



140 YEARS OF DEDICATION

1884 · YEARS · 2024

GREATER WYOMING VALLEY  
Chamber of Commerce

NOW BE A PART OF OUR TRANSFORMATION



Innovating the Business Community. Elevating the Valley.  
Reimagining our Future.



# A Letter From Our President and CEO

The Greater Wilkes-Barre Growth Partnership, the Chamber's Foundation, is dedicated to local businesses and organizations of all sizes, to the diversity of our workforce and industrial base, and to the vitality and quality of life in our community. Our organization has truly embraced the pillars of our current strategic plan and our work each day is geared towards workforce pipeline development, business and community advocacy, regional connectivity, and quality of life.

Your contribution to the 2024 Pledge Campaign enables our Chamber team to work towards solving some of the most pressing regional issues affecting our business community and economy, including:

- **Workforce**
- **Economic Growth**
- **Attraction/Retention of a Changing Demographic**
- **Quality of Life**

We hope that while reviewing our giving levels in this document, you see a place where your organization can participate and say "I'm In!" to support our efforts to solve these regional challenges. As we celebrate our 140th anniversary, we ask you to join us as we continue our mission to be the dynamic force in connecting the community, building economic innovation, and elevating the quality of life in our valley. We are proud to celebrate this milestone and our Chamber's history and dedication to the area, as we look forward to a bright future and another 140 years elevating, connecting, and innovating our community alongside of each of you.

Sincerely,

**Lindsay Griffin-Boylan**

President & CEO of the Greater Wyoming Valley Chamber of Commerce & the Greater Wilkes-Barre Growth Partnership





# 2023-2025 Strategic Plan

Elevate. Connect. Innovate.

Lens: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion



## Goal #1:

Business & Community Advocacy

Enhance a culture of advocacy and community impact as a core strength.

### Objectives

- 1.1. Advocate and support local businesses to adjust to a changing economic landscape.
- 1.2. Engage a diverse cross-sector advocacy strategy through public policy and government affairs.
- 1.3. Foster the development of the economic outlook of the region through funding opportunities and regional approaches.



## Goal #2:

Workforce Pipeline Development

Build an innovative workforce that meets the demands of the region's workforce needs.

### Objectives

- 2.1. Attract and nurture a more inclusive demographic.
- 2.2. Create and align a workforce development pipeline from cradle to career.
- 2.3. Enhance programs and services to all member segments through innovative, integrative, and accessible technology infrastructure.



## Goal #3:

Regional Connectivity

Connect our regional network, talent base and skill sets to solve business, economic, and community challenges.

### Objectives

- 3.1. Serve as a convener for the region's most pressing issues.
- 3.2. Grow regional programs and activities including diversity, equity, and inclusion; government affairs; and young professionals.
- 3.3. Strengthen the region by developing a regional hub of resources for businesses and residents of the Wyoming Valley.



## Goal #4:

Quality of Life Enhancement

Elevate the region's quality of life to retain our region's expertise and attract tomorrow's leaders.

### Objectives

- 4.1. Expand on efforts to build member value, brand, and marketing through community outreach and collaboration.
- 4.2. Promote a cohesive marketing strategy for the Wyoming Valley that showcases assets for business attraction and retention.
- 4.3. Provide a platform for engagement and impact through leadership roles, volunteerism, and community involvement.

Lens: Financial Sustainability

## Vision

We will be the dynamic force in connecting the community, building economic innovation, and elevating the quality of life in the region.

## Mission

We are committed to accelerating the economic engine of the region by fostering innovation, connecting our resources, and elevating and advocating for our community.

## Priorities

Innovative excellence, regional connectivity, business advocacy, elevate the community

## Core Values

Integrity, collaboration, excellence, innovation, community leadership, accountability





GREATER WYOMING VALLEY



**We're In**

**FOR WORKING TOWARDS FINDING SOLUTIONS  
TO SOME OF OUR REGION'S BIGGEST CHALLENGES**



Business & Community Advocacy



Workforce Pipeline Development



Regional Connectivity



Quality of Life Enhancement

### The problem:

“At the K-12 level and beyond, the quality of the education and training received by residents and workers directly correlate with the success of that region’s economy. Pay level often links to high skill jobs, which in turn links to level of education, so higher educational attainment and enhanced training can lead to greater economic opportunity and a more competitive workforce. The shares of the workforces in Lackawanna County (10.9 percent) and Luzerne County (10.4 percent) that have earned an associate’s degree is slightly higher than the shares in Wayne County and statewide – both around nine percent. Lackawanna County has a slightly higher percentage of the population 25 and older that have earned a Bachelor’s degree or higher, at 30.5 percent, compared to Luzerne County (26 percent) and Wayne County (nearly 20 percent). Emerging industries and occupations demand a diverse range of education and training opportunities, including apprenticeship programs, associate degree or trade school programs, on-the-job training, certificates, credentials, and college and university degrees. In 2020–2021, 7,185 degrees were awarded in Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties – many of them in key fields like health care and business. There has appeared to be a downward trajectory in total degrees awarded since the pandemic.”

–2023 Indicators Report by The Institute

### Our solution:

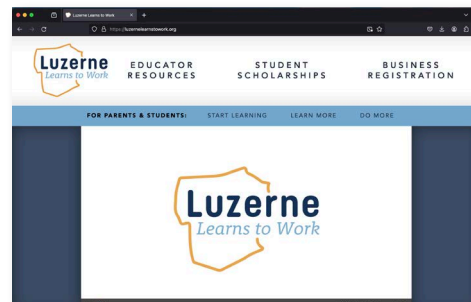
## Luzerne Learns to Work

Our workforce development initiative, Luzerne Learns to Work, in partnership with Luzerne Intermediate Unit 18 and The Institute, serves as a long-term workforce development and talent pipeline management solution. This program provides Luzerne County school districts with a process and platform to introduce career exploration, allowing students to navigate pathways online through LinkedIn Learning and Metrix Learning and linking education and industry by providing students with work-based learning opportunities.

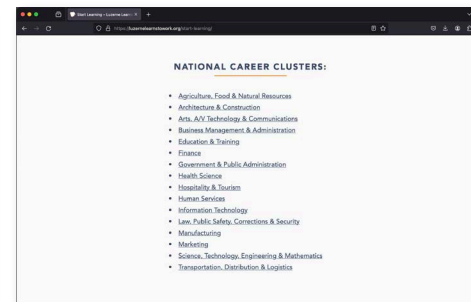
Making these experiences a bigger part of career exploration will build a pipeline of talent filtered into local industries, ensure that students get early exposure to our community, and produce more qualified talent retained to fill jobs in our most in-demand industries.



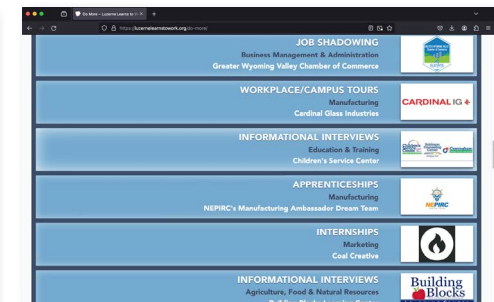
### Take a look at some of the program’s offerings:



On the website’s homepage, students and educators have the opportunity to explore all the different resources the platform has to offer.



Students can explore the different career clusters. From there, they have access to resources through PA Career Link, LinkedIn Learning, and the Luzerne County Library system to learn more about the ones they’re interested in.



Students can then explore work-based learning opportunities provided by local businesses and organizations in their career clusters of interest.

“I like that this program actually gives insights and information on what to expect in my career choices in the future.”

**-11th Grade Student**

“I thought that the information in the program was very useful and not something that you usually find in one place like that all at once.”

**-12th Grade Student**

# Economic Growth

## Strategic Pillars:



Business & Community Advocacy



Workforce Pipeline Development



Regional Connectivity



Quality of Life Enhancement

### The problem:

“Small businesses’ concerns are dominated by inflation. For the sixth consecutive quarter, 50% or more small businesses have cited inflation as one of their biggest challenges. Inflation concern has held steady at 52%-54% over the last year.”

“Amid the ongoing worker shortage, there has been a slow uptick in concern for employee retention and being able to afford employee benefits. Small businesses are twice as likely to say employee retention is one of their biggest challenges compared to two years ago (15% vs. 7% in Q3 2021).”

-Small Business Index Q3 2023 by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and MetLife

### Our solutions:

## Connect Small Business Assistance



The Connect program, the entrepreneurial and economic development arm of the Greater Wyoming Valley Chamber of Commerce, ensures that all entrepreneurs, startups, and existing businesses have access to the resources, providers, and facilities necessary to grow in Northeastern Pennsylvania, free of charge. Connect leverages a partner network to align innovation, strategies, and resources that meet the needs of the business community. Through the click of button, any business can request services, including business plan assistance, financing, workforce solutions, transportation strategies, academic-industry partnerships, work-based learning experiences, entrepreneurial mindset and exploration training, tailored resources for minority-owned businesses, and more.

Acting as a catalyst for business development in NEPA, Connect formulates strategic partnerships with the academic, business, and community sectors to spur business and job creation, and retention. Connect is run through a committee comprised of strategic partners and subject matter experts, and is a free service offered to businesses in our community.



Connect Learn is designed to strengthen the collaborative effort among our academic institutions and business community through connecting our local students to the workforce and career exploration resources available in NEPA. Projects featured include our workforce and economic development-related pilot programs, such as: the NEPA Works Project (Coding the Coal Region; Reimagining our Workforce), Project PIVOT, and Luzerne Learns to Work.



Through the Connect Spotlight program, quarterly events will provide an opportunity for industry leaders and entrepreneurs in NEPA to meet, discuss, and identify potential partnerships. Each event features local entrepreneurs, industry leaders, students, and non-profits and gives them a chance to talk about their businesses and their areas of expertise.



The Connect Pitch Program is a formalized process to introduce entrepreneurs, start-ups, and existing businesses to a regional investor network. Pitch hosts live showcase events at the THINK Center lecture hall. Participating companies will be vetted and then processed through a training program prior to participating in the event.



The Connect Inclusive program addresses systemic and historical barriers to entrepreneurship and business growth experienced by individuals from minority communities. Through connecting them with accessible and inclusive resources specifically tailored to their needs, they are provided with all stages of education and technical resources to start-up or continue to grow their business. Included under Inclusive is our subprogram Honor, which provides specific information and events for veterans in order to afford them the opportunity to access the resources they need to successfully start a business.

## Public Funding Programs

There are numerous federal, state and local grants, loans and training programs available that the Greater Wilkes-Barre Industrial Fund regularly assists with. Our area offers some incentive programs that are not available anywhere else in the state – giving the Greater Wyoming Valley area a competitive advantage for businesses that are interested in expanding locally or relocating to our region.



Tackling regional challenges:

# Attracting & Retaining a Changing Demographic

## The problem:

“Although Lackawanna, Luzerne, and Wayne Counties’ total populations have largely been White/Caucasian, the percentages of residents who are Non-Hispanic White/Caucasian alone have declined since 2000, with substantial declines noted between 2010 and 2021.

The growth of the Hispanic/Latino population has been considerable, with the share of population most recently estimated at 16.0 percent in Luzerne County [and] 9.5 percent in Lackawanna County. The percentages of Asian Americans and African Americans in [both] counties have also grown since 2000, along with those identifying as some other or two or more races.”

–2023 Indicators Report by The Institute

## Our solutions:

### The Connect Inclusive Program

The Connect Inclusive Program addresses systemic and historical barriers to entrepreneurship and business growth experienced by individuals from minority communities by providing accessible resources for all stages of business education and technical resources, to start-up or continue to grow their business. The program leverages and builds upon our existing Connect business assistance program, to provide much needed support services specifically tailored to the needs of minority-owned businesses in our community. With a successful pilot launched within Luzerne County, we are pursuing avenues to extend and expand this program to cover both Luzerne and Lackawanna Counties.



## Strategic Pillars:



Business & Community Advocacy



Workforce Pipeline Development



Regional Connectivity



Quality of Life Enhancement

“The Connect Inclusive voucher program helped our new business by allowing us to apply what we learned from educational videos and 1:1 meetings with Wilkes SBDC to our business plan. After completion of the program, the voucher allowed us to purchase equipment and supplies for our new PT clinic. The knowledge gained and the financial assistance received from participating in the program was invaluable to our company. ”

– Drs. Shelly Lebenson and Casey Miller, Co-owners of Prime Physical Therapy, LLC



## Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI) Council

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council looks at the Greater Wyoming Valley Chamber’s diversity initiatives, ensures inclusion in Chamber programs and policies, and works towards a more equitable future for all in the Wyoming Valley. Our DEI Council has officially turned one year old and has already championed several initiatives within our community, including a DEI Forum, a DEI Certificate Program, and an Inclusion Plan. This Council has also expanded its programming to encompass a more regional footprint in collaboration with our regional chambers.



## Young Professionals Council

The Young Professionals Council plans and assists the young professionals of Greater Wyoming Valley to improve their careers, develop their leadership abilities, build their professional network, and give back to the community. We have approximately 500 young professionals engaged in our network, and host the Young Professionals Awards, the largest young professionals awards event in our community. We have recently expanded our programming to encompass a more regional footprint in collaboration with our regional chambers.



# Quality of Life

## Strategic Pillars:



Business & Community Advocacy



Workforce Pipeline Development



Regional Connectivity



Quality of Life Enhancement

### The problem:

“Many challenges extend beyond the boundaries of single municipalities, townships, cities, and even counties. Regional planning involves addressing issues that span multiple jurisdictions. It calls for a holistic approach to solving the economic, social, and environmental difficulties and disparities for a given geography. Both regional and urban planning may be necessary for a multitude of reasons, such as community building, accommodation of population growth, and economic revitalization.”

“Regional planning requires consideration of many factors that affect the lives of people living in and around a region, and it must be done in collaboration with those who truly know the region. Instead of competing with one another, relevant agencies and local governments must collaborate to devise a comprehensive plan with community needs and goals in mind. They should work in an organized, transparent manner to optimize outcomes for public benefit.”

- Best Practices for Regional Planning Coordination 2023 Task Force Report by The Institute

### Our solutions: Regional Collaboration

We have a strong history of collaboration with our regional Chamber partners and have expanded and strengthened some of our programs and events through collaboration with the Back Mountain Chamber, Greater Hazleton Chamber, Greater Pittston Chamber, Greater Scranton Chamber, and Wyoming County Chamber. We held 16 regional partner events and programs last year, including our Young Professionals and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Councils and their associated programming and events, as well as additional programs through our Government Affairs Council, Nonprofit Council, and Women’s Council in collaboration with other local resource partners.



### Economic Development Partnerships

Our core economic development program, Connect, is built through a referral system of partner organizations that act as service providers in our region. The goal of this program is to connect all of the free business development services already available in our region in a streamlined process that provides businesses with a single entry point to utilize these services.

Through our Connect Inclusive program, we are looking to further expand this system to include specific services and providers needed by minority-owned businesses in our region. Over the past two years, we have approached all of our new economic development programs and initiatives from a collaborative lens and have partnered on multiple projects to create solutions for upskilling workers, introducing technology-integrated solutions to improve communication with workers, and creating opportunities for students to engage with technology training and industry opportunities at the K-12 level – all in partnership with local workforce, data, and technology organizations. Additionally, our organization serves as a PREP partner and an Engage! program partner through DCED.

A prior economic development pilot effort was Project PIVOT, where we aimed to provide accelerated workforce training and upskilling opportunities for Luzerne County workers and businesses. In partnership with The Institute, PA Careerlink Luzerne County, and LinkedIn Learning, we provided 10,000 people in Luzerne County, both residents and businesses, with access to an online platform that allowed them to find the high-demand jobs in our community, upskill themselves in the foundational elements needed to do well in those jobs, pursue further training and education if needed, and ultimately find employment. The success of this pilot program allowed us to strike a partnership with the Luzerne Intermediate Unit 18 and The Institute to build a more comprehensive earlier stage evolution of the program to be integrated into 11th and 12th grade classes in Luzerne County. The resulting collaboration, called the “Luzerne Learns to Work” program, now exists as a current pilot initiative of our organization, linking industry and academia and fostering talent retention and participation among local school districts, parents, students, educators, businesses, and the many workforce and career development agencies in our community.



## Quality of Life (Continued)

### Regional Quality of Life

We also recognize the need for regional collaborations that enhance the quality of life for residents of our community, including partnering with our local downtown organizations and creating free opportunities to promote our entire business community through initiatives like Small Business Saturday and partnering on things like #570 Day and the Rockin' the River concert series. On an individual basis, our staff sits on a wide variety of boards, committees, and volunteer roles for organizations across the region. As a team, we do our best to

attend and support as many community events and programs as we can in NEPA. Additionally, our organization has shown our commitment to this region through the development of a physical location in the heart of the Wyoming Valley. Our organization purchased a blighted building in downtown Wilkes-Barre to make our future home, which will function as a unique and innovative ecosystem that creates jobs, launches businesses, inspires entrepreneurs, and unites resources and individuals within the community.

*"DiscoverNEPA's partnership with the Greater Wyoming Valley Chamber is one of nearly immeasurable mutual benefit for both organizations and, of course, for our many businesses, community members and NEPA residents. Together, we look back with great pride on our combined efforts to shine a spotlight, not only on NEPA's many businesses, attractions and events, but also on the region at large as one of the Commonwealth's best places to live, work, learn, and play."*

**-Mary Kolessar, Executive Director of DiscoverNEPA**



# Community Impact Tiers



## Elevating the Valley

\$20,000-\$25,000

- One individualized star installation on our donor recognition wall with your company name to be placed inside the Chamber's new building.
- A specialized Economic Development Impact Report will be developed and disbursed to all funders at this level, detailing out how funding from this campaign was utilized to further our economic development efforts in the region in 2024 and our community impact.
- Invitation for (2) to our Exclusive Chamber of Commerce Building Grand Opening.
- Invitation to the Annual Chamber Funders Breakfast for (4) organization representatives
- Logo recognition in the Chamber's quarterly print piece, which is mailed out (3) times each year to 2,500 addresses
- Logo recognition on the Chamber's Pledge website page
- Logo recognition in the Chamber's Annual Report
- Recognized as a Pledge Campaign contributor in a digital ad for all Chamber of Commerce major events (including Light Up the Valley, Young Professionals Awards, and Annual Dinner)
- Participation in the "I'm In" Funders social media campaign, where your company will be recognized with a social media graphic and post, featuring your logo and/or company photo, along with a sentence submitted by your team about why you are supporting this cause.

## Accelerating the Economic Engine

\$10,000-\$15,000

- One individualized star installation on our donor recognition wall with your company name to be placed inside the Chamber's new building.
- Invitation for (2) to our Exclusive Chamber of Commerce Building Grand Opening.
- Invitation to the Annual Chamber Funders Breakfast for (3) organization representatives
- Logo recognition in the Chamber's quarterly print piece, which is mailed out (3) times each year to 2,500 addresses
- Logo recognition on the Chamber's Pledge website page
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- Recognized as a Pledge Campaign contributor in a digital ad for all Chamber of Commerce major events (including Light Up the Valley, Young Professionals Awards, and Annual Dinner)
- Participation in the "I'm In" Funders social media campaign, where your company will be recognized with a social media graphic and post, featuring your logo and/or company photo, along with a sentence submitted by your team about why you are supporting this cause.



## Innovative Excellence

\$5,000

- One individualized star installation on our donor recognition wall with your company name to be placed inside the Chamber's new building.
- Invitation for (1) to our Exclusive Chamber of Commerce Building Grand Opening.
- Invitation to the Annual Chamber Funders Breakfast for (2) organization representatives
- Logo recognition in the Chamber's quarterly print piece, which is mailed out (3) times each year to 2,500 addresses
- Logo recognition on the Chamber's Pledge website page
- Logo recognition in the Chamber's Annual Report
- Recognized as a Pledge Campaign contributor in a digital ad for all Chamber of Commerce major events (including Light Up the Valley, Young Professionals Awards, and Annual Dinner)
- Participation in the "I'm In" Funders social media campaign, where your company will be recognized with a social media graphic and post, featuring your logo and/or company photo, along with a sentence submitted by your team about why you are supporting this cause.

## Building Economic Innovation

\$2,500

- One individualized star installation on our donor recognition wall with your company name to be placed inside the Chamber's new building.
- Invitation for (1) to our Exclusive Chamber of Commerce Building Grand Opening.
- Invitation to the Annual Chamber Funders Breakfast for (2) organization representatives
- Mentioned by name in the Chamber's quarterly print piece, which is mailed out (3) times each year to 2,500 addresses
- Mentioned by name on the Chamber's Pledge website page
- Mentioned by name in the Chamber's Annual Report
- Recognized as a Pledge Campaign contributor in a digital ad for all Chamber of Commerce major events (including Light Up the Valley, Young Professionals Awards, and Annual Dinner)
- Participation in the "I'm In" Funders social media campaign, where your company will be recognized with a social media graphic and post, featuring your logo and/or company photo, along with a sentence submitted by your team about why you are supporting this cause.

## Connecting the Community

*Exclusive for 2024 only!*

\$1,400



**Leave your mark on the Wyoming Valley!**

As the Greater Wyoming Valley Chamber of Commerce celebrates its 140th year, we invite you to be part of our history by sponsoring an individualized star installation on our donor recognition wall in our newly renovated building, which will feature your organization's name on the entryway wall for all of our visitors to see.

By sponsoring an individualized star installation on our donor recognition wall you're not merely buying a physical marker, you're etching your name in the collective memory of the community. Your support will play a vital role in innovating the business community, elevating the valley, and reimagining our future, all while celebrating the last 140 years.



# GREATER WYOMING VALLEY Chamber of Commerce

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