

**Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Annual Statewide Performance Report Narrative**

Program Year 2023

Reporting Period July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024

December 1, 2024

**Josh Shapiro, Governor**

**Contact Information**

**Nancy A. Walker**

Secretary

PA Department of Labor & Industry

651 Boas Street, Room 1700

Harrisburg, PA 17121

jeberrier@pa.gov

**James Martini**

Executive Director

PA Workforce Development Board

651 Boas Street, Room 514

Harrisburg, PA 17121

jamartini@pa.gov

**Dan Kuba**

Deputy Secretary for Workforce Development

PA Department of Labor & Industry

651 Boas Street, Room 1700

Harrisburg, PA 17121

dkuba@pa.gov

**Crystal Houser**

Director

Bureau of Workforce Partnership and Operations

PA Department of Labor & Industry

651 Boas Street, 12th Floor

**Brenda Duppstadt**

Director

Bureau of Workforce Development Administration

PA Department of Labor & Industry

651 Boas Street, 12th Floor

Harrisburg, PA 17121

brduppstad@pa.gov

**Tara Loew**

Director

Apprenticeship and Training Office

PA Department of Labor & Industry

651 Boas Street, 2nd Floor

Harrisburg, PA 17121

tloew@pa.gov

**Ed Legge**

Director

Center for Workforce Information and Analysis

PA Department of Labor & Industry

651 Boas Street, 2nd Floor

Harrisburg, PA 17121

elegge@pa.gov

Harrisburg, PA 17121

crhouser@pa.gov

Table of Contents

[Waivers 1](#_Toc182651896)

[Effectiveness in Serving Employers Pilot 1](#_Toc182651897)

[Evaluations 1](#_Toc182651898)

[Approach to Customer Satisfaction 7](#_Toc182651899)

[Combined State Plan Progress 7](#_Toc182651900)

[Sector Strategies and Career Pathways 8](#_Toc182651901)

[Small State Allotment 11](#_Toc182651902)

[Performance Accountability System 12](#_Toc182651903)

[Activities Provided with the Governor’s Reserved Funds 13](#_Toc182651904)

[Rapid Response Activities and Layoff Aversion 15](#_Toc182651905)

[Wagner-Peyser Activities 18](#_Toc182651906)

[National Dislocated Worker Grants 18](#_Toc182651907)

[Technical Assistance Needs 19](#_Toc182651908)

[Promising Practices, Lessons Learned, and Success Stories 19](#_Toc182651909)

[Workforce System Challenges 25](#_Toc182651910)

[Pay-for-Performance 25](#_Toc182651911)

[Appendix A 26](#_Toc182651912)

#

# Waivers

*Identify each waiver that the state has had in place for at least one program year and provide information regarding the state’s progress toward achieving the goals and performance outcomes in ETA’s letter of approval for the waiver (sec 189(i)(3)(C)(ii)) and outlined in the state’s waiver request (when applicable). Discuss how activities carried out under each approved waiver have directly or indirectly affected state and local area performance outcomes. To the extent possible, provide quantitative information.*

Pennsylvania had no active WIOA waivers during the last program year.

# Effectiveness in Serving Employers Pilot

*Identify the two approaches the state has chosen for the Effectiveness in Serving Employers performance indicator pilot. If the state is piloting a state-established measure of Effectiveness in Serving Employers, or has any other metrics to assess employer engagement, describe the measure or metric as well.*

Pennsylvania has two selected measures for the Effectiveness in Serving Employers performance indicator pilot: Employer Penetration Rate and Repeat Business Customers. In addition to these federal measures, Pennsylvania has also chosen to pilot three state-established measures. The first is the Employer Penetration Rate, which will be measured quarterly, rather than annually using the FEIN definition of employer in the denominator as opposed to the QCEW definition of establishments. The second is the Repeat Business Customers, which will be measured each quarter, rather than annually. This is calculated by dividing the number of establishments in the Commonwealth Workforce Development System (CWDS), PA’s statewide system of record, that received a service within both the current quarter and the previous quarter, by the number of establishments in CWDS that received a service in the previous quarter. The third state-established measure is Active Job Orders with Referrals, which will be measured each quarter, rather than annually. This will be calculated by dividing the total number of job orders receiving a referral within a given quarter by the total number of active job orders within a given quarter.

# Evaluations

*Include brief descriptions of: (a) current or planned evaluation and related research projects, including methodologies used; (b) efforts to coordinate the development of such projects with WIOA core programs, other state agencies, and local boards; (c) a list of completed evaluation and related reports and links to where they were made accessible to the public electronically; (d) State efforts to provide data, survey responses, and timely site visits for Federal evaluations; and (e) any continuous improvement strategies utilizing results from studies and evidence-based practices evaluated.*

Business Service Best Practice Guide and Business Service Assessment

Following the Business Service Delivery Evaluation conducted by Labor & Industry (L&I), the Bureau of Workforce Partnership & Operations (BWPO) and local leaders created a guide for conducting business services consistently across the state. This Guide outlined the various partners and their roles in serving businesses. The Guide encouraged inclusion of all partners serving employers in business service meetings to ensure employer needs are met without duplication of services or employer fatigue. The Guide was provided to all local area field teams in December 2023.

The Bureau assessed the state of business services across Pennsylvania by interviewing state and partner staff that serve businesses. Additionally, a survey was sent to all employers in the Commonwealth Workforce Development System (CWDS) and posted to the New Hires website. The goal of this broad engagement was to connect with employers currently working with PA CareerLink® Offices, employers that previously worked with PA CareerLink® Offices but no longer do, and those employers that have not engaged with PA CareerLink®. The survey results and final report will be available during the next Statewide Performance Report. Based on those findings, focus groups with employers will be conducted.

Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment Program (RESEA)

In alignment with new federal regulations for the RESEA program, Pennsylvania’s first annual RESEA evaluation concluded on June 30, 2023, which viewed the program pre-Covid. The evaluation collected data on the efficacy of the program performance metrics, including shortening the time the claimant receives unemployment benefits and employment retention, and measured the value of program participation.

In the next (current) phase of the RESEA evaluation, Pennsylvania will use a randomized controlled trial study to:

* Compare UC benefit durations of virtual RESEA participants, in-person RESEA participants, and non-participant claimants.
* Compare rates of employment (two and four quarters after exit from the program) of virtual RESEA participants, in-person RESEA participants, and non-participant claimants.
* Compare the wages (two and four quarters after exit from the program) of virtual RESEA participants, in-person RESEA participants, and non-participant claimants.

Digital Literacy Grant Round 2 - Third Party Evaluation

L&I procured a vendor with knowledge and experience in research and evaluation methodologies and WIOA workforce development systems to evaluate the efficacy and impact of the Digital Literacy and Workforce Development Grant. Work began in September 2022. The evaluator created a monthly report to update the grants’ progress and to share challenges that the grantees encountered. The evaluator visited all 20 grantees, beginning in March 2023. In September 2023, Bureau of Workforce Development Administration (BWDA) received the final report in which the evaluator shared and discussed performance outcomes, challenges incurred, and the overall status of the grant utilization for each grantee. This grant served 2,533 individuals. While the grantees served only 15 of Pennsylvania’s 67 counties (22 percent), these counties together represent nearly half of the state’s population (49 percent). The final report included recommendations for future Digital Literacy and Workforce Development Grants. Through the final report, grant recipients requested that future grants have increased funding and a longer period of performance to help alleviate the staff turnover due to salary and length of employment. BWDA is incorporating these requests into future NGAs.

Business Education Partnership - 3rd Party Evaluation

L&I procured a vendor with knowledge and experience in research and evaluation methodologies and WIOA workforce development systems to evaluate the efficacy and impact of the Business Education Partnership grants. Beginning in December 2022, the evaluator held bi-monthly calls with the grantees. Site visits began in June 2023 and all 22 grantees were visited by the evaluator, which were completed in December 2023. In June 2024, BWDA received the final report in which the evaluator shared and discussed performance outcomes, challenges incurred, and the overall status of the grant utilization. Some suggested improvements included a more comprehensive tracking method, currently being developed using Microsoft Forms, and the inclusion of cumulative tables to allow for better tracking of the grants’ overall progress over its’ entire duration. Each grantee received a site visit report, which contained the results of staff interviews, discussions on project design, and each grantees plan for sustainability beyond the grant period.

Grant Performance Evaluation

In collaboration with the Center for Workforce Information and Analysis (CWIA), the Apprenticeship Training Office (ATO), and the Pennsylvania Workforce Development Board (WDB), the BWDA Grants Unit developed a Statement of Work to contract with a vendor to:

* Analyze existing grants and new Notices of Grant Availability (NGAs) and recommend strategic improvements to performance monitoring;
* Build data collection tools and performance report dashboards; and
* Evaluate incoming grant performance data and produce summary reports and visualizations upon request.

Pennsylvania began working with KPMG in PY 2022 to determine Key Performance Indicators, create data collections tools, and securely collect data for tracking. The project will run through June 2026, and aims to result in a Grants Services Unit with improved grants management skills and strategies, and an ability to create deeper, more quantitative-focused performance reports. In addition, L&I extended its partnership with the Harvard Kennedy School Government Performance Lab through June 2025 to build on efforts to improve grantmaking processes, including principles of Active Grant Management.

Pre-Apprenticeship Success in Serving Youth and Integration into the Secondary School System

In 2023, the ATO’s pre-apprenticeship division strengthened its partnership with the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) in several ways. The pre-apprenticeship division presented at both Pennsylvania Association of Career & Technical Administrators (PACTA) Conferences, the Pennsylvania Cooperative Education Association (PCEA) Conference, Integrated Learning Conference (ILC), and SAS Institute. The division also collaborated in the Career Ready PA REBoot Camp, a statewide series of trainings designed by the Career Ready PA Coalition for educators across the commonwealth to learn about career readiness while gaining Act 48 credits. 235 educators from 130 school districts attended and learned about the ATO’s services. The success of this engagement with educators is reflected in the fact that 83% of programs created in 2024 have been sponsored by secondary education institutions.

Common Digital Intake Form

In the year since the project launch, PA CareerLink® clients have completed over 100,000 digital intake forms, allowing service providers access to demographic and situational information to better serve customers.

As a testament to L&I’s commitment to collaborative improvement and in response to partner feedback, L&I has published two new tools to help PA CareerLink® staff leverage data gathered by the DIF: a lobby management dashboard and the ability to pull ad hoc reports. In addition, local offices have submitted over forty new features that are currently awaiting evaluation and prioritization to be added to the form.

UI Claimant Reengagement

The Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry (L&I) recognized the need to re-engage unemployed Pennsylvanians in the workforce, given recent declines in workforce participation. The Agency led a statewide initiative to re-engage more than 400,000 unemployment insurance (UI) claimants who received at least one unemployment payment from 2020-2022 and were inactive in the workforce as of the third quarter in 2022. This initiative included outreach activities with those individuals to identify barriers to returning to the workforce, skills shortages, and areas of service delivery improvement.

The initiative consisted of a survey to these claimants, outreach to respondents requesting follow up, and focus groups with respondents representing different barriers. The outreach to the respondents requiring follow up yielded a 14% success rate. The information gathered during this campaign, in conjunction with data from the Digital Intake form, has led to additional initiatives to mitigate barriers.

CWDS Accomplishments - In addition to the Digital Intake effort, we have:

* Integrated ATO activities into CWDS.
* Created a portal for local board monitoring that will give the Oversight Services and Fiscal units a better snapshot of Local Board compliance and fiscal stability. The new portal will streamline the monitoring process for local boards.
* Integrated TANF Youth into CWDS to better track expenditures and outcomes.
* Created a Lobby Management Dashboard to better serve customers in PA CareerLink® offices.

Future enhancements include:

* Integrate pre-apprenticeship activities into CWDS.

Workforce Longitudinal Data System

In 2021, Pennsylvania initiated the development of a comprehensive Workforce Longitudinal Data System (WLDS), building on its current education data system, to enhance data-informed decision making in education and workforce development across agencies. High-level goals of the WLDS project include:

* Understand long-term outcomes and contribute to better informed funding and policy decisions.
* Spend less time finding and validating disparate data sources and more time analyzing it.
* Establish transparent and trackable goals.
* Consider options across the Commonwealth for improving outcomes.
* Develop partnerships to identify key research questions, performance measures, and outcomes.
* Align investments to effective programming.
* Demonstrate progress towards workforce system goals and recommendation.

The US Department of Labor (USDOL) awarded Pennsylvania a Workforce Data Quality Initiative grant to help build the longitudinal data system. Projects underway during PY 2023 include examining workforce outcomes of Title II participants, looking at the employment, social, and health outcomes of those released from Pennsylvania State Prisons, including services from the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, and evaluating outcomes of individuals participating in state supported youth programs, including those related to justice involvement, utilization of public supports, and educational and workforce outcomes.

With funding from the WDQI grant, Pennsylvania has purchased a universal master person indexing (UMPI) solution that will assist with linking together different segments of the longitudinal data system, even when the data sources lack a common unique identifier, such as a Social Security number. Historically, the lack of a common unique identifier between Pennsylvania’s K-12 and workforce systems has impeded the development of a comprehensive WLDS. The UMPI solution will address this barrier and provide new opportunities for more seamless service delivery across systems and enhanced performance reporting.

Continuous Improvement Strategies

Programmatic training and technical assistance is provided for BWPO-administered programs, which include:

* WIOA Title I Adult;
* WIOA Title I Dislocated Worker;
* Rapid Response;
* WIOA Title I Disaster Grant;
* WIOA Title I Youth;
* TANF Youth;
* Labor Exchange/Wagner Peyser;
* Trade Adjustment Assistance;
* Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment;
* Foreign Labor Certification;
* Work Opportunity Tax Credit;
* Federal Bonding;
* Jobs for Veterans State Grants; and
* Eligible Training Provider List.

This performance year, training and resources continued to build upon the foundational knowledge, skills and resources staff need to deliver effective services to our shared jobseeker and employer customers, with the foundational CareerLink 101 (CL101) course and others updated with new statewide and programmatic information, and new courses added. Collaboration with our subject matter experts was key, as was surveying and incorporating insights from PA CareerLink® field staff. Through these efforts, desk guides were created which provide guidance on policy and procedure. Consistent communication was a focus to ensure all partners were aware of learning opportunities available to them.

CareerLink 101 (CL101)

The CL101 course is designed for any workforce development professional that is a part of the PA CareerLink® system. The course is a combination of self-paced interactive learning modules, reflection questions and activities, and collaboration with other workforce development professionals during a four hour live virtual session. CL101 teaches workforce development professionals how PA CareerLink® came to be and its innovative service strategies; our shared customers and the importance of working together; PA CareerLink® programs, services, and how they are provided; and how our work is measured. It helps to provide an understanding of the important role everyone plays in the PA CareerLink® system and the impact of working together. In this performance year, 368 workforce development professionals representing the six WIOA core programs and various partner programs completed CL101.

Building upon Foundational Program-Related Training

Building upon foundational courses such as CL101 and the CWDS Foundational Training, the following program-related trainings were newly released this performance year:

* Labor Market Information
* Scam Prevention
* WIOA Title I Hard and Soft Exits and Hold Outcomes
* Employment Services Complaint System
* Collaborating for Success: A Shared Customer-Centered Approach to Service Delivery
* Trade Adjustment Assistance Best Practices
* WIOA Primary Indicators of Performance 2024
* CL101 for Libraries
* CL101 for Legislative Aids
* Ad Hoc Technical Assistance

Providing Guidance on Policy and Procedure

Desk guides are provided to staff on policy, procedural requirements, and accurate data entry of required information into the system of record, CWDS.

In the past performance year, two desk guides were released:

* The Measurable Skill Gains (MSG) desk guide, which provides in depth knowledge on the different types of MSGs, their definitions, and examples of time frames for achieving the MSG measure. This guide is intended to help explain MSGs so that this important measure is better understood, as this information is collected and reported to the federal government.
* The Reemployment Services & Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) desk guide, which summarizes information about the RESEA program, gives detailed process steps for PA CareerLink® staff implementing the program, includes guidelines and examples for typical activities and interactions, and provides a synopsis of the policies and procedures that Unemployment Compensation uses.

In addition, a Desk Guide Checklist and Template was designed for those who create desk guides for their programs.

Communication and Outreach

The Staff Development team communicated courses and resources offered to workforce development partners, professional development opportunities via the Staff Development Quarterly Update, course registration information via the BWPO Biweekly Update and outreach emails, and participation in regional meetings across Pennsylvania.

Interval Trainings

Short interval training sessions were held monthly and during this performance year, 7,394 persons attended, including Title I and Title III staff. The following topics were covered this performance year:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| June 2024 | Local Workforce Development Boards 101 |
| May 2024 | JVSG: DVOP and LVER Responsibilities and Restrictions |
| April 2024 | What is Job Corps? |
| March 2024 | Pardons as Workforce Development |
| February 2024 | Match Meetings |
| January 2024 | Employer Services Complaint System |
| December 2023 | Agricultural Workforce Needs: Filling Labor Shortages and Educating the Next Generation |
| November 2023 | Big Interview Overview |
| October 2023 | Job Matching: Call-in vs. Referral |
| September 2023 | Skill-up and Reentry |
|  August 2023 | Disabilities in Workforce |
| July 2023  | Scam Prevention |

ETPL Training

Training sessions were held for providers and Points of Contact on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). These sessions offered a demonstration of the steps of the providerflow and built in Q&A. The goal of the training was to answer questions and mitigate confusion or uncertainty before service applications are submitted to avoid delays in service application approval for the ETPL. This was presented using the CWDS Training site with live demonstrations of the ETPL process flow. ETPL provider trainings covered topics including dashboard review; local board process flow; the HPO list; O\*Net; performance measures (which are required for new submissions); an overview of the report module in PA CareerLink®; common mistakes; and upcoming system enhancements. Additionally, quarterly emails were sent to ETPL Points of Contact, reminding them of reporting requirements and helpful tips throughout the year.

Managerial Training

Managers and supervisors from BWDA, BWPO, and ATO join for a monthly in-person training series. L&I’s aim is to build our management teams’ leadership skills, strengthen communications and collaborative relationships across bureaus, provide managers with the modeling, guidance, and tools they need to support and retain their staff, and support the growth of future leaders. In 2024, training topics included resiliency; leading with vision; motivating others; communicating across boundaries; tactical time management; employment engagement strategies; effective meetings; gaining buy-in; change leadership; and leadership in a virtual world.

# Approach to Customer Satisfaction

*Describe the state’s approach to customer satisfaction, which may include such information used for one-stop center certification, in accordance with 20 CFR 678.800. This description should include: 1) the state’s methodologies; 2) the number of individuals/employers who were provided customer satisfaction outreach, the response rate, and efforts made to improve the response rate; 3) the results and whether the results are generalizable to the entire population of customers; and 4) a description of any continuous improvement processes for incorporating the customer satisfaction feedback.*

Customer satisfaction under the WIOA grant is monitored on a continuous basis using surveys of job seekers and employers. These surveys, generally created by local workforce development areas, evaluate the quality of the service provided; the knowledge of the employee/presenter/facilitator; areas of the service/presentation that were helpful; and areas of the service/presentation that need improvement. The surveys also solicit general feedback given as overall comments (like whether the service was provided in a timely manner) through open-ended questions. Customers receive these surveys as part of staff-assisted services like workshops or employer events. In addition to the customer satisfaction services offered through the PA CareerLink®, the local workforce development boards create similar surveys to provide to customers as part of the triennial PA CareerLink® certification monitoring, where each center is evaluated to ensure it meets certification criteria and is also gathered as part of the local board’s annual monitoring of the service providers and one-stop operators. The results of these surveys and monitoring are used to provide staff development and cross-training to improve the quality of the services provided.

# Combined State Plan Progress

*Progress made in achieving the state’s strategic vision and goals, as described in the state’s Unified or Combined State Plan, for developing its workforce and meeting employer needs in order to support economic growth and economic self-sufficiency.*

Pennsylvania’s WIOA Combined State Plan took effect on July 1, 2024. PY 2023 was spent implementing and tracking progress on the objectives and goals in the previous Plan.

Pennsylvania’s 2024 WIOA Combined State Plan includes six broad goal categories:

* Goal 1: Apprenticeship and Career & Technical Education
* Goal 2: Sector Strategies and Employer Engagement
* Goal 3: Youth
* Goal 4: Continuous Improvement of the PA CareerLink(R) System
* Goal 5: Barrier Remediation
* Goal 6: Addressing Workforce Shortages in Critical Industries

During PY 2023, in addition to developing the new Plan, efforts were focused on meeting goals articulated in the Commonwealth’s previous WIOA Combined State plan:

*Goal 1.2: The Commonwealth will increase recruitment efforts of registered pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs to increase the number of individuals from non-traditional populations, such as women, minorities, re-entrants, and persons with disabilities, into these programs, while also ensuring opportunities are available to both youth and adults.*

Pennsylvania continued to invest in serving these populations in assisting them finding employment in apprenticeship opportunities, including the most recent grant opportunity, PAsmart Pathway Innovations to Registered Apprenticeships Grant Program. Which provided up to $5,000,000 in funding to programs to build new or expand current Registered Apprenticeship Programs with a concentration on recruiting from diverse talent pipelines and serving populations traditionally underserved in Registered Apprenticeship. Programs were required to have a focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion, as well as career pathways to opportunities that pay a living wage.

*Goal 2.3: The Commonwealth will expand access to online education and training programs that result in a credential or certification of value.*

Pennsylvania launched SkillUp™ PA in PY 2021. Over 77,000 individuals have registered for SkillUp™ PA accounts. As of June 2024, users have completed 157,296 courses and have logged 135,698 training hours. All 22 LWDBs have individual local portals to develop networks of employers and job seekers with no-cost access to SkillUp™ PA and all 29 Intermediate Units also have that opportunity. School Districts are utilizing the courses to meet Act 158 requirements, the courses are being utilized across workforce programs for Adults, Dislocated Workers and Youth. The courses are also being utilized in some correctional facilities as the courses can be whitelisted for use behind the walls.

*Goal 3.1: The commonwealth will identify and implement evidence-based models to facilitate effective youth workforce program planning and investments.*

In February of 2024, the Pennsylvania Workforce Development Board approved a recommendation to urge the Pennsylvania Longitudinal Data System (PALDS) to form a project in their purview on Pennsylvanians that have utilized youth programming in the Commonwealth and the employment and education outcomes for those individuals during K12 and postsecondary. This project began in 2024 and will continue and looks to evaluate outcomes of individuals participating in Youth programming supporting by Workforce Development Dollars.

# Sector Strategies and Career Pathways

*Progress made in implementing sector strategies and career pathways. The discussion may include: business engagement strategies, work-based learning (including apprenticeship), work experiences for youth and adults, transitional jobs, and incumbent worker training strategies and policies in the state.*

Schools-to-Work

In March 2024, L&I awarded a fourth round of Schools-to-Work grants to develop and enhance workforce development partnerships between schools, employers, organizations, and associations, for pre-apprenticeship and training pathways for students in grades nine through twelve, with a focus on increasing enrollments of underrepresented groups. Thirteen workforce development programs and training centers were awarded $3.2 million in funding for this round, which began June 1, 2024, and will run until May 31, 2026. Throughout PY 2023, the first, second and third rounds of Schools-to-Work Grants continued in their performance periods. To this date, over 2,500 individuals have been enrolled in a Schools-to-Work program. A fifth round is planned.

Industry Partnerships

Industry Partnerships are one of the primary sector strategy investments made in Pennsylvania. In PY 2023 L&I awarded $4.1 million to 20 partnerships across the Commonwealth. L&I currently supports partnerships in these sectors: healthcare, information technology, manufacturing, building and construction, agriculture, and hospitality + entertainment.

Pennsylvanians share a common vision for economic vitality, global competitiveness and expanding opportunity. Pennsylvania Industry Partnerships (IPs) bring collaboration between education, workforce, economic development and answer the call of being responsive to the needs of business and industry, now more than ever. PA has a long history of successfully supporting IPs that bring together business leaders from the same sector to tackle shared economic and workforce development needs. Pennsylvania has been nationally recognized for its success in achieving outcomes for employers as well as workers. The PA WDB, L&I, and the Department of Community & Economic Development have all come together to support industry partnerships around the state.

Additionally, the Commonwealth has deployed specialized training for Pennsylvania IP Conveners, Core Groups and Support Teams. Trainings include: (1) Community of Practice calls (facilitated by the state team), which are monthly peer networking calls designed for practitioners to share experiences with peers across the state, ask questions of one another, and exchange ideas and strategies for successfully launching and sustaining partnerships; (2) specialized technical assistance, (3) professional development; and (4) regular check-in calls with each partnership and the state team liaisons.

Apprenticeship Integration into the Workforce System

Following the ATO’s launch of the “Registered Apprenticeship Desk Guide for Workforce Professionals” and roll out the comprehensive training on Registered Apprenticeship and Pre-apprenticeship to workforce staff through a full one-day, onsite, Professional Development Day (PDD) in 2022. By 2024, this PDD has reached over 500 individual workforce staff including Workforce Development Boards, PA CareerLink® leadership and frontline staff on the ways to best interact and engage with job seekers, employers and the ATO.

The ATO was the Platinum Sponsor of the PA Workforce Development Association’s (PWDA’s) ApprenticeshipPA Collaborative and Expo, held during National Apprenticeship Week in Hershey, PA from November 13-14, 2023. The event brought together over 275 stakeholders from across PA that are interested in strengthening the apprenticeship and work-based learning models as part of its workforce development strategy. These participating stakeholders included industry and business representatives, professionals from education institutions, employment and training providers, labor unions, economic development, and state agency staff.

Cross-Agency Collaboration in Support of Registered Apprenticeship

Collaborating across agencies helps the ATO expand its reach and more effectively support the expansion of apprenticeship. For example, the ATO is working with PDE to identify vocational programs within the Career and Technical Center (CTC) system that can and should be worked into pre-apprenticeship programs and create standardized templates to expedite growth across PA. The ATO is also partnering with PDE to develop a registered apprenticeship framework, create a pathway for paraprofessionals to become certified educators. ATO’s collaboration with PDE resulted in pre-apprenticeship trainings provided to 235 individuals from 130 school districts across Pennsylvania. The ATO is also working with the PA Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) to offer the Disability Inclusion for Apprenticeships & Pre-Apprenticeships workshop through its Apprenticeship Building America (ABA) grant. Additionally, the ATO’s Pre-Apprenticeship Division has been working closely with the PA Department of Corrections (DOC) for close to a year to create pre-apprenticeship programs within the state’s correction institutions. Part of these efforts include collaborating with DOC to incorporate Multi-Craft Core Curriculum (MC3) and trade futures into the programming, and DOC has secured grant funding for this initial work. With support from L&I leadership, Pennsylvania Apprenticeship and Training Council (PATC) member Robert Bair, and the PA Building Trades, these efforts are beginning to come to fruition.

Expansion of Registered Apprenticeship into New Sectors

The majority of new registered apprenticeships registered in 2023 were in new sectors, further expanding the registered apprenticeship model beyond the building trades. Some new sector apprenticeships registered in 2023 include: Cosmetologist, Application Developer, Arborist, Wastewater Systems Operator, Peer Specialist, Youth Development Practitioner, Digital Marketer, Dairy Herd Manager, Cybersecurity Support Technician, Prototype Model Maker, Sourcing Recruiter, and IT Generalist.

Apprenticeship Building America (ABA) Grant Progresses

In 2022, the ATO received an Apprenticeship Building America (ABA) grant from the USDOL with a goal of helping to embed a focus on apprenticeship within the Commonwealth’ s workforce system. Additionally, through this grant, the ATO is supporting local workforce areas as they develop, enhance, and implement strategic plans to expand registered apprenticeship (RA) and pre-apprenticeship (Pre-RA) in their regions, while building knowledge and skills of workforce board and PA CareerLink® staff.

In early 2023, the ATO awarded over $1.8 million in ABA sub granted funding to ten LWDB subgrantees. Collectively, 27 counties in Pennsylvania will be served through just those subgrantees with the ATO looking to serve many of the remaining counties. By late 2023, 10 new registered apprenticeship and 15 new pre-apprenticeships have been built as a result of the funding, with RTI/OJT and support service reimbursements kicking off with the aim of serving 405 apprentices and 405 pre-apprentices.

PAsmart Apprenticeship & Pre-Apprenticeship Grants Progress

Since 2018, L&I has invested over $28 million in PAsmart funding statewide to support 124 projects in the accommodation and food service, agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting, professional and business services, early childhood development, education, electric power generation, healthcare and social assistance, information technology, animal production, administrative and support services, transportation, building and construction, and manufacturing sectors. This funding has supported the creation of 85 new pre-apprenticeship and 102 new registered apprenticeship programs, reaching a total of 2,116 apprentices and 2,110 pre-apprentices across the Commonwealth. Additionally, 3,926 employers and 1,565 training providers have been engaged through PAsmart.

The PAsmart Supporting Broadband Infrastructure through Registered Apprenticeships and Pre-Apprenticeships initiative was released in April 2023, with approximately $800,000 in funding awarded to four organizations to expand and support existing registered apprenticeship and/or pre-apprenticeship programs in broadband-related occupations, focusing on developing diverse talent pipelines and serving underrepresented populations.

Between 2023 and 2025, the Apprenticeship and Training Office is on track to post Notice of Grant Availabilities (NGAs) for over $22 million. The NGAs support diverse sectors including but not limited building trades, education, IT, healthcare, agriculture, and advanced manufacturing.

PAsmart STEM and Computer Science Initiative

In 2024 the PDE released a new round of grants under the PAsmart Initiative intended to expand access and inclusion in career and technical education programs that have a focus on computer science and STEM. The Distressed Schools Grant, for up to $75,000, is intended to partner the most vulnerable fiscally distressed school communities with local Career and Technology Centers to increase opportunities for learners to be included in computer science and STEM Career and Technical Education experiences. A second element of the grant strategy is a PAsmart Planning grant, for up to $75,000, intended for those communities requiring support in moving from an idea to an initiative. Those entities receiving a planning grant would establish the partners within the communities, foundational resources, and pilot tests to be positioned for larger grants and eventual sustainability in the future. The third element of the grant strategy is the PAsmart Innovation grant, for up to $500,000, for projects that expand access to and inclusion in computer science and STEM career and technical education.

Additionally, in 2024 – 2025 PDE will be announcing a new round of PAsmart Targeted Grants. These grants will be requesting applications that continue to build upon the work of previous PAsmart Initiatives by expanding the inclusion of learners and communities in the Computer Science and STEM economies. The grants will provide awards of up to $50,000.00 for initiatives that:

* Connect elementary and middle school STEM and Computer Science experiences to in demand career and technical education career pathways
* Bring STEM and Computer Science experiences to communities and populations lacking the opportunities to be included in a technology-driven Pennsylvania economy
* Build new programs or initiatives in areas like cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, and biotechnology.

Statewide Layoff Aversion Program

The Steel Valley Authority (SVA) receives funding from L&I to administer the Statewide Layoff Aversion Program (SLAP). Their current three-year grant is $6,000,000, awarded in $2,000,000 annual increments. SVA’s Strategic Early Warning Network (SEWN) program covers all 67 Pennsylvania counties working with subject matter experts from manufacturing and related industries to avert job losses and business closures. SEWN conducts outreach to businesses identified as distressed, such as supply chains affected by large corporate closures, tax liens, referrals from public and private organizations, etc. All services provided by SEWN are confidential and at no-cost to the companies.

To further enhance the services and assistance SEWN provides to distressed companies, they recently implemented an incumbent worker training component to their extensive list of customized supports. When a company has been stabilized, SEWN offers up to $2,500 per employee (up to $10,000 per company) to help upskill or reskill employees to enable them to better support the new strategies implemented through their participation in the SLAP program.

During the 2023-2024 program year, SEWN saved 1,333 jobs at a cost to the state of $1,140 per job. Using state averages, the loss of those jobs would have cost the Commonwealth over $8.7 million in unemployment costs.

New Choices New Options

Pennsylvania Women Work (PA Women Work) receives funding through L&I for the New Choices New Options program which aids adults in transition. The goal of this program is to help economically disadvantaged adults pursue family-sustaining careers through employment and/or training and education. The program's primary objectives are to facilitate participants' work readiness through career skills development, increase participant knowledge and skills to obtain career/educational goals in a timely manner, and reduce participants' personal barriers to obtaining and retaining employment through wraparound services and connection to area partners. For PY 2023, Pennsylvania Women Work was awarded $1,000,000.00 to provide these services to over 1,100 participants across Pennsylvania.

# Small State Allotment

*If the state has received a small state allotment exception to decrease the minimum out-of-school youth expenditure requirement, describe how the exception has impacted services provided to both in-school youth and out-of-school youth, including specific strategies for serving each population, as well as how the state and/or local area is ensuring serving out-of-school youth remains a priority.*

Pennsylvania did not receive a small state minimum allotment exception.

# Performance Accountability System

*Any specific state performance measure or goals and progress towards meeting them.*

Not applicable.

*Any performance deficiencies on the primary indicators of performance, which may include descriptions of any factors impacting performance.*

Not applicable.

*The state’s common exit policy, including which ETA-funded partner programs are included in the state’s common exit policy.*

Pennsylvania does not have a common exit policy, however, business rules established in CWDS exit participants from common measures after 90 days of not receiving a partner service. This business rule applies to WIOA titles I and III and Trade Act participants.

*Negotiated performance levels for local areas for titles I and III core programs for Program Years 2022 and 2023.*

Negotiated performance levels are outlined within Appendix A, which covers both PY 2022 and PY 2023.

*The state’s approach to data validation and ensuring data integrity, including a description of the methodology of any validation activities that occurred.*

Data validation consists of internal controls to verify the accuracy, validity, and reliability of data. Data validation helps ensure the accuracy of the annual statewide performance reports; safeguards data integrity; and promotes the timely resolution of data anomalies and inaccuracies (2 CFR 200.328). Data validation ensures that all programs are consistently and accurately reflecting the performance of each core program. All participants across core programs must be validated for the common data elements of the Participant Individual Record Layout (PIRL).

USDOL requires the Commonwealth to validate the accuracy of its annual performance report submissions to ensure decisions about WIOA policy and funding are made based on a true picture of program outcomes. Quarterly performance reviews are completed to monitor for data errors, missing data, out-of-range values, and anomalies. These reviews assure that compliance with applicable federal requirements and programmatic performance expectations are being achieved.

Annual data element validation will be conducted to ensure that the data elements in participant records are accurate—to maintain system integrity, to ensure completeness of data, and to identify and correct specific issues associated within the reporting process. The effectiveness of the data validation process will be assessed annually.

Annual Process:

Per the *Pennsylvania WIOA Common Measures Data Validation Desk Guide*, local area staff collect documentation supporting the data elements on an ongoing basis. This data collection becomes the foundation for the annual data element validation. Documentation may be stored electronically in the system of record (Commonwealth Workforce Development System) or in a paper file.

For data validation, CWIA at L&I developed a statistical model to randomly select participants whose data were included in the Participant Individual Record Layout (PIRL) file provided for the annual performance report.

A worksheet for each PID will be created from the PIRL file that contains all applicable data elements and documentation reported during the reporting period to be validated.

Staff from BWPO Quality Assurance division will validate the worksheets against the source documentation in the participant’s electronic and paper files to ensure compliance with federal and state guidance.

Each data element that is required to be validated and is supported or matched by acceptable documentation will “pass.”

Any data element that is required to be validated and is not supported or matched by acceptable documentation, or is inconsistent with other documentation, will “fail.” In addition, inaccurate CWDS data entry that negatively impacts WIOA reporting will be considered a failure.

Quality Assurance will provide data element validation training in June each year to staff in comprehensive PA CareerLink® offices who offer WIOA Title I and III services and programs.

# Activities Provided with the Governor’s Reserved Funds

*Activities provided with the funds reserved by the governor, which can be up to 15 percent of the state’s allotment.*

Pennsylvania supports several staff positions with the Governor’s Reserve funding to accomplish the required statewide activities. This includes staff from BWPO’s central office teams who complete the required Rapid Response activities supporting businesses and workers impacted by lay-offs; manages the Commonwealth Workforce Development System (CWDS) which disseminates the list of eligible training providers; provides technical assistance to state entities and local areas to carry out the state plan; and other required activities, the BWDA who carries out monitoring and oversight of activities for services to youth, adults, and dislocated workers under WIOA title I, and operates and manages fiscal accountability information systems; and L&I’s Office of Equal Opportunity who disseminates information on physical and programmatic accessibility through period reviews.

Agribusiness Workforce Services Engagement

In collaboration with the PA Department of Agriculture (PDA), BWDA revised the structure of agriculture initiatives and plans to solicit proposals beginning in December 2024. A selected vendor for this project will connect small agribusinesses to workforce development resources and offices; they will also develop training and guidance for workforce development stakeholders for navigating the unique workforce circumstances in the agribusiness industry. The program will educate eligible farm and agribusiness owners to ensure that they understand and have access to the services offered through the PA CareerLink®/PA Workforce Development System, including tax credits, On-the-Job Training Contracts, Registered Apprenticeship Opportunities, writing effective job postings and job descriptions, and recruitment of diverse populations not traditionally employed in agriculture. Another initiative of the grant is to provide additional individualized technical assistance to farms and agribusinesses who would benefit, which can include improvements to the organization’s HR and Workforce Development processes for hiring, training, retaining, managing, and evaluating employees.

Digital Literacy and Workforce Development Grant-Round 3

A continuation and enhancement of the Digital Literacy and Workforce Development Round 1 grant (DLWDG), grantees in Round 3 were able to continue their existing projects with 12 months of additional funds (up to $45,000/project). L&I’s $600,000 Digital Literacy & Workforce Development Round 3 Grant supports sixteen (16) effective programs that enhance foundational digital literacy skills for these job seekers in their local communities. This grant has a period of performance from October 1, 2022, through September 30, 2023. These grants support L&I’s vision to prepare individuals for job searching and emerging employment opportunities, to gain access to employment with family sustaining wages, and to increase communities’ infrastructures for providing foundational digital literacy skills.

Digital Literacy and Workforce Development Grant-Round 4

A continuation and enhancement of the Digital Literacy and Workforce Development Round 2 grant, grantees in Round 4 were able to continue their existing projects with 12 months of additional funds (up to $45,000/project). The award totals nearly $700,000 and will connect Pennsylvania workers with the skills they need to effectively navigate the technology platforms used in today’s workplaces. Digital Literacy & Workforce Development Round 4 Grant supports sixteen (16) effective programs that enhance foundational digital literacy skills for these job seekers in their local communities. This grant has a period of performance from August 1, 2023, through July 31, 2024. This is an additional round of digital-literacy funding that builds on $835,000 awarded in May 2022 (DLWDG Round 2) to support local programs that provide computer-skills training to help people find good jobs in Pennsylvania. Digital literacy grants are 100 percent federally funded.

Business Education Partnership Program Year 2021

The Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry (L&I) awarded 22 Business Education Partnership (BEP) grants to local workforce development boards (LWDBs) and had a period of performance from February 1, 2022 to December 31, 2023. Awards totaled $3.1 million (up to $150,000 per grantee). The BEP program allows school districts to collaborate with local business and LWDBs to educate students, parents and guardians regarding HPOs and in-demand career pathways. The partnerships provide career-related experiences, exposure to different workplace opportunities and knowledge regarding opportunities in the state through internships, job shadowing, career mentoring, career awareness activities and tours.

Business Education Partnership Program Year 2022

The Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry (L&I) awarded 22 Business Education Partnership (BEP) grants to local workforce development boards (LWDBs) and had a period of performance from June 1, 2023, to August 31, 2024. Awards totaled $3.2 million (up to $150,000 per grantee).

Youth Reentry

In PY 2022, L&I awarded $5.5 million in Youth Reentry Grant funding to 10 LWDBs. The goal of this initiative is to engage youth, ages 18-24, who were incarcerated or subject to the justice system, into a career pathway leading to postsecondary education, advanced training, and/or meaningful employment. These programs are helping to reduce recidivism in their areas. To date, this program has reached 2,285 individuals.

Near Completer

The Near Completer grant program was designed for Pennsylvanians who started post-secondary education in high-priority, in-demand fields but stopped without completing their degrees or certificates. Under the guidance of local workforce development boards (LWDBs) and partner schools, participants gain the skills and job training needed to obtain quality employment with family-sustaining wages—a key priority [of Governor Josh Shapiro’s budget proposal](https://www.shapirobudget.pa.gov/). LWDBs awarded grant funding partner with PASSHE schools or other post-secondary education institutions, businesses, workforce leaders, and community partners to help eliminate common barriers faced by individuals seeking re-enrollment. Over $6 million was awarded to four LWDBs. When the project wrapped in June 2024, 197 of the 237 enrollees graduated. Their collective graduation rate was 83%, well-surpassing Pennsylvania’s 59% overall graduation rate for students enrolled in 4-year institutions. The grantees reported all or most of their students were fairly certain they were never going to be able to finish school and graduate. Through this program, nearly 200 of our fellow citizens are now free of that heavy ‘drop-out’ burden anyone who has gone through something like this carries.

Certified Teacher Registered Apprenticeship

In December 2023, L&I awarded Certified Teacher Registered Apprenticeship Grant, to develop a framework for a Registered Apprenticeship to be utilized by school districts within the Commonwealth, which will ultimately allow for the creation of teaching pathways in various subject areas for paraprofessionals throughout Pennsylvania. The goal is to create a program template that can be utilized across Pennsylvania and adapted to specific regional or local needs. Central Susquehanna IU 16 was awarded $379,405 in funding for this program, which began December 1, 2023, and will run until February 28, 2025.

# Rapid Response Activities and Layoff Aversion

*Data on the number of companies served and the number of individuals served.*

Pennsylvania served 86 Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notifications (WARNs) during PY 2023. These WARN notices affected 10,048 workers. The Rapid Response team also responded to 317 Public Notices of closure; these notices affected 7,174 workers.

*Discussion of strategies for linking Rapid Response recipients to American Job Centers and processes for intake or co-enrollment in the Trade Adjustment Assistance and Dislocated Worker programs.*

During PY 2023, the Rapid Response Team (RRT) focused on an outreach strategy to promptly connect customers that participated in a Rapid Response (RR) activity with PA CareerLink®. The RRT focused on what information housed in a RR case (in the Commonwealth Workforce Development System, or CWDS) can be shared with PA CareerLink® staff that will foster a connection with customers threatened with a layoff/company closure. The RRT worked on enhancing outreach features within the Rapid Response environment on CWDS that enabled PA CareerLink® staff to gain access to customer demographics, education levels, and transferable skills.

Having this information available allows for PA CareerLink® to strategically plan the approach to engage a particular group of workers. The new outreach features allow for PA CareerLink® staff to see how many customers attended a Rapid Response event, schedule an appointment, and set up an in-person or virtual appointment with the customer. The staff member also has access to the customer RR survey, which highlights work interests, desired re-employment services, and possible barriers to be addressed.

Additionally, the outreach tools highlight customers that were invited to a RR event but did not to attend. PA CareerLink® staff now have access to these workers and engage promptly to provide re-employment services. The intent of this outreach initiative is to increase collaboration between the RRT and PA CareerLink®, which then translates to a better connection with the shared customer. It is vital for a customer that loses employment through no fault of their own to connect with Rapid Response and equally important to engage PA CareerLink® for re-employment services. This strategy, alongside the tools provided in the system of record, will increase customer engagement with PA CareerLink®.

*Discussion of layoff aversion strategies, including any metrics / outcomes developed and/or tracked by the state with respect to the layoff aversion, such as return on investment or measures showing the economic benefits of Rapid Response and layoff aversion.*

For Program Year 2023, the Rapid Response Team (RRT) strengthened their ties with the Steel Valley Authority (SEWN) to provide layoff aversion services to employers who may be experience business difficulties. Through the SEWN partnership, many businesses in PA saw the need to pivot their services to meet modern needs and thus required assistance in services such as operations/cost management, financial restructuring, new market opportunities, and technology.

During the program year, 194 companies received layoff aversion services from the SEWN partnership saving a total of 1,333 jobs throughout the state. Referrals to layoff aversion came from the Governor’s Action Team, local economic development, Rapid Response Coordinators, and employer customer referrals. The result of saving 1,333 jobs equates to a savings of $8,770,848 in unemployment costs.

While the RRT and its partners want to exhaust all possibilities to save a business from layoffs/closures, the reality is that not all businesses can be saved. Hence, the RRT expanded virtual services allowing employers to select from a menu of pre-layoff/layoff services through any platform of their choosing. The RRT continues to include PA CareerLink® as a valued partner to engage recently laid-off workers and connect them with re-employment services, thus minimizing the length of unemployment.

*Discussion of how Rapid Response and layoff aversion activities are aligned with business engagement, sector strategy, and career pathway efforts, which may include a discussion of any systems, tools, networks of approaches designed to identify companies in distress and strategies to deliver necessary solutions as early as possible, as well as outcomes of the use of such systems or tools.*

During PY 2023, the RRT, SEWN, and related partners embarked on a layoff aversion project and business engagement project to identify companies in bankruptcy proceedings that may have a need for layoff aversion activities. The Rapid Response team is working with the Office of Chief Counsel and Special Assistant to the Secretary, Carol Momjian, to formulate effective communications and strategies to engage these companies and try to prevent closure and layoffs affected by business closures.

The team has not yet implemented this strategy as we are still working out the details and the communication plan with all the parties involved in the initiative.

In addition to this new strategy, Pennsylvania Rapid Response has been involved in several ‘Feasibility Studies’ as part of layoff aversion activities. In coordination with the local workforce development boards, the Rapid Response team has engaged with several companies who were struggling to develop new customers due to contract loss.

The commonwealth is projecting that there will be additional studies during the upcoming year to look at the Lumber/Paper/Wood industry in PA to create positive future results for the company thus greatly diminishing potential job reduction situations.

*Discussion of specific types of services or workshops provided to both companies and affected workers.*

PA Rapid Response is triggered by receipt of a WARN (Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification). A WARN is required by federal legislation and offers protection to workers, their families and communities by requiring employers to provide notice 60 days in advance of a covered-business closing and covered-business mass layoff. Enforcement of the WARN Act falls under U.S. Department of Labor jurisdiction.

The Pennsylvania Rapid Response Services team initiates rapid response assistance as soon as information is received that a mass dislocation or plant closure is scheduled to take place. Rapid Response Assistance is triggered by a variety of information sources including the Worker Adjustment Retraining Notification (WARN) Act 20 CFR Part 639, public announcements, press releases by the employer or representatives of an employer, and other less formal information developed by early warning networks, individual phone calls, or other sources. A “Public Notice” is a closing or layoff confirmed through a Rapid Response Unit contact. Every effort has been made to have a creditable source of information or confirmation from the employer or some other clearly credible evidence of an imminent dislocation event before listing it as a public notification of layoff.

The RRT continued to conduct Fact-Finding meetings with employers experiencing layoff/closure within 48 hours of receiving notice. Contact is made with the employer and any union to develop a preliminary service strategy. Rapid Response information meetings are held either at the workplace or at a convenient site to provide workers with a wide range of information about benefits and services that are critical for a successful transition to new employment or training for an HPO. When possible, information meetings are held prior to the layoff date and on company time and/or a virtual platform of the employer’s choosing.

Information sessions are tailored to the needs of the employer and affected workers. In general, the sessions cover the following services:

* unemployment compensation
* career counseling/resume preparation/job-search assistance
* education and training opportunities (includes Trade Adjustment Assistance)
* supportive services
* limited English proficiency classes
* adult basic education
* referrals and information about services available through OVR
* healthcare
* services exclusively for veterans and adult w/ disabilities.

For employers, RRT offers:

* quick response to transition planning needs
* confidentiality concerning business decisions
* assistance with understanding government regulations
* information about alternatives that may reduce or avoid layoffs
* for small- to medium-sized businesses, referral to agencies that can help in re-structuring to avoid layoffs or closing the business.

While the RRT and its partners want to exhaust all possibilities to save a business from layoffs/closures, the reality is that not all businesses can be saved. Hence, the RRT expanded virtual services allowing employers to select from a menu of pre-layoff/layoff services through any platform of their choosing. The RRT continues to include PA CareerLink® as a valued partner to engage recently laid-off workers and connect them with re-employment services, thus minimizing the length of unemployment.

During the program year, 194 companies received layoff aversion services from the SEWN partnership saving a total of 1,333 jobs throughout the state. Referrals to layoff aversion came from the Governor’s Action Team, local economic development, Rapid Response Coordinators, and employer customer referrals. The result of saving 1,333 jobs equates to a savings of $8,770,848 in unemployment costs.

The RRT, SEWN, and related partners embarked on a layoff aversion project and business engagement project to identify companies in bankruptcy proceedings that may have a need for layoff aversion activities.  The RRT is working with the Office of Chief Counsel and L&I Leadership to formulate effective communications and strategies to engage these companies and try to prevent closure and layoffs affected by business closures.

The team has not yet implemented this strategy as we are still working out the details and the communication plan with the parties involved in the initiative.

In addition to this new strategy, Pennsylvania Rapid Response has been involved in several ‘Feasibility Studies’ as part of layoff aversion activities.  In coordination with the local workforce development boards, the Rapid Response team has engaged with several companies who were struggling to develop new customers due to contract loss.

The Commonwealth is projecting that there will be additional studies during the upcoming year to look at the Lumber/Paper/Wood industry in PA to create positive future results for the company thus greatly diminishing potential job reduction situations.

# Wagner-Peyser Activities

*Activities provided under the Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Services section 7(b) (e.g., services to groups with special needs or extra costs of exemplary models for delivering services).*

Professional Development Delivery Model for Pennsylvania’s Workforce Development System

Over several years, the L&I has worked on a project to assess professional development needs, skill shortages, and possible areas of service delivery improvement through professional development across the service delivery system and to build a suitable model for addressing these needs. Prior to PY 2023, L&I contracted with a vendor to build upon identified performance gaps of system staff and provide actionable steps to design and launch a professional development delivery structure within the PA CareerLink® system. In PY 2023, these recommendations were reviewed, and an action plan was launched for statewide professional development delivery.

TAD Business Services Training

This training initiative was to engage businesses/employers more effectively. Funding was used for things like the development of the High Priority Occupations list (used to effectively targeted training funds through the PA CareerLink® system), Career Poster (showcasing career options in a variety of industry clusters), Workforce System Performance analysis (research and infographics beyond the standard quarterly and annual reports), Labor Market Information (LMI) training sessions and workshops, and a variety of other data-related efforts to support and promote the endeavors of the workforce system.

Career Guide

CWIA develops and publishes the PA Career Guide every two years. This resource helps students, job seekers, and career changers make informed career decisions. Examples of the information found in this guide include career outlook highlights, an interest assessment tool, tips for marketing yourself, sources of financial aid, and contact information for many Commonwealth services, including PA CareerLink® locations and select state agencies. This funding covered the staff time to collaborate with partners and develop the content of the 27th edition of the PA Career Guide as well as the costs associated with printing the publication and distributing it to interested parties, like educational institutions, PA CareerLink® offices, local Workforce Development Boards, non-profit organizations, and other state agency partners (like Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and Department of Corrections.)

Dunn & Bradstreet/EconoVue

Dunn & Bradstreet EconoVue supports a wide variety of workforce programs and use cases. Using the platform, Local Workforce Development Boards can predict the health of companies in their community, target with greater precision and speed, and succeed through early engagement for greater impact.

# National Dislocated Worker Grants

*Any National Dislocated Worker Grants (NDWGs) awarded to or within the state and how those funds are coordinated with state rapid response activities and dislocated worker programs, as well as how the DWGs fit in with state co-enrollment policies and disaster/emergency management activities, as applicable.*

Disaster Recovery National Dislocated Worker Grant (DWG) to address the opioid crisis. Grant Period of Performance: April 8, 2024 – April 7, 2026. DWG grants are aimed at reducing the workforce impacts of federally declared disasters, such as the opioid crisis, through employment and training activities for dislocated workers and temporary employment opportunities assisting disaster-relief efforts.

L&I received an award amount of $8,717,252.00. We proposed five grant activities in response to workforce impacts due to the opioid crisis. Two activities will be implemented statewide and eleven Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) will serve as subgrantees and provide direct services. This initiative includes engaging in disaster relief work and career and training activities.

L&I’s vision is to expand on the Commonwealth’s comprehensive approach to addressing Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) by providing additional and necessary resources to this public health and economic crisis that have proven successful in previous iterations of this program to include the following initiatives:

* Integrate treatment and employment services
* Expand related medical and treatment services
* Educate and Engage Employers

L&I and participating LWDBs will work in partnership with community addiction treatment centers to deliver in-location Title I career services by qualified career coaches mirroring the services provided at PA CareerLink®. PA CareerLink® sites will provide in-location career services, wellness and coaching Title I services, and ensure the supplement of training allowances for related fields.

# Technical Assistance Needs

*Any technical assistance needs of the state workforce system.*

Pay-for-Performance Contracts

Pennsylvania is interested in obtaining more information regarding pay-for-performance contracts. After reviewing guidance issued by the U.S. Department of Labor, as well as information through WorkforceGPS, PA’s workforce stakeholders have expressed an interest in evaluating models from other states that have demonstrated effectiveness in serving diverse populations groups and individuals who face significant barriers to employment.

Integrated Education and Training Activities for Title I and II

We believe it would be beneficial for ETA and OCTAE to develop a Peer Learning Cohort, similar to the ones that were conducted around co-enrollment and credential attainment, to assist states in learning how to better braid funding to support integrated education and training activities across Title I and II programming.

# Promising Practices, Lessons Learned, and Success Stories

*Promising practices, lessons learned, and success stories that focus on serving employers, communities, and individuals with barriers to employment, including information based on the state’s evaluation and related research projects. This discussion should cover a broad range of at-risk and priority populations served, including out-of-school youth, low-income adults, dislocated workers, individuals who are basic skills deficient, individuals with limited language proficiency, individuals with disabilities, veterans, the long-term unemployed, and any other individuals with barriers to employment or other populations the state may wish to discuss.*

Adult Education: Serving Multilingual Learners

Staff from Title II-funded adult education programs worked closely with workforce development system partners, including PA CareerLink frontline staff and Title I program staff, to meet the needs of multilingual learners, i.e., individuals with limited language proficiency. Title II program staff share their knowledge and expertise in working with adults from diverse backgrounds and native languages. They report that they have observed improvements in one-stop services to these individuals through interpretation and translation services, including in areas which have not previously had large multilingual populations.

Workforce Staff Training Project

The Workforce Staff Training Project is a collaboration between the PDE and L&I to provide online cross-training for all workforce development partners to support jobseekers’ success through referrals and co-enrollment. There are currently two free on-demand trainings available at [www.workforcestafftraining.com](https://www.workforcestafftraining.com). In PY 2023-24, 1,349 unique individuals enrolled in a course. These include state staff as well as staff in all 22 local workforce areas.

Department of Education – Student Teacher Stipend Program

Last December, Governor Josh Shapiro signed into law Act 33 of 2023, creating the $10 million Educator Pipeline Support Grant Program, which provides stipends to eligible student teachers in Pennsylvania. The program is a key initiative in the Shapiro Administration’s work to tackle the Commonwealth’s teacher shortage. In the 2024-25 budget, Governor Shapiro secured an additional $20 million for the program, and the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency began dispersing the $30 million available to eligible student teachers and cooperating teachers in Fall 2024. This program will ensure student teachers are compensated for their hard work as they complete their student teaching requirements. Nearly 2,000 student teachers have been provisionally approved for the 2024-2025 school year.

Department of Education – Streamlining Pathway to CTE Certification

A recent change to the Pennsylvania School Code (Act 55 of 2024) is expected to increase the number of individuals seeking to become career and technical education (CTE) instructors. This is especially important as an increasing number of students are seeking to enroll in CTE classes. Act 55 amended the School Code to allow a CTE intern certificate to be awarded to an individual with a bachelor’s degree and two years of full-time, wage-earning experience in the occupational area to be taught. Previously, individuals could only receive an intern certificate if they had four years of wage-earning experience. The new law also allows firefighters and emergency medical technicians (EMT) to count their volunteer hours toward the occupational prerequisite for earning CTE intern and instructional certificates. The change in law also provides individuals who have taught postsecondary courses in an occupational area at an accredited college with a clearer pathway toward receiving a CTE certification.

PA CareerLink® Accessibility

A collaborative effort between L&I’s Workforce, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, and Office of Equal Opportunity staff resulted in an Americans with a Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility review of Pennsylvania’s 62 PA CareerLink® centers and additional access points. These evaluations were focused on determining if each of the comprehensive and affiliate sites fully met all accessibility standards and created a welcoming environment for customers with a disability. When opportunities for improvement were identified, LWDB and state staff quickly responded to ensure any shortcomings were rectified as quickly as possible. Where it was determined that technology equipment and systems were outdated or non-functional, the devices were replaced. Necessary software such as ZoomText and Jaws was updated Commonwealth-wide. The results of this effort were shared with the PA WDB and the OVR board, as well as other organizations with an interest in support persons with a disability in the Commonwealth.

Employer Engagement and No-Cost Support Services

To help employers support individuals with disabilities in their hiring efforts, OVR offers a variety of no-cost services, including workplace accessibility consultation, disability awareness training, assistance with identifying job accommodations, and recruitment support. These services reduce barriers for employers, particularly those in rural or underserved areas, and enable them to create more inclusive work environments. These no cost business services for employers are aligned with OVR’s goals to build sustainable, long-lasting partnerships with businesses across Pennsylvania.

OVR Internship Programming for College Students with Disabilities

In partnership with the Pennsylvania Office of Administration (OA), OVR offers the Commonwealth Internship Program, designed to provide college students with disabilities valuable professional work experience within state government. This program places students in various state agencies, allowing them to build career-specific skills, gain insights into public sector operations, and expand their professional networks. Through this initiative, OVR and OA help bridge the transition from college to career for students with disabilities, enhancing their job readiness and opening pathways to permanent employment in public service. The program also benefits state agencies by creating a more inclusive workforce and building a pipeline of skilled, diverse talent for future state employment opportunities. This year 25 OVR customers completed a 10-week paid summer internship in various state agencies in the Pittsburgh, Harrisburg, Johnstown and Philadelphia regions.

Serving Employers with a Statewide Footprint through the Single Point of Contact Model

OVR has implemented a Single Point of Contact (SPOC) model within its Business Services Team, both at the Central Office level and across each of its 22 local offices. This program year, OVR hired 22 Business Services Representatives (BSRs) to act as dedicated SPOCs for each local district office, ensuring a streamlined approach to employer engagement and support. This model simplifies communication for employers by providing them with a single, consistent contact for all their needs related to hiring individuals with disabilities, coordinating work experiences, and accessing OVR’s resources.

The Central Office Business Services Team supports field staff with training, resources, and guidance, helping BSRs in local offices address employer needs more effectively and ensuring consistency across the state. The SPOC model reduces employer fatigue by minimizing the number of OVR contacts reaching out to employers, making interactions more efficient and responsive. This approach allows OVR to better meet employers' needs and foster long-term partnerships, ultimately increasing employer satisfaction and encouraging more businesses to engage in hiring and supporting individuals with disabilities.

OVR also connects its BSRs with PA CareerLink® Business Services staff to further streamline the SPOC model. This collaboration ensures that employers receive unified support from both OVR and PA CareerLink® centers, enhancing coordination across workforce services and simplifying employer interactions throughout the hiring process.

Hiring Initiative for Hard-to-Fill Positions within the Commonwealth

In partnership with the Office of Administration, OVR has implemented a hiring initiative focused on placing qualified individuals with disabilities into hard-to-fill positions within state agencies. Recognizing the challenges agencies face in filling certain roles, OVR provides targeted support to identify, prepare, and refer candidates who are well-suited for these opportunities. The program includes training for OVR Counselors to better understand and make appropriate referrals, as well as using BSRs to work directly with candidates on interview readiness and job matching. This initiative not only provides stable employment for individuals with disabilities but also supports state agencies in addressing workforce needs while promoting diversity and inclusion within the Commonwealth's workforce.

Continuum of Services for Youth with Disabilities: Career Exploration to Competitive Integrated Employment

OVR has developed a continuum of services that guides youth with disabilities from early career exploration at age 14 through paid work experiences in their last two years of high school, ultimately preparing them for further training or permanent placement in competitive integrated employment (CIE). This pathway begins with career exploration activities such as job shadowing and industry visits to help students understand their interests and strengths. As they progress through high school, students participate in structured, paid work experiences that build essential job skills and workplace confidence. Upon graduation, OVR supports students in pursuing further education, training programs, or direct placement into CIE roles. This approach ensures that young people with disabilities are equipped with the skills, experience, and support they need to achieve long-term career success.

An example of a program along this continuum is the MY Work program which is a summer employment program created by OVR to provide high school students with disabilities the chance to work within their local municipalities. MY Work established a collaboration between OVR, local education agencies, local government, and non-profit organizations, providing paid work experiences to high school students. During this program year, OVR placed 1,214 students with disabilities at 165 worksites across 58 Pennsylvanian counties. OVR covers the program’s wages for all student workers, with no cost to the municipality. Additionally, OVR has developed work readiness guidance that includes soft skills training and interview preparation to assist the participants in a variety of fields, including beautification projects, children’s programming, and customer service.

Working with municipalities and non-profits allows OVR to spread its message and services across a wide geographical area, reaching both urban and rural communities. These partnerships provide a platform for OVR to build relationships with local government agencies and community organizations, raising awareness of OVR’s mission to support employment for individuals with disabilities. As OVR’s presence becomes more established in these localities, more employers, educators, and community members become aware of OVR’s services. This broad network of partnerships helps ensure that people in even the most remote areas of the state know about the opportunities available to individuals with disabilities through OVR programs.

This continuum of services not only supports youth with disabilities but also brings significant benefits to employers across Pennsylvania. By engaging with OVR early in the continuum, employers can help shape the next generation of skilled workers, introducing individuals with disabilities to their industry and fostering talent aligned with their specific workforce needs. Employers who participate in programs like MY Work benefit from having dedicated, prepared young workers who bring fresh perspectives and enthusiasm to roles in their organizations.

Additionally, as these young people progress through work-based learning and paid work experiences, employers can observe and train potential future employees with the support of OVR’s job readiness guidance and wage coverage, reducing both financial and operational risks. Building these relationships helps employers establish a diverse, inclusive talent pipeline that supports long-term recruitment and retention goals, leading to a workforce that is both inclusive and reflective of the community. Employers partnering with OVR to provide work experiences along this continuum help create lasting career pathways for people with disabilities, benefiting both the employees and the business.

L&I collects highlights of workforce success stories. These synopses provide a glimpse into the real-life impact of these programs in the life of Pennsylvanians by outlining the customers’ starting position and need, and how the services provided helped them achieve their goals and improve their lives. Success stories are shared with USDOL, in the L&I Secretary Spotlight and the State Workforce Board Quarterly Report. Below are some examples:

*After losing a long-time position, Betsy increases her skills and rejoins the workforce with a better job*

Betsy was laid off from a marketing firm specializing in retail store layout resets after being employed for over 15 years. As part of regular Unemployment Compensation (UC) outreach efforts, PA CareerLink® staff contacted Betsy to offer assistance with finding new employment. Betsy came to the PA CareerLink® Jefferson County and met with Bureau of Workforce Partnership and Operation (BWPO) staff to complete the PA CareerLink® registration requirement and to search for work, and later to meet requirements of the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessments (RESEA) program. Betsy was referred to Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I staff as a dislocated adult. After attending several workshops at the PA CareerLink®, Betsy considered going to training for a Commercial Driver’s License (CDL). However, family concerns led to Betsy deciding to stay in her current line of work, and PA CareerLink® staff completed job development activities on her behalf. Betsy obtained employment with Mondelez International, working a full-time position for $18.00 per hour.

*Determined Single Mother Overcomes Challenges to Achieve GED and Pursue Nursing Career*

A single mother of two sons came to the PA CareerLink® Somerset Co. On March 3rd, 2023. We registered her into the Young Adult Program. She was an 18-year-old high school dropout. She was currently in her senior year but was falling behind on her schoolwork as she was working a job and trying to care for her two young sons. We started her in General Educational Development (GED) classes on April 4th, 2023. After faithfully attending classes for a month and scoring well on the GED Ready tests, a supportive service was submitted to cover the cost of the GED test. She continued to attend GED classes while taking the GED test sections. As of July 11th, 2023, she has passed all GED test sections. She is now looking into different schooling options for becoming a nurse.

*Shaping Young Lives Through a Career in Childcare*

In April 2024, Tatiana took a pivotal step toward building her future by joining the Out-of-School Youth Program at PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley. Motivated by her goal of achieving financial independence and securing meaningful employment, she dove headfirst into the program, determined to succeed. Her commitment was evident from the start, and by May 2024, she had successfully completed the You’re Hired curriculum. Through this comprehensive training, Tatiana gained essential workforce skills in interviewing, time management, personal finance, entrepreneurship, and more, preparing her for the next stage of her career journey. During her time in the program, Tatiana expressed a deep passion for working with children to her career advisor. Recognizing her enthusiasm and potential, the career advisor, alongside the work-based training developer, identified a local daycare facility as a fitting worksite for her Paid Work Experience (PWE). In May 2024, Tatiana began working at the daycare, where she quickly impressed everyone with her dedication and natural ability to connect with the children. Originally scheduled to complete her PWE by July, her outstanding performance and glowing feedback from her supervisor led to an extension through August 2024.WWTatiana’s work ethic, dependability, and love for working with children did not go unnoticed. Impressed by her contributions, the daycare partnered with PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley to offer her an On-the-Job Training (OJT) opportunity as a Preschool Assistant. This OJT, which began in mid-August, has allowed Tatiana to further develop her skills while becoming an integral part of the daycare’s team. She is now valued not only for her reliability but also for her genuine passion and care for the children she works with as of October 2024, Tatiana is on track to complete her OJT by November. She is proud to have achieved financial independence while pursuing a career she truly loves. Her journey exemplifies the power of perseverance and hard work. The daycare staff are equally grateful to have such a dedicated and trustworthy team member, and Tatiana’s future in early childhood education looks brighter than ever.

*From Background Barriers to Healthcare Triumph: Michael's Inspiring Journey to Success*

During Second Chance Month, PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley proudly spotlighted the remarkable journey of a WIOA participant, Michael. His path through the program was a testament to his unwavering commitment to personal and professional growth. Despite facing background barriers for nearly two decades, Michael's determination to pursue a healthcare career remained steadfast.

Completing a pivotal Customer Service Boot Camp in March 2024 and SkillUp™ PA courses equipped him with essential customer service, communication, business etiquette, and data privacy skills. More importantly, these training programs instilled the confidence Michael needed to chase his career aspirations. In April 2024, he successfully completed a Certified Peer Specialist training program offered by Northampton County.

With guidance from his career advisor and the support of the recruiter team, Michael tailored resumes for the logistics and healthcare fields. He proved his dedication by engaging in 93 job search activities, submitting 42 job applications, and attending various job fairs, including a Fair Chance Hiring Event on April 30, 2024.

Leveraging invaluable resources such as the Federal Bonding Program and Pardon Project, Michael tackled his barriers head-on, seizing opportunities in the healthcare industry. His efforts were rewarded when he secured a full-time psych rehabilitation counselor position with Step by Step, Inc. Michael began his role in May 2024, earning $18 an hour. He worked with 10 highly functional individuals at an apartment complex and said his job was amazing.

Additionally, Michael volunteered as a Crisis Intervention Team member for a crisis response system program and will join the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Lehigh Valley as a group facilitator. He also plans to maintain a professional relationship with PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley and spread awareness about its services in the community and among other organizations. Michael already connected NAMI Lehigh Valley and Step-By-Step with PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley’s outreach manager to schedule information sessions for their staff to learn more about available employment and training services. Michael is very grateful for all the assistance he received at PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley and from the WIOA program. He expressed, “That is why I am so successful and what gave me a job.” Recently, Michael transitioned to a peer specialist role with Sevita and obtained his state certification credential. His journey embodies perseverance, optimism, and the transformative power of seizing opportunities for a brighter future.

Policy on Policies

In July 2023, Pennsylvania published the “Policy on Policies” aimed at creating a standardized and consistent framework for policy development and review within the state’s workforce system. This initiative was designed to improve clarity, transparency, and accountability in the Commonwealth's policy-making efforts. The Policy on Policies outlines a structured approach to effectively manage this process, ensuring alignment with regulations and state goals, while ultimately serving the needs of our internal and external stakeholders.

Policy on Policies describes three distinct pathways for policy creation:

1.**Compliance driven**: A compliance-driven policy is primarily administrative, outlining how Pennsylvania meets specific requirements under WIOA. These policies focus on documenting the state's adherence to federal mandates, program requirements, or performance expectations, and are typically straightforward and non-controversial. Essentially, they serve as a public confirmation that Pennsylvania is fulfilling its federal obligations.

2.**Program driven**: Program-driven policies are developed to manage and regulate critical aspects of workforce programs, such as funding, eligibility, performance, or data security. These policies often arise when workforce system partners—either at the state agency level or local boards—identify a specific need, opportunity, or challenge. They may propose to L&I that an official policy be established to address these concerns and guide program operations effectively.

3.**Strategy driven**: Strategy-driven policies are designed to align with and support the governor’s vision for workforce development in Pennsylvania. These policies often reflect the priorities of the current administration and may be temporary, evolving with changing leadership or economic conditions. However, strategic policies can also respond to broader influences, such as economic crises, technological advancements like artificial intelligence, or other emerging trends that impact workforce development.

Once a workforce system policy proposal is received, the BWDAs Policy & Planning Coordination Services (PPCS) unit identifies members for a Development and Review Team (DART). This team is composed of subject-matter experts (SMEs) who are responsible for both the administration and operational impact of the policy. The DART process is highly collaborative, with the team working together to develop, review, and revise policies as a group. Active participation from all team members is crucial, as it ensures that the policies produced are not only effective but also reflective of our stakeholders' needs and regulatory requirements. Membership in the DART teams is fluid and adjusts depending on the specific policy package. The goal of this approach is to serve all stakeholders —both internal and external— within the workforce system effectively by following a standardized process that emphasizes continuous improvement.

Online Monitoring

During Program Year 2023, BWDA continued to develop a user-friendly functionality on CWDS to perform monitoring activities for the WIOA funding stream. This includes administrative, programmatic, and fiscal monitoring required by WIOA and the PA Workforce Development Act. The system is designed to allow LWDB staff to interface directly with BWDA’s OS unit and have a one-stop location for uploading required documentation, respond to questions and monitoring findings, and to have access to up to seven years of previous reports in accordance with our record retention requirements. In addition, this functionality would allow local board staff to upload key contact and LWDB member information and ensure BWDA has the most up-to-date contact and member information. It will also allow BWDA the ability to perform local area risk assessments, ensuring the risk of fraud, waste, and abuse are avoided to the greatest extent possible.

This was an entirely collaborative process with the LWDBs, a pilot group of which tested the new functionality and provided feedback from the local perspective. Official roll-out of the new functionality occurred at the beginning of program year 2024. OS continues to work collaboratively with the LWDBs to identify areas where current functionality does not perform as intended and to collectively seek improvements for future functionality.

Non-Local Invoicing

As part of our upgrade from CWDS to Financial Management System (FMS) 2.0 we implemented Electronic Invoicing for all non-local grantees. These grantees submit monthly invoices and all supporting documentation in FMS 2.0. Fiscal Operations staff access these invoices electronically, review the documentation and either approve it or return it electronically to the grantee for revision. This significantly cuts down on the need to email documents and revisions while also preserving these documents for future reference.

# Workforce System Challenges

*Any challenges the state workforce system faces, which may include policy, implementation, or other relevant challenge.*

Data Sharing Prohibitions

Integration of services between programs and agencies who provide workforce services is a tenet of WIOA. Pennsylvania continues to innovate to improve collaboration among programs and ensure seamless delivery of services to individuals seeking them, no matter which “door” the individual enters.  However, it remains challenging to articulate the level of this integration due to state and national prohibitions on data sharing and the cost of integrating established data systems across agencies. Strides have been made but challenges remain.

Vocational Rehabilitation

Some of the challenges facing OVR include Rehabilitation Counselor recruitment and provider staffing and availability, which has impacted service delivery. In addition, OVR was notified in Spring of 2024 that the national VR program had been flat funded at the federal level for Federal FY 2024. This resulted in a budgetary shortfall, and it was determined that OVR’s available and projected resources may not be adequate to ensure the provision of the full range of VR services to all eligible individuals moving forward.

# Pay-for-Performance

*Any strategies/policies relating to Pay-for-Performance contracting, which may include examples from local areas.*

Pennsylvania has no Pay-for-Performance contracting to report in Program Year 2023.

# Appendix A

Program Year 2022 Final Negotiated Goals by Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA) for Each Outcome Measure



Program Year 2023 Final Negotiated Goals by Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA) for Each Outcome Measure

