



A partnership among Keystone College, King's College, Lackawanna College, Luzerne County Community College, Marywood University, Misericordia University, Penn State Wilkes-Barre, The Commonwealth Medical College, University of Scranton, and Wilkes University



2016 Indicators Recap

The 2016 Indicators, held on May 12th at Mohegan Sun Pocono marked the ten-year anniversary with the first report publishing and event held in 2006 discussing visions and goals as well as task force formation.

Data shows that since 2012, the population in both counties has declined slightly, yet the diversity continues to increase.

Jobs & Economy

Unemployment in both counties is declining as the labor force is growing and wages are increasing. There are many positive signs of growth after years of a sluggish recovery, however poverty remains a challenge to the region.

The *Jobs, Economy, and Economic Development Task Force* examined and compared relevant financial literacy levels among various groups within the region and externally. The report also evaluated the impact of financial literacy on the region's economy. The findings showed that

PA does not fare well when compared to other states but that most students and community members have a better understanding of personal finance as education level or work experience increases. There is a strong desire for personal finance classes as a core requirement among students in high school.

Education & Workforce Development

The four year high school graduation rate has trended downward in both counties over the past several years, while the statewide rate has increased. However, high school dropouts have dropped in both counties since the 2011-2012 school year.

The *Education and Workforce Development Task Force* conducted research on the impact of socioeconomic status and academic performance and examined regional metrics and issues. The task force

IN THIS ISSUE

Contents

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| 2016 Indicators Recap | 1 |
| Quarterly Economy Tracker ... | 2 |
| Spring 2016 Interns | 2 |
| Spring 2016 Poll | 2 |
| Living Wage Study | 2 |
| Wilkes-Barre Connect | 2 |
| Task Force Linkages..... | 2 |
| Who We Are..... | 2 |
| Client List..... | 2 |
| Advisory Board..... | 2 |

also worked to identify potential resources and solutions to mitigate disparities. The research showed that poverty and income status have an impact on educational success, although not as much as other socioeconomic indicators. Family, environmental, and psychological factors are key to strong academic achievement. These factors and

many more are strong indicators of student performance.

Infrastructure Indicators

The region has seen declines in daily traffic counts and passenger vehicles. There has

been an increase in heavy truck registrations, and 44 percent of area bridges are structurally deficient or functionally obsolete.

The *Planning, Land use, Transportation, & Infrastructure Task Force* worked to develop four toolkits discussing general practices for local government, green building, recycling, and sustainable transportation. The toolkits provide definitions, descriptions, case studies, policy recommendations, implementation steps, and resources.

Health and Healthcare

The death rate of cancer and heart disease have trended downward in the two counties. Compared with the commonwealth, the region has high rates of smoking, excessive drinking, and a lack of exercise. The number of uninsured residents has also

decreased slightly over the last year for which data was available.

The *Health and Healthcare Task Force* studied opioid issues, their prevalence, and associated challenges within Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties. The study provides a snapshot of the region's opioid challenges including resource limitations and policy implications.

Housing

There has been an increase in construction in 2014, especially within Lackawanna County. The home sales volume has increased since the recession and the median sale price has seen some recovery. The *Housing Task Force* prepared a regional home buyer and owner education guide as well as updated and revised the [NEPA Housing](#) website.

Public Safety

Northeastern Pennsylvania remains a safe area for a region with its size and socioeconomic characteristics. The number of violent crimes in both counties has trended downward over the last several years. The number of murders reported fell by more than

half from 2013 to 2014 to the lowest of all years analyzed. There is a greater police presence on both counties, though they have fewer officers per capita than the Commonwealth as a whole.

The *Public Safety Task Force*, with the joint collaboration of co-chairs Congressman Lou Barletta and State Senator John Yudichak, opened SHINE in Luzerne County in 2015 following research papers on "Deterring Successful Gang Recruitment". Currently established in eight school districts, Luzerne SHINE has had a successful first year.

Energy

In 2015, the *Energy Task Force* began its work to unify the industry and energy sectors of Lackawanna and Luzerne County to form a cohesive and feasible energy model. Throughout the year, the task force has worked with higher education institutions as well as government officials to implement next steps in the process.

Quarterly Economy Tracker

Spring 2016

The spring 2016 QET discusses the impact of manufacturing on the regional economy and job forecasts for the next 10 years. Additionally, it discusses original Institute research that shows how local economic developers can work as a unit to attract new industry to the area and change the forecasted decrease in manufacturing employment in some sectors. This edition includes updated cost of living data and the cost of housing, specifically disproportionate increases in rent and tax burden on owners.

Rental Housing Costs

Average monthly rents in both counties rose to new highs in 2014. Even after accounting for inflation, rents in Luzerne County rose by nearly eight percent from 2010 to 2014.

Cost of Living Index

The urban area with the highest cost of living index was Manhattan, NY while the lowest was McAllen, TX. Specific components of the index were higher regionally such as utilities, which was over 116 percent of the national index in both counties. In housing, however, Scranton scored well below the national average while Wilkes-Barre was slightly higher.

To view the full Spring 2016 Quarterly Economic Tracker, visit this [link](#).

Spring 2016 Interns

The Institute would like to congratulate our spring interns on the successful completion of their internships. During the semester, eight students from five different schools worked hard on a variety of projects. Congratulations and good luck!

King's College – Sarah Demace

Marywood University – Duncan Mayer

Misericordia University – Nathanael Brague

University of Scranton – Erin McCormick, Matthew Salzarulo

Wilkes University – Catherine Conte, Kavan Rai, Beth Gilbert

We would also like to welcome our summer interns:

Misericordia University – Evan Bush, Matthew Klassner

Wilkes University – Grace Valenzano

The Institute offers credited internships to students of the member institutions. Non-credit internships are also available to students outside our member schools (based on availability). If you are interested in the internship program, please contact Nimita Patel at The Institute for eligibility criteria at patel@institutepea.org or via phone at 570-408-9850 or visit our [Student Internships](#) page.

Spring 2016 Poll: Post-Graduation Plans

The spring 2016 poll analyzes the views and experiences of college students of Northeastern Pennsylvania. The Institute works with its partner institutions to deploy the surveys with topics covering class year, major, graduate school plans, internship experience, views toward finding a job after graduation and views toward staying in Northeastern Pennsylvania after graduation.



There were over 2,000 students who responded to this survey from The Institute's ten member schools.

The findings suggest:

- Students are highly interested in internships; a majority of respondents stated that they have either already completed an internship or plan to before graduation
- A majority of students believe that a graduate school education is very important in today's economy. Most students plan to attend graduate or professional school.
- Students have moderate levels of job search anxiety

- Students generally feel that their college education has prepared them well for their future careers.

- A large portion of students do not intend to seek work in

N
E
P
A



This is the second

annual post-graduation plan poll analyzing college students in Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties. To read past reports and for future reports, please access our website at this [link](#).

Living Wage Study

The Institute, in partnership with Education for Justice and the Office of Community and Government Relations at the University of Scranton and additional collaboration from Campus Ministries' Center for Service and Social Justice and the Department of Community prepared the Living Wage Study. The study provides a careful analysis including the costs involved in meeting basic human needs such as food, childcare, medical care, housing, transportation, taxes, and other expenses.

Throughout the report, you will find accounts of leaders of agencies throughout the region detailing the daily struggles of their clients. The report also includes recommendations to promote fair

| Family Classification | 1 Adult | 1 Adult, 1 Child | 1 Adult, 2 Children | 1 Adult, 3 Children |
|-----------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Single Parent | | | | |
| Pennsylvania | \$21,641 | \$45,316 | \$55,808 | \$70,716 |
| Lackawanna & Luzerne | \$19,558 | \$42,588 | \$53,080 | \$67,291 |
| Only 1 adult working | 2 Adults | 2 Adults | 2 Adults, 2 Children | 2 Adults, 3 Children |
| Pennsylvania | \$34,523 | \$41,534 | \$46,784 | \$51,750 |
| Lackawanna & Luzerne | \$32,276 | \$38,806 | \$44,056 | \$48,324 |
| 2 working adults | 2 Adults | 2 Adults, 1 Child | 2 Adults, 2 Children | 2 Adults, 3 Children |
| Pennsylvania | \$34,523 | \$49,914 | \$61,316 | \$72,435 |
| Lackawanna & Luzerne | \$32,276 | \$47,186 | \$58,588 | \$69,009 |

wages. The findings of the analysis show that the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 does not meet the living wage standard for any of the family compositions (ranging from single parent to two working adults) even when all adults in the household are working full-time.

There are many resources available to residents of the region who have income challenges. However, the income eligibility guidelines for many assistance programs are often

significantly below the living wage threshold. Consequently, there are many families in NEPA who fall in this gap of having too much income to qualify for assistance but too little to achieve economic security. The full report found [here](#) provides further data and analysis, advocacy and information resources, and additional community leader input and profiles.

Wilkes-Barre Connect

Wilkes-Barre Connect is an entrepreneurial ecosystem to spur business and job creation, retention, and expansion and business attraction to the city of Wilkes-Barre. This will be achieved through a comprehensive protocol of support services, including mentoring, training, networking, technical assistance, and access to capital, facilities, and other resources.

The Greater Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Business & Industry, partnering with the Allan P. Kirby Center for Free Enterprise and Entrepreneurship, the Family

Business Alliance, the Small Business Development Center, Diamond City Partnership, Ben Franklin Partnership, and administrative support from The Institute, WB Connect will help grow your business in Northeastern Pennsylvania.

There are five steps in the process:

- 1) Intake form
- 2) Preliminary consultation
- 3) Establish strategy
- 4) Make referral
- 5) Perform touch points

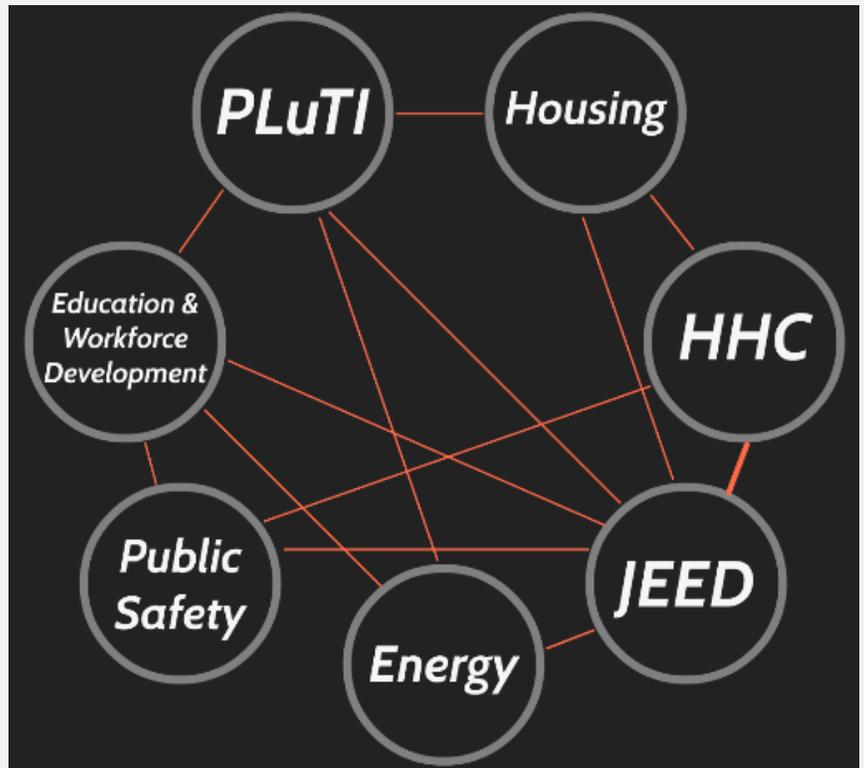
To learn more about Wilkes-Barre Connect, please visit their website at connect.wilkes-barre.org.



Task Force Linkages

Throughout the research and development of the task force reports, it came to light that there are many significant relationships between each of the task forces from cause and effects to interdependence on major community issue.

The graphic detailing these linkage is shown to the right.



Who We Are

The Institute for Public Policy & Economic Development at Wilkes University (**The Institute**) provides a full range of customized and objective economic and demographic research services to businesses, government entities, educational institutions, and non-profit organizations. The Institute's extensive knowledge of regional economics and economic development, combined with a rigorous and strategic approach to research, have generated a wide range of experience conducting projects such as economic development strategies; economic impact studies; surveys and assessments; grant and program evaluation, market and feasibility analyses; industry and workforce studies; and economic and demographic profiles. The Institute supports the business community, government, and regional economic development programs by producing signature economic reports as well as providing data and analysis.

The Institute focuses on providing its clients with credible and objective research to help them make informed and strategic decisions. The Institute staff has 35 years of combined experience in regional economic development. The organization's distinctive history and structure combines practical applications with the credibility and academic expertise of a higher education institution with an applied research focus. The organization is structured as a research institute affiliated with 10 higher education institutions in northeastern Pennsylvania. Over the past 11 years, The Institute has emerged as a nationally-scoped research center having served clients in several states.

The fees earned from client work help to support the community based research The Institute produces on an annual basis. The Indicators, task force research, Quarterly Economy Tracker, and the polling program are the primary initiatives that comprise the community based research efforts. Further, funds help to support student internships at The Institute.

If you or your firm is interested in becoming our next client, please contact us at info@institutepepa.org.

Did you know The Institute provides services to all types of clients?

Client List

Arts & Culture

Luzerne County Convention & Visitors Bureau
Luzerne County Cultural Council

Corporate

Borton Lawson
Facility Design & Development, Ltd.
Live Nation
Williams—Transcontinental Pipeline Company, LLC
Ufberg Law
Wilkes-Barre/Scranton International Airport
Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins

Economic Development

Carbon County Chamber and Economic Development Corp.
Downtown Bloomsburg, Inc.
Forum for Pennsylvania's Heartland
Great Valley Technology Alliance
Greater Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Business & Industry
South Valley Partnership
Wyoming County Chamber of Commerce

Education & Workforce Development

Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania
King's College
Lackawanna County Workforce Investment Board
Lehigh Carbon Community College SHINE
Luzerne County Community College
Luzerne County Head Start
Luzerne Schuylkill Workforce Investment Board
The Commonwealth Medical College
The Wright Center for Graduate Medical Education
University of Scranton
Wall Street West/WIRED
Wayne Pike Workforce Alliance
Wilkes University

Government

Appalachian Regional Commission
Borough of Factoryville
City of Nanticoke
City of Scranton
Civic Research Alliance
Columbia & Montour Counties
Lackawanna County
Local Government Commission
Luzerne County
Luzerne County Municipal Cooperation Commission
Wilkes-Barre City
Wyoming County

Health & Healthcare

Healthy Northeast Pennsylvania Initiative
Moses Taylor Hospital
Volunteers in Medicine Clinic

Non-Profit Organization

Arbor Housing & Development
Carbondale YMCA
Central Susquehanna Community Foundation
Commission on Equal Opportunity
Jewish Community Center
Lacawac Sanctuary Foundation
Municipal Cooperation Commission
Nicholson Heritage Association
Pennsylvania Economy League
United Way of Monroe County
United Way of Susquehanna County
United Way Wyoming Valley

The Institute prepares the following products:

Market and Feasibility Studies
Indicators – Indexes
Community Health Assessments
Housing Studies
Economic Development Strategies
Economic and Tax Impact Studies
Industry Studies
Workforce Studies
Education Studies

Economic and Demographic Profiles
Policy Analysis
Grant and Program Evaluation Support
Research Validation and Peer Review
Site Selection Research
Arts & Culture Studies
Tourism Strategic Plans
Comprehensive Plans
Asset Maps

Follow us on Facebook and Twitter – Click the links below!



Locations in:

Scranton and Wilkes-Barre, PA
Mailing Address:

85 South Main Street
Wilkes-Barre, PA 18701

Staff:

Teri Ooms – Executive Director
ooms@institutepa.org

Andrew Chew – Research Analyst
chew@institutepa.org

Nimita Patel – Research Assistant
patel@institutepa.org

Advisory Board

Patrick Leahy, Ed. D.
Chairman
Wilkes University

Frank Joanlanne
Vice-Chairman
Borton Lawson

William P. Montague
Founder
Montague Family Foundation

Heather Acker—Gentex Corporation
Congressman Lou Barletta
Thomas Botzman, Ph.D.—Misericordia University
Terry Casey—Chancellor Financial Group
Cornelio Catena—Commonwealth Health Systems
John Cefaly—Cushman & Wakefield
David Coppola, Ph.D.—Keystone College
Thomas Curra—WVIA Public Media
Charles Davis, Ph.D.—Penn State University, Wilkes-Barre
Robert Durkin—Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce
Pat Fricchione—Simplex Homes, Inc.
Charles Kasko—Wyoming Valley Motors
Thomas E. Lawson—Borton-Lawson
Thomas Leary—Luzerne County Community College
Robert Luciani—Prudential Retirement Services
Mary Ellen Monacelli—Sanofi Pasteur
Anne Munley, IHM, Ph.D.—Marywood University
Kevin Quinn, S.J.—University of Scranton
Thomas Romanowski—GreenSpace Properties, LLC
Eugene Roth—Rosenn, Jenkins, & Greenwald
John J. Ryan, C.S.C., Ph.D.—King’s College
Steven Scheinman, MD—The Commonwealth Medical College
Conrad Schintz—Geisinger Health System
Bill Sordoni, Sordoni Construction
Matthew Sordoni—Upland Corporation
Marleen Troy, Ph.D., — Wilkes University
Wico van Genderen—Greater Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Business & Industry
Lucyann Vierling—Wayne Pike Workforce Alliance
Mark Volk —Lackawanna College
John P. Wiercinski—Geisinger Health System
John T. Yudichak—Pennsylvania State Senate

William B. Sordoni—Emeritus, Founding Member & Officer—Sordoni Construction