

## COVER SHEET AND SIGNATORY FORM

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(1) Local Workforce Investment Area:

Pocono Counties WIA - NE 135

(2) Term of Update:

March 1, 2001 – February 28, 2002

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(3) Contact Person for the Strategic Plan Update:

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Signature & Title:             \_\_\_\_\_  
    Chairman, Pocono Counties Workforce Investment Board

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(4) Date when the Local Workforce Investment Board approved the Update:

Date:

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## **Three Year Strategic Plan Update**

Development of this Three Year Strategic Plan Update provided the Board an opportunity to review the past twelve months and re-examine the next 30 months. The Board reiterated their commitment to building a Workforce Development System that is universal, accountable, market driven and aligned with economic development. The Board empowered the Executive Committee to develop and review implementation of the Strategic Plan.

Three primary objectives were defined by the Board in the Three Year Strategic Plan. Infrastructure was identified as a key element in projecting Workforce Investment Issues throughout the four county Workforce Investment Area. Paramount to Infrastructure was the development of comprehensive One Stop Centers. To date, the Board has chartered two CareerLink Centers located in Carbon and Monroe Counties. Two additional centers will be comprehensive sites. The Wayne County CareerLink will be chartered within the next six months. The Chartering Sub-Committee is responsible for chartering sites and addressing Quality Assurance Issues.

The Board continues to assess the needs of local employers by interacting with Employer Advisory Councils, Chambers of Commerce, Team Pennsylvania Business Calling Programs and local Economic Development Agencies. Surveying the employer community has had mixed success, however, efforts to educate employers and job seekers utilizing Title I training resources, Wed-Net, Manufacturing Resource Services and distance learning has been successful based on the number of employers who have utilized these services and by the number of Individual Training Accounts issued by the Board.

The Board has focused their attention on a “Regional” approach to Workforce Investment Strategies. Quarterly meetings with representatives of Luzerne/Schuylkill, Lackawanna and Lehigh Valley Workforce Investment Areas have been ongoing for over a year. The meetings provide a forum for discussion on joint program proposals. A seven county application for Stay Invent the Future Funding was submitted jointly with the Schuylkill Chamber of Commerce. An application for a Critical Job Training Grant is being developed by the Lehigh Valley Workforce Investment Area and Pocono Counties in conjunction with the Lehigh Carbon and Northampton Community Colleges. Interaction between the Board and the Community Colleges has resulted in an expansion of training programs for health care workers.

The Board is exploring the use of Industry Cluster Analysis to better address the strengths and weaknesses of the local economy. Industry Cluster Analysis focuses on industries that already exist within the Workforce Investment Area that have local competitive advantages and statistical information that will identify the industries. The Board is interested in working with Workforce Investment Areas that border Pocono

Counties to expand the scope of the analysis. Staff has been in contact with representatives of the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry's Center for Workforce Information and Analysis to convene a meeting with Lackawanna, Luzerne/Schuylkill, Lehigh Valley and Northern Tier Workforce Investment Areas to explore Industry Cluster Analysis within six months.

The Board identified youth as a priority population for services. The Youth Council has been working with local School Districts, Northampton Community College, Carbon and Monroe County Vocational-Technical Schools and At-Risk Youth facilities to survey needs and list issues to be addressed. Efforts to improve linkages and services necessary to prepare youth for the transition to work or training is improving. Efforts continue via the Youth Council and the Youth Training Providers to develop closer relationships with school districts. Recruitment of Out-of-School Youth remains a problem. The Youth Council is working on a marketing campaign that will be initiated on July 1, 2002. Last Year, the Youth Council submitted a proposal for a TANF Youth Challenge Grant that was not selected for funding. The Council intends to work with area youth organizations, school districts and youth providers to submit a proposal for 2002/2003 funding.

The Board and Youth Council endorsed the efforts of the Schuylkill Chamber of Commerce in securing a \$200,000 seven county grant funded by Stay Invent the Future Funds. The Grant will focus on completing an employer survey to identify current and future job opportunities for youth during the next three years. The information, both regional and local, will be shared with Youth and Educational Providers utilized by the Youth Council as a resource for job recruitment and career planning.

The third gap identified by the Board is to improve transportation and child care services. The Board realizes the tremendous task of addressing these issues. Due to the rural nature of the Workforce Investment Area, both services are difficult to secure and extremely costly.

The Board is conducting surveys of the existing services within the area and has started discussions with adjoining Workforce Investment Areas on attempting to coordinate resources. Board Members participate in the Pocono Healthy Communities Alliance which addresses transportation and day care issues. The Board has administered a Welfare Transportation Grant in the amount of \$150,000 for the past two years to provide transportation services to residents in Monroe County. The Workers Express Transportation Grant is a joint effort of the Monroe County Transportation Authority, the Monroe County Vocational-Technical School, the Local Management Committee and the Board.

The Board realizes this gap is the most difficult task to be addressed. The three-year time frame to close this gap may be unrealistic; however, the Board will continue to

close this gap. Staff has been directed to work with The Community Transportation Association of America, an organization that assists in developing innovative transportation solutions to help dislocated workers and unemployed people access to training and jobs.

There have not been any developments in the past twelve months that have caused the Board to change assumptions made when developing the plan, nor does the Board anticipate any developments in the next twelve months to cause the Board to change assumptions.

The Pocono Counties Workforce Investment Area borders New Jersey and New York. The Board needs access to Labor Market Data from areas outside the Commonwealth to assist in strategic planning efforts. The Board also requires access to data collected through the Team Pennsylvania Business Calling Program. We are unable to access this important information.

The Team Pennsylvania Workforce Investment Board can assist the Local Board by providing access to economic development information collected by the Business Calling Program. A viable CareerLink Operating System, that can provide the Board with performance information, is vital to assessing Board Initiatives. The Team Pennsylvania Workforce Investment Board should also support efforts to resolve policy and regulatory differences between the Department of Labor and Industry, Vocational-Rehabilitation, Department of Education and the Department of Public Welfare.