meeting the employers. For virtual events, job seekers register and receive a link to join the event space.
  - 8.2. **Specialized recruiting approaches:** PA CareerLink® also offers unique methods of sourcing candidates for job openings, such as pop-up Job Huts throughout the region, where staff were available to discuss hot job openings, guide candidates to apply, and pre-screen for direct referrals to employers, Employer Wednesdays, where employers can sign-up candidates for on-site meetings and interviews at the PA CareerLink® facility, and holiday "job trees", wooden or virtual displays where individuals can select an ornament that highlights a local employers and their career opportunities. Job Trees

are set up at satellite service sites and seasonal event locations.

- 8.3. **Industry specific recruiters:** Recruiters work face-to-face on-site, or virtually with job seekers receiving programmatic services. Each is assigned a high-priority industry focus which includes healthcare, manufacturing, transportation and warehousing, finance and insurance, professional, scientific and technical services. This industry focus enables each recruiter to have a caseload of active job searching individuals which helps create more knowledge of the unique needs each person has for their right fit job and expedites job matching.
- 8.4. **Expanding candidate pool:** WBLV and the PA CareerLink® staff maintain relationships with community-based organizations through monthly meetings to exchange job postings, labor market trends and employer needs, PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley services and programs, and job fairs. Community Based Organizations (CBO) are routinely informed of events, such as information sessions to benefit their clients. Integrated trusted community partners increase the awareness of services for both job seekers and employers and can serve as an impactful vehicle to ensure services are promoted and accessible for vulnerable populations, such as youth engaged in foster care, unhoused, those with disabilities, LGBTQIA+ communities, justice-involved, and those in addiction recovery. Increased access to a wider base of job seekers, both through community partners and through virtual recruitment efforts, also support employers with their own initiatives.
9. **Industry Partnerships:** Business services staff can recommend employers connect with local and regional industry partnerships, including Industry Partnership models and the Engage! Business Outreach Roundtables. These coordinated events offer employers an opportunity to engage with economic development and educational entities, maximizing employers time spent in these events.
10. **Veterans Services:** Integral to the BEST is a Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVER) whose primary mission is employer outreach for military veterans. Working in partnership with the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) Representative and other PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley staff, the LVER connects employers with qualified Veterans, especially those with barriers.
11. **Disability Inclusion:** OVR business services staff identify resources to assist employers to diversify their workforce to include individuals with barriers to employment. Specifically, for individuals with disabilities, OVR provides multiple services to the business community designed to assist businesses with onboarding pre-screened qualified employees with disabilities, including reasonable accommodation consultation, on-the-job training (OJT) wage reimbursement, referral on tax credits or deductions, and offers no-cost consultation on the Americans with Disability Act (ADA), accessibility standards and helping a business to retain current employees following an accident, injury or disability. OVR also works with businesses through connecting students involved in OVR's pre-employment transition services. Services under pre-employment transition services include programs like paid work experiences, job shadowing, and workplace tours.
12. **Service Tracking:** While not a direct employer-facing services, it is critical to note the value of data capture and analysis of business services delivered. Business services staff are responsible for managing employer folders, job orders, candidate referrals and outcomes, and data entering provided business services. Detailed PA CareerLink® reports and ad hoc reports, such as the Service Reporting Tool (SRT), tracks extensive Business Services functions and are utilized to monitor

employer engagement activity, measure the effectiveness of the business services deliverables, and survey customer satisfaction. Feedback data captured by employers through feedback loops such as OJT end points and post-event surveys provide additional data that helps drive effective, high quality business services.

The WBLV engages business communities and employers with education and educational resources, including adult literacy and other program partners, through the following:

- Board Membership
- Lehigh Valley Business-Education Partnership Committee of WBLV
- Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce
- In-School Youth Programming which includes collaborative planning, outreach, and worksite development with local school districts
- Occupational Advisory Committees
- Employer Workshops
- Matching Employers who need trained workers to Career and Technical Schools
- Providing education with work-based learning opportunities in business such as work experiences, internships, pre-apprenticeships, Registered Apprenticeships, and On-The-Job trainings
- Chapter 339 planning committees
- Career Pathways development and educational levels, including technical support in designing employer-specific career pathways with deep dives into educational and experience requirements for positions within that specific employer's workforce.
- Business Education Partnership Grants
- Teacher in the Workplace grants
- State/Local Internship Programs
- Developing, distributing and collaborating an Employability Skills Curriculum
- Developing and distributing Employer videos
- Kiosks placed in community that expand awareness of career pathways and educational resources
- Providing education with job fair information
- Providing school districts with in-services on Job and Labor market information
- Highlighting public school Superintendents through Chamber of Commerce Forums

In all of the above-described employer services, WBLV and the workforce ecosystem are set up to provide services physically and virtually. Offering both methods aligns with many employers who are operating in hybrid landscapes and also maximizes time, enabling business services staff and employers to interact with greater frequency. Phone routing tools such as Allworx and Google Voice have ensured that employers can readily reach business services team members.

Another feature that exists within the majority of business services is the capacity building of social capital, both for employers and job seekers. Through work-based learning, job seekers gain mentors, professional references, and peer relationships with workers in their industry of interest. Through engaging in the PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley, employers are linked to a workforce professional who can advocate for their needs, connect them to live-time talent solutions, educational partners, and industry collectives to advance their business needs. By close collaboration with service providers in the One-Stop system, WBLV is able to maximize various perspectives and ideas, find traction from the employer community through roundtables and events, and implement these developed solutions.

**4.4. Continuous Improvement – Describe how the local board will ensure the continuous improvement of eligible providers through the system and that such provider will meet the employment needs of local area employers, workers and job seekers.**

The WBLV holds Engage Roundtable meetings, in partnership with the Department of Community Economic Development (DCED), to gather input from board members, employers, education, economic development and the general public on additions to the in demand occupation list provided by the Commonwealth. Attendees are invited to provide evidence-based recommendations to add occupations to the demand list in accordance with a process approved by the Commonwealth. Appropriate recommendations are passed on to L&I and are approved for inclusion on the targeted occupations in demand list which is the list used for the purpose of approving training to assure training is in demand occupations.

The WBLV participates in a number of activities to project the needs of employers exemplified but not limited to those listed below:

1. The WBLV or its staff cross-populate employer associations throughout the local area and communicate employer needs to the full WBLV.
2. The WBLV procures intermediary assistance which is currently the GLVCC which numbers nearly 6,000 employer members.
3. WBLV representatives present information on PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley services throughout the year at Chamber, economic development and employer association meetings and bring back information relayed by employers.
4. The WBLV partners with the LVEDC on skills gap strategic planning and studies to identify workforce pipeline needs.
5. The WBLV coordinates with education to identify new courses of study offered to meet employer and jobseeker demand.
6. The WBLV staff meets with its local governmental partners which identify constituent needs which include employer needs.
7. The WBLV has a business services unit whose task is to identify current in-demand and emerging in-demand jobs as well as the skills needs of those jobs, and identifies job seeker skills and helps connect them to the appropriate jobs/employers.

WBLV reaches out to employers through its intermediaries, memberships in business associations, and partnerships with economic development. The WBLV reaches out to education by including them on the local board and on their committees. The WBLV outreach activities are geared to hearing the voice of the customer, whether it is a participant, employer or provider. This occurs through meetings, participant activities such as job fairs and recruitments and through surveys. Once information is obtained, workforce intelligence is then incorporated into recommendations leading up to the Board's decision-making processes.

The WBLV conducts outreach once a year to ensure local eligible training providers are aware that they may apply to be on the ETPL list. Eligible training provider meetings are held to talk about changes in the job and labor market, performance and employer needs.

By communicating to its network of providers, the WBLV ensures that schools providing training in demand occupations apply to be included on the EPTL.

In accordance with the Uniform Guidance and WIOA, sub-recipient contracts are renewable for four, one-year periods following award and based upon sub-recipient performance. The One-Stop Operator contract is for three one-year renewable periods in accordance with WIOA, which requires a new procurement every four years.

All contracts include required performance objectives. All sub-recipient contract renewals are subject to performance to assure continuous improvement is a component of contract deliverables.

Each new procurement cycle requires a review of the Request for Proposal (RFP) specifications. Policy areas, such as but not limited to, cost per participant, number of enrollments into training, training progress, training completion, employment and for youth enrollment into postsecondary education, are brought to the appropriate board committees for input prior to release of the RFP.

By constantly reviewing past performance, required future performance, incorporating board input and ascertaining fiscal integrity the WBLV employs continuous improvement into the procurement process cycle.

The oversight roles assigned to the board and how they are implemented throughout the workforce service delivery system to support continuous improvement are as follows:

1. The WBLV conducts both financial and program monitoring. Program monitoring also includes performance monitoring. Monitoring is conducted on WBLV activities as well as those of its service providers by Quality Assurance staff.
2. In addition to the above, all sub-recipient contracts require the sub-recipients to develop a self-monitoring protocol and to submit the protocol to the WBLV for approval and to share the results of any monitoring report.
3. All monitoring results in a report and if any corrective action is required, the corrective action must occur within a specified period and documented in writing. Material findings if they were to occur must be reported to the WBLV.
4. To be a high performing board the WBLV also reviews its actions once a year when it meets specifically to review its goals and objectives.
5. Annually L&I monitors the WBLV and the L&I monitoring results are provided to the WBLV.
6. Annually an organization-wide audit is conducted and the results of the audit are reported to the WBLV.
7. The WBLV requires its sub-recipients contractually to provide the WBLV with copies of their annual audits.

Sub-recipients are monitored in a number of ways:

1. WBLV reserves the right to conduct a pre-award risk assessment in accordance with the Uniform Guidance in its Request for Proposals process.
2. Quality Assurance staff monitor contractual requirements and use a tool based upon the L&I monitoring tool.
3. Sub-recipients are required to conduct self-monitoring which process is reviewed and approved by their program manager.
4. All monitoring results in reports and Corrective Action Plans (CAP). If a CAP is warranted by a finding, the service provider has thirty days to submit a CAP that will identify actions needed to correct the finding and a date by when the action will be completed. Within thirty days of the CAP

receipt, the WBLV Director of Compliance will review the CAP and make a recommendation to the Executive Director regarding acceptance of the CAP.

5. Program/contract managers monitor all sub-recipients against the requirements of their contractual scope of work and required performance on a regular basis.
6. Progress Reports are provided to the WBLV Board and to its committees.
7. Contracts require providers' invoices include substantiating documentation for reimbursement requests and maintains those documents. All documents are reviewed by the Finance Department prior to payment assuring another level of fiscal monitoring.
8. At least once a year there is a 100% file review.
9. Service providers submit a report on a quarterly basis for training provider performance data. The training provider performance report reflects the outcomes of the training providers' programs for the quarter. It captures how many completed the program successfully, how many withdrew from the programs, how many found employment in a related field, and how many did not find employment in a related field. The results are shared with the WBLV Executive Director and, if there are any findings, the WBLV Director of Compliance will work with the service provider and training provider to rectify the problem.
10. Service providers also submit weekly and monthly performance reports that reflect whether or not performance measures are being met. Briefings regarding oversight activities, reports, and findings are provided to the WBLV and to the appropriate standing committee of the Board at regularly scheduled meetings.

Customer satisfaction surveys are completed by the one-stop center customers on monthly basis through an electronic survey system. The survey answers are tabulated and reviewed by the WBLV Director of Compliance for review. Once reviewed, the results are condensed that is shared with the WBLV Executive Director and the service provider's Operations Director. Each survey provides detailed customer responses that are used to analyze what areas need improvement to achieve good customer services. If there are any findings or discrepancies that arise from the customer satisfaction surveys, the WBLV Executive Director and service provider will be notified. Once notified, the WBLV Director of Compliance will work with the service provider to devise a solution to the finding.

The WBLV conducts business with training providers in and outside the local area. Eligible training providers sign a Non-Financial Master Training Vendor Agreement that includes payment and performance requirements.

The WBLV Director of Compliance works with sub-recipient staff to confirm that an eligible training provider is either licensed by the State Board of Private Licensed Schools or has met one of the exemptions as outlined in the WIOA.

Title I Statewide Eligible Training Providers List Desk Guide for Public Training Providers and requests copies of their ADA Policy, Non-Discrimination Policy, and Financial statements prior to approval.

An Agreement with a training provider unless they are in compliance with all federal, state, or local statutes, regulations, policies, or procedures.

The WBLV follows the process and criteria provided in the Department's Eligible Training Provider policy to develop, maintain, and distribute the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). The eligibility of the ETPL provider and/or program is determined by the WBLV solely on the measurable factors identified in the policy. WBLV has not established any additional criteria. To continue developing and maintain the ETPL,

the Lehigh Valley High Priority Occupation (HPO) List is provided to training providers to reference when requesting approval for the Eligible Training Providers/Programs List. WBLV will only approve provider programs that lead to an occupation on the Lehigh Valley HPO List. If an occupation is not included on the Lehigh Valley HPO List, WBLV can petition the DLI to consider adding an occupation. If a training provider is not listed on the ETPL, the one-stop system staff or the WBLV Director of Compliance can reach out to the provider in regards to their eligibility and if they are eligible than a Non-Financial Training Vendor Agreement will be created and they may submit their applications for the programs through PA CareerLink®.

The ETPL is available to the one-stop system staff in helping eligible participants find the training provider/program that is appropriate them. The ETPL can be accessed by the one-stop system customers at any time through PA CareerLink®. In addition, the one-stop system staff provides a brief orientation to eligible customers about using the ETPL in order to find an appropriate training provider/program and provide them guidance throughout their research.

WBLV Director of Compliance individually assesses each training provider's performance at least once a quarter. If it is noted that performance has decreased, the WBLV Director of Compliance will reach out to the sub-recipient and training provider to address the matter at which time a meeting will be requested to discuss their performance. If a training provider does not meet compliance or performance, the WBLV Director of Compliance can recommend to the sub-recipient and WBLV Executive Director that funding should be provided to a provider/program on a trial basis or that funding to a provider/program should be discontinued completely.

**4.5. Technology and Remote Access – Through the use of technology, how will the local board facilitate access to services provided through the one-stop service delivery system, including in remote areas?**

The WBLV serves both Lehigh and Northampton counties, including the Allentown-Bethlehem-Easton metropolitan region and surrounding communities. With a growing population that resides across urban, suburban, and rural areas, WBLV's one-stop delivery system is designed for agility, with multiple access points and modalities. Beyond location diversity, WBLV understands that individuals' barriers are diverse and multiple platforms and service delivery locations ensure greater equity and access. An integrated stand-alone one-stop center, co-located satellite sites and offices with partnering agencies, and offering services through multiple online platforms and technological devices provide numerous access points to meet the needs of our diverse customer population.

For in-person access to services, the PA CareerLink® system has a primary facility as well as co-location with St. Luke's Hospital, the Allentown Employment and Training Center, and with Lehigh Carbon Community College, Northampton Community College, and select public school district buildings. With the integration of staff training across multiple programs, workforce professionals in each co-located space are able to offer basic services as well as eligibility screening for core services. Physical services provide the benefit of human connection, live time question and answer, customization of services, and offer technical assistance for those who may struggle with completing paper documents or who have limited digital literacy skills. Several satellite sites offer a computer lab setting with on-site staff support.

Virtual services substantially increase the ability to reach customers and provide necessary services, and with artificial intelligence software developing at quick rates, having a system that is already virtually equipped is critical for future expansion. Virtual services remove barriers of transportation costs and

travel time commitments, limited seating capacity, and classroom availability. Services can be coordinated with greater ease across one-stop partners who are not always physically working out of the same address. Sharing of virtual materials, such as partner and resource websites, online assessments, and applications, can be readily shared with participants who can immediately access those materials at no additional cost. Examples of these efficiencies include directly referring workshop customers to online assessments or open job postings in the industry highlighted during that workshop, posting to social media the newest guidance on Unemployment Compensation, highlighting partner educational workshops, and promoting local employer hiring events, and connecting in-need participants to scheduling links for quick access to individualized meetings with PA CareerLink® staff.

Virtual services also help individuals practice and expand their digital skills, which will continue to be an ever-evolving knowledge base to keep up with technology and artificial intelligence advancements. By offering both virtual and in-person access points, individuals can begin with virtual services, and if the platform becomes a barrier, move to phone based and in-person services to still get the needed services. Tutorials in PDF and video formats have also been developed to help navigation of the website, understand eligibility, and benefits of core program services. These tools can support individuals who cannot access physical services and who do not have skills to access virtual services independently. WBLV has local supportive service policies to address and resolve barriers to accessing technology, including access to services received from partner training providers.

WBLV recognizes CWDS as the system of record and service providers adhere to data entry guidance, including time frames of entry, to ensure that the system of record is accurate and can be an effective driver of data reports that drive continual improvement and performance attainment.

Case notes are maintained by the case managers for all WIOA and EARN participants. All significant communication between a client and a case manager will be case noted in CWDS within 48 hours. Business-facing staff are responsible for completing employer service data entry into CWDS within 48 hours as well. Staff are trained on case noting and following best practices such as objectively noting interactions, goals, successes, challenges, and next steps. Case notes will follow HIPAA in terms of privacy and protection of certain health-related information. The case notes tell the story of a participant from enrollment to outcome, reflecting our commitment to human-centered design. All data entry into CWDS, such as service authorizations, exits, and outcomes, are handled by a Quality Assurance Team on a daily basis with attention to each program's monthly data entry deadlines. This team conducts monthly internal monitoring of all files and regularly monitors performance in CWDS through predictive reporting and regular internal audits.

Each individual's ability to access services that represent them and their needs also plays an important role in the design of service delivery. WBLV understands that the catalyst to successful program engagement and ultimately training and placement outcomes often start with a human connection and trust that services will benefit them and help them reach goals. There are several approaches to ensuring services meet individual needs: hiring culturally competent staff who represent the demographics of the Lehigh Valley, knowledge of demographic changes in the region due to international events, immigration, relocation trends, rates of release from incarceration, secondary degree graduation rates and census data and how that demographic data informs what services are anticipated as most needed, and piloting new technology that continues to enhance effectiveness of virtual services. An example is the mapping of unemployment data in Lehigh Valley by zip code compared to the job seekers currently receiving services by zip code. This analysis helps WBLV identify

underserved communities in need and what representational outreach is best implemented to those communities for effective impact.

The board is also committed to accessible solutions that serve and support the employer community and job seeking community. Through close involvement in business communities, Industry Partnerships, and individual employer account management at the PA CareerLink® level, WBLV learns about the employer experience of accessing services. Solutions that ease employer's access and use of services can then be implemented. Examples include offering virtual hiring events which conserve employer's time and travel costs while helping employers screen for candidates with strong digital navigation skills, urgent promotion of laid off workers to hiring employers within that industry to expedite candidate review, job re-attachment, and retaining that individual's skillset within the industry, and providing staff-assistance to job orders to reduce employer's administrative labor when utilizing CWDS for sourcing talent.

The following strategies are used to support the WBLV's integrated workforce development system in the core programs of WIOA including Adults, Dislocated Workers, Youth, DHS, Adult Education and Literacy, Wagner-Peyser Programs, and Vocational Rehabilitation to meet the needs of individual and employer customers. Access to partner services is delivered through:

1. One-Stop MOU agreements that describe the methods for providing access to programs and a reciprocal priority of referrals and service engagement between required program partners to include Native American programs, Job Corp, HUD employment programs, Second Chance agencies, OVR, Title II and DHS.
2. Access to the PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley website and subsequent access to partner sites through cross-populating partner websites links on PA CareerLink® website and social media posts.
3. Facilitating workshops focused on using new technology including Artificial Intelligence, multiple communication platforms, and networking strategies such as LinkedIn to help job seekers evolve with the rapidly changing digital environment. The PA CareerLink® website continues to grow with virtual accessibility to program engagement through online program referrals, Welcome Center orientations, employer worksite agreements, WIOA information sessions, and virtual recruitment events and job fairs. All points of access lead to personal connections with program staff to ensure services remain human-centered and individualized once accessed.
4. Board representation by core partner, educational and employer representatives who can provide unique perspective and weigh in on policy changes that impact access to services.
5. WBLV contracts with service providers who implement recruitment and retention strategies that ensure their workforce is representational, culturally competent, and able to work across a diverse range of communities and agencies to deliver services.
6. Co-location of key partners, including Wagner-Peyser and PA Department of Human Services (DHS) programs, so that once individuals open a door to access, they can be co-enrolled or referred to the appropriate partner and program without having to exit and re-enter the workforce system all over again.
7. Intentional integration of TANF and SNAP recipient services within the One-Stop physical location has also increased access to services. Local DHS representatives from both Lehigh and Northampton counties have scheduled PA CareerLink® hours to provide DHS information and client support. SNAP recipients are educated on core programs and can be referred to the TANF E&T program if program requirements and benefits are a fit. This pathway was developed as TANF caseload volume reduced while SNAP recipients rose. Local Management Committee and Direct Service Team virtual meetings are facilitated virtually on a quarterly and bi-weekly schedule to identify and fill service gaps in

delivering employment, education and training services. Daily, both CAO and contractor teams connected to triage items as needed. DHS and the local service provider advanced a wraparound, customer-centric approach to create family stability within every job seeker's household that supported upskilling, job placement and advancement, and long-term retention. Title I staff are trained on SNAP eligibility to the TANF program to ensure SNAP recipients are aware of the programs and can be referred to TANF program services. TANF program participants are also able to access the full range of services at PA CareerLink®, including workshops, employability skills, "You're Hired" training content, directed job search, career advisement, recruiter services, work-based learning options, and training opportunities. Participants are mainstreamed and benefit from enhanced access, leveraged staff expertise, dual enrolled value-added services, and efficient referrals to partner and community services.

8. Recruiters manage industry-specific caseloads of job seekers across all programs, enabling employers to benefit from a wide range of talent recruitment with one staff person point of contact.
9. A functionally integrated Business Services Team includes BWPO, Veterans, Title I, Title IV and DHS funded staff. This team facilitates creation of employer records, assistance with real time job orders to meet hiring needs, and ongoing maintenance of individual business folders to promote employer engagement and provides capacity for quick employer engagement across a range of staff who all utilize the system of record to track accounts, services, and outcomes. All employer information is entered by the Business Services Team staff in CWDS within thirty (30) calendar days from the time services are actually performed.
10. A functionally integrated Quality Assurance Team includes Title I and DHS funded staff. This team oversees the participant program information in CWDS by reviewing eligibility, Individual Employment Plan (IEP) and/or Individual Services Strategies (ISS), and case progress notes. This information is entered by the Quality Assurance Team staff in CWDS within thirty (30) calendar days from the time services are actually performed.
11. A functionally integrated Quality Assurance Team includes Title I and DHS funded staff. This team oversees the participant program information in CWDS by reviewing eligibility, Individual Employment Plan (IEP) and/or the Quality Assurance Team staff in CWDS within thirty (30) calendar days from the time services are actually performed.
12. Staff will be trained to provide services to all, regardless of range of abilities, mobility, age, language, learning style, or comprehension or education level. All requests for accommodations must be addressed and reasonable accommodations will be made available to customers as necessary to ensure physical and programmatic accessibility to all customers within the PA CareerLink®. Such accommodations will include but are not limited to an interpreter provided in real time or, if not available, within a reasonable timeframe to any customer with a language barrier, assistive devices, such as screen-reading software programs (e.g., JAWS and DRAGON), and assistive listening devices."
13. Technology will continue to be piloted to identify additional ways to increase access and ease of use. Text messaging, electronic signatures through Adobe Pro, and streamlined phone systems that enable staff to be accessed in facility and in community are all piloted approaches that have become system standards over the years. New examples include language translation software for live-time translation while receiving in-person services, artificial intelligence that expedites career matching and reduces administrative burden, aptitude software that increases matches to diverse ETPL training providers and learning management software that offers creative ways for learners to access content.
14. PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley works closely with Unemployment Compensation representatives, scheduling in-person and virtual appointments to answer claim questions.

15. Integrated programs share certain documents such as information releases and FERPA releases to reduce participant administrative burden in signing multiple documents for the same functional purpose.
16. Reconciliation meetings are held across program case management, recruiters, and quality assurance staff to collaboratively address progress of participants and identify any roadblocks, which could be access related such as inactive cell phone lines, relocation, or health conditions that prevent travel to in-person services.
17. The One-Stop Operator works closely with all mandated partners, and leadership, to host recurring meetings that review each partner's performance measure requirements, highlight service enhancements, and any policy changes within those programs. This cross-pollination of knowledge helps each workforce professional serve individuals as part of an integrated system rather than a closed silo of just one program at a time. Reviewing leading indicator performance data can also reveal understanding of customer trends and how they impact program performance. For example, comparing workshop attendees and post-workshop evidence of learning surveys with lagging data on training enrollments, job placement, and job retention will help identify where our services are creating the most impact in outcomes and what ongoing improvements can be made in quality of virtual services.
18. Sharing eligible training provider performance and training related placements are methods of highlighting key successes and allow for a deep dive into the why. Learning best practices that reduce access barriers to training program classes, testing, and completion help WBLV ensure that training providers are high-quality and meet customer needs.
19. Partners are included in the planning and outreach for targeted hiring events to support performance attainment for all entities. This collaboration increases participant access to services and events regardless of the exact program they are most actively engaged with at any given point.
20. PA CareerLink® staff are co-located within St. Luke's Hospital, the Allentown Employment and Training Center, Lehigh Carbon Community College, Northampton Community College, and select public school district buildings.
21. In addition to the satellite sites listed above, additional in-community programs expand access further. The Linking Employment Activities Post Release (LEAP) program operates in both county correctional facilities to help returning citizens achieve a successful transition back to community and workforce, and staff across LEAP and WIOA Adult programs collaborate to dual-enroll when in alignment with the individual's goals.
22. Customers from limited English speaking and reading populations with limited English proficiency receive equal access to workforce services through Propio Language Services, provider staff language interpreters, documents and websites that are translated, ADA-compliant equipment, and referrals to Title II and IV partners. For persons with impairments, including visual, hearing, and other accessibility needs, a TTY telecommunication device and the provision of a PA certified American Sign Language Interpreter, upon request in advance, are available for Deaf and hard of hearing individuals. In addition to services being available physically and virtually, the Resource Sharing Agreement dedicates funds for reasonable accommodations, should existing infrastructure and ADA-compliant equipment not meet a customer's specific accommodation needs. Piloting technology solutions is another approach to support those where language presents as a barrier.

Over years of implementing an in-person and virtual service delivery system, WBLV has created a streamlined infrastructure for high quality, easy to access services and will continue to evolve this infrastructure to meet the ever-changing needs of the residents and economy within Lehigh Valley. The board is driven to further innovate not just the method of how services are brought to individuals, but also recognize and adapt access to the increasingly diverse audience who receives the services.

**4.6. Transportation and Supportive Services – How will the local board coordinate WIOA Title I workforce investment activities with the provision of transportation and other appropriate supportive services in the local area?**

The WBLV and the PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley workforce system coordinates WIOA Title I supportive services with consideration to the existing resources available in community, the gaps in available resources, and individualized customer needs over the time period of their active participation.

Supportive service needs are determined through an initial assessment conducted by the PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley Title I program staff. Support is established for job seekers using both basic and individualized career services through One-Stop system partners, transportation authorities, community and faith-based organizations, adult literacy providers, academic institutions, and healthcare agencies. Coordination of support services includes direct agency referrals, on-site human resource services, childcare, housing, healthcare, financial literacy, workplace attire, educational assistance, and a full workshop menu.

Workforce guidance and regulations require a coordinated focus on the provision of supportive services. These supports are only provided to participants who are unable to obtain supportive services through other programs or agencies. Based on funding availability, supportive services are provided to eligible participants who meet program engagement requirements in individualized career and training activities. The WBLV and the One-Stop Operator have established durational and monetary limits to the provision of these services. Supportive services may include transportation assistance, required materials/supplies, clothing, background checks, medical screenings, technology required to fulfill program and training needs, and industry-recognized certifications.

Determination of need for individually provided support services is established during the development and modification of an individual service plan. Holistic approaches to career coaching are implemented to understand when a supportive service is needed and appropriate. In some cases, local resources can be leveraged, such as mental health virtual resources, hotlines, food security programs, and legal aid. The referral to and coordination with outside agencies will be investigated prior to the use of WBLV supportive services funding.

In conjunction with the Workforce Board Lehigh Valley, the Title I contractor sub-recipient is responsible for the initial procurement, delivery and payment of supportive services. The Title I provider has ability to create business accounts with local transit authorities, utilize an expense platform to cut checks, and order bulk gas cards to reduce administrative burden. The Title I contractor invoices the Workforce Board Lehigh Valley to receive reimbursement once support service items are distributed. The WBLV has responded to technology-related needs and adjusted supportive service policies as service delivery and training shifts to virtual and hybrid models. Certain items, when able to be provided electronically, can be signed off on electronically through Adobe Pro.

**4.7. Rapid Response – How will the local board coordinate workforce investment activities and ensure they are carried out in the local area with statewide rapid response?**

The WBLV coordinates workforce investment activities through the PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley Administrator and One-Stop Operator. The state Rapid Response staff member, who is a full one-stop partner housed at PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley, coordinates activities with training, educational, and all community services providers. Close collaboration occurs between the Rapid Response leadership team,

which consists of the state Rapid Response Coordinator, the PA CareerLink® Operation Manager, and the local BWPO supervisor. These two leaders are responsible for communicating to the larger PA CareerLink® team, including community engagement, business services, Wagner-Peyser, and WIOA Adult/DW staff of potential layoff events through WARN notifications, public notice or referrals from business and industry or through PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley's workforce system.

A WARN notice offers protection to workers, their families and communities by requiring employers to provide notice 60 days in advance of covered plant closings and covered mass layoffs. This notice must be provided to either affected workers or their representatives (e.g., a labor union); to the State dislocated worker unit; and to the appropriate unit of local government. A Rapid Response representative is required to contact a company that has filed a WARN notice within 48 hours of receipt of the notice. In general, employers are covered by WARN if they have 100 or more employees, not counting employees who have worked less than 6 months in the last 12 months and not counting employees who work an average of less than 20 hours a week. Private, for-profit employers and private, non-profit employers are covered, as are public and quasi-public entities which operate in a commercial context and are separately organized from the regular government. Regular Federal, State, and local government entities which provide public services are not covered. A covered employer must give notice if an employment site (or one or more facilities or operating units within an employment site) will be shut down, and the shutdown will result in an employment loss (as defined later) for 50 or more employees during any 30 day period. A covered employer must give notice if there is to be a mass layoff which does not result from a plant closing, but which will result in an employment loss at the employment site during any 30-day period for 500 or more employees, or for 50-499 employees if they make up at least 33% of the employer's active workforce.

Public notice can be from a variety of sources (newspaper, television, press release or some other form of public announcement from the company) and referrals can come from our workforce partner organizations, direct employer relationships, or through workers impacted from the affected worker group. Whether through WARN, public notice, or referral, WBLV understands the critical need for detailed, accurate information that drives customized Rapid Response service delivery planning and implementation.

Upon notice, WBLV coordinates local workforce development activities with statewide Rapid Response activities using a process that begins with an initial fact-finding meeting to evaluate the needs of the dislocating employer's workforce together with statewide and Lehigh Valley Workforce Development Area Rapid Response team members. The initial fact-finding meeting provides a platform to educate the impacted employer's decision makers and human resources staff of Rapid Response services and is essential to rapidly built trust and access, both of which are valuable to the successful delivery of services and re-employment outcomes. Re-employment services offered through PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley and an explanation of the specialized dislocated worker services available through WIOA Title I program are provided at this meeting. Fact Finding meetings may occur onsite at the company, at the PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley office or virtually through web-based platforms (Skype, Microsoft Teams, WEBX etc.) or at other community locations such as libraries, union halls etc. Establishing points of contact, available data on impacted workers, timeline of layoff or company closure, severance packages, union representation, and ideal locations and times to meet impacted workers with consideration to shift schedules are all items that may be covered in the initial fact-finding. Information from this fact-finding becomes the driving data behind the customized Rapid Response service delivery approach.

Official Rapid Response sessions are scheduled by the local Rapid Response Coordinator, Operation Manager, and local BWPO supervisor and are offered to all impacted employees prior to their dislocation. The session is customized to the workforce, but at a minimum, provides the workers with information on PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley services including the Title I Dislocated Worker program, Unemployment Compensation, healthcare options, retirement options, credit counseling, worker protections under federal law and supportive services available in the local area. Agencies represented in these meetings are Rapid Response, PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley, Greater United Way of the Lehigh Valley, the Federal Department of Labor's Employee Benefit Security Administration, Pennie.com PA State Based Insurance Marketplace and Unemployment Compensation. These sessions typically occur onsite 7-10 days prior to the layoff. Virtual presentations through web platforms (Skype, Microsoft Teams, WEBX etc.) are also available. Flyers promoting services can also be customized and distributed via the employer for those impacted employees who are unable to join the sessions. Surveys distributed and collected during these sessions provide insight into individual's last job and tenure, education, residency, priority goals and long-term goals. These surveys are used as a planning tool for services to dislocated workers, to map talent available for hiring employers, and to request additional Rapid Response funds from the state as needed. Data entry into CWDS tracks Rapid Response services.

WBLV recognizes that during the time of dislocation, individuals are facing an unexpected trauma, processing large amounts of logistical information, while still required to complete work shifts until their date of separation. Title I Dislocated Worker services can also be promoted with special registration events scheduled to assist the workers with easy access to individualized career services and training opportunities as well as one on one opportunities with an Unemployment Compensation representative so impacted individuals can discuss their personal situations privately. Creating low-barrier access increases the engagement of dislocated workers and builds the path to return for additional services towards the goal of re-employment.

In the competition to hire skilled workers, WBLV's Rapid Response strategy recognizes the value of including employer engagement as early as possible. Based on industry of the impacted employer, and if/once fact-finding efforts result in impacted worker's job titles, the Rapid Response team leverages the Business Services Team to bring a win-win solution to the Rapid Response service plan. Employers are connected to talented workers and impacted workers are connected to re-employment options rapidly. All plant closings and major layoffs are included in the Lehigh Valley Job & Labor Market snapshot of the local labor market. The document highlights unemployment rate trends, monthly/yearly job change, plant closings, and major layoffs. Companies looking to expand or explore the possibility of relocating to the Lehigh Valley use the plant closing and layoff listing of companies to assess the skills of the available workforce. Examples of employer-involved solutions include dedicated on-site hiring days, virtual job fairs, resume packets sent to HR staff and recruiters, and peer job networking groups. These dedicated events benefit all involved as impacted workers are given the ability to obtain new employment before they lose their prior employment and the company and local community and economy does not have to support additional unemployment costs.

Through reconciling the list of laid off workers gathered during fact-finding with the CWDS data entry of rapid response services, the Rapid Response team is able to identify individuals not yet connected to services. The PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley staff conducts outreach projects to reach dislocated workers on this list, as well as those who attended an initial session and have not returned for further services, understanding that the time period of dislocation can be overwhelming and repetitive connection points can increase successful engagement. PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley staff also reach out to customers that have a Self-Service Job Search (SSJS) service code in the system of record to engage dislocated

workers within the PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley's programs and services, and to highlight other supportive services. Targeted email campaigns and phone calls are made to recently dislocated workers informing them of upcoming hiring events, hosted or supported by PA CareerLink®. Whenever possible, connecting the industries of hiring employers with matching dislocated worker industries makes the outreach campaigns relevant. Both Lehigh Valley Wagner-Peyser staff and WIOA Title I staff inform program participants of these hiring events.

The local Rapid Response Coordinator works with the WBLV and One Stop Operator to assure delivery of services includes all resources that align with worker needs, including and not limited to ESL services, OVR, training options, and support services. The Rapid Response Coordinator also works with the Fiscal Agent to assist in the application for additional workforce funds if necessary. WIOA permits states to provide Rapid Response Additional Assistance funds to local areas with an increased number of unemployed individuals due to natural disasters, plant closings, mass layoffs or other events, if there are not adequate local funds to assist the dislocated workers.

Business Services Staff are also equipped with knowledge on layoff aversion services so those can be offered when there are signs of labor reduction or business distress. The WBLV, PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley's Business Services staff and the Rapid Response Regional Representative review layoff aversion strategies when advance notice is provided of a potential layoff. Referrals can also be made to the Steel Valley Authority's Strategic Early Warning Network (SEWN) for business consultation services for small to mid-sized manufacturing companies. Referrals can also be made to the Governor's Action Team within DCED to assist companies looking to move into Pennsylvania or grow their existing business model within the Commonwealth. Lastly, a referral can be made in partnership with Unemployment Compensation to Pennsylvania's Shared Work program designed to help company's retain their employees during slow periods, allowing their workers to get a portion of their unemployment benefits with the ability to bring the workers back to full time status once business demand resumes.

The local Rapid Response Coordinator also initiates the Trade Act process with companies who are laying off workers due to the impact of foreign competition. While TAA is "sunsetting" as of the start of this four year plan, WBLV will adhere to guidance to continue offering Trade to prior eligible individuals as it's a lifelong benefit, and the Rapid Response Coordinator will continue to file petitions until further guidance is received. Trade Act petitions can be filed by a company official, union official, two impacted workers from an affected worker group, or a state official and the Rapid Response Coordinator can facilitate that filing. The petition filing commences the process of a federal investigation to determine if the company meets the criteria for certification. If a company is certified under the Trade Act, federal law maintains that a company must provide the state with a worker list encompassing all workers who may have potential eligibility. Upon receipt of a worker list, local Rapid Response coordinator would invite all impacted workers to a Benefit Rights Interview meeting. A Benefit Rights Interview (BRI) meeting gives a general overview of all Trade Act benefits available while also allowing the impacted workers the ability to complete paperwork to obtain their individual certification under the Trade Act. Once individually certified, Rapid Response partners with the State's Trade Act Services unit, Trade merit staff, Title I providers and the Workforce Board Lehigh Valley to coordinate service implementation.

**4.8. Individuals with Barriers to Employment – What services, activities, and program resources will be provided to participants, including those outlined at WIOA Sec. 3(24), *Individuals with a Barrier to Employment*, and WIOA Sec. 188, in the local area?**

The Workforce Board Lehigh Valley, through the PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley One-Stop workforce delivery system, provides the following services, activities, and programs to participants, as outlined in WIOA Sec. 3(24), Individuals with a Barrier to Employment and WIOA section 188 in the local area:

**Universal Wagner- Peyser Services and Methodical Intake Process:**

Beginning with the digital intake process for first time in person participants, key data is collected that helps identify what services an individual is seeking, existing barriers to employment, and what services they are eligible to receive. The Welcome Center staff provides live support for digital intake, as well as supporting the creation of an account in PA CareerLink® online with resume and job preferences and offering an orientation of services. An overview of PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley services is available via an automated audio-visual presentation, in both English and Spanish, and describes in detail the programs, partnerships, service levels, and resources available through the workforce system, ensuring customers' accessible intake. Additionally, bilingual staff conduct in-person or remote/virtual triage interviews for all Welcome Center customers to determine and recommend basic, individualized, and support services. Staff review the digital intake information in real time during a triage interview to determine and recommend universal, individualized career, and support services. Determination of program eligibility and referrals to community partners is completed. A Career Pathway Plan, outlining customized next steps in the workforce system, is developed. Services offered through the Welcome Center, community resource center (CRC), workshops, career exploration, and assessments are provided as an integrated collaborative effort with Wagner-Peyser.

**Methodical Outreach Efforts:**

Targeted recruitment of individuals with barriers identified in WIOA is accomplished through enhanced outreach that presents the benefits and services of the PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley workforce system with community partners, direct referrals from agencies and programs that serve individuals with barriers, and through collaborative efforts of staff serving as members of boards and CBO committees. Ensuring that workforce board members, one-stop partners, and community partners are aware of barriers to employment helps grow an outreach strategy that reaches the intended audience.

Experienced frontline staff are trained in identifying and mitigating employment barriers and, when necessary, refer individuals struggling to resolve those barriers to appropriate partner services.

Information sessions are held regularly at partner and community agencies and events. Staff also participate in virtual outreach opportunities with these organizations. Title II providers, secondary and post-secondary institutions and community colleges, re-entry programs, and various human service agencies, childcare providers, drug and alcohol rehabilitation, mental health, and county assistance offices are all part of PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley's network of service providers. Outreach staff regularly attend job fairs and recruitment events to promote the benefits of workforce services.

Dedicated staff recruit and aid targeted populations throughout the community. Plans include Workforce Counselors stationed at secondary and post-secondary institutions to engage new and returning students and provide counseling and support to complete educational plans and secure related employment. These staff also engage with co-located staff to increase awareness and recommend connections to students that fit within a barrier to employment definition, such as English Language Learner, low-income, those with disabilities, homeless, or involved in foster care.

Staff connect with the long-term unemployed and Unemployment Compensation claimants/exhaustees to reengage and facilitate workforce services for expedited reemployment. Rapid response services provide another avenue to identify dislocated workers.

Mature worker recruitment focuses on meeting the needs of this targeted group through specialized workshops, recruitment events and referral to the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) for eligible job seekers.

The One-Stop Operator works across all mandated and community partners to keep our large outreach, referral, and service network connected. Partners often play a key role in outreaching to communities that align with WIOA defined barriers to employment. Data sets can also tell the story of zip codes where there are higher volume of those with barriers, and how that compares to WIOA enrollment data to identify under-enrolled areas.

#### **Unique Service Delivery Examples:**

Staff responsible for Recruitment, Career Advisement, Program Case Management, and Disabled Veteran Outreach Program, receive Re-entry Employment Specialist (RES) training to address the special re-employment needs of returning citizens. State Parole, Probation and North Penn Legal Services serves are samples of referral sources for those in need of intensive counseling from being justice-involved. Participants enrolled in the LEAP program at both Lehigh Jail and Northampton Prison receive pre-release orientations and work with the Re-entry Navigator, a consistent point of contact for both pre-and post-release services, to ensure connections and access to PA CareerLink® services.

Re-entry recruitment events and unique entrepreneurship workshops increase access to returning citizen-friendly employers and opportunities to grow a self-employed business model, as justice involved individuals are often able to earn higher wages through their own businesses versus gaining employment. Program participants are referred to employers who are receptive to reentering citizens. The PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley Intake and Assessment Career Advisor and Outreach Team conducts numerous off-site and in-house trainings for counselors from various mental health, supported employment and drug and alcohol rehabilitation agencies. Often, populations receiving these services qualify with one or more barriers to employment.

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR), a required WIOA partner, is co-located at the PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley office and refers clients through the Welcome Center into WIOA services. Participant services are coordinated between OVR and WIOA. WIOA Title IV eligible OVR customers receive multiple services from qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors that may include but not be limited to; diagnostic, vocational counseling and guidance, vocational evaluation, restoration, training, job placement and pre-employment training services for eligible and potentially eligible high school students with disabilities.

#### **Provide Services and Resources Equally:**

Once enrolled, service delivery strategies are driven by participant need and their individual employment plan. While economically disadvantaged participants may face increased challenges, an economic analysis and barrier mitigation is conducted with individuals across all programs. Digital intake data and the program eligibility process, along with the IEP, enables the participant and case manager to closely collaborate on needed services, and any accommodations or customization needed. Numerous workshops and alternative curriculum adaptations are offered to the general population.

Tiered instruction and job search assistance are available for all participants ranging from those receiving public benefits, those with no work history, recent graduates, and dislocated professionals. Basic, intermediate, and advanced levels of instruction are offered to accommodate specific job seeker needs based on their educational background, work history and employment goals. Individualized and small group instruction accommodates job seeker preparedness from the Employability Skills classroom to Transitional Job Search and finally the Directed Job Search.

Job opportunities are also diverse and offer opportunities for both entry-level to skilled job seekers.

**4.9. Nondiscrimination – How will entities within the one-stop service delivery system, including one-stop operators and the one-stop partners comply with WIOA Sec. 188 (as applicable) and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101, et seq.) regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology and materials for individuals with disabilities?**

The PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley including the operator and one-stop partners strive to comply with WIOA Section 188, 29 CFR 38.40, and the applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act. To this end:

1. PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley staff are training in the WIOA Section 188 requirements.
2. PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley staff are training in the Americans with Disabilities Act definitions.
3. Staff receives annual sexual harassment training.
4. The WBLV annually reviews the accessibility of its facilities.
5. Whenever a new ETPL applies to be put on the ETPL in the Lehigh Valley, an accessibility site visit is conducted or the EEOC Accessibility Questionnaire is required to be completed by the ETPL.
6. The WBLV requires all relevant posters to be displayed in the PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley centers.
7. All service provider contracts, OJT contracts, Work Experience contracts, Customized Training and Incumbent Worker Training contracts include EEO compliance provisions as well as accessibility requirements.
8. On a regular basis accessibility software options are compared to what is already available in the PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley.
9. The WBLV assures state registered American Sign Language interpreters are available upon request. The Welcome Center includes an automated audio-visual overview of services which is also available in Spanish. Bilingual staff conduct assessment interviews to determine and recommend basic career services. Individualized career and support services are available to assist for all language needs that cannot be satisfied by staff personally. Fifteen percent of local staff are bilingual and extended language resources are available and accessed via EDSI sister sites.

10. The Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO), Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry, conducts an annual Equal Opportunity (EO)/American with Disabilities (ADA) Accessibility compliance review of PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley. Currently the PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley is in pending compliance status. As a result of L&I's Office of Equal Opportunity current annual compliance review, the Workforce Board Lehigh Valley's compliance status has not yet been determined, as WBLV actively works with L&I Office of Equal Opportunity Officer to resolve findings identified in the annual compliance review. As a result of the annual compliance review, WBLV is improving the accessibility of information and services by adding a section to WBLV's website dedicated to Equal Opportunity laws and resources and upgrading and expanding adaptive equipment and technology. Although our website meets Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) standards in site development, the WBLV continues to research adaptive technology improvements for people with disabilities, which would augment current adaptive technology implemented throughout PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley locations.
11. The WBLV Director of Compliance monitors ADA/EO compliance on an ongoing basis using the EEOC/Office of Contract Compliance tools.
12. The WBLV has appointed an Equal Opportunity Officer, Nanse Wolfington, Director of Compliance, WBLV.
13. PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley has adopted an Auxiliary Aids and Services (Universal Access) Policy and Procedure to aid staff in effective communications with people with disabilities a required under Title II of the ADA.
14. PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley receptionists follow the Reception Desk Accessibility Procedures and consult with individuals to determine the auxiliary aids and/or services needed.
15. PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley updates their Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan as needed and submits it to the OEO annually for compliance review. The purpose of the LEP Plan is to demonstrate the customers of PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley are being provided meaningful access to program information, benefits, and services, even though the customers may be limited in their English language proficiency.
16. The Equal Opportunity Law/Civil Rights Statement, including the process to file a complaint if an individual believes she/he has experienced discrimination, is provided to each individual.
17. All one-stop partner staff receive training to familiarize them with all of the programs and services provided through the one-stop delivery system. Staff also receive annual training on the Auxiliary Aids and Services (Universal Access) Policy and Procedure, LEP Plan, and Disability Etiquette. On a regular basis, we also provide training on the application of WIOA Section 188.
18. PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley, including the operator and one-stop partners, provides a broad range of services, including but not limited to: assessment of skills and abilities; basic skill programs; occupational skill and on-the-job training; barrier mitigation and support services to help individuals obtain employment to a diverse population that include members of both genders; LGBT community; various racial, ethnic, and age groups; individuals with disabilities; and individuals with limited English proficiency. Outreach materials designed to provide an overview of services offered

through PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley to the general public either on-site as handouts or at local libraries and schools.

19. PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley coordinates services with the one-stop partners and local agencies, committees, and Wagner-Peyser programs that focus on employment-related functions for targeted groups. Input on types of training, education and services needed is gathered by the One-Stop Operator through partner meetings and outreach. Input gathered is then distributed to PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley staff through staff meetings for inclusion in the Career Resource Center and individualized appointments.
20. WBLV takes the appropriate steps to ensure that equal access is being provided for WIOA Title I-financially assisted programs and activities by promoting PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley programs and services, sharing program information with schools and community services that might serve individuals in targeted populations, and consult with community service groups about improving outreach and services to various targeted populations. WBLV ensures that all programs and service are equally offered to individuals regardless of their gender, racial and ethnic/national origin, religions, individuals with limited English proficiency, individuals with disabilities, and individuals in different age groups. Input on the training, education, and service needs is received from community organizations, training providers, and employers and the WBLV works with each of them and the WIOA Title I-funded service providers to help skill or upskill individuals within the identified populations and prepare them for the workforce through job search assistance and training.

## **5. COMPLIANCE**

### **5.1. MOU Assessment(s) – Describe the cooperative agreements that define how all local area service providers will carry out the requirements for integration of and access to the entire set of services available in the local area One-Stop delivery system.**

The Workforce Board Lehigh Valley (WBLV) has cooperative agreements with our Chief Elected Officials that include: Intergovernmental Consortium Agreement By and Among the Chief Elected Officials of Lehigh and Northampton Counties which comprise the Lehigh Valley Workforce Development Area and the Workforce Board Lehigh Valley Partnership Agreement, and the Memorandum of Understanding By and Between the Consortium of Chief Elected Officials and the Lehigh Valley Workforce Investment Board, Inc. Providing for the Assignment of Fiscal Agent Responsibilities.

The WBLV has executed Memoranda of Understanding with all required One-Stop Partners. The One-Stop Partners work with the WBLV's One-Stop Operator to review and facilitate the development of the Memorandum of Understanding. Each One-Stop Partners is offered three (options) in which they can choose to provide services.

1. A staff member present on-site at the one-stop.
2. One representative who is crossed trained on all providers' program present at the one-stop.
3. A direct linkage to program staff through technology.

Through the Memorandum of Understanding, the One-Stop Partners, at minimum, agree to provide in coordination with the PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley, business services, job seeker basic career services, job seeker individual career services, follow-up services, training services, and youth services. The One-Stop Partners are also responsible for attending meetings with other partners, provide relevant data and information to PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley and WBLV staff, assist in promoting PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley and WBLV events, and assist with the development and implementation of a strategic outreach plan.

The implementation of integration strategies described in our MOUs are key to collaborative service delivery, reduction of duplicate services, improving participant access to services across one-stop partners, and a no wrong door culture where participants and employers can receive high value services efficiently. WBLV's MOU document covers content regarding legal authority, purpose of the MOU, a review of the system structure including the PA CareerLink® Comprehensive Center and Satellite Sites, Site Administrator and One-Stop Operator roles, required partner list with points of contact, additional partner list with points of contact, roles and responsibilities, and terms and conditions such as data sharing, confidentiality, accessibility, priority of service, and modification process. Based on the partnership option selected, the MOU document includes infrastructure funding agreement language as well. MOUs also include attachments to cover individual operating budgets and Commonwealth Terms and Conditions. One-stop partners are included in workforce communication system, meetings, and trainings to ensure collaboration is ongoing and not just reviewed during MOU renewals. All partners support equity in access to high-quality, value-add services across the local area. WBLV supports the participant and employer experience in receiving services, regardless of funding stream, from this diverse, collaborative, and mutually beneficial network of private and public community partners.

1. Lehigh Valley's Youth Mentorship Program uses business, industry, and healthcare professionals to serve as mentors for youth job seekers.
2. Training Providers on the Eligible Training Providers List annually verify their programs, credentials, and outcomes to continue receiving students from the training education and navigation offered at PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley. Training providers attend educational fairs, offer data on graduation and placement outcomes, and provide enrollment counseling to potential students. Providers are part of the network of services that employers receive. New providers join this community based on their own entity's capacity, successful performance, recommendation to match aptitude and interest of program customers, and alignment with local HPOs. Training providers are a critical element in growing the skilled labor required for high-priority occupations (HPO) that continue to grow in the Lehigh Valley.
3. Local Lehigh Valley financial institutions provide Financial Literacy Workshops such as budgeting, banking services and responsible borrowing as part of our workforce services menu. This educational effort benefits a wide range of customers through workshops, individual counseling, and financial wellness fairs. All activities span various programs to include youth, immigrants, and re-entry customers.
4. Lehigh and Northampton County Assistance Offices office hours are established throughout the week to advise and assist individuals' access Department of Human Services and programming. Monthly LMC meetings provide space for updates, education on new policies and initiatives, and performance review between CAO and TANF program leaders and staff. SNAP to TANF referrals occur throughout the Welcome and orientation processes held at PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley.
5. Early Learning Resource Center (ELRC) is a one-stop shop for early education needs. ERLC has office hours for individual on site appointments at PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley, along with childcare information workshop sessions designed to provide quality referrals and assistance with accessing subsidized childcare services.

6. Crime Victims Council of Lehigh Valley is a vital nonprofit organization providing support and services to victims of all violence, their families and significant others throughout Northampton and Lehigh Counties. CVC facilitates individual and group information sessions to raise awareness regarding crime victimization and prevention in a supportive and non-judgmental format.
7. Da Vinci Science Center, after moving to an expanded location in 2024, has partnered not only as an employer but also as a location for youth career exploration and career readiness through their educational exhibits.
8. The Perfect Fit for Working Women, a premier program of YWCA Allentown and PA Workwear site, is dedicated to the empowerment of women and girls, social justice, and strengthening our community. A professional development workshop series provides training on topics such as Professional Expectations & Etiquette, Self-care in the Workplace, and Difficult Work Conversations.
9. North Penn Legal Services is a nonprofit organization providing civil legal aid to low-income residents of Northeastern Pennsylvania. North Penn Legal Services partners with PA CareerLink® to provide monthly workshops surrounding criminal record mitigation and provide one-on-one counseling/appointment scheduling.
10. Northampton and Lehigh County Adult and Juvenile Parole and Probation partners through cross program referrals for PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley intensive services and collaborates in integrated services to support participant with seamless delivery of services.
11. Educational Opportunity Centers, Inc. (EOC) provides free services to encourage and assist adults, as well as high school students in target area schools who are interested in continuing their education. EOC provides information and financial aid assistance through a workshop series at PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley.
12. Center for Humanistic Change, Inc. (CHC) is a private, not-for-profit agency providing prevention education (alcohol, tobacco and other drugs) and life skills training focusing on decision making for healthy choices. CHC facilitates in-person and virtual Workplace Foundation Skills sessions weekly.
13. Lehigh and Northampton Transportation Authority (LANTA), a transit agency that provides public, fixed-route bus service throughout Lehigh County and Northampton County, and provides transportation access, and planning.
14. PPL Electric Utilities provide essential energy services. PPL presents sessions on energy usage, conservation, resource assistance and cost saving solutions for participants.
15. Penn State Extension is a modern educational organization dedicated to delivering science-based information to people, businesses, and communities. Penn State Extension provides nutrition classes for job seekers at the PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley locations.
16. Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM)/Lehigh Valley is the premier professional association for human resource professionals in the Lehigh Valley and surrounding areas of Pennsylvania. SHRM provides individualized resume review assistance and mock interview services.

They also participate as mentors in the Northampton County Jail to participants enrolled in the Linking Employment Activities Pre-Release Program (LEAP).

17. Lehigh Valley Health Network (LVHN) is a healthcare network in the Lehigh Valley and serves Pennsylvania through their various locations. LVHN has partnered with PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley offering “Career Education Sessions” (normally offered only to current and former LVHN employees) to job seekers and the public with insider tips on navigating job interviews, hiring in healthcare, and human resources practices.
18. Lehigh Valley Center for Independent Living (LVCIL) – LVCIL is a non-profit organization that serves people with disabilities from Lehigh and Northampton Counties, as well as their family members. LVCIL facilitates quarterly workshops on disability-related topics such as accommodations.
19. Small Business Development Center of Lehigh University-partners in presenting job seekers information on how to start your business and the initial steps for financing, licenses, applications and marketing strategies. Specific topics also include SWOT analysis, the business model canvas and finance templates.
20. SCORE Lehigh Valley provides entrepreneurial mentoring and education on the formation, growth and success of small businesses, and offers workshops through the PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley on entrepreneurship-related topics and takes referrals for mentoring.
21. Community Action Lehigh Valley, Inc. (CALV) mission is to “...improve the quality of life by building a community in which all people have access to economic opportunity, the ability to pursue that opportunity, and a voice in the decisions that affect their lives.” PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley has helped connect a new nursing school to information on the ETPL and refers individuals interested in business ownership for services.
22. The Literacy Center of the Lehigh Valley is dedicated to adult literacy education in a community-based setting. The Literacy Center offers free training on GED/ESL, computers, working from home, becoming an Administrative Professional, and more. PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley works in close partnership to bring these services to our participants.
23. ProJeCt of Easton serves at-risk families and residents in the Lehigh Valley to help break the cycle of poverty. They provide Adult Education, Family Literacy, School-Based Programming, and Emergency Support to more than 5,000 people a year, including people referred from PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley.
24. Lehigh Career & Technical Institute (LCTI) partners regularly to acquaint job seekers with upskilling opportunities and career pathways education. This educational partner hosts job seeker tours with information sessions that speak to high priority occupations in the local area with self-sustaining wages.
25. Lehigh Carbon Community College (LCCC) facilitates sessions on resumes, as well as one-on-one resume critiquing in our Resume Deep Dive workshop.

26. Northampton Community College (NCC) presents workshop overviews of stackable credit trainings and facility tours of their urban diversified manufacturing training campus in addition to main campus tours where job seekers can upskill to an Associate's degree level.
27. Communities in School's mission is to surround students with a community of support, empowering them to stay in school and achieve in life. Communities in Schools partners with the PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley Out-of-School Youth programming to reengage students who have dropped out of the Allentown School District.
28. The Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation (LVEDC) is a major partner in WBLV's workforce system. The alignment between economic development, workforce development, education, and the community defines Lehigh Valley's integrated services for employers and job seekers. WBLV and LVEDC are partners in economic growth.
29. The WBLV and its PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley workforce system provides services focusing on Digital Literacy; Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce events and training; partnerships with community-based organizations; Lehigh Valley's school districts; community colleges; and higher education.
30. WBLV established partnerships across the school districts to identify and champion high school representatives from every school across the region. Each representative had opportunities for involvement in blog activities, employer site tours, billboard outreach, and mentorship with WBLV and engaged employers.
31. Involvement in the City of Allentown's 2025-2030 Recompete strategy to grow local employment, particularly ways to attract participants and employers to growth initiatives in manufacturing, healthcare, youth, and re-entry communities.
32. Allentown Health Bureau (AHB) is a community health partner whose mission is to prevent disease and injury and to protect and promote public health. Informational workshops include communicable diseases, smoking cessation, responsible alcohol/drug use, child safety and maintaining safe home environments.
33. Change on Hamilton (COH) is a community partner site where basic services are delivered in-community, increasing access for vulnerable populations. COH also accepts referrals from the workforce system for participants needing recovery support, peer support, respite, and local connections to resources in Allentown.

**5.2 Fiscal responsibility – What is the process the local board uses to ensure the collection of the debts of lower-tier sub-recipients, because of audits?**

The WBLV sub-recipients are liable to WBLV for any disallowed or questioned costs that they or the WBLV incurs as a result of sub-recipients expending funds in violation of their agreement with the WBLV, or in violation of the appropriate federal, state, or local statutes, regulations, rules, policies or procedures.

Disallowed or questioned costs may be identified through local, Commonwealth or Federal monitoring activities, or through audits. All contracts with sub-recipients contain the following clauses:

1. In the event of a termination, the Contractor shall be paid for services rendered up to the date of termination however, from the amount due there shall be deducted (a) any claim which WBLV may have against the Contractor in connection with this contract or any other prior Agreement; and (b) any outstanding questioned or disallowed costs attributable to the Contractor arising out of an investigation, monitoring report or audit of this Agreement or any other Agreement Contractor had with the WBLV.
2. Disallowed and Questioned Costs – (a) Contractor shall be liable to the WBLV for any disallowed or questioned costs that Contractor or WBLV incurs as a result of Contractor expending funds in violation of this Agreement or in violation of the applicable federal, Commonwealth or local statutes, regulations, rules, policies, or procedures. (b) Disallowed or questioned costs may be identified through a monitoring report, investigation, review, or audit. Disallowed or questioned costs shall be refunded and promptly repaid to WBLV by Contractor within thirty (30) days of the issuance of the report.
3. Audit Resolution Procedures - Contractor agrees to be subject to the monitoring, review and audit resolution procedures established by WBLV, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania or the applicable federal agency and to cooperate with WBLV in the event that resolution cannot be achieved at WBLV's level.
4. Deduction from Monies Due Contractor - If this or any other Agreement is in effect at the time of the identification of a questioned or disallowed cost, or a credit that is due the WBLV, the WBLV may deduct the amount disallowed/questioned from any reimbursements or payments due Contractor.
5. Failure to Discover - WBLV's failure to promptly discover or demand payment for questioned or disallowed costs will not relieve Contractor from their obligation to repay the disallowance or questioned cost at the time of identification or demand.
6. Stand In Costs - Contractor may, with the written approval of WBLV and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, substitute allowable uncharged costs or in kind contributions, made from non-federal sources to support the program funded by this Agreement, to stand in for a disallowed or questioned cost. Such contributions or in kind payments must have been documented in Contractor's fiscal books of account as required by the federal rules. The expenditure must be supported by the Contractor's Independent Audit Report. The uncharged costs must have been incurred in the same title, cost category, and program year as the costs, which they are proposed to replace.
7. Expiration of the Contract - The expiration of the contract shall not affect the WBLV's, the Commonwealth's, or any federal agency's right to audit, disallow, or question a cost, or Contractor's obligation to repay the cost.
8. Audit Requirements Upon Dissolution of Contractor's Organization or Termination of Agreement in the event of the voluntary or involuntary dissolution of Contractor's organization Contractor shall inform the WBLV, within 24 hours of Contractor's knowledge of its intent to dissolve or of the

involuntary dissolution of their organization, and prior to actual dissolution, agrees to allow WBLV to arrange for an immediate audit of Contractor's organization. The WBLV may also request or make provisions for the preservation of all records pertaining to the program(s) funded by this Agreement so that an immediate audit may be performed.

In addition, sub-recipient contracts require adherence to the Uniform Guidance at 2 CFR 200 et al and also require that sub-recipients maintain insurance which names the WBLV as an additional insured which would generally cover most losses resulting in disallowed costs including theft and fraud. The WBLV also maintains appropriate insurance coverage. The WBLV would immediately provide notice to the sub-recipient's insurer and its own for any matter that should be covered by insurance.

A sub-recipient has 30 days to remit payment to the WBLV following receipt of notice of the disallowance. Unless an appeal is filed pursuant to the appeal rights under the WIOA regulations applicable to audits and reviews, the WBLV may choose to issue a second payment request or if it is determined that a second request will not result in repayment, the matter will be reported to the WBLV and Consortium of Elected Officials with a request for approval to hire an attorney and notice their Director's and Officer's Carrier which may provide legal assistance as well depending on the policy to pursue the collection through the court system as a breach of contract matter. Notice will also be sent to DLI so they may be apprised of actions being taken at the local level and may provide such guidance as they deem appropriate.

It should be noted that other than fraud (which is covered by insurance) the USDOL has worked with local boards and sub-recipients to resolve disallowed costs in a number of ways which do not always include cash repayment. Depending on the basis for the disallowance the WBLV may work with L&I to review determinations of disallowed costs to seek non-cash repayment methods.

**5.3. High-performing board attainment – What action(s) is the local board taking (or will take) towards becoming or remaining a high-performance board?**

Our workforce system is built ensuring comprehensive workforce system of programming, education, training and assisting eligible people in developing skills, upgrading their educational levels, ensuring they are supported through ESL and literacy programming, coupled with supporting services like transportation, referrals to community based organization, alignment with the public welfare system, and any resource within the Lehigh Valley Workforce System's portfolio, upon performance within the law and its regulations, procurement of services and contracting. Furthermore, WBLV aligns its plans with the PA WIOA Combined State Plan, Commonwealth policy, grant requirements and follow the guidance provided by the Department of Labor and Industry.

WBLV's fiduciary and administrative responsibilities are professional and the Board understands their responsibility to be accountable to Lehigh Valley stakeholders.

1. The availability of the Local Plan for public comment is advertised in local newspapers, posted on the WBLV and PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley websites, Chief Elected Officials' offices, County Government centers, and PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley satellite offices, with the ability for the public to email comments.
2. Announcements were made of the availability of the Local Plan on other websites such as counties and cities. Announcements were also provided to the One-Stop Partners,

Community Based Organizations meetings, and at community, economic development and business organizations including the Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce, and Society for Human Resource Management/Lehigh Valley, Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation, and others.

3. In addition to all of the above actions, the WBLV Executive Director made presentations regarding the Plan to the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, Lehigh and Northampton County Chief Elected Officials.

**5.4. Public Notice – What is the process the local board uses to provide a 30-day public comment period prior to submission of the plan, and describe the opportunity for input into the development of the local area plan, particularly for representatives of business, education, labor organizations, program partners, public agencies, and community stakeholders?**

The WBLV uses the following process for stakeholders to provide input into the development of the WBLV WIOA Local Plan. Business, education, labor organizations, and community based organizations are represented on the WBLV and its Committees to assure input into the Plan with the following process.

1. Local Plan Goals are brought before the WBLV and its Committees for input.

Once the plan is approved, any changes are discussed with the WBLV and its Committees. The plan is advertised and sent to the PA Department of Labor and Industry for approval.

2. The Local Plan is discussed and feedback provided during WBLV Board and Committee meetings: Business-Education Partnership; Workforce Solutions, Accountability and Compliance; Business and Data; Youth; Finance; WBLV Executive Governance; Workforce Board Lehigh Valley Board meeting; and at the Chief Elected Officials meeting.
3. The Local Plan was provided to each of the Board members and the Consortium of Chief Elected Officials prior to its being posted for public comment.
4. The availability of the Local Plan for public comment is advertised in local newspapers, posted on the WBLV and PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley websites, and PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley satellite offices, with the ability for the public to email comments.
5. Announcements were made of the availability of the Local Plan on other websites such as counties and cities. Announcements were also provided to the One-Stop Partners, Community Based Organizations meetings, and at community, economic development and business organizations including the Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce, and Society for Human Resource Management/Lehigh Valley, Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation, and others.

The following outlines public comments received during the 30-day public comment period, along with WBLV responses.

| <b>Comment</b>  | <b>WBLV Response</b>   |
|---|--|
| Comment received during the 30-day Public Comment period, January 16, 2025 to February 14, 2025 related to the Local Plan was received from Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, Jillian Seitz, Chief Community and Regional Planner. | Nancy Dischinat, Executive Director, WBLV responded favorably on February 19, 2025, thanking Lehigh Valley Planning Commission as a partner. |