

Top three accomplishments demonstrating commitment to the WIOA Combined State Plan

South Central NextGen Tech Industry Partnership

State Plan Goals: Apprenticeship and Career & Technical Education, Sector Strategies and Employer Engagement, Addressing Workforce Shortages in Critical Industries

The South Central PA IT Industry Partnership (IT IP), launched in April 2019, has evolved into a pivotal regional initiative, addressing critical workforce development challenges and fostering economic growth in the IT sector. With over 150 engaged partners—including employers, higher education institutions, K-12 education, community-based organizations, chambers of commerce, and economic development corporations (EDCs)—the partnership has been instrumental in bridging the gap between the demand for skilled IT talent and the availability of skilled workers. By leveraging the Next Gen organizational model, the IT IP is positioning South Central PA to not only meet current labor shortages but to strengthen the entrepreneurial ecosystem, enabling long-term growth and innovation within the tech industry.

Strategic Goals

1. Apprenticeship and Career & Technology Education

- Harrisburg University Sponsor for IT IP Group Non-Joint Registered Apprenticeship Program for Help Desk, IT Business Analyst and Cyber Security
- Pre-Apprenticeship collaboration with IU12, Harrisburg School District, & CCA
- Community Website launch for marketing of jobs, apprenticeship programs, internships, top five technology jobs, videos, career pathways, education
- Readocracy – micro-credential program with HU and employers for local high schools
- Junior Achievement – Virtual Career Exploration
- Support of IU12 Technology events

2. Sector Strategies and Employer Engagement

- Technology workforce needs & alignment with employers
- Foster entrepreneurship and innovation through monthly events
- Technology Council of Central Pennsylvania Collaboration
- AI Employer Learning Series
- Juneteenth – diversity outreach & engagement

3. Addressing Workforce Shortages in Critical Industries

- 1,500 to 2,000 technology jobs on a month-to-month basis
- Over one million cyber security job postings nationwide
- Cyber Security Boot Camp with The Whitaker Center
- Cyber Security Internship Pilot – PUC, HU, IT IP
- Creation of Cyber Security Track with Higher Ed
- Creation of Cyber Security within Junior Achievement BizTown

South Central Workforce Development Board 2024 Annual Report

By the end of 2024, our region had made the top 20 list for tech hubs across the Northeast. Harrisburg placed 8th among the 20 best Northeastern metro areas for tech development with a total of 44.05 points, surpassing Pittsburgh.

Here are some of the metro's standout metrics:

- Harrisburg landed 1st on the ranking in terms of percentage growth of tech establishments (16.6%).
- The metro came fourth for tech employment density, ahead of Philadelphia. Given Harrisburg's share of 46 out of every 1,000 jobs in the tech industry, professionals on the lookout for tech jobs can expect to find a good match for their skills.
- Harrisburg landed 10th place for its tech establishment density – with 22 of every 1,000 firms registered within the metropolitan area falling under the tech category.

Pre and Post-Release Reentry Services

State Plan Goals: Youth, Barrier Remediation

As part of SCPa Works' commitment to serving individuals with criminal justice system involvement, PA CareerLink® staff offer both pre-release and post-release services across our service region. Through partnerships with county jail leadership and locally elected officials, examples of services that can be offered are Cognitive Behavioral Intervention Workshops, Workforce 101 Workshops, and Career Exploration through virtual reality curriculum.

To maximize the impact of WIOA funding, SCPa Works pursues grants outside of WIOA to integrate complimentary services with WIOA funded programs. For example, through a Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency grant, we offered stipends for participation in both Cognitive Behavioral Intervention and Workforce 101 workshops for individuals. Additionally, funding provided by the US Conference of Mayors and Comcast will expand digital literacy offerings at York County Prison and York Reentry Opportunity Center. Beginning in November 2024, five youth are participating in a pre-release virtual reality pilot program at York County Prison where they will explore various careers through Transfr VR curriculum.

Opportunity Youth Program Analysis and Advancement

State Plan Goals: Youth, Continuous Improvement of the PA CareerLink® System

SCPa Works is committed to serving Opportunity Youth across our eight-county service region. To better understand where opportunity youth reside, activities they may be involved in, their perceptions of the PA CareerLink, and experiences in PA CareerLink® programs, SCPa Works

South Central Workforce Development Board 2024 Annual Report

conducted several Opportunity Youth analysis's in consultation with experienced research professionals. Key findings and deliverables achieved were:

- Detailed Opportunity Youth population mapping across the eight-county service region showcasing Opportunity Youth population density, unemployment rates, high school dropout rates, etc., all at the Census tract level.
- Digital engagement strategies for increasing Opportunity Youth engagement
- Detailed mapping of existing Community Access Points overlaid with Opportunity Youth population density to demonstrate areas of need and strategic staff colocation.
- Refinement of PA CareerLink® Youth staff job descriptions, enrollment processes, and program features to reduce wait time for youth, decrease duplication of services, and provide more hands-on programming and relationship development.
- Qualitative feedback from youth on engagement strategies, outreach recommendations, and program suggestions.
- Employer feedback on experiences employing Opportunity Youth and case making material to encourage hiring of this talent pool.

Top three stories/testimonials of the impact of workforce development programs and services on customers

WIOA Adult Reentry

Jason's Story: "I know that there are people out there that's dealt with more in their life than I have. So this is for all those people who doubt that they can change their life or their situation. No matter how hard it is or how ridiculous it may seem you can always change as long as you want to and if you're willing to put in the work. I went from doing drugs to going to jail. When I got out of prison I struggled to find work. The jobs I did find weren't the jobs I really wanted. They also didn't really provide me with the things I wanted, or even the things I needed.

I decided that I wanted more out of my life so I went to Careerlink® and talked to them about my situation and what I wanted. They helped me succeed in getting my CDL Class A. During the process, it had its challenges, but with determination and the urge to do better for myself I completed the tasks they gave in order to move on to each step that came my way. With that, I graduated from CDL School in November 2024. (I thought) that it was going to get easier after that but I was wrong. There are a lot of companies out there that require experience and in my case my felony on my record was also an issue. Most companies want your felony to be 5 years old or older. I filled out application after application not having any luck on finding a trucking job. I started filling out applications for companies that are located in other states, just kept looking, and didn't quit.

Because of me not giving up, I finally found a company that looked passed my felony. Now I'm flying out to Kansas City, Kansas to start orientation in January 2025 for a trucking company to

South Central Workforce Development Board 2024 Annual Report

finally start my career. If you don't give up and you're willing to put in the work good things do happen.”

WIOA Adult Reentry

William’s Story: “In September 2024, I was at the peak of my career. My confidence was high, I was comfortable in my role, and I was earning a decent salary. However, I wanted more. Believing that a higher paycheck would bring greater satisfaction, I transitioned to a company that offered more money.

It didn’t take long to realize that more money does not equate to peace of mind. The new company's culture was toxic and clashed with everything I stood for. I was faced with challenges that tested my integrity and professional values. Ultimately, the situation escalated to the point where false allegations were made against me, tarnishing my reputation. It was a devastating blow, both personally and professionally.

For the first time in my 25 years, I found myself in a position where I had to ask for assistance to support my family. I applied for food stamps to ensure my kids were fed. Navigating unemployment benefits was another hurdle, as it felt like learning a foreign language. For four months, I had no income and had to find ways to survive while rebuilding my life.

During this time, I reached out to CareerLink® and connected with incredible people who simply listened and provided encouragement. Those four months were some of the most challenging of my life, but they were also the most rewarding. I discovered a resilience within myself that I hadn’t fully realized before.

Now, I am with a new company. While the paycheck isn’t what I once earned, it is enough to provide for my family and put food on the table. It is a stepping-stone to rebuilding my career and getting back to where I want to be. This experience taught me that success is not just about the money you make—it’s about aligning with your values, finding peace of mind, and staying resilient in the face of adversity.”

EARN Program

Sherlande’s Story: Sherlande’s journey to success began with her unwavering determination to create a brighter future for herself and her family. As a refugee navigating the challenges of a new country, she faced numerous obstacles, including language barriers, financial constraints, and the need to establish a stable career. However, Sherlande's resilience and ambition led her to discover the EARN program, a resource designed to help individuals like her achieve self-sufficiency and economic independence.

When Sherlande enrolled in the EARN program, she was immediately connected with a case manager who took the time to understand her goals and aspirations. Sherlande expressed a strong desire to pursue a healthcare career, specifically as a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA). Her passion for helping others and her willingness to work hard made her an ideal candidate for

South Central Workforce Development Board 2024 Annual Report

the program's Individual Training Account (ITA) services, which provides financial assistance for job training and education.

Sherlande's case manager guided her through the application process for ITA services, helping her gather the necessary documents and complete the required paperwork. With their support, Sherlande's application was approved, granting her access to funding that covered the cost of her CNA schooling. This financial assistance was a turning point for Sherlande, as it alleviated the burden of tuition expenses and allowed her to focus entirely on her studies.

Once enrolled, Shelande's case manager will continue to guide her as she navigates through school on her journey to a stable career in healthcare.

Local workforce development challenges

PA CareerLink® staff turnover continues to have far-reaching effects on service delivery. As workforce development funding continues to fall short of demand across the country, local areas see the day-to-day impacts as staff leaves for higher-paid positions in other industries. SCPa Works continuously strategizes with our vendors to obtain and retain talented staff.

Demonstrated innovative and promising practices that support the continuous improvement of the workforce development system

Youth Ambassador Program

The incorporation of individuals with lived experience is vital to program success. While programs that seek to serve communities often fail to incorporate the experiences and knowledge of local community members in service delivery, SCPa Works seeks to remediate this in South Central PA by intentionally incorporating out-of-school youth in the service delivery model. This program launched in 2024 and is still in its pilot phase. In its current model, Youth Ambassadors are hired at PA CareerLink® centers through paid work experience opportunities to serve as credible messengers and outreach specialists for the OSY population in their communities. Simultaneously, they are mentored by PA CareerLink® staff for a future career in workforce development or human services. Ambassadors work alongside various staff members responsible for recruiting, enrolling, and case managing youth. They also have opportunities to learn about program management and development from organizational leadership. To date, one Ambassador has obtained full-time employment as a Career Advisor at the PA CareerLink®.

Jobs for the Future Workforce Communities of Action Participation

SCPa Works and 19 other workforce development boards were selected to participate in the inaugural Workforce Communities of Action (WCA) cohort. Boards embarked on an eight-month journey aimed at equipping the organizations with a set of tools and principles for ideating equitable, community-driven solutions to complex challenges. The experience also resulted in a set of ambitious action plans demonstrating workforce development boards' ability to be powerful change-makers in their communities.

South Central Workforce Development Board 2024 Annual Report

Our team conducted an internal audit of the organization's funding sources and its ability to diversify funding. Wanting to better utilize braided and blended funding strategies, [our] action plan focused on understanding SCPa Works' current financial status and practices, gaining best practices from other workforce boards across the country, and researching needed technology and tools to implement this strategy. All of this was done with the long-term goal of diversifying SCPa Works' funding to serve the local community's needs better.

Through the WCA's structure and resources, our team focused on collectively developing a strategy, needs assessment, and interdepartmental plan for moving our goal of diversified funding forward. With the knowledge gained through this experience, our team hopes to continue building our internal capacity at all levels to support funding diversification to benefit our job seekers and businesses.

Upon the cohort's culmination, SCPa Works was selected to receive one of four \$10,000 grants to further implement the strategies identified throughout the learning experience.

Recovery Ready Workplace Initiative

Through funding provided by York County Opioid Settlement funds, SCPa Works partnered with Envoy, a social impact advisory firm, to convene a Recovery Ready Workplace Implementation Series to provide recovery-friendly employment guidance and implementation support to companies in York County, Pennsylvania.

Envoy delivered the series content to six employers across biweekly, 60-minute modules between October and November 2024. The goal of the virtual series was to bring together a group of local employers to develop and expand recovery ready initiatives by building a foundational understanding of substance use disorder and exposing employers to new policies and practices, community partnerships, and implementation tools. The series culminated with tailored resource guides for all participating companies, meant to provide additional tools and support to advance each organization's unique recovery-ready employment journeys.

One hundred percent of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the series's outcome was valuable and met expectations. Two-thirds of respondents said that they would consider participating in a similar implementation series, such as Fair Chance Hiring, while 1/3 indicated that they had already participated in one.

"We definitely appreciate and value the RRW resource hub and have been referring to those materials. We want to create a depository of info on our internal intranet and also want to develop customized materials. This will be a first quarter 2025 initiative."- Participating Employer

Areas where the LWDB would benefit from additional state guidance

None at this time.