

THE WORKFORCE REPORT

TRWIB on building a world-class workforce in Southwestern Pennsylvania...

Upgrading the region's current workforce skills

Workforce Agility – Getting and staying fit and flexible



Bob Donaldson, Post-Gazette
Tossing a basketball with fellow utility linemen in a training exercise to improve coordination and balance

According to a 2005 report by the Department of Defense, advances in commercial technology are arriving so rapidly that technological obsolescence happens in as little as 18 months. That pace of change affects the way military personnel must be trained. But it is far from being unique to our armed forces.

Throughout the nation's private and nonprofit sectors, technology life-cycles have continued to

shrink, requiring frequent retraining.

What it means is that over the course of an individual's working life, learning to adapt to change will remain a constant challenge. For local employers, maintaining a dependable labor pool with the skills needed to successfully compete is an unending struggle. But it is also one that the Commonwealth, along with many partners, is working to address.

On the job

Keystone Development Partnership (KDP), a non-profit organization, is managing a series of classes for transit workers across the state on different aspects of heavy vehicle maintenance in a program funded by the state's Department of Labor and Industry with TRWIB administrative support. Stuart Bass, Director of KDP describes the process to arrive at a training curriculum as partnership building; "it brings together multi-level employee input – union officials, managers, and front-line workers along with the education community - to analyze trouble spots, complete the job analysis, and build superior work organizations."

Health Career Future (HCF) supported by The Jewish Healthcare Foundation and state funding with TRWIB administrative support also takes a holistic approach to help align the regional supply and demand of healthcare workers. According to Nancy Zions, Vice President, Program and Planning "it takes a community – educators, employers, health professionals and media – to guarantee

appropriate pathways to a health career." HCF offers a unique and comprehensive program across many occupations in healthcare that train front line staff along with their managers in the workplace.

Keeping agile

Identifying needed skills, creating training curricula, locating the right resources, and helping to fund the continuing development of the region's workforce are among the essential strategies for keeping southwestern Pennsylvania's economy competitive on a national as well as a global marketplace.

And, promoting people who are already within the organization increases employee loyalty. By building up their skill sets, retrained workers are able to meet the organization's current as well as emerging needs more flexibly.

The need for workforce retraining is particularly acute among the region's smaller employers, who represent the majority of Pennsylvania's workplaces. According to Deputy Secretary for Workforce Development Sandi Vito, "the Governor recognizes that having workers in PA with world-class skills is a critical factor in maintaining global competitiveness. The Governor's Job Ready PA initiative provides substantial funding through regional industry partnerships, such as KDP, HCF, and others supported by TRWIB". Job Ready PA benefits employers in high priority industries and workers directly through the PA Higher Education Assistance Agency.

What is TRWIB?

The Three Rivers Workforce Investment Board, TRWIB, is an employer-driven, policy-making public entity serving Pittsburgh and Allegheny County.

According to TRWIB CEO, **Ron Painter**, "We help create a cohesive system by translating labor and industry data, funding source specifications, employer needs, and our own region's workforce development resources into economic growth. And new partners are always welcome."

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