

Program Years 2021-2024 WIOA Multi-Year Regional Plan

Region Workforce Development Area name: Southeast Workforce Planning Region

Effective Date: 07/01/2021

Modification Effective Date: 07/01/2023

1.1. *Identification of the region.*

- **Identification of the local workforce development area(s) that comprise the region**
 - Berks County
 - Bucks County
 - Chester County
 - Delaware County
 - Montgomery County
 - Philadelphia County

- **Identification of the key region committee members charged with drafting the regional plan to include organizational affiliation**
 - Berks County: Dan Fogarty, Amber Columbo
 - Bucks County: Billie Barnes, Dianna Krall
 - Chester County: Jeannette Roman, Stephanie Smith
 - Delaware County: Kate McGeever
 - Montgomery County: Jennifer Butler, Jane Stein
 - Philadelphia County: Patrick Clancy, John Daly, Patricia Blumenauer, Jamece Joyner

- **A list of key region committee meeting dates**

June 29, 2020: Southeast PA Workforce Development Board Directors Meeting
August 10, 2020: SEPA WDB planning meeting with PA L&I Deputy Secretary Sheila Ireland
August 24, 2020: SEPA WDB planning meeting
September 7, 2020: SEPA WDB planning meeting
September 21, 2020: SEPA WDB planning meeting
October 5, 2020: SEPA WDB planning meeting
October 19, 2020: SEPA WDB planning meeting
October 14, 2020: Local & Regional Planning Technical Assistance call with L&I BWDA
November 2, 2020: Southeast PA WDB planning meeting
November 16, 2020: SEPA WDB planning meeting
November 30, 2020: SEPA WDB planning meeting
December 14, 2020: SEPA WDB planning meeting
January 5, 2021: Statewide LWDB Directors' data package review meeting with the Pennsylvania Center for Workforce Information and Analysis (PA CWIA) organized by the Pennsylvania Workforce Development Association (PWDA)
January 11, 2021: SEPA WDB planning meeting
January 25, 2021: SEPA WDB planning meeting
February 1, 2021: SEPA WDB planning meeting

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February 22, 2021: SEPA WDB planning meeting
March 1, 2021: SEPA WDB planning meeting
March 15, 2021: SEPA WDB planning meeting
March 29, 2021: SEPA WDB planning meeting
April 12, 2021: SEPA WDB planning meeting
April 26, 2021: SEPA WDB planning meeting
May 3, 2021: SEPA WDB planning meeting – board chairs update
May 10, 2021: SEPA WDB planning meeting
May 24, 2021: SEPA WDB planning meeting
June 7, 2021: SEPA WDB planning meeting
June 21, 2021: SEPA WDB planning meeting
July 7, 2021: SEPA WDB planning meeting
July 19, 2021: SEPA WDB planning meeting
August 2, 2021: SEPA WDB planning meeting
August 16, 2021: SEPA WDB planning meeting
August 30, 2021: SEPA WDB planning meeting
September 13, 2021: SEPA WDB planning meeting
October 4, 2021: SEPA WDB planning meeting
October 18, 2021: SEPA WDB planning meeting
November 1, 2021: SEPA WDB planning meeting
November 15, 2021: SEPA WDB planning meeting
December 6, 2021: SEPA WDB planning meeting
December 20, 2021: SEPA WDB planning meeting
January 4, 2022: SEPA WDB planning meeting
January 18, 2022: SEPA WDB planning meeting
February 7, 2022: SEPA WDB planning meeting
February 21, 2022: SEPA WDB planning meeting
March 7, 2022: SEPA WDB planning meeting
March 21, 2022: SEPA WDB planning meeting
April 4, 2022: SEPA WDB planning meeting
April 18, 2022: SEPA WDB planning meeting
May 3, 2022: SEPA WDB planning meeting
May 16, 2022: SEPA WDB planning meeting
June 6, 2022: SEPA WDB planning meeting
June 21, 2022: SEPA WDB planning meeting
July 5, 2022: SEPA WDB planning meeting
July 18, 2022: SEPA WDB planning meeting
August 1, 2022: SEPA WDB planning meeting
August 15, 2022: SEPA WDB planning meeting
August 29, 2022: SEPA WDB planning meeting
September 6, 2022: SEPA WDB planning meeting – board chairs update
October 3, 2022: SEPA WDB planning meeting
October 17, 2022: SEPA WDB planning meeting

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November 7, 2022: SEPA WDB planning meeting

November 16, 2022: Stakeholder Feedback Session

November 21, 2022: SEPA WDB planning meeting

December 5, 2022: SEPA WDB planning meeting

December 19, 2022: SEPA WDB planning meeting

January 3, 2023: SEPA WDB planning meeting

January 17, 2023: SEPA WDB planning meeting

January 17, 2023: SEPA Regional Plan work session

February 6, 2023: SEPA WDB planning meeting

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

The Workforce Development Board partners of the Southeast Pennsylvania region have a long history of working together to achieve maximum collective impact in producing a highly-skilled workforce available to existing and prospective employers on a regional scale. The partners embrace the vision of the Governor's Combined State Plan that sets a framework for multiple levels of government working efficiently and in concert toward shared goals, expanding the education and training routes that lead to skills documentation valued by employers, and the transition to higher wage jobs tied to higher skills in the workforce through stronger alignment of economic development and workforce development actions.

The partners enthusiastically support advancement of a state system built on two bedrock principles where Pennsylvania has been a national leader in creating best practices for the national workforce development system: *sector-based planning* through industry partnerships, apprenticeship programs, and other employer-led training programs with coalitions tied to engaged employers rather than county or regional boundaries; and *career pathways* as the language of the education and training system that focuses on short-term and long-term employment goals, while allowing for the flexibility of multiple structured on-ramps and off-ramps to skills development.

Since implementation of the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) in 2015, the Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Boards and the economic development partners of the Southeast Partnership for Regional Economic Performance (SE PREP) have regularly partnered to address common regional workforce challenges and priorities, developing a strategic plan for the region. This strategic plan is regularly reviewed and modified to meet current economic conditions in guiding ongoing cross-sector collaboration. The major regional challenges addressed in our planning process in the past have been compounded by the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Addressing the aging workforce
- Engaging youth
- Coordinating employer needs with education and training programs in the region
- Job creation through small business development
- Developing a sustained and coordinated outreach and public relations campaign

Through strategic planning and development of specific regional goals, the Southeast Workforce Development Planning Region had made strides in the expansion of strong collaborations to enhance employer engagement and talent pipeline development through career pathways. Both locally and regionally, each workforce development board utilizes sector-based industry partnerships, advisory councils, apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeships, work-based learning and other programs to drive our business engagement efforts and increase the number of employers utilizing these services/programs to meet their workforce needs.

In particular, the Southeast Workforce Development Planning Region is committed to continuing our recent successes in promoting registered apprenticeships to employers across the region as a proven

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best practice for affordable long-term talent attraction, retention and growth. As such, we welcome the many significant process improvements presented by the Commonwealth's Apprenticeship and Training Office (ATO) in April 2021 to enhance the standard acceptance process for Registered Apprenticeship (RA) and Pre-Apprenticeship programs as described in their new guide to registration and making the registration documents themselves more user-friendly and inclusive of all program types. As a region we also look forward to assisting ATO's announced plans to build out a participant tracking system in CWDS. Finally, the region will continue expanded use of apprenticeship as a critical component of business engagement through Apprenticeship Expansion and Apprenticeship Ambassador initiatives that have raised employer awareness while better equipping each area to guide employers and training providers through the process. The Southeast PA workforce development boards will, collectively and through each local area, work with the ATO ahead of the next planning cycle to establish best practices and future action items to make pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship a regional solution to meet the needs of employers as well as current and future career seekers.

When large-scale layoffs occurred in the region, the partnership was prepared to collaboratively address both the economic and workforce impact. The region is ready to address new challenges now and moving forward through the economic and workforce recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Each local Workforce Development Board in the region works collaboratively with our respective Economic Development Organizations to support our regional economy while continuing ongoing regional planning. An example of this cooperative partnership is the Engage! Grant. This initiative, funded by DCED, encourages business retention and expansion by regularly and proactively interacting with targeted companies in the region. This industry-driven initiative features a robust team of experienced professionals who proactively listen to businesses across the state to identify their opportunities and challenges and offer targeted technical assistance and solutions. It is essential that all six local WDBs continue to support the Engage! grant business calling process as the most frequent request from regional companies is assistance in locating a skilled workforce. This joint project has aided data sharing between organizations and increased referrals between economic development and workforce development partners.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 had a sudden, devastating effect on the regional economy and workforce system in Southeast Pennsylvania. Industries that had been thriving in the region were halted while others struggled with supply chain and workforce needs to meet demand. This collaborative spirit proved critical as the region gathered quickly to assess the impact and begin an immediate plan of action. Leaders across Southeastern Pennsylvania, representing both economic and workforce development, convene regularly throughout the pandemic to strategize response and recovery. The Engage! framework proved vital as each area strove to understand and respond to the needs of employers across all industries.

To support economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Southeast Workforce Planning Region has revised our regional strategies to further align with the broad goals set forth in the combined state plan and allow ongoing response to the evolving impact of the pandemic.

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The table below displays the Southeast Workforce Planning Region’s goals as they relate to the broad goals of the Pennsylvania Combined Workforce Development Plan.

Southeast Workforce Planning Region Goals

Pennsylvania Combined WIOA Plan Broad Goals	Southeast Workforce Development Region Goals 2021
<p>1. Career Pathways and Apprenticeship: Develop a comprehensive career pathways system in PA and expand career pathways as the primary model for skill, credential, degree attainment, with an emphasis on assisting individuals to address barriers to employment, earn a family-sustaining wage, and advance their career.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop consistent career awareness messaging that promotes Career Pathways and Apprenticeship as a regional connection from education and training to employers, engaging all stakeholders to broaden the message to southeast PA career seekers. 2. Regionally support local efforts for programming that leads to in-demand skill, credential, or degree attainment for southeast PA career seekers. 3. Collaborate regionally to support, promote or develop systems to address common barriers to employment including, but not limited to, those of careers seekers with transportation, connectivity, or child-care issues, digital literacy, English language, high school equivalency, or basic skills learning needs, economically disadvantaged careers seekers, career seekers with disabilities, refugees and immigrants, Veterans in need of transferrable skills translation, or career seekers in need of a second chance due to a criminal history or substance abuse.
<p>2. Sector Strategies and Employer Engagement: Engage employers and industry clusters through innovative strategies to improve the connection and responsiveness of workforce programs and services to labor market demand, including recruiting, training, and retaining talent.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create a regional strategy for leveraging competitive grants and other resources to address recruitment and retention training needs in key Industry Sectors. 2. Support sector strategies and employer engagement as a regional activity through joint events (job fairs, career awareness events, etc.), project and partnership promotion and strategic alignment of key employer services when appropriate. 3. Promote regional collaboration by continuing to convene Workforce Board Chairs and Directors regularly, using meetings as avenue for connecting to regional economic development groups & industry sector leaders/associations. 4. Continue LWDB representation in SE Regional Economic Development PREP meetings and engage chambers of commerce to ensure close coordination and alignment with Economic Development Partners. 5. Offer opportunities for local board members to participate in events of common interest throughout the region. 6. Expand sector-based employer engagement via Industry Partnerships, apprenticeships, and other programs.

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<p>Sector Strategies and Employer Engagement (continued)</p>	<p>7. Continue the proven best practices of jointly reviewing local High Priority Occupations (HPO) lists across the region to make sure that critical occupations in key industry sectors are identified and supported without regard to local boundaries.</p>
<p>3. Youth: Increase opportunities for all youth to experience work-based learning through summer employment, pre-apprenticeship, Registered Apprenticeship, internships, job shadowing, mentoring, and other experiences in the workplace, including developing employability skills.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a plan to outreach to youth and young adults (16-24) who are off-track regarding education or employment. 2. Continue to create pathways to apprenticeship opportunities for youth and young adults through outreach, pre-apprenticeship, mentoring and work experiences. 3. Continue to regionally promote and support projects that develop a talent pipeline in high priority occupations through Labor Market Information, Career Fairs or industry-focused competitions. 4. Both collectively and through each local area, work with the ATO ahead of the next planning cycle to establish best practices and future action items to make pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship a regional solution to meet the needs of employers and the region’s youth.
<p>4. Continuous Improvement of the Workforce Development System: Identify and enact system changes and improvements that enhance the collaboration and partnership between agencies and partners in the workforce development system.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implement a plan to continuously review local service strategies, regional data sets, curricula and other resources to leverage when possible, including the ongoing review of provider best practices as well as staff and contracted staff training. 2. Continue SEPA Regional Director’s meetings on a minimum monthly basis, additionally collaborating with the PA WDB, PA Workforce Development Association and PA Department of Labor and Industry as appropriate, leveraging SEPA experience and expertise to benefit the statewide workforce development system and ensure consistent understanding of legislation, policy revision guidelines, technical assistance, and monitoring practices. 3. Implement a bi-annual regional report to highlight best practices, opportunities for collaboration and service delivery comparisons where appropriate, measuring regional versus local benefits. 4. Work collaboratively to identify and pursue relevant funding opportunities that can allow for more flexible local and regional resources.
<p>5. Strengthening the One-Stop Delivery System: Implement improvements to one-stop service delivery to better serve all customers, including job seekers and employers.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regularly review and leverage resources and best practices as well as challenges evolving from Title I provider contracts, especially in instances when the same provider is used for services (at least twice per year). 2. Share resources for public & employer awareness of programs & services.

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Strengthening the One-Stop Delivery System (continued)	<ol style="list-style-type: none">3. Continue efforts to constructively Engage PA Department of Labor and Industry as a partner to advocate where appropriate for customers receiving Unemployment Compensation.4. Align regional messaging as relates to one-stop services.5. Maintain a supportive role in identifying gaps in connectivity and ensuring that those gaps are filled for all career seekers and students in SEPA.
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1.3. Describe the collection and analysis of regional labor market data (in conjunction with the Commonwealth)

Prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Southeast Pennsylvania Regional Labor Market was a growing labor market for employers and sectors with comparatively low unemployment. While current data indicate that our unemployment rates have returned to a pre-pandemic or better level, there is still ambiguity around long-term economic implications and the resultant landscape in Southeastern Pennsylvania particularly related to the size of the labor force that as of October 2022, remains lower than February 2020 with the exception of Chester County.

When the 2021-2024 Southeast Pennsylvania WIOA Regional Plan was developed, employers were struggling with business closures or reductions, supply chain disruptions, changes in consumer demand, and lack of a reliable skilled workforce. Workers faced layoffs or significant barriers to obtaining or retaining employment. As the region moves forward, we are cautiously optimistic that there will be a path beyond the wage disparities that exacerbated barriers during the pandemic, adversely affecting reemployment options. At the same time, we are aware that high inflation such as the nation has experienced since 2021 disparately and negatively affects lower-income households. While the effect is not yet evident in labor market data, we are increasingly concerned that, while many families will recover quite well, others will be left further behind. We will need to evaluate the duration and consequences of a high inflation environment over the next two years covered under this current southeast PA regional plan.

Full and equitable recovery will require an ongoing analysis of all available data relative to economic growth, employer needs and skilled job seeker availability. This ongoing analysis and subsequent action planning will require a collaborative regional approach. The boards that comprise the southeast Pennsylvania workforce development region plan to engage an entity to thoroughly analyze data and help paint a clearer picture of long-term recovery ahead of the 2025 planning cycle. This study will also include several potential areas that directly impact barriers to employment: public transportation route changes due to ridership, childcare vacancies, and accessibility of mental health services. The following section will review the salient regional labor market data then overlay the labor market demographics with the region's economic conditions, as articulated from the perspective of the Workforce Development Boards and their partner organizations, and then identify the key overarching in-demand employer needs.

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Regional Labor Market Overview

The Southeast Pennsylvania region is home to over 4,624,000 residents, which represents 35.7% of Pennsylvania’s population. A little more than one-third (34.08%) of the region’s population resides in Philadelphia, followed by Montgomery (18.6%), Bucks (14.0%), Delaware (12.4%), Chester (11.7%) and Berks (9.3%).

Local Area	Local Population	Percent of Regional Total
Berks	429,342	9.28%
Bucks	646,098	13.97%
Chester	538,649	11.65%
Delaware	573,849	12.41%
Montgomery	860,578	18.61%
Philadelphia	1,576,251	34.08%
SEPA Total	4,624,767	

Source: Total Population (DP05): 1-Year ACS, 2021

Our region is the economic driver for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. As the overall labor force has started to inch closer to pre-pandemic levels in the Southeast region, each of the six counties, and Pennsylvania overall, faces a changing labor market. The region now possesses an unemployment rate (seasonally adjusted 4.7% as of non-preliminary August 2022 data) equal to that of the Commonwealth (4.7%). While some counties still have among the lowest unemployment rates in the Commonwealth, all counties in the region are either seeing rates equal to or less than February 2020.

The average median age for the Southeast Region is 39.9, an increase from 39.8 in 2019. Comparatively, Pennsylvania’s median age remained 40.8, with no change since 2019. This general demographic requires further investigation as a major concern of SE PA employers is to address the challenges brought on by the aging workforce. A large demographic cohort of experienced “baby-boomer” workers are aging out of their prime working years and are retiring from their current occupations, further compounded by the pandemic. Not only will that impact the challenge of filling those positions with skilled replacements but also require responses for second or post-retirement employment for those choosing to remain in the labor force but detached from their career. This could include the engaging of the Gig Economy, another priority noted later in this section. Already, 16.1% of the regional population (744,264) is over the age of 65, with an additional 13.5% (624,748) of the population between the ages of 55 and 64¹.

Regarding education, 39.4% of the region’s population has earned a 4-year degree or more (compared to the state average of 32.3%). 9.4% of the region’s population has less than a high school diploma or equivalent compared to 9.0% across the Commonwealth. 28.5% of the region’s population hold a high

¹ Demographic and Housing Estimates DP05: 5-Year ACS, 2017 – 2021; 2015 - 2019

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school equivalency and 22.7% have some college or an associate degree, both lower than the Commonwealth at 34.2% and 24.5% respectively, identifying an opportunity for the region to increase services to those with limited educational attainment backgrounds².

The region is also home to the best concentration and access to publicly funded community colleges in the Commonwealth with five community colleges providing high quality and affordable education and workforce development programming at multiple campuses throughout the region. These five institutions are:

- Bucks County Community College
- Community College of Philadelphia
- Delaware County Community College (Chester County and Delaware County campuses)
- Montgomery County Community College
- Reading Area Community College

Strong local and regional relationships with the five community colleges encompass both partners and providers. Focus remains on helping regional community colleges meet the performance requirements of the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) while protecting student personal identifiable information.

The impressive proportion of our region's population with 4-year and even advanced degrees should not overshadow the troubling fact that too many residents lack the literacy and numeracy skills to thrive in our region's increasingly knowledge-based economy. Low numeracy in particular represents a significant barrier to local efforts to prepare or upskill adult residents to meet projected employer needs for skilled technology workers in the decade ahead. Based on extensive experience working with regional adult and dislocated workers, combined with consistent reports from local employers and training providers, we increasingly see that low levels of adult numeracy among incumbent workers and job seekers alike is a skills gap of major concern that will require a concerted effort of regional stakeholders to effectively address.

Household income in Southeast Pennsylvania varies widely by individual county but collectively remains well above the Commonwealth average. The average household income in the region in 2021 was \$115,776, higher than the state average of \$92,849. Within the region, Chester County has a mean household income of \$147,132, over \$50,000 more than the statewide average.³

² Center for Workforce Information and Analysis: Educational Attainment of Population (Ages 25 to 64)

³ Selected Economic Characteristics DP03: 5-Year ACS, 2017 – 2021

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Local Area	2021 Total Households	2021 Mean Household Income
Berks	160,065	\$89,737
Bucks	245,200	\$129,875
Chester	198,159	\$147,132
Delaware	214,252	\$113,651
Montgomery	327,065	\$136,806
Philadelphia	646,608	\$77,454
SEPA Total	1,791,349	\$115,776
Pennsylvania	5,147,783	\$92,849

Source: Selected Economic Characteristics DP03: 5-Year ACS, 2021

While unemployment is often noted, the review of labor force participation and employment in the Southeast Region is important. As of 2021, the regional participation status for those over age 16 is 65.69% with 61.49% employed civilians and 34.31% that are not participating in the labor force. These metrics reflect a stronger regional labor market as compared to statewide data at only 63.01% in the labor force with 59.47% employed civilians, and 36.99% that are not in the labor force⁴.

Most employed residents in the region (65.5%) drive alone to work, with an estimated travel time to work of 29.5 minutes, while statewide, 75.9% of the employed population drives alone to work with a mean travel time of 28.9 minutes. Just under one in ten (9.3%) utilize public transportation with that percentage peaking in Philadelphia at 21.4%. As a presumed result of the pandemic, 12.2% of regional workers did not commute at all but rather, worked from home as compared to 5.6% in 2019, more than doubling.⁵ While work from home models are evolving, access to reliable, affordable transportation remains a challenge. The major regional public transit authority, SEPTA, provides many spokes of the regional rail, high speed lines and buses that support regional workforce development. Parts of the system reflect historical investments when development of jobs was mainly in urban centers. Today, commuting patterns have changed and cross county travel is much more prevalent. These changes have affected SEPTA ridership throughout the region.

Annual unemployment (not seasonally adjusted) in the region was up slightly from 2018 to 2019 but remained at or near full employment until the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. While unemployment appears to have peaked in April 2020 (with the exception of Philadelphia which hit its peak in June 2020), rates appear to now be at or below pre-pandemic levels when looking at non-seasonally adjusted September 2022 data. Despite unemployment rates having recovered⁶, the region faces the unfortunate fact that there are still many residents who have been left behind. Some of those most affected are those that had previously held employment in the accommodation and food services industry which has been highly impacted by the pandemic. Another group to note in the region are the older, formerly highly paid professionals who remain long-term unemployed or under-employed.

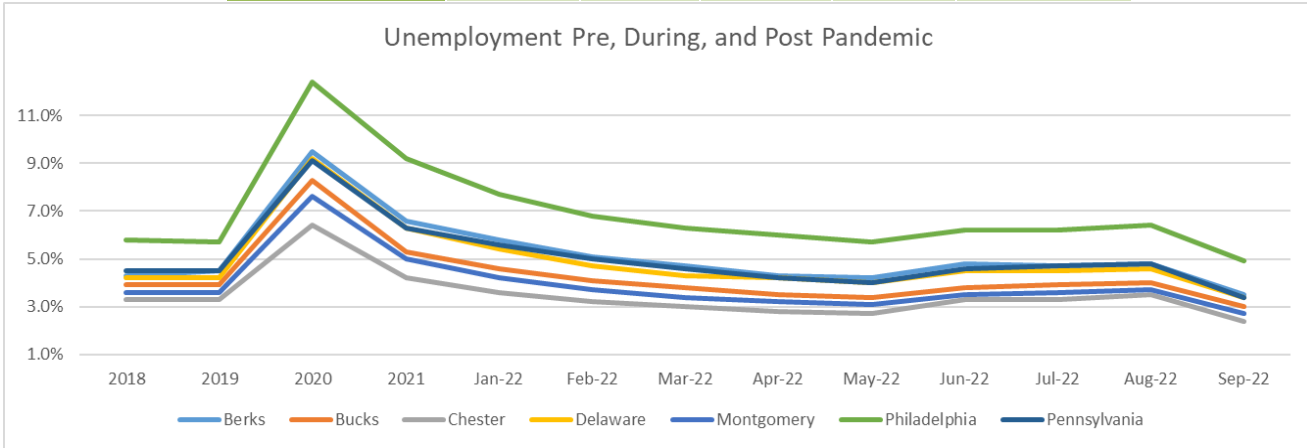
⁴ Selected Economic Characteristics DP03: 5-Year ACS, 2017 – 2021

⁵ Selected Economic Characteristics; DP03: 5-Year ACS, 2015 – 2019

⁶ Center for Workforce Information and Analysis, non-seasonally adjusted LAUS 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, and Jan through Sept 2022.

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Area Name	2018	2019	2020	2021	Sept. 2022
Berks	4.3%	4.5%	9.5%	6.6%	4.3%
Bucks	3.9%	3.9%	8.3%	5.3%	3.15%
Chester	3.3%	3.3%	6.4%	4.2%	2.5%
Delaware	4.2%	4.2%	9.2%	6.3%	3.6%
Montgomery	3.6%	3.6%	7.6%	5.0%	2.8%
Philadelphia	5.8%	5.7%	12.4%	9.2%	5.0%
Pennsylvania	4.5%	4.5%	9.1%	6.3%	4.1%



Given the volatility of the current economic environment and knowing that as of 2019, 34.3% of the regional population was not participating in the labor force, it is important to understand the barriers facing the historically harder to serve including regional residents that had not previously faced those barriers before the pandemic. These groups include those in poverty, immigrant population, and other populations with barriers (including ex-offenders; foster care; and individuals with disabilities). Regionally, we must address these barriers through research, planning, and collaboration in an effort to identify ways to connect potential workers with employer needs.

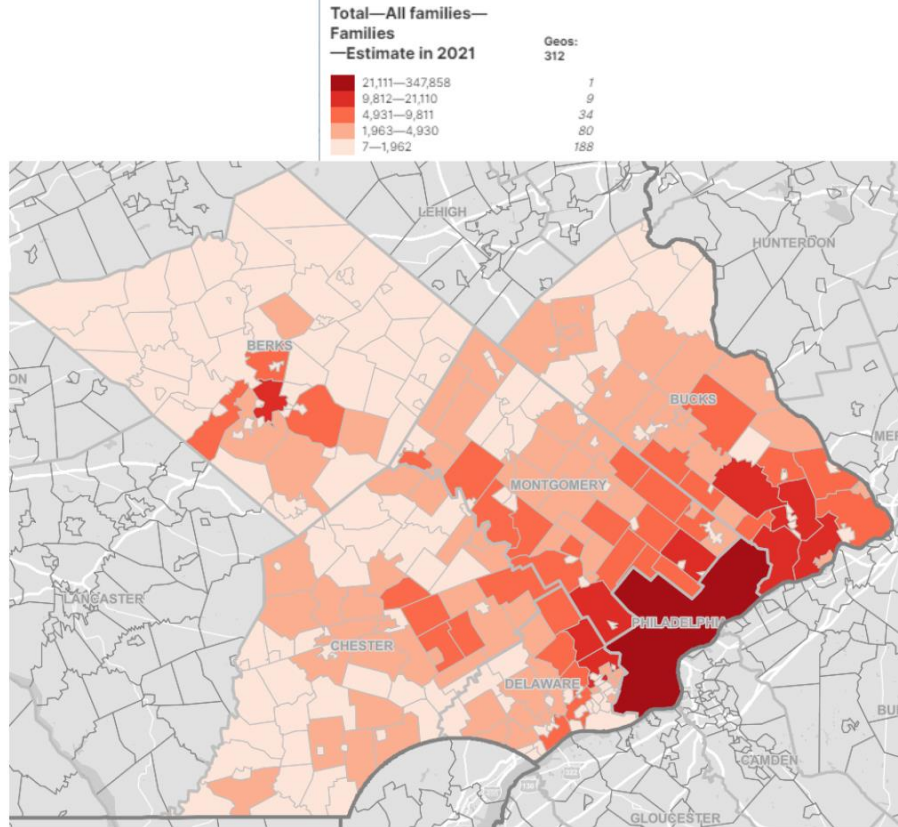
Regional Population with Barriers

Poverty is often an indicator and contributes to unemployment and underemployment. Many people live in poverty because they are unable to find a job that pays a living wage or to find a job at all. When looking at the region, almost one in ten (9.0%) families are living in poverty. Concentrations include a portion of Berks County (select parts of Reading), Delaware County (Chester and Upper Darby) and Philadelphia County with higher numbers of families below the poverty level visible in the darker shades of red below. Single female heads of families are more likely to be living in poverty, with nearly 22% of regional families having a female head of house with no spouse, 24.70% are living in poverty⁷. The labor force participation rate for individuals living in poverty in the region is 37.6%, slightly less than Pennsylvania overall (38.2%). Unemployment among this population is a particular concern at 26.0%, 3% higher than Pennsylvania (23.0%)⁸.

⁷ Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months of Families S1702: ACS 5 – Year, 2017 – 2021

⁸ Center for Workforce Information and Analysis: Barriers - Poverty

Southeast Region - Families Below Poverty



Southeast Pennsylvania possesses an overwhelming percentage of the state’s immigrant population. According to the Selected Social Characteristics in the United States (ACS 5 – Year DP02; 2017 - 2021), there were 532,334 immigrants in the region, accounting for 57.6% of the state’s immigrant population. Several local workforce areas already work closely with the Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians in addition to local community-based organizations with a mission to assist this demographic. Immigrants bring with them a wide range of educational and vocational backgrounds which can ease, or create barriers to, their entry into the local workforce. Basic English language communication skills are the foundation for successful integration into the workforce, however 6.89% of residents in the Southeast region report speaking English “less than very well”, significantly higher than the statewide average of 4.38%⁹. Another barrier to full labor market participation is difficulty transferring credentials and professional licenses, resulting in underemployment. Finally, lack of knowledge of business permitting and licensing requirements slows entrepreneurship efforts which for many immigrants is the best on-ramp to employment.

⁹ Center for Workforce Information and Analysis: Barriers - Language

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In 2022, Bucks, Delaware, Chester, Montgomery and Philadelphia rose to the challenge when Refugee Resettlement Programs in those counties reached capacity. With refugees anticipated specifically from Ukraine, the workforce development boards gathered resources through existing EARN programming to provide career services. Each area joins bi-weekly DHS E&T Refugee Program services delivery meeting as well as Southeast PA Ukrainian Refugee coordination meetings to ensure continuity of service delivery for this population.

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. Some criminal justice research suggests that finding and maintaining a legitimate job can reduce former prisoners' chances of reoffending, and the higher the wage, the less likely it is that individuals will return to crime. While we are seeing a notable increase in the number of "Second Chance Employers" in the region providing more potential job opportunities for these individuals, most individuals re-entering our communities 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, and health problems that make them hard to employ. In addition to lack of skills and established work history, many reentrants must overcome other barriers including lack of proper identification (ID) and transportation. Our local one stop partners are especially effective at helping job seekers obtain legal ID and restored drivers licenses as a lack of transportation is a barrier for many workforce program participants. In the Southeast region, in 2021 there were 4,346 individuals released from the PA Department of Corrections¹⁰ and in 2018, 42,026 discharged from a county jail¹¹. While county release data is on a lag compared to state release data, it is important to note the number of individuals incarcerated to understand if release numbers are increasing on their own or if incarceration is also increasing exponentially. According to the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, there was a significant decrease in the average daily population within county correctional facilities. As of January 31st, 2022, there was an average in-house 2021 daily population in the southeast region of 8,888 (37% of those incarcerated in-house in the Commonwealth's county correctional facilities. This is down from an average of 10,930 in 2019 which is a decline of almost 19%ⁱ. With less individuals incarcerated and an increase of those released, working with this population is vital to the current and future labor force in the region.

Homelessness presents a significant challenge to employment and often is the culmination of several barriers. The Point-in-Time count, required by HUD to measure sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons, saw a regional decrease from 7,865 individuals in 2019 to 5,964 in 2021 with 72% in Philadelphia¹². Of particular concern are the 915(34% of "Sheltered ES") homeless individuals under the age of 18. Additionally, as of the 2021 State of Child Welfare report, there were 8,435 children served through the Foster Care system in the region, which is down from 10,795 in the 2019 report¹³. These individuals are particularly vulnerable to not completing education or getting connected to

¹⁰ PA Department of Corrections Calendar Year Releases, Inmate Releases by County & Year; 2021

¹¹ PA Board of Probation & Parole's County Adult Probation & Parole Annual Statistical Report 2018

¹² HUD – 2007-2021 Point in time estimates by CoC

¹³ Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children, State of Child Welfare 2021: Foster Care – Children served

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employment. The services offered through WIOA Youth programming and the TANF Youth Development Program play a vital role in engaging and reengaging this at-risk population.

When looking at the 298,193 regional residents with a disability (10.7% of the population), we see the unemployment rate go up and the labor force participation rate go down when compared to residents without a disability. The connection with OVR to help overcome misinformation and guide individuals to the resources they need in collaboration with the local workforce development boards aims to reduce the drastic differences between unemployment and labor force participation. The region has a labor force participation rate of 44.2% among individuals with disabilities which is slightly higher than the Commonwealth at 43.9%. Similarly, the regional unemployment rate for individuals with disabilities is 14.5% which is 1.5% higher than the Commonwealth at 13.0%¹⁴. Individual county breakdowns are as follows and demonstrate the need for further partnership development with OVR and other local and regional agencies focused on the disabled population.

County	Unemployment Rate		Labor Force Participation Rate ¹⁵	
	No Disability	Disability	No Disability	Disability
Berks	5.1%	12.4%	84.3%	45.3%
Bucks	3.8%	8.8%	85.7%	47.9%
Chester	3.7%	11.1%	84.3%	50.8%
Delaware	5.7%	13.1%	83.2%	46.7%
Montgomery	4.1%	9.4%	86.0%	53.6%
Philadelphia	7.7%	18.8%	79.3%	37.3%

An additional barrier that may have previously been overlooked but has proven to be important since the start of the pandemic is access to computers and broadband internet. Regionally, just under 93% of households report having a computer, an increase of nearly 3% since 2019 and just 88% report having a broadband internet subscription which is a 4% increase since 2019. Both of these figures are higher than the Commonwealth as a whole which reports 91% of households with a computer and 86% with a broadband internet subscription¹⁶. While schools and places of work have intermittently relied on remote engagement, lack of technological skills and resources need to be addressed regionally across southeast Pennsylvania.

This labor market summary provides the foundation for the six Local Workforce Development Boards (and their community and workforce partners) to design and implement programming that addresses the needs of the regional population. The ultimate goal of analyzing the population and labor force is to develop strategies aimed at mitigating barriers to attach individuals to the employers in the region that need positions filled.

¹⁴ Table C18120: ACS 5 – Year, 2017-2021

¹⁵ Center for Workforce Information and Analysis: Barriers - Disability

¹⁶ Selected Social Characteristics, DP02: ACS 5 – Year, 2017-2021

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Regional Employer Overview

The Southeast Pennsylvania Region has a significant and growing employer base. Comparing the density of the employment concentration through Location Quotients, employment opportunities in the region, and historical and emerging sector trends help better understand the gaps for the employers and business across Southeast Pennsylvania.

Location Quotients (LQ) are a valuable way of quantifying how concentrated a particular industry, cluster, occupation, or demographic group is in a region as compared to the nation. The LQ can reveal what makes a particular region “unique” in comparison to the national average. While there are some outlier sectors with significantly varying LQs across the region, Health Care and Social Assistance has an LQ over one in five of the six counties (Chester County .97), demonstrating its regional importance. Management of companies and enterprises has an LQ over one in five of the six counties, while Finance and Insurance is concentrated above one in three of the six counties. Of particular note is Philadelphia with a 4.16 Educational Services LQ. The June 2022 employment Location Quotients for the 2-digit NAICS Sectors by Local Workforce Area are as follows:

¹⁷ NAICS Sector	Berks	Bucks	Chester	Delaware	Montgomery	Philadelphia
11 Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	1.77	0.28	2.20	0.04	0.08	0.01
21 Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	0.36	0.14	0.14	0.07	0.14	N/A
22 Utilities	0.86	0.56	0.65	0.63	1.29	0.61
23 Construction	0.85	1.22	0.96	1.07	0.98	0.34
31-33 Manufacturing	2.14	1.22	0.83	0.72	1.05	0.33
42 Wholesale trade	0.84	1.26	0.92	0.70	1.13	0.48
44-45 Retail trade	1.05	1.23	0.99	1.05	0.97	0.67
48-49 Transportation and warehousing	1.24	0.67	0.69	1.00	0.59	0.82
51 Information	0.24	0.62	1.41	0.52	0.88	0.94
52 Finance and insurance	0.66	0.77	2.26	1.18	1.56	0.94
53 Real estate and rental and leasing	0.69	0.75	0.81	0.86	0.98	0.99
54 Professional and technical services	0.53	0.86	1.46	0.63	1.64	1.22

¹⁷ Bureau of Labor Statistics – Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages (June 2022)

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55 Management of companies & enterprises	1.68	0.72	2.32	2.14	1.84	1.04
56 Administrative and waste services	0.81	0.74	0.81	0.90	1.08	0.64
61 Educational services	0.56	0.81	1.05	2.57	1.24	4.16
62 Health care and social assistance	1.19	1.45	0.97	1.46	1.25	1.86
71 Arts, entertainment, and recreation	0.88	1.42	1.30	1.29	1.02	1.10
72 Accommodation and food services	0.83	0.94	0.72	0.88	0.70	0.93
81 Other services, except public administration	1.08	1.33	1.21	1.34	1.10	1.17

When digging a little deeper into the NAICS 4-digit industries, the highest concentrations in each county are as follows¹⁸:

- Berks County - 3314 Nonferrous metal (except aluminum) production and processing at 18.14
- Bucks County - 3259 Other chemical product and preparation mfg. at 5.31
- Chester County - 5239 Other financial investment activities at 15.61
- Delaware County - 4869 Other pipeline transportation at 5.85
- Montgomery County - 3254 Pharmaceutical and medicine manufacturing at 9.54
- Philadelphia County - 6223 Specialty (except psychiatric and substance abuse) hospitals at 10.46

Regionally, the 2020 Location Quotients give us the top six NAICS 2-digit sectors with the highest concentration and the 2025 estimates according to EMSI.

NAICS	Description	2020 Location Quotient	2025 Location Quotient
61	Educational Services	2.31	2.53
55	Management of Companies and Enterprises	1.50	1.62
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	1.43	1.43
52	Finance and Insurance	1.30	1.20
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	1.23	1.19
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1.10	1.05

Additionally, long-term industry projections for the Southeast Region provide a window into employer demand to match job seeker supply. Projected employment in Education and Health Services is expected to grow 12.3% through 2030, Information 7.2%, Professional and Business Services 8.0% and as of now, while the post pandemic policies and procedures that would likely play a huge role in growth

¹⁸ Bureau of Labor Statistics – Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages

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are being defined, the Leisure and Hospitality sector is expected to grow 27.3%. As the industry with the fifth most jobs in the region, the workforce development boards will continue to look to their counterparts in economic development agencies to identify local and regional ways to mitigate the impact of the pandemic.

When revisiting the projections from 2018-2028, Manufacturing was regionally expected to decline by 0.7% or 1,090 jobs. While industry projections provide point-in-time estimates, and the 2020-2030 projections account for pandemic recovery from low employment leading to higher than normal growth rates, it is notable that manufacturing is now expected to grow by 2.2% or 3,250 jobs. The region’s workforce and economic development agencies are continuing to work to identify strategies to attract and train talent to continue progress made in filling manufacturing positions.

Long-Term Industry Projections for Southeast Pennsylvania (2020-30) ¹⁹				
Industry	Employment (2020)	Projected Employment (2030)	Employment Change (2020-30)	
			Volume	Percent
Total Jobs	2,100,330	2,272,600	172,270	8.2%
Goods Producing Industries	236,790	244,140	7,350	3.1%
Agriculture, Mining & Logging	11,950	12,370	420	3.5%
Construction	77,130	80,810	3,680	4.8%
Manufacturing	147,730	150,980	3,250	2.2%
Services-Providing	1,759,850	1,922,590	162,740	9.2%
Trade, Transportation & Utilities	331,020	336,870	5,850	1.8%
Information	37,540	40,250	2,710	7.2%
Financial Activities	137,530	140,750	3,220	2.3%
Professional & Business Services	315,250	340,580	25,330	8.0%
Education & Health Services	579,540	650,660	71,120	12.3%

¹⁹ Center for Workforce Information and Analysis; Long Term Industry Projections 2020-2030

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Leisure & Hospitality	143,310	182,440	39,130	27.3%
Other Services, Except Public Admin	89,600	103,420	13,820	15.4%
Federal, State & Local Government	126,120	127,690	1,570	1.2%
Self-Employed Workers	103,690	105,860	2,170	2.1%

Knowing the current industries in demand and the future industries of demand are both valuable resources but having an interim tool to measure growth or decline helps the region stay on track. From 2015-2020, the industries that showed the highest regional employment growth were Transportation and Warehousing, likely due to the addition of Amazon warehouses, and Health Care and Social Assistance. When looking at the 2020-2025 data, the shift to build back pre-pandemic industries is evident with Accommodation and Food Services and Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation both expecting 16% growth.

NAICS	Description	2020 Jobs	2025 Jobs	20120 - 2025 Change	20120 - 2025 % Change
72	Accommodation & Food Services	125,712	145,578	19,866	16%
71	Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	34,866	40,339	5,473	16%
48	Transportation & Warehousing	84,407	95,424	11,017	13%
55	Management of Companies & Enterprises	49,396	55,024	5,628	11%
61	Educational Services	149,288	164,955	15,667	10%

Equally valuable is knowing which industries are showing projected decline over a five year period. Information (NAICS 50) expects the biggest drop in volume and percentage. Finance and Insurance, previously on the industries showing the most growth is now projected a slight decline by 2025 (1%) with a projected LQ still showing above 1 (1.20).

NAICS	Description	2020 Jobs	2025 Jobs	2020 - 2025 Change	2020 - 2025 % Change ²⁰
51	Information	40,463	35,818	(4,645)	(11%)
42	Wholesale Trade	71,906	68,163	(3,743)	(5%)
22	Utilities	6,829	6,562	(267)	(4%)
90	Government	239,713	236,667	(3,046)	(1%)
52	Finance and Insurance	121,834	120,616	(1,218)	(1%)

Occupational growth is an important measurement of where the region is headed and gives the workforce development region a vision to focus collaboration with employers and training providers alike. With a concentration of educational institutions and a prevalence for inter county travel, residents are not limited by providers or employers in their specific county. The region can use these

²⁰ EMSI; All Industries in 6 Pennsylvania Counties Q4 2022 Data Set

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projections to create or further develop partnerships that align with the future needs of the six workforce development areas individually and cumulatively.

Healthcare Practitioners, Technicians and Support is now the occupational cluster with the second highest projected growth through 2030 at 15.4% behind Protective, Food, Building & Personal Service at 15.4%. Education, Legal, Social Service, Arts & Media are expected to grow 10.3% (23,870 jobs by 2030) and the Computer, Engineering and Science occupational cluster is expected to grow by 11,820 jobs by 2030 (8.8%). g There is only occupational clusters expected to decline by 2030 – Office and Administrative Support (-3.7%).

Notably, Installation, Maintenance and Repair Occupations are also projected to grow by 7.5%, reflecting the critical role that these high quality jobs increasingly play in supporting the introduction of new technologies into our advanced manufacturing sector.

The chart below represents the long-term projected occupational growth from 2020 - 2030.

Long-Term Occupational Projections for Southeast Pennsylvania (2020-30) ²¹				
			Employment Change (2020-30)	
Occupational Title	Employment (2020)	Projected Employment (2030)	Volume	Percent
Total, All Occupations	2,100,330	2,272,600	172,270	8.2%
Management, Business & Finance	256,230	277,830	21,600	8.4%
Computer, Engineering & Science	134,220	146,040	11,820	8.8%
Education, Legal, Social Service, Arts & Media	231,760	255,630	23,870	10.3%
Healthcare Practitioners, Technicians & Support	289,700	334,320	44,620	15.4%
Protective, Food, Building & Personal Service	307,200	361,660	54,460	17.7%
Sales & Related	184,450	185,310	860	0.5%
Office & Administrative Support	294,100	283,150	(10,950)	-3.7%
Farming, Fishing & Forestry	7,420	7,580	160	2.2%
Construction & Extraction	71,660	75,710	4,050	5.7%

²¹ Center for Workforce Information Analysis; Long-Term Occupational Projections

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Installation, Maintenance & Repair	71,780	77,140	5,360	7.5%
Production	92,650	92,710	60	0.1%
Transportation & Material Moving	157,890	174,210	16,320	10.3%

Similar to the interim tool used to measure growth or decline in industry, that same method for analyzing occupational growth and decline through 2025 will help the region stay on track and be able to illustrate some of the short-term impacts of the pandemic. Among occupations with greater than 20,000 jobs, General and Operations Managers are showing the highest projection at 34% adding 12,947 jobs by 2025.

Over the 2015-2020 data set, and likely impacted by 2020, saw steep declines in certain occupations as well. The greatest decline has been in Retail Sales Workers who saw a reduction of nearly 20,000 jobs (16%) from 2015 – 2020. That trend is expected to continue through 2025 when looking at 6-digit SOC projections.

SOC	Description	2020 Jobs	2025 Jobs	2020 - 2025 Change	2020 - 2025 % Change ²²
43-9061	Office Clerks, General	54,782	49,195	(5,587)	(10%)
39-9011	Childcare Workers	18,167	16,700	(1,467)	(8%)
35-3023	Fast Food and Counter Workers	46,937	43,348	(3,589)	(8%)
43-4051	Customer Service Representatives	44,057	40,816	(3,240)	(7%)
41-2031	Retail Salespersons	48,389	45,844	(2,545)	(5%)

Another element in identifying and analyzing the needs of employers is through online job posting data. The certifications required by employers in online job postings, as of November 2022, align with industries and occupations in demand, prioritizing licensing that relates to healthcare as four of the top 5 needs in the region. This data regularly be reviewed jointly to ensure staff efforts are appropriately aligned with the data trends.

Certification	November 2022 ²³
Driver's License	10,347
Registered Nurse	3,844
First Aid CPR AED	2,592
Basic Life Saving (BLS)	1,557
Basic Cardiac Life Support (ACLS)	1,121

²² EMSI; All Occupations in 6 Pennsylvania Counties Q4 2022 Data Set

²³ Center for Workforce Information and Analysis; Online Job Postings

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Lastly, in an effort to align training opportunities, including workshops, we need to consider the projected in-demand job skills that are not necessarily specific to a given industry or occupation the way certifications tend to be. When looking at the tools and technology skills expected to be of utmost importance to employment in 2028, the top five for each of the six counties in the Southeast region are all computer related with very little variation in title or their respective order. They are: Spreadsheet software, Office suite software, Word processing software, Data base user interface and query software, and Personal computers²⁴.

Analysis of the labor market and trends that indicate projections are the foundation of the region's vision and goals. Moving forward to ensure a thriving post-COVID recovery, Workforce Development Boards will work to anticipate the needs of regional employers and align service delivery to meet those needs. The ongoing review and analysis of relevant regional data sets as relates to the overall health of the workforce system in Southeastern Pennsylvania will be central to recovery.

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

The Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development region's economic and workforce development vision and goals are based upon regional economic development efforts and common needs of the priority industry clusters, their employers and their critical skill needs. The region has a strong and successful history of collaborating on regional economic and workforce development efforts. This collaborative spirit proved critical at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and has evolved to incorporate strategic recovery planning.

Economic development and business engagement strategies are often regional with employers and sectors crossing local workforce development areas geographic designations in order to obtain their needed skilled labor force. In response to the regional needs of employers, the six local workforce development board directors have a successful history of meeting at least monthly to develop programs, apply for funds, and implement regional efforts to address the needs of employers across the region. These partnerships for program implementation are in direct response to employer needs and consequently may be a full partnership of all six areas (with one usually accepting the lead role) or could be fewer than all six depending upon the locations of employers, type of industry, funds available and other factors.

The region coordinates workforce services with our economic development partners through the regular Southeast regional PREP meetings as well as in special initiatives including Engage!. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, economic and workforce development partners have convened regularly to share resources while collectively addressing needs and strategizing responses. The Engage! survey was modified to target COVID-specific solutions for employers.

The regional system effectively coordinates workforce services with economic development partners through the regular Southeast regional PREP meetings as well as in special initiatives. For example, the region's Small Business Development Centers present their services in information sessions with the

²⁴ Center for Workforce Information and Analysis; Projected Job Skills 2018 - 2028

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area’s Industry Partnerships. The Delaware Valley Industrial Resource Center (DVIRC) and the Manufacturers Resource Center (MRC) are critical partners in supporting the diversification of employers’ manufacturing production and succession planning. These partnerships with economic development agencies provide a broader set of services to employers across the region.

This model of regional collaboration drives efforts toward growing pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship opportunities in the region. While each area has developed local plans to promote and grow registered apprenticeships, efforts have had a regional impact. Through the Philadelphia Workforce Development Board’s (herein after referred to as Philadelphia Works, Inc.) Apprenticeship Ambassador grant, the Philadelphia, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery LWDAs had an opportunity to train key staff around the structural development of strong apprenticeship models. Apprenticeship PHL serves as a regional resource for employers, providers and job seekers. Through a comprehensive website and ongoing promotional events and professional development, these efforts have increased enthusiasm and access to resources in the region. While the region’s apprenticeship efforts have progressed, there is still room for growth in relation to pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship numbers, industry-specific variety, and visibility. Ongoing access to grant funding and technical assistance will continue to play a prominent role in pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship development in Southeastern Pennsylvania.

Other specific projects represent responses to various industry clusters throughout the region and complement the local workforce development area efforts. Examples of these programs include Business-Education Partnerships across the region that connect employers to teachers, parents, and students. BEP activities focus on career readiness and create awareness of in-demand career pathways. Industry Partnerships convene industry leaders around shared goals and concerns. The Industry Partnerships listed below serve one or multiple workforce development areas in Southeastern Pennsylvania.

Southeastern Pennsylvania Workforce Development Region Industry Partnerships

Name	Contact Entity	Website/More Information
Ag Connect – Agricultural Industry Partnership	CCEDC	Ccedcpa.com
Berks County Advanced Manufacturing Industry Partnership	Greater Reading Chamber Alliance	greaterreading.org
Emergency Medical Services Industry Partnership	Delaware County WDB	delcoworks.org
Greater Philadelphia Healthcare Partnership	1199-C Philadelphia	greaterphilahealthcare.org
Healthcare Connect	CCEDC	ccedcpa.com
Hospitality and Entertainment Industry Partnership	Philadelphia Works Inc.	philaworks.org/heip
ITAG – Innovative Technology Action Group	CCEDC	ccedcpa.com

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Manufacturing Alliance of Bucks and Montgomery Counties	Manufacturing Alliance of Bucks and Montgomery Counties	Manufacturingalliancepa.com
Manufacturing Alliance of Chester and Delaware Counties	CCEDC	ccedcpa.com
The Smart Energy Initiative	CCEDC	ccedcpa.com
Southeastern PA Manufacturing Alliance (SEPMA)	Philadelphia Works Inc.	philaworks.org/sepma

All six local workforce development boards will continue to emphasize and respond to the talent demands of employers throughout the region. To implement this, the Board Directors will continue to meet monthly and convene with their Workforce Development Board Chairs quarterly. These meetings will focus on improving the services to employers, industry clusters and skills sets necessary and in demand to complement and support local county-based efforts. Additional efforts beginning in 2021 will convene all six full boards to strategize and share best practices.

The Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Region, as part of their plan, will discuss and consider the following topics (and others) as part of their meetings:

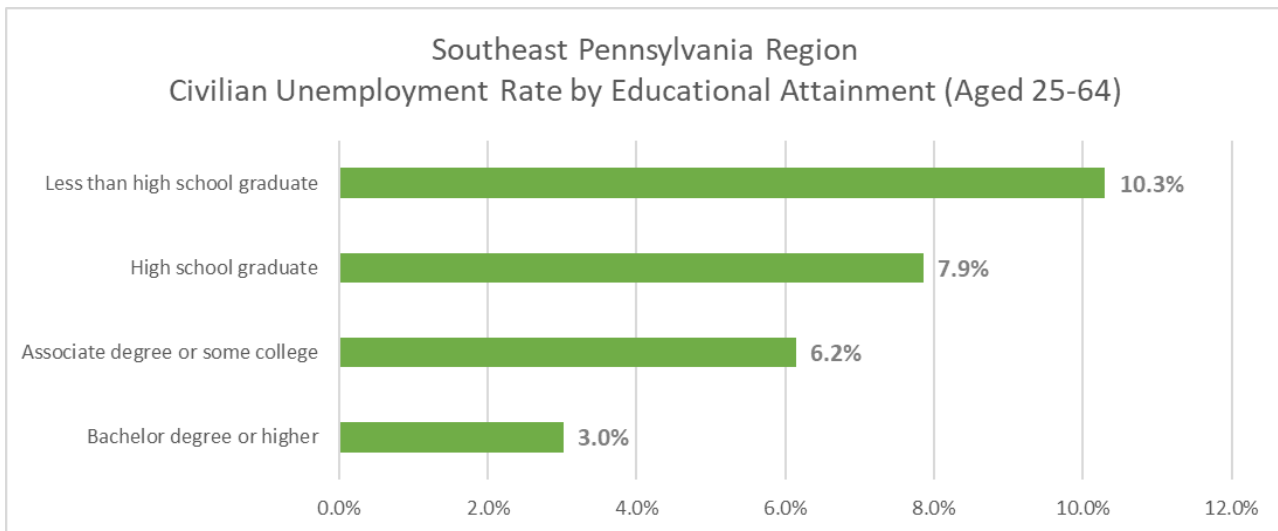
- ✓ Acquiring grants—the region has a successful history of acquiring grant funds to address critical regional needs and will continue to explore these opportunities as a region.
- ✓ Leveraging existing resources—in order to better serve employers, intermediaries, jobs seekers and others, the sharing of resources (such as curricula and service strategies), recruitment needed for skill needs in high demand for the region’s employers, and other related data and information.
- ✓ Incumbent worker policies—consider reviewing and developing consistent incumbent worker policies to best serve the region’s employers. This focus served the region well when in 2018 the region received a \$500,000 layoff aversion matching grant from PA L&I to assist regional employers’ effort to upskill their critical information technology (IT) workforce(s).
- ✓ Core partner procedures—consider development of protocols with partners such as OVR, Wagner-Peyser and Title II to better and more consistently serve employers and job seekers and as available with Youth Build and Job Corps.
- ✓ Train-the-Trainer—development of training packages in venues where staff can access this training including improved employer engagement and business service strategies.
- ✓ Review local employer engagement strategies—one of the opportunities is to improve consistency, performance and services to employers throughout the region by reviewing and sharing effective practices related to employer engagement strategies, including the incorporation of pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship into those strategies when appropriate.

As part of the plan, the Directors will continue to reach out to the lead sectors throughout the region, work with intermediaries (such as Chambers of Commerce and Economic Development Organizations) both locally and regionally, and share labor market information in order to continually serve employers

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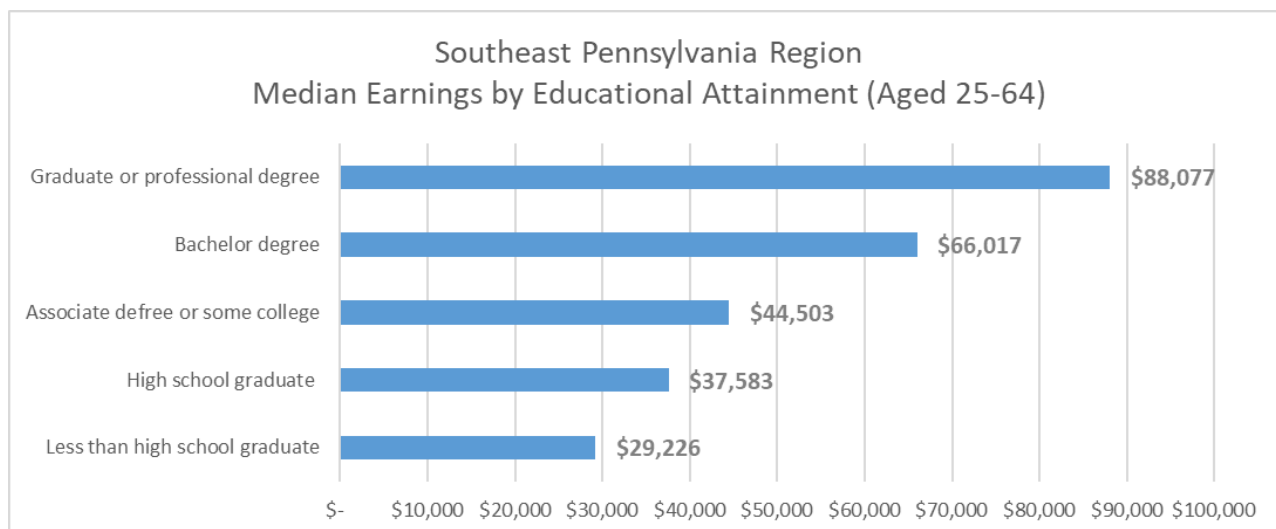
as effectively as possible. Additionally, the region is exploring how to market workforce services and increase our penetration rate across industries while attracting more career seekers into our centers for workforce services.

The Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Boards have a long successful history working with and partnering with post-secondary education. The regional community colleges are key resources in both post-secondary certifications and 2-year degrees that align with employer demand. As noted in the Jobs 1st funding initiative, and indicated in the table below, these national trends also apply to the SEPA region. A worker with an associate degree earns 18% more than a high school graduate. Just graduating from high school in the region leads to a 29% increase in median earnings over the earnings of a worker without a diploma. Workers without postsecondary degrees are also more likely to be unemployed than workers with an associate degree or higher. The unemployment rate from 2017-2021 is 10.3% for workers without a high school diploma which is down from 11.8% in the – 2015 - 2019 dataset. The rate for workers with an associate degree or some college is just 6.2% in – 2017 - 2021, up from 5.3% in – 2015 - 2019. As this data was gathered before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, MontcoWorks will continue to monitor trends.



Source: *Educational Attainment by Employment Status, B23006: 5-Year ACS, 2017 – 2021*

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Source: *Median Earnings in the Past 12 Months by Educational Attainment, B20004: 5-Year ACS, 2017-2021*

For these reasons, as well as the aging workforce and wage disparity further compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, offering training programs that meet the needs of employers and are accessible to all residents is more important than ever. As previously referenced, employers are facing waves of retirements, removing some of the most experienced and skilled workers from the workforce. Most of these openings will require workers with at least an associate degree and strong employability skills.

Focusing and prioritizing assistance to support key industry sectors in Southeastern Pennsylvania has been a critical success factor in the regional planning process under WIOA. Specifically, two goals that have been successfully pursued since 2015 include “workforce and economic partners provide information about the needs of key industry sectors to training providers” and “students, educators, parents, and adult workers are aware of in demand skills and occupations on the region”. A continued strong connection to our world-class education and training infrastructure across the region will allow our residents to readily obtain these skills and their corresponding wages.

Regional Workforce Development Board members, staff and partners are aware that focusing solely on higher level education does not hit all areas needing to be addressed for higher level jobs. Thoroughly reviewing labor market information and available programs on the Eligible Training Provider List allow program staff to connect disadvantaged youth and adults to employment with family-sustaining wages. Additionally, each local area determines skills gaps against High Priority Occupations to develop local and regional programming that meets the needs of employers while ensuring all job seekers have access to services.

Each area has procured Title I Youth and Young Adult, Adult, Dislocated Worker and TANF providers and developed local policy and initiatives with partners to innovate programming that addresses both the unique and mutual needs of all job seekers. In order to provide innovative programming to unserved and underserved populations in the region, each local area has their own outreach methods,

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in accordance with the Office of Equal Opportunity's requirement for an affirmative outreach strategy. Targeted populations include:

- Incarcerated individuals, reentrants and justice-involved job seekers
- Job seekers with disabilities
- Job seekers with substance use disorders
- Public assistance recipients and economically disadvantaged job seekers
- Veterans seeking employment
- Job seekers with Limited English Proficiency
- Job seekers without a high school diploma
- Basic skills deficient job seekers
- Job seekers who have been denied equal employment opportunity because of race, color, sex, national origin, religion, age, disability, marital status, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, or any other non-merit-based factor

One of the goals of the Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Region involves the convening of providers, particularly when providers are common across multiple local areas, to leverage resources and share best practices or special initiatives. By comparing where gaps may exist in each area's local workforce system and collectively brainstorming practical solutions, each area will be better poised to enhance service delivery for every job seeker.

As a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, one area of increased focus will be on developing effective regional responses to the challenges of disconnected young adults. This will involve coordination with our educational partners, community-based organizations (CBOs) and WIOA partners such as Job Corps and YouthBuild. Though data is not yet available to provide confirmation, communication with school districts across the region suggests a significant increase in youth disconnected from secondary education.

The Directors will explore and then establish, as part of the regional effort, appropriate outcomes and results to collectively measure the work with employers and sectors. Developing the partnership framework for ongoing collaboration, developing sustained outreach campaigns for job seekers and employers alike, and engaging employers collaboratively is noted in and part of this regional plan per Section 1.2. Simultaneously, WDBs will continue to promote and develop strong local and regional workforce partnerships to connect youth and adults with barriers to employment to available resources, maximizing outcomes for local initiatives and programming. The SEPA workforce boards will, collectively and through each local area, work with the ATO ahead of the next planning cycle to establish best practices and future action items to make pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship a regional solution to meet the needs of employers as well as current and future career seekers, including EARN, OVR and Title II customers.

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

While all the local workforce development boards in the Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development region maintain strong connections with their multiple local economic development organizations and chambers of commerce, as described in each local plan, the primary forum for connecting workforce development and economic development goals and services at the regional level has been the Southeast Pennsylvania Partnership for Regional Economic Performance (SE PREP). Since 2015, the core partners of SE PREP have brought together the region's 6 county-based economic development organizations, 6 workforce boards, 5 small business development centers, and 2 industrial resource centers to address regional priorities, establish a foundation for ongoing collaboration, and create strategic goals to guide the individual strategies and tactics of each participating organization. The planning that resulted from the process focuses on the intersection of interests, challenges, and opportunities of the partners. The planning does not supersede any other plans but rather provides an overarching framework to focus on the core issue of primary interest to the Southeast Pennsylvania partners – creating a more highly-educated and trained workforce in the region as an enabler of business expansion and attraction. Ongoing planning is reflected in the goals detailed in Section 1.2.

The platform of knowledge and trust among workforce development organizations and economic development organizations in the region has resulted, and will continue to result in, quick concerted action to respond to needs and seize opportunities. Coalitions in various geographic configurations provide customized approaches to address key issues, all under the regional SE PREP platform that is used to share information, expand and replicate successful models, and assess overall regional impact on employer and job seeker customers. This process allows for flexibility and speed in crafting solutions and in sharing leadership on key initiatives, while maintaining focus on regional impact of the collective efforts. This platform has been a critical partnership dynamic throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Shown below are examples of such coalitions and sector initiatives that are serving to advance workforce skills in the region and address challenges collectively. The list is a regional sampling, with additional local initiatives detailed in each LWDA's Local Plan:

AgConnect (NextGen Industry Partnership: Agriculture)

Purpose/Goals: This NextGen Industry Partnership, developed and led by the Chester County Economic Development Council, links farmers and agricultural business owners with the business resources, training, and financing they need to grow their business. Ag Connect promotes agricultural economic development within Southeastern PA and surrounding counties.

Timeline: Ongoing, Successfully re-launched in 2022
Key Partners: SEPA Local Workforce Development Boards, Chester County Agriculture Council, PA Department of Agriculture, Penn State Extension, local and regional farms and agro-businesses

Coordinating Partner: *Chester County Economic Development Council*

American Apprenticeship Grant

Purpose/Goals: Build new apprenticeship structures and pipelines in the region, specifically creating registered apprenticeships in IT, Health and Behavioral Health, building strong career pathways. Create

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visibility for apprenticeship structures in the region to stimulate the growth of apprenticeships in other occupations and support local promotion of pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships through Business Services and Apprenticeship Navigators.

Timeline: October 2015-March 2021

Key Partners: Philadelphia Workforce Development Board, Philadelphia School District, Communities in Schools, Youth Build, Job Corps, District 1199C Training & Upgrading Fund, OIC, PHA, Bucks County WDB, Bucks County Community College, Montgomery County WDB, Montgomery County Community College, CVS

Coordinating Partner: Philadelphia Works Inc.

Berks Business-Education Partnership / Career Ready Berks (CRB) Alliance

Purpose/Goals: These coordinated demonstration projects employ an innovative, multi-faceted approach to the continuing coordinate and expansion of business-education programs. Through an innovative and well-strategized model, the Career Ready Berks (CRB) alliance brings together multiple stakeholders and their collective expertise to the table to coordinate the development and delivery of several distinct but complementary career exploration activities under one universal “enterprise umbrella”. The WDB has consistently applied for and received discretionary Pennsylvania Business Education Partnership (PA BEP) funding to advance the work of this partnership. As a result of the effectiveness of our work, this well-designed and fully scalable CRB model has been recognized by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) as a leading elementary and secondary education best practice that has been adopted and adapted to local business-education collaborative needs by other areas in the region. Expanding such structured and relevant career education opportunities will help us create, grow, and retain the next generation of workforce talent across the SE PA region.

Timeline: June 2018 – December 2021 (3 years of grants)

Key Career Ready Berks Partners: Berks County Intermediate Unit (BCIU), Reading Area Community College (RACC), Berks Career & Technology Center (BCTC), Reading Muhlenberg Career & Technology Center (RMCTC), Reading School District, Greater Reading Chamber Alliance (GRCA), Manufacturing Resource Center (MRC), the Berks Business and Education Coalition (BBEC), the Berks County Workforce Development Board (WDB)

Business & Education Partnership – Bucks County

Purpose/Goals: To build and participate in workplace readiness training and career exploration activities such as Manufacturing Day, What’s So Cool About Manufacturing and ManuFest. The grant has provided funding for internships for high school students. The largest internship is with the Intermediate Unit, offering a paid internship to 60+ special needs students who are employed at various locations in the county. Additionally, funding provides educational programs and career exploration services to youth residing in the Juvenile Detention Center.

Timeline: January 2020 through December 2021

Key Partners: Four Bucks County High Schools, Bucks County Intermediate Unit #22, Bucks County Juvenile Detention Center, Vita Education Services, PA Society for Biomedical Research, and several Bucks County employers

Business Education Partnership – Chester County

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Purpose/Goals: The Business Education Partnership local grant program provider is the Chester County Economic Development Council. The activity focus is to provide elementary through high school students from various socio-economic backgrounds the support and resources, as well as career awareness activities to pursue careers, post -secondary education or vocational training. Training opportunities prepare students for in-demand careers in the Healthcare, Technology, Manufacturing and Energy industries which have been identified as growing occupational areas in Chester County.

Timeline: Ongoing partnership

Key Partners: Chester County WDB, Chester County Economic Development Council, Chester County Intermediate Unit

Business Education Partnership - Delaware County

Purpose/Goals: Connect Students and their Parents to a multitude of opportunities to connect to pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs. The Two-Generation Career Exploration program introduces individuals to Manufacturing and Health Care career pathways.

Timeline: February 2019 to December 2020

Key Partners: Delaware County Chamber of Commerce, Delaware County Workforce Development Board

Business Education Partnership – Montgomery County

Purpose/Goals: The primary goal of the Montgomery County BEP is generating student, parent and educator interest in high-priority occupations that pay family-sustaining wages in the area. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the culmination of BEP was a series of industry tours and two large-scale career expos that focused on the healthcare & social assistance, advanced manufacturing and construction trades. With strong partnerships in place, the partnership is developing virtual career experiences that can be archived to reach more participants.

Timeline: Ongoing partnership (since 2016)

Key Partners: Montgomery County WDB, Manufacturing Alliance of Bucks and Montgomery Counties, Montgomery County Intermediate Unit

Business-Education Partnership – Philadelphia - Career Awareness Project

Purpose/Goals: Create pathways programs in manufacturing sector for 14-24-year old students and young adults. Provide career awareness and internship opportunities for over 300 youth. Enhance career awareness through real-time labor market information and mapping of pathways.

Timeline: June 2018 – December 2021

Key Partners: School District of Philadelphia, Philadelphia Youth Network, Collegiate Consortium, Office of Career & Technical Education, Industry Advisory Committee, Manufacturing Alliance of Philadelphia, Southeast Regional Manufacturing Alliance

Emergency Medical Services Industry Partnership

The EMS Industry Partnership is a planning project that brings together employers from the region to identify shared challenges and resources. Participants include small privately held companies up to large hospital systems.

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Purpose/Goals: Create an employer led planning process to identify common challenges and opportunities.

Key Partners: Bucks, Chester, Delaware and Montgomery County Workforce Development Boards

Health Care Connect (HCC)

Health Care Connect's mission is to advocate for the advancement of the health care industry through training, outreach and other industry strategies. In collaboration with participating hospitals, continuing care facilities, acute rehabilitation facilities, educational institutions, workforce development boards, and other resource providers, HCC develops programs, trainings, and workshops for individuals and companies to help recruitment and retention of health care workers.

Purpose/Goals: HCC Action teams have reaffirmed their focus on these regional healthcare industry priorities:

Priority # 1: Behavioral Health Access: Understanding the potential issues related to drug abuse and/or mental health challenges and establishing available resources.

Priority # 2: Training: Develop Trainings on the implications of insurance changes (Value-based, other), recovery.... Work with area politicians to make PA a compact state for licensure.

Priority # 3 Transportation: Encourage flexibility with provider shuttles and other transit services to supplement potential public options. Work with TMACC and their partners to verify short and long-term solutions.

Priority # 4: HCC Partnership Sustainability: Secure supplemental funding for imperative behavior health trainings and other HCC challenges from available grants, partners and new funding sources.

Timeline: Ongoing

Coordinating Partner: Chester County Economic Development Council

Innovation Technology Action Group (ITAG)

Purpose/Goals: Develop programs and workshops for individuals and companies, promoting the latest technology and best practices in using it. Create a pipeline of qualified technically-trained workers. Host an annual Tech Summit conference for IT leaders to share knowledge and experiences on leading trends impacting business. Administer the \$500,000 Layoff Aversion Incumbent Worker Training Grant for the region.

Timeline: Ongoing Industry Partnership (since 2009)

Key Partners: Workforce Development Boards of Southeast Pennsylvania

Coordinating Partner: Chester County Economic Development Council

LGBTQI + Project

Purpose/Goals: Conduct a needs assessment and asset mapping of LGBTQIA+ resources in Delaware and Montgomery counties; develop jobseeker curriculum with input from legal experts; create employer webinars about LGBTQIA+ rights in the workplace; engage a LGBTQIA+ Career Navigator to help jobseekers connect to PA CareerLink® Centers and additional resources in those counties.

Timeline: 2023

Key Partners: Delaware and Montgomery County Workforce Development Boards

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Manufacturing Alliances of Bucks & Montgomery Counties and Chester & Delaware Counties

Purpose/Goals: Connect manufacturers in the four counties to strengthen and grow the sector. Provide opportunities for increased networking, partnering, and sharing of information. Create and maintain a supply chain website. Raise money to support goals. Provide dedicated staff from the two Workforce Development Boards.

Timeline: Ongoing platforms

Key Partners: Bucks, Chester, Delaware and Montgomery County Workforce Development Boards, manufacturers in all four counties

National Dislocated Worker Grant - Economic Transition

Purpose/Goals: To provide dislocated workers with clear pathways to in-demand occupations with sustainable wages through degree completion or short-term training and enhanced supportive services.

Timeline: January 2019-September 2021

Key Partners: Berks County WDB, Chester County WDB, Delaware County WDB Montgomery County WDB (in partnership with Philadelphia and Bucks County WDB)

Next Gen IP: Hospitality, Leisure and Entertainment

Purpose/Goals: This partnership has 4 objectives: Provide consistent and portable skills training to entry-level workers; develop a pipeline of workers from high school to adult programs; change the image of hospitality jobs through education, apprenticeships and defining career pathways; and develop a strategic plan to implement for the industry. Administer the \$32,654 to benefit the IP and find match dollars.

Timeline: Starting Industry Partnership

Key Partners: Philadelphia workforce board, Montgomery County workforce board

PASmart Ambassador Grant for SE PA- ApprenticeshipPHL

Purpose/Goals: To engage teachers and educators with businesses to better support pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship development across multiple industries with a focus on development of non-traditional models.

Timeline: February 2019 – June 2020, ongoing

Key Partners: Philadelphia Works Inc.

ApprenticeshipPHL (a collaborative of workforce boards, union and non-traditional apprenticeship programs, employers, and supportive systems)

Partnerships for Regional Economic Performance (PREP) and Engage!

Purpose/Goals: Ongoing regional economic development effort to increase programs and participation. These goals are ultimately meant to increase sales within the immediate county, create jobs, retain jobs, assist with financing, and encourage startup companies to set roots locally. Engage! surveys connect partners to county-based businesses through in-depth documented conversations in order to gauge the needs of owners, to monitor any trends between industries and to expand on the communications between policy makers and the business community.

Timeline: Ongoing (Engage! through 12/31/2021)

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Key Partners: Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Berks, Philadelphia and Montgomery County, Kutztown University, Temple University, Widener University

Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry – Clean Energy Workforce Development Grants

Purpose/Goals: Philadelphia Works and the Chester County Economic Development Council each received \$500,000 to establish the Southeastern Pennsylvania Multi-County Clean Energy Partnership covering all counties in the planning region. The Clean Energy Partnership will work with clean energy sector employers to evaluate their needs and cultivate a talent pipeline that recruits, trains, and retains workers. This work is especially important to our region because there was a significant overlap between the Recovery Occupations analysis conducted by Philadelphia Works and projected clean energy job growth.

Timeline: July 2022 – June 2025

Key Partners: the WDBs of the southeast PA planning region, Philadelphia Energy Authority (PEA), the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce’s Energy Action Team (GPEA), the Philadelphia Area Labor Management Committee (PALM), and the Chester County Economic Development Agency’s Smart Energy Initiative of Southeast Pennsylvania (SEI)

Re-Entry / Justice-Involved Programming – Chester County

Purpose/Goals: Chester County Workforce Development Board (WDB) staff are proud to participate in WRAP (Women’s Reentry Assessment & Programming Initiative (WRAP) committee meetings and see great potential for collaborative programming in years to come. WRAP is a specialized assessment and supervision unit of Adult Probation, Parole and Pretrial Services that integrates gender-responsive, risk/need assessment, supervision and programming in collaboration with community case management to reduce recidivism, decrease technical violations of community supervision and increase the health and well-being of justice involved women, their families and communities. Chester County WDB will continue to seek out funding opportunities like Strategic Innovation, when funds are made available. If given the opportunity, we would like to expand programming and continue to support and invest in re-entry services to justice-involved participants. This programming could include providing intensive workshops, skills training, On the Job Training, job placement, and follow-up services. We established two goals in a previous grant application; the first, to place justice-involved participants on a career path which will allow them self-sufficiency, the ability to pay fines and child support orders and arrears. The second goal is to engage employers, known as Second Chance Employers, who are open to hiring justice-involved individuals. We have an especially active Addressing Barriers Committee, with representatives from many different organizations and programs, including Chester County Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC) and Life Transforming Ministries. We look forward to continuing our support of programs like these and expanding available services for justice-involved individuals.

State and Local Internship Program (SLIP)

Purpose/Goals: To offer paid internships to youth 16-24 years old to promote workplace soft skills training and valuable hands-on workplace experience. WDBs facilitate programming through this grant to meet the needs of local youth and employers.

Key Partners: Each participating WDB collaborates with schools, employers and other partners to facilitate programming.

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Smart Energy Initiative (SEI)

The Smart Energy Initiative (SEI) of Southeastern Pennsylvania is a public-private partnership focusing on energy efficiency, biofuels, geothermal, and solar industries. SEI services also focus on smart grid implementation and innovative use of traditional energy resources. Our mission is to promote the growth of the “smart” energy industry by providing comprehensive workforce and economic development services to partnering companies.

SEI is regional in scope offering public education programming, consulting, incumbent worker training, sector-specific working groups, project leads and financing, and a host of other business-related services. SEI has become a key resource for the region’s diverse, competitive energy industry.

Purpose/Goals: Identifying and addressing workforce development, human resource and other business needs - Developing an inter-connected “web” of resources that supports existing business and encourages new business - Providing public education/awareness programming aimed at promoting clean/renewable energy, energy efficiency and conservation, and demand-side management products/services - Developing linkages with education partners to establish programs and grow the pipeline of future workers - Providing information on regional and state-wide energy projects, initiatives, legislation, and financing.

Southeastern Pennsylvania Manufacturing Alliance (SEPMA)

Purpose/Goals: Develop training plans and awareness initiatives to ensure a reliable pipeline of talent for the manufacturing sector. Increase employer membership. Support work-based learning for students, including summer internships. Develop a pre-apprenticeship manufacturing program. Develop on-site career coaching models. Map manufacturing career pathways to showcase education/training leading to high wages in the sector.

Timeline: Formed in 2007, work is ongoing

Key Partners: Workforce Development Boards of Philadelphia, Berks, Bucks, Montgomery, and Delaware Counties, 50+ employers, School District of Philadelphia, Philadelphia Youth Network, regional/local economic development agencies, labor organizations, faith-based organizations

US Department of Commerce – Economic Development Administration Good Jobs Challenge – Coordinated Southeastern PA Workforce Development System

Purpose/Goals: Philadelphia Works, in partnership with the Berks, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia counties will design and scale a coordinated workforce development system that develops and launches training programs to build regional workforce skills within three growth industries: Healthcare and Life Sciences, Energy, and Infrastructure, with the aim to connect more than 3,000 career seekers to jobs within 24-36 months. As the “System Lead Entity,” Philadelphia Works is responsible for driving this work and managing the “Backbone Organizations,” what lead and convene a single-industry partnership.

Timeline: September 2022 – September 2025

Key Partners: West Philadelphia Skills Initiative (WPSI) Philadelphia Energy Authority (PEA) Philadelphia Area Labor Management Committee (PALM)

US Department of Labor – Employment and Training Administration – Apprenticeship Building America

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Purpose/Goals: This grant will enable Philadelphia Works' Apprenticeship team to expand its ApprenticeshipPHL efforts in ways that further decreases the unemployment rate for youth, Black and brown people, and women, leverages partnerships across the five-county region, builds Registered Pre-Apprenticeships and Apprenticeships, and develops strategies for equitable Apprenticeship career pathways that result in family-sustaining wages. Over the lifetime of the grant, Philadelphia Works aims to enroll 400 individuals into Registered Apprenticeship programs.

Bucks and Montgomery Counties additionally received ABA funds administered by the PA Apprenticeship Training Office in January 2023 and will use those funds to advance pre-apprenticeship and Registered Apprenticeship initiatives.

Timeline: July 2022-July 2026

Key Partners: BAYADA, Community College of Philadelphia, JEVS Human Services, and Philadelphia Academies. Montgomery County Community College, Bucks County Community College, the career technical centers of Bucks and Montgomery counties, EDSI.

US Department of Labor – Employment & Training Administration: Comprehensive and Accessible Reemployment through Equitable Employment Recovery (CAREER) National Dislocated Worker Grant

Purpose/Goals: Philadelphia Works, on behalf of the consortium of Southeastern Pennsylvania Workforce Development Boards (Berks, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery counties), led the application of the Department of Labor Employment & Training Administration (DOL) CAREER Dislocated Worker Grant. In September 2021, Philadelphia Works was awarded the \$3 million grant to serve approximately 250 dislocated workers in our region, focusing on DOL-identified priority populations:

- Individuals from historically marginalized communities or groups,
- Individuals that have been unemployed for an extended period or who have exhausted UI or other Pandemic Unemployment Insurance Programs, and
- Other eligible dislocated workers.

Leveraging these funds with our existing dollars will help provide additional supports to dislocated workers to reduce barriers and help them complete training. We are currently working on startup activities. Philadelphia Works issued a press release regarding the award on October 28, 2021.

Timeline: September 2021 – September 2023

Key Partners: EDSI

As updated through meetings and discussions with the PREP Partners and other community stakeholders, the Southeast PA Workforce Development Areas have identified additional areas of focus on the regional level. These include but are not limited to:

- ✓ Aligning partnership efforts in advanced manufacturing to better leverage resources and provide opportunities for dislocated workers displaced from other industries.
- ✓ Engaging the "Gig Economy" to assess impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ✓ Increasing labor market participation throughout the region in order to better serve employers, businesses and priority sectors. This includes regional initiatives targeted at individuals with barrier as well as the long-term unemployed/under-employed.
- ✓ Continue research and engagement in the Construction Trades sectors.
- ✓ Research additional potential sectors including Child Development Associates, opportunities for

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Immigrant population, and services to Youth.

The Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Region has used the Next Gen Sector Partnership opportunities to continue to grow and build effective sector partnerships. Working in collaboration with the Commonwealth, these Sector Partnerships provide an industry-led collaboration that serves as a vehicle for aligning workforce development, economic development and education around the needs of business from a targeted industry.

In addition to the sector strategies noted above, there is a big movement for Registered Apprenticeships across the region: in Bucks and Montgomery counties for metal working; Philadelphia and Bucks Counties in IT, Philadelphia and Chester County in Healthcare; and across the region in construction and welding. Unfortunately, despite ongoing regional efforts over the past four years to expand registered apprenticeships, our manufacturing sector employers have been slow to embrace the model. However, the Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Region remains committed to the coordination and growth of registered apprenticeship as a priority in manufacturing and our other key industry sectors over the next four years.

Given the size, diversity, and complexity of the broader Southeast PA region that includes over 1/3 of the commonwealth's population, the approach of sponsorship of initiatives by varying combinations of geographic and industry partners has served the region well. Many of these efforts, as shown above, are ongoing and funded for multiple years. As such, they lay the foundation for region-wide sharing of knowledge and best practices, spawning new initiatives that can be expanded and replicated as needed.

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.

Southeastern Pennsylvania will prosper if we can successfully prepare our working age adults (including young adults and all adults with barriers to employment) for the ample career opportunities generated by the many expected retirements described in section 1.4 (above) and planned regional economic growth over the next decade. As we look ahead to continued economic and labor market recovery from the pandemic, SE PA employers and local Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) together face significant workforce development opportunities and challenges. Fortunately, we have and will continue to implement effective joint strategies to meet these challenges.

The Southeast Workforce Development Region has significant regional populations in need of services and skills to meet the need of the region's sector employment needs. Each local workforce area has established Priority of Service policies to serve targeted groups in their area.

Ongoing regional labor market analysis expands our regionally targeted populations to include veterans, returning citizens, low-income individuals, low educational attainment individuals, persons with disabilities and limited English proficiency. This list of targeted populations will be regularly reviewed and updated to determine any gaps or services necessary. Additionally, each local area has spent extensive time and research documenting, reaching out, and serving to the best of their abilities

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many targeted populations, as identified in their respective local plans. With a region as large, extensive and diverse as the six local workforce areas comprising Southeast Pennsylvania, the regionally identified target groups could comprise sub-groups of areas or the entire region.

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

Another area of focus continues to be on developing effective regional responses to the challenges of disconnected young adults. Regional efforts are underway to outreach to youth who have disconnected from secondary school during the COVID-19 pandemic, providing access to the range of services available through WIOA Youth programming. Through a network of public and private partners, youth will have access to services that will address barriers that may have been overlooked as well as those that have developed as a result of the pandemic.

Regional efforts around youth outreach highlight one of several ways that close collaboration has grown in an effort to best address the needs of underserved populations throughout Southeastern Pennsylvania during the COVID-19 pandemic. Shared resources have been integral in service delivery, with directors meeting bi-weekly, then at least monthly to address job seeker and employer obstacles and strategize best practices in real-time. An example is the identification of high quality virtual workshops that are promoted across area boundaries to expand job seeker options.

The Workforce Board Directors will continue to address obstacles, innovate solutions and explore best practices as part of their ongoing monthly meetings. The directors will also work in the context of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the Commonwealth's Combined Plan, and other significant stakeholders in reaching out to identify and address ongoing target population needs. As appropriate, they will work closely with local organizations and agencies that have a keen and in-depth understanding of the critical challenges and opportunities in addressing these target populations.

While each local area has worked to establish pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship as a viable way to connect employers and career seekers, the workforce boards will work regionally with the ATO ahead of the next planning cycle to establish best practices and future action items to make pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship a regional solution to meet the needs of employers as well as current and future career seekers, including disconnected youth and career seekers with barriers to employment.

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

Transportation is a critical factor to the success of an individual receiving education and training, getting to and from work, and a key success factor toward obtaining and keeping a job. This is particularly true for those individuals with barriers to employment, including but not limited to returning citizens, persons with disabilities, TANF recipients, veterans, and others. Additionally, many of the priority sector jobs available, such as health care, manufacturing, agriculture, retail sales, and management occupations require non-traditional working hours including evenings and weekend work. Managing these challenges while also including additional needs such as childcare, further education, and other activities further amplifies the need of reliable transportation.

Southeast Pennsylvania Region Means of Transportation to Work						
	Drive Alone	Carpool	Public Trans.	Walked	Worked from Home	Other
Berks	77.3%	8.1%	1.4%	3.2%	7.8%	1.9%
Bucks	77.3%	5.8%	2.5%	1.4%	12.2%	0.8%
Chester	72.2%	6.2%	1.9%	2.1%	16.4%	0.9%
Delaware	69.7%	7.4%	8.0%	2.9%	10.9%	0.9%
Montgomery	72.1%	6.3%	3.9%	2.0%	14.7%	0.8%
Philadelphia	48.3%	7.8%	21.4%	7.6%	10.8%	3.9%
<i>Source: Means of Transportation by Age, B08101: 5-Year ACS, – 2017-2021</i>						

Transportation as a potential barrier to employment for underserved populations is reflected in the regional commuting patterns illustrated in the chart above. In Southeast Pennsylvania, the primary mode of transportation for most people is to drive to work alone. According to the five-year American Community Survey (ACS) 2017-2021, just under half (48.3%) of Philadelphia residents drove alone, but the number jumps even further in suburban counties, ranging from 69% to 77%. The survey reflects that additional but much smaller percentages of individuals carpool, take public transportation, or walk. Most notable, the percentage of individuals working from home more than doubled in all Southeast Pennsylvania counties except for Berks county which fell .6% short of doubling. This clearly demonstrates that reliable transportation and most likely ownership or use of a vehicle is critical to the long-term career success of individuals throughout the region. This data also points to an evolving workplace climate that the planning region will need to monitor in terms of those working from home returning to pre-pandemic levels or becoming a permanent fixture.

Transportation presents a difficult and underreported challenge to low income and specifically entry level job seekers attempting to secure employment across the SE region of Pennsylvania. This challenge represents a threat to viable employment for thousands of jobseekers in our region and millions of Americans across the US. According to a report produced by the Federal reserve, a mix of urban-suburban sprawl and well documented lack of upkeep with the US transportation infrastructure leaves job seekers in difficult situations. This federal Reserve report further states access to reliable transportation is determined to be a necessary component of economic mobility and quality of life.

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Surveys revealed if you do not own a car or access to a car, your employment options are limited. Insufficient public transportation options or no access to a car can create insurmountable barriers to employment hindering both an applicant's ability to apply for available jobs and employed residents' ability to retain their jobs.

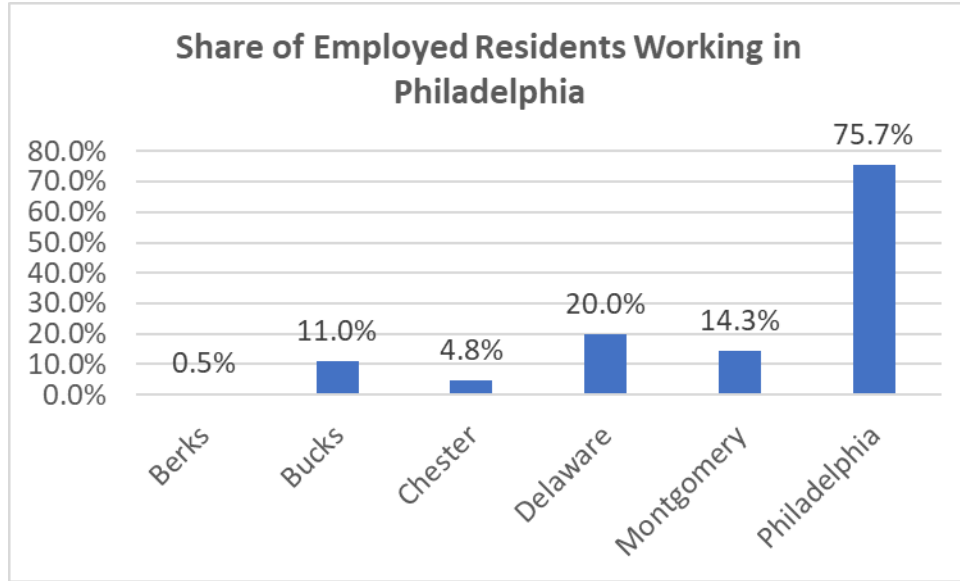
Regionally the Federal Reserve Bank is working to promote solutions to economic problems due to lack of transportation by convening community groups, non-profits, for profits and government agencies. One of the executed suggestions of these think tanks is partnerships between public transportation authorities, workforce development boards, employers, and companies like Uber & Lyft. These partnerships entail free rides/transportation for economically disadvantaged riders, discounted rides to interviews and or work in certain geographic areas and significantly discounted rides to rail stations.

While the percentage of residents working from home is considerably low in the most recent ACS, percentages had risen an average of 1.2% across the six-county region from the 2011-2015 5-year ACS to the 2015-2019 5-year ACS. While the actual long-term impact of the pandemic on this percentage is unknown, it is anticipated to increase significantly. A June 2020 Monthly Labor Review published by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics estimated that 31% percent of workers employed in March 2020 had switched to a work-from-home model by April 2020. Of those workers, 67.5% held at least a bachelor's degree.

This is significant as the region plans through the duration and recovery of the COVID-19 pandemic. As employers consider work-from-home or hybrid models going forward, ensuring that those who commute to work have the resources to do so may become more complicated. The lasting impacts of the pandemic on the way employees work and how they get to work is still unknown, requiring ongoing review and strategic regional planning.

As is evidenced by labor market data, skill sets do not stop at county lines in Southeastern Pennsylvania. Economic development and employer engagement efforts must be a regional approach by all partners. Transportation results in commuting patterns demonstrating the labor shed across county lines (or in some cases state lines) to get to work. The analysis of the place of work versus the neighboring county or state illustrates a broad commuting pattern from suburban Philadelphia counties to Philadelphia while the Berks County labor force mostly works within Berks County. While this data was not updated for the 2017-2021 ACS, factors impacting these commuting patterns had not changed considerably prior to the pandemic.

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Source: County Commuting Flows by Resident Geography: 5-Year ACS, 2011-2015

Comparing where a person’s permanent residence is located versus where they work is also a manner of identifying commuting patterns. The vast majority of individuals work within their home county or contiguous county. Clearly a large number of residents in counties contiguous to Philadelphia are commuting to Philadelphia. The chart below shows the county of residence versus where persons are working. Although the data specific to inter-county commuting flows in Southeast PA was not updated for the 2017-2021 ACS, we again consider that factors impacting these commuting patterns had not changed considerably prior to the pandemic.

Southeast Pennsylvania Region Comparison of Place of Work vs. Residence				
Local Area	Work in their county	Work outside their county	Work in PA	Work outside PA
Berks	74.0%	25.1%	99.1%	0.9%
Bucks	59.6%	28.2%	87.8%	12.2%
Chester	66.9%	25.7%	92.6%	7.4%
Delaware	54.8%	38.5%	93.3%	6.7%
Montgomery	67.4%	30.0%	97.4%	2.6%
Philadelphia	76.2%	17.7%	93.9%	6.1%

Source: Commuting Characteristics, S0801: 5-Year ACS, – 2017-2021

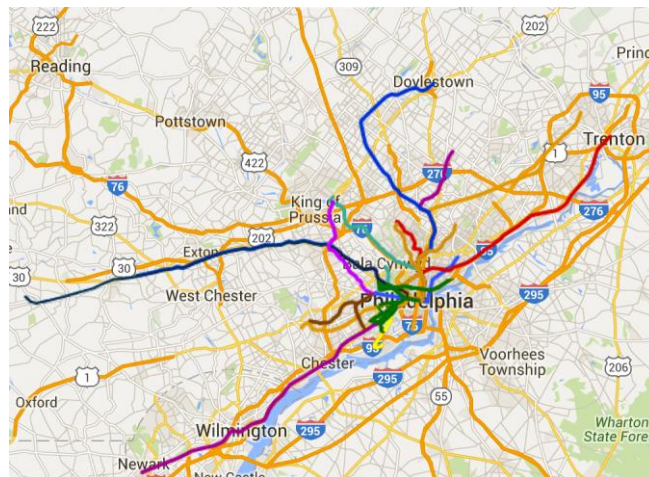
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Southeast Pennsylvania Region Count - County Worker Flows 2011-2015							
	Berks	Bucks	Chester	Delaware	Montgomery	Philadelphia	Other
Berks	144,707	1,305	7,149	622	14,757	952	24,080
Bucks	379	177,422	3,179	2,614	46,192	34,582	50,787
Chester	2,825	1,251	162,557	19,164	30,061	12,297	27,743
Delaware	204	2,099	18,322	137,983	30,312	52,493	21,161
Montgomery	4,977	26,782	26,180	13,175	261,926	58,910	18,950
Philadelphia	281	27,148	7,637	17,676	61,038	473,604	38,609

Source: County Comuting Flows by Resident Geography: 5-Year ACS, 2011-2015

Considering commuting flows with the knowledge that the vast majority of workers are driving themselves to work stresses the importance of a safe and reliable means to travel by vehicle. However, this goes beyond the vehicles themselves to ongoing improvement plans for the roads and bridges in Southeastern Pennsylvania. Each LWDB must be apprised of local and regional improvement projects with the capacity to interpret their impact. As an example, current ongoing PennDOT improvements along the US Route 422 corridor will increase capacity and enhance safety for a major artery between Berks County and King of Prussia in Montgomery County.

While planning around the number of workers who drive themselves to work as well as the increasing number who will continue to work from home, public transit has been and will continue to be a vital component of community life throughout much of Southeast Pennsylvania. The region is fortunate to have an extensive public transportation system through the Southeast Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA). (Berks County is served by a separate county-based public transportation system – BARTA). While the SEPTA map below (from their website) shows the transportation venues throughout the Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Area, the use of public transportation varies within the counties. For example, Philadelphia has the highest percentage of individuals using public transportation at 21.4% with 8.0% in Delaware County, 3.9% in Montgomery County and under 3% in the remaining three counties. These numbers further represent an average 1.5% per county decrease from the 2015-2019 ACS to the 2017 ACS.



Source: <http://www.septa.org/maps/system/>

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As can be seen from the SEPTA map of their routes, the services of SEPTA are concentrated in Philadelphia and Delaware County with limited services to other counties (and also neighboring states in some cases). While SEPTA is the sole provider in Philadelphia and Delaware Counties, the other counties have various local or county-based public transportation options that complement SEPTA services or addresses various county-specific needs.

The Job Access/ Reverse Commute (JARC) program funded by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) was established to address the unique transportation challenges faced by welfare recipients and low-income persons seeking to obtain and maintain employment. The JARC funding was used by SEPTA to provide additional service to passengers at times when regular transit operations would not be justified, such as the late evening, early morning, and on Sundays. Many low-income workers and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients in the region, particularly Philadelphia and neighboring counties, rely on transit in order to work night shifts and on weekends.

All this being noted, the Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Area works diligently to link with public transportation including ensuring that the PA CareerLink® centers and major contractors are on public transportation routes wherever possible. The LWDBs also work closely with employers and their sectors to address transportation issues, partnering to establish last-mile connectors or rideshare programs when possible. The LWDBs are closely monitoring potential SEPTA route changes due to ridership to seek viable solutions for employers and employees along those routes.

The Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Areas will update and identify those regional transportation options identifying accessible transportation opportunities for persons with disabilities that cross county lines. Based upon the current data available, the Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Areas will work collectively with the available Human Services Transportation Plans within each county to best identify services offered to address accessible transportation for those with disabilities. Also, in the broader engagement of employers and coordination of services, the Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Areas will pursue available public transportation accessibility to serve employers' labor force needs during off-peak time periods (nights and weekends). This could include working with non-traditional carriers such as Uber or special arrangements with public dedicated transportation systems, such as county human services.

The Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Areas are aware of the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission Equity through Access, the DVRPC's update to the region's Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan (<http://www.dvrpc.org/ETA/>). Among the key gaps identified in the plan include:

- ✓ Infrastructure—Not all fixed-route service is American with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant.
- ✓ Service and funding—Existing routes and schedules are not always coordinated, flexible or convenient.
- ✓ Service and funding—There is inadequate funding to meet overall service demand among vulnerable populations.
- ✓ Data and coordination—There is lack of coordination between public transit services and Transportation Network Companies (TNC's) such as Uber and Lyft.

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Based on this report, there is much to be done to improve both regional, intercounty and county based human services transportation to address job seeker and employer needs. The Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Areas will explore and work closely with all entities involved to better address these critical transportation needs.

Successful expansion of public transportation access in Southeastern Pennsylvania would contribute to the reduction of individuals who drive themselves to work. This would reduce an ongoing significant barrier to employment as well as CO2 emissions in the region. Such expansion would need to include ADA improvements, increased service schedules and geographic route extensions, particularly in the Suburban counties. As example, re-establishing regional rail connection between Reading and Philadelphia would help better integrate the Berks County workforce and employers into the regional labor markets while simultaneously decreasing the number of vehicles travelling along the Route 422 corridor.

A cause for optimism regarding a potentially “game-changing” regional transportation project began with a July 2020 study by Transportation Economics and Management Systems, Inc., funded by Berks Alliance, which identified a strong case for the return of passenger rail service from Berks County to New York City and Washington D.C., via Pottstown, Phoenixville and Philadelphia. The Study found that restoring rail service would produce substantial economic benefits for all communities along the line, including jobs, income and property development opportunities. The Project would also generate benefits for travelers and could be effectively integrated into the Northeast Corridor rail services to both New and Washington D.C. Also, restoring this passenger rail service would provide transportation and job opportunities to disadvantaged communities and bring immediately positively impact to some of our largest clusters of low- and moderate-income neighborhoods in the region.

In early 2021, a Tri-County Rail Committee was formed by Commissioners from Berks, Chester and Montgomery counties to further explore the restoration of passenger rail service and to help begin implementing the next steps of the project. This committee not only brings promise to the region as a whole but demonstrates the cooperative efforts of leadership in the region. In April 2022, the three counties took a big step forward by creating the Schuylkill River Passenger Rail Authority (SRPRA) supported with equal representation and funding from all three counties, starting with a \$100,00 investment from each county. SRPRA has the power to formalize agreements, pursue funding opportunities and partner with rail operators and state and federal transportation agencies. For example, in October 2022 the SRPRA unanimously approved an agreement with Smart Growth America to provide guidance to the authority during the process of advocating and applying for federal funding to restore passenger service in the Reading to Philadelphia corridor.

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

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the value of online skills-based learning for eligible Adults, Dislocated Workers and Youth. The range of programs available on the statewide Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) has allowed individuals who lost their jobs due to the pandemic to retrain for more secure and family-sustaining employment. This highlighted the need to have an ample menu of training options available on the ETPL (both online and in-person).

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The most critical step in growing ETPL offerings is establishing local skills gaps and projecting employment growth of High Priority Occupations. Each area has detailed plans for analyzing and addressing skills gaps within their local area in their Local Plan. With this knowledge in hand, staff review existing offerings, outreaching to local and more regional providers as needed. WDB staff have worked with providers to approve existing programs or to establish new ones as needed to address skills gaps.

A recurring obstacle to increasing participation on the ETPL has been the performance requirement of providing student social security numbers. This has decreased the number of programs listed by community colleges and other institutions of higher education who do not use social security numbers as classroom identifiers. A priority for LWDBs in Southeast Pennsylvania continues to be working with and advocating for providers of high quality higher education and vetted short-term training programs to increase ETPL participation.

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

The Southeast Workforce Planning Region has a long successful history of sharing resources. For many years, the Workforce Development Areas shared funds to employ a Regional Coordinator to address regional needs related to common job seeker and employer programs. Based upon experience, the six areas will use the groundwork from this past experience as a basis for sharing resources. In this case, the local areas employed evenly shared expenses based upon an equal division of the total costs shared among each of the areas. This was an appropriate and agreeable method for sharing costs based upon the scope of work. The regional directors are actively coordinating to recreate this effort as a response to the pandemic, specific to the manufacturing industry as driver of recovery efforts.

The Southeast Planning Region has experience working collaboratively with administering Industry Sector Partnerships, special workforce initiatives, and most recently the NDW Economic Transition grant. These programs are based upon employer or job seeker needs and the local areas have learned through this process to regionally prioritize activities to promote a broader impact. Toward that end, the six local areas will pursue funding opportunities, address economic development efforts, and explore cost-sharing and cost-saving initiatives through local, regional, national, philanthropic and other funds as appropriate. The specific determinations related to defining and establishing appropriate allocation of costs continues to be determined on a case by case basis. Additionally, the local areas convene around designation of a fiscal agent per special project, carefully considering the type of contract(s) required to administer the project, overall administrative capacity through the anticipated duration, partnership alignment and existing resources to promote sustainability. For any applications for grant funding that will be programmatically implemented by more than one LWDA but administered by one, the fiscal agent is identified at application, with that LWDA assuming responsibility for project outcomes and fiscal accountability.

Should this not be appropriate in the future, the local areas will agree upon a comparable formula to allocate funds. This could be based upon allowable methods based upon Generally Accepted Accounting Principles, Office of Management and Budget Circular, or similar guidance that is most efficient and

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effective for the circumstance. Every effort will be made with the interest of the efficient shepherding of public resources.

1.10. 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.

The Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Boards strive to meet or exceed all performance measures, acknowledging that these measures relate directly to successful outcomes for our customers – job seekers and employers. Issues related to performance outcomes have implications throughout the workforce system, including job seekers and employers as well as various agencies and intermediary organizations that help align services based on satisfactory performance outcomes.

As previously stated, the LWDAs in Southeastern Pennsylvania share resources and have a high concentration of workers flowing in and out of each county. However, each area is unique in terms of physical geography, real estate development, and transit access as well as demographics including tax base, poverty rate and average age. Each LWDA undergoes a negotiation process with the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry’s Center for Workforce Information and Analysis (CWIA) to accommodate the distinctive characteristics of respective southeast counties.

These negotiated levels, which do vary by local area, are listed as part of each Local Plan. With those established goals in hand, the region plans around quality services to job seekers and employers, allowing the collected work to reflect in common measure performance and convening to review the process if it does not.

While performance levels are established individually, regional WDBs continue to work together to identify common trends to implement best practices and discuss and develop solutions to any deficiencies that may arise. This collaboration is reflected in our goals listed in Section 1.2 above. Each of those goals have a direct or indirect effect on performance outcomes and therefore serve as a guidepost for ongoing strategic planning.

¹ Inspection Schedule, Statistics and General Information; PA DOC 2021 and 2019