

**BERKS COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD  
(WDB)**

**7:30 a.m.  
March 19, 2021**

**Meeting Summary**

**Members Present (via MS Teams Meeting)**

Ms. Debra Antol  
Ms. Jenny Batista  
Ms. Auria Bradley  
Dr. Karen Campbell  
Ms. Ashley Chambers  
Mr. John DeVere  
Mr. William Dorward  
Ms. Kristi Gage-Linderman  
Mr. Robert Harrop  
Ms. Carole Homolash  
Ms. Peggy Kershner  
Mr. Thomas McNelis  
Mr. Scott Mengle  
Ms. Debra Millman  
Mr. James Nichols  
Mr. Mark Pinkasavage  
Mr. Michael Rowley  
Mr. Russell Showers  
Mr. Pablo Tejada  
Ms. Karyn Troxell  
Mr. David Turner  
Mr. Barry Unger

**Members Absent**

Ms. Marianne Egolf  
Mr. Michael Fischetti  
Ms. Jennie Rodriguez-Priest

**Staff and Guests Present (via MS Teams Meeting)**

Mr. Daniel Fogarty	Berks County Workforce Development Board Staff
Mr. John Moser	Berks County Workforce Development Board Staff
Ms. Megan Noll	Berks County Workforce Development Board Staff
Ms. Matika Palmer	Berks County Workforce Development Board Staff
Ms. Patricia Spencer	Berks County Workforce Development Board Staff
Mr. Rory Stevenson	Berks County Workforce Development Board Staff
Ms. Helen Amole	PA CareerLink® Berks County Administrator
Ms. Amber Columbo	PA CareerLink® Berks County Youth Program Director
Ms. Marybeth Ferguson	Bureau of Workforce Partnership and Operations (BWPO)
Mr. Larry Melf	Educational Data Systems, Inc.
Ms. Yanie Serrano	Bureau of Workforce Partnership and Operations (BWPO)
Ms. Heather Berger	County of Berks Information Systems Staff

All Board members and guests participated in the meeting via the Microsoft Teams virtual meeting or teleconference call-in option. The meeting was called to order by Ms. Gage-Linderman at 7:35 a.m. Mr. Fogarty announced that the meeting was being streamed for the public via YouTube through the County's website and was being recorded for minutes purposes only and that recording would be deleted. An attendance roll call was taken, and a quorum was present.

Mr. Fogarty introduced the Consent Agenda items on behalf of the Chair and asked if any item should be moved for later discussion prior to the vote:

- Approve Previous Meeting's Minutes
- Approve Revised WDB Procurement Policy (Executive Committee recommendation)
- Approve Modified PY2020 WDB Budget (Finance Committee recommendation)
- Approve DEI Committee Name Change to Diversity, *Equity* and Inclusion Committee (DEI and Executive Committee Recommendation)
- Approve 4-Year SE PA Regional Plan and 4-Year Local Plan (Executive Committee Recommendation)

As no members requested any items so moved, on behalf of the Chair, Mr. Fogarty announced WDB approval of all Consent Agenda items.

Ms. Gage-Linderman introduced the Executive Committee report mentioning that Board member Lou McCoy retired effective December 31, 2020. She welcomed two new members to the Board: Dr. Karen Campbell, Provost, Albright College and Ms. Debra Millman, Vice President of Development, Greater Reading Chamber of Commerce.

Ms. Gage-Linderman asked Mr. Moser to review the PY2020 Second Quarter YTD Performance Results and Challenges. Mr. Moser stated that PY2019 ended in June and that all the levels negotiated were exceeded. However, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was not allowed by the Commonwealth to be factored into PY2020 negotiations. Mr. Moser noted median earnings were lower because people lost their jobs. He added that the rest of the region also saw similar issues relating to COVID.

The next item on the agenda required Board action: Approval of Revised Work Based Training Policy. Mr. Moser explained that this policy targets on-the-job training transitional employment to take advantage of a State Grant enabling the hiring of workers in the CareerLink and to pay for wages during training. Mr. DeVere moved to adopt the Policy and Mr. Turner seconded the motion. All members voted approval.

Also requiring Board action was approval of emergency waiver of transitional employment 50% wage reimbursement cap and maximum hourly wage from 3/18/2021 to 3/18/2022. Ms. Antol moved to adopt the waiver and Mr. Showers seconded the motion. All members voted approval.

The Finance Committee report was introduced by Ms. Noll who noted that the revised budget had already been approved under the Consent Agenda. She referred to an updated Discretionary/Competitive Grants status dated 2/17/2021. She added that a comprehensive discussion on the budget had taken place during the March 11, 2021 Finance Committee meeting.

Ms. Gage-Linderman noted that very detailed minutes of a combined meeting of the Training and Industry Partnership Committee and the Youth Committee which was held on February 25, 2021 had been provided to the Board prior to the meeting. Both Mr. DeVere, Chair of the Training and Industry Partnership Committee and Ms. Batista, Chair of the Youth Committee found a lot of overlap recently with an abundance of information pertinent to both Committees. Therefore, a meeting of the combined Committees was very valuable. Mr. Stevenson staffs both committees.

Mr. DeVere reported on the Greater Berks Advanced Manufacturing Skills Gap Report and Rollout Plan. His slide presentation is shown below:

## Significance of Manufacturing in the Region

- Seven county area makes up nearly one-third of Pennsylvania's manufacturing
  - 27% of establishments and 30% of the workforce
  - Accounted for 81% of PA's job growth in manufacturing
- The region's manufacturing sector is projected to grow more strongly than the State or nation over next 10 years
  - BLS projects manufacturing's employment base to contract
  - Region's growth projected at 4%-5% in manufacturing's employment base (6,460 to 8,740 additional jobs).

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## Advanced Manufacturing's Talent Needs

- In advanced manufacturing, the next 10 to 15 years will bring steady, incremental change.
- **Production workers** will need to be life-long learners as they are continuously redeployed within the plant.
- **Maintenance workers** will have strong aptitude combined with formal (postsecondary) training and years of on-the-job training.
- Employers emphasized:
  - importance of basic entry level skills
  - uniformity in the set of knowledge and training
  - balancing technical skills and general management/teamwork aptitude.

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## Supply of Talent for Advance Manufacturing

- Struggle to overcome past perceptions of manufacturing jobs as dirty, dull and dangerous and decades-long cultural shift toward emphasizing college education
- CTCs attract 10-15% of HS students but only 1% (250-300 students per year across the region) graduate with training to advanced manufacturing careers
- Need at least 2%, just to offset retiring workers
- Post secondary is important source of talent, but difficult to estimate
  - Advanced preparation for graduating high school students interested in further education and training (associates degree or college credit certificate);
  - Adult learners interested in career changes or credentialing their on-the-job skills (including military veterans); and
  - Incumbent workers (primarily for the purpose of upskilling or cross training).

## Net Impact

- Skills gap widens over time
- Demand is growing
- Supply is contracting (aging workforce and fewer entrants)
- By 2029, skill gap ranges from 5,880 and 13,885 workers

Projected Change in Demand and Supply of Advanced Manufacturing Workers in the Greater Berks Region between 2019 and 2029		
	PRODUCTION OCCUPATIONS	MAINTENANCE OCCUPATIONS
2019 Employment	22,320	6,125
2029 Projected Employment	25,360 - 32,510	6,680 - 6,930
Increased demand by 2029	3,040 - 10,190	555 - 805
Net shortage of entry and exits by 2029*	2,070 - 2,670	220
<b>Projected Net Shortage of Advanced Manufacturing Workers by 2029</b>	<b>5,110 - 12,860</b>	<b>770 - 1,025</b>

\* Entry reflects projected number of new workers to advanced manufacturing occupations from secondary and postsecondary education by 2029. For production workers, between 2,700 and 8,300 new workers are estimated to fill production roles, and 5,370 workers are anticipated to retire. For maintenance workers, 1,500 new workers are forecasted and 1,720 are expected to retire.

Referring to the memorandum from Lancaster County, PA Economic Development Company (LCEDC), Mr. DeVere then outlined the collaborative Berks WDB/LCEDC rollout plan as we move through 2021 and into 2022. The goal: Between now and October 2021 transition from educating the community about the final report's key findings to putting in motion actions relating to the establishment of recommendations for regional workforce/economic development strategies and their implementation. Mr. DeVere stated that the final report has been posted on the Berks County WDB webpage and its findings now need to be disseminated to the same regional business/education community.

Mr. McNelis, Chair of the Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Committee, was introduced by Ms. Gage-Linderman. The DEI Committee approved and had recommended a name change to the Board's Executive Committee to Diversity, *Equity* and Inclusion Committee. An Ad Hoc Subcommittee will review the Committee's "charge" going forward. Ms. Homolash, Vice Chair of the Committee, commented that the description goals will include "no talent left behind for adults with barriers". She thanked the Board for approving the name change stating that this is an

interesting time for those on the committee and that many tasks and accomplishments the committee has taken on have been accomplished.

Ms. Gage-Linderman introduced Ms. Kershner, Chair of the One Stop Oversight Committee. Ms. Kershner thanked Mr. Moser for his hard work towards receiving a favorable notice of EO (equal opportunity) compliance from the State. Mr. Moser also thanked Ms. Amole and the CareerLink's leadership team for the part they played in putting together the compliance report. Mr. Moser received a certificate on behalf of PACL Berks, for EO Best Practices, Adaptive Technologies, Disability Assistance Technology and the WDB sponsored Employer Symposia. The PA CareerLink® Berks County was also recognized for its strong outreach and frequency/variety of EO training offered at full staff meetings.

Ms. Kershner introduced a request for approval of revisions to the WDB Equal Opportunity and Complaints Processing Policy which must be signed by the WDB Chair after approval by the Board. Ms. Batista moved to adopt the policy; Mr. DeVere seconded the motion and all members voted their approval.

Mr. Moser said he and the CareerLink leadership team meets regularly to discuss COVID-19 CareerLink Phased Reopening Plans. Mr. Fogarty reminded members that some functions cannot be handled remotely, e.g. WorkKeys testing. Currently all workshops are virtual.

Mr. Rowley introduced the Policy, Planning and Priorities (PPP) Committee Report noting that the minutes from two meetings held by this committee were distributed with the Board's packets. He added that a tremendous amount of work had been accomplished by the Committee and staff to put together 4-year Local and Regional Plans to be effective July 1, 2021.

Ms. Batista introduced the Youth Committee report. She said that being disconnected during the pandemic was particularly hard for youth. She referred to the following points from the committee report:

- 2017 Disconnected Young Adult Study shows 3,000 – 5,000 disconnected young adults age 18-24
- Many of the young adults that were semi-connected pre-COVID are now disconnected, post-COVID. Students still in school, whether in person or attending virtually, are hopefully still connected.
- Our current TANF Youth contract with ResCare was extended through March 2021 (additional 3 months) to allow the time for a new services contract to be issued. Our new contract will provide a higher level of service required in response to the pandemic.

Mr. Fogarty added that the Youth Committee had a specialized responsibility to provide input for our new contracts and it was good to have an HR businessperson at the helm of this Committee. Ms. Batista is Chairperson of SHRM (Society for Human Resource Management) in Berks County.

The COO report was introduced by Mr. Fogarty. “As discussed in our new 4-year plan, it’s too early to tell whether our local “V” shaped recovery from June through December 2020 will regress into a “W” shaped recovery during the first quarter of 2021.” Berks County’s local labor market continued its steady recovery from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic through December 2020 with our seasonally adjusted (SA) local unemployment rate continuing to decline to 6.4%.

Mr. Fogarty stated that more benchmarks need to be completed in the coming months. A State of Berks County’s Economy prepared by Lancaster County’s Center for Regional Analysis was included in the Board’s packet of materials. Two additional contracted reports will be received in May and July. Mr. Rowley requested that any updates received would be shared with the Board.

Mr. Fogarty thanked the Board members who have completed and returned their Statements of Financial Interests to the Board’s office and reminded those who have not yet returned their Statements that they are due to our office by the State’s May 1 deadline. He added that Ms. Spencer is available for any “technical assistance” needed.

Ms. Gage-Linderman opened the meeting for Market Intelligence Discussion.

Mr. McNelis referred to an article which appeared in the Reading Eagle on March 19, 2021 titled “Berks County’s Jobless Rate Rises in January” which gave comparisons to other counties.

Mr. Fogarty commented that there are a huge number of jobs needing to be filled in the County and many needs in the community.

Mr. Harrop commented that there are many people sitting on the sidelines which are unaccounted in the numbers. He added that most callbacks occurred early on during the pandemic.

Ms. Batista commented that most people which had been sitting on the sidelines may have moved on to other positions.

Ms. Gage-Linderman’s firm has reached out to contact many persons across the country for comparative information.

Mr. Fogarty commented that there was a reported drop in the number of unemployed persons over a few months. Berks County has had very few plant closings. Even if a plant closed, e.g. Sun Rich, those employees were often highly sought after by other employers.

Mr. Fogarty reported that Commissioner Michael Rivera was very interested in presenting the WDB’s plan details in a Spanish broadcast on April 8. Mr. Fogarty asked if any Board member would be interested in presenting the Spanish broadcast to please let him know.

Ms. Berger was asked if there was any public comment to which she answered there was not. Mr. Fogarty thanked Ms. Berger for her assistance with the meeting presentation.

The next quarterly meeting of the Board is scheduled for Friday, June 18, 2021 at 7:30 a.m. and will held virtually.

The meeting was adjourned by Ms. Gage-Linderman at 8:57 a.m.