

STRATEGIC PLAN

A BLUE-PRINT
OF STRATEGIC INITIATIVES
TO ENSURE A
COMPETENT, QUALIFIED, SKILLED
WORKFORCE SUPPORTING ECONOMIC GROWTH IN
LACKAWANNA AND
SURROUNDING COUNTIES
DURING THE NEXT LUSTRE (5-Year Cycle)

2011- 2016

Lackawanna County Workforce Investment Board
Austin J. Burke, Chair

Approved and Implemented - June 23, 2011

The Lackawanna County Workforce Investment Board (WIB), building on a successful operational and philosophical structure during the first decade of the 21st Century, and having weathered a significant economic crisis, now turns its focus to the revitalization of both local and regional economies through training, retraining, and the education of a future workforce. To accomplish this goal, it is recognized that workers, regardless of age or experience, must possess skills identifiable and in-line with the ever-fluctuating needs of business and industry. A needs-driven economy promotes current as well as future growth within and across all industrial sectors. Realizing that on-going planning efforts must engage a myriad of partners to ensure successful outcomes, the Lackawanna County WIB stands poised to develop, implement, and sustain comprehensive workforce initiatives; facilitate alignment of educational curriculums; communicate and integrate in regional projects; maintain/increase linkages within targeted industry sectors; and serve as a resource catalyst for economic re-growth.

Over the past ten years, the Lackawanna County WIB has accomplished a major goal of systemic change. Although a single-County Board, the Lackawanna County WIB is now strategically engaged as a partner in the *Northeast Regional Consortium of WIBs* (in cooperation with the Luzerne/Schuylkill, Northern Tier, and Pocono Counties WIBs), thus promoting regionalization in training initiatives and comprehensive planning efforts across a 12-County area. The Lackawanna County WIB is integrated with the Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce in promoting economic development and educational initiatives. The WIB has broadened its scope of action above and beyond approval of training activities to include outreach to the K through 12 populations through infiltration into most Lackawanna County School Districts; has developed a comprehensive tactical approach to address local dislocations, downsizings and, most imperatively, re-engagement of this dislocated population to ensure an economic renaissance; become entrenched in the development of Industry Partnership activity supporting upgrading of current workforces; promoted more open lines of communication among its members as well as the community as a whole; solidified a collaborative approach to problem-solving; and attained the rank of “High-Performing WIB” as designated by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

To analyze the effectiveness, or non-effectiveness, in attainment of previously defined goals, this document reflects on accomplishments, discusses challenges, and then defines a revised set of priorities to be addressed/accomplished over the next five-year period. The **vision** and **mission** of the Board remains sound and sets the basic foundation for future involvement of this Board in the revitalization of Lackawanna, as well as, surrounding counties:

VISION

To serve as a conduit for information and communication among stakeholders, promoting economic growth through strategic investment and leveraging of resources to increase career advancement opportunities and the competitive advantage of businesses in Lackawanna County and all of Northeastern Pennsylvania.

MISSION

To promote a comprehensive and structurally sound WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT system through human capital development, capacity building, and operational effectiveness.

The system model has not changed. It remains an integrated and collaborative effort among the primary stakeholders in a socioeconomic environment striving to promote economic prosperity among its citizens. The education of a workforce (skilled/trained) coupled with initiatives directly supporting the current needs of business and industry translates into economic growth.



To that end, we review previous initiatives and, based on findings, begin the development of structured steps enroute to a concrete five-year plan of action.

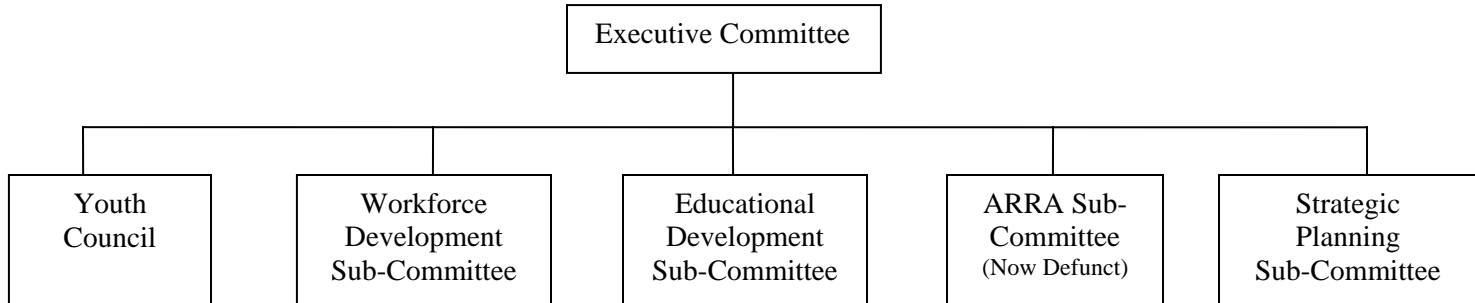
Previous Strategy: [Adoption of a new sub-committee structure by the full-WIB to ensure alignment with strategic initiatives.](#)

Accomplishment(s): On September, 21, 2007, the WIB approved the redesign of its Sub-Committee structure. Membership affiliation designated participation on specific Sub-Committees with the option made available to grow the size and scope of the committees when appropriate, based on a fluctuating environment. A prime example was the implementation of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Sub-Committee which was initiated in June of 2009 and continued through December 31, 2010 when ARRA funds were exhausted. This Sub-Committee performed periodic review of all expenditures and operations and provided strategic oversight to staff in the administration of the activity.

Just recently, and in anticipation of the preparation of this document, a Strategic Planning Sub-Committee was established to provide expertise and insight into the development of this product.

Other Sub-Committees are called upon at times to address specific issues regarding overall Workforce Investment operations.

The current structure stands as follows:



Executive Committee	This Committee represents the WIB membership in the provision of oversight and guidance for the single-County designated Lackawanna County Workforce Investment Area (WIA) including overall system operation, WIB staff, WIA Staff, PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County, community outreach, program development, etc. The WIB Executive Committee has the authority of the full-WIB to approve any/all actions (programmatic and fiscal) as necessary to ensure a timely deliverance of services. Any/all action taken by the Executive Committee is presented to the full Board at quarterly meetings for review, discussion, and final approval.
Youth Council Sub-Committee	The Youth Council provides oversight and guidance in the comprehensive deliverance of all WIA & TANF youth services including, but not limited to, the following: authorization of release of Requests for proposals (RFPs) to secure training/educational services; review and oversight of on-going yearly activities to ensure compliance with local plan of operation and specific funding criteria; provides guidance to Youth Operational Staff, as needed; conducts outreach to local school districts for dissemination of programmatic information and economic development initiatives. The Youth Council performs any/all other youth-related duties as prescribed by the full-Board with actions reported for final approval during quarterly meetings.
Workforce Development Sub-Committee	This Committee serves in the capacity to communicate and promote the actions and activities of the Board in alignment with local and regional economic development through support and oversight of industry-led initiatives including, but not limited: on-going formation and sustainment of Industry Partnerships; dissemination of any/all industry-specific worker training funding; leveraging of resources; outreach and communication efforts; regionalization promotion; sustainability planning; integration of business services; and long-range development. All actions taken by this Committee are reported at full-Board quarterly meetings.
Educational Development Sub-Committee	This Committee provides directives to the development of educational initiatives to ensure alignment with changes in shifting economic and workforce climates including, but not limited to: development of industry-led curricula; on-line course accessibility; development of wide-based articulation agreements; improving the school-to-work concept within the community at-large; promotion of a variety of training options (short & long-term); and oversight of internal programs aligned with education. All actions taken by this Committee are reported at full-Board quarterly meetings.
American Recovery & Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Sub-Committee	This Committee (now-defunct) served from June 22, 2009, through December 31, 2010. Members met once in full session and then conducted business via email. This Committee held the responsibility for approving all outlay of funds including periodic review of all draws of funds; monitoring programmatic activity through review of in-depth reports; and ensuring the overall accountability and transparency of all ARRA funds across specific funding streams. All actions taken by this Committee were recorded and presented to the full-Board at quarterly meetings. A final reports on ARRA activities is now available.
Strategic Planning Sub-Committee	This Committee will provide overall guidance in the development of a revised, 5-year “Plan of Action,” establishing both short and long-range goals solidifying the Board’s objectives, accountability, overall management, linkages with business and industry, oversight of operations, etc.

Challenge(s): Member attendance at structured meetings has been relatively low. Scheduling of meetings is difficult due to the recognized constraints of business and industry representatives.

Action Items:

- A comprehensive re-review of current Sub-committee descriptions to determine if deletion or addition of specific Committees is required to ensure alignment with current administrative/operational needs and the current funding situation and economic climate;
- Structuring meetings in line with those of the now-defunct ARRA Sub-Committee which allowed for minimal in-person attendance and relied on electronic media/conference calling for dissemination of information; and
- Increased participation and stronger commitment of additional Board members to ensure accomplishment of goals.

Previous Strategy: [Continued and strengthened linkages with local Chambers of Commerce, Northeast Pennsylvania Alliance \(NEPA\) and The Great Valley Technology Alliance/Northeastern Pennsylvania Technology Institute.](#)

Accomplishments: This goal has been accomplished. The WIB and Chamber of Commerce are strategically aligned to propel economic and workforce development initiatives through, but not limited to, such efforts as integrated outreach to prospective companies; development of training initiatives directly related to the current, as well as projected, needs of business and industry; restructuring of the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County Business Services Team to include *Scranton Plan* staff; coordinated business fairs and meetings; aligned projects with *Skills in Scranton* for engagement of youth customers across the intermediate and secondary educational communities; and other initiatives supporting regional growth.

NEPA Alliance, the Local Development District (LDD) for Northeast Pennsylvania, which encompasses Lackawanna County, has been extremely supportive in providing assistance in the provision of research and data information to support local/regional economic development efforts. Technical assistance is readily accessible upon request.

Linkages with the Great Valley Technology Alliance/Northeastern Pennsylvania Technology Institute (GVTA/NPTI) are solid with a current venture revolving around the placement of local college students into intern positions in local businesses. Pre-placement testing and assessment of prospective students is conducted through the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County through a sub-contractual agreement. With both the WIB administrative office and the GVTA/NPTI offices located contiguously in the Scranton Enterprise Center, continued cooperation and collaboration is assured.

Challenge: Encourage the involvement of additional partners such as, but not necessarily limited to, the Ben Franklin Technology Group and the Northeastern Pennsylvania Industrial Resource Center (NEPIRC).

Action Items:

- Maintenance of well-entrenched linkages with local and regional economic development entities and growth of joint initiatives;
- Ongoing recruitment and active integration of community-entrenched agencies and organizations to expand the availability of business involvement and coordinate the implementation of training opportunities;
- Systemic alignment of core value development and implementation of support strategies;
- On-going outreach to new and emerging community-related projects.

Previous Strategy: On-going research and analysis of local and regional high-priority occupations for continued development of cluster initiatives and appropriate realignment of educational curriculums dictated by fluctuating needs.

Accomplishments: As is generally recognized, the analyzation of data is not a static process. As data cycles differ, (Census, American Community Survey, Wage Data, Occupational Data, High-Priority Occupation lists), it becomes necessary to review and revise decision-making criteria based on overarching trends. To this end, the Lackawanna County WIB, working with its partners in the community, has participated in the development of projects directly related to and dictated by local business needs: i.e., a joint Electronic Technician program of study uniting Lackawanna College (academic track) and Johnson College (technical track) as training institutions in alignment with such companies as Tobyhanna Army Depot (Student Career Experience Program – SCEP) to allow for a complete package of study enroute to attainment of permanent employment following receipt of an Associate degree of study. This initiative can be replicated across any occupational sector once a need is identified and verified through support of local data.

Challenge(s): Continual upkeep of Workforce Analysis data studies. Due to shifts in staffing at the WIB level, recent updates of a previous Workforce Analysis have not materialized. Current statistics are utilized, as necessary, to provide documentable support for outlay of Workforce dollars and to assist in local economic development efforts, as needed; however a full-scale documentation of trends is outdated. Based on looming budget cuts, this may be an area of continued concern.

Action Items:

- Update the WIB *Workforce Analysis* on a yearly basis to ensure a concrete base of study supporting local initiatives and a positive workforce development direction for Lackawanna County;

- Continued involvement by WIB staff at Economic and Workforce Development Data Workshops sponsored by the Pennsylvania State Data Center (PaSDC) and the Center for Workforce Information and Analysis (CWIA) to improve internal data collection skills. Staff-development will be on-going in the area of analysis.
- Increased utilization of CWIA for provision of data resources.

Previous Strategy: Identification of current and projected workforce shortages to facilitate effective planning efforts in skill-gap curriculum development.

Accomplishments: Linking directly to business and industry through such ventures as the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania’s Industry Partnership/Worker Training Grant Initiative and the now completed Wall Street West Project, the WIB has developed a network of alliances that have been instrumental in producing a needs-based approach to planning and project development. Outreach efforts are conducted utilizing a targeted-sector approach (i.e., health care/life sciences; advanced manufacturing/diversified materials; logistics and transportation; business/finance) to ensure that specific industry-related needs are identified and not solely universal in nature. At present, distribution of a needs-based information survey is underway which, it is hoped, will identify current local industry needs as well as those that are projected over the next 5-year period, thus supporting an economic recovery.

Challenge(s): The main challenge over the past 2 to 3 year period has been the severe national economic downturn that has stymied most industrial growth and caused a significant number of downsizings and closures. This has resulted in the lack of new or career-ladder positions and the need for internal training of incumbent workers has halted. Most businesses are just trying to maintain a status-quo means of operation during this crisis. This, in turn, has produced somewhat of a reluctance on the part of some companies to provide statistical data regarding their operations. From a survey standpoint, any response above and beyond a 10 – 15 percent response rate is unfeasible and, more importantly, unacceptable, if a true picture of workforce needs is to be formulated.

Action Items:

- Continued outreach (minimum yearly) to business and industry through survey distribution, personal contacts, fact-to-face meetings, etc. to ensure a current and comprehensive study of the local environment;
- Facilitating Industry Partnership Meetings and regional alignment with State initiatives;
- Development of sustainability plans; and
- Preparation of updated resource and asset mapping.

Previous Strategy: Strengthening ties with all Northeast PA Workforce Investment Boards to support regional Industry Partnerships and Worker Training Initiatives across broad-based geographical areas.

Accomplishments: This goal has been met. Over the past 3-year period, the Lackawanna County WIB has formed a solid partnership with the Luzerne/Schuylkill, Northern Tier

(Bradford, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Tioga & Wyoming Counties), and Pocono Counties (Carbon, Monroe, Pike Wayne Counties) Workforce Investment Boards to form the Northeast PA Consortium of Workforce Boards. Working cooperatively, Industry Partnerships, as available, are now regional in nature covering this 12-county area. WIB executive staff meetings occur quarterly and provide a forum for discussion of regional objectives and identification of needs. Board liaisons exist between the Lackawanna County and Pocono Board as well as the Luzerne/Schuylkill Board. These members serve to provide a conduit for exchange of information regarding Board operations, practices, training initiatives, and overlapping linkages with the regional business community.

Challenge(s): No challenges exist.

Action Items:

- Maintain current relationships and regional structure.

Previous Strategy: Participation in efforts to recruit new businesses to Northeastern Pennsylvania and promote layoff aversion strategies to exiting companies.

Accomplishments: This goal has been accomplished. The WIB Executive Director, PA CareerLink Site Administrator, and WIA Operations Directors are included by the Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce as part of a “team approach” in all recruitment efforts of new business and industry thus providing a comprehensive package of detailed workforce information to interested entities. Through the Pennsylvania Department of Labor, Rapid Response Coordination Services and Strategic Early Warning Network, the Lackawanna WIB ensures participation and alignment of services to prevent and/or address local downsizings and closures.

Challenge(s): No challenges identified.

Action Items:

- Maintain current relationships with flexibility for expansion ensured;
- Continue to provide statistical data and personnel support at meetings and during outreach to prospective companies/businesses; and
- Strengthened member involvement in local and regional planning efforts, as requested.

Previous Strategy: Alignment of educational outreach efforts to both the K-12 as well as post-secondary populations to ensure broad dissemination of workforce information, explanation of variable employment trends, scheduling criteria to meet specific educational goals, and long-range productivity through self-sustaining employment opportunities.

Accomplishments: Over the past 2 – 3 year period, the Lackawanna County WIB staff, working cooperatively with *Skills in Scranton*, the business-education arm of the Greater Scranton

Chamber of Commerce, has made measurable gains in the involvement of local school districts through the inclusion of career planning in curriculum development. These inroads now encompass every school district and revolve around the dissemination of information, both in material as well as dignitary visits, to youngsters at both the intermediate as well as high school levels; providing information sessions during teacher in-service events and to various school district administrative personnel; providing opportunities for “Teacher-In-The- Workplace” activities; support of development of “Virtual Companies” in 5 local school districts working in collaboration with local business and industry; local business involvement in the form of classroom presentations; and involvement in career and educational fairs, both on and off-site. The local WIB is the recipient of a competitive Commonwealth of PA Regional Career Education Partnership (RCEP) grant which financially supports many of these activities. The Youth Council, a long-standing Sub-Committee of the Lackawanna County WIB, provides oversight in the distribution of Workforce Investment Act funding across a wide variety of after-school and truancy-related projects.

In addition, the WIB has, most recently, prepared and distributed a comprehensive package of information addressing the “drop-out” populations on a county-wide basis which is designed to provide a “road to recovery” for those students who choose this path.

Challenge(s): The major challenge revolved around establishment of in-roads into all Lackawanna County school districts. This challenge has since been eliminated.

Action Items:

- Continued involvement of students, teachers and administrators in career awareness activities;
- Infusing career-related information and activities into curriculum development;
- Correlating class study to the real world (i.e., relating the importance of Science, Technology, Engineering, & Math [STEM] subjects in relation to job acquisition;
- Increased presentations by industry in classrooms;
- Development of sustainability plans in light of projected financial shortcomings supporting such activities as Teacher-In-The Workplace” and Virtual Business projects, and
- Expansion of career-related information and activities to the elementary level.

Previous Strategy: [Support of life-long Learning Initiatives](#)

Accomplishments: The nature of current Workforce Investment Act funding is to support initiatives that engulf all ages and populations. Funding streams address youth, adult and dislocated worker customers. All workforce development efforts support future, emerging, and current opportunities in the labor market which, in turn, promotes life-long learning capabilities. Based on future availability of funding, these efforts will continue.

Challenge(s): Funding to support much-needed training/re-training efforts in a depressed/stymied economy provides the major challenge. To date, even though funding

levels have decreased (approximately 13+% during the current Program Year), service provision has remained stable through solicitation of alternate grants and internal monitoring of expenditures. It is anticipated that further decreases will affect service provision.

Action Items:

- Prepare fiscal sustainability plans;
- Remain flexible in an ever-changing financial arena;
- Investigate alternate funding sources;
- Coordination and collaboration of local community resources; and
- Develop local models for preparing workers to remain competitive in a changing market.

Previous Strategy: Strengthen the membership of the Lackawanna County Youth Council to ensure wide-ranging oversight of youth initiatives by local educators, youth advocates, community leaders, program developers, and judicial staff.

Accomplishments: This goal has been accomplished. Today, the Youth Council is comprised of members representing the following entities: private business and industry, the Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce *Skills in Scranton*, Lackawanna County Juvenile Probation, Scranton Central Labor Union, Lackawanna County Housing Authority, a Community Action Agency, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, Keystone Job Corps, a parent of a youth participant, a youth participant, and WIB and WIA staff. All members are significantly engaged.

Challenge(s): No challenges were identified.

Action items:

- Continued involvement of the identified Youth Council members with possible expansion, as applicable.

Previous Strategy: Development and dissemination of a package of comprehensive materials to assist school dropouts in accessing community services, returning to school, or obtaining employment.

Accomplishment: As previously stated, this has been accomplished.

Challenge(s): None

Action Items:

- On-going distribution of material with updated information included, as necessary.

Previous Strategy: Conduct resource mapping to ensure leveraging of funds across wide-based funding streams including national and state sources, foundations, private employer contributions, etc.

Accomplishments: The Lackawanna County WIB did prepare an in-depth resource map which currently needs to be reviewed and updated.

Challenge(s): No challenges to accomplishment of this task are identified.

Action Items:

- Research and development of an updated resource and asset mapping tool, including technology distance learning opportunities;
- Preparation and submission of grant proposals to non-traditional sources (i.e., foundations, private companies, etc) to secure additional funding.

FUTURE PLAN OF ACTION/STRATEGIES:

- Preparation of a comprehensive package of information for distribution to both Federal and State legislators outlining effective practices, successful outcomes, and customer success stories
 1. Gather data
 2. Interpret & edit & prepare document
 3. DistributeTimeline: April, 2011 – September, 2011
- Revision of the WIB website to project a more current and up-dated product
 1. Conduct feasibility study
 2. Assess financial resources
 3. Project development
 4. Public roll-outTimeline: June, 2011 – December, 2011
- Implementation of WIB Facebook and Twitter Accounts
 1. Identify and designate account administrator
 2. Develop accounts
 3. Maintain accounts on a regular basisTimeline: Implement January, 2011 (On-going)
- Development of a regionalized study in preparation of reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998
 1. Research and analyses of local population data and trends
 2. Review of local performance criteria
 3. Development of single county versus regionalized feasibility study
 4. Compile presentation packet
 5. Summit to federal government entity/legislators, as appropriateTimeline: April, 2011 – December, 2011
- Continued strengthening of the PA CareerLink® Lackawanna County to ensure the provision of a comprehensive package of services to the public.

1. Continued enhanced Business Services Team development
2. Staff development
3. Establish linkages to the Marcellus Shale initiative
4. Strengthen involvement with emerging “Green” industries

Timeline: Present - Future