

# STRATEGIC PLAN

A DEVELOPMENTAL STRATEGY TO  
ENSURE THE ON-GOING  
GROWTH AND ADVANCEMENT OF  
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT IN  
LACKAWANNA COUNTY

2007 – 2009

Lackawanna County Workforce Investment Board  
Austin J. Burke, Chair

**The Lackawanna County Workforce Investment Board (WIB)**, through the development of this Strategic Plan, offers a sound and needs-driven economic future for Lackawanna County and the Northeast region of the Commonwealth through the development, implementation, and sustainability of comprehensive workforce initiatives; realization of significant planning processes; alignment of educational curriculums; and achievement of stability based on sound socio-economic trends. The WIB is committed to addressing challenges to prepare a workforce for a globally competitive, knowledge-based economy. The WIB, through its mission, vision, plans and partnerships will serve as a catalyst for change in Lackawanna County.

The Lackawanna Workforce Investment Area is unique in that it borders 3 additional WIB's that comprise the Northeastern Region of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Initiating and coordinating strategies with our neighboring Pocono Counties, Luzerne/Schuylkill and the Northern Tier Workforce Investment Boards, Lackawanna County is poised to provide a world-class, educated, competitive workforce aligned with the needs of an ever-fluctuating economy.

The Lackawanna WIB continues its path toward systematic change. Changing cultures involves changing mindsets, which takes time. The development of this strategic plan will solidify the foundation and promote continued quality improvements that have been achieved within the last year. Engaging all stakeholders to collectively identify and address strategic improvements at all levels will only enhance the future stability of Lackawanna County. Words such as holistic, all encompassing and multi-faceted are present descriptors when addressing the Workforce Development System. This plan will confirm the collaborative approach that is in its infancy stages. Through individual commitment, on-going open communication and a defined sense of direction, Lackawanna County will make great strides in achieving the goals described herein.

### The Lackawanna County Workforce Development System Model Integrated -- Collaborative



## 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.

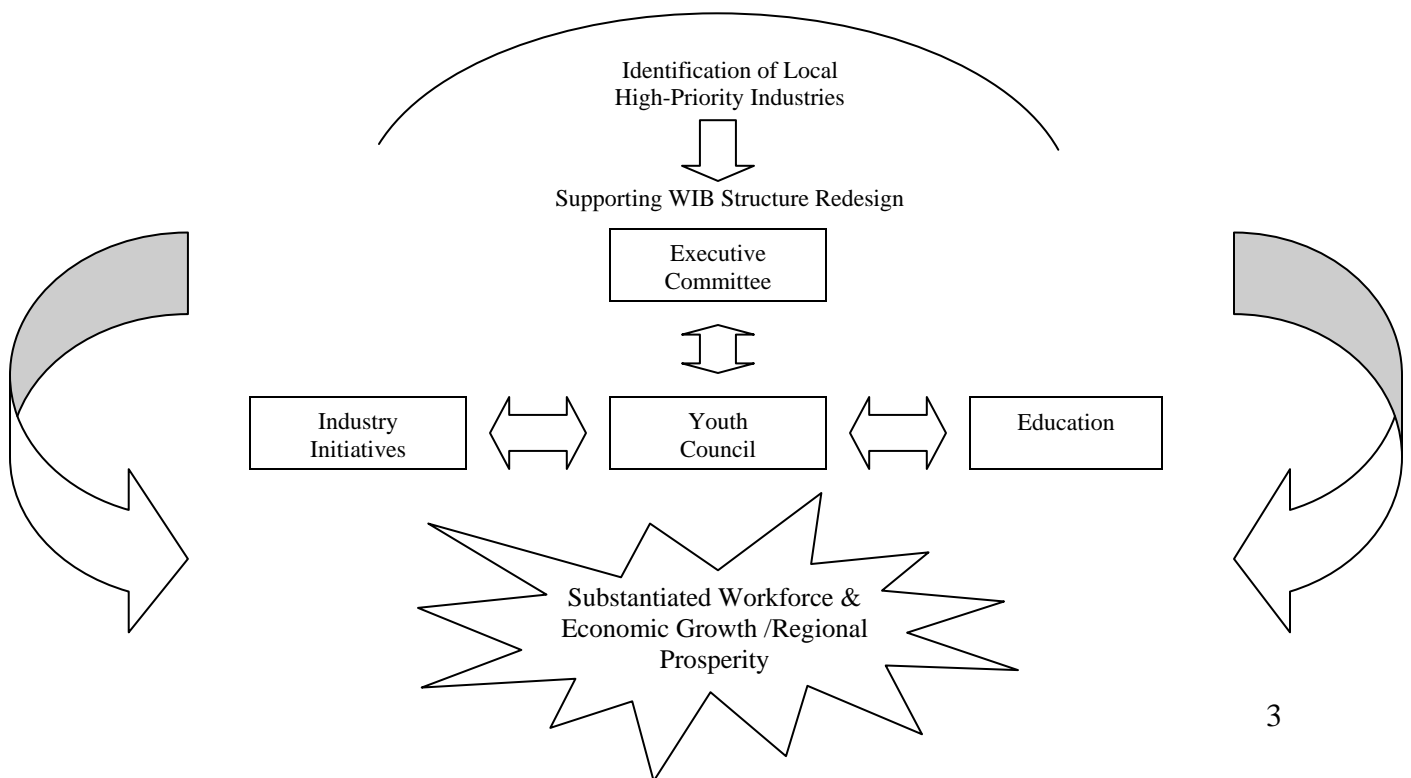
## MISSION

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

## SUPPORT STRATEGIES

- ✦ Adoption of a new committee structure by the full-WIB to ensure alignment with strategic initiatives.

Supporting comprehensive systematic change to ensure growth within workforce development strategies, the Lackawanna County WIB opted to undergo a structural redesign of member commitment through a full-Board vote on September 21, 2007. Subcommittee reorganization, as outlined below, aligns membership affiliations with locally identified high-priority industry clusters. Recognizing the strength of collaboration among economic development, education, and employment entities, the WIB foresees these changes as support pillars to widespread workforce growth and continued economic prosperity. Seen in relation to progress, this initial step represents an obligation necessary to propagate change; viewed pictorially as follows:



#### Executive Committee:

The Executive Committee of the WIB represents the WIB membership in providing overall oversight and guidance for the Workforce Development System, including WIB staff, Workforce Investment Act (WIA) staff, PA CareerLink Lackawanna County, community outreach, program development, etc. The WIB Executive Committee has the authority of the WIB to approve programmatic and fiscal issues within the Lackawanna County Workforce Investment Area to ensure timely continuance of services. All actions taken by the Executive Committee are presented to the full Board at Quarterly meetings.

#### Youth Council:

The Youth Council provides oversight and guidance for comprehensive service provision to the WIB regarding the following: review and provide guidance in the development of portions of Local Operational Plan relating to youth, provide authority to issue Requests for Proposals for the provision of youth services, conducts oversight and review of ongoing yearly activities, provides guidance to Youth Operational staff, and 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 all actions reported for approval during Quarterly Meetings.

#### Industry Initiatives Committee:

The Industry Initiatives Committee serves in the capacity to communicate and promote the actions and activities of the Board to Industry specific/led initiatives including Industry Partnership formation and development and the oversight for dissemination of worker training grants, leveraging of resources, outreach and communication efforts, regional promotion; advanced strategic planning as it pertains to workforce and economic development, sustainability planning, integration of business services oversight, long-range development, and compliance of all regulatory requirements as dictated by specific initiatives. All actions taken by the Industry Initiatives Committee are reported to the Executive Committee for review and submission to the full Board for approval at Quarterly Meetings.

#### Education Committee:

The Education Committee provides directives to the development of educational initiatives to ensure alignment with changes in workforce development shifts within a fluctuating economic climate including development of industry-led curricula, online course accessibility, development of wide-based articulation agreements, providing guidance to improve the school-to-work concept within the community at large, and promoting both short and long-term avenues of study.

All actions taken by the Education Committee are reported to the Executive Committee for review and submission to the full Board for approval at Quarterly Meetings.

✦ Continued and strengthened linkages with local Chambers of Commerce, Northeast Pennsylvania Alliance (NEPA) and The Great Valley Technology Alliance/Northeastern Pennsylvania Technology Institute.

The Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce serves as a catalyst for economic growth and has become a working partner in propelling efforts for both local as well as regionalized promotion, stimulation, and advancement. Utilizing such efforts as the *Rediscover Scranton...we're electric!* and "Work & Play in Northeast PA" campaigns, the Chamber is instrumental in marketing Northeastern PA to major businesses and corporations both nationally and globally. Austin Burke, Vice President of SLIBCO, the business arm of the Chamber sits as the Chair of the Lackawanna County WIB and is a prominent figure promoting collaborative ventures among partners.

NEPA Alliance, the Local Development District for Northeast Pennsylvania, which encompasses Lackawanna County, can assist the WIB with a variety of research and data analysis tools and expertise. Utilization of economic modeling with INPLAN, Economic Modeling Specialists, Inc. (EMSI) software, and a variety of other databases, research and information will be an ongoing enhancement to planning and development. This information can be presented on both a regional and county level. Strengthening this linkage ensures that data is relevant and timely and appropriately utilized in planning and development efforts.

NEPA Alliance serves in the capacity of regional contact for the Penn State Data Center. Technical assistance is always available with regard to data identification, extraction, and summarization. WIB staff has and will continue to enlist this local resource for support for research assistance.

The Great Valley Technology Alliance (GVTI) follows its mission to create a self-sustaining technology-based economy in Northeastern Pennsylvania. Through collaborative efforts with the Lackawanna WIB, a variety of programs and services conducted through its operational division, The Northeastern Pennsylvania Technology Institute (NPTI), can be infused into workforce planning processes. By information sharing, programs such as Strategic Teams Accelerating Regional Stimuli (STARS) can align strategies for cluster development. Keystone Innovation Zones (KIZ) information and other business incentive programs will be utilized in WIB consortia development.

✦ 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.

Analyzing data is not a static process. As data cycles differ, (Census, American Community Survey, Wage Data, Occupational Data, High-Priority Occupation lists) the WIB staff will review and update information as pertinent to on-going project planning.

The WIB *Workforce Analysis*, prepared in June 2007, was a “Phase I” review that compiled commuting patterns, and Pennsylvania workforce projections. The “Phase II” segment, completed October 2007, focuses on an *Industry Cluster Analysis*. “Phase III” is currently under development, and consists of an *Occupational Analysis*. Data is necessary to identify positive workforce development direction for Lackawanna County. Through data collection and analysis, the identification of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities or trends within Lackawanna County, can ensure the appropriate alignment of resources and energies to progress.

WIB staff has attended the Economic and Workforce Development Data Workshop sponsored by the Pennsylvania State Data Center and the Center for Workforce Information and Analysis Workshop to improve internal data collection skills. Staff-development will be on-going in the area of analysis.

Through the WIB sub-committee structure, the Youth Council, Industry Initiatives and Education committees will be presented with both quantitative and qualitative information to better coordinate development efforts. This coordination will ensure that all facets of workforce development are working collaboratively.

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

On-going data collection will be presented to the WIB sub-committees for foundation planning. Occupational deficiencies cross-referenced with existing or absent educational programs will be reviewed to ensure alignment with current and future workforce development planning processes. Conducting a global asset map of educational programs, in occupational alignment with the targeted industry clusters needs, will facilitate the necessity of curriculum development. An on-going review of the State approved training providers and programs will also facilitate discussion regarding curriculum development to identify voids in appropriate training choices for Workforce Investment Act – Title I and Trade Act sponsored customers.

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

The Lackawanna WIB has ensured on-going regional planning efforts by spearheading quarterly WIB coordination meetings. The various Industry Partnership efforts that encompass the 4 Northeast Regional WIB's (Lackawanna, Luzerne/Schuylkill, Northern Tier and Pocono Counties) will be better aligned in process, planning, and delivery. The WIB Directors have agreed to a common training application, invoicing methodology, and the cross-informing of geographic-specific Industry involvement in Partnership efforts.

The Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development (WIRED) Grant/Wall Street West initiative extends the regionalism to a 5 WIB area (Lackawanna, Luzerne/Schuylkill, Pocono Counties, Berks and Lehigh Valley). A collaborative agreement has been developed to ensure seamless service delivery in the quest to bolster the workforce pipeline to financial services and information technology occupations. The 5 WIB's have agreed to common training practices, such as Individual Training Account (ITA) allocation, outreach materials, and uniform customer eligibility practices in the Business Financial Services cluster. On-going dialog will entertain common practice for On The Job Training (OJT) relative to the Wall Street West initiative and future agreements for other industry clusters and/or occupational groups.

- ✦ Participation in efforts to recruit new businesses to Northeastern Pennsylvania and promote layoff aversion strategies to exiting companies.

Integration with the Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce recruitment efforts entailing visits to/with prospective business(es) considering relocation and new developers has been on going and will continue. The WIB Executive Director, PA CareerLink Site Administrator, and WIA Operations Directors are included as part of a "team approach" thus providing a comprehensive package of detailed workforce information to interested entities. Through the Pennsylvania Department of Labor, Rapid Response Coordination Services, the Lackawanna WIB will ensure participation and alignment of services to prevent downsizing. PA CareerLink Lackawanna County will be kept apprised of any potential situations that may require Rapid Response assistance.

- ✦ 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.

The Lackawanna WIB, through primary industry cluster focused efforts, will ensure that necessary and appropriate workforce information is disseminated to both internal and external K-12 stakeholders. The WIB will prepare an asset map of all Lackawanna County schools to chart 720 participation, articulation agreements with post-secondary institutions, dual-enrollment agreements with post-secondary institutions, 2+2+2 programs, Tech-Prep participation, Career & Technical Education usage (comprehensive and external enrollments) and

participation in Business/Education Partnerships. The asset map will be presented to all WIB Sub-Committees for review, discussion and for use in planning efforts.

✦ Support of life-long learning initiatives.

The Lackawanna County WIB defines the Workforce Development System as kindergarten through lifelong learning. All workforce development efforts will be in support of future, emerging, and current persons in the labor market. By promoting workforce activities at all levels we can ensure the accommodation of industry needs.

✦ 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.

The WIB will continuously review the membership to ensure appropriate stakeholders are involved. The utilization of data and workforce information will assist with the recruiting process. By presenting workforce/educational strengths and weaknesses, it is the goal of the WIB to engage one representative from each school district to commit to Youth Council membership.

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

Lackawanna County experienced a 1.0% dropout rate, or 134 students, in 2004-2005 (Pennsylvania 1.9%). The WIB will ensure that all school districts receive a comprehensive packet of materials to enhance the students' transition from school to work. Schools with the largest concentration of dropouts will be provided on-site assistance for program registration, such as the general equivalency diploma, and PA CareerLink registration. All schools will receive labor market materials displaying level of education and wages, and level of education and employment opportunities. Through appropriate outreach efforts, it is hoped that the number of dropouts will be reduced.

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

By presenting all applicable resources in a comprehensive view, activities and programs are approached in an aligned and practical fashion. Resource mapping ensures that funds are expended in a prudent manner and are not duplicated and also identifies voids, thus allowing research of additional funding opportunities through public and private venues. Recognizing that resources may fluctuate, the WIB includes a current overview, as attached, with revisions to be addressed frequently to ensure accuracy of data.

## **PLAN OF ACTION**

Utilizing the support strategies, the WIB has chosen to focus its strategic efforts on three key areas:

### **I. Industry Engagement**

Goal: To ensure industry alignment through the continuum of workforce development programs.

Strategy: The utilization of Industry Analysis

To engage the workforce development system through strategic application - identifying priorities and developing processes for subsequent planning efforts. The analysis will provide the foundation for a preliminary focus of Industry Clusters within Lackawanna County. The desired result will be the alignment and synergies of resources and talents of all stakeholders. By utilizing this sector strategy the WIB will strengthen its outreach to the business community, develop a framework within which business services are generated and delivered and build stronger links with regional economic development efforts.

Utilize “Phase I & II” Analysis information to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and trends of businesses. The primary focus approach to Industry Clusters will promote an achievable method of planning. Both workforce professionals and Industry must have a common understanding of demographic, economic, and educational characteristics of our available labor force. An on-going review will assist with the alignment of necessary initiatives to meet the needs of Industry.

The three bordering WIB’s, (Pocono Counties, Luzerne/Schuylkill and Northern Tier) through their continued collaboration, have determined the necessity for a Regional Industry Cluster Analysis. This broader scope of industry will assist all WIB’s in better aligning energies and resources to strengthen workforce development processes. This initiative will be an action item for 2008.

PA CareerLink staff will be provided training on the information so that they can contribute to the planning process and can be aligning career advisement and other universal information activities to the reality of the local labor market.

Business Services Team members have segmented talents in accordance with the focused Clusters. Each member will be involved or apprised with the various Industry Partnerships and/or Partnership Worker Training initiatives encompassing their particular Cluster.

Lackawanna WIB has initiated a plan for regional Industry Clusters to be showcased. The WIB has obtained consensus from the Northeast Region WIB's to establish *Workforce Weeks* surrounding each identified Industry Cluster. In replication of the successful Health Care Awareness Week held each November, the Lackawanna WIB will collaborate with the Luzerne/Schuylkill, Northern Tier, and Pocono Counties WIB's to schedule a variety of activities and events to showcase particular Clusters. Utilizing PA CareerLink offices and Business/Education Partnership venues, youth based activities, labor market statistics publications, employment opportunities and future projections through job fairs and educational fairs, and other innovative activities will generate awareness of the Regional economy.

#### Strategy: Enhance Industry Partnerships

To improve the consortia building – through a Regional approach but with localized attention. Lackawanna WIB staff is currently involved with a myriad of Partnerships encompassing Lackawanna County. Improved communication with and between lead-applicant WIB's will continue to improve the Partnership development activities of Lackawanna County. Realizing the geographic hindrance that a 12 county consortia can provide to Industry participation, Lackawanna WIB staff will provide a localized means of information dissemination to our businesses for each Industry Partnership. Through the use of the PA CareerLink Business Services Team and WIB staff interaction, Lackawanna County business needs will be relayed to regional Partnerships.

Lackawanna County WIB staff members are apprised of all established Partnership activities and the companies named within. WIB staff members attend Regional Partnership meetings and planning sessions to locally relay Partnership information to businesses as potential solutions to workforce needs. Staff members will continue to attend any state sponsored meetings/trainings to ensure quality improvement in Partnership development processes.

Lackawanna County WIB serves as the lead-applicant and program manager for Early Education Industry Partnership and the Advanced Materials and Diversified Manufacturing – Electronics Industry Partnership. This is the first attempt for Lackawanna County to organize Partnership activities under Governor Rendell's Job Ready Initiative. Staff has and will continue to attend State sponsored trainings and will enlist the State WIB for on-going technical assistance with regard to Partnership development and organization.

The utilization of the *High Performance Standards for Industry Partnerships* document serves as the basis for Lackawanna County to embark on effective Partnership development. The framework for Partnership development will follow the 4 identified areas, serving as a preliminary structure for strategic development of Partnership activities. The areas are as follows:

- Ensuring Strategic and Effective Assistance to Business
- Ensuring Strategic and Effective Assistance to Workers
- Institutional Alignment: Aligning Goals and Catalyzing Change
- Partnership Governance: Strategic Partners, Real Collaboration & Sustainability

Both the Early Education and Electronics Partnership Grants provided an initial structure for decision-making capacity. Early Education has an initial pool of individuals previously served through a Worker Training Grant. Great enthusiasm from this core group will assist with Partnership development. The Electronics Partnership, previously managed by the Luzerne/Schuylkill WIB, has a list of 17 Industry Partners. The Lackawanna County WIB has initiated a “re-engagement” effort to establish active participation on part of Industry, and to provide direction addressing identified workforce systems issues. It is through this personal engagement strategy supporting a “value added” inclusion message that both Partnerships will grow in numbers and evolve in purpose.

Both Industry Partnerships formalize the network of industry, education, economic and workforce professionals, streamlining the communication among partners. The approach is on activities and programs that leverage existing resources, programs, and systems to provide for sustainability. On-going costs for physical meeting places will be absorbed through the various industry partners, many of whom have facilities to accommodate periodic face-to-face meetings. The sponsoring organizations will also play a role in convening and supporting the Partnership and Training efforts.

Strategy: Talent Pool Development

The Lackawanna WIB will promote occupations within local clusters ensuring a qualified workforce. By utilizing a data-driven approach, all levels of workforce development will be addressed. Collaborative efforts with stakeholders at all levels will create subsequent activities in identified sectors. By generating a common mission across education, economic and workforce agencies energies can be directed to ensure a skilled pool of workers.

Through Industry Partnerships and other enhanced business participation efforts, identified workforce needs will provide the foundation for planning. Asset mapping of relevant training programs cross-referenced with the occupational needs of Industry will allow for the creation of industry specified curriculum. Through the sub-committee structure, the WIB can address and align curricula development with validated industry needs.

Distribution and promotion of local labor market information and industry sector career awareness information will enhance the interaction and engagement of youth stakeholders. The continued development of Career Pathways and Career

Ladders within and among industries will assist in the progression of skills necessary to attract and retain companies in Lackawanna County.

## II. Education

Goal: To ensure educational opportunities are in alignment with the local economy.

Strategy: Enhance K-12 Interaction

To provide comprehensive workforce information, enhancing the knowledge base of educators, students and parents. By aligning career awareness activities with the realism of the local labor market, appropriate career choices can be made. By expanding collaborative efforts to work with current 720 school districts, and other districts, appropriate career planning activities can be conducted. By conducting an educational asset map, strengths and deficiencies can be addressed with regard to 2+2+2 programs, dual enrollment and articulation agreements. Through the WIB sub-committee structure, Industry and Education will align with the Youth council to embark on right-course planning.

Strategy: Enhance Career and Technical Education (CTE)

It is promising that through the PA Department of Education a parallel message is being sent. Program design and outcomes obtained by CTE students are to be in alignment with Industry standards and be needs driven. Industry-led strategies will enhance CTE offerings. CTE Representatives are WIB members and are currently involved in collaborative activities. It is the intent to continue to expand the relationship with CTE stakeholders to be inclusive of the WIB's direction and purpose. All Industry analysis information will be disseminated and used as a planning tool to ensure alignment of program development/delivery with local industry advantage. Promote increased enrollments through wide-based dissemination of quality educational opportunity materials.

Strategy: Align Post-Secondary Options

Recognizing the need to supplement avenues of training to specifically meet the needs of current and emerging business and industry, emphasis must be placed on continued growth of established relationships with training institutions, colleges, and universities that are prevalent in Northeastern PA to ensure that course offerings align with ever-changing industry/occupational demands. Citing an example within the Financial Services and IT industry, it can be recognized that once popular jobs such as bank tellers and entry-level data processors requiring a high school diploma are now being upgraded to college-degree positions in a fast-paced, high-tech world of global business. The Lackawanna WIB, through promotion of local Industry Partnerships, will include at the table representatives of local educational institutions to ensure that curriculum development augments

workforce expansion and, thus enabling, future endeavors in a changing environment. In addition, the WIB strongly promotes increased usage of the Commonwealth's Training Provider List as an avenue to support dissemination of Workforce Investment Act funds to a wider base of eligible customers. Driven by substantiated socio-economic data, the availability of education in support of current economic conditions significantly supports workforce growth.

### III. WIRED

Goal: To provide an all-encompassing process of systematic workforce change relating to the Business/Financial sector.

Goal: To utilize the WIRED grant/designation for Lackawanna County promotion in future resource development.

Strategy: Wall Street West Initiative

The Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development (WIRED) Grant/Wall Street West initiative extends the regionalism to a 5 WIB area (Lackawanna, Luzerne/Schuylkill, Pocono Counties, Berks and Lehigh Valley). A collaborative agreement has been developed to ensure seamless service delivery in the quest to bolster the workforce pipeline to financial services and information technology occupations. The 5 WIB's have agreed to common training practices, such as Individual Training Account (ITA) allocation, outreach materials, and uniform customer eligibility practices in the Business Financial Services cluster. On-going dialog will entertain common practice for On The Job Training (OJT) relative to the Wall Street West initiative and future agreements for other industry clusters and/or occupational groups.

The Lackawanna County WIB will utilize data from the Gap Analysis to focus development efforts for occupational awareness, training and employment. Preliminary data extraction has been completed by WIB staff, benchmarking Lackawanna County's occupations in demand, current availability of education and training programs and self-sufficiency wages identifying areas of program development.

WIB staff will work collectively with Wall Street West to provide outreach to educational providers. Utilizing a data-driven approach to display the necessity for curriculum/program development, efforts will be made to increase the overall rate of degree attainment within the region. By providing resources to assist entry-level and current workforce training, the Lackawanna County WIB will seek training development around occupations with self-sustaining wages.

Business Services Team members from the regional PA CareerLinks' will be provided training directly from Wall Street West. The information and data produced by the Gap Analysis will be shared in a manner that will be useful to

those conducting business engagement duties. The training will also be useful for PA CareerLink staff when providing career advisement duties and other universal information activities.

The Lackawanna WIB has submitted an application for Industry Partnership resources. This effort, in collaboration with Luzerne/Schuylkill WIB, Pocono Counties WIB and Wall Street West, will enhance localized Industry engagement efforts. The Lackawanna WIB updates current Board members at quarterly meetings with the regional initiative, and has gained their support and commitment to the effort of workforce development improvement around the Business & Financial Services/Information Technology sector.

Strategy: WIRED recipient capitalization

Lackawanna County, as one of nine counties encompassed by WIRED, is poised to utilize the WIRED designation to its advantage. As regional transformation evolves under this initiative, collaborative relationships and planning processes will be the reality. Through strategic application and systematic changes, partnering efforts can be replicated under other resource venues.

## **SUMMARY**

The Lackawanna WIB realizes its role is to become a catalyst for change within our community. Through collaborative efforts, ideas and innovation will assist in preparing our workforce. Through advocacy with federal, state, and local elected officials, funding and support for programs that build a strong workforce to compete in the global economy will continue. Through Regionalism, uniqueness and commonality will innovate new and creative workforce solutions to address workforce development.

The Lackawanna WIB realizes the strategies contained herein are the steps, the progress in motion, and the building blocks that will ensure positive transformation of Lackawanna County.

Collaboration + Commitment = Change.