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County of Berks: Director of Workforce Development

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Workforce Development Board Chair



Topics:

- Berks Workforce 2030 Study
- Berks County Workforce Development Board
- Berks County Industry Sector Priorities
- Partnerships
- PA CareerLink® Berks County
- Questions & Answers

Berks Workforce 2030 Study

Population Trends & Labor Force Participation

- Stable population & capped participation, Berks County's competitiveness will depend on how well it **retains workers, strengthens pipelines, and prepares replacements for retiring talent.**

Findings	Implications	Recommendations
Stable prime-age population (25–64) through 2035 (+0.1% ACS, +4.2% Lightcast) Mid-career growth (40–49), but younger cohorts flat and older cohorts (55–64) decline Labor force participation high but capped (78–83%) Persistent shortages in healthcare, skilled trades, and technical roles despite stable population	Modest workforce expansion; demand must be met through participation and retention Weak early-career pipeline signals succession risks Retirement of older workers will deepen technical, trade, and clinical gaps Competitiveness at risk if pipelines and skill alignment are not strengthened	Expand participation from underutilized groups (parents, veterans, immigrant professionals) Strengthen early-career pipelines (apprenticeships, contextualized literacy/math) Build advancement and succession pathways to capture mid-career stability and prepare future leaders Emphasize retention, job quality, and barrier reduction (childcare, transportation, housing)

Berks Workforce 2030 Study

Education, Numeracy, and Literacy Skills

- Addressing literacy & numeracy gaps is essential for Berks County to keep **workers advancing, employers competitive, and industries supplied with job-ready talent.**

Findings	Implications	Recommendations
Foundational skills declining as 1 in 3 employers report weaker English proficiency in healthcare and manufacturing Applied math challenges with nearly 30% of employers noting gaps Youth math readiness weak as over half of Berks’ 8th graders scored below basic post-pandemic Employers are adapting in-house by dropping tests or providing training directly	Workforce readiness is constrained, many residents lack skills for mid-skill jobs Industry pipelines are strained as literacy and math gaps increase errors, safety risks, training costs Equity gaps are widening, English learners at risk of exclusion from advancing Regional competitiveness is threatened as nearby counties with stronger proficiency may attract investment	Expand contextualized training by embedding literacy and math into training Strengthen employer-educator partnerships, aligning curricula & credentials with job demands Create an employer support hub to centralize training funds, toolkits, and access to credentials Facilitate career-connected learning through internships, apprenticeships, and project-based experiences that integrate literacy & numeracy Measure and track skills consistently with portable tools to monitor applied math, workplace documents, and literacy outcomes

Berks Workforce 2030 Study

Recommendations & Opportunities

- Strengths & Opportunities, employers and community leaders shared the following:

Key Strengths	Opportunities
Strong employer–education partnerships sustain pipelines	Expand high school career readiness, math/science pipelines
High intern-to-hire conversion strengthens local retention	Scale apprenticeships and flexible upskilling programs
Community supports (ESL, math, case management) boost stability	Invest in childcare, transport, housing, healthcare supports
“Grow your own” and tuition support models build loyalty	Build clearer pathways and retain college grads/young professionals

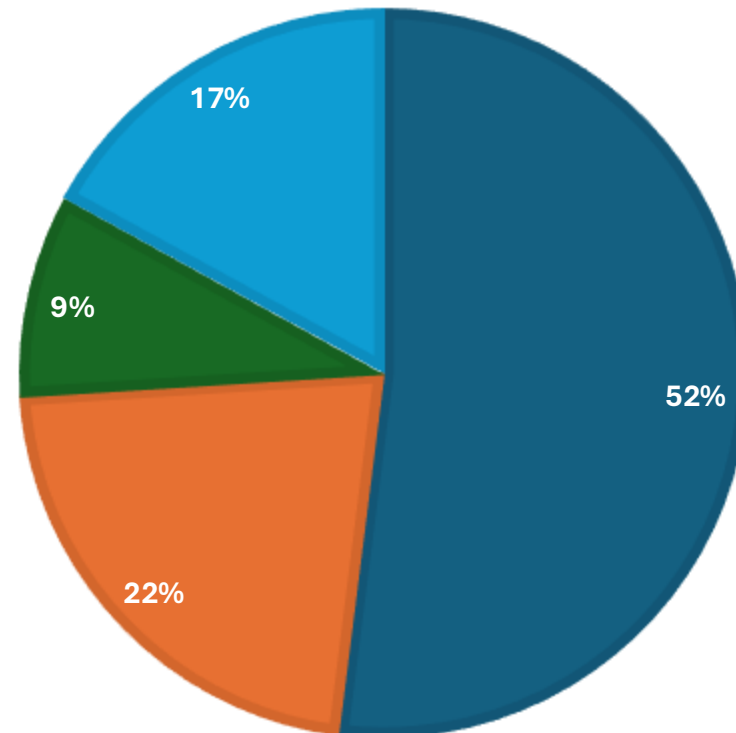
- Final report will also include the following:
- Mobility, Commuting & Remote Work
 - Housing Market & Affordability

Berks County Workforce Development Board

- The Workforce Development Board (WDB) is appointed by the Berks County Board of Commissioners under Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014.
- The WDB staff is part of the Berks County's Department of Community & Economic Development.

BOARD COMPOSITION

- Business Representation
- Workforce Representation
- Education Representation
- Governmental & Community and Economic Development Representation



Berks County Workforce Development Board

- Identify the long-term strategic workforce development needs of the community.
 - Propose strategies to meet those needs;
 - Set priorities
 - Build partnerships to align resources
 - Measure & Evaluate results
- Support the development & maintenance of skills and competitive workforce in alignment with the broader economic development efforts to attract, retain and grow business in Berks County.

Berks County Workforce Development Board

Industry Sector Priorities (2024-2029)

- Priority A: Manufacturing
- Priority A: Healthcare *(excludes Social Assistance)*
- Priority B: Construction
- Priority C: Agriculture *(Watch Industry)*
- Priority C: Educational Services *(Watch Industry)*



Industry Sector Priority A: Manufacturing Career Pathways

Largest Sector by employment: 31,600 jobs *(PA DOLI/CWIA, April 2024)*

17.4% of local employment *(JobsEQ® 2023Q4 dataset)*

- Critical current & future skill shortages:
 - Technical Occupations
 - Precision Machining
 - Industrial Maintenance/Mechatronics Technicians
 - Welders
 - Quality System Professionals
- Entry level- production worker hiring/retention increasingly difficult in current labor market.

Industry Sector Priority A: Healthcare Career Pathways

2nd largest sector by employment: 25,164 jobs
13.8% of local employment (JobsEQ® 2023Q4 dataset)

Top five Healthcare occupations by employment with 5-year growth/annual growth percentage & 5-year projected demand:

Occupation	Current Employed	5 Year Employ Growth	% Annual Growth	5 Year Total Demand
1. Registered Nurses	3,699	-24	-0.1%	966
2. Personal Care Aides	1,932	85	1.5%	1,469
3. Nursing Assistants	1,757	-24	-0.2%	1,197
4. Licensed Practical & Licensed Vocational Nurses	844	-4	-0.1%	315
5. Medical Assistants	723	26	0.7%	499

Industry Sector Priority B: Construction Career Pathways

Sector employment: 7,900 jobs (PA DOLI/CWIA, April 2024) + 1,900 self-employed contractors
5.3% of local employment (JobsEQ® 2023Q4 dataset)

Top six Construction Trade occupations by employment/5-year projected total demand:

Occupation	Current Employed	5 Year Total Demand
1. Construction Laborers	1,333	544
2. Carpenters	866	317
3. Electricians	585	255
4. Operating Engineers/Construction Equip. Ops.	463	181
5. Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	456	180
6. HVACR Mechanics/Installers	438	179

Industry Sector Priority C: Agriculture Career Pathways

Sector employment: 3,350 (JobsEQ® 2023Q4 dataset)
2% of local employment

- Regional demand for mechanics/technicians to service increasingly sophisticated farm and production equipment – including programmer, electronic, hydraulics and diesel technicians as well as CDL Drivers.

What's needed?

- Expanding knowledge and awareness of STEM career pathways in Agriculture and its related fields.

What are we doing locally?

- Keeping Agriculture as a sector priority, working closely with our AG Department for the County.
- Encouraging secondary & post- secondary education programs & activities that address labor force needs across industries to include Agriculture.

Scan here for more information on *Growing Berks*



AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES 

CAREER & JOB FAIR

NOVEMBER 13, 2025 8:30-11:30 AM
Leesport Farmers Market, Leesport, PA

- Exhibitors include: local companies, government agencies, and colleges.
- Opportunities for internships, volunteering, job shadowing.
- Current or future employment opportunities.

FREE and open to high schoolers, college students, and adults of all education levels!

Ag is more than farming!
It includes



To register, scan above or visit:
<https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/ev/reg/jz27kvr>
Questions? Contact : DeptofAg@berkspa.gov or 610-378-1844

Industry Sector Priority C: Educational Services Career Pathways

Sector employment: 12,479 (JobsEQ® 2023Q4 dataset)

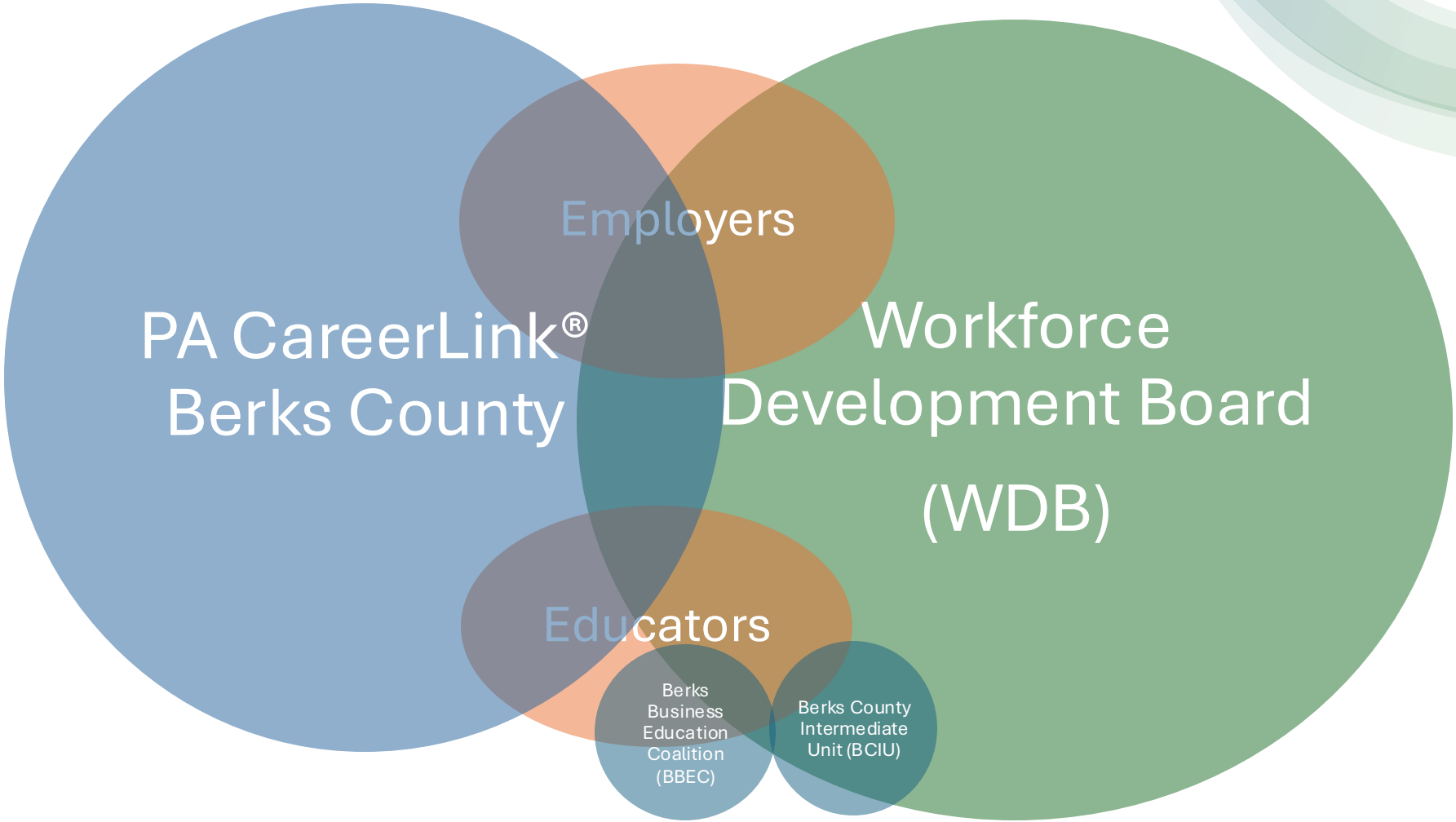
7% of local employment (JobsEQ® 2023Q4 dataset)

Top five Educational Service occupations (excluding school administration, maintenance, & services) by employment/5-year growth/annual growth percentage/5-year projected total demand:

Occupation	Current Employed	5 Year Employ Growth	% Annual Growth	5 Year Total Demand
1. Elementary School Teachers (exc. Special Ed.)	1,730	-13	0.03%	563
2. Secondary School Teachers (exc. Special & CTE)	1,477	-10	0.2%	438
3. Teaching Assistants (exc. Postsecondary)	1,224	-11	-0.4%	694
4. Middle School Teachers (exc. Special & CTE)	795	-5	-0.3%	259
5. Substitute Teachers, Short Term	266	4	0.1%	164

Berks County Workforce Development Board

Partnerships



Pennsylvania CareerLink® Berks County

Employer Resources:

- Paid Work Experience/Internships for Young Adults – 100% funded
- On-the-Job Training Opportunities – up to 75% reimbursement to employer during training period, max \$6,000.
- Incumbent Worker Training Opportunities (IWT) – Employer focus is on retaining & upskilling current talent. Up to 75% reimbursement.



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Pennsylvania CareerLink® Berks County

General Resources:

- Job Search Assistance
- Individualized Training Accounts (ITA) – Gain additional training opportunities within a High Priority Occupation with an eligible training provider – up to \$6,000.
- High school equivalency diploma classes for Young Adults (ages 17-24).



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Questions & Answers