



ANNUAL REPORT



**Northwest Pennsylvania Workforce Investment Board
& Regional Center for Workforce Excellence**

Program Year 2007-2008

www.nwpawib.org
(814)333-1286

WELCOME



On behalf of the Northwest Pennsylvania Workforce Investment Board and the Regional Center for Workforce Excellence (RCWE), we are pleased to present the Northwest Pennsylvania Workforce Investment Board's Annual Report for Program Year July 1, 2007 – June 30, 2008.

This last year has presented many challenges as we face impending cuts in federal dollars to our workforce investment system. Despite declining funds, workforce remains the number one issue for Northwest Pennsylvania employers. It is armed with this knowledge that we choose to face this obstacle with a fierce determination to provide a high quality workforce development system for Northwest PA, not through cuts in services, but by seeking alternative ways to better align those limited resources. It is with this goal in mind that we strive to create a more effective and efficient workforce system designed to withstand economic and programmatic change.

Excellence will remain our focus moving us toward a new year of systemic evolution targeted to achieve high impact, quality outcomes that serve the needs of our public. In truly understanding the dynamics of an employer driven system, we remain committed to supporting efforts that foster the continued development, training and preparation of a workforce that meets current and future needs in Northwest Pennsylvania.

Respectfully,

Lisa M. Lynch

Lisa M. Lynch, Chair
Northwest PA Workforce Investment Board

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VISION Northwest PA will have a skilled workforce that is responsive to the current and future needs of the region.

MISSION To connect people with jobs through collaborative workforce development efforts and strong partnerships with the economic development, business, education and government sectors in the Northwest Pennsylvania region.

WIB MEMBERS

Lisa Lynch
Chairperson
National City Bank

Edward Althof
Loesel Schaaf Insurance

Bruce Best
Office of Vocational Rehabilitation

Peg Bly
Accudyn Products, Inc.

Butch Campbell
Butch Campbell Real Estate
Management

Hope Couch
Crawford County Assistance Office

Beverly Fetzner
Comfort Care Resources

Felix (Chip) Folletti
Carpenters District Council

Dr. Richard Gacka
Stairways Behavioral Health

Dr. Joseph Grunenwald
Clarion University

Larry Harvey
Crawford County Labor Union Council

Scott Henry
Forest County Economic Development

Louis Kraft
Kraft Concrete Products, Inc.

Don D. Lewis
Structural Modulares, Inc.

Georgia Lewis
Penelec

William Liddle
Franklin Industries

Sr. Miriam Mashank
St. Benedict Education Center

Dale McBrier
McBrier Properties/Lyndal Enterprises

Dr. Eric Randall
Edinboro University

Linda Schell
Bureau of Workforce
Development Partnership

Kerry Schwab
Clarion Bel-Aire Hotel

Joy Sherry
Dad's Pet Care

Kenneth Smith
Software Technology Concepts, LLC

Robert Spaulding
Erie County Government

Ronald Steele
Greater Erie Community Action
Committee

Don Stolarski
Entech Plastics

David Stone
Mickey's Central Fire Station

David Van Amburg
Mutualgravity, Inc.

Eugene Ware
Retirement Services of Erie

RCWE STAFF

Michele A. Zieziula
Chief Executive Officer

Kristin Arendash
Coordinator – Programs

Jess Culver
Accounting Tech I Contracts & Invoicing

Scott Deissler
Network Specialist &
Facilities Management

Kelly Emerson
Accounting Tech II Fund Management

Matthew Good
Coordinator – Outreach

Nick Hoffman
Marketing & Communication
Specialist

Michelle Horn
Accounting Tech II AR/AP/Payroll/
Benefits Management

Patricia McEwan
Receptionist/Clerical Assistant

Paul Newlin
Coordinator – QA & EO Officer

Deb O'Neil
Performance & Quality Specialist

Robert Silvis
Network Specialist

Lynette Watkins
Executive Assistant/Administrative
Services Coordinator

BUSINESS SERVICE UNITS

Connie Frantz
Crawford County

Lori Gillette
Erie County

Doug Massey
Erie County

Deb Lutz
Venango County

Deb McNerney
Clarion County

Heidi M. Powely
Warren County

*On behalf of the Northwest PA Workforce Investment Board and the Regional Center for Workforce Excellence Staff
we dedicate this document in loving memory of our friend and co-worker.
Jeannette Bey (1949-2008)*



CEO REPORT

As we close another year, I am pleased to report continued success in the Northwest PA workforce system. Despite national and global reaction to shifting economies and international conflict, our revenue stream experienced minimal decline as additional grant writing served to stabilize continued cuts in Federal WIA funding. It is not without great effort that we seek to provide our system with the means to serve our most important customer...You.

In early fall 2007, with the threat of declining resources, we determined that success was not always measured in dollars. Our continued focus on refining processes and standardizing quality helped us to better define a more streamlined Strategic Plan 2007-2009 that aligned the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 with Pennsylvania WIB Performance Measures, regional need and local WIB composition. This plan reflects our commitment to a quality system that: 1. coordinates and customizes services that optimize community workforce resources; 2. simplifies access to education, training and employment opportunities; 3. supports a highly effective communications network for the public and private sectors; and 4. leads to workforce job attainment, retention and career advancement.

To optimize our efforts, board committees were redefined to support and operationalize five primary goals: 1. Marketing and Community Awareness - Enhance community awareness and understanding of system network and its benefits to various consumers; 2. Quality and Effectiveness - Continuously monitor best practices and current trends for innovative approaches and workforce and CareerLink System improvements; 3. Outreach and Regional Network Enhancements - Enhance regional collaboration and networking with the Education, Economic Development, Private Industry and Government sectors; 4. Fund Development and Sustainability - Diversification and sustainability of the Northwest PA workforce development system through funding and partnership development; and 5. Board Development - Establish the Workforce Investment Board as the recognized leader for regional workforce development policy and efforts.

Our focus then turned to strategies aimed at advancing committee goals through various projects, events and initiatives. From discussions surrounding a regional effort to realize a community college for Northwest PA, to partnering with Economic Development and local universities to develop the NWPA Keystone Innovation Zone, to the development of a Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Initiative, staff endeavored to better link with the education sector to simplify access to education, support pipeline development in STEM related fields and to connect university research and intellectual property assistance to a potential entrepreneurial network of private sector businesses. As work progressed in these strategic areas, change loomed on the horizon.

News of federal rescissions swiftly moved our focus to the future of our One-Stop system. As with any organization, this change came in many forms, bringing with it challenges designed to strengthen us. Federal funding cuts to Title I programs and significant loss of staff support to our CareerLink system served as a turning point. Our Organizational Evolution process, in mid-stream with board and staff development, now turned to redefining Northwest PA CareerLinks to ensure future sustainability of our labor exchange system. This required a national best practice review of successful One-Stops, and the development of a Business & Staff Capacity Plan for helping to reposition our CareerLinks to a demand-driven, employer-focused system designed to better meet local employer's workforce needs. It was especially noted in the best practice report that the key to success of one-stop centers is inextricably linked to their service delivery to and credibility with local employers. Given that our current system was primarily focused on the job seeker population, our mission would not be realized without hurdles.

Tragedy struck, in spring of 2008, with the sudden loss of fellow RCWE staff member Jeannette Bey. As a result, RCWE suffered setbacks in many of the major initiatives in process as staff, reeling with the sense of loss, struggled to maintain their workload while focusing on healing. Discussions continue into the new program year with our CareerLink Organizational Evolution process, our WIB Organizational Evolution process and the successful funding of our STEM grant. Efforts are underway to create a Workforce Development Foundation, targeted at providing sustainability to a network of exemplary individuals and organizations whose primary existence is to support the future competitiveness of Northwest PA employers and their workforce. It is with a mixture of sadness, perseverance and hope, that we bid farewell to Program Year 2007-2008 and look forward to 2008-2009 as a year of hope and positive change.

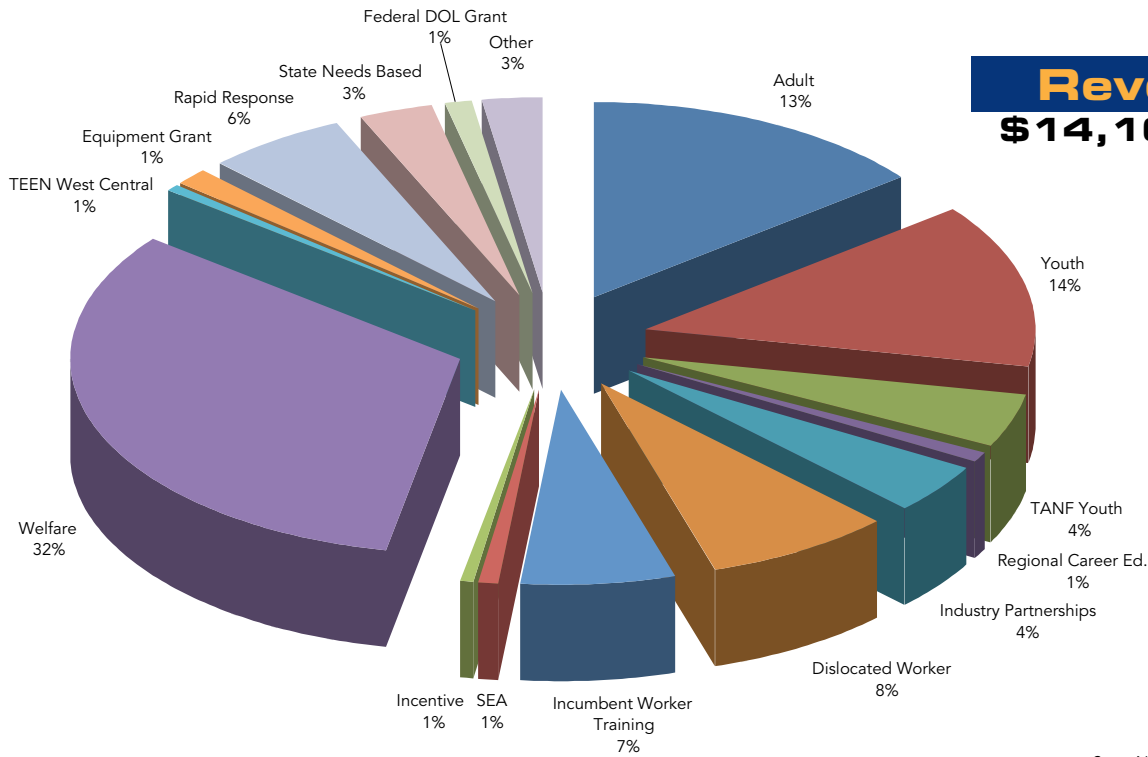
As always, while the above projects and accomplishments are indicative of our organization's efforts over the last program year, the items outlined on the following pages detail the larger investment of our system, the staff, partners and our greater workforce community. On behalf of the NWPA WIB and the RCWE, I would like to take this opportunity to offer our sincerest gratitude. Much of our work would not be possible without their support and dedication.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michele A. Zieziula
Chief Executive Officer

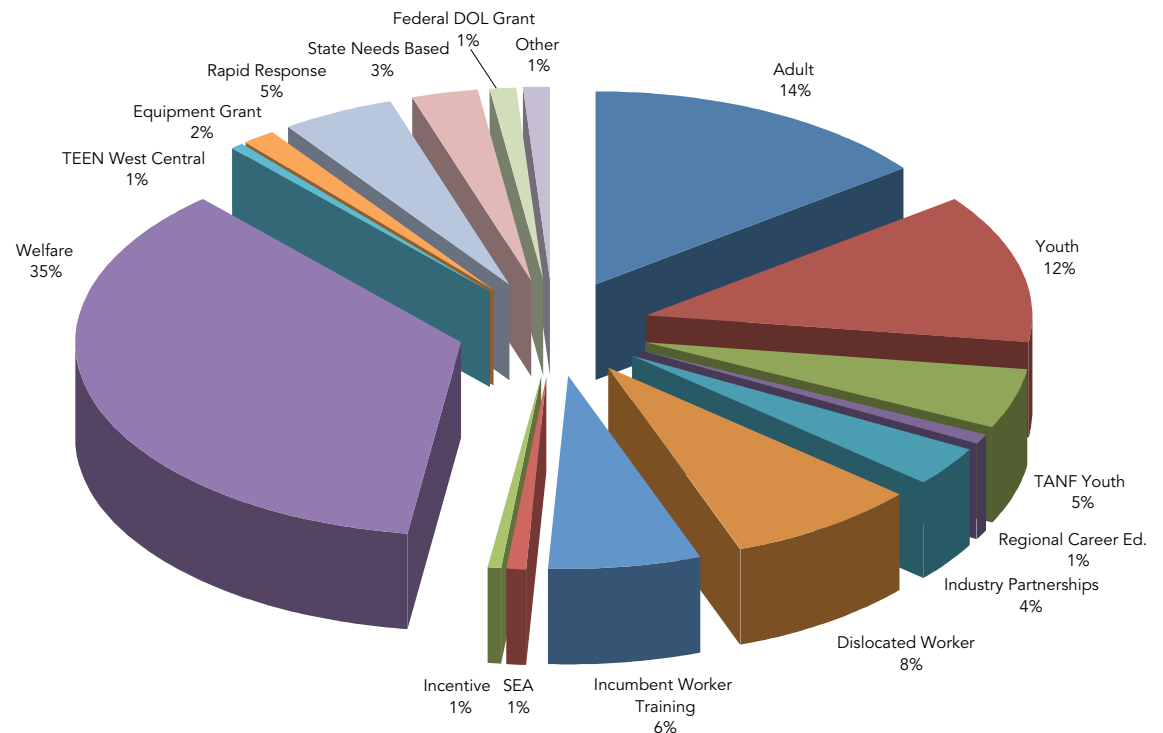
FINANCIAL REPORT PROGRAM YEAR 2007-2008

Revenue \$14,161,954



OTHER	
PA Youth in Transition	0.6002%
Career Advancement Account	1.3346%
Erie Workforce Study	0.2065%
Nursing Initiative	0.4136%
Venango County Community Services Block Grant	0.0494%

Expenditure \$12,806,364



OTHER	
PA Youth in Transition	0.0997%
Career Advancement Account	0.4877%
Erie Workforce Study	0.2284%
Nursing Initiative	0.2370%
Venango County Community Services Block Grant	0.0547%

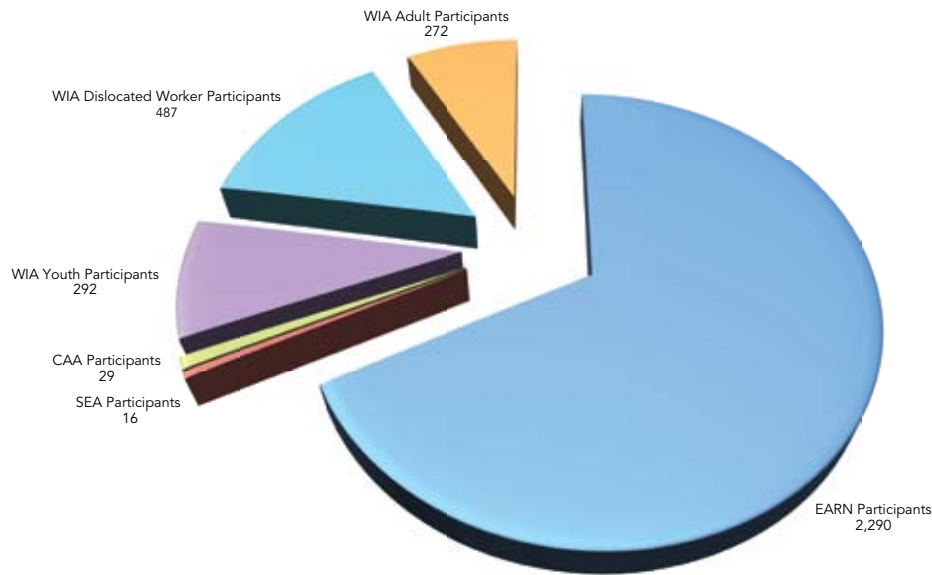
PROGRAM STATISTICS

CareerLink

NWPA CareerLink Total Customers Served 57,894

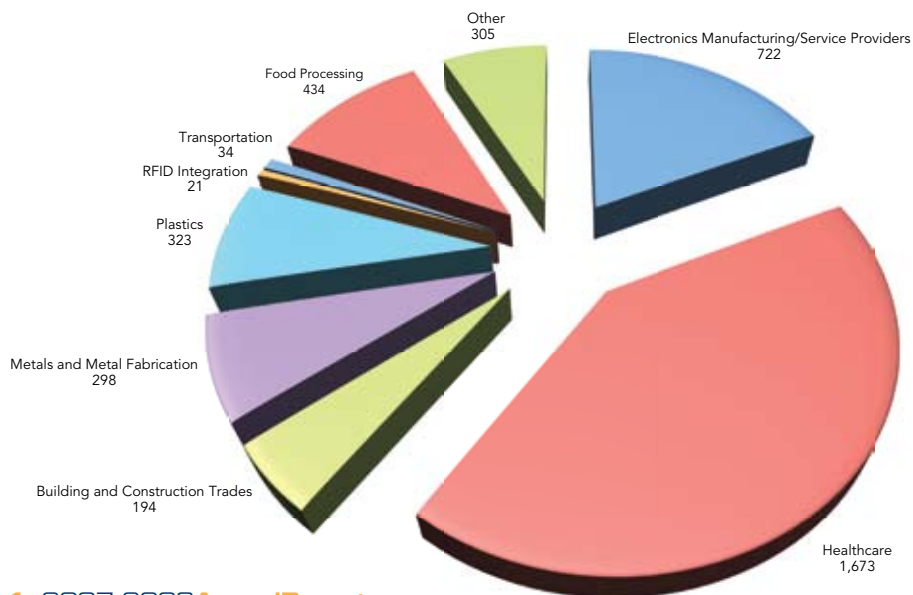
Adult and Youth Program Outcomes

WIA Program Participants - 3,386



Industry Partnership Incumbent Worker Training

Incumbent Workers Trained - 4,004



ADULT PROGRAMS

WIA Adult & Dislocated Worker Programs In addition to the required core, intensive and training services provided through the WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs, the program contractors, Greater Erie Community Action Committee (GECAC) and Partners For Performance (PFP), focused on seamless integration of new programs and services. Program Year 2007-08 saw the formal implementation of dual enrollment in both Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) and WIA for individuals dislocated due to the Trade Act. This dual enrollment provided intensive case management and additional post-secondary and on-the-job training opportunities to job seekers. The Senior Community Service program continues to compliment the Adult program in Clarion, Crawford, Forest, Venango and Warren Counties with over 55 seniors served and \$210,000 in training dollars provided to participants.

Career Advancement Accounts (CAA) An initiative new to 2007-2008 was the Career Advancement Account Federal Pilot Project, which provides up to \$3,000 for individuals who may not be eligible for WIA Adult or Dislocated Worker programs. These funds serve to upgrade participant skills through training.

Self Employment Assistance Program (SEA) Despite showing success during the previous four years, SEA program activity was limited due to a significant reduction in funding. Program Year 2007-2008 saw 16 participants enrolled, 11 of which completed required training and are at various stages of completing business counseling activities.

Employment and Retention Network Programs (EARN) Through the Department of Public Welfare EARN Programs, St. Benedict Education Center assisted 2,290 individuals and families across the region move from welfare into the workforce and economic independence through life, work maturity and job development skills, training, job search, placement and retention support.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

With funding assistance secured by the NWPA Workforce Investment Board and the Regional Center for Workforce Excellence, Channellock, Inc. of Meadville formed a joint labor management workforce training committee to identify and develop strategies on how to fill employee skill gaps through a Skill Gap Analysis conducted by Educational Data Systems Inc. (EDSI). EDSI is a proven expert in working with labor and management committees on such projects. Data from this project will be used as the basis for training vendor selection, curriculum development, on-the-job training plans and support for future grant applications. The data has already been used to develop a customized lean manufacturing program through the NW Industrial Resource Center. The NWPA WIB and RCWE are also partners in the funding and development of this customized training program.

A \$10,000 grant to the Erie City Mission provided work experience/work skill training for 22 of their clients. A portion of the earnings were placed in escrow toward a housing account which is received upon completion of the year-long program. Of the 70% that completed the full program, 77% had legitimate employment and 86% achieved one-year's sobriety.

RCWE served as fiscal agent for three nursing shortage initiative grants. Penn State Behrend and Clarion Hospital used their funds to staff simulation labs. Penn State's lab provided training for their associate degree nursing program and also incumbent worker training for EMTs, paramedics, nurses and physicians employed by St. Vincent Health System and EmeryCare resulting in 112 health care providers receiving training since the program began in 2007. Clarion Hospital's lab for nursing externs and current nursing staff resulted in better critical thinking skills within the nursing staff and a 100% pass rate for the graduates taking their nursing certification exams. Mercyhurst College received a grant to support two Nursing/Health Career Summer Camps for 40 middle school students.



YOUTH PROGRAMS

This has been an exciting year for youth programs. In addition to WIA services, Venango Training and Development Center (VTDC) piloted a "CareerLink in the School" program by providing a CareerLink youth staff person who spent one day per week in five different schools in Clarion County. This CareerLink Counselor presented career information to classes and met individually with students to help them plan their career paths. The Oil Region CareerLink and VTDC created "The Gate" youth zone inside the CareerLink to provide a place for older youth to research job opportunities, participate in career development activities geared toward young people and receive individual attention from CareerLink youth staff. They are partnering with Clarion University and the Venango Young Professionals Group, who provide volunteers to staff these activities.

The middle school Industry Club program expanded to include 16 schools across the region. The year-end Industry Club Expo was attended by approximately 90 students representing eight clubs. Youngsville Middle School Industry Club took home top honors, with Union City and Clarion Area winning second and third, respectively. Other TANF funded programs included various career development programs through community organizations and schools, such as after school activities, career and post-secondary training exploration, tutoring and reading programs, peer-to-peer leadership activities, work experience and juvenile probation programs. Approximately 1000 youth ages 5-18 were served through these activities in 2007-2008.

The Regional Career Education Partnership (RCEP) continues to grow and have an impact on career education within the school districts. The RCEP provided \$40,000 in grants to school districts and community organizations to implement career pathways curriculum, develop job shadow and career exploration activities and institute work place and soft skills through the Fish Philosophy. Additionally, \$4,000 in micro-grants were provided to schools to meet immediate small needs related to career development for students. The second Regional Career Education Conference was held in April at Cross Creek Resort with 125 teachers, counselors and administrators attending to learn strategies for implementing the PDE Career Education and Work Standards.

RCWE participated in a state pilot project which targets high school dropouts and youth aging out of foster care. The first part of this project focuses on research and asset mapping to identify current resources and effective methods of reconnecting these youth with education and employment. The Northwest Region also partnered with the Lehigh Valley WIB to create a dropout prevention video which will be released statewide at the Youth Services Academy in November 2008.

STEM INITIATIVE

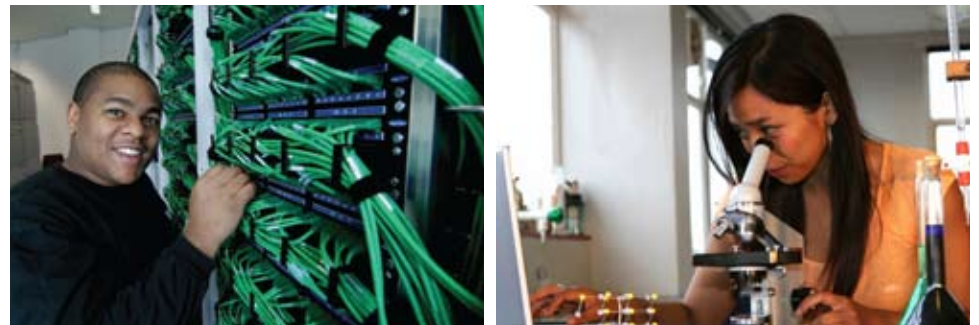
National dialogue has started around the need to focus on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) education and workforce development. Industry & Government are concerned about the size, diversity and quality of the U.S. engineering/STEM workforce. An understanding of engineering and its relation to science, mathematics and technology is increasingly being considered an important attribute of both scientific and technological literacy.

In response to this concern, leaders from throughout Northwest Pennsylvania have come together with the common interest of addressing the need for an increased focus on education and training opportunities in the disciplines of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) to prepare students and workers for careers where these skills are needed. Regional partners from education, workforce and economic development and business and industry have united to develop a plan that will serve as the road map in implementing a STEM strategy in Northwest Pennsylvania.

The NWP STEM Initiative comprises a diverse network of partners united in defining and promoting a regional vision, mission and strategic plan of action that will help the region overcome the key challenges it faces in providing training opportunities and a workforce skilled in STEM disciplines. This network of professionals spans the fields of education (P-20), workforce and economic development and business and industry of the 12 counties of the NWP STEM Region.

To date, the NWP STEM Network has made significant strides in organizing the region around the promotion of STEM concepts. These foundation steps include: identification of a steering committee, designation of RCWE as fiscal agent and the formation of teams to assist in developing a work plan, organize a Regional STEM Forum and promote partner buy-in to the Regional STEM Compact. In addition, the Network has implemented a communications and document sharing platform through Google.com, developed vision and mission statements, participated in a statewide STEM planning event, is holding regular region-wide meetings and is adding partner organizations and participating individuals as the initiative moves forward.

STEM is both an economic and human development initiative to produce a scientifically and technically talented, highly adaptable, creative and socially responsible workforce for the 21st Century. Through signing on to the Regional STEM Compact, partners commit to 1. Promoting collaboration among education, business and government to ensure that the region's education systems graduate a well-educated diverse workforce that is scientifically, technologically and quantitatively literate; 2. Advocating for successful local, regional and national programs that can be implemented and amplified by regional partnerships to attract students to math, science, engineering and related careers, and to strengthen P-20 STEM education programs; 3. Articulating policies and actions at the local, regional and state levels to support STEM education in K-20 systems so that students realize their individual and collective potential; and, 4. Sharing research, data and information as it pertains to the NWP STEM Initiative goals and the shared strategic intent of the partners.



INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIPS

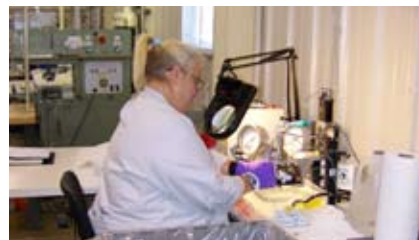
The Industry Partnerships of NWPA made significant strides this past year – collectively and individually – in advancing industry clusters representative of the regional economy. Moving beyond the foundational stages of partnership development, these industry-led alliances are now involved in meaningful discussions and projects centered on engaging the future workforce, exploring market development opportunities in bio-medical manufacturing and aerospace, streamlining operations for energy and waste stream efficiencies and forming joint ventures and alliances to be more competitive as a region.

The partnerships, representing Healthcare, Metals and Metal Fabrication, Plastics, Building and Construction Trades, Food Processing, Electronics Manufacturing and Service Providers and Technology, engaged over 400 companies, trained over 4,000 incumbent workers, secured over \$1.5 million in grant funds and successfully engaged CareerLink staff, workforce and economic development professionals and training providers in advancing market driven approaches to program development and implementation.

What's more, employers invested hundreds of thousands in matching funds for workforce training – far exceeding the match requirement to qualify for state funds – and devoted countless hours as an in-kind match to develop strategic approaches to meeting workforce challenges and increasing the economic competitiveness of the region. The NWPA Industry Partnership Initiative is truly demand driven!



Employers from each of the Industry Partnerships collectively tackled the following issues in 2007-2008:



Partnership Sustainability – Partnerships have endorsed the establishment of a partnership sustainability fund through RCWE. The sustainability fund will serve as the repository of funds contributed by employers as part of their obligation to provide a 25% cash match to any incumbent worker training funds they receive in state funds through the partnership. The employers will work with RCWE to develop guidelines and directives on how the funds are utilized when the fund is established and contributions are made.

Outcomes Measurement – An Outcomes Measurement Report Card has been developed that will be used by each of the steering committees to evaluate the progress and effectiveness of their respective partnerships. This reporting mechanism was developed through employer involvement and takes into consideration the evaluation tool utilized by the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry and training participant data collected by the Quantitative Measures Record utilized by RCWE.

Regional Partnership Branding – RCWE developed a regional branding identity for Industry Partnerships through the creation of partnership logos, literature and posters that can be used to recruit additional employers, highlight the partnership at job fairs and industry events and reach out to the future workforce through presentations at schools and youth events.

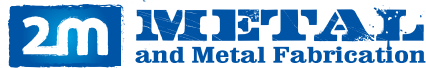
Regional Strategic Planning – A panel of employers from each of the Industry Partnerships participated in a strategic planning session with workforce and economic development professionals at the Great Lakes Industrial and Technology Summit. The employers outlined the future vision and next steps for the initiative in this region.

Each partnership addressed issues specific to the represented industry clusters.

The following highlights the industry specific high impact outcomes for each partnership:



Healthcare Boasting the participation of 80 employers, the NWPAs Regional Healthcare Industry Partnership (HIP) formed an active subcommittee structure to facilitate the work of the partnership; committees on Outreach, Soft Skills Credentialing, Apprenticeship Development and CareerLink Services have been charged with exploring and developing projects within each of these areas for the benefit of the entire partnership. By far, the NW HIP leads the region in incumbent worker training. Since 2006, over 3,000 local incumbent workers have been trained through programs established by partnership companies.



Metals and Metal Fabrication Building collaborative efforts has been a priority of the NWPAs Metals and Metal Fabrication Industry Partnership. This past year, the partnership formed an alliance with the National Tooling and Machining Association (NTMA) of NWPAs to provide outreach activities on behalf of the employers. Because the industry is experiencing a critical shortage of skilled workers entering the industry, NTMA has embarked on a number of outreach activities in regional schools, in addition to their exciting RoboBOTS IQ Program, to increase career awareness and recruit qualified skilled workers in the industry. Further, NTMA conducts an in school marketing/educational initiative to educate and motivate students to pursue careers in manufacturing. The "Careers in Manufacturing Tribute Bike Tour" program addresses these critical skilled worker shortages by promoting manufacturing in NWPAs to students and teachers. The program addresses "brain drain" by making students aware of the many opportunities that exist in manufacturing skilled careers. Local manufacturer representatives participate in the programs to share the specific employer needs and career opportunities that exist in their plans. The program directly impacted 8,000 – 10,000 students in 40-50 middle and high schools in the region during the 2007-2008 school year!



Plastics Recognizing that the local plastics industry is in a transition phase, employers have utilized the partnership as a means of identifying new market development opportunities. The partnership furthered this goal by conducting research to identify business development

opportunities in the bio-medical and pharmaceutical markets and through completion of a capabilities survey on local industry in order to explore business development opportunities in the aerospace and composite plastics markets. This information will be used to design a phone interview survey for major Original Equipment Manufacturers to determine what opportunities are available for members of the partnership.



Building and Construction Trades The Great Lakes Building and Construction Trades Industry Partnership (GLBTIP) finished a hallmark year with the development of a major public awareness campaign entitled "Better Together" that markets the local building and construction industry to target customers. In addition, the partnership implemented training strategies to provide a pipeline of workers trained in supervisory skills. Workers received intense leadership training through consortium based training, moving these workers up the career ladder, as well as providing for continued supervisory support for the job site. Currently, participating contractors are engaged in high level training courses in project management, accounting, leadership and succession planning for the future success of local workers and the viability of their companies. The Manufactured Housing Sub-Committee of this partnership diligently addressed the threat of increased costs of raw materials and shipping costs due to the proposed tolling of Interstate 80. In addition, this group has implemented a scrap drywall recycling pilot program with a Clarion County landscaping supply company. This company hopes to accept 30 tons of raw gypsum per week in the first three months, grind it and then compost it and use it in bagged soils.



Food Processing The newest of the partnerships, the Food Processing Industry Partnership (FPIP) of NWPAs was swift to implement strategies to help fulfill its mission of supporting regional processors in efforts to remain competitive with national food suppliers by supporting incumbent worker training, the assimilation of new processing methods and technologies, the development of regional purchasing networks and employee recruitment to the industry. Most notably, the FPIP completed Best Practices Research in Food Safety, Cost Efficiency and Recruitment and Retention. This research involved information sharing on supply chain implications, technology and regulations. Another report

outlined the benefits of Economies of Scale for purchasing, utilities, warehousing, transportation and employee retention strategies on becoming a best workplace.



Electronics Manufacturing and Service Providers

Continuing to develop its role as the Commonwealth's leader in green manufacturing, education and training the PA Electronics Manufacturing and Service Providers Industry Partnership (EMSIP) began outreach events to increase employer involvement from the four corners of the state through a series of presentations to prospective members. The first "road show" event was held in Southwest Pennsylvania in conjunction with the area's Industrial Resource Center, Catalyst Connections. The "road show" event resulted in 10 new employers from Southwest Pennsylvania joining the EMSIP. This partnership now covers 26 counties in western and central Pennsylvania!



TECHNOLOGY INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIP
OF NORTHWEST PENNSYLVANIA

Technology The Technology Industry Partnership (TIP) of NWPAs is open to companies in all industry clusters that are interested in integrating emerging technologies into their businesses. Over the past year, the TIP has completed several major projects, including a Telecommunications Needs Assessment across industry sectors, curriculum development for RFID implementation and the formation of an e-Marketing Special Interest Group that is working on strategies establishing how companies can utilize e-marketing techniques to boost sales and increase customer satisfaction.

Employers are also involved in Industry Partnerships that have been established by neighboring Workforce Investment Areas. Namely, the Manufacturing Economic and Education Network (MEEN), the Transportation Economic and Education Network (TEEN), Oil and Gas Extraction, Lumber and Hardwoods and Mining.

THE NWPA CAREERLINK SYSTEM

The key to success in these challenging times is our ability to adapt to the changing demands of our volatile economic climate. The NWPA CareerLink system, faced with significant funding cuts and staff shortages, embraced the arduous task of adapting to those changes while still maintaining and improving the services to our clients, both employers and job seekers. The PA CareerLink Operator Consortium and the Site Administrators implemented a regional approach resulting in one regional Operator Consortium and a regional approach to strategic planning. This led to greater consistency among the sites, improved efficiencies, eliminated unnecessary duplication of effort and utilized best practices.

EMPLOYER SERVICES

Much effort has been focused over the past program year on demand-driven employer services, which in turn yielded improved opportunities for job seekers.

Program Year 2007-2008 was highlighted by many specialized employer recruitment activities. These targeted, individualized recruitment events provide employers with the opportunity to partner with the local CareerLink, utilize CareerLink resources to assist in recruiting applicants, resulting in a more productive and time-saving process for them. This yields more qualified candidates and placements for the employers. These specialized recruitments can include assistance with the application process, assessments and the overall screening process. These events were conducted in all the counties, with over 130 employers benefitting from them in Erie County alone.

Across the region, special recruiting events were conducted with numerous employers including: Owens-Illinois, J.M. Smucker Company, Dad's Pet Care, General Electric, Verizon, Penelec, Northwest Savings Bank, ICT Group, Seneca Printing, Shaw Industries, AVI Vending, United Parcel Service, Federal Express, Abraxas Treatment Center, SCI Forest, Blair Corporation and Ellwood National Forge and Ellwood National Steel.

Job Fairs and Career Fairs continue to be a staple of the CareerLinks to serve both employers and job seekers. The 2007-2008 program year focused on career fairs that were industry specific or targeted to specific job seeker populations. These included Healthcare Career Fairs, Hospitality/Tourism/Seasonal Job Fair, Summer Jobs & Beyond Recruitment Day, Career Exploration Events and a Community Mental Health Awareness Event. The non-industry specific job fairs across the region served over 320 employers and over 3,500 job seekers.

In 2007-2008 the CareerLinks delivered various fee-based services. This included the use of CareerLink facilities, staff and technology for services such as application management, interview coordination, room rental, specialized recruitment events, preliminary interviewing, reference checks, pre-employment assessment testing and specialized training sessions.



PARTNERSHIPS

Additional partnerships were formed between the CareerLinks and local agencies in 2007-2008. In some cases, these partnerships involved co-locating at the CareerLinks, contributing to the services offered at the CareerLink and integrating services to our mutual clients. These partnerships contributed to the CareerLinks financially through rental agreements. One example is a partnership formed in Crawford County with Domestic Relations which has resulted in a 63% decrease in contempt-of-court violations and over \$150,000 in child support payments. In Oil Region, new partnerships were developed with Domestic Relations and Probation & Parole, along with Manpower partnering to provide services in registering parolees. In each county, CareerLinks have partnered with the local economic development agencies and the Business Retention and Expansion Programs resulting in increased employer market penetration with CareerLink services.

In response to specific requests from employers and partners, specialized informational seminars were conducted on various workforce development topics such as: CWDS information sessions, Crystal Reports training and tax credit training conducted by the Work Opportunity Tax Credit Unit of Harrisburg. Warren County partnered with the Warren County Chamber of Business and Industry to provide a workforce development seminar on training resources for 36 companies.

JOB SEEKERS

Program Year 2007-2008 was very active for Rapid Response activities. Rapid Response events are conducted if a company or organization announces a significant layoff or location/plant closing. The CareerLinks, in collaboration with various local and state level agencies, conduct informational events for the affected dislocated employees. Rapid Response sessions provide valuable information to the individuals as they transition into new employment. Across the region 33 Rapid Response events were conducted, serving over 2,600 dislocated workers with three events in Clarion assisting 100 employees, five events in Crawford with 221 employees served, 21 events in Erie serving 2,133 employees, one event in Venango with 45 affected employees and three events in Warren assisting 172 workers.

Due to the high number of trade-impacted dislocated workers in our local workforce investment area, our region received \$491,500 of a \$12.4 million National Emergency Grant from the Department of Labor & Industry, to enable the PA CareerLink system to provide needed workforce development services to eligible participants. This funding will benefit specific trade-impacted dislocated workers in our region who have lost their jobs due to overseas competition. If suitable employment is not available in their area, then an eligible trade affected worker can apply for job search allowance, relocation allowance and possibly tap into training monies that include new skill training and employer based training.

The NWPA CareerLink system will continue their efforts to implement best practices to increase efficiency in response to business needs and to align its workforce investment services with high-growth, targeted industries in the region.

