



Northeast Pennsylvania Consortium of Workforce Boards

WIOA Multi-Year Regional Plan

Effective Dates:

July 1, 2025 → June 30, 2029

Public Comment Period: **May 15, 2025 – June 13, 2025**

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Introduction

The Northeast Region of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is comprised of seven counties: Carbon, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Monroe, Pike, Schuylkill, and Wayne. Consisting of a major metropolitan area comprised of the cities of Hazleton, Scranton, and Wilkes Barre, it is also home to a large array of smaller cities, towns, boroughs, townships, forests and rugged/rural farm areas. Overall, the Region is home to 1,025,926 citizens¹.

Historically, the three local Workforce Development Boards/Areas that encompass the Northeast Region of the Commonwealth have endeavored to work together to ensure that comprehensive and analogous services are afforded to a wide spectrum of business and industry, thus, supporting a robust and resilient economy both locally as well as regionally. Recognized for decades as a leader in the manufacturing, transportation, warehousing and distribution, retail, and hospitality industry sectors, Northeastern PA continues to experience growth in these areas.

1.1. Identification of the Region.

- **Name of the Region: The Northeast Pennsylvania Consortium of Workforce Boards** (or “Northeast Region)
- **Composition of Workforce Development Boards:**
 - Lackawanna Workforce Development Area – Lackawanna County
 - Luzerne/Schuylkill Workforce Development Area – Luzerne and Schuylkill Counties
 - Pocono Counties Workforce Development Area – Carbon, Monroe, Pike, and Wayne Counties
- **Key Regional Committee Members and Organizational Affiliation**
 - Virginia Turano, Lackawanna Workforce Development Board
 - Patti Lenahan, Luzerne/Schuylkill Workforce Investment Board
 - Sam Hellen, Pocono Counties Workforce Development Board
- **Key Regional Committee Meeting Dates (conducted via Zoom).**
 - 12/12/2024 Initial meeting to discuss Regional Plan development
 - 2/11/2025 Meeting to discuss Regional Plan development
 - 2/18/2023 Regional Plan review of rough draft
 - 2/20/2023 Final review of rough draft prior to initial release for Commonwealth comment
- **Regional Plan Effective Date. July 1, 2025**

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

¹ Center for Workforce Information & Analysis (CWIA), PA Department of Labor and Industry

collection and analysis of regional labor market data (in conjunction with the Commonwealth).

The Northeast Pennsylvania Consortium of Workforce Boards (Northeast Region) knows that growth in a regional economy comes from a combination of economic development, workforce development, and community development; and it understands that workforce development is instrumental in reducing the number of people who are unemployed.

Its vision is to ensure a world-class trained, readily available workforce, which is the impetus for the enticing of new business ventures and the growing or retooling of existing industry, addressing the needs of all local workers is primary to stimulate progress within Northeastern Pennsylvania. To support this vision, it has established the following goals that consider the workforce and economic development priorities within the Region, including the coordination of services and providers.

- Increase the skill level of the Region's labor force through an innovative, integrated workforce infrastructure system that links labor demand and supply to meet the current and future workforce needs of the Region's businesses
- Utilize the expertise of educational institutions and training providers within the Region to develop training programs and services which are based upon clearly defined opportunities and needs, and supported by research within specific industry sectors
- Enhance linkages between workforce development and economic development delivery organizations with private industry in a collaborative manner that promotes high skill and high wage jobs

The Northeast Consortium of Workforce Boards (Lackawanna County, Luzerne/Schuylkill, Pocono Counties), through representation by the local Boards' Executive Directors on numerous boards and councils, has long been entrenched across the economic development community in Northeastern Pennsylvania. Working locally with their individual Chambers of Commerce and County economic development agencies, development and implementation of strategic plans of action guide localized community progress. Taking into consideration the diversity (urban versus rural) among the three NEPA workforce boards, distinct localized plans must first be established which then, in turn, becomes integral to the formation of a concerted regionalized initiative.

Regionalization efforts across the 7-county Northeast region is spearheaded by the Northeastern Pennsylvania (NEPA) Alliance, a regional community and economic development agency that promotes effective partnerships and collaboration, through a non-partisan organizational framework, to promote the continued social and economic development of the region through the retention and expansion of industrial, commercial, financial, research, educational, technology, and other business and development activities. This, then, stimulates improvement of the overall region's environment, recreational facilities, and quality of life. Many members of the NEPA Alliance Board concurrently sit as members of the local WDB's which allows for wide-spread communication (among business and industry, education, labor, community-based organizations) through quarterly WDB meetings. NEPA Alliance also coordinates the Northeast PA Partnerships for Economic Performance (PREP) that includes representation and instills linkages among the region's chambers, small business development centers, industrial development centers, and other economic development partners. NEPA Alliance also develops and maintains a

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS) that provides a broad-based analyzation of the regional climate for establishing goals and objectives and development of an outcomes plan. Further, NEPA Alliance has, for many years, provided comprehensive regional and localized demographic data to the workforce boards for planning and development purposes. This coordination of activities with NE PA Alliance also ensures a linkage to Engage! with funding provided by the PA Department of Community and Economic Development for regional initiatives.

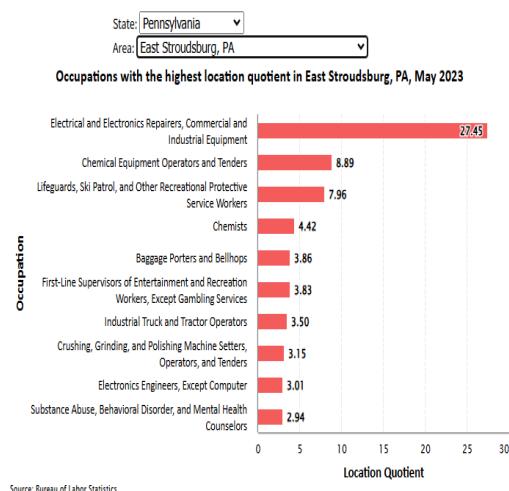
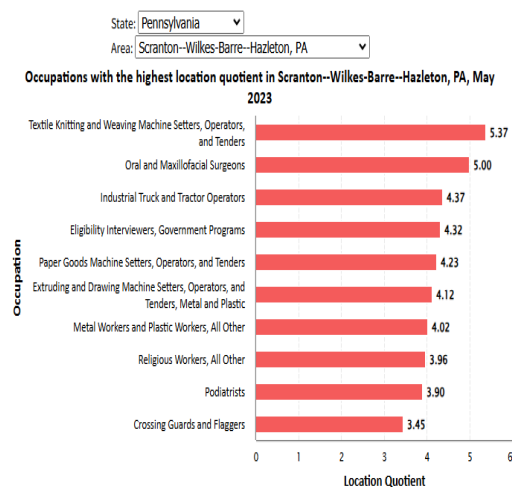
In looking at regionalized economic development linkages, business and Industry must be at the table to provide invaluable expertise in both the workforce development as well as economic development arenas. Working hand-in-hand with workforce boards and educational representatives, companies can dictate their needs (present as well as future) to ensure that a specifically-skilled workforce is at hand which will, subsequently, spur the growth of both local as well as regional economies.

In a concerted attempt to articulate a specific geographic region's economic conditions and workforce needs, a variety of sources must be used to thoroughly compile, dissect, and analyze available data. The following pages are full of statistics, graphs, charts, and diagrams that will provide a picture of the state of the economy of Northeastern Pennsylvania including the key industry clusters; existing and emerging in-demand sectors; existing and emerging occupational sectors; regional and local Location Quotients (LQs); and, perhaps most importantly, the identified needs of the employers across the region.

Location Quotient (LQ) is a way of quantifying how concentrated a particular industry, cluster, occupation, or demographic group is in a region as compared to the nation. According to the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the following data is available for the Scranton-Wilkes Barre-Hazleton Metropolitan area with an additional listing for East Stroudsburg, PA in the Pocono region:

Charts of occupations with the highest location quotient in each area, May 2023

Charts of occupations with the highest location quotient in each area, May 2023



It is interesting to note that, even though these statistics are from 2023 (latest available), there are no occupational listings for health care or related fields when it has been widely recognized regionally that there is a distinct need in that sector. Also, in looking at the Pocono Counties (specifically East Stroudsburg, PA), the concentration is in Electrical & Electronic Repairers, Commercial & Industrial Equipment. This could be attributed to the location of Tobyhanna Army Depot in Monroe County.

Now, let's take a look at industry clusters across the three NE PA workforce areas. The following three charts provide a numerical picture of the economic climate:

Lackawanna County Workforce Development Area:

Description	2022 Jobs	2032 Jobs	2022-2032 Change	2022-2032 % Change
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting	490	480	-10	-2.0%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	60	70	10	16.7%
Utilities	310	300	-10	-3.2%
Construction	3,670	3,710	40	1.1%
Manufacturing	10,220	9,790	-430	-4.2%
Wholesale Trade	3,890	3,820	-70	-1.8%
Retail Trade	11,260	11,010	-250	-2.2%
Transportation and Warehousing	6,640	6,810	170	2.6%
Information	1,080	1,120	40	3.7%
Finance and Insurance	3,850	3,990	140	3.6%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	800	820	20	2.5%
Professional and Technical Services	2,740	2,930	190	6.9%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	1,340	1,520	180	13.4%
Administrative and Waste Services	4,730	4,870	140	3.0%
Educational Services	7,980	7,870	-110	-1.4%
Healthcare and Social Assistance	19,170	19,980	810	4.2%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1,330	1,390	60	4.5%
Accommodation and Food Services	7,720	7,740	20	0.3%
Other Services (except public administration)	3,950	4,030	80	2.0%
Government	5,530	5,490	-40	-0.7%
Self-Employed Workers	4,210	4,400	190	4.5%
All Industries	100,960	102,140	1,180	1.2%

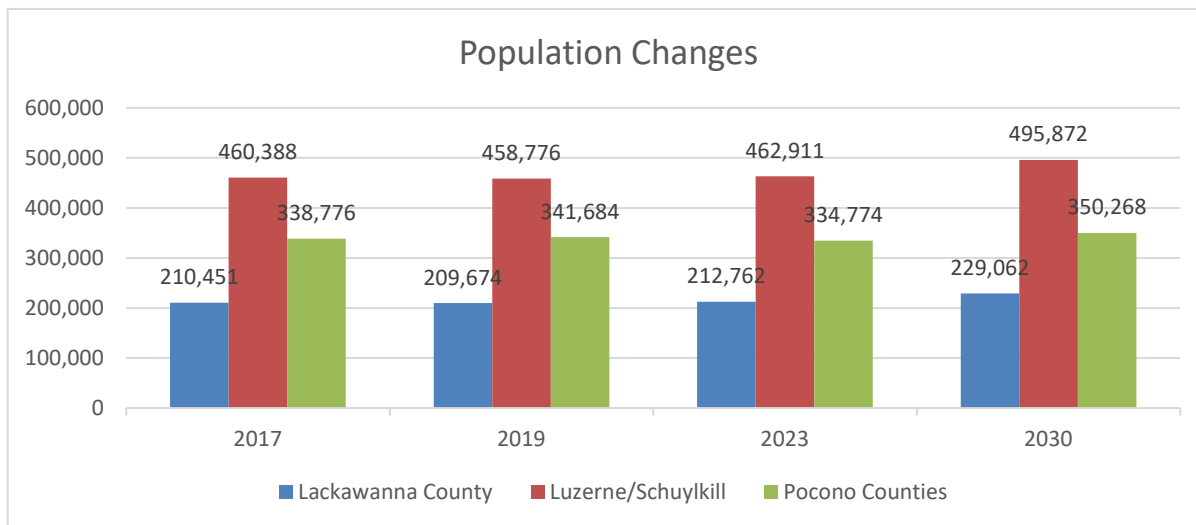
Luzerne/Schuylkill County Workforce Development Area:

Description	2022 Jobs	2032 Jobs	2022-2032 Change	2022-2032 % Change
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting	1,760	1,660	-100	-5.7%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	820	820	0	0.0%
Utilities	1,580	1,610	30	1.9%
Construction	7,180	7,160	-20	-0.3%
Manufacturing	27,810	26,820	-990	-3.6%
Wholesale Trade	5,930	6,080	150	2.5%
Retail Trade	20,960	20,520	-440	-2.1%
Transportation and Warehousing	27,070	27,700	630	2.3%
Information	1,530	1,590	60	3.9%
Finance and Insurance	4,680	4,790	110	2.4%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	1,400	1,400	0	0.0%
Professional and Technical Services	4,580	4,830	250	5.5%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	1,750	1,920	170	9.7%
Administrative and Waste Services	10,340	10,610	270	2.6%
Educational Services	13,000	12,890	-110	-0.8%
Healthcare and Social Assistance	29,220	31,210	1,990	6.8%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1,640	1,720	80	4.9%
Accommodation and Food Services	13,550	13,600	50	0.4%
Other Services (except public administration)	6,650	6,790	140	2.1%
Government	13,680	13,760	80	0.6%
Self-Employed Workers	9,020	8,990	-30	-0.3%
All Industries	204,150	206,450	2,300	1.1%

Pocono Counties (Carbon, Monroe, Pike, Wayne) Workforce Development Area:

Description	2022 Jobs	2032 Jobs	2022-2032 Change	2022-2032 % Change
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting	1,040	1,050	10	1.0%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	0	0	0	0.0%
Utilities	0	0	0	0.0%
Construction	3,810	3,790	-20	-0.5%
Manufacturing	7,050	7,210	160	2.3%
Wholesale Trade	1,240	1,290	50	4.0%
Retail Trade	15,120	14,780	-340	-2.2%
Transportation and Warehousing	4,710	4,830	120	2.5%
Information	1,420	1,430	10	0.7%
Finance and Insurance	1,850	1,860	10	0.5%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	870	880	10	1.1%
Professional and Technical Services	2,130	2,260	130	6.1%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	360	400	40	11.1%
Administrative and Waste Services	3,610	3,730	120	3.3%
Educational Services	8,600	8,630	30	0.3%
Healthcare and Social Assistance	14,160	14,700	540	3.8%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	3,040	3,320	280	9.2%
Accommodation and Food Services	15,560	16,260	700	4.5%
Other Services (except public administration)	5,450	5,530	80	1.5%
Government	9,450	9,550	100	1.1%
Self-Employed Workers	7,850	7,650	-200	-2.5%
All Industries	107,820	109,620	1,800	1.7%

The following chart provides an overview of the population changes for the Region from 2017 through a projected 2030². It is interesting to note the fluctuations with growth in Luzerne County doubling that of Lackawanna.

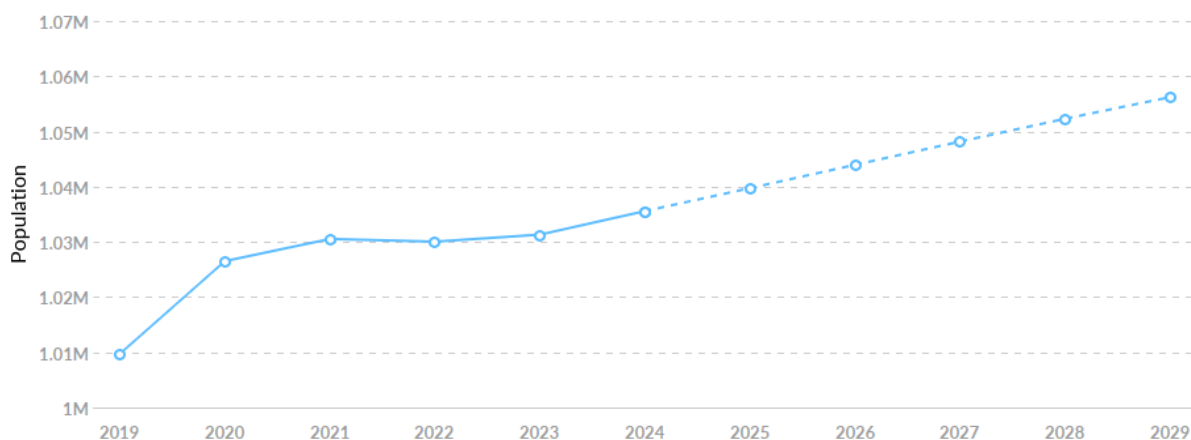


² U.S. Census Bureau

According to *Lightcast* Q1 2025 Data Set, as of 2024, the region's population increased by 2.6% since 2019, growing by 25,866. Population is expected to increase by 2.0% between 2024 – 2029, adding 20,645.

Population Trends

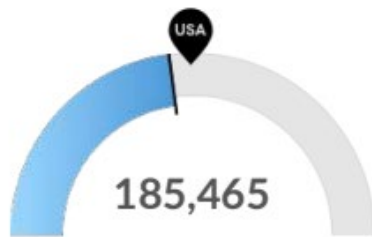
As of 2024 the region's population increased by 2.6% since 2019, growing by 25,866. Population is expected to increase by 2.0% between 2024 and 2029, adding 20,645.



If the projections prevail, the area will see a surge in population as we approach 2030 which could, in turn, promote a wider workforce base and improved economic forecast.

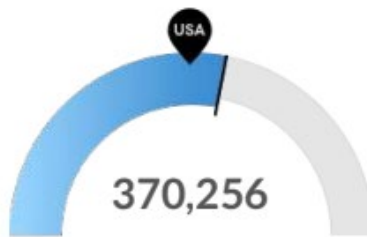
Also, interesting to look at are the following characteristics of the regional population base, according to *Lightcast*:

Population Characteristics



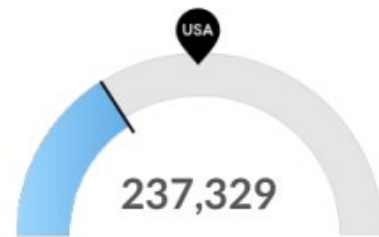
Millennials

Your area has 185,465 millennials (ages 25-39). The national average for an area this size is 209,547.



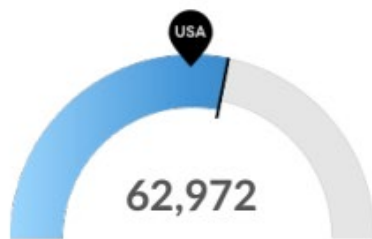
Retiring Soon

Retirement risk is high in your area. The national average for an area this size is 311,330 people 55 or older, while there are 370,256 here.



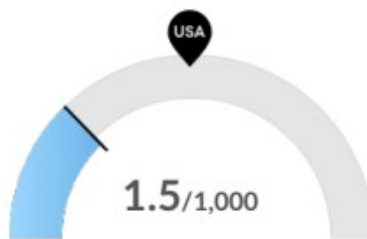
Racial Diversity

Racial diversity is low in your area. The national average for an area this size is 429,514 racially diverse people, while there are 237,329 here.



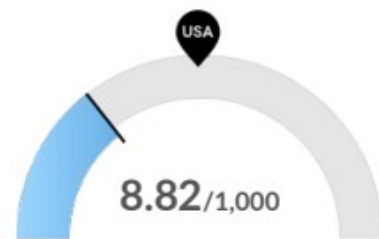
Veterans

Your area has 62,972 veterans. The national average for an area this size is 52,662.



Violent Crime

Your area has 1.5 violent crimes per 1,000 people. The national rate is 3.54 per 1,000 people.



Property Crime

Your area has 8.82 property crimes per 1,000 people. The national rate is 18.02 per 1,000 people.

In looking at the charts above, these statistics further support an aging population with fewer workers to fill the projected employment gaps.

As shown in the chart below, the current median age of citizens in the Northeast Region is 45.1 which is older than the State's median age of 41.1³.

³ CWIA County Profiles, December, 2024

Median Age		
Carbon County	45.8	} 45.1 Median Age for the 7-County Region
Lackawanna County	41.2	
Luzerne County	41.9	
Monroe County	44.5	
Pike County	49.4	
Schuylkill County	44.0	
Wayne County	48.9	
Pennsylvania	41.1	

This reflects the historical pattern that has been prevalent in the NE PA counties for many years.

According to *The Institute*, in looking at ethnicity statistics for the two largest counties in the region and one representative County from the Pocono Counties (only available data) in comparison with State data, over the course of 22 years, it can be seen that the populations across the northeast region are becoming more and more diverse but, in most cases, still lag behind the Commonwealth. However, it should be recognized that one statistic that escalated substantially over the course of the 22 years is the Hispanic/Latino (of any race) in Luzerne County which has necessitated the need for expanded services to this population (i.e., ESL instruction) and the employment of bi-lingual staff.

Race & Ethnicity						
Lackawanna	1990	2000	2010	2020	2021	2022
White, Non-Hispanic	98.1%	95.9%	89.7%	81.2%	83.1%	81.9%
Black/African-American, Non-Hispanic	0.7%	1.2%	2.2%	3.4%	2.6%	2.6%
Asian, Non-Hispanic	0.6%	0.7%	1.7%	3.1%	2.9%	2.9%
Two or more races, Non-Hispanic	ND	0.5%	1.2%	3.3%	2.6%	3.2%
Hispanic/Latino (of any race)	0.5%	1.4%	5.0%	8.5%	8.6%	9.0%
Some other race, Non-Hispanic	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.4%	0.2%	0.3%
Luzerne	1990	2000	2010	2020	2021	2022
White, Non-Hispanic	97.7%	96.0%	88.2%	76.9%	78.7%	77.2%
Black/African-American, Non-Hispanic	1.2%	1.6%	3.0%	4.3%	3.9%	3.9%
Asian, Non-Hispanic	0.4%	0.6%	1.0%	1.2%	1.1%	1.1%
Two or more races, Non-Hispanic	ND	0.5%	1.0%	2.8%	2.0%	2.4%
Hispanic/Latino (of any race)	0.6%	1.2%	6.7%	14.4%	14.0%	15.1%
Some other race, Non-Hispanic	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.3%	0.1%	0.2%
Wayne	1990	2000	2010	2020	2021	2022
White, Non-Hispanic	98.0%	95.7%	92.0%	87.6%	89.2%	89.1%
Black/African-American, Non-Hispanic	0.7%	1.5%	3.0%	3.2%	3.0%	2.9%
Asian, Non-Hispanic	0.2%	0.4%	0.5%	0.8%	0.6%	0.6%
Two or more races, Non-Hispanic	ND	0.6%	0.9%	3.3%	1.9%	2.1%
Hispanic/Latino (of any race)	0.9%	1.7%	3.4%	4.6%	4.8%	4.9%
Some other race, Non-Hispanic	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%
Pennsylvania	1990	2000	2010	2020	2021	2022
White, Non-Hispanic	87.7%	84.1%	79.5%	73.5%	75.0%	74.5%
Black/African-American, Non-Hispanic	9.0%	9.8%	10.4%	10.5%	10.5%	10.4%
Asian, Non-Hispanic	1.1%	1.8%	2.7%	3.9%	3.5%	3.6%
Two or more races, Non-Hispanic	ND	0.9%	1.4%	3.5%	2.7%	3.0%
Hispanic/Latino (of any race)	2.0%	3.2%	5.7%	8.1%	7.9%	8.1%
Some other race, Non-Hispanic	10.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.4%	0.3%	0.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau Decennial Census 1990, 2000, 2010, 2020 ; American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates - 2021 and 2022

Also, in reviewing comparisons of housing units as detailed by *The Institute*, over the past 22 years, again in the two largest counties and one representative from the Pocono Counties (only available data), the numbers of houses are rising; however, it remains to be seen if the number of housing units will support the projected population growth that is depicted in the chart on Page 7 of this Plan. It can be stated that an increase in “downtown” living units has been on the rise in the major metropolitan areas of the region through the refurbishing of older buildings into multi-unit dwellings.

Housing Density Comparison													
	Total Square Miles	1990*		2000*		2010*		2020*		2021		2022	
		Housing Units	Homes per square mile	Housing Units	Homes per square mile	Housing Units	Homes per square mile	Housing Units	Homes per square mile	Housing Units	Homes per square mile	Housing Units	Homes per square mile
Lackawanna	464.9	91,707	197.3	95,362	205.1	96,832	208.3	99,815	214.7	99,840	214.8	99,900	214.9
Luzerne	906.3	138,724	153.1	144,686	159.7	148,748	164.1	150,693	166.3	150,547	166.1	150,885	166.5
Wayne	751.0	28,482	37.9	30,593	40.7	31,653	42.1	31,910	42.5	31,937	42.5	31,981	42.6
Pennsylvania	45,306.0	4,938,148	109.0	5,249,750	115.9	5,567,315	122.9	5,742,828	126.8	5,728,788	126.4	5,753,908	127.0
Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS 5-Year Estimates and Decennial Census*													

In a review of the educational levels of the current NE PA region, the pattern that emerges is that the highest percentage of residents are either high school graduates or some with college or associate’s degrees. As the economies have changed over the past few years, this becomes in line with jobs that are not always requiring bachelor’s degrees⁴.

Educational Attainment of Working Age Population (Ages 25 and Older) by County - Percentage

County	Less than high school graduate:	High school graduate (incl. equivalency):	Some college or associate's degree:	Bachelor's degree or higher:
Carbon	10.3%	44.1%	27.3%	18.3%
Lackawanna	8.4%	35.5%	26.1%	29.9%
Luzerne	9.5%	37.8%	28.2%	24.5%
Monroe	10.1%	35.3%	28.0%	26.6%
Pike	6.9%	34.0%	31.6%	27.4%
Schuylkill	10.3%	44.9%	26.3%	18.5%
Wayne	8.4%	44.0%	26.7%	20.8%
PA Total	8.3%	33.5%	24.4%	33.8%

According to *Lightcast*, the following chart also mirrors that finding.

⁴ CWIA

Educational Attainment

Concerning educational attainment, 15.6% of the selected regions' residents possess a Bachelor's Degree (5.9% below the national average), and 10.7% hold an Associate's Degree (1.7% above the national average).



According to following chart (CWIA), a review of data regarding poverty and the labor force illustrates the Northeast region is comparable to the State with the rural counties falling slightly below the averages⁶. The figures, though, also present a somewhat alarming statistic that the poverty level of the 11.4% of population of the region is living at or in a poverty level which is higher than 10.73 for the Commonwealth. This, in turn, substantiates the need for social and workforce programs in NE PA and across the State.

Poverty and Labor Force Status (Ages 16 and Older) by County

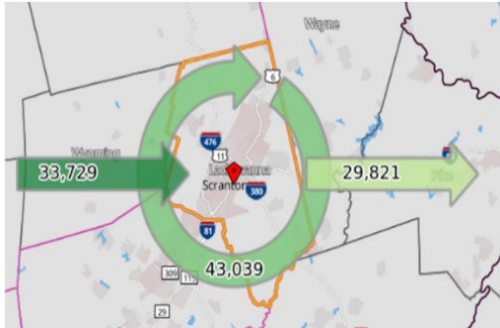
County	Total Population Age 16 and Older	Individuals Below the Poverty Level Age 16 and Older						
		Total Individuals	Poverty Rate	Employed	Unemployed	Not in Labor Force	Unemployment Rate	Labor Force Participation Rate
Carbon	53,417	5,371	10.1%	1,507	856	3,008	36.2%	44.0%
Lackawanna	170,173	19,829	11.7%	5,432	1,564	12,833	22.4%	35.3%
Luzerne	257,734	32,721	12.7%	9,230	2,936	20,555	24.1%	37.2%
Monroe	137,334	14,489	10.6%	4,244	1,162	9,083	21.5%	37.3%
Pike	50,078	4,469	8.9%	978	675	2,816	40.8%	37.0%
Schuylkill	111,651	12,496	11.2%	3,090	1,202	8,204	28.0%	34.3%
Wayne	40,716	4,252	10.4%	1,173	346	2,733	22.8%	35.7%
PA Total	10,263,481	1,101,511	10.7%	310,199	96,715	694,597	23.8%	36.9%

Commuting patterns reveal how workers travel from their home counties to their work counties. The specific reasons for commuting may be unknown; however, it may be reasoned that workers travel to other areas for job opportunities that are not found within their home counties or they may choose to live in their home counties due to housing, schools, or entertainment preferences. Proximity (or location) to larger metropolitan areas may also affect the migration patterns of the individual counties.

Both the Luzerne/Schuylkill and Pocono Counties WDAs have a higher number of out-commuters, meaning

more people are traveling outside these areas for work than are traveling in for employment. The Lackawanna WDA, on the other hand, has a higher number of in-commuters. The following charts (as supplied by CWIA) supports this information with actual data figures:

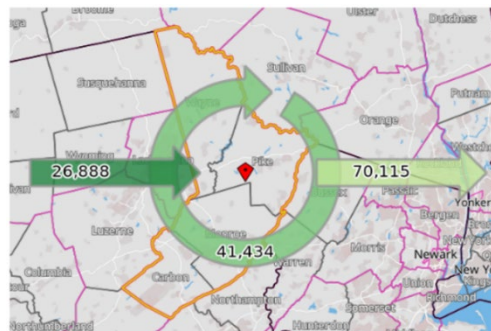
Lackawanna



Luzerne/Schuylkill



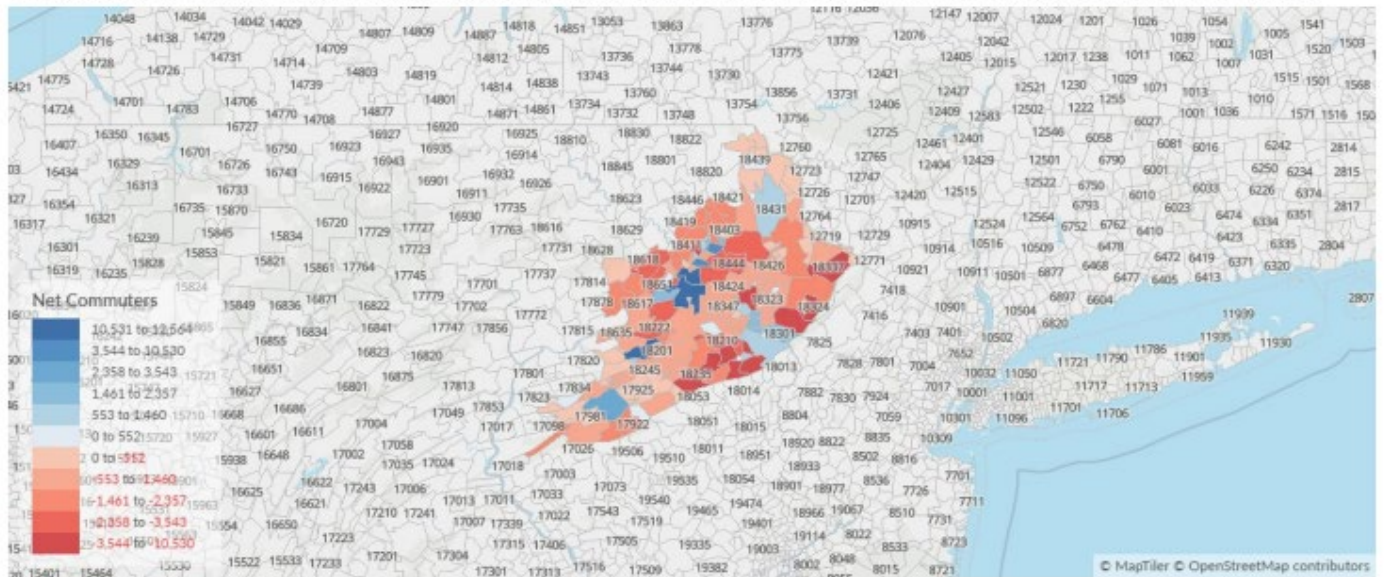
Pocono Counties



What this reveals is that the historical pattern of individual s living in the Pocono regions are still commuting to the larger metropolitan areas of New York City and New Jersey outlying districts and Luzerne/Schuylkill residents are heading towards the Lehigh Valley/Philadelphia areas. This can be due to the larger composition of business and industry in the larger urban areas and may affect the number of available workers to fill localized job openings. The following chart provides an interesting look a commuters over a slightly larger footprint (*Lightcast*).

Place of Work vs Place of Residence

Understanding where talent in the region currently works compared to where talent lives can help you optimize site decisions.

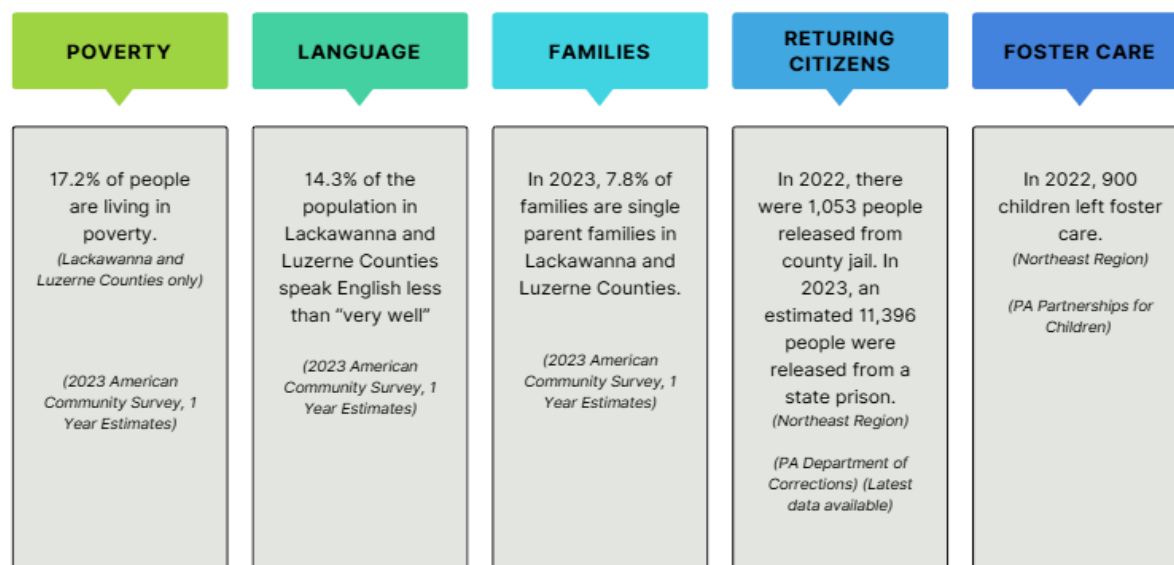


According to [datausa](#), within the Northeast region of the Commonwealth of PA, the average travel time is 30.7 minutes. As of 2022, 77.3% of workers in Northeastern PA drove to work alone, followed by 9.9% who carpoolled, 5.25% who walked to work, and, which could have been predicted, 8% who now report working from home. The two major metropolitan cities, Scranton and Wilkes Barre, do have public bus transportation but the hours are mainly day time in nature and, traditionally, have not been used by the majority of workers.

According to the Urban Institute, most individuals released from prison held some type of job prior to incarceration and want legal, stable employment upon release. Research also suggests that the higher the wage, the less likely it is that individuals will return to crime. However, most former prisoners experience difficulty finding a job after release. During the time spent in prison, many lose work skills and are given little opportunity to gain useful work experience. A large proportion of former prisoners have low levels of educational attainment and work experience, health problems, and other personal characteristics that make them hard to employ. Once in the community, not only are many employers reluctant to hire convicted felons, but many former prisoners are legally barred from certain occupations.

Research obtained from *Children's Rights* has shown that youth who age out of foster care are less likely than youth in the general population to graduate from high school and are less likely to attend or graduate college. By age 26, approximately 80% of young people who aged out of foster care earned at least a high school degree or equivalency compared to 94% in the general population. By age 26, 4% of youth who aged out of foster care had earned a four-year college degree, while 36% of youth in the general population had done so.

The following chart provides a descriptive overview of individuals with barriers to employment in NE PA:



According to the *Division for Social Policy and Development*, in developing countries, 80% to 90% of persons with disabilities of working age are unemployed, whereas in industrialized countries the figure is between 50% and 70%. Persons with disabilities are frequently not considered potential members of the workforce. Perception, fear, myth and prejudice continue to limit understanding and acceptance of disability in workplaces everywhere. Myths abound, including that persons with disabilities are unable to work and that accommodating a person with a disability in the workplace is expensive. Contrary to these notions, many companies have found that persons with disabilities are more than capable.

According to *Youth.Gov*, the high social and economic costs of teen pregnancy and childbearing can have short- and long-term negative consequences for teen parents, their children, and their community. Through recent research, it has been recognized that pregnancy and childbirth have a significant impact on educational outcomes of teen parents. Specifically:

- By age 22, approximately 50% of teen mothers have received a high school diploma and only 30% have earned high school equivalency certificate, whereas 90% of women who did not give birth during adolescence receive a high school diploma.
- Approximately 10% of teen mothers complete a two- or four-year college program.
- Teen fathers have a 25 to 30% lower probability of graduating from high school than teenage boys who are not fathers.

Children who are born to teen mothers also experience a wide range of problems. For example, they are more likely to:

- have a higher risk for low birth weight and infant mortality;
- have lower levels of emotional support and cognitive stimulation;
- have fewer skills and be less prepared to learn when they enter kindergarten;
- have behavioral problems and chronic medical conditions;

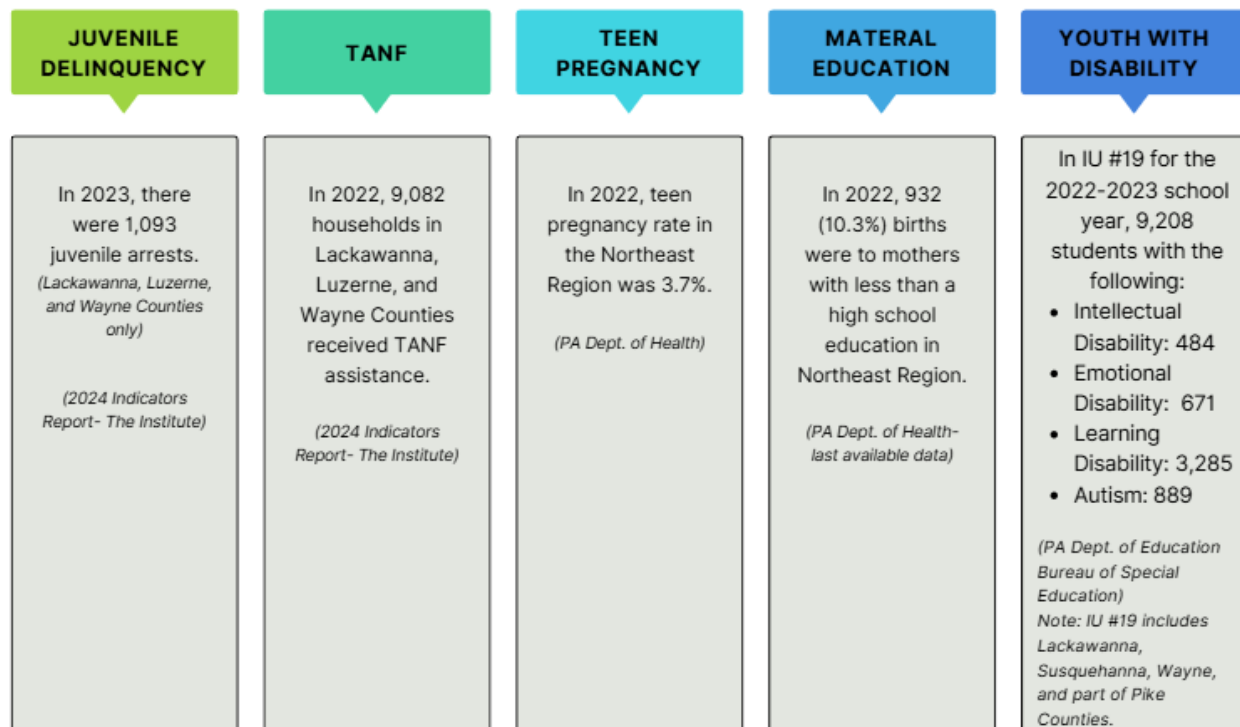
- rely more heavily on publicly funded health care;
- have higher rates of foster care placement;
- be incarcerated at some time during adolescence;
- have lower school achievement and drop out of high school;
- give birth as a teen; and
- be unemployed or underemployed as a young adult.

These immediate and long-lasting effects continue for teen parents and their children even after adjusting for the factors that increased the teen’s risk for pregnancy—e.g., growing up in poverty, having parents with low levels of education, growing up in a single-parent family, and having low attendance and performance in school.

According the Department for Health for 2018-2022 (latest data available), the teenage pregnancy rate per 1,000 youth aged 15-19 for the Counties of Monroe (7.3) and Pike (6.3) were significantly lower when compared to the State (12.3).

However, teenage pregnancy rates for Carbon County (16.0), Lackawanna County (12.7), Luzerne County (18.7), Schuylkill County (17.7) and Wayne County (12.4) were higher and, in some cases, significantly, to the State (12.3).

The following chart provides additional information on youth with barriers in the Northeast region:



The following Intermediate Units are in the Northeast Region

- IU#18 includes: Luzerne and Wyoming Counties
- IU#19 includes: Lackawanna, Susquehanna, and Wayne Counties
- IU#20 includes: Monroe, Northampton, and Pike Counties
- IU#21 includes: Carbon and Lehigh Counties
- IU#29 includes: Schuylkill County

These Intermediate Units are instrumental in providing comprehensive services to school-aged students, 321, who require assistance in attaining their educational goals including preparing to enter the workforce.

According to the *National Coalition for the Homeless*, meaningful and sustainable employment is the key to creating and maintaining housing stability. Unemployment, underemployment, and low wages relative to rent are frequent causes of homelessness and burden millions of families with the risk of becoming homeless. At the same time, individuals experiencing homelessness face obstacles to finding and maintaining employment.

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act defines youth homelessness as:

- Children sharing housing due to economic hardship or loss of housing;
- Children living in "motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camp grounds due to lack of alternative accommodations"
- Children living in "emergency or transitional shelters"
- Children whose primary nighttime residence is not ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation (e.g. park benches, etc.)
- Children living in "cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations".

Now let's look at labor market trends. The overall unemployment rate in the Northeast Region in 2023 was 4.2% with a labor force of 494,600. As can be seen in the chart below, the unemployment rate fluctuated only slightly over the first eight months of 2024.

Average Labor Force Statistics for 2023 and Seasonally Adjusted Statistics for 2024

Annual Average Labor Force Statistics

Annual Average	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Unemployment rate
2023	494,600	474,100	20,700	4.2%

Seasonally Adjusted Labor Force Statistics, 2024

Month	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Unemployment Rate
January	497,600	478,800	18,800	3.8%
February	502,800	482,400	20,300	4.0%
March	504,100	484,700	19,300	3.8%
April	504,200	484,900	19,300	3.8%
May	501,700	482,100	19,700	3.9%
June	498,400	478,400	20,000	4.0%
July	500,400	481,000	19,400	3.9%
August	494,700	474,700	20,000	4.0%

Labor Market trends can be examined by looking at Long-Term Industry Projections as well as other labor market information:

Long-Term Industry Projections for Lackawanna County WDA (2022-32)			Employment Change (2022-32)	
Industry	Employment (2022)	Projected Employment (2032)	Volume	Percent
Total Jobs	100,960	102,140	1,180	1.2%
Goods Producing Industries	14,440	14,050	-390	-2.7%
Agriculture, Mining & Logging	550	550	0	0.0%
Construction	3,670	3,710	40	1.1%
Manufacturing	10,220	9,790	-430	-4.2%
Services-Providing	82,300	83,690	1,390	1.7%
Trade, Transportation & Utilities	22,100	21,940	-160	-0.7%
Information	1,080	1,120	40	3.7%
Financial Activities	4,650	4,810	160	3.4%
Professional & Business Services	8,810	9,320	510	5.8%
Education & Health Services	27,150	27,850	700	2.6%
Leisure & Hospitality	9,050	9,130	80	0.9%
Other Services, Except Public Admin.	3,950	4,030	80	2.0%
Federal, State & Local Government	5,530	5,490	-40	-0.7%
Self-Employed Workers	4,210	4,400	190	4.5%

Long-Term Industry Projections for Luzerne-Schuylkill Counties WDA (2022-32)			Employment Change (2022-32)	
Industry	Employment (2022)	Projected Employment (2032)	Volume	Percent
Total Jobs	204,150	206,450	2,300	1.1%
Goods Producing Industries	37,570	36,460	-1,110	-3.0%
Agriculture, Mining & Logging	2,580	2,480	-100	-3.9%
Construction	7,180	7,160	-20	-0.3%
Manufacturing	27,810	26,820	-990	-3.6%
Services-Providing	157,560	161,000	3,440	2.2%
Trade, Transportation & Utilities	55,540	55,910	370	0.7%
Information	1,530	1,590	60	3.9%
Financial Activities	6,080	6,190	110	1.8%
Professional & Business Services	16,670	17,360	690	4.1%
Education & Health Services	42,220	44,100	1,880	4.5%
Leisure & Hospitality	15,190	15,320	130	0.9%
Other Services, Except Public Admin.	6,650	6,790	140	2.1%
Federal, State & Local Government	13,680	13,760	80	0.6%
Self-Employed Workers	9,020	8,990	-30	-0.3%

Long-Term Industry Projections for Pocono Counties WDA (2022-32)			Employment Change (2022-32)	
Industry	Employment (2022)	Projected Employment (2032)	Volume	Percent
Total Jobs	107,820	109,620	1,800	1.7%
Goods Producing Industries	12,170	12,280	110	0.9%
Agriculture, Mining & Logging	1,310	1,290	-20	-1.5%
Construction	3,810	3,790	-20	-0.5%
Manufacturing	7,050	7,210	160	2.3%
Services-Providing	87,800	89,690	1,890	2.2%
Trade, Transportation & Utilities	21,310	21,140	-170	-0.8%
Information	1,420	1,430	10	0.7%
Financial Activities	2,720	2,740	20	0.7%
Professional & Business Services	6,100	6,390	290	4.8%
Education & Health Services	22,760	23,330	570	2.5%
Leisure & Hospitality	18,600	19,580	980	5.3%
Other Services, Except Public Admin.	5,450	5,530	80	1.5%
Federal, State & Local Government	9,450	9,550	100	1.1%
Self-Employed Workers	7,850	7,650	-200	-2.5%

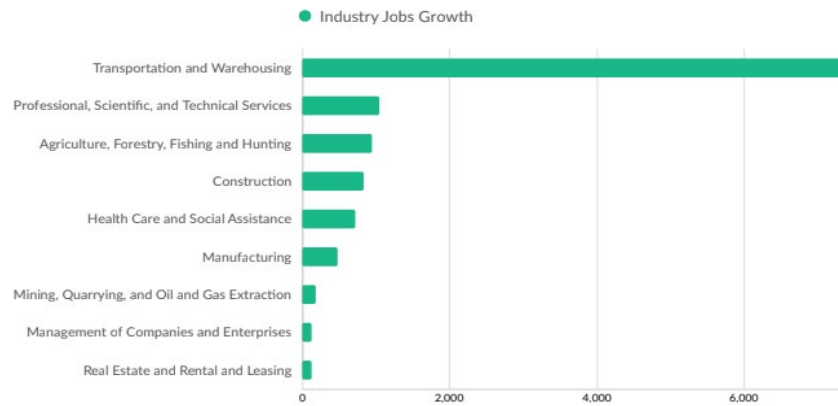
Source: Long-Term Industry Employment Projections (2022-32)

*Data may not add due confidentiality

The above charts provide a comprehensive picture of the long-term industry projection across the three

workforce areas that comprise the Northeast region of the Commonwealth. In analyzing these charts, growth trends, primarily, across all three areas are projected in the Professional and Business Services, Information, Leisure & Hospitality and Education and Health Services fields. According to Lightcast, top growing industries are:

Top Growing Industries



As shown in the following charts, the occupations projecting the greatest volume growth are Healthcare Practitioners, Technicians and Support and Computer Engineering & Science. Occupations in Office and Administrative Support, as well as the Production and Sales and Related areas are expected to decline.

Long-Term Occupational Projections for Lackawanna County WDA (2022-32)			Employment Change (2022-32)		Annual Demand
Occupational Title	Employment (2022)	Projected Employment (2032)	Volume	Percent	
Total, All Occupations	100,960	102,140	1,180	1.2%	11,613
Management, Business & Finance	9,500	9,690	190	2.0%	756
Computer, Engineering & Science	3,190	3,320	130	4.1%	223
Education, Legal, Social Service, Arts & Media	9,630	9,660	30	0.3%	823
Healthcare Practitioners, Technicians & Support	14,280	14,870	590	4.1%	1,479
Protective, Food, Building & Personal Service	16,060	16,250	190	1.2%	2,712
Sales & Related	8,420	8,330	-90	-1.1%	1,136
Office & Administrative Support	13,050	13,350	300	2.3%	1,521
Farming, Fishing & Forestry	370	370	0	0.0%	55
Construction & Extraction	3,610	3,660	50	1.4%	313
Installation, Maintenance & Repair	4,070	4,060	-10	-0.2%	350
Production	6,600	6,360	-240	-3.6%	678
Transportation & Material Moving	12,190	12,220	30	0.2%	1,567

Long-Term Occupational Projections for Luzerne-Schuylkill Counties WDA (2022-32)

Occupational Title	Employment (2022)	Projected Employment (2032)	Employment Change (2022-32)		Annual Demand
			Volume	Percent	
Total, All Occupations	204,150	206,450	2,300	1.1%	23,285
Management, Business & Finance	18,120	18,450	330	1.8%	1,447
Computer, Engineering & Science	6,650	6,770	120	1.8%	465
Education, Legal, Social Service, Arts & Media	17,820	18,110	290	1.6%	1,564
Healthcare Practitioners, Technicians & Support	21,350	22,570	1,220	5.7%	2,123
Protective, Food, Building & Personal Service	29,170	29,350	180	0.6%	4,791
Sales & Related	15,450	15,270	-180	-1.2%	2,114
Office & Administrative Support	23,420	23,780	360	1.5%	2,701
Farming, Fishing & Forestry	1,300	1,250	-50	-3.8%	183
Construction & Extraction	7,490	7,470	-20	-0.3%	632
Installation, Maintenance & Repair	9,270	9,300	30	0.3%	800
Production	18,380	17,850	-530	-2.9%	1,869
Transportation & Material Moving	35,740	36,280	540	1.5%	4,598

Long-Term Occupational Projections for Pocono Counties WDA (2022-32)

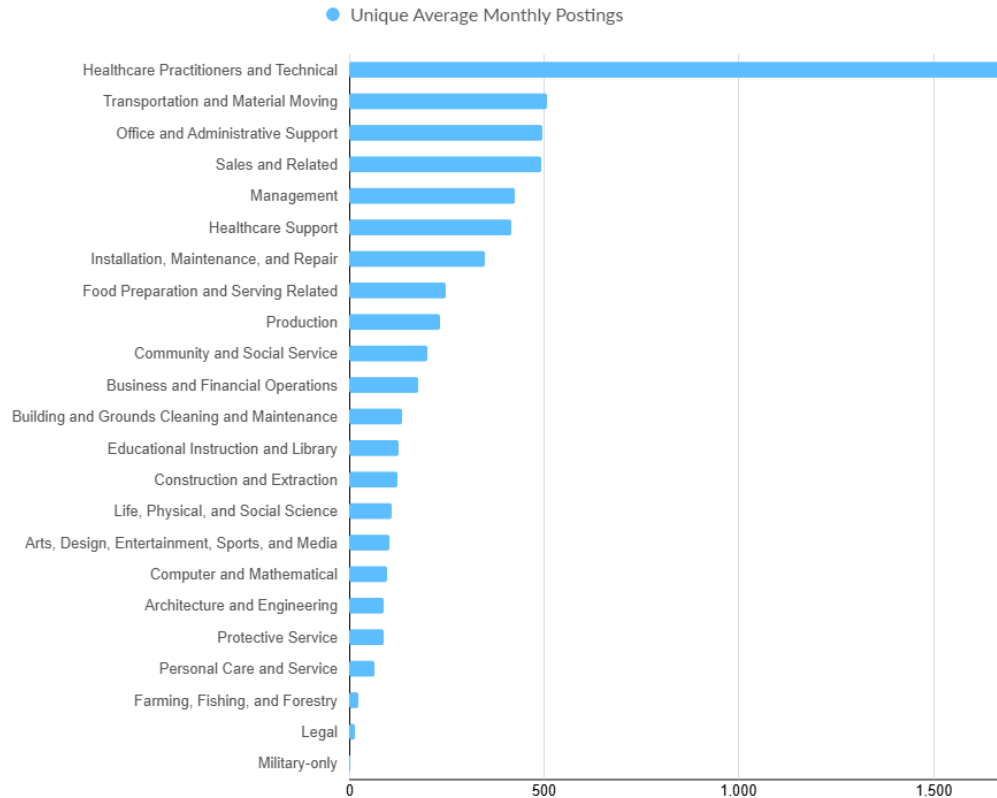
Occupational Title	Employment (2022)	Projected Employment (2032)	Employment Change (2022-32)		Annual Demand
			Volume	Percent	
Total, All Occupations	107,820	109,620	1,800	1.7%	13,019
Management, Business & Finance	8,850	9,180	330	3.7%	745
Computer, Engineering & Science	3,540	3,770	230	6.5%	278
Education, Legal, Social Service, Arts & Media	10,700	11,040	340	3.2%	956
Healthcare Practitioners, Technicians & Support	10,990	11,620	630	5.7%	1,113
Protective, Food, Building & Personal Service	24,630	25,480	850	3.5%	4,271
Sales & Related	11,150	10,780	-370	-3.3%	1,521
Office & Administrative Support	12,520	11,750	-770	-6.2%	1,317
Farming, Fishing & Forestry	910	900	-10	-1.1%	132
Construction & Extraction	4,600	4,650	50	1.1%	396
Installation, Maintenance & Repair	5,420	5,580	160	3.0%	494
Production	4,580	4,540	-40	-0.9%	482
Transportation & Material Moving	9,940	10,310	370	3.7%	1,314

Source: Long-Term Occupational Employment Projections (2022-32)

*Data may not add due confidentiality

Further, the following chart (*Lightcast*) mirrors the above data.

Top Posted Occupations



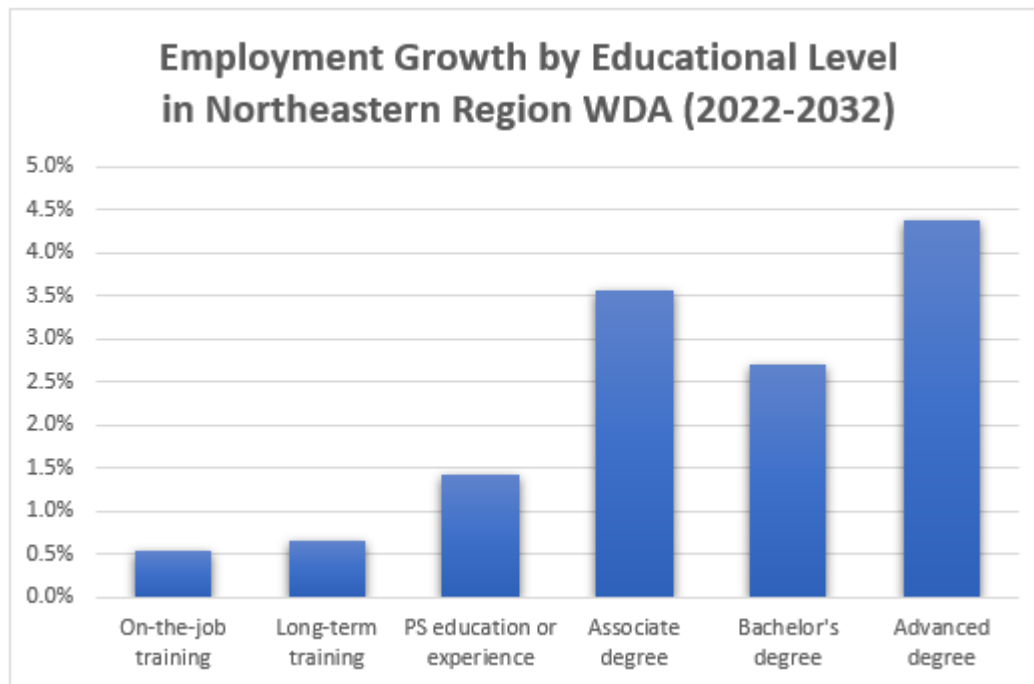
One way to measure the skill gap is to compare the current educational attainment with the projected employment growth by educational level.

As shown in the charts below, there are projected to be 74,230 jobs that require a Bachelor's Degree or higher in the Region projected for 2032. Also depicted is that only 23.7% will achieve this educational level (see chart on page 11). Therefore, it can be rationalized, and, as documented by the figures, it appears that there will be a lack of potential workers with the appropriate levels to meet the projected demand.

At the same time, there are expected to be 319,240 jobs that will require some level of on-the-job training, long-term training, or postsecondary education or experience. Within the Region, 27.7% have some level of college with no degree with 39.4% having achieved a high school diploma. Thus, these two groups may be able to fulfill the projected demand if they are able secure the required skills via additional education and/or training.

Area	Educational Grouping	Employment (2022)	Projected Employment (2032)	Percent Change (2022-32)
Northeast Region	On-the-job training	234,470	235,750	0.55%
Northeast Region	Long-term training	13,500	13,590	0.67%
Northeast Region	PS education or experience	68,920	69,900	1.42%
Northeast Region	Associate degree	7,550	7,820	3.58%
Northeast Region	Bachelor's degree	72,280	74,230	2.70%
Northeast Region	Advanced degree	16,220	16,930	4.38%

In taking a look at the chart below, the area is swinging back to the necessity of higher education.

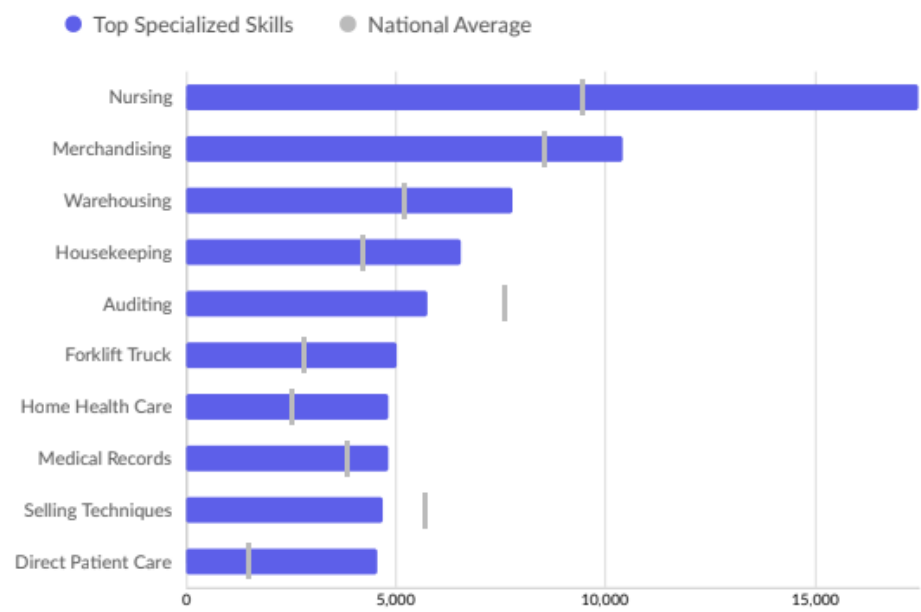


Source: Center for Workforce Information and Analysis

In reviewing the educational data, it is interesting to note that the percentage distribution across educational groupings from 2020 through 2030 are relatively even across the Northeast region which will play a major role in workforce development strategies over the next decade.

Looking at in-demand skills for NE PA (provided by *Lightcast*), the following chart provides a picture of trends which can be used for educational planning purposes.

In-Demand Skills



The following sectors account for the largest number of jobs in the Northeast Region.



Health Care and Social Assistance

- Registered Nurses is a top occupation in the Region and a top job posting
- Employs the highest paying occupations
- Personal Care Aides, Registered Nurses and Home Health Aides are among the fastest growing occupations
- Registered Nurse, Nurse Practitioner, Licensed Practical Nurse, Licensed Vocational Nurse, and Certified Nursing Assistant are among the top certifications requested by employers
- With the exception of Lackawanna, individuals in these jobs are likely to commute outside of their county of residency and/or region for employment

Professional and Business/Information

- Positions include accounting, advertising, architecture, computer system design, engineering, and research & development
- There is an increasing reliance on digital tools with many applications requiring a good understanding of information systems and data management
- In the next 10-year period, there is the following anticipated increase in management of companies and enterprises: Lackawanna County – 13.4%; Luzerne/Schuylkill – 9.7%; Pocono Counties – 11.1%

Logistics/Transportation

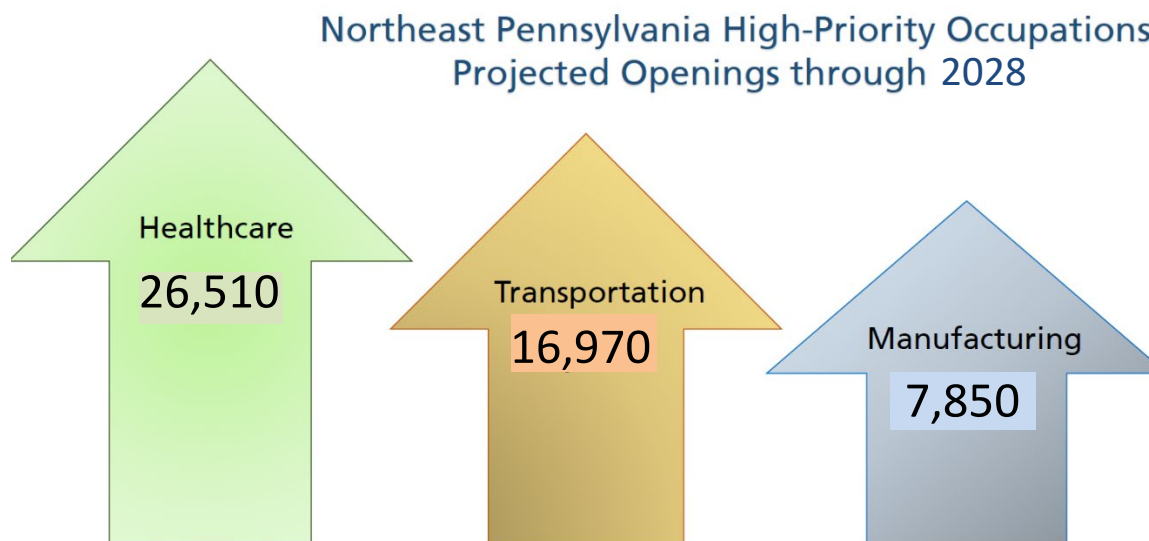
- NE PA has strong logistics and transportation infrastructure including highways, bridges, and third-party logistics companies
- The main occupation in logistics and transportation is CDL-A drivers
- 956 employers in transportation and warehousing
- Employs 37,241 people
- NEPA is leading logistics hub because of proximity to PA I-81, I-84, I-80, and I-38- corridors

Hospitality, Leisure and & Entertainment

- Retail Salespersons, Cashiers and Stock Clerks and Order Fillers are among the largest occupations
- Retail Salespersons, First-Line Supervisors, Food Preparation Workers, Marketing Promoters, Caterers, Cashiers and Stock Clerks and Order Fillers are among the top posted positions
- Sales, Customer service, fitness and Recreation Workers are among the top skills employers look for
- While this industry tends to hire large numbers of employees and positions are accessible to those with minimal education, they do not offer family sustaining wages

Based on the analysis of the skills and educational levels of the existing and emerging labor force in the Northeast Region, as compared to the area's current and projected occupational demands, the Northeast Pennsylvania Consortium of Workforce Boards has identified five primary Industry

Partnerships that drive its workforce development activities: advanced materials /diversified manufacturing, food production, logistics and transportation, healthcare, and energy.



1.3. Based on the analysis of regional labor market and economic conditions, describe the regional service delivery strategies for addressing the identified conditions through the coordination of appropriate services to the region.

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania recognizes the 7-County area of Carbon, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Monroe, Pike, Schuylkill, and Wayne as the Northeast Region. Covering the 7 counties, there are three define workforce boards; Lackawanna, as a designated single Conty; Luzerne/Schuylkill as a dual -county area; and the 4 counties comprising the Pocono area: Carbon, Monroe, Pike and Wayne. At the on-set of the implementation of the WIOA of 2014, the three workforce development boards came together to form the Northeast PA consortium of Workforce Boards to ensure a similarity in the provision of services for both the job seeking as well as business customer. This, in itself, demonstrates a regional approach to the development of process and practices supporting regional initiatives. Historically, this can be demonstrated by a multi-WDB collaboration in implementing Industry Partnership and/or specialized grant activity.

In October, 2019. the Luzerne/Schuylkill Board, and as sponsored by the Greater Pittston Chamber of Commerce, received an Apprenticeship Expansion Grant designed to provide classroom instruction (first-time supervisory skills, office management skills, human resource management skills, business communication skills, and customer service skills) as well as a structured On-The-Job Training (OJT) workplace learning process. Involved participants would experience a step-by-step wage progression as they demonstrated competency and completed phases of the 2,192-hour program. Envisioned to be a new and innovative concept, the on-set of COVID-19 in the Spring of 2020 provided a blow from which recovery did not occur, and the project was de-registered on February 13, 2025. Though disappointing, a

cooperative attempt to implement the apprenticeship exemplifies the commitment of the local Boards to work collaboratively in the administration of regionalized ventures. In the future, every effort will be made to build and sustain apprenticeships across the Northeast Region of PA. References to apprenticeship collaboration are also included in Sections 104, 105, and 106 of this Plan.

A second project, administered through the Pocono Counties WDB, involved the receipt of a Manufacturing Industry Partnership Grant that brought together all 3 area WDBs, Chambers of Commerce's from across the region, and economic development partners to support the development of a regional manufacturing employment guide and short videos highlighting occupations within the field.

And, most recently, the Lackawanna County WDB, in June of 2022, received a 3-year "Clean Energy" Grant to provide On-The-Job Training (OJT) and Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) opportunities to businesses that conduct clean and green operations. To-date, 14 companies have been enrolled (at least one from each workforce area) with 58 OJT contracts administered supporting new employment hires and 54 current employees receiving IWT to upgrade their skills and promote career-ladder development.

As needs of regional employers are identified, either through a review and dissection of statistical data or through PA CareerLink® Business Services teams (BSTs) outreach, the 3 WDBs will coordinate strategies as well as financial resources, as allowable. There are no formal service delivery cooperative agreements in place; however, this is not a deterrent to collaboration.

Regionally, the system is securely in place to address the needs of employers. Historically, the employer base has "been at the table" to discuss their needs which, in turn, allows for the alignment of training and skill-based opportunities to be developed accordingly. Some of the following factors that continue to provide challenges:

- 1) wage rates are continuously fluctuating with larger employers having the capability of increasing entry-level wages and sign-on bonuses in an attempt to attract new hires;
- 2) educational facilities are conducting training remotely which restricts those with substandard computer knowledge;
- 3) job seekers are reluctant to return to an in-person work environment;
- 4) the job market is constantly evolving as employers adjust to new product lines and methods for conducting business (i.e., on-line business models); and
- 5) the necessity for increased broadband capabilities.

Lack of computer skills, internet access, inefficient time management skills, and lack of computer hardware are some issues which can also affect the alignment of existing labor force skills and education and training with the needs of the employers. Also, as employers move to a virtual hiring process, these conditions come into play. What has been deduced is there exists a distinct need for digital literacy instruction to accommodate new modes of learning and connectivity to employers.

The 3 local boards maintain a strong and solid linkage with their individual Chambers of Commerce and economic development entities as well as NE PA Alliance, the regional economic development agency that serves the same 7 counties with Federal and State grant assistance, government contracting assistance, business financing, international trade assistance, nonprofit assistance, transportation planning, and research and information. Constituents from these bodies provide invaluable insight into the fluctuating economic climate. This collaboration ensures that economic development partners are well informed as to the capability of the local workforce system to provide such activities as On-The-Job Training (OJT), work-

based training, customized training, incumbent worker training (through WIOA, specialized grants, industry partnerships), linkages to adult education opportunities that support career pathway curriculum development, and, in turn, can then effectively promote them to the business and industry community. These entities stand united in the provision of data, staff support, linkages to workforce training opportunities as well as WEDnet (when available), Ben Franklin Grants, tecBridge (technology, entrepreneurship, collaboration) and other community resources to ensure a comprehensive approach to coordination of efforts. The linkages are solid; messaging is coordinated. Future ventures will continue.

Strong relationships are maintained with representatives of labor organizations across the region to support various apprenticeship opportunities. Representatives of labor organizations maintain active seats on all three of the local workforce boards, thus, ensuring that the face and expertise of labor is at the table and providing valuable insight into development needs across all seven counties. Also, apprenticeship and trade opportunities are strongly promoted in all PA CareerLink® One-Stop centers across the region through the provision of informational workshops and outreach ventures. And, very importantly, unions are now actively posting apprenticeship opportunities on the statewide-approved *Eligible Training Provider List* to allow regional workforce boards the opportunity to expend WIOA funding on apprenticeship curriculums. The local Centers provide contact information to prospective trainees on local application submission processes.

In further support of the development of pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship opportunities in Northeastern Pennsylvania, the Northeast PA Consortiums of WDBs will align with the PA Apprenticeship and Training Office (ATO)'s *Apprenticeship Strategic Plan Guide* to facilitate an upward movement of pre-apprenticeship/apprenticeship growth and broaden the regional ecosystem.

It is also recognized that linkages with the PA Department of Community & Economic Development strongly support local and regional economic development/growth within a community. Understanding that ENGAGE! is a statewide, industry-driven initiative that proactively addresses the needs of businesses across the state through the provision of technical assistance to identify their opportunities as well as challenges. The local PA CareerLink® One-Stops are pleased to be able to serve as an identifiable resource for promotion by the ENGAGE! Team. Contact will be made with the Northeast Regional Office, located in Pittston, PA, to ensure open lines of communication and referral services.

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

The Northeast Region relies on both workforce development and economic development initiatives to engage businesses throughout the seven-county area. The role of workforce development is to support the expansion and development of local talent and to assist employers with their workforce needs. Economic development is closely related in that it helps communities with business attraction, supports programs for workforce development, and promotes small business development and new business startups.

As previously discussed, the Northeast Region's strategies and activities are overseen by the three local boards of the Northeast Consortium of Workforce Boards as discussed in Section 1.1. They have well-established working relationships, and are also closely aligned with the Northern Tier Workforce Development Board that is responsible for similar activities for Bradford, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Tioga, and Wyoming Counties.

To promote regional workforce efforts, the group meets, at a minimum, bi-monthly. Formal agendas and minutes are recorded to document activities, progress, and outcomes. Some examples of regional best practices that have been implemented include alignment of Individual Training Account (ITA) levels, standardized operational forms, and a consistent approach to PA CareerLink® customer service. The Boards also work collaboratively to secure ancillary grants to further leverage and supplement regional sector initiatives.

The Region's economic development activities complement and support its workforce development initiatives, coordinated across the Region through NE PA Alliance's Partnership for Regional Economic Performance (PREP). The Northeast Region PREP partners include:

-  Local Development District: The Northeast Pennsylvania Alliance (Lead Organization)
-  Small Business Development Centers at the University of Scranton and Wilkes University
-  The Northeastern Pennsylvania Industrial Resource Center located in Hanover Township
-  The Manufacturers Resource Center headquartered in Bethlehem
-  The Northeast Pennsylvania Manufacturing and Employers Association located in Pottsville
-  Local Industrial Development Organizations: Berwick Industrial Development Association, CAN-DO Inc. (Hazleton), Carbon County Economic Development Corporation, Monroe County Industrial Development Authority, the Pike County Economic Development Authority, Schuylkill County Economic Development Corporation, Scranton-Lackawanna Industrial Building Company, and the Wayne Economic Development Corporation.

These PREP partners provide a powerful network of regional experts to help business owners address challenges facing their companies. Additionally, the network also helps businesses access critical state and federal resources, such as loans, grants, technical assistance, and other support. PREP partners provide services to local businesses and also to individual residents who may be interested in business start-up and management. Of key significance, many of the PREP partners serve on Local Workforce Development Boards in the Northeast Region.

At this time, there are no formal cooperative service delivery agreements in place; however, informal agreements among all constituents support strong linkages. This includes the willingness to collaborate and coordinate in systemic development of regional initiatives, readiness to prepare and submit overarching proposals for support of funding for regional projects, and the development of integrated strategic plans supporting regionalized economic and workforce development growth.

To ensure overarching support for all segments of the regional population such as youth and/or individuals with barriers to employment, it must first be noted that each local area receives Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funding to support these segments of the population. Procedures are established in each of the PA CareerLink® One-Stop sites to conduct program enrollments, provide assessment and case management services, and assist young adults and others with barriers in attaining their educational goals. WIOA Case Managers serve as advocates for these individuals as they research training and career pathway options that will set them on a path to self-sufficiency. Also, located within

the area, in Luzerne County, is the Keystone Job Corp Center who actively recruits across the entire region through scheduled sessions in the PA CareerLink® sites. There are no YouthBuild projects currently within the region but an Americorps project revolving around the provision of mentors to youth was recently approved for Carbon County through the United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley. It is envisioned that youth from the southeast corner of the region will be recruited for this project.

Within the Northeast Region, each PA CareerLink® has a Business Services Team (BST) that works directly with employers. They identify needs and match them to qualified candidates to fill open positions. As needed, they help employers maximize job postings on PA's workforce development system of record. Additionally, they establish on-the-job training (OJT), customized training, or incumbent worker training programs to help businesses develop workers.

BSTs also use labor market information to help businesses determine appropriate compensation levels and related benefits packages to remain competitive in the Northeast Region. Further, to avoid duplication of efforts, BST staff members communicate and collaborate with the partner organizations that are a part of the PA CareerLink® system. Moreover, each local area's BST members convene at least once each quarter on a regional basis to share best practices and identify emerging trends and needs.

To address the on-going needs of business and industry, the use of apprenticeships can support a workforce growth strategy. An apprenticeship is a program that trains a worker to become skilled in a particular trade, often combining hands-on work with classroom learning to train a new hire or upgrade the skills of an incumbent worker. Apprenticeships are generally considered full-time employment. As the apprentice is learning, they are also applying the lessons through working.

Expansion of Registered Apprenticeship programming provides an opportunity for regional coordination. In addition to support for traditional Joint-Individual Registered Apprenticeship programs, the region also promotes Non-Joint individual and Group Registered Apprenticeship programs for non-traditional occupations. While not exclusive, our recruiting efforts with our PA CareerLink® partners intentionally focuses on reaching underserved, underrepresented, displaced, and veteran groups.

The region's employers struggle to find workers with the right skills. Registered Pre-Apprenticeship provides the instruction needed to help individuals acquire the skills to be successful in registered apprenticeship programs. The region's LWDBs are committed to supporting the development an ecosystem that connects training providers and other organizations with the capacity to administer Pre-apprenticeship programs to Registered Apprenticeship programs. For individuals, Pre-Apprenticeship programs can be a bridge to career opportunities. For employers, Pre-Apprenticeships can provide a dependable pipeline to skilled job seekers.

Further, given the geographical differences across the three NE PA workforce boards and the nature of the individualized business climates, each area must develop their own action plan for dissemination of information and development of specific apprenticeship opportunities. The dissemination of information regarding apprenticeships falls to the Business Services Teams (BSTs) within each of the applicable PA CareerLink® One-Stop Centers across the region. Similar in nature across the various Centers, staff have been trained to initiate discussions regarding this opportunity as they infiltrate business and industry, most commonly through the internal human resources departments. Staff are made available to provide presentations to business owners and/or representatives and provide informational material on establishing apprenticeships as part of their overall outreach campaigns. Having assisted the local

workforce boards for many years, the various NE PA institutions of higher learning are well aware of the viability of apprenticeships and have been progressive in their development of courses of study to support apprenticeship usage. The mechanisms are in place to promote apprenticeship development; however, the challenge has always been the engagement of business and industry for participation. Local Boards recognize the qualitative results that can be recognized from apprenticeship development; therefore, the following strategies can be universally applied for strategic planning purposes;

- Each of the three NE PA workforce areas will ensure that BST staff are well-trained and well-versed in their knowledge and support of apprenticeship applications and that all PA CareerLink® partner staff are engaged in the promotion of apprenticeships as part of the overall services available through the Centers;
- The workforce board directors and administrative staff will continue to promote post-secondary curriculum development revolving around emerging industries and apprenticeship applications including addressing non-traditional occupational areas;
- Information on apprenticeship opportunities will be stressed at Quarterly workforce board meetings to ensure that the varied membership of the boards (private and public representatives) have the knowledge to further disseminate this information throughout their local communities;
- Support of the current projects will continue; and
- Successful best practices, as they emerge, will be utilized to promote expansion of apprenticeship usage.

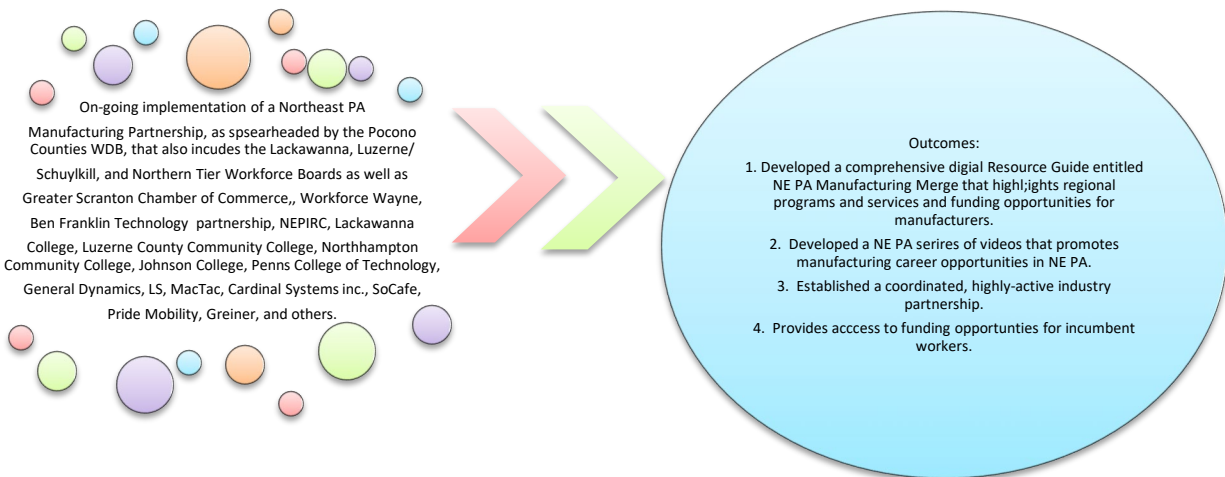
All said, the Northeast PA Consortium of Workforce Boards is committed to promoting pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship opportunities across its 7-County region and will utilize the PA ATO's *Apprenticeship Strategic Plan Guide* for long-term planning and development.

Across the 7-County Northeast Region of the Commonwealth, there are 54 school districts, 17 post-secondary institutions of higher education, and various other providers of training (i.e., tractor trailer driving schools, LPN and CNA training programs, technical school offerings, computer programs, and the like). Business Education Partnership (BEP) Grants received by the three Boards support the provision of career awareness and pathway information to intermediate and high-school-aged students and immerse workforce system information into school districts' 339 plans of action. The receipt of WIOA formula funding by the Boards allows for the channeling of millions of dollars to the post-secondary institutions and local training providers. Given that the selection of training is an individualized choice, there are no boundary regulations for training placements (i.e., a Lackawanna County resident may choose to attend Luzerne County Community College). Finally, WDB Executive Directors and administrative staff are well entrenched on Career Technology Centers and other post-secondary Perkins boards and committees and have participated in the recent development 5-year Perkins operational plans.

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

Currently, the Northeast Region is focusing workforce development efforts within the region on the key sectors of healthcare, logistics and transportation, professional business/information, advanced materials/diversified manufacturing, and leisure/hospitality (primarily, Pocono Counties). These sectors have been the most prominent across the region for the past decade and appear to be stable in nature. The Northeast Region, to accommodate preferences about travel time and avoiding duplicative efforts, alternate ways to conduct meetings and initiate plans of action were implemented. Currently, ZOOM/TEAM-type meetings facilitate the easiest mode of communication.

An example of how this has historically worked is shown in the diagram below:



This structure can be replicated across industry sectors. Continued sustainability, from the Commonwealth's perspective, through the on-going outlay of funding opportunities, will further support IP development.

Given the nature of the Region, the focus of sectoral efforts on its successful Industry Partnership initiatives should rest, primarily, with NEPA Alliance, the previously-mentioned regional community and economic development agency that serves the seven counties of the Northeast Region. Collectively, NEPA Alliance partners provide a powerful network of regional experts who help business owners address nearly every type of challenge facing their companies, including workforce development issues.

As regional opportunities arise, the constituents will convene groups (most likely now through a ZOOM or the like platform) to discuss the strategies and actions that are required to address specific needs. This action will ensure that fluctuating in-demand occupational areas remain at the forefront of any workforce/economic development planning efforts and ensure that both foreseen, as well unforeseen changes are addressed, in real time. The Region believes that by taking incremental steps, and building upon the strong foundation of its past as well as existing Industry Partnerships, it will be able to gather the momentum that is required to gain commitment from sector representatives for sectoral activities. To note: in cases where IPs must be revived, the three local Workforce Development Boards will assume a lead role in the developmental process and acquisition of funding.

As existing apprenticeships continue to grow or expand or new registered apprenticeships emerge, regional partners will ensure linkages to workforce initiatives and opportunities that can, in turn, promote sustainability. Additionally, the three local Workforce Boards encompassing the Northeast PA region strongly support the development of apprenticeship opportunities and promote this development across the varied workforce sectors. Please see Section 1.4 for more in-depth information.

And, as previously stated, the Northeast PA Consortium of Workforce Board's goal continues to utilize the *Apprenticeship Strategic Plan Guide* to support the Registered Apprenticeship and Pre-Apprenticeship ecosystem.

Finally, when and/or if in-demand occupations fluctuate, the region will address the changing workforce needs.

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.

The Northeast Region continues to utilize the State-approved *High-Priority Occupational (HPO) List* and *Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL)* to connect jobseekers, including those with barriers to employment, with occupational demands across the region. The services provided through the PA CareerLink® centers and satellite locations are designed to assist individuals who are actively seeking employment or who are interested in improving their current skills. Overall, the Northeast Region strives to ensure that at least 51% of enrolled participants are individuals with barriers to employment, such as veterans, recipients of public assistance, low-income individuals, individuals who are basic skills deficient, and out-of-school youth. The following strategies promote the achievement of this goal.

Title I staff within the PA CareerLink® system work closely with Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVERs). Priority of service is given to veterans at PA CareerLink® offices (a veteran or qualified spouse receives priority access to services and training opportunities).

Individuals on public assistance and low-income individuals are identified on initial visit in the PA CareerLink® centers. They are informed of their right to receive priority of service. Strong partnerships are established among title I Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and Employment, Advancement, and Retention Network (EARN) providers to integrate services and offerings.

PA CareerLink® staff identify individuals who are basic skills deficient through an intake process, then refer them as needed to literacy programs, including high school equivalency review classes, English as a Second Language (ESL), and remediation courses. Co-enrollment with Title II Adult Basic Education and title I services is encouraged for individuals with basic skill deficiencies.

Any/all services that have been described and/or are available through the workforce system are extended to all workforce customers engaged in pre-apprenticeship/apprenticeship activities or seeking a linkage to such entities. Strategies, as outlined in the PA ATO's *Apprenticeship Strategic Plan Guide*, will guide regional development of new apprenticeships/pre-apprenticeships. At this time, there are no YouthBuild or AmeriCorps project within the region; however, there is a comprehensive Job Corps site located in Luzerne County. A representative from Job Corps visits the PA CareerLink® One-Stops regularly to conduct recruitment of potential participants. This individual provides one-on-one informational sessions to both the prospective participant as well as parents/guardians.

The usage of *SkillUp™ PA* is also promoted for customers who are seeking both short-term course work to enhance existing skills sets as well as industry-recognized certification attainment.

All of these services, as described, are conveyed and discussed at local WDB Quarterly Meetings, thus, ensuring the engagement of business and industry, educational, labor, and community leaders in the oversight of their local area. Of note is that there are Board members crossing geographical workforce areas to sit on contiguous boards which, in turn, allows for the dissemination of information across the various workforce areas and promotes conformity in the development and provision of services. Finally, as has been previously stated, many of these individuals also sit on the various NE PA Alliance boards and

committees and transfer information as appropriate.

Of key significance, the Northeast Pennsylvania Consortium's regional strategies go beyond its borders. The three Northeast Region WDBs (Lackawanna, Luzerne-Schuylkill, and the Pocono Counties) are solidly partnered with the Northern Tier Region to ensure a wider-based systemic approach to the provision of services and the coordination of initiatives.

The Northeast Pennsylvania Consortium will continue to discuss additional opportunities for expanding services on a regional basis and to leverage the best practices learned through the collective impact model in the local areas.

As can be seen, process are in place to provide local workforce and economic development professionals with significant information to support planning efforts.

Additionally, *The Institute*, a major public policy and educational development entity in NE PA, prepares and conducts a yearly community-wide information session (upcoming in May, 2025) centered around an Indicator's Report, a statistical-heavy report on the demographics, economic development, community development, education, energy, government, health and health care, housing, industry, infrastructure, land use, planning, public safety, tourism and arts and culture, transportation, and workforce development for two of the region's largest counties: Lackawanna and Luzerne. This report is used by local workforce development professionals as a tool for local as well as economic/workforce development planning.

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

As discussed, the Northeast Region includes three local workforce boards covering seven counties. Taking into consideration the geographical nuances that impact overall regionalization efforts, the three areas work cooperatively to coordinate and collaborate their strategies, services, and delivery methods to maximize services for businesses and job seekers. The Boards identified primary supportive service needs. They established coordinated spending caps, similar priority of service policies, and key sector initiatives (i.e., industry partnerships, community-based grants, sector partnership grants, and other regionally-awarded grants) to promote consistency and provide systemic stability.

Access to public transportation is a principal impediment for many of the Region's jobseekers. Overall, the Northeast Region encompasses nearly 4,400 square miles that is connected by both Interstate highways and rural roads. Additionally, many residents commute to work outside of the local area, including to Lehigh Valley, Berks County, New Jersey, and New York. Commuting is largely in personal, motorized vehicles with public and private transit providing a much smaller share.

As can be seen in the charts in Section 1.2, both the Luzerne-Schuylkill and Pocono Counties WDAs have a higher number of out-commuters, meaning more people are traveling outside these areas for work than are traveling in for employment. The Lackawanna WDA, on the other hand, has a higher number of in-commuters.

The public bus transportation services that are available in the more urban areas of the Northeast Region are not well coordinated with the needs of business and industry. Services are restricted to traditional day-time hours with limited service on Saturdays, and no service on Sundays. There is; however, daily bus runs between Wilkes Barre (Luzerne County Transportation Authority – LCTA) and Scranton (County of Lackawanna Transit Authority – COLTS). Moreover, many individuals in the Region seek employment in

the bordering States of New York and New Jersey. However, public transportation to these areas consists of a daily bus run from Wilkes Barre through Scranton, through the Poconos, and on to New York City. Rail service between NE PA and New York City has long been under discussion with recent movement predicting a future linkage.

The region is also connected to the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) that works in conjunction with the PA Department of Transportation and County officials to coordinate transportation planning and programming. TAP projects are intended to build pedestrian and bicycle facilities, improve access to public transportation, create safe routes to schools, preserve historic transportation structures, provide environmental mitigation, create trails projects that serve a transportation purpose, all while promoting safety and mobility.

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

The three NE PA Workforce Development Boards are well aware of the need to increase training options for inclusion on the statewide *Eligible Training Provider List* or *ETPL*. The *ETPL* is a listing of programs of study at local/regional education and training providers that are, yearly, determined to be in high demand in each designated workforce development area by the Commonwealth's Center for Workforce information and Analysis (CWIA). If a course of study is not included on the published List, the education/training provider has the opportunity to petition the Commonwealth for consideration of inclusion. This petition process involves local Board approval prior to submission and must include documentable information regarding the number of local job opening projected over the next three years as verified by letters of support from established businesses. Petitions may be filed for unmet employer demand, career pathways, or local workforce initiative/sector partnerships.

As the economy and workforce situation fluctuate, it becomes necessary to conduct regular reviews of *ETPL* offerings to ensure alignment with the regional needs of business and industry. As the employment opportunities vary, so must the training options. To this end, the local Boards work closely with their educational and training providers to ensure the understanding of current labor market data and the trends that are projected. This proactive approach also allows for the development of new courses of study to accommodate new job openings. As technology continues to change, educational institutions and training providers must be adaptable in their methods of educational delivery systems which will, in turn, enhance options to be included on the *ETPL*. It is also very important that training options continue to increase to allow for the expenditure of WOIA dollars to significantly increase the numbers of trainees to fulfill probable job openings.

1.9. Describe how the region established administrative cost arrangements, including the pooling of funds for administrative costs, as appropriate, for the region.

The Northeast Region does not pool administrative funds. The Lead Applicant is the designated Fiscal Agent for regional grants and receives the administrative dollars.

When securing regional grants, the Boards utilize a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreement to identify the specific breakdown and eligibility requirements for the funding the workforce has access to. The funds are typically divided equally among the workforce boards (less administrative

dollars) and remain in the control of the designated Fiscal Agent.

If, prior to the last quarter of the funding period, a Board has not expended its allocated portion, then its balance may be re-allocated to one or more of the other areas, typically on a first-come, first-serve basis

1.10. Describe the agreement between the local boards that describes how the planning region will collectively negotiate and reach agreement with L&I 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.

The three local Boards comprising the Northeast region each negotiate performance levels individually with the Commonwealth of PA. That said, the regional partners conduct reviews and discuss the individual Common Measures Performance Goals and Performance Levels to ensure similarities and/or identify extraordinary inconsistencies to allow for the development of corrective plans of action for attainment of goals by all partners.

The highest deviation rate was for the Average Quarterly Earnings, which is to be expected since the Lackawanna and Luzerne/Schuylkill local areas include more urban labor markets as compared to the rural nature of the Pocono Counties.

1.11 Describe the region's process to ensure the public (including representatives of business, labor organizations, and education) had 30 days to review and comment on the contents of the proposed Regional Plan, and subsequent modification, if applicable, prior to Commonwealth submission.

Following the Commonwealth's initial review on or after February 21, 2025, to ensure a 30-day public review period, this Plan, once initially reviewed, critiqued, and approved, will be posted on the Lackawanna, Luzerne/Schuylkill, and Pocono Counties Workforce Development Boards websites, as well as the applicable local PA CareerLink® One-Stops websites. It will also be published in the following publications: Citizen's Voice, Scranton Times, Pocono Record, Times News, and Tri-County Independent.

In addition, to ensure transparency and universality for public comments, a public information ZOOM session will be scheduled following the Commonwealth's review and during the 30-day open public comment period. This session will also be advertised in the above publications and on the WDB and PA CareerLink® websites.

Comments to this multi-Year Plan may be submitted in writing (via letter and email processes) to:

- Ms. Virginia H. Turano, Lackawanna County WDB Executive Director, 135 Franklin Avenue, Scranton, PA 18503 or to vturano@wiblackawanna.org.
- Ms. Patti Lenahan, Luzerne/Schuylkill WDB Executive Director. 32 E. Union Street, 2nd Floor, Wilkes Barre, PA 18701 or to patricialenahan@lswib.org
- Mr. Samuel Hellen, Pocono Counties WDB Executive Director, 811 Blakeslee Blvd. Dr E., Suite 85, Lehighton, PA 18235 or to shellen@pcwia.org.