

ALLEGHENY COUNTY INDUSTRY WORKING GROUP

INCLUSIVE WORKSPACES MUST BE PRIORITIZED TO RETAIN AND ATTRACT EMPLOYEES

Launched in 2022, the Industry Working Group met with representatives from several of Allegheny County's major employment sectors. Representatives from partner organizations had the opportunity to connect with leaders in wide-reaching industries, including healthcare, manufacturing, and childcare, as well as fields with a slightly smaller footprint, such as energy efficiency and film.

While some industries had specific opportunities to expand support for workers, such as in healthcare, the Working Group heard familiar calls from many organizations for what they see as vital opportunities to better connect Allegheny County residents to quality jobs and careers.

CULTIVATING AN ECOSYSTEM OF SUPPORT

Particularly in the manufacturing, healthcare, and childcare fields, the Working Group heard many calls for expansive changes to the ecosystem – and that change can't be solved by only one employer. Many fields experience a vicious cycle of high turnover, overtime, and burnout among workers. Employers, regardless of industry, must look to opportunities to expand non-traditional benefits, such as last-mile transit, childcare, and mental health support. Further, [a study](#) by PolicyLink found that people of color, those without a four-year degree, and immigrants are more likely to be left out of new career pathways in the context of increasing automation.

- Cultivate a sense of belonging. Samantha Goldberg, from Open Space, described how employees having to engage in masking activities, such as changing their appearance, hiding their LGBTQIA+ identity, and explaining pronouns takes energy away from people's ability to contribute to the organization and adds stress to their work environment. Many presenters discussed the opportunities to change an industry's culture and the difficulties many people face when deciding to enter these fields that historically have not been welcoming to people who are not white and/or cisgender men.
- Demonstrate genuine commitment to accountability. Nathaniel Broadus, from Catalyst Connection, discussed the importance of follow-through when it comes to DEI pledges and ensuring that students are supported in their careers after the program.
- Prioritize setting students/apprentices up for success in their new role. For example, Neil Ashbaugh stated that New Century Careers doesn't require background checks, however they do request students in their programs to self-identify to better match them with an employer. Many of the speakers highlighted the importance of demonstrating a career track to program participants, as opposed to focusing solely on job placement.
- Utilize multiple teaching methods and additional learning support. Not everyone learns the same way – organizations have found that programs that get students out of the classroom and have the potential for individualized wraparound services are more likely to empower students to successfully complete trainings. Maria Lewis, from Building Performance Association, emphasized that their success in utilizing mixed experiential learning methods also helps participants to visualize potential career paths.



Speakers from the manufacturing industry stressed that most people still think of “manufacturing” as a sector frozen in the 1950s or 1980s. Pop culture imprinted a very specific image of what working in manufacturing looks like, which is no longer representative of the current experience.

BUILDING CONNECTIONS, FROM THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT TO LOCAL COMMUNITIES

- From existing workforce development programs to tax credits and supports for businesses to hire people with disabilities, our region will thrive when information is shared. Many of the presenters and Working Group members highlighted that there are already so many incredible programs out there, but there’s a vast opportunity to build connections and ensure every job seeker in the region is supported in finding a quality, well-paying career. The Working Group identified a need for a centralized resource for workforce training and education opportunities. This centralized space for knowledge sharing should also highlight funding and financial aid available to support training, upskilling, and educational/credential attainment.
- A common thread throughout the Working Group meetings was that many program applicants and job seekers must factor in the ability to not only commute, but to also drop off/pick up children at day care or school. “Last-mile” transit was repeatedly promoted as an opportunity for employers or other organizations to directly support workers.
- While childcare can be very expensive, people working as childcare providers earn very little pay. The [Economic Policy Institute](#) notes that women hold 95% of childcare jobs in the US and that women of color are disproportionately represented in the field. Cara Ciminillo, from Trying Together, emphasized that the average pay for childcare providers is only \$12.43/hour, even though this field is vital to support working parents and caregivers. There must be financial support and/or improved subsidies to help pay for childcare and compensate childcare providers adequately.

95%

of the 370,600 jobs in childcare lost nationally during the pandemic were held by women, and women of color were disproportionately impacted.

The industry is still down 10% from pre-pandemic levels ([US Chamber](#)).

\$12.43/hour

Average pay for childcare workers in Pennsylvania. For someone earning the same as the average childcare worker, over half of their annual income would be spent on childcare.

19.7%

Health Care and Social Assistance employees comprise 19.7% of workers in the county, the highest among any NAICS industry category ([PA DLL](#), County Profile PDF).

\$29,080

Overall, the entry-level wage (\$28,220) and average wage (\$60,760) in Allegheny County is slightly higher than PA (\$27,980 and \$58,470, respectively). However, on average, Food Prep/Serving workers in Allegheny County earn slightly less than the state’s average. The average wage earned by food service workers in the county is \$29,080 (\$19,890 entry-level) and \$29,460 (\$29,460 entry-level) in the state.



Thank you to our many presenters and Working Group members for sharing their time and expertise.

Working Group Members	Presenters
DeWitt Walton, A. Philip Randolph Institute Pittsburgh Chapter	Dr. Jeff Cohen, Chief Physician Executive – Community Health and Innovation, AHN
Linda Topoleski, Allegheny Conference on Community Development	Claire Zangerle, Chief Nursing Executive, AHN
Darrin Kelly, Allegheny/Fayette Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO	Stephen Hunter, VP – Innovation & Incubator Operations, AHN
Dr. Quintin Bullock, Community College of Allegheny County (CCAC)	Maria Lewis, State Outreach Coordinator, Building Performance Association
Michael Rinsem, CCAC	Nathaniel Broadus, Workforce Specialist, Catalyst Connection
Dr. Debra Roach, CCAC	Dr. Justin Starr, PhD, Endowed Professor of Advanced Technologies, CCAC
Charles Howell, MonValley Initiative	Neil Ashbaugh, President & CEO, New Century Careers
Gina Grone, Northside North Shore Chamber of Commerce	Gina Grone, Executive Director, Northside North Shore Chamber of Commerce
Markese Long, Partner4Work	Samantha Goldberg, Founder & Executive Director - OpenSpace Counseling, Consulting & Wellness
Kristin Ioannou, Pennsylvania Women Work	Dawn Keezer, Executive Director, Pittsburgh Film Office
Cynthia Oliver, Three Rivers Business Alliance	Zach Zobrist, Chief of Staff, SEIU Healthcare PA
Dr. Josie Badger, United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania's #IWantToWork Campaign	Cara Ciminillo, Executive Director, Trying Together

