



SOUTHEAST PENNSYLVANIA

Workforce Development Planning Region

BERKS BUCKS CHESTER DELAWARE MONTGOMERY PHILADELPHIA



Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act
Regional Plan
Fiscal Years 2025-2028

Effective Date: July 1, 2025

The Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Planning Region has established this Regional Plan to align programmatic planning with the workforce development system-wide priorities established under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The plan provides a comprehensive overview and analysis of the current and projected economic and workforce conditions in southeast Pennsylvania, along with strategies to effectively support the region’s businesses and labor force, both now and in the years to come.

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1.1 The Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Planning Region

Identification of the region

The Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Planning Region, encompassing a diverse and dynamic array of communities, is dedicated to fostering economic growth and workforce readiness through strategic initiatives and collaborative partnerships under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The region is comprised of the following local workforce development areas:

- Berks County
- Bucks County
- Chester County
- Delaware County
- Montgomery County
- Philadelphia County

Key regional planning committee members who have worked collaboratively to development the 2025-2028 regional plan include the following:

Regional Planning Committee Member	Affiliation	Title
Dan Fogarty	Berks County LWDB	Chief Operating Officer
Amber Columbo	Berks County LWDB	Assistant Director and EO Officer
Billie Barnes	Bucks County LWDB	Executive Director and EO Officer
Dianna Krall	Bucks County LWDB	Assistant Director
Jeannette Roman	Chester County LWDB	Director & EO Officer
Stephanie Smith	Chester County LWDB	Workforce Manager
Kate McGeever	Delaware County LWDB	Executive Director
Jennifer Butler	Montgomery County LWDB	Executive Director
Jane Stein	Montgomery County LWDB	Research & Performance Officer and EO Officer
Patrick Clancy	Philadelphia County LWDB	President & CEO
Patricia Blumenauer	Philadelphia County LWDB	Chief Operating Officer

The following meetings were used to develop and review content for this regional plan:

Meeting Date	Meeting Type	Attendance
October 7, 2024	Regional Goals Review	SEPA LWDB chairs, directors, and staff
November 4, 2024	Regional Plan Development	SEPA LWDB leadership staff
November 14, 2024	Regional Plan Data Review	SEPA LWDB leadership staff and CWIA

December 2, 2024	Regional Plan Development	SEPA LWDB leadership staff
December 16, 2024	Regional Plan Development	SEPA LWDB leadership staff
January 6, 2025	Regional Plan Development	SEPA LWDB leadership staff
January 21, 2025	Regional Plan Development	SEPA LWDB leadership staff
February 3, 2025	Regional Plan Development	SEPA LWDB leadership staff

The Southeast Pennsylvania WIOA Regional Plan will be in effect as of July 1, 2025.

1.2 Southeast Pennsylvania Regional Analysis

Regional Analysis. -Based on the analysis of the regional labor market and economic conditions, describe the region's workforce and economic development-oriented vision and goals. Describe the collection and analysis of regional labor market data (in conjunction with the Commonwealth).

Southeast Pennsylvania is a region characterized by its diverse economic landscape, vibrant communities, and robust network of post-secondary educational institutions. The Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Planning Region, including the counties of Berks, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia, represents 36%¹ of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's total population. The Workforce Development Boards that comprise the Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Planning Region have a long-standing tradition of collaboration to promote a highly skilled workforce for current and prospective employers in the region both now and in the future. They support the Governor's Combined State Plan, which aims to streamline efforts across various government levels to strengthen the workforce development system through registered apprenticeship, career pathway development, sector strategies and employer engagement, increased work-based learning opportunities for youth, continuous improvement of the PA CareerLink® system, career-seeker barrier remediation, and addressing workforce shortages in critical industries. This includes enhancing education and training pathways that result in employer-recognized skills documentation and facilitating the transition to higher-wage jobs through better alignment of economic and workforce development initiatives.

Through ongoing collaboration, the Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Boards have developed and implemented strategic plans to address ongoing regional workforce development challenges and opportunities:

- Supporting business expansion and retention;
- Engaging the next generation of workers to meet projected demand;
- Coordinating employer needs with education and training programs in the region;
- Supporting small business development;
- Working with employers, community-based organizations, and local government to meet the needs of career seekers with barriers to gainful employment;
- Promoting and supporting Registered Apprenticeship and Pre-Apprenticeship as a talent acquisition and retention solution;

¹ US Census Bureau's American Community Survey; DP05 2023 5 Year Estimates

- Developing a sustained and coordinated outreach and public relations campaign.

As the Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Planning Region strategizes the vision and goals that will drive the next four years of workforce development service delivery in the region, alignment with data-informed insight is vital. This analysis will explore the current state of Southeast Pennsylvania's workforce, identifying key trends, challenges, and opportunities that shape the region's labor market.



Regional Labor Market & Economic Conditions

The Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Planning Region's population of 4,635,039 represents 36% of the Commonwealth's overall population and each of the six counties in the region falls within the top nine most populous. Within the region, Philadelphia accounts for 34.37%, a slight increase from 34.08% when the 2021 regional population breakdown was analyzed. The remaining counties saw a decrease in their share of regional population by fractions of a percentage point.²

Area Name	Area Population	Percentage of SEPA Region
Berks County	428,483	9.24%
Bucks County	645,163	13.92%
Chester County	536,474	11.57%
Delaware County	575,312	12.41%
Montgomery County	856,399	18.48%
Philadelphia County	1,593,208	34.37%
SEPA Total	4,635,039	100.00%
<i>Source: Total Population (DP05): 5-Year ACS, 2023</i>		

Prime working years are in the range of 25 to 54 years and the Southeast PA region has a median age just under 40 (39.98). Philadelphia has the lowest median age in the region at 35.1 while Bucks County has the highest at 44.1.³ Understanding the age demographics of the SEPA population helps align workforce services and discover gaps in resources. Moreover, looking at the age demographics in concert with the labor force participation rate can amplify the need for services geared toward specific groups. The chart below shows the average median age of each regional county and the labor force participation rate for the working-age population of those between 18-64.⁴ Except for Philadelphia, each regional county has a labor force participation above the state average, pointing to SEPA being an economic driving force. Despite having the second highest median wage, Montgomery County has the highest labor force participation rate but generally, the higher the median wage, the higher the participation rate. This demonstrates the importance of retaining prime age workers in the region throughout

² US Census Bureau's American Community Survey; DP05 2023 5 Year Estimates

³ US Census Bureau's American Community Survey; SO101 2023 5 Year Estimates

⁴ US Census Bureau's American Community Survey; SO101 2023 5 Year Estimates & CWIA Data Packet Barriers-Disability tab

their careers while engaging the next generation of workers to backfill upon eventual retirement.

Area Name	Median Age	Population 18-64	Labor Force Participation
Berks County	39.9	258,687	83.8%
Bucks County	44.1	387,194	85.9%
Chester County	40.7	326,554	84.5%
Delaware County	39.0	350,746	83.7%
Montgomery County	41.1	517,948	86.1%
Philadelphia County	35.1	1,016,581	80.5%
Pennsylvania	40.9	7,836,466	82.9%
<i>Sources: Age & Sex (SO101): 5-Year ACS, 2023 & CWIA Data Pack; Barriers-Disability</i>			

Regarding education, 41.2% of the region's population has earned a 4-year degree or more (compared to the state average of 33.8%). 8.7% of the region's population has less than a high school diploma or equivalent compared to 8.3% across the Commonwealth. 27.5% of the region's population hold a high school equivalency and 22.6% have some college or an associate degree, both lower than the Commonwealth at 33.5% and 24.4% respectively, identifying an opportunity for the region to increase services to those with limited educational attainment backgrounds to improve their employability⁵.

In addition to private institutions of higher education, the region is also home to the best concentration and access to publicly funded community colleges in the Commonwealth. Southeast PA is home to five community colleges that provide high quality and affordable education and workforce development programming at multiple campuses throughout the region:

- 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 these institutions afford for collaboration and innovation to meet the educational, training, and employment demands of Southeast PA. Focus remains on helping regional community colleges meet the performance and reporting requirements of the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) while protecting student personal identifiable information. Each local area within the region values the quantity and quality of approved courses, enabling and promoting customer choice.

⁵ CWIA Data Packet – WkfcEducAttain (Educational Attainment of Working Age Population)

While our region boasts a high proportion of residents with 4-year and advanced degrees, it is concerning that many still lack the essential literacy, numeracy, and digital skills needed to succeed in an increasingly knowledge-based economy. Particularly, low numeracy poses a significant challenge to local efforts aimed at preparing or upskilling adult residents to meet the anticipated demand for skilled technology workers in the coming decade. Drawing on extensive experience with regional adult and dislocated workers, along with consistent feedback from local employers and training providers, it is evident that low literacy among both incumbent workers and career seekers is a critical skills gap. Addressing this issue will require a concerted effort from regional stakeholders.

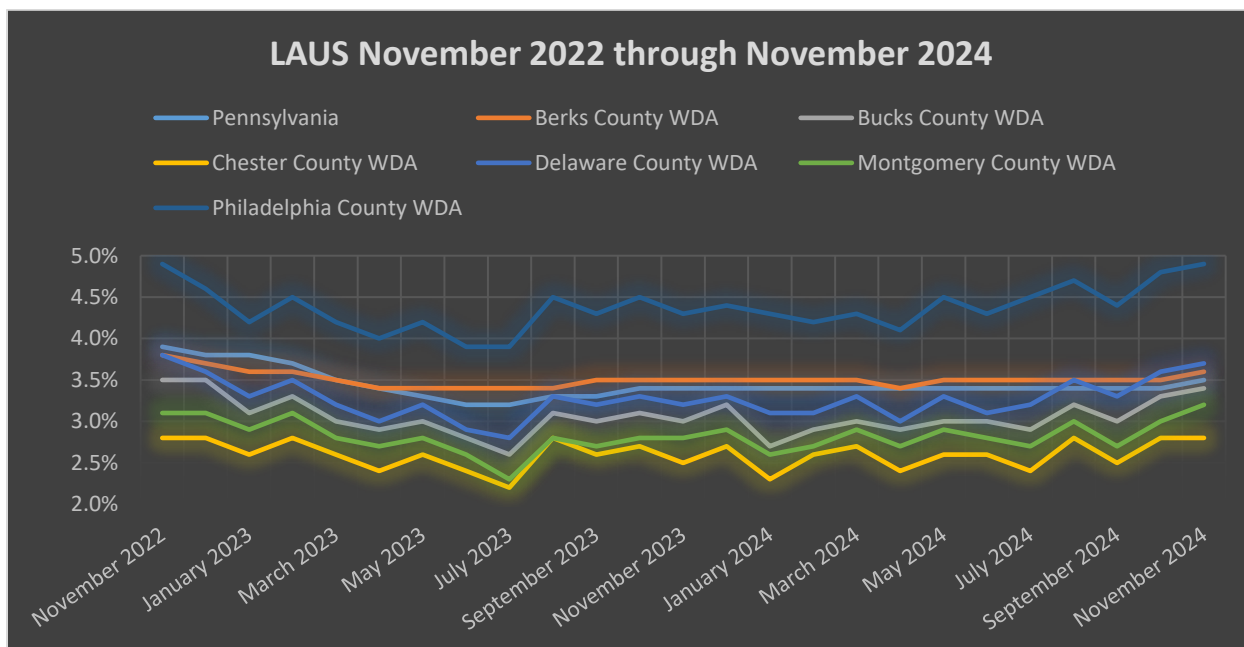
Household income in Southeast Pennsylvania varies widely by individual county but collectively remains well above the Commonwealth average. The average household income across the region in 2023 was \$130,165, higher than the state average of \$104,925. Within the region, Chester County has a mean household income of \$165,377, over \$60,000 more than the statewide average and nearly double Philadelphia's average at \$88,307.⁶

Area Name	2023 Total Households	2023 Mean Household Income
Berks County	161,701	\$101,044
Bucks County	247,647	\$145,806
Chester County	202,405	\$165,377
Delaware County	216,660	\$126,081
Montgomery County	333,514	\$154,372
Philadelphia County	669,222	\$88,307
SEPA	1,831,176	\$130,165
Pennsylvania	5,235,339	\$104,925
<i>Sources: Selected Economic Characteristics (DP03): 5-Year ACS, 2023</i>		

As the household income varies throughout the region, the Local Area Unemployment Statistics Program reports variance from county to county. Pennsylvania's unemployment rate went thirteen consecutive months seeing a seasonally adjusted rate of 3.4% from October 2023 through October 2024. The rates at the local workforce development area did see some slight fluctuation but overall, have remained quite stable over the past two years, through preliminary November 2024 results. Each workforce development area has an unemployment rate in November 2024 that is within .2 percentage points from November 2022. Chester and Philadelphia have identical rates at the start and end of the two-year cycle.⁷ The consistency lends to a picture of economic stability and predictability, but it is important to look deeper than this data point to ensure the region is poised to meet any challenges including those that we have experienced with pandemics, legislative changes, or other unforeseen or unexpected disruptions.

⁶ Selected Economic Characteristics DP03: 5-Year ACS, 2023

⁷ Local Area Unemployment Statistics, seasonally adjusted, November 2022 monthly through November 2024



While unemployment is often noted as a primary indicator of stability, the review of labor force participation and employment in the Southeast Region is also important. As of 2023, the regional participation status for those over age 16 is 65.6% with 61.6% employed civilians and 34.4% that are not participating in the labor force. These metrics reflect a stronger regional labor force compared to statewide data that shows 62.8% in the labor force with 59.4% employed civilians, and 37.2% that are not in the labor force at all.⁸

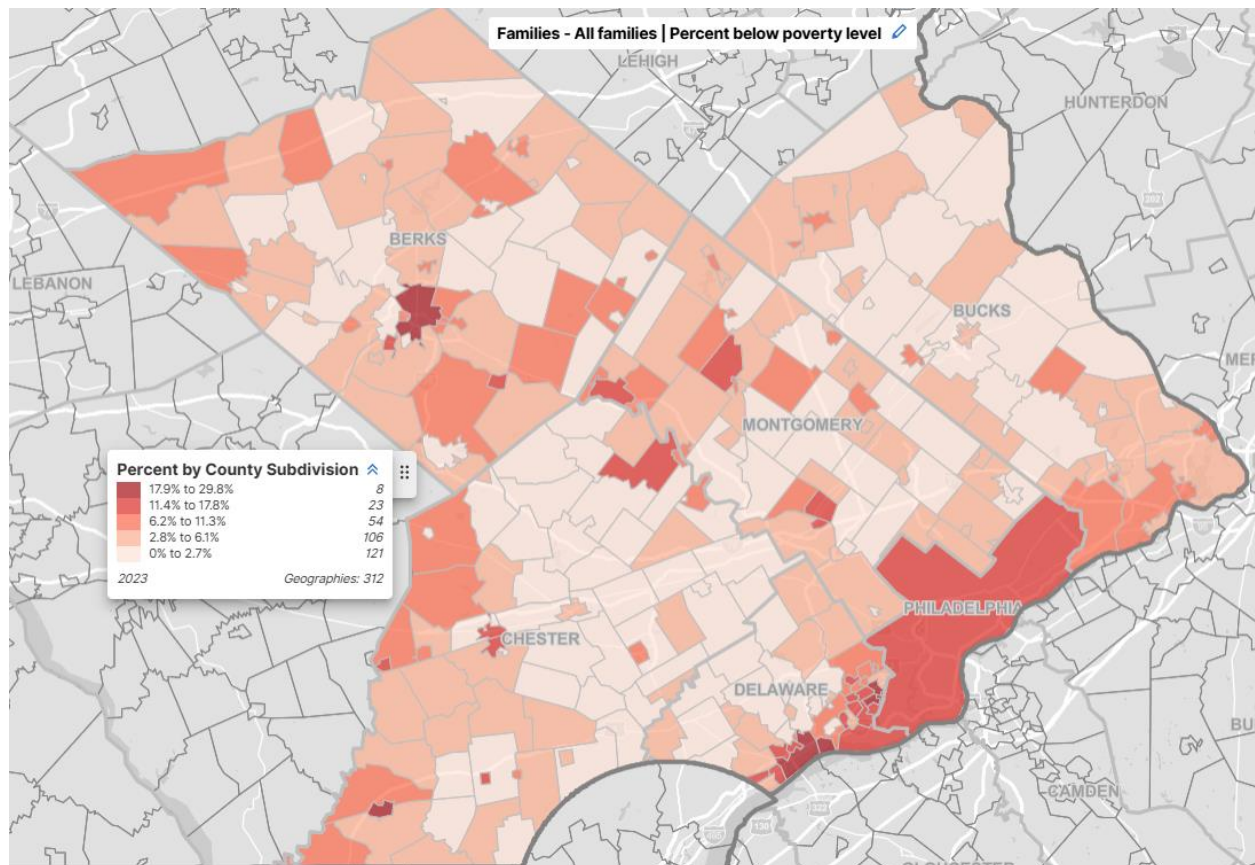
Given the relative stability of the current economic environment and the fact that, as of 2023, 34.4% of the regional population was not participating in the labor force, it is crucial to understand the barriers residents may be facing that is preventing participation. Barriers ranging from prior incarceration and poverty to individuals experiencing homeless or those with limited English proficiency all present unique challenges, further compounded by common intersectionality of barriers. To address these challenges, we must engage in research, planning, and collaboration to identify effective strategies for connecting potential workers with employer needs.

Regional Population with Barriers

Poverty is often an indicator of and contributor 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), Chester County (Oxford borough), Delaware County (Chester city and Darby borough) and Philadelphia County with higher numbers of families below the poverty

⁸ Selected Economic Characteristics (DP03): 5-Year ACS, 2023

level visible in the darker shades of red below. Single female heads of families are more likely to be living in poverty, with over 26% of regional families having a female head of house with no spouse, 24.36% are living in poverty.⁹ The labor force participation rate for individuals over the age of 16 living in poverty in the Southeast PA region is 37.9%, now one percentage point higher than the Commonwealth overall (36.9%). Unemployment among this population is a particular concern at 27.1%, 3.3 percentage points higher than Pennsylvania (23.8%).¹⁰



In addition to those families living in poverty, there is another set of the population that is Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) that struggle to afford the basics where they live. ALICE “represents the growing number of families who are unable to afford the basics of housing, childcare, food, transportation, health care, and technology. These workers often struggle to keep their own households from financial ruin, while keeping our local communities running”.¹¹ ALICE families are often overlooked but represent a population of workers that may need upskilling or other workforce development services to help them thrive. This is particularly evident when looking at families with a single female head of house as depicted in the chart below for the Southeast PA region.¹²

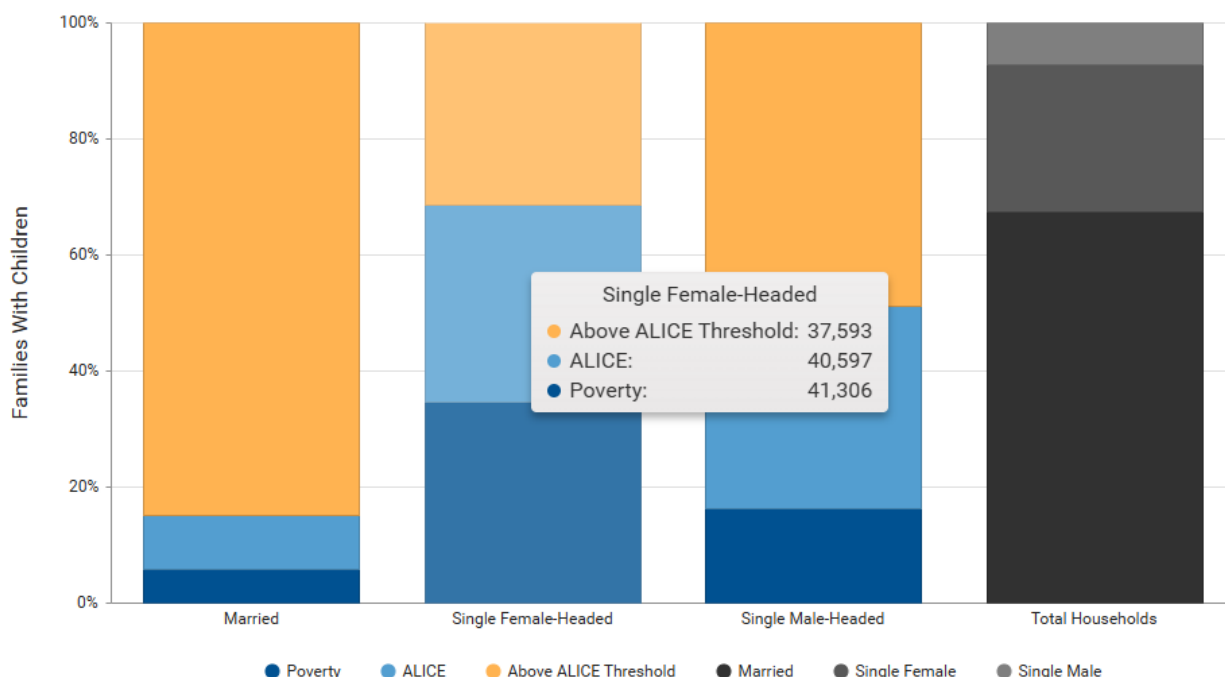
⁹ Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months of Families (S1702): 5-Year ACS, 2023

¹⁰ CWIA Data Packet – Barriers-Poverty

¹¹ <https://www.unitedforalice.org/home>

¹² United for Alice; 2022 Demographics for Selected Counties; Families with Children

Families With Children, Selected Counties, Pennsylvania, 2022



Southeast Pennsylvania possesses 36% of the state’s population but over 57% of the state’s foreign-born population with 532,334 immigrants.¹³ Each local workforce area and one-stop work closely with their Title II providers, who support immigrants by offering essential education and literacy services. These programs are invaluable in helping people who want to build a new life in America, providing them with the skills and opportunities to succeed. Several local workforce areas also collaborate with the Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians and other local community-based organizations to assist this demographic. Several local workforce areas already work closely with the Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians in addition to local community-based organizations and 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 7.1% of residents in the Southeast region report speaking English “less than very well,” significantly higher than the statewide average of 4.5%.¹⁴ Another barrier to full labor market participation is difficulty transferring credentials and professional licenses, resulting in underemployment. The Southeast PA planning region recognizes the value in assisting these individuals with credential evaluation services as they often possess the specific higher-level skills sought by local employers but end up in survival jobs. Finally, lack of knowledge of business permitting and licensing requirements slows entrepreneurship efforts which for many immigrants is the best on-ramp to employment.

¹³ Selected Social Characteristics in the United States (DP02): 5-Year ACS, 2023

¹⁴ CWIA Data Packet – Barriers-Language

Employment plays a crucial role in reducing recidivism among career seekers who have previously been incarcerated by providing financial stability, a sense of purpose, and a structured routine, all of which can help prevent reoffending. Studies have shown that individuals employed after release are less likely to return to criminal activity.

Employment-focused reentry programs can significantly impact recidivism rates by providing financial independence, reducing the need to engage in illegal activities to make ends meet, offering social integration, helping individuals build positive relationships and support networks, and enhancing self-esteem and personal growth, giving individuals a sense of accomplishment and purpose. While we are seeing a notable increase in awareness around this population filling a crucial gap in the labor force, most individuals re-entering our communities have trouble 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. According to the Urban Institute, a considerable 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 career 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, great strides are being made to assist individuals before release. Local areas in the region are working with their correctional institutions to ensure that inmates are aware of available services post release and are even getting services while incarcerated in some instances. In 2022 there were 11,331 individuals released from the PA Department of Corrections across the Commonwealth and 3,627 (32%) in Southeast PA¹⁵ and in 2019, 40,356 discharged from a county jail.¹⁶ 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. In 2023, there was an average in-house daily population in the southeast region of 8,844 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% and down minimally from 8,888 in 2021.¹⁷ With fewer individuals incarcerated and an increase in 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 the United States Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) to measure sheltered and unsheltered people experiencing homelessness, saw a regional increase from 5,964 in 2021 back up to 7,614 in 2024, nearly returning to 7,865 from 2019. The percentage of individuals experiencing homelessness is concentrated in Philadelphia, with 68%, the

¹⁵ PA Department of Corrections Calendar Year Releases, Inmate Releases by County & Year; 2022

¹⁶ PA Board of Probation & Parole's County Adult Probation & Parole Annual Statistical Report 2019

¹⁷ PA Office of County Inspections & Services, County Statistics General Information (2023, 2021, 2019)

next highest in Reading with 10%. Of particular concern are the 1,502 homeless individuals under the age of 18, representing nearly 20% of the overall population experiencing homelessness.¹⁸ Additionally, as of the 2023 State of Child Welfare report, there were 6,546 children served through the Foster Care system in the region, which has continued to decline annually from 10,795 in the 2019 report.¹⁹ These individuals are particularly vulnerable to not completing education or getting connected to 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 310,875 regional residents with a disability (10.9% 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 46.7% among individuals with disabilities which is slightly higher than the Commonwealth at 46.2%. Similarly, the regional unemployment rate for individuals with disabilities is 13.7% which is 1.6% higher than the Commonwealth at 12.1%.²⁰ 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.

Area Name	Unemployment Rate		Labor Force Participation Rate	
	No Disability	Disability	No Disability	Disability
Berks County	4.9%	12.3%	83.8%	47.4%
Bucks County	4.3%	7.5%	85.9%	46.6%
Chester County	3.6%	8.8%	84.5%	53.1%
Delaware County	6.2%	16.6%	83.7%	49.2%
Montgomery County	4.1%	10.9%	86.1%	54.2%
Philadelphia County	7.7%	17.6%	80.5%	39.9%
<i>Source: CWIA Data Packet – Barriers-Disability</i>				

An additional barrier that has gotten more attention is tied to the emergence of digital-first opportunities for both training and employment. The lack of digital literacy skills and access to computers and broadband internet put a segment of the population at a severe disadvantage. Regionally, just under 95% of households report having a computer and just under 91% report having a broadband internet subscription. Both figures are higher than the Commonwealth as a whole, which reports 93% of

¹⁸ HUD – 2007-2024 Point in time estimates by CoC

¹⁹ Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children, State of Child Welfare 2021 and 2023: Foster Care – Children served

²⁰ Employment Status by Disability Status (C18120): 5-Year ACS, 2023

households with a computer and 89% with a broadband internet subscription.²¹ While schools and places of work have intermittently relied on remote engagement, lack of technological skills and resources remain a barrier to ensure equitable access to opportunity. Great strides have been made in terms of access to grant funds to support digital literacy initiatives across the region and Southeast PA looks forward to continuing providing services and resources to level the digital playing field.

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

Regional Employer Overview

The Southeast Pennsylvania region has a significant and growing employer base. Comparing the density of the employment concentration through Location Quotients (LQ), employment opportunities in the region, and historical and emerging sector trends help better understand the gaps for the employers and businesses across Southeast Pennsylvania. Location Quotients are a valuable way of quantifying how concentrated a particular industry, cluster, occupation, or demographic group is in a region as compared to the nation. 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 0.96), demonstrating its continued regional importance. Management of companies and enterprises and Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation both have an LQ over one in five of the six counties, while Manufacturing is concentrated above one in three of the six counties. Of note is Philadelphia with a 3.92 Educational Services LQ. The June 2024 privately-owned employment Location Quotients for the 2-digit NAICS Sectors by Local Workforce Area are as follows:²²

NAICS Sector	Berks	Bucks	Chester	Delaware	Montgomery	Philadelphia
11 - Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	1.65	0.25	2.20	0.07	0.10	n/a
21 - Mining	0.35	0.13	0.14	0.06	0.13	n/a
22 - Utilities	0.79	0.57	0.62	0.64	1.33	0.60
23 - Construction	0.83	1.18	0.95	1.06	0.94	0.34
31-33 - Manufacturing	2.21	1.17	0.86	0.72	1.07	0.32
42 - Wholesale Trade	0.85	1.23	0.85	0.70	1.17	0.44
44-45 - Retail Trade	1.08	1.26	0.95	1.07	0.99	0.61
48-49 - Transportation and Warehousing	1.39	0.81	0.73	0.87	0.55	0.84

²¹ Selected Social Characteristics in the United States (DP02): 5-Year ACS, 2023

²² Bureau of Labor Statistics – Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages (June 2024)

51 - Information	0.27	0.63	1.26	0.51	0.91	0.93
52 - Finance and Insurance	0.56	0.71	2.36	0.99	1.46	0.92
53 - Real Estate Rental and Leasing	0.63	0.71	0.83	0.83	1.02	0.99
54 - Professional, Scientific, and Tech. Svcs	0.52	0.81	1.45	0.62	1.50	1.18
55 - Mgmt of Companies & Enterprises	1.64	0.69	2.09	1.95	1.79	1.04
56 - Admin. & Support & Waste Svcs	0.85	0.76	0.84	0.88	1.07	0.66
61 - Educational Services	0.55	0.77	1.11	2.62	1.24	3.92
62 - Health Care and Social Assistance	1.19	1.49	0.96	1.51	1.28	1.90
71 - Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	0.90	1.42	1.37	1.27	1.08	1.22
72 - Accommodation and Food Services	0.81	0.91	0.77	0.89	0.73	0.91
81 - Other Services (except Public Admin.)	1.07	1.27	1.26	1.37	1.12	1.12

When digging a little deeper into the NAICS 4-digit private-ownership industries, the highest concentrations in each county are as follows:²³

Berks: 3314 Nonferrous metal (except aluminum) production & processing at 20.69

Bucks: 3259 Other chemical product and preparation manufacturing at 5.30

Chester: 5239 Other financial investment activities at 15.33

Delaware: 4869 Other pipeline transportation at 6.85

Montgomery: 3254 Pharmaceutical and medicine manufacturing at 9.93

Philadelphia: 6223 Specialty (except psychiatric & substance abuse) hospitals at 10.08

Additionally, long-term industry projections for the Southeast Region provide a window into employer demand to match career seeker supply and talent development.

Projected employment in three key sectors is expected to grow at least 8% by 2032; Information at 8.0%, Healthcare and Social Assistance at 8.2%, and Professional and Technical Services at 8.9%, with Management of Companies and Enterprises just under that threshold at 7.9%. Retail Trade, the industry with the second most jobs in the region as of 2022, is expected to see a decline of 1.7% by 2032.²⁴ While this appears to be a minimal annual decline, the Center for Workforce Information and Analysis Worker Movements by Industry shows that while those in retail generally stay in retail, about 17% left for “the unknown”, defined as becoming unemployed, moving out of state, or leaving the labor force. The regional workforce development boards will continue to monitor this industry in the coming years to ensure that individuals separating from retail trade employment have the knowledge of services available to either reenter retail trade or to promote their transferrable skills into a different industry. Knowing the current industries in demand and the future projected industries of demand are both valuable resources but equally valuable is knowing which industries are projecting decline so the region can develop strategies to mitigate any anticipated impact.

²³ Bureau of Labor Statistics – Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages (June 2024)

²⁴ Center for Workforce Information and Analysis; Long Term Industry Projections 2022-2032

Southeast PA Industry Employment				
2022-2032 Long-Term Projections				
NAICS - Industry Title	Employment		Change	
	2022	2032	Level	%
TOTAL ALL INDUSTRIES	2,240,810	2,314,78	73,970	3.3%
11 - Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	13,050	13,010	(40)	-0.3%
21 - Mining, Quarrying & Oil & Gas Extraction	820	760	(60)	-7.3%
23 - Construction	85,840	88,270	2,430	2.8%
31-33 - Manufacturing	153,390	153,860	470	0.3%
22 - Utilities	6,270	6,160	(110)	-1.8%
42 - Wholesale Trade	69,590	69,780	190	0.3%
44-45 - Retail Trade	198,380	194,910	(3,470)	-1.7%
48-49 - Transportation & Warehousing	75,550	78,380	2,830	3.7%
51 - Information	35,420	38,270	2,850	8.0%
52 - Finance & Insurance	106,470	109,120	2,650	2.5%
53 - Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	28,950	30,470	1,520	5.3%
54 - Professional & Technical Services	171,930	187,280	15,350	8.9%
55 - Management of Companies & Enterprises	52,590	56,720	4,130	7.9%
56 - Administrative & Waste Services	106,130	109,290	3,160	3.0%
61 - Educational Services	189,710	190,230	520	0.3%
62 - Health Care & Social Assistance	414,180	448,290	34,110	8.2%
71 - Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	36,410	37,160	750	2.1%
72 - Accommodation & Food Services	154,740	155,250	510	0.3%
81 - Other Services, Ex. Public Admin	98,950	101,840	2,890	2.9%
99 - Government	122,010	122,830	820	0.7%
Self-Employed Workers	120,520	122,950	2,430	2.0%
<i>Source: Rounded local data aggregated to generate regional results from CWIA's 22-32 LTIP</i>				

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 projections to create or further develop partnerships that align with the future needs of the six workforce development areas individually and cumulatively. Healthcare Support is now the occupational cluster with the highest projected growth through 2032 at 12.2% ahead of Computer and Mathematical occupations at 11.1%. The occupational cluster with the highest expected decline by 2032 is Farming, Fishing & Forestry at 1.2%.²⁵ The region will look to AgConnect, a key industry partnership, to continue the education of workforce professionals on ways to help the industry and its workers thrive. The chart below represents the long-term projected occupational growth from 2022 - 2032.

²⁵ Center for Workforce Information and Analysis; Long Term Occupational Projections 2022-2032

Southeast PA Occupational Employment 2022-2032 Long-Term Projections

SOC Code – Occupational Cluster	<u>Employment Outlook</u>		
	Est. 2022	Proj. 2032	% Change
00-0000 - Total, All Occupations	2,240,810	2,314,780	3.3%
11-0000 - Management	152,840	160,410	5.0%
13-0000 - Business & Financial Operations	149,800	156,680	4.6%
15-0000 - Computer & Mathematical	68,880	76,550	11.1%
17-0000 - Architecture & Engineering	35,980	37,880	5.3%
19-0000 - Life, Physical & Social Science	26,810	28,510	6.3%
21-0000 - Community & Social Services	53,780	56,770	5.6%
23-0000 - Legal	23,900	24,930	4.3%
25-0000 - Education, Training & Library	132,560	134,280	1.3%
27-0000 - Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, Media	36,350	37,480	3.1%
29-0000 - Healthcare Practitioners & Technical	155,690	165,270	6.2%
31-0000 - Healthcare Support	148,180	166,320	12.2%
33-0000 - Protective Service	50,250	50,740	1.0%
35-0000 - Food Preparation & Serving Related	163,020	164,330	0.8%
37-0000 – Building/Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	70,890	72,050	1.6%
39-0000 - Personal Care & Service	72,550	76,030	4.8%
41-0000 - Sales & Related	182,360	181,860	-0.3%
43-0000 - Office & Administrative Support	288,140	287,350	-0.3%
45-0000 - Farming, Fishing & Forestry	8,610	8,510	-1.2%
47-0000 - Construction & Extraction	79,690	82,020	2.9%
49-0000 - Installation, Maintenance & Repair	76,270	78,150	2.5%
51-0000 - Production	97,930	97,370	-0.6%
53-0000 - Transportation & Material Moving	166,390	171,360	3.0%

Source: Rounded local data aggregated to generate regional results from CWIA's 22-32 LTOP

Another element in identifying and analyzing the needs of employers is through online job posting data that includes various levels of skill and certification preferences. The certifications required by employers in online job postings, as of November 2024, align with industries and occupations in demand, prioritizing licensing that relates to healthcare as four of the top five needs in the region with a valid Driver's License being the top certification needed in each area. Additional demand was noted for the Commercial Driver's License A, being in the top ten most desired certifications in three of six areas.²⁶ This data is regularly reviewed to ensure staff efforts are appropriately aligned with trends.

Certification	November 2024 Online Job Postings
Valid Driver's License	3,531
Registered Nurse (RN)	2,252
Basic Life Support (BLS)	1,305
Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)	999
Board Certified/Board Eligible	286

Source: Center for Workforce Information and Analysis; Online Job Postings, New

Lastly, to align training opportunities, including workshops, we need to consider the projected in-demand job skills that are not 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 2030, the top five for each of the six counties in the Southeast region are all computer related with minimal 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 computers.²⁷

By examining and analyzing factors such as economic conditions, labor market information, employer demand, and career seekers with barriers to gainful employment, the Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Board partners will be better positioned to progress the goals for the region, developed and refined to reflect the established broad goals prioritized by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as published in the 2024-2028 Pennsylvania Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Combined State Plan.

The Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Planning Region Goals

Apprenticeship and Career & Technical Education

Pennsylvania Broad Goal

Expand opportunities for individuals to enter Registered Apprenticeship and Registered Pre-Apprenticeship programs, assist employers in building Registered Pre-

²⁶ Center for Workforce Information and Analysis; Online Job Postings, New, November 2024

²⁷ Center for Workforce Information and Analysis; Pennsylvania's Projected Job Skills 2020-2030, WDAs

Apprenticeship and Registered Apprenticeship programs, and increase the coordination with Career & Technical Education in these efforts.

Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Planning Region Goals

- Develop consistent career awareness messaging that promotes Career Pathways, Pre-Apprenticeship and Registered Apprenticeship as a regional connection from education and training to employers, engaging all stakeholders to broaden the message to southeast PA career seekers.
- Regionally support local efforts for programming that leads to in-demand skill, credential, or degree attainment for southeast PA career seekers.
- Regionally support employers who seek work-based learning solutions for labor force needs.
- Regionalize coordination of Career Technical Education when practical.

Sector Strategies and Employer Engagement

Pennsylvania Broad Goal

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.

Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Planning Region Goals

- 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.
- 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.
- Continue LWDB representation in SE Regional Economic Development Partnerships for Regional Economic Performance (PREP) meetings and engage chambers of commerce to ensure close coordination and alignment with Economic Development Partners.
- Offer opportunities for local board members to participate in events of common interest throughout the region.
- Expand sector-based employer engagement via Industry Partnerships, apprenticeships, and other programs.

Youth

Pennsylvania Broad Goal

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.

Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Planning Region Goals

- Develop a plan to outreach to youth and young adults (16-24) who are off-track regarding education or employment.
- Continue to create pathways to apprenticeship opportunities for youth and young adults through outreach, pre-apprenticeship, mentoring and work experiences.
- 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.
- 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.

Continuous Improvement of the PA CareerLink® System

Pennsylvania Broad Goal

Identify and enact system changes and improvements that enhance the collaboration and partnership between agencies and partners in the workforce development system.

Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Planning Region Goals

- 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.
- Continue SEPA Regional Director's meetings on a minimum monthly basis, additionally collaborating with the PA LWDB, 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.
- Develop regional messaging for outreach, aligning messaging to one-stop service delivery.
- Work collaboratively to identify and pursue relevant funding opportunities that can allow for more flexible local and regional resources.
- Share resources for public & employer awareness of programs & services.
- Continue efforts to constructively engage PA Department of Labor and Industry as a partner to advocate where appropriate for customers receiving Unemployment Compensation.
- Continue to leverage strong relationships with L&I's regional Rapid Response Coordinators to expedite successful transitions of dislocated workers whose numbers are expected to increase in SE PA (and across the Commonwealth) over the next four years, following the past four years of relatively few major layoffs and plant closings.

Barrier Remediation

Pennsylvania Broad Goal

Develop strategies to ensure the workforce development system is equipped to support individuals with barriers to employment in finding and maintaining self- and family-sustaining employment.

Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Planning Region Goals

- 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.
- Maintain a supportive role in identifying gaps in connectivity and ensuring that those gaps are filled for all career seekers and students in SEPA.

Addressing Workforce Shortages in Critical Industries

Pennsylvania Broad Goal

Prioritizing investment in industries that are critical to the economic prosperity of the Commonwealth.

Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Planning Region Goals

- Create a regional strategy for leveraging competitive grants and other resources to address recruitment and retention training needs in critical Industry Sectors.
- 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.

1.3 Regional Strategies for Business Services and Economic Development

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

The goals of the Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Planning Region are driven by regional economic development efforts and the shared needs of priority industry clusters, their employers, and the critical skills they require. The region has a strong and successful history of collaborating on regional economic and workforce development efforts. This collaborative approach ensures that workforce initiatives are aligned with the evolving demands of the local economy, fostering sustainable growth and prosperity.

Economic development and business engagement strategies are typically regional, with employers and sectors crossing local workforce development area boundaries to secure the skilled labor they need. To address these regional needs, the six Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) directors meet at least monthly to develop programs, address issues, share best practices, apply for funding, and implement regional initiatives. These partnerships are tailored to employer needs and may involve all six areas, with one typically taking the lead, or fewer areas depending on employer location, industry type, available funds, and other factors.

The region coordinates workforce services with our economic development partners through regular Southeast Regional Partnerships for Regional Economic Performance (PREP) meetings and special initiatives like the Engage! program through the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED). Economic and workforce development partners convene regularly to share resources, address needs, and strategize responses. The Engage! survey has become an effective tool to reach expanding or at-risk businesses in Southeast Pennsylvania, allowing the LWDBs to make vital workforce development connections.

In addition to economic development partners comprising the Southeast PREP region, LWDBs work closely with local and regional chambers of commerce, Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs), the Delaware Valley Industrial Resource Center (DVIRC), the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC), and other economic development entities that expands workforce system outreach and provides invaluable connections for employers within the system.

As of January 2025, the LWDBs in Southeast Pennsylvania are working closely with economic development partners within the Greater Philadelphia area to develop a long-term Economic Development Strategy for the region. An in-depth analysis of workforce and economic conditions is in process, funded by the Pew Charitable Trust and administered by Brookings Institute. While this strategic planning is still in development, early indications reflect a need to attract businesses to the region that will offer highly skilled, high-wage employment. The Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Planning Region supports a strategy that will require alignment with post-secondary education and talent attraction. However, the LWDBs in Southeast Pennsylvania must also strive for a system that meets current demand which includes critical positions across several industries that do not offer a sustainable wage. To find a balance between the economic and workforce development needs of industry and individuals requires ongoing collaboration and innovation which drives ongoing workforce development planning and goals in the region.

This model of regional collaboration drives efforts toward growing Registered Apprenticeship and Pre-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 three Apprenticeship Building America grants, LWDBs have pursued several opportunities to grow apprenticeship in the region and will continue to do so. Apprenticeship PHL serves as a regional resource for employers,

providers, and career 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 numbers, industry-specific variety, and visibility. Ongoing access to grant funding and technical assistance will continue to play a prominent role in Registered Apprenticeship and Pre-Apprenticeship development in Southeast 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 (BEP) 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 LWDAs in Southeast Pennsylvania:

Southeast Pennsylvania Industry Partnerships

AgConnect

A Next Generation Industry Partnership linking farmers and agricultural business owners with the business resources, training, and financing they need to grow their business and promote agricultural economic development within Southeast PA.

Administered by: The Chester County Economic Development Council

LWDAs served: Berks, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia

The Collar Counties Emergency Medical Services Industry Partnership

The Collar Counties Emergency Medical Services Industry Partnership (CCEMS IP) harnesses the collective strength of employers who pull from a common labor pool to employ workers in Emergency Medical Services career pathways including Emergency Medical Responders, Emergency Medical Technicians, Paramedics, Pre-Hospital Registered Nurses. Employers include hospitals, transport companies, medical and emergency services companies, firehouses, and colleges and universities that offer emergency medical services.

Administered by: Delaware County WDB

LWDAs served: Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery

Health Care Connect

Health Care Connect is an Industry Partnership developed to support the healthcare industry in Southeast Pennsylvania through training, outreach, collaboration, and best practices.

Administered by: The Chester County Economic Development Council

LWDAs served: Berks, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia

Healthcare Connection Industry Partnership of Berks County of Berks County

This newly formed Industry Partnership seeks bring a local focus to Berks County's second largest industry by employment by engaging our healthcare employers in

sharing best employment practices by way of in person quarterly meetings as well as ongoing electronic communications. Since 2023, IP participants have joined in employer tours, job shadowing, mock interviewing, internships, mentorship engagements, career readiness, workforce development, and peer-to-peer training.

Administered by: The Berks County WDB and the Greater Reading Chamber Alliance

LWDAs served: Berks

Hospitality and Entertainment Industry Partnership

The Hospitality and Entertainment Industry Partnership provides training solutions, employee development, networking opportunities and recruitment strategies– for restaurants, hotels, leisure, and entertainment businesses in the Greater Philadelphia region.

Administered by: Philadelphia WDB

LWDAs served: Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia

The Innovative Technology Action Group

The Innovative Technology Action Group, ITAG, is an industry partnership dedicated to promoting Information Technology, Communications, and Technological Processes to all companies and individuals in Southeast Pennsylvania as a means to become more effective in an increasingly sophisticated global marketplace.

Administered by: The Chester County Economic Development Council

LWDAs served: Berks, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia

Logistics, Transportation and Distribution

Still in development, this industry partnership seeks to convene businesses around solutions to help strengthen this critical industry.

Administered by: Philadelphia WDB

LWDAs served: Philadelphia

The Manufacturing Alliance of Chester and Delaware Counties

MACC/DC was formed to establish a strong manufacturing partnership of private and public sector partners that collectively and collaboratively utilize their talent and available resources to develop and advance the technical skills of their workforce and provide opportunities for growth and increased profitability.

Administered by: The Chester County Economic Development Council

LWDAs served: Chester, Delaware

The Manufacturing Industry Partnership of the Greater Reading Region

The focus of this partnership is to convene leaders in the manufacturing industry around shared challenges, opportunities, and programming. With the support of educational partners and workforce development organizations, this public-private partnership brings all stakeholders to the table to create solutions for sustainable change to ensure economic growth and success.

Administered by: The Greater Reading Chamber Alliance

LWDAs served: Berks

The Southeast Pennsylvania Manufacturing Alliance

The Southeast Pennsylvania Manufacturing Alliance (SEPMA) is a multi-employer collaborative comprised of regional manufacturers that work with education, workforce development, economic development, and community organizations to address the workforce and other competitiveness needs of the manufacturing industry.

Administered by: Philadelphia WDB

LWDAs served: Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia

The Southeast Pennsylvania Smart Energy Initiative

The Southeast Pennsylvania Smart Energy Initiative (SEI) was founded in 2007 to support the region's smart energy industry by providing comprehensive workforce and business development services to partnering energy organizations.

Administered by: The Chester County Economic Development Council

LWDAs served: Berks, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia

The six LWDBs that comprise the Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Planning Region will continue to work closely with our economic development partners, convening champions and making connections for employers in need of talent acquisition, talent pathway development, training, and retention support. Whether a connection is made through Engage!, one of the thriving Industry Partnerships, a one-stop Business Services Representative, or one of multiple special initiatives (detailed further in Section 1.5 – Sector Strategies), the collaborative efforts will ensure that businesses have access to a skilled and adaptable workforce. By fostering these partnerships, we aim to drive economic growth, enhance workforce readiness, and create sustainable employment opportunities across the region.

1.4 Regional Strategies for Service Delivery

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

The Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Planning Region coordinates service delivery to foster a dynamic and resilient workforce that meets the evolving needs of our regional economy. The regional strategy is built on broad-based, overarching sector and industry approaches designed to drive economic growth and enhance workforce development.

By leveraging sector-based planning, the Southeast Pennsylvania Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) collaborate to align education, training, and employment services with the demands of key industries. This alignment ensures that the regional workforce is equipped with the skills and knowledge required to thrive in an evolving job market. Local and regional service delivery strategies represent an investment in the high-growth, high-value sectors that are economic drivers in Southeast Pennsylvania and across the commonwealth. Key sectors identified for strategic focus by Governor Shapiro in his Ten-Year Strategic Plan for Economic Development in Pennsylvania (2024-2033) include agriculture, energy, life sciences, advanced manufacturing, and

robotics & technology. These sectors have been chosen based on their potential for growth, job creation, and their critical role in a robust economy. As the largest and most economically dynamic region in the Commonwealth, Southeastern Pennsylvania is uniquely positioned to support the Governor's Goal #3: opening doors of opportunity for all Pennsylvanians. Our region can help individuals chart their own paths to join, rejoin, and excel in the labor force through employee-centric, employer-powered workforce training and placement programs. These initiatives leverage our exceptional regional assets and strong labor organizations. The Southeast Pennsylvania have collectively focused efforts on these industries, as well industries related to ongoing regional infrastructure advancement, through career pathway development, concentrated business services, expansion of training opportunities, and pursuit of available funding.

Apprenticeship

To connect youth and career seekers with barriers to employment to meaningful and impactful career pathways, the Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Planning Region continues to determinedly support the growth of Registered Apprenticeship and Pre-Apprenticeship opportunities in the region. Apprenticeship PHL serves as a regional resource hub for employers, providers, and career seekers. Through a comprehensive website and ongoing promotional events and professional development, these efforts have increased enthusiasm and access to resources in the region. Simultaneously, each LWDA has continued to make efforts to develop apprenticeship solutions, detailed in each Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Local Plan.

While the region's apprenticeship efforts have progressed, there is still room for growth in relation to the number of Registered Apprenticeships and Pre-Apprenticeships, industry-specific variety, visibility, and sustainability. Ongoing access to grant funding and technical assistance will continue to play a prominent role in pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship development in Southeast Pennsylvania.

As described in Sections 1.2 - Southeast Pennsylvania Regional Analysis and 1.5 - Sector Strategies, the Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Planning Region plays an active role in the Southeast Pennsylvania Partnerships for Regional Economic Performance (PREP) initiative. Economic and Workforce Development leadership collectively pursue a strategy that supports the training and supportive services required to meet current labor demand while planning for projected growth. In order to meet current labor demand, each LWDB in Southeast Pennsylvania strives to connect career seekers to skills. Southeast Pennsylvania LWDBs focus on development of diverse training options available on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL), described more thoroughly in Section 1.8 - Training and establish procedures to address barriers to employment as described in Section 1.7- Transportation and Other Supportive Services.

Business Services

While each LWDA has developed localized approaches to Business Services, the region collaborates to meet the needs of employers through sector-based initiatives and

events including cross-county job fairs, employer information sessions, networking events, and career exploration fairs for students. Additionally, the Industry Partnerships described in Section 1.3 - Regional Strategies for Business Services and Economic Development provide a platform through which localized Business Services models can connect to regional efforts.

With a goal of leveraging proven strategies, the Southeast Pennsylvania LWDBs will convene programmatic providers, including Business Services Teams, to network, plan joint events, and share promising practices. All Business Service Teams across Southeast Pennsylvania have been engaged through the PA Department of Labor and Industry Bureau of Workforce Partnerships and Operations (BWPO) Business Services evaluation. Additionally, the Pennsylvania Workforce Development Board is developing a Best Practices Playbook for Business Services. The Montgomery County LWDB has procured a provider to further evaluate local Business Services practices and make recommendations to inform their WIOA Local Plan. The Berks County LWDB has been recognized as a leader in leveraging their Business Services Team (BST) to provide supports, including an easy-to-use guide, for regional employers seeking to increase employment and advancement opportunities for adult residents with disabilities. A regional Business Services convening will focus on reviewing recommendations derived from these projects against local and regional practices.

Regional Training Activities

The primary approach to ensuring career seekers with barriers to employment, including Opportunity Youth, are connected to viable training options is through promotional awareness and comprehensive career counseling. Whenever a Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) in Southeast Pennsylvania creates or re-establishes a connection to an available training resource, a representative is invited to join one of the regularly scheduled SEPA WDB Leadership meetings. Locally contracted providers share best practices across the same platform. This model, which has increased access to, and specified needs related to training activities, will continue through the 2025-2028 planning cycle. By maintaining relevant connections to programs such as YouthBuild, Job Corps, Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps, AmeriCorps, and the Commonwealth Technical Institute at the Hiram G. Andrews Center, we ensure that youth and individuals with barriers to employment have access to necessary career services and training activities at a regional level.

Currently, the system of record does not provide an accessible means to track enrollments into programs such as YouthBuild, Job Corps, Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps, or AmeriCorps. The Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Planning Region does not yet have a method in place to record this information but will work as a region to use the system of record to identify referrals to the identified programs on behalf of our WIOA Title I youth population.

A regional approach to assessing need for developed training activities aligning to in-demand occupations led the Philadelphia LWDB to apply for funding through the US Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA) Good Jobs Challenge. The EDA invested \$500 million in funding nationwide to build collaborative skills training systems and programs focusing on efforts to reach historically underserved populations and areas, including communities of color, women, and other groups facing labor market barriers. The Good Jobs Challenge convenes LWDBs, economic development agencies, employers, training providers, and community-based organizations, and provides an opportunity to build worker-centered, employer-led workforce training systems. These systems advance equitable job opportunities across traditionally underserved communities and populations.

As the System Lead Entity, the Philadelphia LWDB received \$22.7 million to connect at least 3,000 individuals to quality “good jobs” over a three-year grant period (September 2022 through September 2025). Grant strategies emphasize accelerating equitable recovery, driving economic growth, and disrupting chronic multigenerational poverty across the Southeast Pennsylvania region.

The Good Jobs Challenge supports the development of new and the enhancement of existing training programs to build regional workforce partnerships within three targeted high-growth industry sectors. These sectors are led by dedicated backbone organizations:

Healthcare & Life Sciences – University City District/The Skills Initiative
Infrastructure – The Philadelphia Area Labor Management Committee (PALM)
Energy – The Philadelphia Energy Authority (PEA)

The Good Jobs Challenge aims to enhance workforce capabilities and ensure a sustainable regional economic transformation in Southeast Pennsylvania by fostering industry-specific partnerships and focusing on high-growth sectors. These efforts not only address current labor market demand but also position the region as a competitive economic hub for future growth. Through these focused efforts, the Good Jobs Challenge has already made significant strides in improving employment outcomes across the Healthcare & Life Sciences, Energy, and Infrastructure sectors. By late 2024, hundreds of participants have enrolled in specialized training programs and connected to employment opportunities, directly bolstering regional economic vitality and addressing critical labor shortages.

The Good Jobs Challenge in Southeast Pennsylvania procured new training providers in the region, and this comprehensive effort underscores a commitment to enhancing training and employment pathways through innovation, collaboration, and targeted investment in services that address current and future labor market demands. As a result of successful procurement, the region is investing in 17 training programs across the targeted sectors with 14 regional training providers, which will result in hundreds of new training and employment outcomes.

Secondary and Post-Secondary Education

Southeast Pennsylvania is home to the most extensive secondary and post-secondary education system in the Commonwealth which serves as a magnet for attracting emerging talent from across the nation and the world. The Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Boards have a long successful history of partnering with this world-class system of secondary and post-secondary education. Secondary and post-secondary education serve as the cornerstone of a thriving workforce development system, equipping individuals with the critical skills, knowledge, and adaptability needed to excel in an ever-evolving job market. By fostering innovation, enhancing employability, and promoting lifelong learning, these educational stages ensure a robust, dynamic, and competitive workforce capable of driving economic growth and societal progress. The LWDBs in the Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Planning Region work closely with both secondary and post-secondary institutions for these very reasons, ensuring a seamless integration of education and workforce needs.

Each LWDB has established a Business Education Partnership (BEP) model designed to bridge the gap between Southeast Pennsylvania businesses and the schools that are nurturing their future workforce. Using PA Department of Labor and Industry BEP funding as well as local resources when available, each area develops plans to meet local need through a range of activities that cross geographical boundaries whenever possible. Activities occurring in one or more Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDA) in Southeast Pennsylvania include but are not limited to:

- Ongoing collaborative meetings to connect business and education;
- Career Ready platforms to ease connections between educators, students, and employers;
- Career exploration activities such as career fairs and industry tours;
- Work-based learning activities including internships, job-shadowing, and cooperative education development;
- Skills Training;
- Support for industry-specific career exploration initiatives such as *What's So Cool About Manufacturing?*;
- LMI and other information sessions for parents, students, and educators;
- Career Pathway mapping;
- Educator in the Workplace activities.

Each LWDB in the region works closely with their respective Career Technical Centers (CTCs) and post-secondary institutions authorized for Career-Technical Education (CTE) under the Perkins V Act. While each area's connection to CTE is detailed within their WIOA Local Plan, the LWDBs are represented on advisory committees, provide Labor Market Information to guide programming, and offer support for special initiatives when feasible.

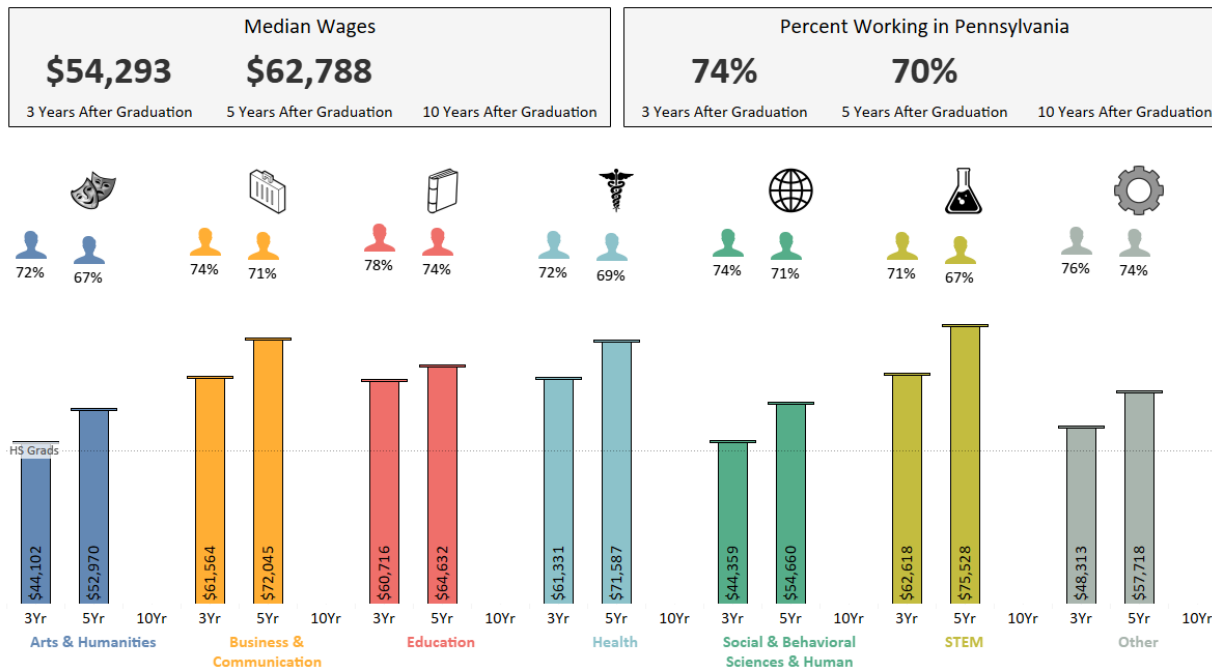
The regional community colleges are key resources in both post-secondary certifications and 2-year degrees that align with employer demand. The Pennsylvania

Department of Labor and Industry's Center for Workforce Information and Analysis (CWIA) reports annual employment (2022) of 52,212 for individuals with an associate degree and projected annual employment of 54,302 through 2032. Annual employment for individuals with some post-secondary education or experience is projected to increase from 353,952 (2022) to 363,845 (2032).²⁸ By working closely with community colleges throughout the region, LWDBs facilitate the alignment of training programs offered by community colleges with the current needs of the local job market, helping students acquire relevant skills and employer obtain skilled workers. Additionally, these collaborations support continuous education and upskilling, which is essential in today's rapidly changing workforce landscape.

The region is also home to three Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) institutions that are not only educating the next generation of workers but helping to keep them in PA after graduation. When looking at the Longitudinal Employment Outcomes, shown below, for graduates of Cheyney University, Kutztown University, and West Chester University, 74% of graduates are employed in PA three years after graduation and 70% at the five-year mark. The highest concentration, by broad major category, that stay in PA are those graduating with degrees in education which is promising for the future employment demand in that industry.²⁹ Through shared initiatives such as implementation of the PA Department of Labor and Industry Near Completer's Grant, the Southeast Pennsylvania LWDBs have progressed in establishing and maintaining sustainable partnerships with our PASSHE schools and other institutions of higher education that play a vital role in regional economic stability. The regional LWDBs collaborate closely with organizations that promote the area to ensure that graduates from our esteemed institutions of higher education are encouraged to stay in the region, fostering a vibrant community where they can live, work, and invest.

²⁸CWIA Data Packet – EducDist (Employment Distribution by Educational Attainment)

²⁹ Longitudinal Employment Outcomes for Graduates; PASSHE Workforce Outcomes (Data updated 1/15/25)



1.5 Sector Strategies

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

Each Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) within the Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Planning Region develops their WIOA Local Plans around sector strategies while working together to align sectoral priorities. This unified approach ensures a cohesive regional workforce strategy that addresses the unique needs of each sector. Additionally, this collaboration fosters the sharing of best practices and innovative solutions, enhancing the overall effectiveness of sector-specific initiatives.

Across Southeast Pennsylvania, sector strategies are informed through Industry Partnerships, as described in Section 1.3 - Regional Strategies for Business Services and Economic Development, and ongoing connections to local economic development organizations, chambers of commerce, and other entities that support employers. The regional effort to review and align High Priority Occupations serves as an opportunity to solidify sectoral priorities. This coordinated approach ensures that workforce development initiatives are closely aligned with the evolving needs of the regional economy.

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 LWDB WIOA Local Plan, the primary forum for connecting workforce development and economic development goals and services at the regional level has been the through the Southeast Partnerships for Regional Economic Performance (PREP). Since 2015,

the core partners of Southeast PREP have brought together the region's 6 county-based economic development organizations, 6 LWDBs, 4 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. This partnership was reinforced during the COVID-19 pandemic as advancements in meeting technology facilitated greater resource sharing.

These practices resulted in planning focused on the intersection of interests, challenges, and opportunities of the partners. The service delivery described in Section 1.4 - Regional Strategies for Service Delivery is enhanced by sharing best practices and connections to regional resources while regularly joining forces to develop new initiatives and seek funding to support efforts. Coalitions in various geographic configurations provide customized approaches to address key issues, share information, expand, and replicate successful models, and assess overall regional impact on employer and career 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. Shown below are examples of such sector-based initiatives, in addition to Industry Partnerships and Business Education Partnerships 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 Local Workforce Development Area's Local Plan:

- Providing comprehensive business services and assessments for employers in the Clean Energy industry through PA Department of Labor and Industry grant funding (LWDB leads – Chester and Philadelphia);
- Infusing the Southeast PA region with training opportunities and partnership development across the Healthcare & Life Sciences, Energy, and Infrastructure sectors through the US Economic Development Administration Good Jobs Challenge (LWDB lead – Philadelphia);
- Providing multi-industry training and in-depth supportive services to eligible customers through the National Dislocated Worker CAREER grant (LWDB lead – Philadelphia);
- Developing sustainable Registered Apprenticeship and Pre-Apprenticeship models across all industries through the Apprenticeship Building America grant (LWDB leads – Bucks, Delaware, and Philadelphia)

The six Southeast PA LWDBs 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 each month and convene their Workforce Development Board Chairs regularly. These meetings will aim to enhance services for employers, define industry clusters, share best practices, and develop options for the in-demand skill sets needed to complement and support local county-based initiatives

Priorities and topics reviewed and addressed through this robust partnership include, but are not limited to:

- Acquiring grants to address critical regional needs;
- Leveraging existing resources that support employers, intermediaries, and career seekers more efficiently;
- Supporting a Skills-First model across the region;
- Reviewing policies, processes, procedures for consistency as well as best practice-sharing;
- Developing employer engagement strategies;
- Addressing any issues that arise on a local, regional, state, or federal level with a collective approach to support common interests;
- Increasing the number of registered system users to increase employer/career seeker connections;
- Analyzing Labor Market Information to identify additional priority sectors;
- Organizing responses to business closures or layoffs, knowing that the impact of these events cross geographic boundaries;
- Developing innovative ways to support growing or at-risk businesses to prevent closures or mass-layoffs;
- Cultivating Registered Apprenticeships and Pre-Apprenticeships (described more thoroughly in Section 1.6)
- Sharing opportunities for staff development.

The Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Planning Region exemplifies a unified and strategic approach to workforce development. By aligning sectoral priorities and fostering strong partnerships with local economic development organizations, chambers of commerce, and other key entities, the region ensures that workforce initiatives are responsive to the evolving needs of the economy. The collaborative efforts through Industry Partnerships and the Southeast Partnerships for Regional Economic Performance (PREP) have established a robust foundation for addressing regional priorities and enhancing service delivery.

As the region continues to navigate the challenges and opportunities of the modern workforce landscape, the commitment to sharing best practices, leveraging resources, and developing innovative solutions remains steadfast. The ongoing efforts to support high-priority occupations, provide comprehensive training programs, and engage with employers across various sectors will drive economic growth and ensure a skilled and adaptable workforce. The Southeast PA LWDBs are dedicated to maintaining this momentum, fostering a dynamic environment where businesses and career seekers can thrive.

1.6 Employer/Career Seeker Connections

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 attrition and regional economic growth over the next decade. The Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Planning Region is committed to optimizing available opportunities and addressing structural weaknesses within the current workforce system to benefit regional employers and the labor force.

The LWDBs comprising the Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Planning Region collectively understand that, to provide impactful service delivery, the planning process must be well-informed. Over the past five years, LWDBs have led or participated in efforts to complete the below studies, guiding program and service delivery development in Southeast Pennsylvania.

Study	LWDA(s) Covered	Publication Date
COVID-19 Impact Study	Montgomery	2021
SEPA Manufacturing Skills-Gap Analysis	all	2021
Individuals with Disabilities Employment Study	Berks	2021
Opportunity Youth COVID-19 Impact Study	all	2022
Business and Community Engagement Study	Montgomery	2025
SEPA Regional Economic Development Collaborative	Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, Philadelphia	TBD

Informed by thorough Labor Market Information analysis and comprehensive reports, The Southeast Pennsylvania regional strategy incorporates several approaches to achieve these goals:

Connecting Career Seekers to Services and Training Activities

The Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Planning Region prioritizes connecting youth and individuals with barriers to employment to career services and training activities at a regional level. Dedicated staff in each one-stop center in the region works tirelessly every day to provide career counseling, assessments, workplace readiness, and training guidance, ensuring that career seekers can make meaningful connections. Each local area has systems in place to refer customers to partner entities providing barrier remediating services, including but not limited to Title II providers and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR). Through partner and provider

collaboration, these centers are dedicated to helping individuals navigate their career paths, offering personalized support and resources to meet their unique needs.

In order to make impactful connections, frontline staff need to be aware of each area's priority sectors and have a thorough understanding of the skills area employers need. The region's Industry Partnerships and Business Services Teams play a crucial role in assessing the needs of employers. They engage with local businesses to understand their workforce requirements, identify skill gaps, and develop tailored solutions to address these challenges. By maintaining close relationships with employers, the Business Services Teams ensure that the training programs and career services offered are aligned with the current demands of the job market. This proactive approach helps create a dynamic workforce that meets the needs of both career seekers and employers, fostering economic growth and stability in the region.

Programs such as YouthBuild, Job Corps, and AmeriCorps are integral to this strategy, providing essential skills and work experience. Each Southeast Pennsylvania Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) outreach to ensure that program staff have current connections to these training resources. The LWDBs will work collaboratively to use the system of record to develop a method of accurately reporting on regional enrollments in these key programs.

The Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Planning Region will continue to work locally and regionally to make connections to in-demand occupations through Registered Apprenticeships and Pre-Apprenticeships. The growth of learn and earn models leading to family-sustaining wages through relevant skills and credentials will remain a priority. The Southeast Pennsylvania LWDBs have worked collaboratively and locally along with the Apprenticeship Training Office (ATO) to support Registered Apprenticeship and Pre-Apprenticeship in multiple ways including, but not limited to:

- Ensuring Title I service providers have a thorough understanding of funding support options;
- Providing supportive services to eligible apprentices;
- Holding information sessions to encourage employers and sponsors;
- Providing regional expertise and technical assistance to employers and sponsors;
- Supporting grant applications that encourage growth;
- Working with Career Technical Centers to align programming to Registered Apprenticeship and supporting the process to register a Pre-Apprenticeship;
- Developing and sharing success stories.

As the Southeastern Pennsylvania Workforce Development Planning Region meets a minimum of once per month, any weaknesses around the registering, implementation, or sustainability of Registered Apprenticeship and Pre-Apprenticeship are addressed and strategized collaboratively.

Supporting Career Seekers with Barriers to Employment

The Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Planning Region continually evaluates best practices for serving individuals with barriers to employment, providing valuable insights into effective service delivery models. Through resource-sharing, the region enhances collaboration among local agencies, ensuring that comprehensive support services are accessible to those in need. This collaborative approach not only maximizes the impact of available resources but also fosters a more inclusive and resilient workforce.

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.

In March of 2023, the Berks County LWDB sponsored an open Symposium for Employers, highlighting and promoting resources and best practices of hiring individuals with disabilities. Delivery of the program was presented by an expert under contract with the Bucks, Montgomery, and Berks LWDBs. 176 employer participants from across Southeast PA viewed short videos and presentations highlighting practical and proven employer “best practices.” Employer feedback following the symposium was overwhelmingly positive, underscoring the opportunities acknowledged as proven best practices they could adopt in their own organizations.

Engaging one-stop partners on both a local and regional level is crucial for the workforce development planning region to effectively address the diverse needs of career seekers across Southeast PA. Title II providers play a vital role in supporting individuals with barriers to employment by offering essential education, literacy, and language services, as well as citizenship support for immigrants. Additionally, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) provides specialized support for individuals with disabilities, helping them overcome obstacles and achieve meaningful employment. By fostering strong collaborations with these partners, workforce development regions can create a more inclusive and supportive environment that empowers all career seekers to succeed.

The Southeastern PA Workforce Development Planning region is committed to connecting priority groups, especially youth and individuals with barriers to employment, to Registered Apprenticeships and Pre-Apprenticeships. By leveraging partnerships with local schools, community organizations, and employers, the region aims to create accessible pathways to these valuable programs. Initiatives such as career fairs, informational workshops, and outreach campaigns are designed to raise awareness and

provide guidance on the benefits and opportunities available through apprenticeships. Additionally, collaboration with PA CareerLink® offices ensures that individuals receive personalized support in navigating the application process and accessing necessary resources.

Employment Sustainability

The Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Planning Region is committed to proactively identifying and mitigating risks that could lead to employee layoffs and negatively impact the local economy. By closely examining potential threats, particularly those related to emergency preparedness, the region aims to develop robust strategies that support business continuity and workforce stability. This forward-thinking approach ensures that employers are better equipped to handle unforeseen challenges, thereby safeguarding jobs, and fostering economic resilience.

1.7 Transportation and Other Supportive Services

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

Transportation plays a pivotal role in enabling individuals to access education, training, and employment, making it a key factor in securing and maintaining a job. This is especially true for those facing employment barriers, such as returning citizens, individuals with disabilities, TANF recipients, veterans, and others. Moreover, many essential sector jobs—like health care, manufacturing, agriculture, retail, and management—often demand non-traditional hours, including evenings and weekends. Balancing these challenges, along with additional responsibilities like childcare, further education, and other activities, underscores the critical need for reliable transportation.

Southeast Pennsylvania Region Means of Transportation to Work						
	Drive Alone	Carpool	Public Trans.	Walked	Worked from Home	Other
Berks	75.3%	8.3%	1.0%	2.8%	10.6%	2.0%
Bucks	72.0%	6.1%	2.1%	1.2%	17.3%	1.1%
Chester	66.9%	6.6%	1.4%	1.9%	21.7%	1.6%
Delaware	66.1%	6.8%	6.7%	3.3%	15.4%	1.7%
Montgomery	66.6%	6.1%	3.0%	2.0%	21.1%	1.2%
Philadelphia	46.7%	7.6%	17.9%	7.5%	16.4%	4.0%

Source: Means of Transportation to Work by Age (B08101): 5-Year ACS, 2023

While transportation has the ability to increase opportunities for employment, it also poses as a potential barrier to employment for populations without access to reliable or expansive transportation. Illustrated in chart above, the primary mode of transportation to work for residents in the Southeast PA region is still driving alone despite increases in the percentage of individuals working from home in each local area. Less than half of Philadelphia workers drove alone (46.7%) with the collar counties ranging from 66% to 75%. The survey shows that additional but much smaller percentages of individuals

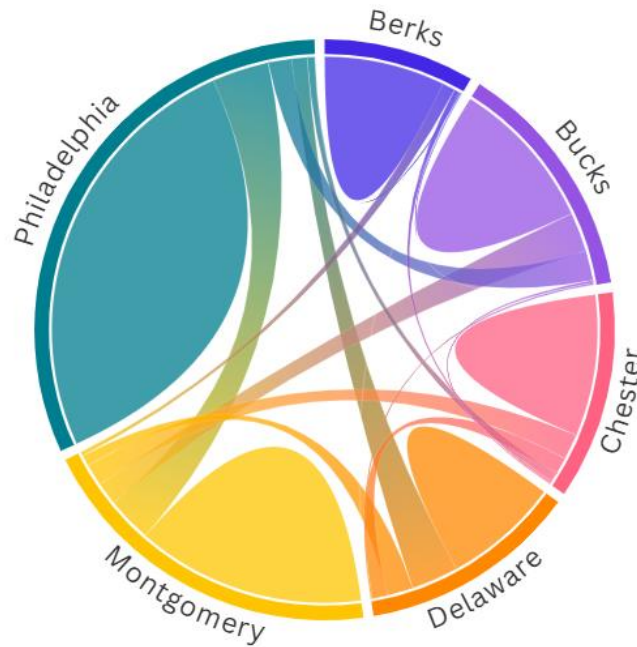
carpool, walk, or take public transportation, which remains most prevalent in Philadelphia but also declined almost four percentage points from the 2021 survey (21.4%).³⁰ The reduction in previously established usage trends is most reasonably explained by the increase in those able to work from home. Whether remote work remains a permanent fixture to the extent of the survey results remains unclear but limiting transportation options will remain a barrier for those in-demand occupations in direct service that do not afford the ability to work from home.

As established in section 1.2, labor market data shows that employer required skill sets extend beyond county lines in Southeastern Pennsylvania. To increase the applicant pool for employers, it is important to understand the commuting patterns in the region and where interconnectivity is more or less likely. Most individuals work within their home county or an adjacent county and a considerable number of residents from counties next to Philadelphia commute to the city. Conversely, Berks County residents not working in their home county are most likely to travel to Montgomery County. The chart and chord diagram below show the county of residence versus the workplace and demonstrate the interconnected nature of travel in the region.³¹

County of Employment							
Home County		Berks	Bucks	Chester	Delaware	Montgomery	Philadelphia
	Berks	148,163	1,477	6,604	484	15,626	1,613
	Bucks	470	187,477	2,979	2,533	48,358	36,475
	Chester	2,837	1,164	173,369	20,405	31,522	11,388
	Delaware	171	1,923	18,779	142,246	31,783	57,667
	Montgomery	4,670	27,496	27,317	13,282	280,578	55,506
	Philadelphia	207	28,445	9,183	19,284	69,761	521,478
Source: US Census Residence County to Workplace County Commuting Flows; 5-Year ACS 2020							

³⁰ Means of Transportation by Age, B08101; 5-Year ACS, 2021 & 2023

³¹ US Census Table1. Residence County to Workplace County Commuting Flows for the United States and Puerto Rico Sorted by Residence Geography: 5-Year ACS, 2016-2020



Source: 2016-2020 5-Year ACS Commuting Flows

Understanding commuting patterns and knowing that most workers drive themselves to work highlights the need for safe and reliable vehicle travel. This necessity extends beyond the vehicles to the ongoing road and bridge improvement plans in Southeastern Pennsylvania. Each LWDB must stay informed about local and regional improvement projects and be able to assess their impact. For instance, the current PennDOT package of improvements along the US Route 422 corridor will enhance capacity and safety for this major route connecting Berks County, parts of Chester County, and King of Prussia in Montgomery County.

Public transit has always been, and will remain, a vital part of community life in much of Southeastern Pennsylvania. The region benefits from a comprehensive public transportation network managed by the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA). Berks County, however, is served by its own county-based public transportation system, the Berks Area Regional Transportation Authority (BARTA). The map below shows the reach of regional SEPTA access including connections to Amtrak, Port Authority Transit Corporation (PATCO), and New Jersey Transit (NJT).³² 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.

³² www.septa.org/maps

Public transportation is a crucial resource for people with disabilities and low-income individuals, providing them with the independence to travel for work, education, healthcare, and social activities. However, there are several barriers that can make using public transit challenging for these groups including inaccessible stations and vehicles, lack of reliable paratransit services, poorly maintained sidewalks and

pathways, and the cost of fares. Despite these challenges, many people with disabilities and low-income individuals rely on public transportation and advocate for improvements to make it more accessible, affordable, and user-friendly. To address these needs, the Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Areas will update and identify regional transportation options that offer accessible opportunities for persons with disabilities, particularly those crossing county lines. Utilizing current data, they will collaborate with Human Services Transportation Plans within each county to pinpoint services that enhance accessibility for individuals with disabilities. Additionally, in their broader engagement with employers and coordination of services, the Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Areas will work to improve public transportation accessibility during off-peak times (nights and weekends) to meet employers' labor force needs. This could involve partnering with non-traditional carriers, such as Uber, or arranging special transportation services through county human services.

Expanding public transportation access in Southeastern Pennsylvania would significantly reduce the number of individuals who drive themselves to work, thereby addressing a major barrier to employment and decreasing CO2 emissions in the region. There are several expansion projects planned, according to the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC), some which include ADA improvements, increased service schedules, and extended geographic routes, especially in the suburban counties. One such project the Southeastern PA region has been excited about is re-establishing the regional rail connection between Reading and Philadelphia to better integrate the Berks County workforce and employers into the regional labor markets while also reducing traffic congestion. The Schuylkill Rail Project, led by the Schuylkill River Passenger Rail Authority (SRPRA), was officially accepted into the Federal Railroad Administration's Corridor Identification and Development Program on October 31, 2024. The project aims to restore passenger rail service between Reading and Philadelphia, with stops in Phoenixville, Pottstown, and King of Prussia to further enhance opportunities for both career seekers and employers.

The Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Planning Region recognizes the importance of collaboration in enhancing the identification and utilization of resource referrals for supportive services. By working together, LWDBs can pool their expertise and resources to provide a more comprehensive support network that goes beyond the limitations of local supportive service policies. This collaborative effort ensures that individuals receive holistic assistance tailored to their unique needs, thereby improving their chances of successful employment and long-term stability. Through shared knowledge and coordinated efforts, the region can create a more robust and responsive system of support for those facing barriers to employment.

1.8 Training

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

The range of training programs available on Pennsylvania's Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) provides PA CareerLink® customers with opportunities to pursue career

paths leading to in-demand, sustainable employment. In the event a customer does not successfully complete a training program or enter training-related employment upon completion, there can be a multitude of reasons related to the customer's own preferences or barriers to employment. With an extended period of historically low unemployment throughout the region, many career seekers find quick connections to entry-level positions with attractive wages that, subsequently, do not offer upward mobility along viable career pathways. While dedicated teams within each one-stop center support customers through these decisions, the collective goal of the Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Planning Region is to ensure that the availability of quality programming or alignment with regional labor demand does not have a negative effect on customer success or on the number of qualified candidates available to meet that regional demand.

The first step in growing ETPL offerings effectively is establishing local skills gaps and projecting employment growth of High Priority Occupations. Each area has processes in place to analyze and address skills gaps and projections within their Local Plan. These local processes are coordinated annually to ensure those High Priority Occupations and, subsequently, skills training programs, are consistent across a densely populated region that shares its substantial and diverse workforce. As of January 2025, there are 213 state approved courses tied to the local areas within the Southeast PA region spread across 15 occupational clusters, with the highest concentration in line with projected growth established in 1.2 for Healthcare Support Occupations.³³ While there is general alignment with approved courses and projected growth, there are clusters we can look at closer to establish if there are appropriate courses we can add or if availability and cost are prohibitive.

Occupational Cluster	LTOP 2022-2032 Percent Change	Program Year 24 ETPL Courses
31 - Healthcare Support	12.2%	44
47 - Construction and Extraction	2.9%	25
49 - Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	2.5%	25
29 - Healthcare Practitioners & Technical	6.2%	22
53 - Transportation and Material Moving	3.0%	20
15 - Computer and Mathematical	11.1%	19
51 - Production Occupations	-0.6%	17
43 - Office and Administrative Support	-0.3%	13
11 - Management	5.0%	11
41 - Sales and Related	-0.3%	5
13 - Business and Financial Operations	4.6%	4
21 - Community and Social Service	5.6%	4
17 - Architecture and Engineering	5.3%	2
27 - Arts, Design, Entertain, Sports, Media	3.1%	1
35 - Food Preparation & Serving Related	0.8%	1

³³ Center for Workforce Information and Analysis; Long Term Occupational Projections 2022-2032 & CWDS Ad Hoc Report of PY24 State Approved courses with SOC's deduplicated by application ID

The implementation of the US Economic Development Administration (EDA) Good Jobs Challenge has reinforced the importance of aligning trained skills with employer demand. Through partnerships developed by backbone organizations in three critical industries, current and projected regional job openings are better aligned against actual required skills. The success of this skills-first model can be duplicated by leveraging the work of existing Industry Partnerships across the region to establish the actual need against ETPL programs.

To further align training availability with labor demand, the Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Planning Region has committed to the development of an employer-focused webpage that will allow for feedback related to skills needs. This feedback will better guide planning and development for all local areas.

With a more thorough understanding of local skills needs, Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) staff review existing offerings, outreaching to providers as needed. An increase in online training programs over the past five years has diversified options. LWDB staff now work with a broader range of providers to approve existing programs or to establish new ones as needed to address skills gaps.

While the increase in online programs has lifted some geographical limits on access to training, it has simultaneously expanded the need for oversight. Each LWDB establishes and implements local policies to facilitate oversight of approved training programs. Communication across all LWDBs is critical to ensure concerns are addressed timely and provide uniform messaging.

Another way the LWDBs in Southeast Pennsylvania have worked to grow relevant skills training is through an ongoing commitment to the growth of Registered Apprenticeship and Pre-Apprenticeship as a sustainable solution for career seekers and employers. The LWDBs in Southeast Pennsylvania continue to work collaboratively and with the Apprenticeship Training Office to ensure this viable solution is accessible across all industries and to ensure there are clear pathways for career seekers interested in work-based learning.

A recurring obstacle to increasing participation on the ETPL continues to be 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. The Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Planning Region is poised to address potential changes to this practice that will expand quality offerings but also require alternative performance indicators.

1.9 Resource-Sharing

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

The Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Planning Region has a long, successful history of sharing resources and working collaboratively to implement Industry Partnerships, special workforce initiatives, and grant funding. These programs are based on employer or career seeker needs. Through this process, the local areas have learned to prioritize activities regionally to promote a broader impact.

The six Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) comprising the region will continue to 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 grants that will be programmatically implemented by more than one LWDA but administered by one, the fiscal agent is identified at application, with that area's Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) assuming responsibility for project outcomes and fiscal accountability.

Recent examples of resource-sharing that have had a significant positive effect on the workforce development system in Southeast Pennsylvania include:

- US Department of Labor CAREER National Dislocated Worker Grant (Philadelphia LWDB)
- US Economic Development Administration Good Jobs Challenge (Philadelphia LWDB)
- US Department of Labor Apprenticeship Building America Grants (Philadelphia LWDB, Bucks County LWDB)
- PA Department of Labor and Industry Clean Energy Grants (Philadelphia LWDB, Chester County LWDB)
- Focused funding to support existing and developing Industry Partnerships.

Understanding the value of collaborating to ensure businesses across Southeast Pennsylvania are informed and that the information they receive is consistent, the LWDAs have committed to collectively establishing, promoting, and maintaining a webpage specific to employers in the region. This webpage will provide sector-specific resources and information to employers that will include but not be limited to:

- PA CareerLink® Online
- Industry Partnerships
- Local policies related to training funds
- Special initiatives
- Relevant Labor Market Information

Additionally, a method will be developed for employers to provide input related to their training needs, better informing training provider outreach as each LWDA seeks to expand opportunities available through the Statewide Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). This collaboration will align with the Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Planning Region's goals to enrich employer engagement and sector strategies, allow for focused outreach to critical industries, promote continuous improvement, and maximize use of each LWDA's resources.

1.10 Performance

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

The Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) that comprise the Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Planning Region strive to meet or exceed all performance measures and average indicators, acknowledging that these measures relate directly to successful outcomes for our customers. Issues related to performance outcomes have implications throughout the workforce system, including career 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 Southeast 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 biennial 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 cooperatively develops quality services for career seekers and employers, allowing the collective work to reflect in common measure performance and convening to review the process if it does not.

While performance levels are established individually, regional LWDBs 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 - Southeast Pennsylvania Regional Analysis above. Each of those goals has a direct or indirect effect on performance outcomes and therefore serves as a guidepost for ongoing strategic planning.

1.11 Public Comment

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



The Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Planning Region is committed to developing a strategic plan that is data-informed, vetted through each area Workforce Development Board (LWDB), and that incorporates the feedback of regional and state-level partners and stakeholders.

30-day public comment period for the Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Regional Plan occurred from April 21, 2025 to May 22, 2025 with each local area posting the regional plan for public comment along with their local plans. Public comment was advertised in The Philadelphia Inquirer (see ad and confirmation below) to ensure readership across the region.

Thirteen stakeholders attended a virtual public information session on Monday April 28, 2025. In addition to providing an overview of the regional plan, each local workforce area provided brief highlights from their local plans.

A link to an online Form was posted with the plan to streamline public comment. In addition, stakeholders were invited to email public comment to each local area. At the close of the public comment period, the Southeast Pennsylvania Workforce Development Planning Region received no public comment on the 2025-2028 regional plan.

The Southeast PA Workforce Development Planning Region is pleased to post the 2025-2028 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Plan for public comment from Monday, April 21 to Thursday, May 22. The region includes the counties of Berks, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia. The plan outlines regional efforts to continue fostering a thriving workforce system in Southeast Pennsylvania. We invite all community members to review and provide feedback on the plan. Each local workforce development area will also be posting their local plans for public comment.

Additionally, a virtual public information session will be held on Monday, April 28 at 2:00 PM. Please join us to learn more and share your thoughts. To review the plan and register for the public information session, please visit <https://bit.ly/MontcoWorks>.

The Philadelphia Inquirer

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Affidavit of Publication

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MONTGOMERY COUNTY COMMERCE DEPARTMENT
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1430 DEKALB ST
NORRISTOWN, PA 19401

STATE OF PENNSYLVANIA COUNTY OF PHILADELPHIA:

Before the undersigned authority personally appeared the undersigned who, on oath represented a and say: that I am an employee of The Philadelphia Inquirer, LLC, and am authorized to make this affidavit of publication, and being duly sworn, I depose and say:

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3. The printed notice or publication attached hereto set forth on attached hereto was published in all regular print editions of The Philadelphia Inquirer on

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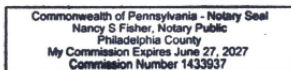
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