

Southwest Planning Region

Local Workforce Development Areas

Allegheny County

City of Pittsburgh

Southwest Corner

Tri-County

Westmoreland-Fayette

Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act

Multi-Year Regional Plan

PY2021 - PY2024

Effective: July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2025

Workforce Development Region: Southwest Planning Region

Effective Date: July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2025

Modifications Effective: July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2025

1.1. Identification of the region.

- Name of the Region: Southwest Planning Region
- Local workforce development areas that comprise the region:
 - Allegheny County Workforce Development Area (SW005)
 - City of Pittsburgh Workforce Development Area (SW095)
 - Southwest Corner Workforce Development Area (SW165)
 - Tri-County Workforce Development Area (SW110)
 - Westmoreland-Fayette Workforce Development Area (SW045)
- Four local workforce development boards (LWDBs) oversee these local areas:
 - **Three Rivers Workforce Development Board (TRWDB)**, also known as Partner4Work
 - Allegheny County Workforce Development Area
 - City of Pittsburgh Workforce Development Area
 - **Southwest Corner Workforce Development Board (SCWDB)**
 - **Tri-County Workforce Investment Board Inc.**, also known as Tri-County Workforce Development Board (TCWDB)
 - **Westmoreland-Fayette Workforce Development Board (WFWDB)**
- Southwest Region – Regional Committee Members
 - Robert Cherry, TRWDB
 - Mary Salony, TCWDB
 - Ami Gatts, SCWDB
 - Janet Ward, WFWDB
- Key Regional Planning Meeting Dates
 - November 5, 2020 (Regional Planning Meeting #1)
 - December 8, 2020 (Regional Planning Meeting #2)
 - January 12, 2021 (Regional Planning Meeting #3)
 - September 9, 2022 (Regional Plan Modifications Meeting #1)

1.2. Based on the analysis of the regional labor market and economic conditions, describe the region's workforce and economic development-oriented vision and goals.

The Southwest Planning Region shares the Governor's vision of serving Pennsylvania's businesses through the creation of a skilled workforce. We embrace the priority goals outlined in Pennsylvania's WIOA Combined State Plan, with their focus on 1.) Career Pathways and Apprenticeship; 2.) Sector Strategies and Employer Engagement; 3.) Youth; 4.) Continuous Improvement of the Workforce System; and 5.) Strengthening the One-Stop Delivery System.

The Southwest Planning Region recognizes the importance of a coordinated and innovative regional workforce development system. We strive to create a workforce system that presents a seamless face of public workforce throughout Southwest Pennsylvania but preserves local boards' flexibility to innovate in serving local workforce needs. We have developed the following regional goals, in alignment with the Governor's five key state goals and regional economic development priorities:

1. Enhance coordination between local boards

The Southwest Planning Region continues to strengthen regional coordination and collaboration. In February 2022, the Southwest Planning Region collaborated with numerous regional partners to apply to the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) Good Jobs Challenge. While our application was not awarded, this process enabled us to establish an updated vision for a more equitable, streamlined, and accessible workforce system that meets the needs of both job seekers and employers. During the application process, we set priorities for regional coordination focused on:

- **Recovery and Resilience:** Our region will increase its ability to sustain and recover from economic shocks by integrating employers into the development of a strong network of short- to mid-length training programs and stackable credentials. This system will be better able to react in real-time to employer and community needs. We have developed a wide range of partnerships to support diverse job opportunities and are focused on industries which will drive the regional economy. Together, we will ensure these industries have the talent available to continue to lead the local economy. We will codify lessons learned and understand why some interventions work better in some industries than in others. These lessons will prepare the system for responding to future shocks.
- **Equity:** Our region will increase economic opportunities for people of color, women, and those facing systemic barriers to employment. With our regional workforce development partners, we will focus on both the supply and demand sides of the labor market to ensure there is support for job seekers in and after training, and that employers create accessible career pathways. Our region will strengthen our recruitment efforts and barrier remediation to ensure training is available and accessible to historically underrepresented populations.
- **Improved Workforce Development System:** Our region will focus on continuous improvements to the existing workforce development system infrastructure, while developing a more cohesive regional workforce development network and creating significant workforce training opportunities aligned with industry demand.

- **Career Pathways and Talent Pipeline Development:** This will be addressed through an emphasis on building pathways into a wide-variety high-demand occupations, accessible without a 4-year college degree, through short-term training, apprenticeship, and other work-based training opportunities. As an example, the local boards in the Southwest Planning Region will support our partners in the Southwestern Pennsylvania New Economy Collaborative on an initiative to grow the region’s existing robotics and AI-related workforce training portfolio to reach beyond the typical urban core and Tier 1 universities, where it is currently concentrated. This initiative is being funded through the U.S. EDA Build Back Better program.

Examples of Regional Coordination:

The **PartnerUp** program is a career-readiness program that initially began as a pilot funded through Business Education Partnership (BEP) funding TRWDB received from the PA Department of Labor & Industry. Led by PNC Bank in partnership with a coalition of regional employers, this program offers an alternative path toward a professional career without the burden of student loan debt. Since its February 2018 launch, the program has created a talent pipeline of early career professionals ready to enter the workforce after high school graduation in entry-level roles. The program has been rolled out in over 50 high schools and to 6,000 students across the Southwest Planning Region and beyond, offering an in-school curriculum for participating junior and senior students. Throughout the program’s five-year existence, 16 partner employers have participated and offered students the chance to land positions in a variety of industries. PNC has offered roles at the company to over 100 graduates of the program with dozens of others landing at partner companies.

Through support from the **Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) Investments Supporting Partnerships in Recovery Ecosystems (INSPIRE) Initiative**, the Southwest Planning Region and its regional partners are working to build and expand upon programs, partnerships, and efforts across the region to address the human, economic, and health impacts of substance use disorders (SUD). This project intends to engage adults in recovery from SUD for at least 18 months in training, job placement, and retention activities. Another key component of this project is working with employers to establish and improve upon recovery friendly employment practices.

Registered Apprenticeships (RAs) are another opportunity for regional coordination. The Southwest Planning Region will continue to establish partnerships with current registered apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs, and form new partnerships with employers, education providers (including post-secondary and career and technical centers), labor organizations, and other stakeholders to increase the registered apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship opportunities in the region. To do this, our region will leverage our industry partnerships, local board memberships, and other connections to convene key stakeholders around apprenticeship. Our region will also ensure close coordination with Pennsylvania’s Apprenticeship & Training Office (ATO). This will include regular communication with the Western Region Apprenticeship & Training Representative (ATR), helping to ensure partners are aware of the apprenticeship information and resources available through ATO, and applying for additional funding through ATO and other grants to support apprenticeship expansion.

In addition, each local workforce development area in the region has a menu of training options that may be used, where appropriate, to support registered apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship. These may include:

- Individual Training Accounts (ITAs): ITA funds can be used to support the related technical instruction (RTI) component of an RA program, including tuition, fees, books, equipment, and other training-related costs.
- On-the-Job Training (OJT): OJT contracts with employers may be able to support on-the-job learning component of RA through wage reimbursements.
- Incumbent Worker Training (IWT): in accordance with WIOA regulations, IWT contracts with employers can support the cost of training and upskilling for existing employees who have been employed by the same business for a period of six months or longer.
- Customized Job Training (CJT): CJT may be able to assist RAs by supporting the cost of training designed to meet the needs of one or more employers.
- Supportive Services: Eligible individuals may be able to receive additional services that help them participate in a registered apprenticeship or pre-apprenticeship, which may include fees, books, supplies, childcare, transportation, tools, and uniforms.

Local boards in the Southwest Planning Region are currently partnering with registered apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs. For example, TRWDB partners with and supports Apprenti PGH, which creates apprenticeship opportunities in information technology with a focus on eliminating barriers to participation for individuals from underrepresented populations. TRWDB also partners with the Builders Guild of Western PA to support Introduction to the Construction Trades, which is a registered pre-apprenticeship program that guarantees placement into a RA for participants who successfully complete the program. In addition, the WFWDB promotes RA opportunities and the pathways they offer through its career awareness programs, local career and technology centers, and partnerships with community, education, training, and public partners. The WFWDB WIOA Title I provider coordinates RA testing through PA CareerLink® centers with the assistance of PA CareerLink® staff to streamline the process. As an additional example, TCWDB partners with and supports the Steamfitters Local 449 Union to recruit apprentices and provide funding for training new apprentices and increase the skills of incumbent union members. TCWDB promotes the apprenticeship career pathway with both employers and jobseekers both to create new apprenticeships as well as provide funding for current apprentices through the WIOA program. SCWDB has the Apprenticeship Readiness Program (ARP), which is aimed at recruiting and preparing nontraditional and diverse populations for building trades careers in Beaver County. This is a partnership between the SCWDB, Beaver County Building Trades, Beaver County Career and Technical Center (CTC), and Community College of Beaver County (CCBC), along with several community and social service groups. SCWDB is currently working with the Beaver County CTC to help them provide ARP training to their students through this program, with the goal that eventually students will be able to graduate having completed or nearly completed a Pre-Apprenticeship program and be ready to progress into an Apprenticeship program if they desire to do so.

A searchable list of the current active registered apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships in the region is available [here](#).

2. Streamline talent delivery and business services

More than half (54.3%) of the employed residents of Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Washington, and Westmoreland counties leave their county of residence to work. Twenty percent of Allegheny County employed residents leave Allegheny County to work.¹ Regional residents cross county lines for employment and regional employers draw their workforce from all of the counties in Southwest

¹ U.S. Census Bureau. (2019). Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD). Center for Economic Studies.

Pennsylvania. These regional labor market trends mean that the same employers may interface with multiple LWDBs. While each board has developed the policies and procedures that best meet the needs of the businesses and job seekers they serve, opportunities for coordination to reduce the administrative burden may exist. The Southwest Planning Region will consider these opportunities. A more complete explanation of this is evident in **Table 1** below.

Table 1. Where Workers are Living and Working in the Southwest Planning Region

County/Workforce Development Area	Percent of Workers Living and Working in the Area	Percent of Living Out of the Area but Working in the Area	Percent Living in the Area but Working Out of the Area
Three Rivers			
Allegheny County	80.0%	34.7%	20.0%
Tri County			
Butler County	42.7%	57.5%	57.3%
Armstrong County	27.2%	47.3%	72.8%
Indiana County	44.7%	50.1%	55.3%
Westmoreland Fayette			
Westmoreland County	43.9%	45.8%	56.1%
Fayette County	41.3%	40.8%	58.7%
Southwest Corner			
Beaver County	35.1%	49.8%	64.9%
Washington County	41.9%	55.3%	58.1%
Greene County	33.0%	62.6%	67.0%

Each local board faces some of the same issues in their areas, including how to most effectively orient job seekers to the system, how to best align services in the PA CareerLink® system, how to serve individuals with barriers to employment, and how to engage businesses in the system. We will examine ways to develop and share best practices for program delivery across our local areas and seek out innovations to consolidate messaging and amplify our impact. Recognizing that some job seekers cross county lines to access PA CareerLink® services, the local areas will work with PA CareerLink® One-Stop Operators and Site Administrators as appropriate to discuss customer flow and how to best meet customer needs.

Beginning in March 2020, challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic required workforce development areas and regions to expand infrastructure for delivering remote and virtual services to job seekers and employers. While health restrictions and other challenges imposed by the pandemic have been temporary, the improved capacity to provide remote and virtual services has enabled workforce development regions and areas to more permanently connect with job seekers, businesses, and partners outside of brick-and-mortar locations. The Southwest Planning Region will continue to use technology for improved regional communication, coordination, and collaboration among our local boards, one-stop center staff, and other partners to the system. Virtual regional hiring events, employer roundtables, job seeker workshops, and staff training/professional development are all examples of potential collaboration. In addition, our region will continue to promote SkillUp™ PA, which provides access to free, online job skills training to Pennsylvania residents. Broadband connections vary across counties in the Southwest Planning Region. Local boards will examine ways of addressing this challenge, such as partnering with local library systems, expanding Wi-Fi access at PA CareerLink® locations, and other options.

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

Given the region's aging workforce and the potential of area youth, investing in the future talent pipeline is a key area of focus for the planning region. Labor force participation among youth has also recovered to pre-pandemic levels more quickly compared to U.S. population overall. The labor force participation rate for U.S. civilians aged 16-19 was 37.2% in January 2023, compared to 36.2% in January 2020.² The total labor force participation rate for U.S. civilians was 62.4% in January 2023, which is below the 63.3% rate in January 2020.³ The Southwest Planning Region believes that youth must be exposed to a range of available careers to start on a career path to a sustainable future.

In accordance with the requirements under WIOA, local boards in the Southwest Planning Region have prioritized services to out-of-school youth (OSY). Work experience is a key component to the professional development and long-term success of these youth and young adults and creates talent pipelines for regional employers. The local boards in our region will share best practices, including techniques for identifying, recruiting, and engaging disconnected youth and the design and delivery of effective work experiences and internships for OSY. This will include best practices in the virtual and remote delivery of services and creation of work experience opportunities. For example, TRWDB, along with program partners, delivered the Learn & Earn summer youth employment program in 2020 by pivoting to a hybrid model of virtual/remote and in-person services and work experiences. More than 1,600 young adults participated in the program despite challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic. Best practices and lessons learned from this program will be shared regionally to help inform future programming.

The development of career pathways and sector strategies for youth are promising areas for collaboration between local boards. Each of the local boards in the Southwest Planning Region is working to engage youth in career exploration. The Southwest Planning Region will expand efforts to support such youth programming on a regional scale. As an example, each workforce area in our region has developed and implemented Business Education Partnership programs to strengthen connections between education and business, while enhancing work-based learning and work-readiness skills development in schools. As previously noted, the PartnerUp program led by PNC Bank, began as a part of Business Education Partnership programming and continues to expand to serve business and schools on a regional and national level. Also, the WFWDB is currently coordinating a program called Teacher In the Workplace (TIW) for Westmoreland County educators and businesses. Educators are exploring Manufacturing, Healthcare, Business Services, Technology, and the Trades to strengthen career readiness, pathway opportunities, and classroom instruction for students' future success. The Southwest Planning Region will utilize industry partnerships as another mechanism to support career exploration and career pathway development for youth and young adults.

Collaboration with higher education represents an opportunity to help prepare the region's workforce for the needs of employers. While each local board is partnering with representatives of higher education in their respective local areas, the Southwest Planning Region will explore ways to partner with higher education as a collective group. As a past example of regional collaboration, through a Workforce

² U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Labor Force Participation Rate - 16-19 Yrs. [LNS11300012], retrieved from FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis; <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/LNS11300012>, February 22, 2023.

³ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Labor Force Participation Rate [CIVPART], retrieved from FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis; <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/CIVPART>, February 22, 2023.

Innovation Fund (WIF) grant, WFWDB and TRWDB worked with Westmoreland County Community College and Community College of Allegheny County, respectively, to develop microcredentials along key career pathways. The curricula developed for these microcredentials continues to be implemented.

Regional Economic Development Goals

The Allegheny Conference on Community Development (ACCD), is a key regional economic development organization, which includes the Pittsburgh Regional Alliance, the Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce, and the Economy League of Greater Pittsburgh. The ACCD service area aligns with the Southwest Planning Region. ACCD released the report, *2020/2030 Next is Now: A 10 Year Vision of Vitality in the Pittsburgh Region*.⁴ The report notes that the regional economy has experienced slow growth compared to statewide growth in Pennsylvania and growth nationally. The report emphasizes making economic growth a priority and sets three core goals:

- **Thriving People:** Improve the standard of living by 25% for all populations. This goal includes two components, average wage and per capita GDP.
- **Quality of Place:** Reduce greenhouse gas emissions to meet Paris Accord targets and implement strategies toward UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- **Strong Economy:** Double the projected job growth, resulting in 75,000 new jobs. This measure prioritizes job growth over GDP growth to factor in talent attraction targets.

The Southwest Planning Region's work will align with this vision of a thriving population and strong economy in the Pittsburgh region, as we establish strategies and goals to meet the needs of youth, job seekers, workers, and businesses across the Region.

Sections 1.4 and 1.5 below describe in greater detail the efforts of the Southwest Planning Region to work with economic development organizations to achieve our strategic goals, including working with the ACCD, Engage!, and our Southwestern PA Partnership for Regional Economic Performance (PREP) network.

1.3 Describe the collection and analysis of regional labor market data (in conjunction with the commonwealth).

The Southwest Pennsylvania regional labor market enjoyed a period of job growth prior to April 2020 and is currently experiencing a slow, but somewhat steady, recovery with a continued focus on innovation and technology. The Region has historically had a declining population, but data shows that population in the region is stabilizing. A strong and collaborative regional approach, coupled with distinct local solutions, is required for successful matching of employer needs with job seeker skills in key sectors and priority occupations.

This part will review the salient regional labor market data, overlay the labor market demographics with the region's economic conditions, as articulated from the perspective of the LWDBs and their partner organizations, and then identify the key overarching in-demand employer needs.

Regional Labor Market Overview

⁴ Allegheny Conference on Community Development. (2020). *2020/2030 Next is Now: A 10 Year Vision of Vitality in the Pittsburgh Region*.

The Southwest Planning Region is composed of Allegheny County Workforce Development Area (WDA), City of Pittsburgh WDA, Southwest Corner WDA, Tri-County WDA, and Westmoreland-Fayette WDA. The region includes nine counties: Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Washington, and Westmoreland. Overall, the area is home to 2,490,130 people.⁵

Across the nine-county region, there was an increase of 6,279 (+0.25%) residents between the U.S. Census dates of 2010 and 2020. Allegheny, Butler, and Washington Counties were the only counties in the region that saw an increase in population during this time period. During this period the population across Pennsylvania grew by 2.4%. While the Pennsylvania population is projected to continue to grow, most of the growth is expected to occur within the Harrisburg corridor, while the Southwest Planning Region is projected to lose an additional 1% of the population over the next 10 years.⁶

The median age for Pennsylvania is 40.9 years. The median age for the Southwest Planning Region is 44.5 years, while the average age for the region is 43.9 years and ranges from 40.2 years in Indiana County to 47.2 years in Westmoreland County.⁷

Education

In Pennsylvania, 91.0% of residents (Ages 25-64) have received a high school diploma/equivalent and 32.3% have received a bachelor's degree or higher. Comparatively, 94.0% have residents in the Southwest Planning Region have received a high school diploma/equivalent and 35.3% have received a bachelor's degree or higher. In the Southwest Planning Region, the percentages of residents (age 25-64) with a high school diploma/equivalent range from 87.6% in Greene County to 95.4% in Butler County. The percentages of Southwest Planning Region residents with a bachelor's degree or higher range from 17.7% in Fayette County and Greene County to 42.5% in Allegheny County.⁸

Household Income

In 2021, the median household income for those living in Pennsylvania was \$68,931. The median household income for the region ranged from \$47,812 in Fayette County to \$77,902 in Butler County.⁹

Labor Force and Unemployment

An examination of unemployment across a five-year period (2018-2022) indicates that the average monthly unemployment in the region ranged from 5.1% in Butler County to 7.8% in Fayette County. This can be compared to the average monthly unemployment rate in the United States (5.0%) and in Pennsylvania (5.7%).¹⁰

⁵ US Census Bureau. (2020). Quick Facts Tables. Census.gov.

⁶ The Institute of State and Regional Affairs. (2014). 2010-2040 Pennsylvania Population Projections. The Center for Rural Pennsylvania, Penn State Harrisburg.

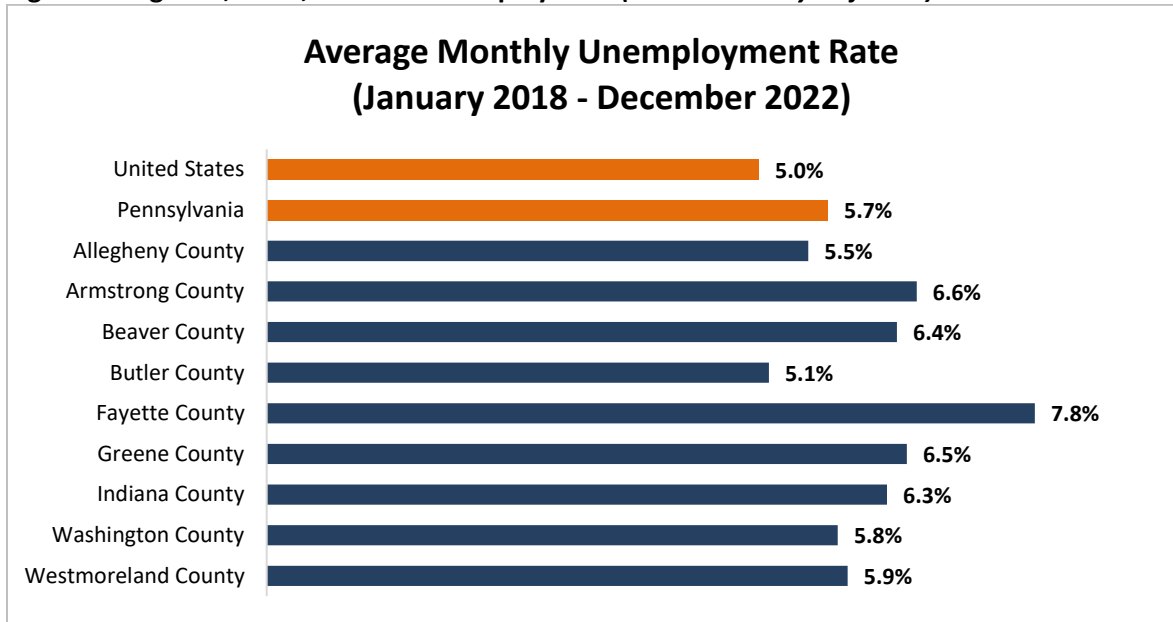
⁷ US Census Bureau. (2020). 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ US Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, 2021.

¹⁰ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Unemployment Rate in Allegheny County, retrieved from FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis

Figure 1. Regional, State, and U.S. Unemployment (Not Seasonally Adjusted)



Beginning in March 2020, statewide health restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic forced the closure or limited activities of many businesses across the Commonwealth. This setback, alongside other factors, contributed to an increase in unemployment in the region during 2020 (see Figure 2). Closures and job losses in March led to a spike in the April unemployment across the country (14.4%) and across Pennsylvania (15.6%). Regionally, unemployment ranged from 20% in Fayette County to 14.3% in Greene County in April. Unemployment rates have declined across the region since their peak in April 2020 and were between 4.7% (Fayette County) and 2.9% (Butler County) as of September 2022.

Figure 2. Post-Pandemic Regional Unemployment

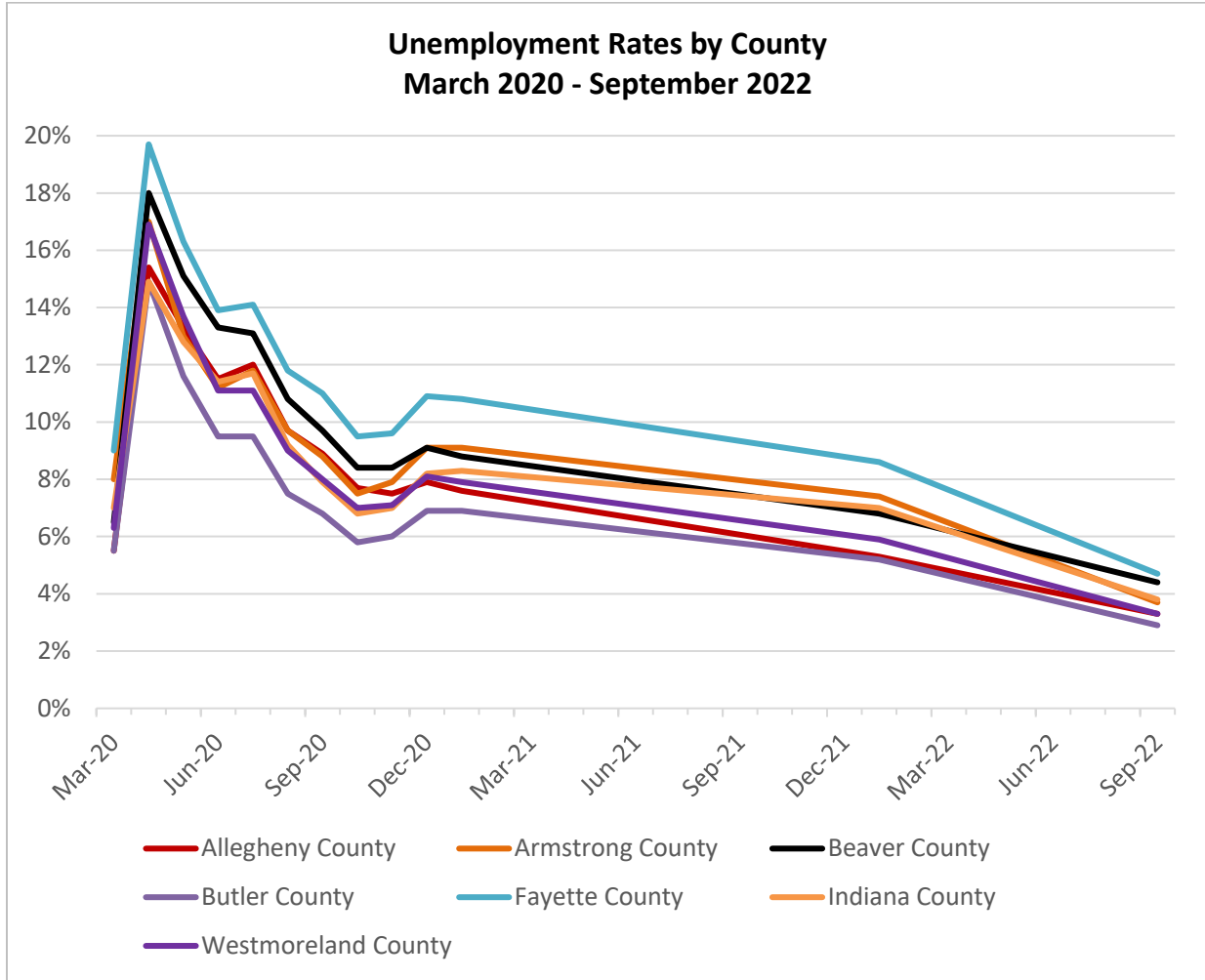


Table 2 shows the distribution of continued unemployment claims by industry and county in the Southwest Planning Region as of August 2022. The highest concentration of continued claims occurred in Trade, Transportation, and Utilities (ranging from 27.2% of continued claims in Allegheny County to 44.3% of continued claims in Greene County). Allegheny County and Westmoreland County had lower concentrations of continued claims in Construction compared to the rest of the region.¹¹

¹¹ Center for Workforce Information & Analysis, August 2022

Table 2. Continued Unemployment Claims by Industry (August 2022)

Industry	Percentage of Continued Unemployment Claims by County								
	Allegheny	Armstrong	Beaver	Butler	Fayette	Greene	Indiana	Washington	Westmoreland
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	27.2%	40.4%	26.5%	37.9%	39.5%	44.3%	34.4%	31.8%	34.5%
Professional and Business Services	17.7%	8.4%	16.2%	12.2%	8.5%	11.2%	9.4%	11.7%	13.7%
Education and Health Services	15.6%	13.8%	12.7%	10.3%	17.2%	12.7%	16.5%	14.7%	14.2%
Leisure and Hospitality	10.8%	3.7%	6.8%	7.9%	5.7%	6.8%	10.1%	6.1%	9.3%
Construction	10.4%	19.0%	21.2%	14.7%	12.7%	12.5%	15.3%	16.0%	13.0%
Financial Activities	6.3%	1.0%	6.4%	3.4%	1.9%	1.4%	2.0%	4.1%	2.0%
Manufacturing	4.3%	9.4%	5.2%	8.0%	8.1%	3.2%	4.3%	8.2%	8.2%
Information	2.4%	0.7%	0.9%	1.1%	0.4%	0.0%	0.6%	1.3%	0.9%
Other Services	2.3%	1.5%	1.3%	2.3%	1.0%	0.5%	2.1%	2.0%	1.4%
Industry Not Available	1.4%	1.0%	1.9%	0.9%	1.8%	1.2%	0.6%	1.9%	1.1%
Government	1.4%	0.5%	0.8%	0.7%	1.3%	0.6%	1.0%	1.0%	1.2%
Natural Resources and Mining	0.3%	0.6%	0.2%	0.6%	1.9%	5.5%	3.7%	1.2%	0.3%

Bold Numbers = Top three industries by percentage of continued claims in each county.

Population with Barriers

Poverty

Data from the ACS (5-Year Estimates, 2016-2020) indicated that 10.8% of Pennsylvanians ages 16 and older are living below the poverty level. The percentage of those 16 and older living below the poverty level in the region ranges from 14.8% in Fayette County to 7.3% in Butler County. Compared to the state, both Fayette (14.8%) and Indiana (14.4%) counties have a larger percentage of 16 and older individuals living below the poverty level. In Butler (7.3%), Washington (8.4%), Beaver (8.8%) and Westmoreland (8.8%) counties, a smaller percentage of individuals 16 and older are living below the poverty level compared to those across Pennsylvania.¹²

Re-Entry Population

Research conducted by The Brookings Institution, using the tax records of incarcerated individuals, indicated that for years prior to incarceration and for years following incarceration, offenders have a history of higher rates of unemployment and lower earnings when employed compared to those not incarcerated. Previously incarcerated individuals also tend to have lower education attainment, employment experience, and skill levels. These characteristics, in addition to employers' reluctance to

¹² US Census Bureau. (2020). 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

hire previously incarcerated individuals can lead to chronic unemployment and low wages.¹³

In 2021, more than 5,723 people in Pennsylvania and 728 people in the Southwest Planning Region were sentenced by a court to a state correctional facility. In the Southwest Planning Region, the number of individuals sentenced ranged from 242 in Allegheny County to 12 individuals in Greene County. Among the people sentenced to state correctional facilities in Pennsylvania, 13.5% (771 individuals) were under the age of 25, which is a decrease from 25.4% in 2011. Additionally, in 2021, 14,267 individuals were released from state correctional institutions across Pennsylvania and 11,039 of them were released on parole.¹⁴

Individuals with a Disability

Table 3 shows the disability and labor force status for the working age population (Ages 25-64) in the Southwest Planning Region. Approximately 11.4% (167,954 individuals) of the working age population in the Southwest Planning Region have a disability, which is slightly above the 11.3% rate in Pennsylvania. The percentage of working age individuals with a disability in the region ranges from 9.6% in Butler County to 17.5% in Fayette County. People with a disability experience higher unemployment rates and lower labor force participation rates across the region and state. For example, the unemployment rate for working age individuals with a disability in Pennsylvania was 12.8% compared to 4.7% for individuals without a disability. The labor force participation rate for working age individuals with a disability was 43.6% compared to 82.8% for individuals without a disability in Pennsylvania.¹⁵

Table 3. Disability & Labor Force Status of Working Age Population (Ages 25-64) by County

County	Total Population	Number of Individuals with a Disability	Percentage of Population with a Disability	Unemployment Rate		Labor Force Participation Rate	
				No Disability	Disability	No Disability	Disability
Allegheny	753,551	77,439	10.3%	4.2%	14.2%	84.1%	47.8%
Armstrong	38,064	5,530	14.5%	5.2%	11.0%	83.5%	39.7%
Beaver	96,833	12,316	12.7%	4.4%	13.9%	84.2%	43.3%
Butler	114,251	10,943	9.6%	4.1%	8.3%	82.9%	38.5%
Fayette	75,005	13,113	17.5%	5.8%	14.8%	79.2%	37.6%
Greene	20,207	3,340	16.5%	4.0%	7.5%	74.7%	33.8%
Indiana	52,053	6,756	13.0%	6.4%	14.6%	75.0%	41.2%
Washington	123,251	13,692	11.1%	4.7%	13.0%	83.0%	42.4%
Westmoreland	205,608	24,825	12.1%	4.2%	12.1%	83.9%	45.3%
PA Total	7,692,941	865,740	11.3%	4.7%	12.8%	82.8%	43.6%

Those with disabilities often face barriers to employment. A supplement to the July 2021 Current Population Survey (CPS) was sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor’s Chief Evaluation Office and focused on barriers to employment, prior work experience, career and financial assistance, and requested changes to the workplace by persons with disabilities. Forty-four percent of survey respondents with a disability who were not employed (unemployed or not in the workforce) identified at least one barrier to

¹³ Looney, A. & Turner, N. (March 2018). Work and opportunity before and after incarceration. The Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C.

¹⁴ Pennsylvania Department of Corrections Annual Statistical Report. (2021).

¹⁵ US Census Bureau. (2020). 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

employment. Of the respondents who identified at least one barrier to employment, 79.0% identified their own disability as a barrier to employment, 12.0% cited a lack of education or training, 10.3% responded that transportation was a barrier, and 9.9% cited the need for special features on the job as a barrier to employment.¹⁶

Pregnant or Parenting Youth/Young Adults

Teen pregnancy or childbearing can lead to increased social or economic costs for teen parents and their children.¹⁷ Teenage mothers experience lower high school graduation rates compared to women who do not give birth during adolescence.¹⁸ The children of teenage mothers are also more likely to drop out of high school, be incarcerated at some point during adolescence, give birth as a teenager, and face unemployment as a young adult.¹⁹

In 2019, 5,252 births in Pennsylvania were to teens 15 to 19 years of age. Of these births, 13.2% occurred within the Southwest Planning Region. Compared to the state (3.9%), a lower percentage of births were to teen mothers in Allegheny (2.4%), Beaver (3.5%), Butler (2.0%), Washington (3.2%) and Westmoreland (2.9%) counties. However, a higher percentage of births were to teen mothers ages 15 to 19 in Armstrong (4.4%), Fayette (6.2%), Indiana (4.0%), and Greene (4.0%) counties during that same time.²⁰

Single Parents

Single parents face a variety of challenges including multiple demands on their time. Single parents are often met with challenges, such the need for childcare and related expenses, that can negatively impact their ability to maintain a job or grow a career.²¹

Approximately 71,569 (30.1%) of households with children in the Southwest Planning Region are single parent households, compared to 32.5% in Pennsylvania. The percentages of households with children that are single parent households range from 20.9% in Butler County to 35.4% in Fayette County.²²

Substance Use Disorder (SUD)

Pennsylvania has identified opioid use as one of the Commonwealth's worst public health crises in a generation. Between January 2018 and October 2022, 76,975 doses of Naloxone were administered by EMS and there were 46,577 emergency department visits for opioid overdoses across the Commonwealth²³. Moreover, 68,861 individuals 12 years old and older who are living in the Southwest

¹⁶Bureau of Labor Statistics (March 2022). *Persons with a disability: Barriers to Employment, Type of Assistance, and Other Labor-Related Issues* - July 2021. https://www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/dissup_05012020.htm#:~:text=A%20person's%20own%20disability%2C%20lack,duties%20because%20of%20their%20disability. Retrieved 12/31/20.

¹⁷ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (November 2021). About Teen Pregnancy. <https://www.cdc.gov/teenpregnancy/about/index.htm>. Retrieved 12/20/2022.

¹⁸ Perper K, Peterson K, Manlove J. Diploma Attainment Among Teen Mothers. Child Trends, Fact Sheet Publication #2010-01: Washington, DC: Child Trends; 2010.

¹⁹ Hoffman SD. Kids Having Kids: Economic Costs and Social Consequences of Teen Pregnancy. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute Press; 2008.

²⁰ PA Department of Health. (2019). Enterprise Data Dissemination Informatics Exchange IEDDIE).

²¹ Lindholm, M. (2021). Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/2021/04/creative-strategies-from-single-parents-on-juggling-work-and-family>

²² US Census Bureau. (2020). 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

²³ Opendata PA, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Opioid Data Dashboard. <https://data.pa.gov/stories/s/9q45-nckt/>. Retrieved 1/4/2021.

Planning Region have been identified as having a substance use disorder. Pennsylvania data indicate that 1,258 individuals across the Region have died due to substance overdoses between 2012 and 2021²⁴.

Substance use disorder can be associated with worker absenteeism, a reduction in productivity, increased hospitalization costs, and higher unemployment. Additionally, it is estimated that substance use disorder is associated with 17% per person productivity loss. The productivity loss is associated with a loss in wages ranging from \$6,931,744 in Greene County to \$408,766,285 in Allegheny County.²⁵

Technology/Internet Access

Seeking employment has largely become a digital process, reliant on digital literacy and broadband access. U.S. Census data from 2021 indicated that 95.0% of U.S. households have a computer and 90.3 % of households have internet access, and 93.2 % of Pennsylvania households have a computer and 89.1% have internet access. **Table 4** indicates that the percentage of households across the Southwest Planning Region with a computer ranges from 94.3 % in Allegheny County to 87.4 % in Greene County and access to the internet ranges from 90.8% in Allegheny County to 80.5 % in Indiana County.

Table 4. Southwest Planning Region Computer and Internet Access, 2021

County	Percent of Households with a Computer	Percent of Households having Internet Access
Allegheny County	94.3%	90.8%
Butler County	93.6%	90.3%
Washington County	92.1%	89.6%
Beaver County	91.7%	87.3%
Westmoreland County	91.5%	87.7%
Fayette County	90.2%	85.2%
Indiana County	89.7%	80.5%
Armstrong County	88.1%	83.3%
Greene County	87.4%	81.8%

English Language Barrier

The percentage of the population who have indicated that they speak English less than ‘very well’ ranges from 2.3% of residents of Allegheny County to 0.5% of residents of Greene County.²⁶ Local boards in the Southwest Planning Region work closely with our Title II Adult Education partners to connect job seekers with English language learning and related programming for individuals in need of the services to support their education and employment goals.

²⁴ Opendata PA, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Opioid Data Dashboard. <https://data.pa.gov/Opioid-Related/Estimated-Accidental-and-Undetermined-Drug-Overdos/apm5-9wfy>. Retrieved 1/4/2021.

²⁵ Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Opendata PA, Opioid Data Dashboard. <https://data.pa.gov/stories/s/enh4-nazt>

²⁶ US Census Bureau. (2020). 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Regional Employer Overview

Between 2Q 2021 and 2Q 2022, there was a 2.6% increase in the employment volume of the Southwest Planning Region. However, the region is projected to experience decreases in total employment over the next one- and five-year periods. **Table 5** displays employment projections in the region by industry. Between 2022-2027, the largest amounts of job loss are projected to occur in Retail Trade (-12,033 jobs), Manufacturing (-5,503 jobs), Construction (-3,487 jobs), and Finance and Insurance (-3,436 jobs). The largest amounts of job growth are projected to occur in Accommodation and Food Services (+4,603 jobs), Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation (+2,940 jobs), and Healthcare and Social Assistance (+2,258 jobs).

Table 5. Employment and Projections in the Southwest Planning Region by Industry²⁷

Industry	Employment (2Q 2022)	Employment Change (2021-2022)	Projected Employment Change (2022-2023)	Projected Employment Change (2022-2027)
Health Care and Social Assistance	205,236	-2.6%	0.2%	1.1%
Retail Trade	125,346	1.4%	-2.0%	-9.6%
Educational Services	92,757	1.1%	-0.2%	-0.9%
Accommodation and Food Services	92,062	17.5%	1.0%	5.0%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	87,582	0.9%	-0.5%	-2.5%
Manufacturing	85,982	3.4%	-1.3%	-6.4%
Construction	69,732	2.4%	-1.0%	-5.0%
Finance and Insurance	55,426	-4.9%	-1.3%	-6.2%
Transportation and Warehousing	54,601	4.3%	-0.3%	-1.3%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	53,156	4.3%	0.2%	0.9%
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	52,543	3.5%	-0.4%	-2.0%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	38,638	10.0%	-1.2%	-5.9%
Public Administration	36,581	-0.9%	-1.1%	-5.5%
Wholesale Trade	35,655	2.2%	-1.2%	-5.8%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	24,097	25.6%	2.3%	12.2%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	17,864	4.6%	-1.0%	-4.9%
Information	16,869	2.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	10,642	-1.9%	0.1%	0.3%
Utilities	9,016	-0.2%	-2.3%	-11.2%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	5,242	5.7%	-1.5%	-7.1%
Total - All Industries	1,169,030	2.6%	-0.5%	-2.2%

Location Quotients are a valuable way of quantifying how concentrated a particular industry, cluster, occupation, or demographic group is in a region as compared to the nation. Per JobsEQ, location quotients can reveal what makes a particular region “unique” in comparison to the national average. The location quotients for the 2021 key industry clusters as delineated by JobsEQ are provided in **Table 6** for the U.S., Pennsylvania and for the Southwest Planning Region.²⁸

²⁷ JobsEQ Q2 2022

²⁸ JobsEQ Occupation Snapshot, 2021

Table 6. Location Quotient Comparisons for U.S., Pennsylvania, and the Southwest Planning Region

NAICS Title	US	Pennsylvania	Southwest Planning Region
Management of Companies and Enterprises	1	1.52	2.25
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	1	1.04	2.13
Utilities	1	1.08	1.42
Health Care and Social Assistance	1	1.21	1.23
Finance and Insurance	1	1.1	1.21
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	1	0.95	1.06
Other Services (except Public Administration)	1	1.06	1.05
Retail Trade	1	1	1.04
Construction	1	0.9	1.01
Educational Services	1	0.97	0.99
Transportation and Warehousing	1	1.18	0.95
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1	0.83	0.93
Accommodation and Food Services	1	0.83	0.93
Manufacturing	1	1.13	0.91
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	1	0.75	0.87
Wholesale Trade	1	0.92	0.8
Information	1	0.77	0.73
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	1	0.82	0.7
Public Administration	1	0.8	0.64
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	1	0.61	0.27

Comparatively, the data indicate the Southwest Planning Region is more concentrated than the nation or the state in the following areas: Management of Companies and Enterprises; Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction; Utilities; Construction; Retail Trade; Finance and Insurance; Professional, Scientific and Technical Services; and Health Care and Social Assistance.

An examination of the change in jobs between 2022 and 2027 projects a decrease of 26,215 (-2.2%) in the number of jobs available across the Southwest Planning Region. See **Table 7** for the change in jobs by county.

Table 7. Change in the Number of Jobs, 2022-2027 by County

Region	2022 Jobs	2027 Jobs	Change	% Change
Allegheny County	693,943	680,496	-13,447	-1.9%
Westmoreland County	138,792	134,962	-3,830	-2.8%
Indiana County	29,778	27,776	-2,002	-6.7%
Beaver County	56,140	54,187	-1,953	-3.5%
Fayette County	40,323	38,583	-1,740	-4.3%
Washington County	90,166	88,950	-1,216	-1.3%
Armstrong County	17,519	16,714	-805	-4.6%
Greene County,	12,437	11,782	-655	-5.3%
Butler County	89,931	89,364	-567	-0.6%
Total	1,169,029	1,142,814	-26,215	-2.2%

In addition, the data presented in **Table 8**, indicate continued projected growth through 2027 in the entirety of the Southwest Planning Region in the areas of Personal Care and Service (18.1%), Food Preparation and Serving (16.1%), Farming, Fishing and Forestry (9.7%), Computer and Mathematical (6.3%), Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports and Media (5.2%), Management (3.9%), Transportation and Material Moving (3.9%), Business and Financial Operations (3.7%), and Construction and Extraction (1%).²⁹

²⁹ JobsEQ Q2 2022

Table 8. Job Growth and Loss Projections (2022-2027) by Occupation and County

Description	Allegheny County	Armstrong County	Beaver County	Butler County	Fayette County	Greene County	Indiana County	Washington County	Westmoreland County
Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	2,386	35	176	470	99	15	23	317	541
Healthcare Support Occupations	1,740	13	122	347	74	20	27	368	225
Personal Care and Service Occupations	1,254	9	51	178	27	7	14	172	235
Educational Instruction and Library Occupations	393	-13	-45	75	-42	-19	-66	30	-64
Community and Social Service Occupations	334	2	17	50	2	-4	-2	43	76
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations	193	-5	-8	12	-18	-2	-20	65	-23
Computer and Mathematical Occupations	72	-14	-24	25	-31	-7	-39	1	-55
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations	-25	-9	-4	-6	-10	-2	-21	-8	-12
Protective Service Occupations	-51	-10	-36	14	-59	-56	-53	5	-23
Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations	-170	-5	-34	-12	-10	-4	-19	-11	-34
Legal Occupations	-199	-4	-10	-5	-11	-4	-11	-10	-21
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	-372	-22	-56	-5	-42	-12	-46	-39	-111
Management Occupations	-499	-56	-84	-21	-95	-51	-132	-73	-163
Architecture and Engineering Occupations	-551	-13	-56	-42	-46	-14	-57	-52	-94
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	-708	-45	-121	-39	-92	-41	-114	-77	-194
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	-810	-50	-60	35	-77	-19	-79	-35	-133
Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	-889	-47	-171	-26	-157	-34	-154	-131	-346
Construction and Extraction Occupations	-1,074	-76	-248	-69	-86	-138	-121	-135	-277
Business and Financial Operations Occupations	-1,244	-38	-87	-65	-78	-25	-113	-84	-190
Production Occupations	-1,780	-109	-348	-359	-218	-46	-213	-353	-854
Sales and Related Occupations	-4,305	-171	-477	-533	-460	-99	-387	-567	-1,194
Office and Administrative Support Occupations	-7,770	-191	-503	-675	-449	-129	-448	-724	-1,245
Total	-13,447	-805	-1,953	-567	-1,740	-655	-2,002	-1,216	-3,830

Table 9 provides commuting data. Other than in Allegheny County and Butler County, there are a greater number of people who are traveling outside of their county of residence than there are people traveling into their county for employment purposes. All of the counties, except Greene County, have some form of public bus transportation. While many counties may have a form of public transportation, it may be in limited areas. For example, Butler County has public bus transportation but not in Cranberry Township. Cranberry Township is one of the most populated areas in Butler County and many of the residents work in the City of Pittsburgh (Allegheny County).

Table 9. Commuting Data by County in the Southwest Planning Region

County	Incoming Commuters	Outgoing Commuters
Allegheny County	216,934	101,986
Armstrong County	6,282	18,708
Beaver County	23,247	43,459
Butler County	43,035	42,702
Fayette County	12,781	26,348
Greene County	6,419	7,774
Indiana County	11,948	14,672
Washington County	42,318	47,428
Westmoreland County	52,073	78,903

1.4. Describe the regional service strategies aimed at achieving the vision and goals established for the region.

A key strategy for achieving our vision and goals focuses on building strong relationships with employers in our region. The Business Service Teams (BST) across each local area provide PA CareerLink® services through personal visits and ongoing PA CareerLink® online support. They connect with the local Chambers of Commerce and Economic Development agencies to keep pace with developments within the region. These BSTs regularly meet and communicate with each other to build relationships across the region. The Southwest Planning Region recognizes the importance of small businesses in the region and focuses attention on connecting them with the services offered through PA CareerLink® and industry partnerships. BSTs are often composed of members from EARN, local community colleges, economic development organizations, and other appropriate partner and community organizations.

Site Administrators, Supervisors of the Business Services Teams, and Account Representatives will work to identify regional employer relationships that will prove critical to the success of the BSTs. These relationships will then be cultivated through individualized attention from Account Representatives, invitations to attend open houses and symposiums or events hosted by the various PA CareerLink® offices, and a menu of services available for business engagement, including training funds.

The region uses the generic term, "Account Representative," to identify individuals who provide PA CareerLink® services to employers, both large and small, and are members of their respective BSTs. The Account Representatives are employed by all the partners, not just Title I or the LWDB controlled funds. Additionally, each respective area has PA Bureau of Workforce Partnership & Operation (BWPO) employees performing this function depending on classification. These individuals are supported by Wagner-Peyser funds. Account Representatives from across funding streams work together to build relationships with businesses in the communities.

The Account Representative will make personal visits to employers in their respective area, and the employer will work individually with their personalized Account Representative. Each employer will be given an employer packet. This packet explains all the services that the PA CareerLink® can provide including but not limited to contact information, an OJT informational flier, labor market information, tax credit information, Unemployment Compensation workshops, and current job fairs, trainings, and presentations.

Employers will be able to complete PA CareerLink® registration on their own or contact the PA CareerLink® for assistance from a staff member. Job orders can then be placed on the PA CareerLink® website once the employer has been approved, where it can be viewed by thousands of interested job seekers. Recruitment assistance will be offered to employers in terms of promoting their recruitment events through advertisement at the PA CareerLink®, and resumes can be collected on their behalf. Recruitments and screening interviews can also be held on site at the PA CareerLink®. Additionally, labor market information will be available to employers including wage data, Equal Employment Opportunity compliance, industry and occupation projections, and new hire reporting guidelines. Employers can also receive information regarding the local and regional high priority occupations, receive information on State and Federal tax credits, or guidance concerning Federal Bonding.

Local areas within the region have implemented additional data tracking measures beyond those required by the law to understand in real time whether the system is adding value to local businesses. The success of the PA CareerLink® system in working with employers is measured in some areas by the number of job orders, placements, work-based training, and any job fairs that can be set up for the employer. Local areas also consider the provision of additional business services to be key factors for the employers with which they work. This can include but not be limited to programs that provide cohort training for employers at a reduced cost, information on low interest non-traditional business micro-loans, grant research, technical assistance, and government procurement opportunities.

Industry partnerships and sector strategies represent an additional opportunity for business engagement in the region. Each local board in the region pursues sector strategies in industries such as Manufacturing, Healthcare, Energy, and Construction. Observing the overlap in these sectors, the Southwest Planning Region will explore opportunities to align local efforts into a region-wide effort. \

In addition to industry partnerships on a regional scale, local boards have developed sector strategies and industry partnerships in line with their labor markets. TCWDB has industry partnerships in Healthcare, Manufacturing, and Information Technology (IT) and is currently developing strategies for Transportation & Logistics and Agriculture. TRWDB manages industry partnerships in Construction, Financial Services, Healthcare, Information Technology, and Manufacturing. WFWDB focuses its industry partnerships on Healthcare, Manufacturing, and Logistics and Transportation. SCWDB leads partnerships with Building and Construction Trades, Advanced Manufacturing, and Healthcare industries. As we explore regional

collaboration, we will work to build on existing successes rather than creating programs from scratch.

Another regional strategy will be to strengthen our connections and engagement with existing region-wide initiatives that align with our vision and goals. For example, the Greater Pittsburgh Metals Manufacturing Community (GPMMC) is a region-wide partnership that pursues sector strategies in Manufacturing. The partnership spans a twenty-county area including parts of Pennsylvania and West Virginia, and includes 1,636 metal manufacturing establishments that employ over 63,000 people and contribute \$2.1 billion in exports each year. GPMMC responds to a mismatch between the skills that manufacturing employers' need and the regional workforce's skills. The regional partnership works to facilitate industry-led development of a common curriculum for middle-skilled occupations as the foundation for new training programs, promote awareness of employment opportunities and shift perceptions among students and parents, and expand apprenticeships, internships and community college offerings for high-skills, high-wage metal jobs.

The Pittsburgh region is fortunate to have an education environment that is both diverse and deep in post-high school opportunities for credentialing, including 88 regional universities and post-secondary career, technical and vocational schools. These organizations together confer more than 45,000 degrees annually, including 12,000 technology degrees and certificates.³⁰ The Southwest Planning Region is currently exploring ways to align efforts regarding higher education initiatives and increased demand for skilled labor driven by the aforementioned cracker plant and other developments in the region. This will include coordination with post-secondary Perkins partners, who are required one-stop system partners in each local workforce area. Further, each local board works closely with our Title II – Adult Education partner programs, which are core one-stop system partners. Further, the Southwest Planning Region will strengthen connections with community colleges in our region, as an important resource for education and training.

Expanding access to registered pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship opportunities will also be an important component of our regional strategy. Section 1.2 discusses current examples and ways in which the LWDBs in our region are developing and implementing apprenticeship programming, including programs in information technology, construction, and other industries. The Southwest Planning Region will continue exploring ways we can partner with training providers, employers, and the Commonwealth's Apprenticeship & Training Office (ATO) to expand apprenticeships in the region, including ways to connect women, people of color, and other populations to apprenticeship opportunities. This may include utilizing the menu of training options (ITA, OJT, CJT, and IWT) and supportive services outlined in Section 1.2 to support apprenticeship, ensuring apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeships are leveraged by industry partnerships when appropriate, applying for additional funding from ATO and other entities to support apprenticeship in our region, and ensuring job seekers, employers, and other stakeholders are aware of the information and resources available through ATO. Our region will also consider ways of facilitating stronger connections between apprenticeship programs and PA CareerLink®. These may include: 1.) Encouraging employers/sponsors to post open RA jobs on the PA CareerLink® website; 2.) Making information available to PA CareerLink® customers about the process of how/when to apply to RAs; 3.) Encouraging local RAs to have their programs included on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL); 4.) Hosting informational sessions to educate RA sponsors about the funding and other resources available through PA CareerLink®; or 5.) Hosting job fairs that lead to RA opportunities. Our region will also ensure PA CareerLink® staff take advantage of training and resources offered through ATO and coordinate with our regional ATO representative to conduct additional apprenticeship related training as needed.

³⁰ Pittsburgh Regional Alliance (2020)

As discussed, Intro to the Construction Trades, which was developed in partnership between TRWDB and the Builders Guild of Western PA, is a pre-apprenticeship that has helped to build a path to registered apprenticeships and employment for people of color across a wide range of occupations in the Construction industry. Additionally, TRWDB partners with the A. Philip Randolph Institute (APRI) Breaking the Chains of Poverty program, which has also helped to prepare people of color for careers in the construction and building trades. This program is also able to guarantee placement into a registered apprenticeship for individuals who successfully complete the program.

As part of the regional efforts of SCWDB's Building and Construction Industry Partnership, the trades send a list of enrolled apprentices to the SCWDB director, who then distributes to the other regional directors, so that they may check if any enrolled apprentices are eligible to receive WIOA funding and services in their respective workforce development areas. The Building and Construction IP has also hosted several Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion trainings during partnership meetings to train members on how to recruit and retain apprentices from underrepresented populations.

Another opportunity to support registered apprenticeship programs is by promoting the Registered Apprenticeship (RA) Navigator Program, which is an apprenticeship program that trains people to develop and manage apprenticeship programs. Registered in the State of Pennsylvania, RA Navigators help grow the apprenticeship ecosystem through regional partnerships and provide technical assistance to unions, employers, industry associations, community organizations, training providers, and the workforce system. The one-year apprenticeship program includes 2,000 hours of on-the-job training (OJT) plus 144 hours of Related Technical Instruction (RTI). The program also uses online collaboration platforms to support the RTI, facilitate discussions, and provide additional resources. The SCWDB's Strategic Workforce Outreach Coordinator is currently enrolled in the RA Navigator Program.

Across each of these strategies, our region will prioritize equitable and inclusive programming. As discussed in Section 1.2, our region will work to improve access to training and employment opportunities to women, people of color, and individuals with systemic barriers to employment through outreach, recruitment, and barrier remediation services. Our region will also prioritize job quality as a key component for improving outcomes for workers and employers. This will include consideration of multiple job quality factors in addition to wage, such as health insurance, retirement, stable work schedules, paid leave, and other criteria. The Southwest Planning Region will identify potential job quality and equity measurement tools, such as Working Metrics or Vibrant Pittsburgh's (VP) Vibrant Index, that can be made available to partner employers to evaluate their job quality and equity status and to assess areas of improvement.

The Southwest Planning Region works with the Allegheny Conference on Community Development (ACCD) to connect workforce and economic development efforts. Further, our collaborative effort includes working through the Southwest PA Partnership for Regional Economic Performance (PREP) Network. All LWDBs are non-funded members. This membership includes interaction, sharing, referral for services and working on regional initiatives, such as the Greater Pittsburgh Metal Manufacturing Community. We will continue to pursue opportunities to be more involved in regional Southwestern PREP activities, including referrals and outreach to employers on workforce development items moving forward.

A further description on how local boards engage with PREP and other Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) programming is available in Section 1.5. A detailed description on how local boards will coordinate to serve special populations and individuals with barriers to employment is

available in Section 1.6.

1.5. Describe the development and implementation of sector initiatives for in-demand industry sectors or occupations for the region.

As discussed, industry partnerships and sector strategies are a core component to effective business engagement in the Southwest Pennsylvania Region. Each local board in our region pursues strategies for engaging employers with a focus on in-demand industries. As an example, SCWDB leads industry partnerships in Construction/Building Trades, Advanced Manufacturing, and Healthcare. TCWDB has industry partnerships in Healthcare, Manufacturing, and Information Technology (IT) and is currently developing strategies for Transportation & Logistics and Agriculture. TRWDB continues to develop and manage industry partnerships in Construction, Education, Financial Services, Healthcare, Information Technology, Manufacturing, Public Sector, Retail & Hospitality, and Transportation & Logistics. WFWDB focuses on Hospitality and Tourism, Logistics, and Transportation.

These sector strategies and industry partnership efforts have led to the development of occupational training programs that lead to quality jobs and apprenticeship opportunities in the respective industries. For example, TRWDB has developed signature training programs connected to industry partnerships, including Bankwork\$, which is national training model leading to entry-level employment in the Banking and Financial Services industry., As discussed, Intro to the Construction Trades, delivered in close partnership between TRWDB and the Builders Guild of Western PA, is a pre-apprenticeship program that guarantees placement into a registered apprenticeship upon successful completion.

The Southwest Planning Region will continue to partner with organizations to create and expand apprenticeship opportunities in the region, including through Industry Partnership work, where appropriate. For example, the National Tooling and Machining Association (NTMA) coordinates registered apprenticeship opportunities focusing on manufacturing throughout the Southwest Region. There are several apprenticeship opportunities that center on construction across the region provided by the Builders Guild of Western PA, Carpenters, Western Pennsylvania Operating Engineers, and others. Our region will also work to build apprenticeship opportunities in non-traditional sectors, such as information technology and healthcare. Section 1.2 highlights a current partnership between TRWDB and Apprenti PGH to make information technology apprenticeships accessible to underrepresented populations.

The Southwest Planning Region also works to engage with ongoing region-wide programs and initiatives. As an example, the Southwest Pennsylvania Partnership for Regional Economic Performance (PREP) consists of the economic development partners of the nine-county Southwest PREP region working together to organize and achieve economic results. PREP partners offer one-on-one counseling, specialized workshops, online training, and financial incentives to new businesses and existing companies looking to grow. Each regional PREP team works together to coordinate the resources and services offered by local economic development service providers, including Local Development Districts (LDDs), Industrial Resource Centers (IRCs), Industrial Development Corporations (IDCs), and Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs). In addition, the PREP funded partners have involved the four LWDBs to continue efficient and effective coordination of workforce and economic development.

The local boards in our region also plan to coordinate and collaborate with Engage! program partners. Engage! is a PA DCED business retention and expansion program designed to interact with targeted companies. Engage! works to retain existing businesses in a community and to help them grow and

expand by building relationships with business owners or key decision makers and economic and workforce development partners. Engage! programs work closely with businesses to:

- Identify needs and match resources to help existing businesses and industries address their challenges to become more competitive and successful.
- Demonstrate to local businesses and industries that the community recognizes and depends on their contributions to the local/state economy.
- Build business and community capacity to sustain growth and development.
- Understand and address the common themes articulated by PA businesses in order to drive policy and the menu of PA DCED and partner services for long range business retention and expansion efforts.

As an additional example of coordination with economic development, the SCWDB is a member of the Beaver County Action Team (BCAT) along with representatives from the Beaver County Corporation for Economic Development, Beaver County Chamber of Commerce, Beaver County Regional Council of Governments, Beaver County Commissioners, and the Community College of Beaver County. This team is leveraging workforce and economic development resources to attract new businesses to the area, retain and support expansion of existing businesses and foster new business creation through entrepreneurship programs. The SCWDB and Title I service provider in Washington and Greene counties have also participated in the Greene County COVID Economic Development Task Force.

As noted, the Southwest Planning Region will also work to more closely connect with other sector-focused, region-wide initiatives, such as the Greater Pittsburgh Metals Manufacturing Community (GPMMC), to support and ensure alignment between these initiatives and the strategies and services of the public workforce development system.

1.6. Describe how the region will connect employer labor force requirements and occupational demands with the region's labor force, including individuals with barriers to employment.

Discussed in Section 1.2, the Allegheny Conference on Community Development released the report, *2020/2030 Next is Now: A 10 Year Vision of Vitality in the Pittsburgh Region*. The development of report was led by a 35-member steering committee of regional leaders and was informed by obtaining feedback from 1,000 stakeholders in ACCD's 10-county region, as well as a summit of 1,000 stakeholders during summer 2019. The report notes a key regional challenge is that the economy has experienced slow growth compared to statewide growth in Pennsylvania and growth nationally. The report emphasizes making economic growth a priority and highlights several strategies, including but not limited to scaling talent attraction and retention efforts; removing barriers to opportunity to ensure people are not excluded from the benefits of increased economic growth; and creating a regional investment and growth environment that encourages business investment, job creation, high quality of place and opportunity for all.

Addressing barriers to employment and connecting individuals to quality career opportunities is core to the work of the Southwest Planning Region. Local boards within the region seek to serve special populations, such as veterans, and individuals with barriers to employment, including low-income individuals, recipients of public assistance, individuals who are basic skills deficient, out-of-school youth, and the re-entry population. Through the PA CareerLink® offices, the Southwest Planning Region aligns programming to meet the state and federal requirements for priority of service; more than 51% of those served will be priority of service populations under WIOA. The following are examples of how the Southwest Planning Region will continue to implement strategies for serving individuals with barriers to

employment:

Veterans

Veterans receive priority of service at PA CareerLink® offices, meaning that a veteran or qualified spouse receives priority access to services and training opportunities. Additionally, Title I staff within the PA CareerLink® system work closely with Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVER) in each local area. The LVER provide services geared specifically towards veterans, including intensive job development activities, the initiation of referrals to social services, and regular follow-up to ensure that the veteran receives the support needed. Additionally, the LVER coordinates with local veteran service providers, provides information about and referral to veterans programs, and reviews and analyzes the veterans program to ensure compliance with veteran standards. Our region will consider possibilities for future regional collaboration to effectively serve veterans.

Low-Income Individuals and Recipients of Public Assistance

Low-income individuals and recipients of public assistance are identified at the point of entry at local PA CareerLink® offices and informed of their entitlement to priority of service. In order to better serve this population, local boards within the Southwest Planning Region will determine ways to strengthen the partnerships between Title I WIOA services and TANF Employment Advancement and Retention Network (EARN) providers. Local boards recently collaborated with the PA Department of Human Services (DHS) on developing and implementing re-designed TANF EARN and Work Ready program models, shifting toward a more holistic service model that works to meet both the workforce and human service needs of individuals. Updates to these programs include:

- Expanded services beyond the Work First approach to promote more access to education and barrier remediation, recognizing education is often required for family-sustaining jobs.
- Incorporation of counseling services and a stronger case management/coaching component to provide consistent, comprehensive support.
- An extended timeframe to provide retention services to help navigate the transition into the workforce and address elements of the “benefits cliff.”
- A new focus on people who have needed TANF the longest and often face significant barriers. The Work Ready programs will now be serving the extended TANF population, and DHS is revising policies to increase flexibility for serving this population.
- Revised program evaluation measures and pay-for-performance items to reflect and incentivize long-term outcomes.

Additionally, WIOA OSY, ISY, and TANF Youth Development Fund programs each set income eligibility requirements to ensure services are reaching individuals who are low income and/or individuals with other barriers to employment. Further, each local workforce area sets a self-sufficiency wage standard, as a target entry-level wage for participants served. This standard serves as a guide for service delivery and job placement, to help focus on training and jobs that lead to economic self-sufficiency for the participant.

Individuals with Disabilities

Eligible individuals who self-identify as having a disability are referred to the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) staff at PA CareerLink® for additional services. Eligible OVR customers can receive vocational counseling and guidance, vocational education, restoration, training, job placement, and

individualized supportive services. Job seekers with a disability are also served through Title I staff at the PA CareerLink®. This dual enrollment would be more effective and would better serve job seekers and employers with increased data sharing from OVR and enhanced program alignment. The Southwest Planning Region will work with our OVR partners to determine additional opportunities for partnership and coordination moving forward.

As a core partner, OVR has the ability to collaborate with the LWDB to serve individuals with disabilities. Eligible OVR customers receive multiple, individualized services that may include but not be limited to diagnostic, vocational counseling and guidance, vocational evaluation, restoration, training, and job placement. Under WIOA, OVR has the ability to provide both eligible and potentially eligible in-school youth with disabilities with pre-employment transition services (PETS) to better prepare these students for life after high school. OVR also provides multiple services to the business community designed to assist businesses with onboarding pre-screened qualified employees with disabilities.

Re-Entry Population

As noted in our regional analysis, previously incarcerated individuals and individuals with a criminal background experience barriers to obtaining and retaining employment. Each local workforce area in the Southwest Planning Region has developed specialized workforce programming to assist these individuals in overcoming barriers. TCWDB, for example, is currently piloting a youth re-entry project in Butler County for young adults, ages 18-24 who were incarcerated or were subjected to the justice system. TCWDB is partnering with several county agencies, PA CareerLink®, and other partners to connect participants to a variety of services, including case management, financial literacy, adult education, and certification programs. The program also facilitates connections to PA CareerLink® for additional career, training, and job placement services upon program completion.

TRWDB has developed and implemented several federal and state funded re-entry programs. These include the Pathway Home Program, delivered in partnership with the Allegheny County Jail Collaborative. Pathway Home assists returning citizens in the reintegration process and works to reduce recidivism through pre- and post-release services in occupational training, career-specific work readiness activities, and meaningful employment opportunities by leveraging the public workforce system's extensive employer networks. In October 2022, TRWDB awarded a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice to further support high-quality pre- and post-release career services to people incarcerated in the Allegheny County Jail.

The WFWDB coordinates a youth re-entry program, called locally as the Westmoreland-Fayette Youth Re-Entry Program, that aims to enhance re-entry strategies for young adults ages 18 to 24 who have been involved in the juvenile justice system. Comprehensive case management and supportive services are delivered in tandem with mentoring support including facilitating access to vocational training, education, post-secondary information, soft-skills training, and transitional employment to increase job skills and readiness. In the event that the returning youth does not have a high school diploma, youth will be worked back into the school system or connected to a local GED/remediation program. A primary goal of the program is to help participants gain unsubsidized, career-track employment that affords self-sustaining income. Ideally, the gains of participants will result in long-term community benefits of higher employment, lower recidivism, and increased public safety.

Substance Use Disorder (SUD)

As discussed in Section 1.2, the Southwest Planning Region, with SCWDB as the lead applicant, has been awarded funding through the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) Investments Supporting Partnerships in Recovery Ecosystems (INSPIRE) Initiative. Through this initiative, the local boards in the Southwest Planning Region and our regional partners, are working to build and expand programs, partnerships, and efforts across the region to address the impacts of SUD. This project will engage adults in recovery from SUD for at least 18 months in training (including Certified Recovery Specialist training), job placement, and retention activities. The project will also partner with employers to establish and improve upon recovery friendly employment practices.

Adult Education

Individuals with basic skills deficiencies who enroll in Title I services through PA CareerLink® will be co-enrolled with Title II Adult Basic Education where appropriate. PA CareerLink® staff identify individuals who are basic skills deficient through an intake process, then refer these customers to appropriate literacy programs, including GED review classes, ESL, and math and English remediation courses.

Employer Engagement and Industry Partnerships

Recognizing that employer skills needs do not stop at county lines, the Southwest Planning Region will continue to utilize regional efforts in the development of sector strategies and industry partnerships. This will enable our region to regularly and effectively engage and interact with employers in identifying and connecting employer needs with the regional labor force.

Our Region will also leverage industry partnerships, employer engagement capacity, and apprenticeships (where appropriate) to connect special populations and individuals with barriers to career opportunities and registered apprenticeships. This may include educating employers on the benefits of hiring individuals with certain barriers to employment and incentives, such as Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) and Federal Bonding programs that are available. This may also include working with our industry partners to develop specialized training to connect individuals to employment along career pathways within their respective industries. As an example, the support of participating employers in TRWDB's Financial Services Industry Partnership helped to bring the national model Bankwork\$ to the Pittsburgh area. This 8-week program provides career readiness and occupational skills training to qualify participants for entry-level employment in the banking industry (tellers, customer service representatives, etc.). Past Bankwork\$ participants have included both WIOA priority of service customers and TANF EARN clients.

Sections 1.2 and Sections 1.5 discuss in greater detail ways in which the Southwest Planning Region are working to create and expand registered apprenticeship opportunities in our region, including for individuals from underrepresented populations and with other barriers to employment. This includes a discussion of the menu of training options that may be used to support apprenticeship, convening stakeholders to support apprenticeship, facilitating stronger connections between apprenticeship programs and PA CareerLink®, and other information.

1.7. Describe the coordination of transportation and other supportive services for the region.

The Southwest Planning Region has a diverse geographic landscape, from rural, sparsely populated areas like Greene and Indiana Counties, to suburban, moderately populated areas like Westmoreland and Butler Counties, to the urban, densely populated City of Pittsburgh. Each county has unique transportation needs and varying levels of public transportation systems.

Commuting patterns and business density also vary widely throughout the region. As noted, more than half of employed residents in the region, except those in Allegheny County, commute outside of their county for work. The economic influence of Allegheny County often draws residents of neighboring counties into Allegheny County for work. Allegheny County was home to nearly 60% of the jobs in the Southwest Planning Region in 2020.³¹ **Table 10** displays average commute times and modes of transportation for the Southwest Planning Region. The average commute time across the region for workers 16 and older is 27.1 minutes, which is similar to commute times across Pennsylvania (27.1 minutes) and the nation (26.9 minutes). Additionally, the majority (80.2%) of commuters across the region drive to work alone and 1.8% use public transportation.

Table 10: Regional Commute Times and Transportation Methods³²

County	Average Travel Time to Work in Minutes	Drove Alone to Work Percent	Took Public Transportation to Work Percent	Worked from Home Percent
Allegheny County	26.92	69.2	8.9	8.6
Armstrong County	30.0	82.0	0.3	4.9
Beaver County	26.4	81.2	2.0	5.6
Butler County	27.4	82.0	.5	7.5
Fayette County	26.7	83.5	1.1	4.4
Greene County	29.0	81.9	.1	4.2
Indiana County	24.1	78.7	.5	4.5
Washington County	26.6	80.9	1.3	7.1
Westmoreland County	27.0	82.5	1.2	6.3
Pennsylvania	27.1	74.4	5.28	7.1
United States	26.9	74.9	4.6	7.3

Lack of strong public transportation infrastructure between Allegheny County and some outlying counties and within the outlying counties mean that workers frequently must rely on cars and ridesharing to commute to work. The COVID-19 pandemic has also influenced commuting patterns across many occupations as employers have shifted to remote and hybrid work options for their employees. A recent survey from McKinsey found that 58% of Americans reported having the option to work remotely full-time or part-time at their jobs.³³ Due to variations in local transportation options and changing commuting trends, each local board determines the best method to provide transportation assistance. Transportation

³¹ EMSI, QCEW Employees, Non-QCEW Employees and Self-Employed, 2020

³² U.S. Census Bureau, 2016-2020 ACS 5-Year Data Profile.

³³ McKinsey American Opportunity Survey (Spring 2022)

will continue to be a barrier and a challenge to job seekers being successfully employed in long-term employment. The Southwest Planning Region workforce boards will continue to explore transportation options to assist job seekers in meeting their education, training and employment needs.

Access to affordable and quality childcare also continues to be a significant obstacle to obtaining and retaining employment in the region. This challenge has been heightened during the COVID-19 pandemic that began in 2020, which forced the temporary closure of both childcare facilities and schools at different points during the pandemic. The Southwest Region will work to ensure our programs are able to facilitate the appropriate connections to childcare services for participants in need. Our region will also explore ways of partnering with existing organizations and agencies, such as the United Way of Southwestern PA, state and local human services agencies, community-based organizations, and others to address the challenge of childcare as a barrier to employment.

An additional barrier to education and employment for many individuals in the Southwest Region, particularly in rural locations, is access to internet and broadband connections. As discussed, the percentage of households with access to the internet ranges from 80.5% in Indiana County to 90.8% in Allegheny County. This barrier intensified as a result of the pandemic, which required many education, training, and employment opportunities to shift to remote/virtual formats. The Southwest Planning Region will explore ways of addressing this challenge for job seekers in our region, coordinating and sharing best practices as needed. TCWDB, for example, has worked to address technology and internet connectivity as a barrier within the three counties in its workforce area. TCWDB extended Wi-Fi to the PA CareerLink® parking lots so customers can access the internet without having to walk into physical locations, a particular need during the pandemic. TCWDB has built partnerships with libraries and senior centers to provide job seekers with access to computers and the internet. These services have been promoted to PA CareerLink® customers and TCWDB is working to build additional community partnerships to connect customers to the internet.

Regarding coordinating supportive services, the key to successful work outcomes is often the delivery of supportive services consistently across the region. This may include childcare, transportation, and other services necessary to participate in workforce development programs and obtaining employment. While supportive services are based upon local policies, the Southwest Planning Region LWDBs will continue to review supportive services as needed based on common needs of employers and job seekers.

1.8. Describe the region's strategy to increase participation on the statewide eligible training provider list.

Each local board in the Southwest Planning Region has established processes for review and approval of training providers and programs to the WIOA Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). Local boards strive to maintain a robust menu of quality training opportunities on the ETPL aligned with High Priority Occupations (HPOs) in the region and each respective local area. Training programs are assessed based on their alignment with an HPO, past performance outcomes (including job placement, median earning, credential attainment, and program completion) and various other factors. The local boards in the Southwest Region also regularly engage employers in in-demand industries through industry partnerships and sector strategies to assess employer priorities and hiring needs and develop training/credentialing programs aligned with labor market demand. The Southwest Planning Region has also previously collaborated in petitioning for occupations to be added to the HPO list on a regional scale based on our knowledge of regional hiring needs, informed by employer engagement. Our region will continue to explore opportunities for collective outreach efforts to enhance the menu of quality training options in

our region, while ensuring alignment with regional demand.

1.9. (Planning Regions Only) Describe how the region established administrative cost arrangements, including the pooling of funds for administrative costs, as appropriate, for the region.

The Southwest Planning Region will explore opportunities to define and establish administrative cost and resource sharing arrangements regionally. As mentioned, while health restrictions and other challenges imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic are temporary, the enhanced capacity our region has developed to provide remote and virtual services will enable our region and local areas to more permanently connect with job seekers, businesses, and partners outside of brick-and-mortar locations. The Southwest Planning Region will determine ways of leveraging technology for improved regional communication, coordination, and collaboration among our local boards, one-stop center staff, and other partners to the system. Virtual regional hiring events, employer roundtables, job seeker workshops, and staff training/professional development are all examples of potential collaboration.

1.10. (Planning Regions Only) Describe the agreement between the local boards that describes how the planning region will collectively negotiate and reach agreement with the Department on local levels of performance for, and report on, the performance accountability measures described in section 116(c), for each of the local areas within the planning region.

Each local area will negotiate individually with the Commonwealth.

The negotiated levels of performance for the Southwest Planning Region have many implications for individuals and employers accessing workforce development services. The region is committed to assisting all of its job seekers to find success in their careers while driving the workforce development system to meet performance outcomes. Each local board in the region has negotiated performance measures with the Department for PY 2022-PY2023 for its local area. Moving forward, we will identify a process for the collective negotiation of regional measures for performance. Each local board will report on negotiation of performance measures and subsequent performance to the other locals. Local boards will discuss any concerns which may arise in regard to the local levels and we will provide support to each other when needed.