WIOA Plan Review and Modification Form (Local Plan)

A plan modification may be submitted at any time; however, there are certain procedural steps required as part of the modification process. Please refer to the Commonwealth of PA’s Workforce System Policy No. 108-01, Change 1. Direct plan submissions and questions to PA Department of L&I’s Bureau of Workforce Development Administration, or BWDA, Policy Coordination resource account: RA-LI-BWDA-Policy@pa.gov

I. Local Plan: Submitting Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region Name:</th>
<th>LWDB Name (i.e. designated name, not D.B.A.):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Southern Alleghenies</td>
<td>Southern Alleghenies Workforce Development Board (SAWDB)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Designated Point of Contact (POC):</th>
<th>Organization:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Susan K. Whisler</td>
<td>Southern Alleghenies Workforce Development Board</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title:</th>
<th>Telephone Number:</th>
<th>E-mail Address:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>814-949-6507</td>
<td><a href="mailto:whisler@sapdc.org">whisler@sapdc.org</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

II. Local Plan Review and Modification Information

Was the local plan reviewed per WIOA regulations and PA WSP# 108-01, Change 1? Yes

Indicate the economic condition and labor market information source(s) used in the plan review process:

U.S. Census Bureau, CWIA, CPWDC Data Consortium

Did the local plan review warrant plan modifications? Yes

L&I will approve continuation of existing structure exemptions when the local plan is created or its modification in lieu of a separate structure exemption request letter (see PA WSP# 02-2015).

Is the LWDB requesting a continuation of an existing structure exemption? No

Was the modified local plan draft provided to LWDBs members prior to public posting? Yes

Has the LWDB approved final local plan modification: Yes

Public Comment Period: 08/15/2019 – 09/16/2019

Comments received: No

Submitting LWDB Approval Date: November 12, 2019

Plan Modification Effective Date: 01/01/2020

III(a). Requested Local Plan Changes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page #</th>
<th>Change due to a public comment</th>
<th>Describe change in as few words as possible to direct reviewer to the marked narrative. Do not describe mechanical or grammatic edits.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Updated population and labor force data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#8</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Modification to alignment challenges regarding business services and IP’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#10</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Addition of Northstar Digital Literacy to education and training at the one-stop; Updated ETPL offerings; addition of paid work experience to one-stop opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#11</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Clarification on CTE activities regarding curriculum development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#13</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Updated board vision for service integration with Title II and OVR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#15</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Strategy modification to adapt to OVR’s closing of the Order of Selection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#17</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>New work-based learning opportunities; new entrepreneurial partnership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If needed, please use supplemental Section III(b). Requested Plan Changes – Continuation Page

IV. Submitting LWDB Executive Director’s Attestation

Submitter attests LWDB Chief Elected Officer (CEO) and LWDB Chair approved the plan review or the submitted plan.

Name: Susan K. Whisler

Signature:

Date: 11/13/19

V. Submission and Feedback Information (L&I Use Only)

Date L&I received: Are plan modification documents complete? Y / N

Date L&I acknowledged: Has a cursory review been completed, and if needed, acted upon? Y / N

Has the plan been reviewed? Y / N

Are the plan and supporting documents satisfactory? Y / N

VI. BWDA Chief or Policy Coordination Supervisor Recommendation for Approval

Name: Signature: Date:

VII. BWDA Bureau Director’s Approval

Name: Signature: Date:
## III(b). Requested WIOA Plan Changes – Continuation Page

**LWDB name (i.e. designated name, not D.B.A.):**

### Page # | Change due to a public comment |
|__________|______________________________|
| #21      | No Document name changes      |
| #22      | No Revision of One-Stop-Operator initiatives |
| #24      | No Addition to core programs delivery |
| #26      | No Addition of Northstar assessment; changes to affiliate and comprehensive site locations |
| #28      | No New partnership with CTC on Business Education Partnership Grant |
| #31      | No New business services strategies aimed at improving engagement |
| #34      | No Addition of PREP partner/Business Services Team collaboration on ENGAGE |
| #38      | No Addition of the board involvement in Startup Alleghenies Entrepreneurial Ecosystem |
| #41      | No Modification of Title II areas of coverage |
| #43      | No Changes to EO Liaisons for the one-stop centers |
| #45      | No Addition of one-stop partners |
| #49      | No Explanation of one-stop moves to libraries |
| #51      | No Deletion of Pathways to Employment pilot program |
| #52      | No Update to staff training related to OVR and EEO |
| #56      | No Additions to training services for Adult and Dislocated Worker participants |
| #58      | No Added activity for National DW Grant for displaced retail and service sector employees |
| #66      | No Coordination plans for avoid duplication of services regarding CTC’s |
| #67      | No Explanation of Next Generation IP activity |
| #68      | No Explanation of changes to OSO membership and staff development |
| #71      | No Delete references to Pathways to Employment pilot program |
| #73      | No Explanation of Welcome Team activities |
| #73      | No Addition of OSO developed regional website |
| #74      | No Delete reference to Youth2Work Program |
| #76      | No Added explanation of ENGAGE program activities with economic development partners |
| #77      | No Added reference to Alleghenies Ahead conference co-sponsored by the board |
| #78      | No Addition of business engagement activities |
| #82      | No Added reference to re-location of one-stops to libraries |
| #84      | No Updated information regarding public comment period and activities |

# (yes or no) | Change
# (yes or no) | Change
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# (yes or no) | Change
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Appendix D: PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan template

Local Workforce Development Area name: Southern Alleghenies
Effective Date: January 1, 2020

1. STRATEGIC PLANNING QUESTIONS: Local Area Workforce and Economic Analysis
   1.1. Identify the composition of the local area’s population and labor force.

The workforce development area profile from the Center for Workforce Information and Analysis (CWIA) website places the 2017 population of the region at 445,434, nearly equally split between female and male. The population is weighted toward the older age groups. The age group 55-64 contains 15.2% of the population or 67,705 persons. The 18-24 age group entering the workforce is only 8.5% or 37,861 persons, a difference of 29,844, meaning there are physically not enough people to replace eligible retiring workers. The trend in this area is a continuing decline in the population overall with the younger age groups declining the quickest.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>POPULATION</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-17</td>
<td>87,750</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>37,861</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>48,997</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>51,225</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>61,470</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>67,705</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-74</td>
<td>48,997</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75+</td>
<td>41,870</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The population is reasonably well educated evidenced by the 89% graduation rate among all persons 18 and older. Additionally, 41.4% have some college or a degree. Additionally, 85% of WIOA participants who attend training with the support of Individual Training Accounts in High Priority Occupations are completing their course work and working in their field of study contributing to the rise in education levels. The high school graduation rates have fluctuated between 88% and 91% since the 2011-2012 school year. The lowest being 11% for a school district cyber school and 100% for seven schools in the region. The dropouts are one of the biggest challenges as the counselors work to find those individuals and get them connected to and engaged with the resources that might help them get their diploma and successfully become part of the workforce.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE GROUP</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 9th Grade</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th to 12th Grade, No Diploma</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Graduate (Includes Equivalency)</td>
<td>47.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College, No Degree</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associates Degree</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate or Professional Degree</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Individuals with barriers to employment is a broad group given the 13 different populations targeted for service by WIOA. However, the impact of poor educational attainment and lack of skills may be clearly seen in those individuals with barriers to employment such as poverty, disability, citizenship and language. Included in those groups are Displaced Homemakers, Indians, Alaska Natives and native Hawaiians, Low Income Individuals, Individuals with Disabilities, Older Individuals (age 55 and
older), Ex-Offenders, Homeless Individuals, Youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system, Individuals who are English language learners, have low literacy levels, or face substantial cultural barriers, Eligible Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers, Individuals within two years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under TANF, Single Parents (including pregnant women, and Long-Term Unemployed Individuals. These groups represent the most vulnerable in our system and significant efforts and resources will be directed to identifying and serving these individuals. PA CareerLink® staff recognize that unique strategies will need to be developed and deployed to reach many of the targeted populations including utilizing flexible operating hours and potentially meeting customers at locations other than the PA CareerLink® office. The SAWDB will encourage and support professional development to ensure that staff are comfortable and confident that they are well-positioned to identify and address the needs of these target populations. The SAWDB’s Special Populations Committee is working with the site administrators to identify service gaps and outreach strategies. Recent data from the CWIA have shed some light on barriers to help us determine the volume and characteristics of these target groups.

A meaningful level of detail related to the education and skill levels of the target populations in the local area is currently unavailable. What can be shared is as follows:

- 12.5% of those sixteen years of age and older (44,182 individuals) have an income that places them below the poverty level, 28% of this group are employed, 11% are unemployed and 61% are not attached to the workforce.
- 14% of the working population age 25-64 reports some type of disability. The unemployment rate for that group runs from 11% to 19% in the counties included in the region while the unemployment rate for those without disabilities is 5.6% to 7.1%. Additionally, of the 36,631 individuals in the disability group, the percentage of individuals not in the labor force varies between 31% and 52% in the counties in the region.
- Less than 0.05% in the region are not U.S. citizens and less than 1% or 4,111 individuals are reported as not speaking English “very well.”
- Single parent households represent 31.4% of all households in the region with children.

The subject of employment status, like barriers to employment, is a multi-faceted issue that starts with population and workforce participation rates. Fortunately, there is plenty of data to use for analysis. Defined as a measure of the number of people in the labor force as a percentage of the population 16 and over, this figure has been consistently below fifty percent while having a significant impact on both the unemployment statistics as well as the declining labor force participants. A variety of evidence indicates that several factors contributing to this problem to include the weak state of the labor markets, an aging and declining population, retirements, discouraged workers and the absence of employability skills. The influence of these trend factors implies that potential labor supply has been adversely affected creating challenges for employers as the area economy moves forward. The participation rate in the region has been less than 50% since at least 1990 and has been decreasing since 2007. As of May 2019, the rate is 45.8%. The civilian labor force is down 5,700 persons for the year to a level of 204,200. The employed population in the region is actually up slightly 2900 to 195,100 due to the strong current labor market. All six counties showed a positive change in the employed population over the last year. Perhaps the most publicly visible indicator of labor market health are the jobless statistics. These numbers across the region are currently well below the recession peak while falling back to the low four to five percent range which is generally the norm during normal economic times. However, at this point these figures may be a somewhat misleading economic indicator, falling not because of a rising employed population but rather because workers have been dropping out of the labor force. If these workers were still attached to
the labor force, the unemployment rate would be significantly higher. The unemployed population also reflects a smaller number compared to last year which should be a good thing when looked at from the unemployment rate of 5.5%. However, when taken in context with the shrinking labor force and employed populations, it can only mean there are less attached to the workforce. That trend creates a similar situation to the non-high school graduate problem of identification of and engagement with the public workforce system.

Under the leadership of the SAWDB, the PA CareerLink® staff will be expected to expand outreach to these target groups. Through community resource mapping, we will identify those program providers who routinely serve these individuals and establish a coordinated method for referral to and case management with the public workforce system. The PA CareerLink® staff will conduct greater outreach to the agencies below and measure customer referrals:

- Veterans Organizations including the US Department of Veterans Affairs;
- Family Counseling Services including homeless and women’s shelters and related community and faith-based organizations, food pantries, public libraries, EARN providers;
- County Bar Associations, MH/MR Community Services and Addiction/Recovery providers, and Transitonal Re-entry Advisory Councils;
- Senior Community Employment Program providers and County Area Agencies on Aging;
- Community Action Agencies;
- County Children and Youth services, free medical clinics, and community family counseling service providers.

The PA CareerLink® staff have significant experience in serving individuals with barriers to employment; they will utilize their combined expertise and a variety of assessment tools to help customers develop their individual employment plans. These ‘roadmaps to success’ will include not only those services provided through the public workforce system but also identify appropriate referrals to partner programs that can further support attainment of the individual’s vocational goal. Close communication and collaboration will be expected between the PA CareerLink® and supporting partner agencies and will be essential to meet, in many cases, the special needs of those in the target populations.

Sources: Central PA Workforce Development Corporation, Educational Attainment by Age Group 2015
Central PA Workforce Development Corporation, Southern Alleghenies Cohort Graduation Rates
PA Department of Labor and Industry, CWIA, Southern Alleghenies Local Plan Data, 2016
Central PA Workforce Development Corporation, SA Labor Market Status Report, May 2019

1.2. 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/local area?

It is board policy to continuously solicit input from a broad range of organizations and groups that are involved in workforce development. It has and will continue to provide enhanced support for On-the-Job Training and Apprenticeship programs by placing significant resources at the disposal of the PA CareerLink® centers and their employer partners to supply employers with the right employees with the correct skill sets.
The board and board partners depend upon and thrive on the quality of collaboration and communication between all parties impacting the workforce. Regular meetings of local and regional committees, sub-committees, industry partnerships, economic development forums and senior business and political leader working groups all help to inform the board about what is happening at various levels in the workforce. That information is combined with information gathered by counselors at the local level in the CareerLink to form a picture of the workforce. Additionally, workforce and educational attainment data is gathered from multiple sources to provide a basis for comparison to local data. The information is then presented to the full board for discussion and policy action if necessary.

Regular monthly meetings of the one-stop operator occur immediately following the monthly executive committee board meeting. Those one-stop meetings have proven to be crucial to the effective flow of information pertaining to board intentions regarding skill gaps as well as a place to gather immediate feedback from the operator. It also facilitates a parallel planning process for new initiatives because the information is fresh and the key leadership is in attendance. Formal data analysis from multiple sources such as Help Wanted On-Line, local newspaper ads, and information pulled from state data sets is routinely used to keep the partners informed about the workforce. It is also important to watch local developments closely, as these provide current relevant input to the analysis.

A recent experience with dislocated coal miners highlighted how skills can get rusty. Many miners who came to the PA CareerLink® for help were found to be basic skills deficient upon initial testing and therefore unable to access training programs until remediation was completed. These were highly compensated workers who had been very successful that now found themselves delayed in looking for a new position until they brushed up on their reading and math skills. Additionally, those without a high school diploma found that they could not even apply for many positions until they completed the equivalency testing. This phenomenon has also been seen in the manufacturing sector as well when plants shutter and the older more experienced segment of the workforce needed significant basic skills remediation to find new employment. Given the higher density of older workers in the region, the one-stops should expect to continue to see customers in that situation. Another example of the local influence occurred in conjunction with the industry partnership solicitation for 2016. The provision that training result in an industry recognized credential had a very real impact on the decision not to apply. The employers, through the industry partnerships, did not feel that training resulting in a credential was supportive of the training they felt they needed which helped us to understand exactly what the skills gaps were.

Below are the current and relevant skills that cluster employers in the region seek in current employees.

- **Advanced Manufacturing** – The advanced manufacturing cluster has long been a solid part of the local economy that requires constantly changing technology to remain competitive. Manufacturing positions from supervisors to skilled craftsmen and production workers to maintenance mechanics are strong in the following skill areas:
  - Communicating with Supervisors, Peers, or Subordinates
  - Making Decisions and Solving Problems
  - Performing General Physical Activities
  - Inspecting Equipment, Structures, or Material
  - Oral expression and oral, written, and reading comprehension
  - Mechanical aptitude
o **Building and Construction** – Technicians such as drafters and skilled craftsmen like carpenters, masons and electricians have a wide range of skills including:

- Ability to listen to the wants and needs of the customer and translate that to a product that can be forwarded to a craftsman for actual development.
- Mathematical skills to provide the proper instructions to the field resulting in fewer mistakes and less need for modification of plans.
- Handling and Moving Objects
- Organizing, Planning, and Prioritizing Work
- Choice and implementation of the correct material and accepted construction practice.

o **Business Services** – The workforce involved in the business services cluster tends to be more educated and their skills more complex. The financial managers, accountants, information management professionals, and customer service representatives have skills that are technical, personal, and analytical in nature. Included in those categories are:

- Analyzing Data or Information
- Reading comprehension
- Performing for or Working Directly with the Public
- Communicating with Persons Outside Organization
- Evaluating Information to Determine Compliance with Standards
- Interacting with Computers

o **Healthcare** – The healthcare cluster is the largest cluster in the region and encompasses a wide variety of occupations that range from individuals providing direct patient care to the administration required in a highly-regulated industry. Those employees possess very diversified skill sets such as:

- Assisting and Caring for Others
- Documenting/Recording Information
- Accurately translating written orders into action
- Oral expression and comprehension
- Processing information
- Monitoring processes, materials, or surroundings
- Inductive reasoning, judgment and decision making
- Establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships
- Updating and using relevant knowledge

o **Logistics and Transportation** – Employees in the logistics and transportation cluster include those involved in the actual movement of cargo to those involved in processing and accounting for inventory and managing the flow of cargo to final destination. Workers in the cluster have skills such as:

- Vision, spatial orientation, and reaction time to safely operate equipment
- Material Handling
- Operating equipment safely
- Evaluating Information to Determine Compliance with Standards
- Thinking Creatively
PY 2017-2019 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

- Identifying Objects, Actions, and Events
- Communicating with Persons Outside Organization

This analysis begins with a look at the education level of local area population 25 years of age and older totaling 320,264.

![Education Levels Chart]

A large majority of the population, 58%, possesses a high school diploma or less. A further break down reflects that 25% have an associate degree or at least some college, 11% have bachelor degrees and 6% have graduate degrees. This corresponds very closely with the data reflected in the most recent High Priority Occupation List: education requirements for the region. The 2019 High Priority Occupation List for the local area provides a good place to start to analyze the employment requirements for industries and occupations that are important to the local economy. The proposed regional list contains 69 occupations. The necessary entry level educational attainment levels are reflected below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Level</th>
<th># Occupations on List</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work Experience</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short Term OJT (&lt;1yr)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Med. Term OJT (&lt;1yr)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Term OJT (&gt;1yr)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Secondary</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assoc. Degree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree and +</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A closer analysis of the chart above reveals that there is a shift away from occupations requiring a bachelor’s degree toward occupations that require previous work experience, willingness to engage in OJT and some type of post-secondary education. Consequently, the board will focus its resources on those types of training as much as possible and ensure career planners have up to date information that can be used to guide job seekers.

The charts below illustrate, that for the projectable future, the education requirements for the region’s workforce is not expected to change much. The CWIA Employment Distribution by Education statistics
comparison between 2014-2024 indicates there will be a slight increase in projected employment with long-term training and advanced degrees rising the most. However, there will be virtually no change to the education distribution among the workforce. Short to moderate-term OJT will make up more than half of the requirement supporting the board’s decision to concentrate on marketing and promoting OJT and apprenticeship to area employers.

The Board will support policies and programs that strive to provide a solid foundation of soft skills in the PA CareerLink® sites and its partners while using training funds to focus on the skills that will support job placements in the High Priority Occupation List. The CWIA data from Help Wanted On-Line (HWOL) appears to reinforce this focus as eighteen of the twenty top skills are related to 3 of the regions targeted industry clusters: Healthcare, Logistics and Transportation, and Building and Construction. Further reinforcement comes from the fifteen of the top twenty certifications being related to 2
industry clusters, Healthcare and Transportation. The importance of computers and associated software skills is evident from a review of the top twenty tools and technology with nineteen being directly related to computers and one being screwdrivers.

Source: PA Dept. of Labor, CWIA, Copy of So Alleghenies Local Plan, June 2017

1.3 What are the challenges the local area faces in aligning existing labor force skills and education and training activities with the needs of regional employers?

The challenges the board faces are primarily related to timely intelligence and funding priorities. Consequently, the board strategy will be to connect with as many employers as possible using multiple avenues striving to have an impact on:

- Timely identification of needs from employers
- Development of consensus to achieve multi-employer economies of scale
- Lead times for curriculum development
- Lead times for arrangement of trainers

The Board and staff will participate on as many committees, advisory panels, and partnerships as possible to gather information from different industries, levels of leadership, and PA CareerLink® customers. The PA CareerLink® site administrators will operate Business Service Teams tasked with connecting with employers and then use employer workshops to address some incumbent worker training needs. The board allocates funds every year to provide workshop seed money to the PA CareerLink® sites which they then leverage with partners to provide the needed training at little or no cost to the employer community. The SAWDB additionally allocates funding, if available, to provide the one-stop assistance with job fairs targeted at employers who have openings and are actively seeking employees. The SAWDB’s One-Stop Operator has established businesses services as prime focus for the PA CareerLink® business service teams and has established a quarterly scorecard that measures progress in contacting new employers, servicing current employer customers and developing new services aimed at attracting, hiring, and retaining employees.

The SAWDB will continue to connect with the economic development community directly and through the Partnership for Regional Economic Progress (PREP) where one employer need can be identified and potentially be embraced by multiple employers when staff shares that need with other contacts. Also, by being an active partner with PREP, the board has access to employer surveys which often include skill training needs. The board will continue to pursue similar opportunities whenever possible. Some of the other avenues the board uses to gather skill gap information are various advisory committees for high schools, career and technical centers, community colleges, and adult literacy providers.

The Board and staff will continue to explore opportunities with the Next Generation industry partnership initiative in the region to directly interact with employers, economic developers, and education partners to collect information and coordinate future actions. The board has been successful in helping to coordinate incumbent worker training among multiple employers even without industry partnership grants by working closely with local industry partnership coordinators. Once an employer expresses a need, that training topic is circulated among all the partnership employers. If sufficient
interest is there, a trainer is contacted for pricing and marketing takes place to increase enrollment and lower cost for each participating employer. If there is industry partnership funding, the employers pay 25% in cash and the grant will fund the remaining amount. The hours employees spend in training, along with facilities or food provided by the employers is counted as in-kind match. If no industry partnership funding is available, employers can choose to self-fund the training and the board uses its resources to market and recruit additional employers with a goal of driving down the per employer cost.

Another avenue to address the employer need for skills is to import them or more importantly, the people who possess them. The Board will work with different community groups in Altoona and Johnstown who are focused on transforming their cities by addressing blight, crime, and business declines through community development aimed at bringing younger residents into the region and encouraging entrepreneurs. Helping in that process is the board's participation with tourism projects that seek to market the region's outdoor and cultural activities to major metropolitan areas within a two-hour drive of the Southern Alleghenies.

The process of developing apprenticeships may provide a pathway to alleviating the lag in curriculum development by getting education providers in direct contact with employers who are determining what their related instruction needs to be. Consequently, the Board has placed additional focus on apprenticeship development which has already resulted in at least four companies starting on the apprenticeship development path this year. Development of apprenticeships for in-demand occupations helps to get that curriculum in place which can then be used for other apprenticeships or modified more quickly if necessary.

The Board was an active partner with the committee that recently completed the Southern Alleghenies regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2015-2019. The two strategies noted below are in direct support of Goal Number One in the CEDS: Seek Expansion of the Regional Economy Through Diversified Job Growth.

- **Strategy 2:** Conduct annual assessments of high demand jobs and specific skills required in those positions to focus workforce development and job placement activities according to current opportunities.
- **Strategy 3:** Support workforce development programs that provide information technology training and certification, as well as other employee skills training.

The various strategies described above are directed at ensuring the businesses in the region know and understand that the workforce board and the PA CareerLink® sites are the face of the public workforce system and believe this is the place to call for assistance in addressing issues with the workforce

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

The Southern Alleghenies local area includes a wide range of workforce development activities provided by multiple partners that include but are not limited to the one-stop system, career and technical centers, for-profit providers, community colleges, and post-secondary institutions. There are seven Career and Technical Centers that provide training to secondary and post-secondary students. There are two community colleges that provide training to most of the six-county local
area. There are five degree producing institutions and one two business college that also provide training to residents of the local area.

While the local area is home to a significant number of post-secondary institutions and a variety of public and private training providers, many of our residents are not prepared to pursue and successfully complete training programs because they lack the requisite reading, math, and digital literacy skills. The SAWDB and its PA CareerLink® sites will continue to work closely with the coalition of ABLE Title II providers, community-based and other service organizations that provide adult basic education services, and the local area's network of public libraries to ensure that job seekers have the necessary skills to successfully complete post-secondary education coursework and return to the workforce. The Division of Adult Education Coalition meetings are held regularly and include representatives from career and technology centers, school districts, child and adult development corporations and members of the SAWDB and its staff. Frequent communication with partners and referrals between providers and the board and PA CareerLink® sites has served to better connect those customers in need of adult basic education with appropriate providers of the service. The SAWDB has further cemented its position on the importance of adult basic education by including a Coalition representative on the SAWDB, its One-Stop Operator Consortium and its committee dedicated to serving special population. Exciting initiatives underway, and described in greater detail later in this plan include the Northstar Digital Literacy assessment and the reintroduction of the Helms Academy which will introduce post-secondary educational opportunities to those who may have dropped out of school or have other barriers that have kept them from pursuing post-secondary education. In both cases, adult basic education providers figure prominently and will be key to the programs’ success. Digital literacy has been called 'the most important lifelong learning tool’ and being 'digitally literate' is essential for jobseekers, regardless of their vocational goals. The PA CareerLink® sites offer the Northstar digital literacy assessment, which defines the basic skills needed to use a computer and the internet in daily life, employment, and higher education. PA CareerLink® customers can take any or all of the eleven modules that range from basic computer skills and Windows 10 and MacOS X to Microsoft Office applications and information literacy. Our customers can receive digital badges whenever they pass the assessments and can additionally receive certificates when they pass the assessments in our proctored environment. All of the credentials associated with Northstar are included in the jobseeker’s portfolio.

The Southern Alleghenies public workforce system consists of five full PA CareerLink® sites, multiple affiliate, and other service locations where residents can receive personal service or conduct self-service activities. This is critical given the diverse and rural geography of the region where a one-stop may be more than an hour’s drive from some parts of the county. Those one-stops and the affiliate sites are the entry point to services that can include orientation, job search (both assisted and unassisted), career training, targeted skill development workshops, and job fairs. The activities are planned and organized so that a participant can get on at any point depending on their personal situation and level of need and get off when they have met their own goals. Orientation is the introduction to the one-stop and its services. A confident self-motivated job seeker can take advantage of PA CareerLink® 2.0® and the state-wide system of job postings and somebody who never completed a resume can receive one-on-one assistance from staff to utilize PA CareerLink® 2.0®. Assistance with using labor market information to make informed career and training decisions is also available. A variety of workshops are offered regularly and range from basic and intermediate computer to preparing for an interview. All the activities are geared toward putting people to work.
PY 2017-2019 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

Many of the institutions listed above provide programs made available to eligible workforce system participants through the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). The local ETPL has a total of 165 programs offered by 16 providers, currently the 3 highest number in Pennsylvania. The workforce system also provides the opportunity for work-based training through the OJT program, paid work experience for adults and dislocated workers who have limited employment histories, summer work experience for youth and internships offered through special grants.

The significant number of providers and the broad breadth of consumer choice from the large number of available courses combine to provide strength to the system’s ability to respond to employer and jobseeker needs. Dual enrollment opportunities for secondary students is another strong element that helps to promote educational attainment by providing students with the chance to earn college credit while in high school.

Even though there are many providers offering a broad set of choices for training, the rural geography of the region and general lack of public transportation combine to limit access to a significant portion of the local population. Another challenge is the level of technical training offered in the vocational or trades arena. The career and technical centers provide a variety of trades training and work closely with their employer advisory committees to ensure that their curriculum and certifications are recognized and in demand by employers. Still, the cost of education continues to be a deterrent to some seeking training even with funding support available through the public workforce system. This is particularly evident for dislocated workers and underemployed adults who often must choose between attending training or working at a job that pays significantly less than their prior earnings.

2. STRATEGIC PLANNING QUESTIONS: Vision and Goals

2.1. What are the local board’s strategic vision and goals for preparing its workforce?

The Southern Alleghenies Workforce Development Board (SAWDB) will lead initiatives designed to enhance the skills of the workforce in order to meet the needs of the region’s employers to compete in a world economy. To accomplish this, the SAWDB is committed to supporting a data-driven, goal-oriented public workforce system that:

- Is flexible and responsive to the changing needs of jobseekers and employers;
- Embraces innovation as espoused in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA);
- Is committed to serving all those who are seeking employment or employees;
- Is integrated into a larger, coordinated network that includes other entities with a similar mission;
- Recognizes the importance of career pathways and invests in training opportunities that are tied to employer demand and result in jobs that pay a family-sustaining wage for the employee;
- Is committed to excellence and accountable to its funding agents, its customers, and its partners.

The SAWDB will help to advance its vision and support attainment of the performance accountability measures as outlined in the WIOA Section 116 for local areas through the following:

- Increased resources directed to support industry-driven training. Beyond the training benchmarks established in Pennsylvania’s Workforce Development Plan, the SAWDB will
direct its WICA Title I allocation, Rapid Response Funding, POWER resources and National Emergency Grant awards and other competitively secured resources to support training that results in industry-recognized credentials. On-the-Job Training (OJT) will continue to be heavily promoted; all positions supported through OJT will provide a wage that meets or exceeds the local self-sufficiency level. The SAWDB will continue to seek flexible funding and leverage and align partner support to help raise the educational attainment level of our residents and support jobseeker and incumbent worker training needs. Efforts will be closely coordinated with the Partnership for Regional Economic Performance (PREP) partners and WEUnetPA service providers to ensure that employer needs are identified, addressed and services are not duplicated. As a member of PREP, the SAWDB will utilize the partnership opportunities with the region’s economic developers to coordinate services that support business recruitment and retention, and incumbent worker skill advancement.

- Increased alignment with WIOA Title II (Adult Education) and Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) to support greater career pathway development and utilization. One in five WIOA Title I customers is basic skills deficient (reading below a 9th grade level), has a disability or both barriers to employment. Seamless service integration will be essential to ensure jobseekers receive the services they need; strategies for the resource alignment are outlined in section 2.2.

- Continued support for the region’s Industry Partnerships (IPs). Industry-driven consortia have been in place in the region for more than 19 years. These will serve as a vehicle for promoting apprenticeships, a training model that has been slow to gain traction in the region. Increased engagement between employers that effectively utilize apprenticeships and those considering this resource for employee development and career advancement will be supported.

- Greater analysis of the High Priority Occupation (HPO) and Eligible Training Provider (ETP) Lists to include data analysis of training investments and the effectiveness of preparing participants for employment in their fields of study. Increased communication and collaboration with members of the IPs and the Southern Alleghenies Higher Education Consortia will help to ensure that employer needs and educational offerings are aligned. Additional work will be conducted to develop and promote micro-credentials and prior-learning credits.

- Enhanced partner integration specifically with OVR, the Employment, Advancement, and Retention Network (EARN), and Department of Corrections with a goal of greater inclusion and seamless referral between programs. The SAWDB’s standing committee will focus on service to target populations with significant barriers to employment. The SAWDB’s Special Populations Committee will act as the conduit for information between agencies that serve WIOA target populations and the SAWDB and its PA CareerLink® sites.

- Expanded and enhanced work-based opportunities for youth. The SAWDB will continue its support for and promotion of summer and year-round paid work experience, internship, and apprenticeship opportunities. Its modified OJT policy to allow for a slightly lower wage for youth participants has expanded utilization of this service. Signs indicate that continued
PY 2017-2019 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

SAWDB emphasis on OJT opportunities for youth have resulted in this service gaining greater traction and momentum. Contracts written to date far exceed the $10.00 per hour minimum established for youth OJT participants.

- Support for special initiatives such as YouthBuild and other services that address the special challenges of Out-of-School Youth with significant barriers to employment.

Like the Commonwealth, the SAWDB and its workforce partners are committed to supporting an effective workforce development system built on a foundation of alignment, innovation, employer engagement, accountability structures and improved data.  

Each year, the PA CareerLink® Management Teams, with assistance from the One-Stop Operator Consortium (OSO), develop their own measurable goals, objectives and action steps to support the SAWDB’s vision and strategic objectives. The SAWDB PA CareerLink® Scorecard captures a variety of SAWDB-identified information designed to provide a ‘performance snapshot’ by PA CareerLink® that includes:

- Number of new UC claims filed and the percentage of claimants served
- Foot traffic
- Unique participants
- Percentage of customers with a barrier to employment
- Total services provided
- Percentage of employers using PA CareerLink®, including percentage of repeat customers
- Number of employer services provided
- Number of job postings
- Number of job referrals
- number of On-the-Job (OJT) training contracts prepare
- Number of Workshops and recruitment events
- Labor force, employment and unemployment rates, and UC rates

This information is captured monthly and reported quarterly, and reviewed by the SAWDB, One-Stop Operator (OSO), and PA CareerLink® partners. It is also shared with system stakeholders. The partners, OSO, and SAWDB are in the process of setting specific numerical goals around the information captured on the Scorecard. Workforce development leadership will ensure that the new goals and objectives are aligned and further reflect Governor Wolf’s and the SAWDB’s strategic vision.

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1 Pennsylvania’s Workforce Development Plan (PY 2016-PY 2019), pg. 7.
2.2. *What is the local board’s strategy to work with the entities that carry out the core programs to align resources available to the local area, in order to achieve the strategic vision and goals for the local area?*

The SAWDB recognizes that having an effective OSO is key to core program integration and effective service delivery. Per the requirements of the WIOA, the SAWDB competitively procured a OSO; the selected consortium represents the following partners:

- WIOA Title I
- WIOA Title II Adult Education
- YouthBuild
- Community Services Block Grant

In addition to the OSO, the SAWDB is supporting the development of an advisory council that includes representatives from all the core programs. Together the SAWDB, OSO and core partner advisory council will work together to ensure that services are coordinated, and resources are aligned in support of the SAWDB’s strategic vision and goals. Seamless integration of services is key. For the average customer who enters a one-stop in the region, there is nothing to indicate that services are provided by the many organizations and agencies listed above. From its layout by function, rather than staff seating by agency, to the common forms shared by partners and the integrated referral network, the region’s one-stops strive to be a model of service integration and inclusion. Lines of authority, chains of command, and mandated ‘firewalls’ are recognized and respected by those in the one-stop system.

With the PA CareerLink® Site Administrators providing the functional leadership, the partners (mandated and others) within the region’s PA CareerLink® sites are committed to providing the workforce services needed by the region’s jobseekers and employers. They include but are not limited to:

- Office of Vocational Rehabilitation staff provide workforce information and referral for persons with disabilities and help customers to achieve their vocational goal. They assist other one-stop staff on matters related to disability awareness and accessibility and serve on the Business Services Teams. Staff assist individuals with disabilities to secure and maintain employment and independence under Title V of the Rehabilitation Act. Eligible OVR customers receive multiple services that may include but not be limited to: diagnostic, vocation counseling and guidance, vocational evaluation, restoration, training, job placement and pre-employment training services for eligible high school students with disabilities. OVR also provides multiple services to the business community designed to assist businesses with onboarding pre-screen qualified employees with disabilities. OVR on-boarding supports for a qualified new hire can include: reasonable accommodation consultation, initial probationary period wage reimbursement (On-the-Job Training- OJT), referral on tax credits or deductions. 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 death. The state-wide business services staff can identify resources to assist any organization on how to improve access compliance and steps to diversify their workforce to include individuals with a disability. With the closing of OVR’s Order of Selection, we anticipate that additional customers will be seeking PA CareerLink® services. The region’s one-stop have a strong history of providing customized services to all jobseekers, regardless of the individual’s barrier to employment. Currently, the OSO, and one-stop and OVR leadership are identifying training opportunities that will enable staff to more effectively engage jobseekers with a disability.
PY 2017-2019 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

- WIOA Title I staff provide Career (basic, individualized, and follow-up) services to adults, dislocated workers and youth. They assist in and coordinate the delivery of workshops and other common services with other partners.
- Bureau of Workforce Policy and Operations staff provide a variety of workforce services associated with Wagner-Peyser, including job search and placement assistance and provision of labor market information.
- Department of Human Services staff provide services for DHS-administered programs and work with one-stop staff to further the employment opportunities and goals of their clients.
- Adult Basic Literacy Education staff provides remedial adult education services to jobseekers.

There are currently three WIOA Title I subcontractors in the Southern Alleghenies Workforce Development Area. The organizations and the counties they serve are as follows:

- Goodwill of the Southern Alleghenies- Bedford, Blair and Cambria Counties
- Employment & Training of Huntingdon- Fulton and Huntingdon Counties
- Community Action Partnership for Somerset County-Tableland Services, Inc.- Somerset County

These providers were selected through a competitive Request for Proposals (RFP) process initiated by the LEOs and the SAWDB and completed in May 2017.

The SAWDB has taken a ‘team’ approach when it comes to operations in the region and it enjoys outstanding working relationships with everyone, from the local elected officials and members of the OSO and members of the PREP, to the core partner staff who work directly with the customers. Because of these strong lines of communication and spirit of cooperation that is present in the region, the local system has been recognized by the state and the US Department of Labor for its ability to meet the needs of its customers through its cooperative and coordinated approach to service delivery. Examples of this include:

- SAWDB staff meet regularly with WIOA Title I providers to discuss topics ranging from performance management to Board policy changes, operating system modifications, service delivery improvements.
- SAWDB director, operations and employer services specialists’ participation in monthly OSO and site administrator meetings to ensure communication flows from the SAWDB directly to the PA CareerLink® sites. The OSO also participates in and reports out at all SAWDB and Executive Committee meetings.
- SAWDB director participation in state-organized meetings of the local WDB directors to ensure that information flows from the local area to other LWDA’s and the state and then back to the region.
- SAWDB director and staff participation in the PA Workforce Development Association Board, Policy Council, and technical work group meetings to ensure that communication flows from our local area to other LWIAs and the state and then back to our region.
- SAWDB staff participation in regularly scheduled meetings of Industry Partnerships, Business Service Teams, PREP partners, service organizations, etc. to convey information relative to workforce initiatives to these entities and provide feedback to the Board.

Furthermore, the SAWDB director and staff maintain an ‘open door’ policy so that they are accessible to all workforce partners and stakeholders, including PA CareerLink® staff at all levels.
2.3. How will the local board's vision and goals align with, support, and contribute to the governor's vision and goals for the commonwealth's workforce development system, as well any the goals and strategies articulated in the regional plan?

This SAWDB’s vision and goals, outlined above, reflects the values of the Board and its partners and supports Governor Wolf’s strategic vision for workforce development in Pennsylvania in the following ways:

Commonwealth Goals

- **Establish career pathways as the primary model for skill, credential and degree attainment.** SAWDB Goal 2,5,7- Increased alignment with WIOA Title II and OVR to support greater career pathway development and utilization. The increased support from and interaction with Title II Adult Education providers and the OVR, will enable individuals with barriers to employment to gain the necessary skills and credentials needed to obtain a family-sustaining job in the Southern Alleghenies. The following initiatives align directly to this goal:
  
  - Pathways to Employment that provides opportunities for dislocated workers, who are basic skills deficient, to receive an industry-recognized credential at the same time they are participating in remedial education. This Integrating Education and Training (IET) Initiative promises to present educational opportunities to those who may never have considered themselves candidates for post-secondary education.
  
  - Promotion of Registered Apprenticeships- SAWDB, Business Service Teams (BSTs), educational partners, and economic developers have been actively promoting registered apprenticeships to the employer community. We believe that this industry model will provide the necessary skilled pipeline for employers, address their retention issues, and provide jobseekers with significant employment opportunities that will lead to self-sufficiency and enable them to secure transferable and transportable industry credentials.

- **Expand public-private investment in the state’s pipeline of workers and in incumbent workers for targeted sectors.** Each of the SAWDB Goals 1-7, identified in Section 2.1, support investment in workforce pipeline and enhanced training opportunities for the incumbent workforce. Both are critical issues in the region. Even with a declining population, employers are projecting significant worker shortages as skilled employees reach retirement age and youth are not entering the skilled trades in sufficient numbers to replace those exiting the workforce. The SAWDB, PREP partners, and WEDNetPA providers have successfully coordinated large-scale incumbent worker trainings but they have only begun to ‘scratch the surface’ in addressing employer-identified incumbent worker training needs. The SAWDB and its partners will continue to aggressively pursue flexible funding opportunities; intelligence gathered from the next-generation industry partnership consortiums. Through greater analysis of the High Priority Occupation and Eligible Training Provider Lists, and increased alignment with industry intelligence, the region’s workforce system will be better positioned to support training that will result the credentials most in demand by industry. With the SAWDB’s investment in the Northstar Digital Literacy assessment, PA CareerLink® customers will be better positioned to meet employers’ needs for a computer-literate workforce.
PY 2017-2019 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

- **Increase Opportunities for all youth to participate in work-based learning.** The SAWDB Goals 6,7 continue to place significant emphasis in support of youth work-based learning experience, as illustrated in nearly all its goals found in Section 2.1. The SAWDB recognizes the importance of supporting work-based learning opportunities for youth and ensuring that the work-readiness standards that are applied to these services reflect employer expectations. While paid work experience services have been a long-standing offering, the utilization of OJT for youth had never reached its potential. The Board has modified its OJT policy to encourage employers to hire youth through this service; interest in and use of this service has subsequently increased. Additional initiatives in support of this goal include:
  - Activities through the region’s Business-Education Partnership (BEP)- youth are exposed to the educational requirements and employer expectation. Increased connections with the Career & Technology Centers is also occurring because of the BEP. Career Camps and opportunities for youth to explore non-traditional occupations (nursing for men, construction for women) are exciting new program features.
  - YouthBuild- this SAWDB-supported initiative has enabled young people, with barriers to employment, gain industry-recognized credentials and participate in paid work experience opportunities that mirror their interests and skills.

- **Engage employers through multi-employer workforce partnerships.** All SAWDB Goals 1-7 support employer partnership through workforce development. Workforce intelligence and sector strategy development are tied to all the Board’s goals. The SAWDB has been involved in employer consortia development and support for over 19 years and recognizes that success will come only through employer investment and engagement in the public workforce system. The SAWDB and its PA CareerLink® sites are partnering with the Startup Alleghenies Entrepreneurial Ecosystem to ensure that the region’s newest employers are aware of the resources available through the public workforce system.

- **Strengthen data sharing across state agencies and workforce development partners to better understand education and employment outcomes.** SAWDB Goal 4 directly aligns with this goal of enhanced data sharing to facilitate greater analysis of education and employment outcomes. With ever-increasing investments in occupational skills training, it is essential for local areas and the Commonwealth to determine effectiveness. We need to accurately assess service outcomes. Are participants completing training and securing jobs in their fields of study that pay family-sustaining wages? With an expanded referral network, increased program co-enrollments, and greater leveraged resources, improved data sharing between partner agencies will be essential to accurately measure program/service outcomes.

The SAWDB believe that its efforts, examples of which are highlighted through the regional and local plans will serve to meet the unique needs of the region it serves, align with and support Governor Wolf’s vision and goals for workforce development in Pennsylvania, and help to promote and facilitate ‘jobs that pay’ and ‘schools that teach.’

2.4. **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?**
The Performance Accountability attachment includes the specific performance levels negotiated for the Southern Allegheries region. The SAWDB's goals, identified in Section 2.1 of this plan, are tied directly to and support the achievement of the performance measures outlined in the WIOA Section 116. They include:

**Title I Adult & Dislocated Worker Employment Rate**
- All the Board's goals, except for those related specifically to youth, support participant employment (2nd quarter and 4th quarter past exit). Stronger entered employment and job retention rates should result from the increased emphasis on connecting individuals with industry-driven training opportunities and providing the financial resources to reduce barriers to successful completion. This is especially true for participants in the On-the-Job training service; they are considered employed on day one of the contract and retained by the employer following the successful completion of the training plan. Greater integration with partner programs (OVR, EARN, Corrections), will mean additional leveraged resources including staff assistance with participant job search and placement.

**Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Median Earnings**
- There is a well-documented correlation between an individual's educational attainment and their employment and earning potential. Greater emphasis in training, along with the increased resource allocation to support it, will result in more participation in classroom and OJT. Enhanced development of career pathways and support for micro and stackable credentials will further increase our customers median earnings.

**Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Credential Rate**
- Realization of the negotiated credential rate will hinge on the local workforce system's ability to connect its customers with credentialed training and the SAWDB's ability to reduce barriers to successful completion through resource allocation and program support. As with earnings, use of career pathways, and the stackable credentials that can be earned along the employment path, will help the achievement of this measure.

**Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Measurable Skill Gains**
- Achievement of this performance measure hinges on the local system's ability to connect job seekers with training that will support employment in a high priority occupation and align to the participant's interests and abilities. Identifying and reducing/eliminating barriers to successful advancement will be key. The availability of supportive services, combined with enhanced case management and service coordination and integration among workforce partners will support attainment of this measure. These factors apply to classroom training and OJT, with its structured training plan that includes identified skills to be attained.

**Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Effectiveness in Serving Employers**
- The SAWDB's vision and strategic goals and those of its PA CareerLink® sites focus on identifying and meeting the workforce needs of the region's employers. Greater financial support for industry-driven training, both for potential new hires as well as the incumbent workforce, will help to address the employers' training needs. Increased collaboration among partners, including those housed in the one-stops as well as the PREP partners and community and faith-based organizations, will greatly improve service delivery to employers. No longer should employers be responding to multiple requests from various agencies all
requesting the same information. Once an employer’s needs are identified, referrals between partnering agencies should be much smoother and services provided seamlessly. Greater financial support for industry-driven training, both for potential new hires as well as the incumbent workforce, will help to address the employers’ training needs.

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

3.1. Provide a descriptive overview of the governance structure for the workforce system, including key stakeholders and entities in the local area.

The local workforce development system includes a wide range of key stakeholders, from boards of local elected officials to small community-based organizations. These many and varied stakeholders are identified in the following narrative. The board of county commissioners representing the six-county Southern Alleghenies workforce development area, designated the Southern Alleghenies Planning and Development Commission (SAP&DC) as the Fiscal Agent for WIOA Title I funds. The SAP&DC, one of the commonwealth’s Local Development Districts, also provides the staff to the SAWDB. The majority of the SAP&DC board is comprised of commissioners from the six-county service area; several key private sector and education representatives also serve. The president of the Commission’s board is designated the region’s chief local elected official; he is responsible for approving all appointments to the SAWDB. The Commission’s board also works in cooperation with the SAWDB to develop and approve all local plans, reviews and approves the SAWDB budgets, and performance benchmarks. Since the SAWDB is a non-incorporated body, all contracts for services are made between the SAP&DC and the individual subcontractor; the LEOs accept liability for WIOA funds allocated to the region. The SAWDB director meets with the LEOs bi-monthly, and communicates as needed between meetings, to ensure that they are engaged and kept up to date on the state of the region’s workforce development system.

The SAP&DC, as fiscal agent, has a broad list of responsibilities related to the disbursal of funds including but not limited to:

- contract preparation and maintenance;
- invoice review and check disbursement;
- expenditure tracking;
- draw-down of funds from the PA CareerLink® including preparing Requests for Funds;
- fiscal monitoring of all subcontract/subcontractors;
- preparation and delivery of fiscal reports to LEOs and SAWDB;
- Resource Sharing Agreement Budget maintenance;
- check disbursal on behalf of the region’s PA CareerLink® sites.

The SAWDB is comprised of 30 members that represent the private sector, organized labor, economic development (PREP partner), one-stop partners including OVR, Wagner-Peyser, and the Department of Human Services, community-based organizations including community action agencies, and education. In addition, other individuals who do not fit into the categories listed above, but bring special expertise to the table, have been asked to serve. They have optimum policy-making authority in their organization and are well-positioned to speak to the needs of their industry, organization, or client population. While board turnover is low, the LEOs work directly with appropriate entities in the
Southern Alleghenies region to secure nominations to appoint new members or fill vacancies on the SAWDB. Private sector nominations are made by the appropriate county business organization; nominees come from companies that provide high-quality work and represent a targeted industry cluster. Economic development representatives are members of the PREP partners and are nominated by their individual board of directors. Representatives for education are nominated by their board of trustees, their operating committee, or in the case of adult education, by the ABLE Coalition. Labor representatives are nominated by their central labor council, regional council or area labor federation. The boards of directors for community-based organizations nominate their representatives. The Commonwealth Department of Labor and Industry nominates their representative. All nominations are made in writing on agency letterhead and forwarded to the Chief LEO. The Chief LEO reviews all nominations and officially appoints all members to the SAWDB at the bi-monthly meeting of the SAP&DC, or in between meetings when absolutely necessary.

The SAWDB is dedicated to ensuring that the region’s residents received the highest level of services available through the local one-stop system and that these services be provided by the PA CareerLink® partners in the most efficient and effective manner possible. The SAWDB has four standing committees including:

- The Executive Committee that meets monthly and acts on behalf of the SAWDB between its regular meetings.
- The Fiscal Committee which develops budgets, provides oversight and other duties as identified in the PA Department of Labor and Industry Workforce System Policy No. 02-2015, December 18, 2015.
- The Young Adult Council which provides the SAWDB with input on all matters related to serving youth, from training-related issues to performance review. They also develop the local strategic plan for serving TANF youth.
- The Special Populations Committee focuses on identifying any service gaps in the local workforce system ensuring that the needs of those with significant barriers to employment are identified and addressed.

The role of the SAWDB in the workforce system has been expanded under the WIOA. The SAWDB complies with all regulations set forth in the WIOA and has executed the following in partnership with the local elected officials as they relate to the workforce system and its infrastructure:

- competitive process to identify the OSO;
- negotiation of the Memorandum of Understanding and Infrastructure Funding Agreement with the PA CareerLink® partners to provide workforce services in the region;
- review and evaluation of performance of one stops and operators and certification of the region’s PA CareerLink® sites;
- negotiation of WIOA Title I Performance Goals.

Other key responsibilities include:

- The selection of the WIOA Title I providers and the development of a performance management system designed to capture Title I and PA CareerLink® performance benchmarks to ensure that the workforce system operates in the most efficient and effective manner possible.
- Labor market information data collection, analysis, and dissemination. The SAWDB has positioned itself as a “go to” entity for the most up-to-date labor market information. To date, recipients of this data include the region’s employers, economic development agencies,
PY 2017-2019 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

- secondary and post-secondary educational institutions, and the PA CareerLink® sites.
- Industry Partnership development and support. The Board will continue to sponsor Core workshops designed to address the soft skills employers so often find lacking in their new hires and incumbent workforce.
- Involvement in regional educational initiatives like BASICS (Businesses and Schools Investing in Cooperative Solutions), and the Southern Alleghenies Higher Education Consortium. The SAWDB participation has helped to promote expanded career education and work experience opportunities for youth by leveraging non-WIOA resources.
- Support for and involvement in the Southern Alleghenies Entrepreneurial Ecosystem-Startup Alleghenies.

Together, the Chief Local Elected Official, SAWDB, and Fiscal Agent, form a strong team committed to ensuring that the workforce services provided in the Southern Alleghenies meet the needs of the jobseeker and employer community.

3.2. What are the programs 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?

See Appendix G Workforce Development Delivery System Program Partner/Provider List for partner contact information. Sections 4.1 and 4.2 of the Plan include additional detail on programs included in the Southern Alleghenies local workforce delivery system.

The SAWDB has taken a ‘team’ approach when it comes to operations in the region and it enjoys outstanding working relationships with everyone, from the local elected officials and members of the OSO and members of the PREP, to the partner staff who work directly with the customers. Because of these strong lines of communication and spirit of cooperation that is present in the region, the local system has been recognized by the state and the US Department of Labor for its ability to meet the needs of its customers through its cooperative and coordinated approach to service delivery. The SAWDB had completed a competitive Request for Proposal process to secure a new One-Stop Operator; this consortium has led the drive for innovation and excellence; many of its accomplishments are noted in the Plan. The OSO is a key player is workforce development; it is responsible to help provide direction to the delivery system and assist the one-stop with the implementation of the SAWDB's strategic objectives. Its membership includes key stakeholders and form a consortium of three agencies (Goodwill of the Southern Alleghenies, Employment and Training Inc. and the Community Action Partnership for Somerset County-Tableland Services, who collectively represent the mandated partners- WIOA Title I, Adult Education, YouthBuild, and the Community Service Block Grant. They bring tremendous experience and a long and successful history of providing significant workforce services, especially to those with barriers to employment. They, along with the SAWDB director, business services and operations specialists, PA CareerLink® site administrators and Bureau of Workforce Partnership and Operations assistant regional director meet monthly to review performance metrics, discuss and identify service gaps, lay the groundwork for new program implementation, and address any pressing issues or concerns. Their current focus includes:

- Increased outreach to those with significant barriers to employment;
PY 2017-2019 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

- Identification of new performance metrics for the Pa CareerLink® Scorecards and the formation of an Operational Intelligence Team;
- Modernize services and facilities to attract diverse customers;
- Innovation of Business Services;
- Promotion of the importance of Digital Literacy and Northstar Assessment.

The OSO also:
- Assists with the preparation and maintenance of the PA CareerLink® Operating Budget in concert with the site administrators and one-stop partners;
- Works to ensure seamless integration within the one-stop;
- Helps prepare for PA CareerLink® quality review visits;
- Ensures preparation and maintenance of the One-Stop Service Plan;
- Serves as liaison to the SAWDB and provides one-stop updates at Board and committee meetings;
- Selects, evaluates and supports the PA CareerLink® site administrators;
- Provides oversight of the performance management system relative to Common Measures and the PA CareerLink® Scorecards;
- Evaluates customer needs and satisfaction
- Completes reporting requirements;
- Oversees marketing/outreach for PA CareerLink® sites and system;

The OSO has already taken action to move customer satisfaction measurement to a digital platform, developed a website that will tie to social media applications and further promote the system, including the addition of a ‘live chat’ feature, and the coordinated measurement of performance levels, and further help expand services through greater use of technology, i.e., Zoom, skype and teleconferencing, supported the move of the region’s two largest comprehensive one-stops into more accessible public libraries, established three affiliate sites, rolled out the Northstar Digital Literacy Assessment, and delivered a number of professional development opportunities for all one-stop partners to name but a few of its many significant accomplishments.

Furthermore, the alignment of these programs, and their connection to the SAWDB, PA CareerLink® partners and workforce stakeholders directly supports the workforce strategies outlined in the state plan, the Southern Alleghenies Regional and Local Plan and the shared goals and objectives of the Governor and local Board. Examples of this include:

- The SAWDB/OSO/PA CareerLink® partner development of and support for the PA CareerLink® Scorecard, a single page ‘performance dashboard’ that illustrates, at a glance, how the sites are faring regarding customers served, including those with barriers to employment, training activities, placements, etc.
- SAWDB staff meet regularly with WIOA Title I providers to discuss topics ranging from performance management to Board policy changes, operating system modifications, service delivery improvements.
- The SAWDB Special Populations Committee, with its representatives from state and community agencies that serve WIOA target population, meet with the site administrators to identify service gaps and ways to improve outreach to those in need of the workforce services.
- SAWDB director participation in monthly OSO and site administrator meetings to ensure communication flows from the SAWDB directly to the PA CareerLink® sites. The OSO also participates in and reports out at all SAWDB and Executive Committee meetings.
• SAWDB director participation in state-organized meetings of the local WDB directors to ensure that information flows from the local area to other LWDA s and the state and then back to the region.
• SAWDB director and staff participation in the PA Workforce Development Association board, Policy Council, and technical work group meetings to ensure that communication flows from our local area to other LWDA s and the state and then back to our region.
• SAWDB director participation in the recently established Best Practices subcommittee of Governor Wolf’s Keystone Economic Development and Workforce Command Center;
• SAWDB staff participation in regularly scheduled meetings of Industry Partnerships, Business Service Teams, PREP partners, service organizations, etc. to convey information relative to workforce initiatives to these entities and provide feedback to the Board.

Furthermore, the SAWDB director and staff maintain an ‘open door’ policy so that they are accessible to all workforce partners and stakeholders, including PA CareerLink® staff at all levels. They will also be engaged in ‘best practice brainstorming’ sessions in the coming program year. These will be designed to capture input from the Board, OSO, and partners to improve, enhance and expand available services and their delivery.

3.3. How will the local board work with the entities carrying out core programs to:
   ▶ Expand access to employment, training, education and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly individuals with barriers to employment.

The WIOA has placed increased emphasis on expanding access to employment, training, education and supportive services and serving those who are most in need of assistance particularly individuals with barriers to employment. Thus, strong partnerships with community and faith-based organizations is more important than ever. The SAWDB began by expanding its membership to include the executive directors from two Community Action Agencies (CAAs) and with their assistance, the referral network between the one-stops and CAAs is being strengthened. As is often the case, those who come to the CCAs seeking assistance with housing and transportation, or drug and alcohol counseling are also in need of a job. Similar relationships are being developed or reinforced with other entities that include:

• Juvenile and Adult Probation Offices;
• Transitional Re-Entry Advisory Councils;
• Transition Jnits (OVR);
• County Housing Authorities;
• Food Banks;
• Literacy Providers;
• County MH/MR Offices;
• County Assistance Offices;
• US Department of Veterans Affairs- Community Employment;
• Human Services Councils.

When a customer initially enters a one-stop, a member of the Welcome Team meets with the individual to complete an initial assessment and determine the most appropriate ‘next step’ in service provision. A growing number of customers are entering the one-stop with significant barriers to employment,
issues that must be first addressed before an effective job search can be initiated. Our partnerships with Community Action Agencies are utilized during the ‘Stabilization Phase’, when these individuals are immediately connected, through a face-to-face referral or with technology i.e., Zoom or Skype, with the local community action agency. Inherent in the mission of these partner agencies, these staff are best positioned to assist with barrier remediation. Once the barrier/s has been effectively addressed, the individual returns to the one-stop and the job search work can begin.

As one-stop staff and representatives from these agencies gain a greater understanding of each other’s resources, clients and service needs/gaps, the opportunities for cross-referrals will be heightened and ultimately clients/customers will have access to a broader range of services designed to meet their needs.

Goal setting and performance benchmarking, above and beyond Common Measures, have been the hallmarks of service delivery in the Southern Alleghenies. Part of expanding access to workforce services is to first understand current ‘market share’ and recognize who is using our system. The SAWDB and its workforce partners draw on many PA CareerLink® service utilization reports to better understand demand and customer demographics. From this data, the SAWDB, the OSO, and PA CareerLink® Site Administrators and management team members will set measurable goals for the PY 17-19 program year. These goals will also incorporate the Department of Labor and Industry’s 50% to 70% benchmarks associated with training and serving low income individuals and those with barriers to employment. These targets will be included in the individual PA CareerLink® strategic plans and Scorecards and reviewed monthly to ensure that staff are working towards the goals.

In support of expanding services to individuals with the greatest barriers to employment, the SAWDB has created the Special Populations Committee, which focuses on identifying any service gaps in the local workforce system ensuring that the needs of those with significant barriers to employment are identified and addressed. An OVR district administrator serves as the chair of this committee as well as on the SAWDB and its Executive Committee; this helps to ensure that the employment needs of individuals with disabilities will remain in the forefront. Other committee members include representatives from Department of Corrections, Human Services, Senior Employment, Adult Education, the US Department of Veterans Affairs, and others with a commitment to assisting those who face some of the most significant barriers to employment. The Board and its partners in the public workforce system recognize that innovative approaches must be identified and utilized if they are to be successful in placing these individuals in jobs with career pathways that ultimately lead to self-sufficiency. Specific programs and strategies are outlined in detail in Section 4.13 of this Plan.

- Facilitate the development of Career Pathways and co-enrollment, as appropriate, in core programs (specify on-ramps from adult education).

Every effort is made to co-enroll jobseekers with WIOA Title I and all appropriate programs when they are eligible and suitable for such services. The SAWDB and its PA CareerLink® partners have developed and support overarching strategies to ensure that all persons are afforded the opportunity to access all levels of PA CareerLink® services. They include but are not limited to:

- Welcome Team members provide a more customized approach when informing customers of the services/resources available to one-stop customers. The PA CareerLink® partners have been engaged in aggressive outreach to those targeted for the RESEA program. This includes direct mailings inviting dislocated workers to the PA CareerLink®, as well as follow-up phone calls to encourage/ensure participation.
PY 2017-2019 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

- Preliminary Assessment- conducted early on to identify potential barriers to employment/service, identify service needs and appropriate service mix, and referrals to other partners. This also aids in determining those eligible for a priority of service including veterans and their spouses, and low-income individuals and those receiving public assistance.
- Development of an Individual Service Strategy to identify a customer’s vocational/service goal and the services to be provided for the individual to reach their goal.
- Case Management- the assignment of a career planner who will work one-on-one to help ensure that the customer receives the needed services. The career planner will also act as an advocate for the customer.
- Follow-up to include regular communication between the career planner and the customer once the customer has reached their vocational/service goal. This is to ensure that any barriers to continued employment are addressed early on.
- Availability of tools and resources including WorkKeys Career Readiness Assessment/Credentialing and Northstar Digital Literacy Assessment;
- Affiliate Sites- due to the geographic expanse of the Southern Alleghenies, the SAWDB has established and supports multiple 1-1 sites throughout the region. These are strategically located within each county and housed in traditional gathering places including community centers, libraries, senior centers and YMCAs.
- Two Comprehensive one-stops have been relocated into the region’s largest public libraries in order to make workforce services more readily accessible to larger target populations.

SAWDB support for program alignment extends far beyond the Core service providers. Increased service coordination and resource sharing are underway with many entities whose mission includes a workforce development component. These include expanded relationships with:

- Employment and Retention Network (EARN)- to better integrate customers and programs with core PA CareerLink® offerings. Strong EARN/TANF staff participation on the SAWDB’s Special Populations Committee, PA CareerLink® staff participation in EARN Direct Service Team meetings, and EARN staff engagement with the OSO has helped to further EARN integration;
- PREP- to ensure that the public workforce system supports the efforts of the region’s network of economic developers;
- US Department of Veterans Affairs- to better integrate job seeking veterans into the public workforce system;
- Southern Alleghenies Education Consortium- SAWDB and staff participation on employer advisory boards and initiatives designed to connect college graduates with local employers to help stem the ‘brain drain’ issue;
- Community Action Agencies (CAAs)- lack of gainful employment and low literacy are key issues with so many clients who receive specialized assistance from the CAAs. Strengthening relationships with these vital community agencies has resulted in improved service alignment and coordination. As additional providers of literacy and GED services, the CAAs are positioned to provide leveraged resources and support a more holistic approach to meeting customer needs.

The presence of a strong Adult Basic Literacy Education Coalition (ABLE) in the region, and specifically in the one-stops has helped to increase opportunities for partner referral to these vital sources for
customer support. As noted throughout the Plan, significant WIOA Title I resources, as well as other partner funding, are used to support post-secondary education for eligible customers. Customer assessment has revealed the significant number of individuals who are basic skills deficient and therefore in need of adult basic education services. Referrals to these services are made by all partner programs and can come at any time during service provision.

The ABLE Coalition has helped to drive Career Pathway efforts as well and have educated one-stop staff, customers and employers to the value of pathway recognition and support and many jobseekers have benefited from remediation at different levels of their engagement with the public workforce system. Under the WIOA, adult education functions as an individual’s “on-ramp” to success in post-secondary education, job training, and career. The adult education on-ramp may serve people who are:

- working in low-wage, unstable jobs,
- without work history
- re-entering from incarceration
- testing at low learning levels
- preparing for college, or
- non-native English speakers.

An on-ramp is a career pathway program designed to serve individuals with significant barriers to educational and economic success. The adult education on-ramp shares accountability with WIOA staff and takes into consideration the client’s individual engagement with public and private systems and seeks to deliver integrated service that will address each individual’s specific needs.

The following Adult Education services provide stepping-stones that prepare participants to enter and successfully complete training and enter employment.

- **ABE** (Adult Basic Education): Students reading between 0 and 9th grade level learn reading, writing and math skills.
- **ASE / HSE** (Adult Secondary Education / High School Equivalency): Students reading at or above a 9th grade level learn academic skills to prepare for postsecondary education or a high school equivalency diploma. (GED® or HiSET®)
- **College and Career Readiness**: Students at all levels receive rigorous academic training to prepare them for the transition from adult education into (1) postsecondary education, (2) on-job training, or (3) jobs and careers.
- **Workforce Preparation**: Students at all levels learn workforce preparation skills. These skills (including digital literacy, problem-solving, critical thinking, communication, time management, and other skills people need to be successful in any workplace) are embedded into appropriately contextualized learning opportunities.
- **Career Pathways**: Students learn about career options and the education and training pathway that will enable them to meet their career goals. Some adult education programs offer bridge classes to prepare students to enter a career area (e.g., health, manufacturing).

Some additional related services provided by adult education include but are not limited to the following:

- Health Careers Prep classes that learners can take to prepare to pass the school entrance exams for training in licensed practical nursing, certified nurse aide, phlebotomy, medical secretary and other related trainings;
- College Prep class is provided as an alternative to the non-credit bearing but costly
PY 2017-2019 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

developmental math class offered by the college;
- Community Agency Fairs where learners can consider post-secondary opportunities after they complete their adult education classes;
- SMART goals are developed by the learners and their case managers and shared with instructors so that their adult education instruction can be used as an ‘on-ramp’ to their specific career goals.

The SAWDB and its staff also work closely with the region’s Career and Technology Centers to ensure that their programs of study are positioned to meet employers’ current and future hiring needs. Many of the region’s employers have expressed concern over their ability to attract and retain a skilled workforce. In the next five to ten years, the number of retirees will exceed the number of those entering the skilled trades. The CTCs are well positioned to respond to industry needs and the public workforce system will support program alignment through the following:

- SAWDB member and staff participation on employer advisory councils and Perkins Participatory Planning Committees. These serve as excellent vehicles to communicate employer workforce projections and review and advise current and proposed programs of study.
- Provision of detailed labor market information. The SAWDB has positioned itself and the PA CareerLink® sites as the ‘go to’ source for detailed, up-to-date information that is used to inform school administrators, educators, counselors, parents and students on demand occupations, compensation, and education attainment requirements.
- Support for Pennsylvania Department of Education equipment grants and other competitive funding. The SAWDB and its staff will continue to work closely with the CTCs to assist with procuring equipment to provide ‘state of the art’ training for their students.
- Partnership with CTCs in the implementation of the region’s 2019/20 Business Education Partnership grant whereby more students have the opportunity to engage in ‘hands on’ career exploration offered through CTC programs.

The SAWDB and its staff maintain continued engagement with the CTCs as a source for occupational skills training through the ETPL and as a source of incumbent worker training and apprenticeship development. The SAWDB invests a significant portion of its WIOA Title I funding and federal discretionary and competitive grant awards in training for eligible PA CareerLink® customers. In PY 16, in PY 18, 103 ITAs were approved; 68% of the students attended CTCs. Given the significant level of investment, in terms of workforce dollars and customer time and commitment, it is vital that these programs of study align with employer demands, that graduates have the requisite skills to obtain gainful employment and that the SAWDB and the public workforce system provide the support necessary to ensure these successful outcomes.

In addition to providing needed services, the SAWDB has made significant efforts to ‘take the services to the customer’. This has been especially important given the geographic expanse of the region. In addition to 5 comprehensive PA CareerLink® sites and 4 affiliated sites, the SAWDB has also established multiple service locations throughout the region. These are in community centers and public libraries. Staff visit these sites to meet with individuals or groups who are unable to travel to a comprehensive site. The SAWDB has developed effective relationships with public libraries. Staff and volunteers are shown how to navigate PA CareerLink® and refer their job seeking customers to the closest one-stop. The SAWDB, OSO and one-stop staff are exploring other opportunities to increase the mobility of service delivery to include regularly scheduling and holding appointments in the offices of workforce
partners including housing authorities, community action agencies, prisons, foodbanks, and similar locations. This will further facilitate outreach to those unable to travel to a one-stop.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act requires eligibility determination and the completion of a WIOA application for all recipients of WIOA Title I Individualized Career Services and Training services. In Pennsylvania, all WIOA Title I participant service tracking information including the WIOA Title I Application are required to be entered onto the state’s operating system of record, the Commonwealth Workforce Development System PA CareerLink®. The SAWDB staff have developed an extensive monitoring system to validate eligibility determination. The process includes the following:

- **File review-** SAWDB staff review files annually to ensure that all appropriate eligibility documents have been secured and are included within the participant file. Also, that the information is posted onto PA CareerLink® and complies with state and federal requirements, as it pertains to data validation for eligibility verification for WIOA Title I, outcomes, service and program follow-up.

- **Limiting use of Self-Certification-** In the Southern Alleghenies Workforce Development Area, the use of Self Certification for eligibility validation, is permissible after all practicable methods of acquiring the proper verification have been exhausted or failed. This includes the use of telephone/documentation Inspection verification method prior to the utilization of self -certification to verify eligibility criteria. Concern over repeated use of self-certification led the SAWDB staff to develop a check list that is utilized by WIOA Title I staff and monitored by board staff during file review. It identifies the multiple methods that must be first utilized by staff before self-certification, as a last resort, is used to validate eligibility. SAWDB staff have analyzed the rates of usage of self-certification, reported the levels to WIOA Title I providers and provided them with technical assistance on the use other preferred methods, including telephone verification. In addition to participant file review, the use of Self Certification as it pertains to eligibility verification, is tracked and monitored in the Southern Alleghenies using data derived from a PA CareerLink® Ad-Hoc report created with the assistance of state staff. These combined efforts have contributed to a marked reduction in the use of Self Certification for eligibility verification in the Southern Alleghenies region; it is utilized in less than 5% of all eligibility verification over the last two program years.

It is also important to note that an analysis of participant characteristics, including barriers to employment, has shown that the decline in the use of Self Certification for eligibility verification has not adversely impacted access to program services, particularly those individuals with barriers to employment served in the Southern Alleghenies Workforce Development Area.

### 3.4. What strategies will be implemented in the local area to improve business/employer engagement that:

- **Support a local area workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses in the local area;**

Frequent and consistent employer feedback, combined with setting measurable employer-focused goals, will be essential to ensure the region’s workforce development system meets the needs of the business community. Some efforts will include:
The OSO is utilizing new satisfaction instruments that are in a digital format. These will be utilized to gauge business response to existing services and help identify gaps. With expected guidance from the US DOL and the PA Department of Labor and Industry, the SAWDB will work with the OSO, PA CareerLink® site administrators and WIOA Title I providers to develop an instrument that will help capture ‘Effectiveness In Serving Employers’ and measure movement toward meeting the negotiated WIOA performance goal. The SAWDB’s PA CareerLink® Scorecard measures employer market penetration and system utilization by return employer customers as a measure of satisfaction.

Employer-centric and measurable goals will continue and be expanded upon in the PA CareerLink® Scorecard. Current measurable objectives include increased employer market penetration as reflected in the number of job postings, return customer utilization rates and those participating in services including OJT and other training and recruitment-related activities. Goal setting around these metrics will occur early in PY19.

Employer-driven discussions around training topics to include incumbent worker training, apprenticeship development and customized training program will be facilitated. Significant efforts are currently underway to promote registered apprenticeships. Roundtable discussions will continue to be held; these forums bring together employers, economic development, the public workforce system and education to begin identifying and addressing key issues. Grassroots, county-based, Next Generation Industry Partnership work is building. Existing Executive Roundtable forums serve as the launch point for these discussions with the resulting intelligence brought to the PREP meetings. While still in its infancy, we believe these opportunities for higher level, ‘big picture’ strategic discussions will take the workforce and economic development partners relationship to a new level and result in greater service to the region’s employers. The SAWDB has long supported OJT and other work-based learning programs, industry partnerships, sector strategies, and career pathways. Targeted employer feedback will support program development that meets the needs of the business customer.

Established employer forums will provide the conduit for key business intelligence to be communicated to the SAWDB and workforce partners and likewise offer the venue to promote workforce resources to the business community. Representatives from the one-stop Business Service Teams and workforce leadership will participate in Industry Partnership, Society of Human Resource Management, Chamber of Commerce, and other business-led forums to identify and assess employer service needs. This information will be conveyed back to the SAWDB; the Board in turn will ensure that service priorities are communicated to providers and resources are dedicated to implement and expand training services to include incumbent worker and customized training and apprenticeship development.

To effectively serve employers, the workforce system must recognize the needs of the business community and respond with appropriate services to address those needs. Agility is a hallmark of any successful enterprise; successful businesses are positioned to meet the changing needs of their customers. The workforce system must do likewise. The strategies outlined above -- regular employer engagement and specialized service development, implementation, and assessment, will help to ensure that the region’s workforce system will be well-positioned to meet the needs and exceed the expectations of the employer community it serves.

- Manage activities or services that will be implemented to improve business engagement;

Ensuring business engagement in the workforce system, regardless of size and industry, comes down
PY 2017-2019 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

to three things: determining employer needs, informing the employer that the system is able, willing and ready to meet their needs, and having the ability to meet those needs in a timely and effective manner. Small employers (49 employees or less) make up 95% of all the companies in the region. They often lack resources, both human and financial, so the SAWDB and its workforce partners will work to ensure that the one-stops are well-positioned to meet the needs of these business customers.

Strategies to ensure effective engagement of business and industry are and will continue to be developed and deployed on two levels: Administrative (SAWDB) and Programmatic (PA CareerLink® and Workforce Development Partners).

The board will use continuous improvement techniques to evaluate the administrative and programmatic strategies, receive regular updates from staff and gather input from employer board members. Additionally, the board and the one-stop operator consortium have collaborated to form a business services strategy team with business services representatives, Local Veterans Employment Representative, Title 1 representatives and the board’s Employer Services Development Specialist to examine current policies, make recommendations, help establish priorities and develop new strategies to increase employer engagement. The SAWDB, in partnership with the PREP, have expanded strategic outreach to employers through the Department of Community and Economic Development’s ENGAGE initiative. In the Southern Alleghenies region, joint business calls are being conducted by county economic developers and PA CareerLink® Business Service Team leads. During these visits, participants engage in a ‘deep dive’ into the company’s challenges and work together to identify ways to help address these issues. These visits have enabled one-stop staff to not only strengthen good existing relationships with the economic development community, but more importantly, they have made significant connections with business leaders that have resulted in increased employer recognition of and increased engagement with the public workforce system. The region’s Scorecard will continue to track the percentage of employers in the region who use the one-stop, the percentage of repeat users, and the number of employer services provided each quarter. These figures will be used to track improvement towards the goal of increased employer engagement.

Administrative

- The SAWDB will annually review its policies to ensure, where legally possible, they are employer-friendly and do not create barriers to effective service provision. Agility is key to business success and the public workforce system and its administrators must strive for the same.
- The SAWDB will continue to support and look for opportunities to expand Next Generation Industry Partnership participation in targeted sectors.
- The SAWDB will continue to support opportunities for professional development and employer networking and identify and work to secure flexible funding to support incumbent worker training as well as address future pipeline supply issues.
- The SAWDB will promote opportunities for skill training ensure that significant resources are available to expand the promotion and utilization of OJT, incumbent worker training, work-based learning opportunities, apprenticeships, customized training, and other proven employer training services. Interest in registered apprenticeships has begun to gain momentum and the SAWDB and its workforce partners will utilize employer forums to promote this valuable employee/employer tool.
- The SAWDB will continue to support staff involvement in and engagement with the PREP partners to ensure alignment of workforce and economic development strategies and
The SAWDB and OSO will annually review the PA CareerLink® employer service mix to determine any gaps, based on local need and WIOA direction.

The SAWDB and OSO will annually review employer services outreach materials and enhance and professionalize the materials, utilizing the expertise of the SAP&DC Marketing and Communication Specialist.

The SAWDB, with input from the PREP partners and IP participants, will review the High Priority Occupation List to ensure it reflects employer hiring needs.

The SAWDB will encourage quality education providers to submit relevant programs for inclusion on the Eligible Training Provider List to ensure customers can access training that meets employer demands.

The SAWDB and OSO will annually review PA CareerLink® employer-centric goals to ensure alignment with Governor Wolf’s and the SAWDB’s strategic vision and confirm that the benchmarks are sufficiently ambitious and promote continuous improvement.

Though small (4), the SAWDB staff will continue to designate a staff person to serve as the board’s ‘point person’ regarding to business services. A significant amount of his time is spent participating in Business Service Team meetings, attending Industry Partnership roundtables, and meeting, along with the site administrators and Business Service Team members, with employers to discuss available services and identify service gaps and training needs. Considerable time is spent monitoring the significant number of OJT contracts; the WIOA Title I providers contract directly with the employers but the SAWDB staff are responsible for all monitoring to include compliance with local, state and federal guidelines and employer and employee satisfaction with the program.

Programmatic

- The OSO, PA CareerLink® site administrators and PA CareerLink® management teams will review their employer policies and procedures to identify and mitigate any barriers to service provision.

- The OSO and PA CareerLink® site administrators will ensure that each PA CareerLink® has an active Business Services Team made up of the ‘right’ representatives from partner agencies. As the lead entity responsible for facilitating employer engagement at the one-stop level, it is essential that the Business Service Teams are viewed by employers as professional, well-coordinated, business-focused and committed to service to the region’s employers. These teams meet regularly to discuss engagement strategies and have ‘point’ staff responsible for different aspects of business services. Databases that track employer visits are utilized. In some cases, team members utilize Executive Pulse, a PREP IT tool, to track and make partner referrals. Close communication between partner staff dedicated to serving employers, including the use of spreadsheets that track employer visits, outcomes, and referrals, will help to significantly reduce the risk of redundant employer visits/communication pieces.

- The PA CareerLink® staff will gather business intelligence through employer outreach and utilization of Center for Workforce Information and Analysis (CWIA) data to ensure alignment of job seeker services with employer hiring needs.

- The PA CareerLink® site administrators and OSO will review Business Service Team communication plans to ensure that employer outreach is coordinated among all partners and that small employers and those tied to in-demand industry sectors are targeted for assistance.

- The PA CareerLink® staff will strengthen relationships with employer-driven organizations and associations (S-IRM, Chambers of Commerce, Rotary, etc.) and use these as vehicles to educate
members on available services and resources.

- The PA CareerLink® staff will work closely with PREP partners to provide leveraged resources in support of business recruitment, retention, expansion, and training efforts.
- The PA CareerLink® staff will organize employer-driven incumbent worker training opportunities.

➤ Better coordinate regional workforce and economic development strategy, messaging, engagement and programs; and

The SAWDB will continue to support the long, well-established and highly effective partnership between the public workforce system and the region’s economic development agencies. For decades, the economic developers and workforce development professionals of the Southern Alleghenies have participated in a recognized and effective network dedicated to improving the region’s economy. The public workforce system is a key partner in the Southern Alleghenies PREP; the SAWDB director and PA CareerLink® site administrators have been non-financial members since the PREP’s inception. This relationship is reinforced and broadened through both entities’ ties to the Southern Alleghenies Planning and Development Commission (SAP&DC). Serving as fiscal agent and staff to the SAWDB, the SAP&DC is one of seven Local Development Districts (LDD) in the state uniquely positioned to help ensure the ‘workforce-economic development connection’ and alignment of programs and services.

As an arm of the SAP&DC, the SAWDB and its staff are involved in all projects that include a workforce development component. This helps to further cement the strong connection between the public workforce system and economic development network.

As referenced earlier in this Plan, the region’s economy has been adversely affected by the decline in its defense industry and to an even larger degree, the tremendous downturn in the coal industry. Assistance to the affected companies and their workforce serves to illustrate the coordinated and cooperative approach taken by the region’s workforce and economic development professionals. Each brings unique resources to the table that include:

Workforce Development

- Labor Market Information- an inventory of the skill sets of the affected workers will help identify current opportunities for re-employment and provide economic developers with data they can use in their business recruitment efforts.
- Incumbent Worker/Dislocated Worker Training- assistance is available to companies that need to ‘retool’ their workforce as part of a job retention/product diversification strategy. Funding is available to train the affected dislocated workers so that they are prepared to reenter the workforce.
- Employer Services- range from Rapid Response assistance available after notification of a downsizing (staff from JARI, an economic development agency, participates on two counties Rapid Response Teams), to assistance with new employee assessment, recruitment and, training.
- Dislocated Worker Services- range from assessment and remediation to job search assistance and its components, career counseling, and opportunities for retraining.
PY 2017-2019 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan

- Resources of the US Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration and the PA Department of Labor and Industry- from dedicated funding (National Emergency Grants, Made in America, POWER) to technical assistance and labor market information.

Economic Development

- Employer intelligence - In-depth knowledge of the employer/industry and its needs, challenges, opportunities for growth/diversification/economic restructuring.
- New Market Identification & Expansion- assistance with government procurement and product export.
- Business recruitment services - financing packages, shovel-ready property, tax incentives understanding of supply chain. More often, PA CareerLink® Business Service Team and SAWDB staff are often invited by economic developers to participate in meetings with site selection teams. This reinforces the relationship between economic and workforce development professionals and presents a 'united front' to prospective companies.
- Resources of the Appalachian Regional Commission, Economic Development Administration, PA Department of Community and Economic Development, United States Department of Agriculture, Local Economic Development Fund, and Pennsylvania Industrial Development Authority that range from dedicated funding to technical assistance.

Many of these same resources will also be coordinated in support of business recruitment and expansion efforts. The SAWDB and its PA CareerLink® sites are positioned to provide labor market information that can be used to promote the region to site selection committees. These range from radial analysis reports that illustrate population demographics and commuting pattern studies that identify workforce movement and possible recruitment opportunities to target industry data including an analysis of the location quotient and potential availability of a skilled workforce. Furthermore, workforce funding will be leveraged to incentivize a company to establish a presence or expand operations in the region. In many cases, the opportunity to access On-the-Job training funds resulted in companies’ decisions to relocate to the region.

The workforce and economic development communities recognize the value and unique resources each possess, complementing rather than competing with one another. Opportunities for cross-referrals, joint employer visits, as demonstrated in the ENGAGE initiative, and coordinated business recruitment efforts will continue and grow.

The SAWDB, along with the PA CareerLink® partner staff and the PREP partners are committed to working together to ensure that the needs of the business community are identified and address. With this shared mission comes the risk of overwhelming employers with multiple communications, including visits designed to share information on available services and learn of the companies’ needs. The following strategies will be utilized to increase coordination between the workforce and economic development partners to reduce the chance for duplication of services and lessen employer fatigue:

- Encourage greater connectivity between the worlds of workforce and economic development by inviting local economic developers to attend BST meetings when possible and appropriate; share minutes and other appropriate communications with the local agencies.
- Develop joint calls when and where appropriate. The local PREP partners are currently working with the BST leads in the ENGAGE initiative.