

Conference Summary

Workforce Development Listening Sessions in Pennsylvania



FEDERAL RESERVE BANK
OF PHILADELPHIA



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Summary of Workforce Development Listening Sessions

INTRODUCTION

Community development departments in the Federal Reserve System promote economic growth and financial stability for low- and moderate-income (LMI) communities and individuals through a range of activities, including convening meetings with stakeholders, conducting and sharing research, and identifying emerging issues. Given the attenuating effects of long-term unemployment on the broader economic recovery and particular issues facing LMI communities, the Reserve Banks of Philadelphia and Cleveland partnered to convene regional meetings to understand employment and workforce development issues.

WHAT WE DID

In the summer of 2013, the community development divisions of the Reserve Banks organized five regional listening sessions in Pennsylvania that brought together educational, business, and community development leaders to get a better understanding of the workforce development needs of young people between the ages of 16 and 24. The employment rates of this age cohort declined significantly from 2000 to 2010.¹ The listening sessions were held throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in Erie, Harrisburg, Johnstown, Pittsburgh, and Scranton (the locations are indicated on the map on page 5).

Attendees included representatives of career and technical education centers, career academies, school districts, community colleges, business–education partnerships, workforce investment boards, nonprofit agencies engaged in workforce development, chambers of commerce, and community foundations.² For most of the sessions, the area chambers of commerce helped to identify invitees in the categories above.

WHAT WE LEARNED

This document summarizes comments made by participants in the five sessions.³ The comments that were most frequently expressed are organized into groups, or themes, below. It should be noted that the summary does not include all comments made at the sessions and that attendee comments have not been verified. Some additional comments made in individual sessions are provided in Appendix B.

Supply and demand challenges limit employment opportunities for young people.

Multifaceted Challenges. Young people face major challenges in finding employment following high school and college graduation, while employers face major challenges in finding qualified employees. The challenges are multifaceted and interconnected.

Employers face a number of issues related to both soft and technical skills as well as screening criteria.

Soft Skills. The consensus of chamber of commerce officials and some individual employers was that employers find it difficult to find entry-level workers. Employers are generally looking for workers who have “soft skills,” such as punctuality, reliability, a good work ethic, and the ability to communicate and work in a team environment. Additionally, they are looking for workers who have basic reading and writing skills and math aptitude. In addition, many employers also prefer workers who have a certain level of technical proficiency within the specific career field.

¹ See Neeta P. Fogg and Paul E. Harrington, “The Collapse of the Labor Market for 16- to 24-Year-Olds,” Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia *Cascade* (Fall 2011), pp. 6–7, 15–17, available at <http://ow.ly/p4ctU>.

² A list of the organizations participating in each of the listening sessions can be found in Appendix C.

³ The summary was prepared by Keith L. Rolland, community development advisor, Community Development Studies and Education (CDS&E), Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia, in consultation with Erin Mierzwa, Department Manager, CDS&E, Philadelphia Fed and Joseph C. Ott, Senior Policy Analyst, Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland, who organized or participated in the sessions.



Job Screening Criteria. In most of the cities in which we conducted a listening session, we heard that applicants frequently fail drug and alcohol tests as well as criminal background checks. Some employers report that as many as half of the applicants fail their drug tests.⁴ An additional barrier is the use by employers of online tests to initially screen job candidates. Applicants often do not realize that some questions on the tests probe their attitudes about what is appropriate communication and behavior in the workplace. In addition, software used to scan résumés may omit qualified candidates who do not use certain keywords on their résumés.

Competition for Entry-Level Jobs. Participants said that competition has intensified for available jobs and that young job seekers are competing with older workers who lost their jobs during the recession or who need and/or prefer to work. Additionally, we heard reports that workers with higher education levels are taking jobs that would otherwise be taken by entry-level workers. Some employers are more likely to hire applicants who hold a bachelor's or an associate's degree because the employer sees the degrees as a proxy that the applicants are job-ready.

Desirability of Available Jobs. Many participants said that available jobs are often part time and low paying, typically in the retail and service sectors, and are not always desirable. Furthermore, we heard that some manufacturing and health-care jobs pay less than retail and service jobs, so there is little incentive to obtain the additional training needed for these career paths because it will not lead to an increase in compensation, and the type of work may be more demanding.

⁴ Employee and workforce development advocates noted that an increase in the use of more extensive and rigorous drug screenings may have contributed to the increase in drug test failures.

Negative Perceptions of Technical Careers. The listening sessions revealed that young people have shown limited interest in employment and careers in skilled trades, such as welding, and in manufacturing, even when job opportunities do exist. There are negative perceptions of technical careers, often reinforced by parents who believe that their children must go to a four-year college in order to be successful and that the skilled trades and manufacturing are not viable career paths.

Career Awareness. Too often, young people, and their parents, have limited information and data about careers and limited understanding of different pathways to enter career fields. Attendees noted that written job descriptions provided by employers may not adequately reflect the type of work opportunities actually available. These descriptions may focus too heavily on keywords that may not resonate with qualified candidates. Furthermore, different kinds of jobs within career fields are often not apparent to the younger population. For example, in Pittsburgh, participants noted that there are eight different types of carpenters and each type provides a different career path, yet this distinction is unclear to young people.

Job Availability. Despite demand-side and supply-side challenges, job availability was reported in each session in health care, manufacturing (including advanced manufacturing), and the skilled trades. In Johnstown and Pittsburgh, participants noted that the natural gas extraction industry has opportunities in manufacturing and construction as well as in middle management, which includes program managers and operators. In Scranton, the representative of a large gas company active in Marcellus shale exploration said that the company had great difficulty in finding heavy-equipment operators and other employees, although it has had success in working with a for-profit college that provides training designed by the company.

Positive Attributes of Young Workers. During the sessions, employers mentioned that computer and social media proficiency and an acceptance of diversity in the workplace are among the attributes of young people that are viewed positively. One participant observed that once young workers get entry-level positions, they often are viewed as good workers.

Funding and programmatic constraints challenge local workforce development systems.

Declining Funding and Fragmentation. Participants said that federal funding is steadily declining for Workforce Investment Act–related programs for young people. Federal workforce programs are fragmented and often have restrictions on eligibility of individuals and use of funds that make it difficult to use the programs. Smaller cities and rural areas find it difficult to develop workforce programs because the programs serve relatively few individuals located across a large geographic area. They compete for funding with larger cities that have documented greater populations in need.

Uneven Demand for Career and Technical Education (CTE) Programs Across the State. While there's a high demand for CTE programs⁵ in some locations, demand is reportedly weaker in some rural and suburban communities.⁶ Many participants held their own regional CTE in high regard but felt that the CTE system in general was not as effective as it could be. Participants noted uneven availability of CTE programs and uneven demand for the programs. For example, it was reported in Pittsburgh that, on average, only 7 percent of the students elect CTE programs in many suburban communities, contributing to vacant seats in many CTE programs outside of the city. Many CTE students reportedly have learning disabilities. One participant said that up to 45 percent of all CTE students in Pennsylvania have an individualized education program (IEP) tailored to their learning disability. Alternatively, participants noted that some CTE programs have excellent job placement histories and, therefore, are highly competitive to enter.

⁵ For background on CTE programs in Pennsylvania, see www.pacode.com/secure/data/022/chapter4/s4.31.html and www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/career_technical_education/7335. General background about CTE programs is available at www.acteonline.org/factsheets/.

⁶ The demand for CTE programs was affected by program quality and focus.

Effectiveness of Current Systems. The performance of the CareerLink system⁷ was discussed in some of the listening sessions. In these discussions, it was reported that CareerLink does not always capture and post the jobs available to workers and that more opportunities exist to increase engagement with individual employers. Attendees also acknowledged some historical challenges with the CareerLink system, primarily related to the screening of candidates and the caliber of the available candidates in the system.

There are specific challenges for hard-to-serve populations and regions.

Demand Far Exceeds Supply for Programs for Low- and Moderate-Income Residents. Programs often are subsidy-dependent and operate for a short time. The number of young people served in summer youth programs in the five cities has been cut substantially. In Harrisburg, youth programs are oversubscribed, and there aren't enough openings to meet demand. Programs that were funded for a few years and then discontinued include a Job Corps program in Erie that provided training and subsidized youth employment and a YouthBuild program in Harrisburg.

Ex-Offenders Face Major Hurdles in Finding Employment. There is a sizable population of ex-offenders who are returning to communities and need assistance in preparing for work and seeking employment, according to participants in Harrisburg and at other listening sessions.

Smaller Cities and Rural Areas Face Specific Challenges. Attendees noted that there has been a “brain drain” for decades in many of these communities. Young people often feel they must leave smaller cities and rural areas because they believe that these areas are in decline and do not offer a promising future. In fact, some jobs in manufacturing and the skilled trades are in demand in many of the smaller cities and rural areas, although employers say that they're unable to entice job applicants and their spouses to move into these communities to take the available jobs.

Transportation Barriers. Generally, every city has some form of public transit, but the service offerings are limited, especially in the smaller cities and in outlying rural areas of all the cities. Furthermore, in many smaller communities, car travel is the dominant mode of transportation. Many entry-level workers cannot afford cars. In Johnstown, residents often find it difficult to travel due to the mountainous terrain in the region and the conditions caused by the winter weather.

Collaboration is key to implementing successful workforce development strategies.

Partnerships Are Critical to Addressing Workforce Development Needs. The partnerships often include high schools, career and technical education centers, community colleges, workforce development practitioners (such as CareerLink and social service agencies), and employers.

Examples of Partnerships. The Harrisburg Regional Chamber & Capital Region Economic Development Corporation's (CREDC) Education and Business Partnership Committee focuses on preparing the student workforce, improving workforce skills, providing internships and mentoring, and retraining unemployed workers. The Capital Region Partnership for Career Development is also active in Harrisburg. Meanwhile, Skills in Scranton, the 20-year-old business–education partnership of the Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce, promotes career awareness in electronics, health care, and financial/information technology and strives to retain 18- to 35-year-old employees in the region. However, in some communities, employers and the K-12 school district weren't substantially engaged in workforce development efforts.

⁷ In 1999, Pennsylvania implemented its one-stop workforce development system under the brand name Pennsylvania CareerLink. Pennsylvania CareerLink provides services for employers and job seekers, including a web-based job matching and training resource system. Public and private workforce development agencies staff local CareerLink offices, some of which serve multiple counties. Job seekers can register for events or workshops at www.pacareerlink.state.pa.us. A supplemental state website, JobGateway, has job search capabilities and assists job seekers with résumé creation; see www.jobgateway.state.pa.us. For background on the Workforce Investment Act. See <http://ow.ly/sxiry>.

Need for Greater Collaboration. Participants noted that there are many nonprofit agencies involved in workforce development and that they are not always aware of one another. Collaboration has increased in recent years as federal and other funding have declined. The sense at the meetings was that there needs to be greater collaboration in the future with employers and some nonprofits that are not presently part of regional partnerships. Greater collaboration needs to occur, although additional funding is unlikely.

Employer Roles. The importance of job shadowing and internships was underscored in many of the listening sessions. Few of these opportunities exist. Employers find it difficult to find the time required for job shadowing, internships, and mentoring, and it is difficult to bring these programs to scale. Collaboration with employers is important when training programs are developed by community colleges, other two-year colleges, and CTE programs.⁸

Disconnections Between Schools and Employers. A common theme in the listening sessions was that teachers are preoccupied and pressured to prepare their students, particularly underperforming students, for the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment tests and Keystone end-of-course examinations. The predominant emphasis on teaching the Common Core State Standards and enabling students to pass achievement tests has overshadowed sports and other extracurricular activities that build soft skills that are important in the workplace. Also, the number of guidance counselors has been reduced, and the remaining guidance counselors have little time for giving career advice. Teachers reportedly often fail to make connections between course content and career paths and lack sufficient knowledge about career pathways. Lastly, the focus on the Common Core State Standards and graduation rates has had negative effects on CTE programs. The Erie CTE program reportedly loses approximately 50 percent of its students annually because of poor academic performance. The students must then return to their home school districts to focus on high school graduation. It was reported that Erie's experience is typical in Pennsylvania's CTE program. The president of a two-year college observed that there is a "huge disconnect" between the educational system and employment.

Information Gaps. In addition, young people, teachers, guidance/career counselors, and students' parents need better information and data about careers and different pathways to embark on these careers, according to participants. While it was frequently acknowledged that more specific information about career pathways is needed early in high school, many attendees also noted that general career discussions should begin before children enter high school.

Additional opportunities to foster success for individuals and employers were identified in the sessions.

Session attendees repeatedly mentioned that opportunities for young people to gain work experience prior to high school or college graduation were very limited. They suggested that more employers need to offer job shadowing, internships, apprenticeships, and other opportunities that would enable young people to get some understanding of the work world as well as knowledge of a particular business. They expressed a belief that young people who have some work experience, even if the experience consists of summer jobs, tend to have more attachment to jobs later on.⁹

In nearly every session, the sentiment was expressed that young people and their parents need up-to-date information and data on careers while the young people are attending the first years of high school. Further,

⁸ A study from the Workforce Development Policy Committee of the Institute of Politics at the University of Pittsburgh, which was referenced during the Pittsburgh meeting, recommended that each CTE program institute a joint operating committee that includes industry representation. The recommendation was based on the belief that "With greater governance involvement by local industry representatives employing workers in high-priority occupations ... CTEs would become more responsive to filling the local industry pipeline," see <http://www.iop.pitt.edu/documents/Status%20Report%20Governance%20and%20Funding%20Reform%20for%20CTCs%20Jan%2011.pdf>.

⁹ See the "Pathways to Prosperity" report published by Harvard University's Graduate School of Education, available at www.gse.harvard.edu/news_events/features/2011/Pathways_to_Prosperty_Feb2011.pdf.

since parent involvement in the career development of their sons and daughters is important, programs that involve parents are needed so that they can help their children make career choices, enter career fields, and finance their education. Moreover, attendees said that career coaches would be useful in working with students in high schools, career and technical education centers, and community colleges. For example, the Erie CTE program has started using a career coach.

Attendees also indicated that CTE programs and community colleges need to help increase students' attainment of industry-recognized degrees and credentials. In community colleges, some students languish in remedial classes and do not obtain an associate's degree. Further, more effective partnerships between employers and CTE programs and community colleges are necessary to identify the specific industry-recognized degrees and credentials that employers prefer prospective candidates to have. Finally, CTE programs and community colleges should clearly articulate to students how these credentials fit into their overall curricula and degree programs.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS AND POTENTIAL AREAS FOR ADDITIONAL INQUIRY

Attendees had extensive discussions in each session about the information gaps faced by all participants in workforce training, including employers, educators, young people, and the unemployed or underemployed. However, attendees noted specific efforts to eliminate information gaps in various partnerships, such as those involving CTE and community colleges and employers, social service training agencies and employers, and workforce investment boards and employers. Given the recognition of the gaps and the efforts to overcome these gaps, what is the primary cause for continued concern? Is the issue that there is no overall oversight mechanism, or is it the scalability of the communication given the broad types of jobs with a shortage of skilled workers? Or are there timing issues with the development of training curricula given the speed at which labor markets and the necessary skills change?

Another area in which there is nearly universal agreement is the fragmentation of the funding for training programs. Many respondents indicated that breadth and variety of funding for the unemployed frustrates employers and workforce development professionals alike. What would a streamlined funding system look like? Which programs are underutilized? Which are unable to meet demand? Taking into account the challenges of reform at the federal funding level, what are the options for states and local workforce investment boards and their partners? What other potential funding sources could be used to supplement existing funding for workforce development training?

APPENDIX A: Federal Reserve System's Workforce Development Initiative

In the fall of 2011, the community development departments of nine Reserve Banks worked with the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System to design a program to explore regional perspectives through a series of forums held throughout the country.

The objective of this initiative was to better understand the complex factors that were creating long-term unemployment conditions, particularly in LMI communities, and to identify promising workforce development strategies. Between October 2011 and May 2012, the community development departments at the nine Reserve Banks conducted 31 forums that brought together various workforce development stakeholders.^a

In addition, the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta launched a Center for Human Capital Studies, which is designed to enhance the understanding of human capital development and labor market issues. The center has maintained a repository of research published since 2008 by the Board of Governors and all 12 Federal Reserve Banks on topics related to employment, unemployment, and workforce development.^b

^a A report on the forums, "A Perspective from Main Street: Long-Term Unemployment and Workforce Development," was published by the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System and is available at www.federalreserve.gov/communitydev/long-term-unemployment-and-workforce-development.htm.

^b See www.frbatlanta.org/chcs/.

APPENDIX B: Additional Highlights from the Listening Sessions

The following section describes partnerships, programs, and other topics discussed in individual listening sessions. In general, comments that were made at the majority of the sessions are not included here, but they are included in the overall summary.

ERIE

Programs in the city of Erie for LMI residents, such as Go College and College for Every Student, provide college tours, tutoring, financial aid workshops, counseling, peer mentoring, and employer visits. The programs have been funded by the GE Foundation. However, there are few such programs in the rest of Erie County, although there is discussion about forming a workforce development consortium in the county.

A notable exception is Fort Leboeuf High School in Waterford, which established a Center for Post-Secondary and Career Discovery. The program gives students hands-on experience in six career areas: communications; business, management, marketing, and technology; preengineering; premed; prelaw; and natural resources and agri-science. Despite limited funding, the school provides students with job shadowing opportunities, internships, and presentations on careers. The school tries to infuse career-related information into its curriculum, and it has been noted that having a strong career awareness program is a selling point for a high school as it competes with other public and charter schools for students. Programs that involve parents are needed; therefore, efforts are being made to connect with parents who may persuade their children to go to college rather than consider manufacturing jobs.

Because there is no community college in Erie, several colleges are working with schools in a career exploration project to respond to postsecondary needs and to develop a new web portal that would provide career information. The absence of a community college limits the number of training opportunities in the area.

In addition, it was noted that employers are not aware of all the programs they can use. Employers need an up-to-date list of these programs, such as the apprenticeship programs funded under the Workforce Investment Act.

HARRISBURG

The regional workforce investment board (WIB) serves an eight-county region that has 77 independent school districts. In rural areas of the region, the WIB faces transportation challenges in getting residents to jobs and job-assistance programs. A lack of reading and writing proficiency is another common barrier to employment. The WIB finds that its youth program is overenrolled in Harrisburg, but it has difficulty recruiting residents in rural Juniata and Perry counties.

A challenge in the region is preparing nonviolent offenders for employment. Several correctional institutions are in the Harrisburg region, but Harrisburg is often overshadowed in regard to grants to assist ex-offenders by larger metropolitan areas that have more visible crime problems. Programmatic silos in education, youth development, and reentry of ex-offenders complicate a response to the need for jobs. A participant recalled Pathways to Success, a former Pennsylvania program that linked high schools, career and technical education centers, and four-year institutions in creating a pipeline of high-paying technical jobs.

A major workforce development effort in the region is the Education and Business Partnership of the Harrisburg Regional Chamber & CREDC.

In this region, immigrants from Nepal have a good work ethic but are hampered by language barriers.

Guidance counselors encourage students to consider the vocational trades, but many parents are resistant. Most parents want their children to go to college. A need to reach out and involve parents and explain opportunities in vocational and technical career paths was noted. A need to get the local media to talk realistically about occupations was also noted in the session.

SCRANTON

A school superintendent said that the educational system is training students for jobs that probably do not exist. Reading, writing, and soft skills are especially important. No Child Left Behind has led to an emphasis on testing and narrowed the time devoted to other areas that are useful for children's overall development. Guidance counselors deal with student crises and do not have much time to focus on careers.

A participant recalled the usefulness of a Pennsylvania program known as "teacher in the workplace." It enabled teachers to spend a week in an area company. The teachers saw the soft skills that were needed and focused on those skill areas in their classrooms.

An official with an oil and gas company active in northeastern Pennsylvania and other regions said that the company needs, and cannot find, heavy-equipment operators, diesel mechanics, and well tenders in the Scranton region. The company developed a training program in cooperation with Lackawanna College, a two-year college; after graduating, the trainees take a two-year internship with the company and, if successful, are offered a job with the company. The program was developed for this particular employer and was not offered by other employers. About 25 employees a year are being hired by the company in this way.

The area community college is talking with businesses to design a curriculum and certificate programs and deliver the programs in a targeted way that meets the needs of the businesses. A program advisory committee, including industry representatives, is helping to develop the curriculum.

State financial aid programs are focused on four-year colleges and need to consider two-year and technical training more specifically. This has a significant impact on low- and moderate-income and minority students.

PITTSBURGH

The consensus was that the problems encountered in unemployment and underemployment are multifaceted. They span education, family, neighborhood, and employer needs. In the past two years, collaboration has increased as funding has declined. Some participants advocated merging funding streams in federal workforce programs and focusing on outcomes.

Young people need job shadowing opportunities, for example, in the first two years of high school. The director of a nonprofit that prepares young people for employment said that the lack of job opportunities "cripples" young people. The only way for a young person to understand work ethic is to have a job, even if it's a summer position, he added.

The pathways for high school students to enter career fields, especially if they are not headed for further academic study, are not clear in the Pittsburgh area. K-12 teachers and guidance counselors generally do not understand what the pathways are. More pathways, including those in career and technical education and community colleges, need to be created. The goal is that young people acquire a series of "stackable credentials."

In discussions about low-income students, a need was cited for short-term affordable training. Job shadowing is important for all populations, but young low-income residents are isolated and need awareness of professions and, especially, job shadowing opportunities and mentors. They generally need a "bridge" to the work world. Corporate partners need to be given incentives to provide learning and internship opportunities for low-income students.

In the area community college, a valuable innovation is the use of career coaches in different career fields to provide linkages between students and companies. The coaching positions are federally funded.

JOHNSTOWN

This session had good representation from industry officials, and strong partnerships between area community colleges, high schools, and industrial firms were cited.

Jobs for welders, machinists, iron workers, carpenters, and others in the skilled trades are in demand. Trained workers are needed in manufacturing and the oil and gas industry, but there are also difficult-to-fill jobs in middle management, including jobs for project and program managers and operators.

Qualified individuals are not generally willing to move to Johnstown to take available positions. More needs to be done to sell the positive attributes of the region, and the media can promote the fact that the region has sustainable jobs. For decades, people left the community in order to get ahead. Johnstown offers residents a high quality of life, which could be used to attract new employees and their families to the region.

The Johnstown school district is one of the poorest in the state, and more than 80 percent of the students in the Greater Johnstown High School qualify for free or reduced-price lunches. The rural nature of the region exacerbates the issues. The more teachers understand the needs of businesses, the better off the community will be. There is a societal distinction between academic and vocational training that is artificial and destructive, noted one participant.

Sparse population in rural areas outside of Johnstown means that it is very difficult to put together workforce development programs that have economies of scale. Transportation barriers make it difficult to serve residents in these programs and hard for firms to draw workers from a wide area.

Good Will Industries operates a YouthBuild program for young people who have not completed high school and trains them for jobs in health care, welding, construction, and other fields. It also has several mentoring programs.

APPENDIX C: Organizations Represented in the Listening Sessions

ERIE

City of Erie
Edinboro University
Erie County Technical School
Erie Regional Chamber and Growth Partnerships
Erie Regional Education and Training Consortium
Fort LeBoeuf High School
Gannon University
Housing and Neighborhood Development Service (HANDS)
Northwest Commission
Northwestern Pennsylvania CareerLink/Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
Penn State Erie, The Behrend College
Pennsylvania CareerLink — Erie County
Regional Center for Workforce Excellence
St. Benedict Education Center
The Erie Community Foundation
United Way of Erie County

HARRISBURG

Belco Community Credit Union
Capital Region Partnership for Career Development
Central Penn College
Community Action Commission
Dauphin County Department of Community and Economic Development
Harrisburg Area Community College
Harrisburg High School
Harrisburg Regional Chamber & CREDC
Harrisburg University
Illuminations Consulting
Jump Street
Keystone Correctional Services, Inc.
Pennsylvania Fund for Workforce Development
Pennsylvania Fund for Workforce Solutions
Workforce Investment Board
YWCA of Greater Harrisburg

JOHNSTOWN

Allegany College of Maryland, Somerset County Campus
Alternative Community Resource Program
AmeriServ Financial Bank
Goodwill Industries of the Conemaugh Valley
Grane Healthcare
Greater Johnstown Career & Technology Center (GJCTC)
Greater Johnstown High School
In-Shore Technologies, Inc.
Institute of Politics at the University of Pittsburgh
Johnstown Area Regional Industries

Pennsylvania Highlands Community College
Richland School District
Somerset County Chamber of Commerce
Southern Alleghenies Planning and Development Commission
The Challenge Program, Inc.
The Learning Lamp
United Way of the Laurel Highlands

PITTSBURGH

A.W. Beattie Career Center
Allegheny Intermediate Unit
Auberle
Bank of New York Mellon Corporation
Community College of Allegheny County
East Liberty Development, Inc.
Goodwill of Southwestern Pennsylvania
Institute of Politics at the University of Pittsburgh
Mentors Community Wealth Building Initiative
Mon Valley Initiative
Parkway West Career and Technology Center
Southwest Corner Workforce Investment Board
Steel Center AVTS
The Pittsburgh Foundation
Three Rivers Workforce Investment Board
Westmoreland County Community College

SCRANTON

Cabot Oil & Gas Corporation
Condron & Company
Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce
Greater Scranton YMCA
Institute for Public Policy and Economic Development
Jackson College
Lackawanna College
Lackawanna County Workforce Investment Board
Luzerne County Community College
McCann School of Business & Technology
Northampton Community College
Northeastern Pennsylvania Industrial Resource Center
Scranton-Lackawanna Human Development Agency, Inc.
Skills in Scranton
United Way of Lackawanna and Wayne Counties

APPENDIX D: Discussion Questions Asked During the Listening Sessions

Regional job market:

- Describe the job market in your community for young people from 16 to 24 years of age and how it has changed over the past five years.
- What opportunities exist specifically for young people who are not college bound?
 - Is the demand for employment significant for this population?
 - Which employers are actively hiring in your region?
 - What positive things are employers saying about the young people they are hiring? What negative things are they saying?
- What are the structural barriers and other obstacles that people are facing when trying to enter the job market?

Workforce training pathways and delivery system:

- What are the current career pathways for young people in your region that connect students to employers from:
 - high schools,
 - Which programs/services are offered at the high school level to prepare young adults to enter the labor force and better understand possible career paths?
 - community colleges, and
 - four-year colleges and universities?
- What collaborations exist between employers and other stakeholders, such as the local school districts and/or community colleges? In what ways are they effective/ineffective?
- What is your experience in working with career and technical education centers and/or career academies in this region?

Focus on LMI and minority employees:

- Do you have any experience working with programs targeted to low-income students in your region, such as YouthBuild, Job Corps, National Guard ChalleNGe, and youth programs funded under the Workforce Investment Act?
- In your experience, what works best to increase job awareness and readiness of lower-income and minority students in local schools?
- Do employment and training/job readiness opportunities vary across the region, particularly in urban and suburban areas?

Looking forward:

- What opportunities exist for additional collaboration involving different groups of stakeholders?
- What new programs or services are needed in your region? Are there programs that were successful but ended because of funding or other reasons?