WIOA Plan Review and Modification Form (Regional 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. Regional Plan: Designated Submitting Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB)

Region Name: Southern Alleghenies
LWDB Name (i.e. designated name, not D.B.A.): Southern Alleghenies Workforce Development Board – (SawDB)
Region includes the Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDA) included in Region: Southern Alleghenies Workforce Development Area

Name of Designated Point of Contact (POC): Susan K. Whisler
Organization: SawDB
Title: Director
Telephone Number: 814-949-6507
E-mail Address: whisler@sapdo.org

II. Plan Review and Modification Information

Was the plan reviewed per WMOA 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 plan review warrant plan modifications? Yes
Was the modified plan draft provided to affected LWDB(s) prior to public posting? Yes
Have all affected LWDB(s) approved final plan mod: Yes
Public Comment Period:
08/15/2019 – 09/16/2019
Comments received: No
Submitting LWDB Approval Date: 11/12/2019
Plan Modification Effective Date: 01/01/2020

III(a). Requested Plan Changes

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<td>Description of communications with public during planning process</td>
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<td>#5</td>
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<td>Description of the Engage program partnership and deletion of sector initiative</td>
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<td>#7</td>
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<td>Response to added question regarding Board, LED orgs and strategic goals</td>
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<td>#8</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Added Admin strategies on entrepreneurial ecosystem, Engage and business services</td>
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<tr>
<td>#9</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Added programmatic strategy for one-stop-operator and mod to sector initiatives on IPs</td>
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<tr>
<td>#10</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Update industry cluster employment data</td>
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If needed, please use supplemental Section III(b), Requested Plan Changes – Continuation Page

IV. Submitting LWDB Executive Director's Attestation

Submitter attests affected LWDA Chief Elected Officers (CEO) and LWDB Chairs approved the plan review or the submitted plan.
Name: Susan K. Whisler
Date: 11/13/2019

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:

If after the mandated WIOA plan review it is determined no plan modifications are required provide a copy of this form's page 1 to L&I as evidence that a plan review occurred.
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Appendix C: PY 2017-2020 WIOA Multi-Year Regional Plan template

Region Workforce Development Area name: Southern Alleghenies

Effective Date: January 1, 2020

1.1 Identification of the region.

The Southern Alleghenies Planning Region includes the counties of Bedford, Blair, Cambria, Fulton, Huntingdon and Somerset. The Southern Alleghenies Workforce Development Area and Planning Region are one in the same.

The Regional Plan was developed for the Southern Alleghenies Workforce Development Area (SAWDA) and planning region, as designated by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of Labor and Industry. The Southern Alleghenies Workforce Development Board (SAWDB) has a long and successful history of developing solid, strategic local and regional plans. Formation of a planning region committee was not applicable to the Southern Alleghenies. The SAWDB utilized its established planning process and sought input from the following stakeholders:

- The local elected officials from the six member counties;
- The SAWDB and its Special Populations Committee and Young Adult Council;
- The Partnership for Regional Economic Performance (PREP) members;
- The region’s employer community;
- The Southern Alleghenies Higher Education Consortium;
- The Southern Alleghenies PA CareerLink® partners;
- The Local Management Committee;
- The users of the public workforce system including jobseekers.

Communication with these key stakeholders took place throughout the planning process. Meetings, including those publicly advertised, where the plan was discussed prior to posting, were held on June 29, July 11, and July 19, 2017.

Regional Plan modifications, along with the PA Department of Labor and Industry Workforce System Policy No. 108-01, were shared with the stakeholders listed above and their input was sought. Meetings, including those publicly advertised, where the plan was discussed were held on August 7th and 13th, September 6, 10, 18, and 20, 2019. Stakeholders, partners, and the public were given opportunities to comment during the planning process and were encouraged to direct written comments to the SAWDB director.

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

The SAWDB uses multiple sources from federal census data, state level resources, a regional data consortium, and local data gathered from PA CareerLink® partners, industry partnerships and economic developers.

The civilian labor force across the six county Southern Alleghenies region has posted a steady decline since 2007, dropping from 226,100 to 202,800 in 2018, as the availability of workers will continue to
drive future labor force activity. All other measures support this projected trend to include those relying on other sources of support income, some of which tell a more complicated story. Specifically this list would include those spending more time in school, baby boomers continuing to retire, potential workers spending more time in school, continued declining demand for less skilled workers resulting in many becoming discouraged about their employment prospects, an aging workforce who is less likely to seek work compared to workers in the prime age category, and unemployed workers who have been unemployed for extended time periods.

While untangling the causes of these labor force trends is a complicated endeavor, we recognize that the challenges these demographic and labor market factors will continue to exert downward pressure on the already low labor force participation rate.

Coming out of the recession the region has not done quite as well as many had hoped, a trend that is reflected in the statistics across the board. While the numbers may not be an exclusive measure, they do point to the fact that the regional economy has continued to operate below its norm by the broadest measures punctuated by consistent annual average job losses dating back to 2012. In 2016 average employment in the six-county region totaled 167,268. That number had risen to 195,100 by June 2019. The regional economy faces many challenges covering a broad spectrum that includes:

- Continued higher than State unemployment rates;
- Declining labor force participation. Participation rates are less than 50%;
- Aging population;
- Struggle to attract and retain younger workers for the region;
- Creating employment opportunities through a more diverse business base and attraction of new industries.

The partial recovery that has materialized since then has been quite uneven favoring modest growth across the service sector. Meanwhile, the goods producing industries dominated by area manufacturers has pursued a somewhat more stable job pattern while managing to post only modest gains through this period. While this trend does not discredit the importance of manufacturing to the region, it points to the comparatively low contribution to the economy in terms of providing jobs throughout this recovery period including the past year.

The region has the sixteenth highest unemployment rate among the 22 workforce development areas in the state. The unemployment rate in four of the six counties in the region is higher than the state rate and three of the counties are included with the 20 counties having the highest unemployment rates in the state. The number of people in the labor force has remained well below pre-recession levels and the labor force participation rate is less than 50%. The region loses nearly 20,000 workers net to other workforce regions every day and five of the six counties experience an overall net loss of workers daily. The overall population continues to age with the median being 43.8 years which puts it well ahead of PA’s number of 40.7 and ahead of the second-place state in the U.S., New Hampshire at 43 years. The population density of younger individuals in the region continues to be a concern. The population of 15-24-year-old’s is more than 12,000 less than the age group 55-64-year-old’s setting up the potential of a labor shortage as older workers retire and there are physically not enough people in the region to replace them. There are several other conditions affecting the region that need to be considered. Much of the region is rural in nature and lacks even reliable dial-up internet service not to mention any high-speed internet. The number of children being born under medical assistance funding has risen to a disturbing level of 53%. Some experts predict that if the region’s percentage climbs much
higher, it will be nearly impossible to recover. Drug overdoses are a nearly everyday occurrence and employers report that finding individuals able to pass a pre-employment drug screen is very challenging. Between 2010 and 2015, the number of high school graduates in the region declined by 679 students or 14% and the total of post-secondary bound students declined by 655 or 19.5% severely impacting the potential labor force supply. During the same time frame, there were more than 7,950 less students, ages 3 years and older, enrolled in school in the region pointing to an even more difficult situation for employers as the workforce continues to age. The positive side of the economy is that there are some industries that continue to do well and grow which provides opportunity for those interested in those fields. Since the first quarter of 2016, average weekly wages for all industries has risen by $69. Additionally, the average wage paid for On-the-Job Training in the region has risen although occupational wages remain well below the state averages. There have been recent plant openings in manufacturing that provided new opportunities and while small initially, there is an expectation of growth that will add even more jobs. The U.S Route 219 extension project is well underway that will open a new corridor to a neighboring state and should provide a needed logistical access boost to the region.

The board will target Healthcare, Advanced Manufacturing, Logistics and Transportation, Construction, Business Services, and Mining because of the high numbers of individuals employed, high wages, or a combination of both factors. The regional High Priority Occupation List supports this strategy with numerous occupations covering all the targeted clusters.

Existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors include:

- Healthcare is the top existing in-demand industry employing 21% of the labor force.
- Retail trade at 13% and while the sector has significant employment numbers, the wages and career opportunities exclude it from board focus.
- Manufacturing is third on the list with 12% of the workforce.
- Accommodation and Food Service at 9%, which while growing in the region, does not offer significant wage growth and therefore is not a priority of the board.
- Transportation and Warehousing
- Construction. Both Transportation and Warehousing as well as Construction have good annual wages and consistent occupational openings making them an easy fit for workforce programs.
- Business Services is broad category that covers many services provided to businesses in the region. The industry contributes approximately 7% of the workforce.
- Energy is a re-emerging industry that the board is targeting. After a precipitous fall from a spot as a leading regional industry, coal mining is beginning to see a resurgence in the area with several new mines opening and a new pipeline being built through the region.

Existing and emerging in-demand industry sector(s) occupations include:
Healthcare positions including registered nurses, nursing assistants, and licensed practical nurses lead the pack in terms of annual openings numbering into the thousands. Additional health related occupations include medical and clinical technologists/technicians, radiologic technologists, physical therapist assistants and dental assistants.

Manufacturing occupations make up 10% of the regional workforce with the most pressing need being welders, machinists, machinery maintenance workers, assemblers, and supervisors.
Transportation related occupations have been a critical need in the region for several years led primarily by driver positions, both heavy and light trucks and driver supervisors. Also needed are production, planning, and expediting clerks and shipping, receiving, and traffic clerks. Construction-related positions include carpenters, supervisors, highway maintenance workers, and construction and building inspectors.

The Energy sector will need all occupations, however, the significant number of available experienced miners still unemployed are expected to fill any open positions.

Southern Alleghenies Targeted Clusters Location Quotients

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<tr>
<th>Industry Cluster</th>
<th>Location Quotient</th>
<th>Employment</th>
<th>Employment %</th>
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<tr>
<td>Healthcare</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>35,445</td>
<td>21.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Retail Trade</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>22,002</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>19,293</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accommodation/Food Svc</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>14,651</td>
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<td>Educational Services</td>
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<td>Business Services</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>12,116</td>
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<td>Trans/Warehousing</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>9,140</td>
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<td>Public Administration</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>8,439</td>
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<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>7,752</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
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Source: Center for Workforce Information and Analysis, Southern Alleghenies WDA Profile, May 2019

The region’s employers need technically competent workers, capable of solving problems and committed to being there every day to make the company successful. Skill sets needed by employers include communications and interpersonal interaction, understanding and using technology, critical thinking and analysis, physical work, quality assurance and standards enforcement. The SAWDB has allocated significant resources in support of training for adults, dislocated workers, and youth. The Board and its staff have also worked with a variety of partners to “get the word out” that a high school degree is no longer sufficient to get and keep a good job.

Sources: Labor Market Status Report/County Unemployment Rates, April 2019, Central PA Workforce Development Corporation
Labor Force Participation Rates, January 2016, Central PA Workforce Development Corporation
Southern Alleghenies WDA Commuting Patterns, April 2017, Central PA Workforce Development Corporation
US Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey, 5-year estimates
Center for Workforce Information and Analysis, Southern Alleghenies WDA Profile, May 2019
PA Health Care Cost Containment Council, Data FY 2010
1.3. Based on the analysis of the regional labor market and economic conditions, describe the region’s workforce and economic development-oriented vision and goals.

The Southern Alleghenies Workforce Development Board (SAWDB) will lead initiatives designed to enhance the skills of the workforce 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 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 WIOA 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 WEDnet PA 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. During Engage visits, joint business calls made by economic developers and PA CareerLink® Business Service Team leads, staff have the opportunity to hear directly from employers. Invaluable information related to business challenges and current and future workforce needs is communicated directly to those in a position to help address the issues. The one-stop figures prominently in the resulting business action plans and positions the workforce system in the center of providing targeted business assistance. As the SAWDB moves to incorporate the Next Generation IP model, it anticipates greater industry involvement and improved business intelligence that will enhance board-supported training initiatives.

Increased alignment with WIOA Title II (Adult Education) and Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) to support greater career pathway development.
PY 2017-2019 WIOA Multi-Year Regional Plan

Continued support for the region’s Industry Partnerships (IPs). While, industry-driven consortia have been in place in the region for more than 16 years, the SAWDB is collaborating with its economic development partners to move its existing IPs to the Next Gen model. 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 at 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 Special Populations Committee will continue to focus on service to target populations with significant barriers to employment. This standing committee will act as the conduit for information between agencies that serve WIOA target populations and the SAWDB and its PA CareerLink® sites and service providers.

Expanded and enhanced work-based opportunities for youth. The SAWDB will continue its support for and promote 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. The SAWDB’s 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. Opportunities for additional and unique work experiences will be provided in maker spaces - ‘Idea Mines’ for budding entrepreneurs. Youth participants will be incorporated into a larger initiative called ‘Startup Alleghenies’ an effort to restructure local economies through the promotion of entrepreneurship.

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. These types of efforts will provide youth with the opportunity to receive industry-recognized credentials and paid work experience aligned to the credentials.

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 SAWDA PA CareerLink® Scorecard captures a variety of

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1 Pennsylvania’s Workforce Development Plan (PY 2016-PY 2019), pg. 7.
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 the 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 prepared
- Number of Workshops and recruitment events
- Labor force, employment and unemployment rates, and UC rates

This information is reported monthly 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.

The Board will continue to work closely with the PREP partners to coordinate efforts. Through the Engage initiative, county economic developers and PA CareerLink® Business Service Team leads call on targeted company leaders to learn about their challenges and projected needs, including those workforce related ones. The close collaboration, and with it, stronger relationships built between the workforce and economic development partners, has resulted in more effective communication with employers and improved service delivery to the region’s companies. The Board will continue to participate in PREP and Startup Alleghenies meetings to ensure that the lines of communication remain strong and opportunities for partnership are identified and acted upon.

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

The SAWDD will deploy the following strategies to achieve the vision and goals established for the region. They are classified on two levels: Administrative (SAWDB) and Programmatic (PA CareerLink® and Workforce Development Partners and stakeholders).

Administrative
- The SAWDB will annually review its policies to ensure, where legally possible, they are employer and jobseeker customer friendly and do not create barriers to effective service provision. Agility is key to 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 Industry Partnership
participation in targeted sectors. Included in this is a promotion of registered apprenticeships to those companies/industries that are well-positioned to benefit from this model.

- The SAWDB will continue to support professional development opportunities for employers through vehicles like its 2019 Alleghenies Ahead: Creating an Entrepreneurial Spirit in the Workplace conference. This event, jointly sponsored by the SAWDB and Startup Alleghenies, included internationally known keynote speakers, breakout sessions, a panel discussion and networking opportunities. The SAWDB will also identify and work to secure flexible funding to support incumbent worker training as well as address future pipeline supply issues.

- The SAWDB will ensure that significant resources are available to expand the promotion and utilization of OIT, registered apprenticeships and other proven employer training services. 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 resources. These include participation in Engage joint business calls.

- The SAWDB and OSO will annually review the PA CareerLink® employer service mix to determine any gaps, based on local need and WIOA direction. SAWDB and PA CareerLink® Business Service Team staff have formed a strategy team that is identifying ways to apply innovation to business service delivery and take a more consultative approach in working with employers.

- 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.

**Programmatic**

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

- The SAWDB, OSO and PA CareerLink® site administrators will work with the SAWDB’s Special Populations Committee to identify and address service gaps and ensure that the public workforce system provides services to meet the workforce needs of the target populations.

- 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.

- 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 the OSO will review Business Service Team communication plans to ensure that employer outreach is coordinated among all partners.

- The PA CareerLink® staff will strengthen relationships with employer-driven organizations and associations (SHRM, 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 the PREP partners to provide leveraged resources in
support of business recruitment, retention and expansion efforts.

- The PA CareerLink® staff will help to identify and support employer-driven incumbent worker training opportunities.
- The PA CareerLink®, OSO and the SAWDB will promote the importance of digital literacy to all jobseekers and will utilize the Northstar® assessment as a vehicle to assess and credential one-stop customers.
- The OSO and PA CareerLink® staff will form an Operational Intelligence Team; they will focus on ‘business’ intelligence to improve and communicate partner performance to the system’s stakeholders.

Ensuring business and jobseeker engagement in the workforce system comes down to three things: determining customer needs, informing the customer 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. The utilization of the aforementioned strategies will ensure that our customers are engaged in a meaningful way and that the one-stops are well-positioned to meet the needs of their business jobseeker customers.

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

Developing and implementing successful sector initiatives requires an understanding of the sectors and their relationship to the labor force. The board recognizes the important role up-to-date Labor Market Information plays in building the foundation and consequently takes special steps to ensure that current and accurate information guides the decision-making process. Every full board meeting has a standing agenda item focused on labor market information where an experienced board member provides a presentation on a topic related to the workforce and then leads a discussion of the topic to address questions from the other board members. Many of these discussions focus on a targeted industry sector. The result of those discussions is a well-informed board armed with accurate and current information that is used to guide the board in making strategic decisions related to training, and the identification of high priority occupations aligned to employer needs.

The SAWDB and its economic development partners will continue to explore opportunities to take the region’s industry partnerships to a new level through the next-generation partnership initiative. Economic and workforce development professionals have joined forces and combined resources to gain a higher level of industry intelligence to better understand the current and projected needs of employers and together, coordinate PREP and workforce resources in support of increased business development and retention. The importance of this link with economic development and other stakeholders cannot be understated given the changes in business cycles where one business or industry sector declines and others open or expand. For example, within the last two years, the coal industry had bottomed out in Cambria and Somerset Counties. However, with changes in the political climate, the industry has seen a new resurgence. Also, with the development of the Southern Alleghenies Entrepreneurial Ecosystem known as ‘Startup Alleghenies’ a POWER-supported initiative, the SAWDB and its PA CareerLink® system are well-positioned to assist the economic development community with support for the new businesses being developed.

The SAWDB has, for many years, identified targeted industry clusters to further define and refine its
strategic focus. Accordingly, the SAWDB targets resources in the region in support of its five clusters including special emphasis and support for any Industry Partnerships focused on manufacturing and healthcare. The five clusters represent a significant portion of the region’s overall employment and provide jobs that pay family sustaining wages. A summary of each cluster is included below along with special initiatives designed to enhance the workforce in the targeted clusters. The clusters include:

- Advanced Manufacturing
- Building and Construction
- Business Services
- Healthcare
- Logistics and Transportation

The advanced manufacturing cluster currently represents approximately 20,400 jobs in the region and while it is expected to decline slightly by 3.4%, manufacturing occupations continue to be in demand and are listed on the region’s High Priority Occupation List (HPOL). Companies continue to need CNC machine tool operators, machinists, structural metal fabricators, maintenance and repair technicians, and welders, cutters, solderers and brazers. Even though the industry is projected to be smaller in the future, employers continue to struggle to fill welding and machining positions. In response to that need the SAWDB is supporting efforts to build a supply of new entrants into the field. Another sector initiative is the support of special events highlighting the industry—manufacturing days where employers collaborate with economic and workforce development professionals and educational institutions to showcase manufacturing. Companies provide tours, students can talk with production professionals and company management about specific products and company culture, and explore the training needed to pursue a career in manufacturing. YouthBuild will also target support for the manufacturing sector, in addition to construction and healthcare. Through these, youth with significant barriers to employment are receiving training that results in an industry recognized credential and paid work experience in a business setting that will allow them to utilize their skills and showcase their abilities to a perspective employer.

Employment in the Building and Construction industry in the Southern Alleghenies region is projected to grow from 9761 in 2015 to 10,272 by the year 2025. This represents an increase of 5.2 percent through this period. Job growth will be driven by but not limited to specialty trade contractors, construction of buildings and heavy civil engineering construction. Occupations in this industry sector that represent significant demand include brick masons and block masons, carpenters, cement masons, concrete finishers, construction laborers, electricians. The construction of a new power plant in Cambria County is expected to employ 300-500 workers during the 30-month construction schedule. Also, the extension of a major highway in the region has brought a considerable number of construction jobs to the southern part of the region and the project’s prime contractor has shown a significant interest in hiring local talent. While the Southern Alleghenies region does not currently have a significant number of registered apprenticeships, the SAWDB and its partners are promoting the value of this employment model. Apprenticeship fairs are being held to educate the community and employers to the value of apprenticeships; this is especially true for the trades associated with this target industry. In the case of the road expansion, the contractor along with the one-stop system, the local Career and Technology Centers, the economic development agencies, and several organized labor organizations have teamed up to sponsor and host apprenticeship fairs for potential workers and there are plans to hold additional events in the future. The fairs are held at the Career and Technology Centers and the organized labor organizations provide people and equipment to demonstrate and talk with
potential applicants. These career fairs provide the opportunity for interested individuals to learn about the industry, see new technology in operation, and specifically discuss the necessary qualifications and hiring process. The SAWDB is also supporting the construction industry through the YouthBuild initiative that targets young adults who have significant barriers to employment such as low education levels, homelessness, owe income, and criminal records. Program participants receive classroom education, workforce preparedness training and hands-on construction experience through actual building projects.

The Business Services clusters include a broad range of support services to companies, to include but not limited to public relations services, direct marketing services, legal services, staffing services, security services, education and training services and telecommunications services. The sector employs nearly 7% of the region’s workforce. Key industry sectors within this group that are projected to grow within the Southern Alleghenies region include Professional and Technical Services (22.3%) and Administrative and Waste Services (14.2%). The continues to be a demand for marketing managers, computer and information system managers, purchasing managers, cost estimators, management analysts, training and development specialists, computer system analysts, software developer, computer user support specialist.

The Healthcare industry continues to grow steadily in the Southern Alleghenies and remains the largest employer of all the targeted clusters in the region, employing 21% of the labor force. This growth is project to continue as the region’s population continues to age growth is expected to increase by the year 2022 to more than 38,000 workers. The gains will be seen in home health care services, individual and family services, social assistance, and other ambulatory health care services. The occupations with the greatest demand include registered nurse, licensed and practical nurse, nursing assistant, healthcare social worker, respiratory therapist, emergency medical technician, paramedic, mental health and substance abuse social worker, and medical and clinical laboratory technician. Being the largest and the fastest growing industry also requires a large pipeline to meet the demand for workers. The previously referenced Sector Partnership and targeted youth initiatives also include components to support the healthcare industry sector. Individuals interested in pursuing careers in healthcare can receive basic education, workforce preparedness, and mentoring to better position them to pursue occupations that provide a solid wage and benefits. Additionally, the SAWDB supports Health Careers Awareness Week; a special recognition of the industry that calls attention to its importance to the region and educates students and the public to the industry’s many employment opportunities.

Moving goods is a life line for many businesses and the region’s access to major highways is key to keeping that lifeline, represented by the Logistics and Transportation industry cluster, healthy. The Logistics cluster includes the analysis and coordination of an organization’s supply chain. The Transportation industry can be broken down into three groups of companies: shipping, passenger transport, and equipment manufacturers. Fortunately, the Southern Alleghenies is well-positioned and served by two major east-west and two major north-south highways that provide strategic access to a significant portion of the east coast of the United States and its metropolitan centers. According to the Center for Workforce Information and Analysis’ industry cluster data, Logistics and Transportation accounts for approximately 5.4% of the total employment in the region. Sub-sectors that employ the most logisticians are manufacturers, federal government, professional, scientific and technical services, management of companies, and wholesale trade. Occupational demand in transportation and warehousing is projected to increase through the year 2022 by 1170 workers and transportation and material moving is projected to increase by 1550 over the same period. Heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers continue to lead the list of high demand occupations while others such as cost estimators,
logisticians, industrial engineers, and supervisor-transportation and vehicle operators are demand occupations. Each year, the SAWDB supports a significant number of individual training requests for the driving occupations associated with this industry to meet the heavy demand.

The clusters defined above represent a significant portion of the economy but there are other industry clusters that either don’t have many workers overall or they have a large number of workers but the occupations do not typically pay a family sustaining wage. The two such best are the Energy and Hospitality, Leisure and Entertainment clusters. The Energy cluster represents only 2% of the workforce but pays very well in comparison to the Hospitality cluster which accounts for 8% of the workforce but has many jobs that pay less than the family sustaining wage for the region. The Energy sector had been negatively impacted by the closure of coal burning power plants and coal mines. However, with the change in political direction, and in anticipation of industry deregulation, new mines have opened, and previously shuttered operations have reopened. While it is not anticipated that mining will return to the 1950/60 levels, where some 30 to 50 percent of the Cambria and Somerset populations were employed in the mining industry, the industry may grow to the extent that it rises to the level of a targeted industry.

The SAWDB’s support of the targeted industry clusters has resulted in long term success placing job seekers in positions that pay a family sustaining wage. The board also works closely with its economic development partners to identify and support opportunities for business recruitment, retention and growth. While most of the region’s job openings are replacement-related (aging workers leaving the labor force), labor market information points to potential growth opportunities in the following emerging industries:

- General warehousing
- Services for the elderly and persons with disabilities
- Continuing care retirement communities
- Residential Intellectual and Developmental Disability Facilities,
- Residential Mental Health and Substance Abuse Facilities
- Perishable Food Manufacturing
- Crushed and Broken Limestone Mining and Quarrying

These specialized industries (6-digit NAICS) are all projected to grow by between 166% - 1139% by 2025. They fall under the umbrella of the targeted industry clusters of Logistics and Transportation, Healthcare, Agriculture and Food Production and Energy and their rapid growth projections merit special consideration and additional attention. These specialized industries have had low employee densities but according to projections, were estimated by 2025 to need an additional 8600 employees over the 2001 levels.

Several key projects are also underway and that are helping to spur growth. The extension of US Highway 219 from Somerset, Pennsylvania to the Maryland border will eventually connect a major state highway and interstate to an interstate in Maryland. This brings with it quicker shipping routes and the possibility of new storage and trans-shipping facilities. The construction of a power plant and several healthcare facilities have supported increased employment in the construction industry. Also, a series of hospital mergers that moved the institutions from non-profit to profit status has brought some growth in the billing and coding area. With increased support for new business development through the POWER-supported Southern Alleghenies Entrepreneurial Ecosystem, known as Startup Alleghenies, comes additional opportunities for the workforce system to engage with its economic development.
partners, expand its next-generation sector work and support new and emerging industries and occupations.

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

Labor force connections will occur at multiple levels throughout the entire workforce system and include a wide variety of system partners and stakeholders. As referenced above, the SAWDB supports numerous programs and special initiatives designed to first gather employer labor force requirements and then communicate those needs to the region’s labor force, especially those who are targeted for special assistance and have multiple barriers to employment.

While vehicles like the next generation sector partnerships will help to further identify industry needs, the SAWDB recognizes that the workforce system may not be well-positioned to help those with barriers to employment prepare to compete for those job openings. The SAWDB has reinforced its commitment to providing meaningful services to target populations and has set the direction and tone for service delivery through the efforts of its Special Populations Committee. This committee includes representatives from the private sector, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, Department of Corrections, Health and Human Services, Adult Education providers, the US Department of Veterans Affairs and others with a commitment to assist those who face some of the most significant barriers to employment. This committee is tasked with identifying service gaps and recommending enhancements to the public workforce system that will increase the marketability of those with barriers to employment and better connect these individuals with demand occupations. With significant input from this committee, the public workforce system will continue to develop and deploy unique strategies designed to address employer hiring demands and provide employment opportunities to those with barriers. These will include but are not limited to:

- Promotion of Apprenticeship Fairs - these events have fostered closer working relationships with companies that support apprenticeships and improved partnerships with those labor councils that provide apprenticeships. The fairs will be aggressively marketed to dislocated workers, especially the long-term unemployed and those with readily transferable skills, individuals on public assistance including EARN program participants, and young adults in hopes of addressing pipeline issues.
- Career Fairs for Target Populations - building on a successful recruitment tool, the SAWDB and its PA CareerLink® sites will support events designed to enhance employment opportunities for special, target populations including individuals with disabilities, senior workers, low income residents, and young adults.
- Enhanced Business Service Team Membership - membership has expanded to include representatives from the EARN program, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Senior Employment Service, and Corrections. Coordination between partner staff engaged in employer outreach has been enhanced and with it, increased collaboration and greater market penetration has been realized. The state-wide business services staff can also serve as a resource to help the Committee identify strategies to promote workforce diversification and inclusion.
- YouthBuild - an initiative designed to transform the lives of young adults through education and employment. This program targets those young people who have made poor choices in their past and who now face serious barriers to employment. Those targeted for assistance include
high school dropouts, the homeless and/or transitioning out of foster care, and those with criminal records. Participants will earn their GED and industry-recognized credentials in healthcare and manufacturing occupations and participate in paid work experience.

- Helm’s Academy - an innovative program, that will be re-introduced in 2020, that combines the talent and resources of Goodwill of the Southern Alleghenies, the WIOA Title I provider in Bedford, Blair and Cambria Counties, the Pennsylvania Highlands Community College and other community stakeholders. The partnership has established a community-based educational option for adults without a high school diploma or GED. The Academy provides adult general education development, work readiness, job development and placement, and wrap-around support service; successful participants will receive a Commonwealth Secondary School Diploma, a dual-earned college credit, and support to further the individual’s education and employment.

- STEPS (Steps Toward Employment-Progress-Success) - this innovative program developed by the Community Action Partnership for Somerset County, the WIOA Title I provider in Somerset County, helps participants address three specific barriers to employment - criminal backgrounds, mental health issues and substance abuse. During weekly sessions, participants tackle the issues, receive support and additional referrals to relevant agencies, and ultimately graduate to a Job Club and mainstream job search services.

- Support for expungement of court records - workforce partners in Cambria County continue to support a pilot program that brings together the county court system and individuals with criminal records but without convictions. For those determined eligible, their criminal, non-conviction court records are expunged at no cost. This has significantly increased their marketability.

- Development and Implementation of the PA CareerLink® Stabilization Phase- 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. These individuals are immediately connected, through a face-to-face referral or through the use of 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 will be referred back to the one-stop and the job search work can begin.

- Increased/Enhanced Re-integration Efforts- While many employers are desperate for workers, annually some 4,900 individuals are released from the region’s county and state correctional institutions. Efforts will be made to provide intensive case management and workforce development services to ex-offenders and provide each with a plan that supports the highest level of success. Supportive services and paid work experience opportunities will be available as will close coordination with partners in the justice system, and outreach to employers willing to provide a ‘second chance’ to these individuals.

As a core partner, OVR 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 disability.
Special assistance will also be provided to those unemployed from targeted industry sectors. The SAWDB is currently administering, in partnership with the PA Department of Labor and Industry, a federal Economic Transition National Dislocated Worker Grant. Special assistance is being provided to dislocated workers from the retail and service sectors. Resources include 100% tuition coverage and supportive service provision to help eliminate barriers to successful training completion. The overarching goal is to move these individuals into more stable employment that pays self-sustaining wages. Also, eligible dislocated workers will also have the chance to explore entrepreneurial opportunities and receive professional coaching through Startup Alleghenies.

Through this multi-pronged approach, the public workforce system will be well-positioned to assist jobseekers, especially those with barriers to employment, gain the necessary soft skills and occupational credentials necessary to meet employer-identified workforce needs.

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

The Southern Alleghenies region encompasses more than 4,600 square miles, 60% of which is still forested. Consequently, much of the region is rural and public transportation is limited. Fixed route public transportation is only available in Cambria and Blair Counties, with the cities of Johnstown and Altoona as the respective hubs; 89% of the region’s jobs are also found in these two counties. Van service is available on a limited basis in the four rural counties; this system is primarily utilized by senior citizens to access healthcare. This lack of public transportation, especially in the region’s more rural areas, can create significant challenges for those seeking employment but without access to an automobile.

Despite the limited access to transportation resources, there are coordinated efforts underway to identify and address transportation issues. With guidance from the Southern Alleghenies Planning and Development Commission (SAP&DC) and leadership from the local elected officials, multiple partners have come together to address the challenges created from this lack of public transit. The Southern Alleghenies Rural Planning Organization (RPO) is developing the 2018-2042 Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) that outlines a vision for the region’s transportation system over a minimum 25-year horizon. The plan will identify the region’s transportation assets, highlight current and future transportation needs, and outline a series of goals and objectives designed to address these needs. The plan is being developed in coordination with PennDOT and with significant input from key stakeholders, including representatives from the public workforce system.

In July of 2017, the Southern Alleghenies RPO adopted its Coordinated Transit-Human Service Plan (CTP). This document provides direction for the region to improve public transportation options and promote the mobility of those who are dependent on transit. Furthermore, this plan seeks to close transportation gaps in service availability, quality, and communication. The CTP has been developed with considerable input from a variety of community stakeholders including the SAWDB and PA CareerLink® sites.

Both plans are required to secure public funding, most notably support available through the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act. This act includes provisions to increase transportation options, assist in redeveloping communities, and expand employment opportunities especially for low-income residents, minorities and individuals with disabilities. The Southern Alleghenies Planning and
Development Commission (SAP&DC), the PA Department of Transportation designee to provide rural transportation planning for the region, will work to secure funding to address the issues identified within the transportation plans. As an arm of the SAP&DC and active participant in both planning initiatives, the SAWDB, and with it the public workforce system, will have input on projects that serve to connect jobseekers with employment opportunities.

To facilitate access to workforce services, the SAWDB and its workforce partners have supported the establishment of multiple PA CareerLink® access points and affiliate sites across the region. Public libraries and community centers serve as remote locations where workforce and volunteer facility staff can provide basic services to customers who don’t have personal access to the internet or in some cases, the resources to travel to one of the region’s five comprehensive PA CareerLink® sites. In 2018 and 2019, the region’s two largest comprehensive one-stops (Blair and Cambria Counties) relocated their operations into the Cambria County and Altoona Area Public Libraries. These locations, situated downtown in Altoona and Johnstown, were selected after developing a ‘heat map’, a resource that geographically illustrated our customers’ residences. It became quickly evident that our two largest sites were not conveniently located and not readily accessible by public transportation. The move to the libraries has resulted in increased accessibility, and with it customer foot-traffic, innovative programming, accomplished in partnership with the libraries, and a cost savings that has allowed for the development of additional affiliate sites in Blair and Cambria Counties. Under OSO guidance, the one-stops have expanded the use of technology to help serve those who reside some distance from the nearest PA CareerLink®. Staff have begun using video platforms such as Zoom to ‘meet’ with customers. This allows for ‘face to face’ case management without requiring the customer to travel to the one-stop.

The SAWDB has a long history of providing financial support for a variety of supportive services. These include transportation assistance, childcare, and support for work-related clothing, tools, and other essentials to increase an individual’s marketability or their participation in a work-based training opportunity. The region’s Title II providers expressed concern that many of their customers, who were co-enrolled in WIOA Title I services, struggled to pay for the Transportation assistance is by far the most sought-after service, not surprisingly given the region’s geography and general lack of public transportation. Financial assistance is provided to adults, dislocated workers and youth, to offset commuting costs while an individual is pursuing post-secondary education, engaged in On-the-Job Training (OJT), or in a paid work experience opportunity. As is the case with OJT, this financial support is provided until the individual receives their first paycheck.

**Commuting Patterns:**

Of the 195,000 jobs in the region, more than 80% are held by residents of the six counties. The other 20% are filled by individuals who commute into the Southern Alleghenies region for employment. Conversely, roughly 58,000 residents leave the region for employment. Only in Blair County do the ‘in-commuters’ out-number the ‘out-commuters’; roughly 45% of those coming into the county for employment reside elsewhere in the Southern Alleghenies region. Blair is also the only county where the number of jobs exceeds the available labor force. This is no doubt a direct reflection of Blair County’s strong local economy, with 35% of all jobs in the region, and low unemployment rate 3.5% when compared to the rest of the counties that make up the Southern Alleghenies. By comparison, 56% of the resident labor force in Somerset leave the county for employment; there are roughly 8,500 more workers than jobs. In the case of Huntingdon, where there are 6,400 more workers than jobs, 66% of
the resident labor force leave the county for employment. The SAWDB and its workforce partners, will be watching these numbers closely as new business development increases, especially in rural Huntingdon and Somerset Counties. An examination of commuting patterns may help to identify geographic areas and industries where skill gaps exist and therefore require more 'in-commuters' to meet industry workforce needs. The maps below illustrate the region's commuting patterns.

Southern Alleghenies Out-Commuting Patterns

2 U.S. Census Bureau 2013, 2014, 2015, OnTheMap Application, Longitudinal-Employer Household Dynamics Program
Local Workforce Development Area Profile, July 2019, Center for Workforce Information and Analysis
1.8. **(Planning Regions Only)** Describe how the region established administrative cost arrangements, including the pooling of funds for administrative costs, as appropriate, for the region.

Not applicable to the Southern Alleghenies Region.

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

Not applicable to the Southern Alleghenies Region.