

2019

Annual Report



Northwest
COMMISSION

CLARION • CRAWFORD • ERIE • FOREST
LAWRENCE • MERCER • VENANGO • WARREN

Mission

To provide leadership and assistance as well as collaborate and cooperate with our partners in strengthening business and job growth and improving the environment for economic and community development across the Northwest Pennsylvania region.

Vision

Northwest Pennsylvania will grow in its business and economic vitality, its residents will become more prosperous and the quality of life will be enhanced in the region's counties and communities.



Our Organization

Established in 1967, the Northwest Pennsylvania Regional Planning and Development Commission (Northwest Commission) is an Oil City-based, public, non-profit regional resource for economic and business development as well as community development and planning.

Funding for the Northwest Commission comes from local, state and federal levels of government. We are pleased to provide quality services at little or no cost to our clients.

Team

The Northwest Commission is comprised of skilled professionals dedicated to sustaining economic vitality and growth in the Northwest Pennsylvania region by fostering local, state and federal partnerships across public and private sector lines.

The Board of Directors represents county governments, private businesses, county planners, tourism and economic development corporations throughout the region.

Our Services

The Northwest Commission strives to produce private sector job creation and retention through its business and economic development programs such as government contracting, business financing and international marketing assistance.

The Northwest Commission also provides community development and planning services such as grants, transportation, community revitalization and technology assistance to municipal governments to help communities stay progressive.

Our Region

The Northwest Commission is proud to serve eight counties in Northwest Pennsylvania: Clarion, Crawford, Erie, Forest, Lawrence, Mercer, Venango and Warren.



A message from the

Executive Director



Jill Foys, Executive Director

Another year has come and gone.

They pass by quicker each year but none as quickly as when your child graduates from high school. That was my year. It is a time of reflection of did we do enough, is he prepared, what opportunities are out there for him, what pitfalls exist that can be mitigated? It is the same with working with our companies, communities, and counties. Have we done everything we can to prepare small businesses? Have we supported the work and plans of our communities and our partners? I think the secret is to never stop asking "what else can we do?" We can never be complacent in our work.


So much ground work has been done to identify opportunities stemming from the Petrochemical Cracker Plant being constructed in Beaver County. The support of our region's partners, both financially and strategically, on the study completed shows a strong commitment in Northwest Pennsylvania to advance our businesses and communities. Working together is always the right way.

We spent much time focused on the need for internet connectivity in the region. The goal is to live where you want to live, not where you have to live. Lack of connectivity should not be the reason a family or a business does not locate in our eight counties. We are pleased that the Commonwealth has provided funding to begin pilot projects involving fixed wireless technology. Successes come in small victories leading to collective wins for all. The Local Development Districts will continue to work to make the goal a reality.

To our Board of Directors: thank you for all of the support, assistance, feedback, guidance and energy you give to the Northwest Commission. My appreciation cannot be adequately expressed.

Lastly, but never least, I am so proud of the staff at the Northwest Commission. They are dedicated, motivated, professional men and women. They never stop asking "what else can we do?" Their enthusiasm is what motivates me to come to work each day and give as much as I can to this agency and these remarkable people. It is truly my privilege to lead the Northwest Commission.

Take care of yourself and one another,



International Marketing Program

The Northwest Commission serves as the Regional Export Network (REN) Coordinator for the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) Office of International Business Development (OIBD). The REN partner acts as the gateway to Pennsylvania's Authorized Trade Representatives (ATRs) of 15 overseas trade consultants covering 51 countries.

The program offers a wide range of export assistance committed to preparing clients to enter and compete in the global marketplace by providing international opportunities that lead to increased jobs and sales. Services include export readiness assessment, target market research and identification, market entry strategy development, foreign agent/distributor search and trade event/mission assistance.

Impact in Action

OPEI Trade Mission to Thailand and Vietnam Yields 100% Success Rate for Pennsylvania Companies!

In March 2019, four PA companies participated in the OPEI trade mission to Thailand and Vietnam. Jeff Uber, of Betts Industries, Inc., reached out to his meeting prospects to announce his arrival – he received an immediate order, requests for proto-



types from another customer, and expected orders from two others. Steve Jones of Ron Jones Hardwood Sales, Inc., announced export sales with two full container loads to Vietnam, and Network Forest Products, LLC, Darin Williamson received a purchase order for a trial container of white oak logs to Vietnam. Joe Joseph of Dalko Resources, Inc., met his objectives by forming reliable business partnerships in both countries.

"The trade mission was an essential part of Dalko's continued push to be a premier door to door provider for international importing and exporting. Dorte and Hilary, along with their overseas counterparts, did an outstanding job creating opportunities for Dalko to develop key relationships with overseas partners."

-Joseph M. Joseph, Dalko Resources, Inc.

The trade mission was organized in partnership between Pennsylvania's Department of Community and Economic Development's Office of International Business Development and the Ohio Development Services Agency as part of the Ohio-Pennsylvania Stateline Export Initiative (OPEI). Orissa International, the authorized trade representative office for Ohio and Pennsylvania organized all meetings and logistics for participants. The mission was led by Dorte Heffernan, International Trade Manager with the Northwest Pennsylvania Regional Planning and Development Commission and Mousa Kassis, Director of the Ohio Small Business Development Center Export Assistance Network at Youngstown State University.



"Everything was facilitated to the point that all I needed to do was prepare for my individual appointments. Thank you again for a productive and prosperous trip."

- Jeff Uber, Betts Industries, Inc.

247
Jobs
Created

496
Jobs
Retained

Over
\$150
Million
Total Export Sales

Business Financing Program

The Business Financing Program stimulates the creation and expansion of small businesses through the use of fixed low-interest loans, structured to allow companies the ability to borrow based on the number of jobs created and/or retained. The Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) is comprised of funds from the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), Economic Development Administration (EDA) and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). RLF loans can be used for land & building, machinery & equipment and working capital needs. In addition, as a Certified Economic Development Organization (CEDO), the Northwest Commission works with the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) to market and administer the loan financing programs available through the Commonwealth.

Impact In Action

Meadville Plaza Lanes is a newly formed corporation that purchased the real estate and business assets of the existing company, Plaza Bowling Lanes in Meadville, PA. The business includes 24 AMF synthetic lanes. Meadville Plaza Lanes hosts tournaments and offers league play year round in addition to open bowls, specials and children's parties.

There is also a restaurant and bar within the business. The restaurant called "EATS", features a full kitchen serving salads, sandwiches, pizza and appetizers. The accompanying dining area can accommodate up to 40 guests and an additional 8 at the bar.

The business received a \$400,000 loan in August 2018 from the Northwest Commission as part of a \$1,095,000 project to purchase the real estate, equipment, liquor license, inventory, goodwill and a non-compete agreement. The company had 5 full-time employees at the time of purchase and will be creating 3 more jobs as a result of this project.

\$1,616,000
In Loans Closed

\$4,918,692
In Leveraged Private Investment

10

Loans Closed

14

Jobs Created

51

Jobs Retained

Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC)

The Northwest Commission offers a free government contracting program known as the Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC). The Northwest Commission's PTAC office is part of a larger network of nearly 100 PTACs located across the United States.

The PTAC assists businesses large and small in understanding and navigating the government contracting market by providing counseling, instruction and bid opportunities. Through these activities, the PTAC increases qualified sources and competition and creates better value for government agencies and American taxpayers, while stimulating local economic activity as local businesses learn how to successfully navigate federal, state and local government contracting processes.

PTAC counseling is confidential and, because the Northwest Commission's program is funded through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) and a match from the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED), services are offered at no cost.

During the past fiscal year, the Northwest Commission's PTAC staff worked with nearly 200 clients by offering over a dozen training and networking events and providing hundreds of hours of counseling and administrative support.

Impact in Action

"One focus of our plan this year was adding resources, and PTAC was very much on my list when I joined this team in January of '17. I reached out to Melissa Becker and Robyn Young and invited the PTAC team to come and assess our potential work together. I expressed my desire to recapture the PA state contract after having lost it 23 years prior to out of state competition. Robyn brought in Kelly Weaver to help lead the project; they were eager and we got to work right away. Fast forward a few months and Franklin industries is now once again the contracted provider of Steel U Post for our home state!

In addition to this striking achievement, we have attended several PTAC contracting functions and are benefiting mightily from their ongoing partnership. I have also introduced several of our business partners, vendors and suppliers to PTAC because I know firsthand the value that they provide AT NO COST to new and existing small businesses, intent on success, yet struggling to survive."

- Ben Choffel, Franklin Industries

150
Jobs Created

80
Jobs Retained

\$188,468,106
in Total Government Sales

Partnerships for Regional Economic Performance (PREP)

The Northwest Pennsylvania Partnerships for Regional Economic Performance (NW PREP) is one of ten economic development regions designated by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

As the regional coordinator, the Northwest Commission brings together local, county and regional economic and workforce developers, government offices and statewide organizations to work together on specific projects and proactively seek out new resources and opportunities to build a stronger and more prosperous Northwest region.

141

Training Workshops

2,982

Attendees

Impact in Action

"Providing Business Outreach, in-step with the Northwest Commission connects valuable resources to the various businesses in the Northwest Pennsylvania PREP region. As the Local Development District (LDD), their regional umbrella organization's expert staff offers support in multiple programs and services. Confidently, referrals are made to "the Commission" for business assistance in government contracting, international marketing, finance programs, transportation, community and economic development initiatives, long-term planning and more. The feedback from business leaders that receive their skilled assistance is always positive. As is true today, into the future our partnership with the Northwest Commission will continue to grow, resulting in competitive advantages for businesses and communities throughout Northwest Pennsylvania."

- Deb Eckelberger, Franklin Industrial and Commercial Development Authority

818

New Clients

807

Jobs Created

104

Business Start-Ups

845

Jobs Retained

Engage!

Eleven regional economic development entities have been awarded a grant for Engage! – a statewide program initiated by the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) to support regular and proactive interactions with targeted companies to identify their needs and strategically connect them with viable resources, ensuring their challenges are minimized and their opportunities are capitalized.

Impact in Action

Engage! provides the opportunity to express appreciation to local businesses on behalf of the region and the Commonwealth for their contribution of goods, services, jobs retained, and jobs created. The overall goal of Engage! is to retain existing businesses in a community, helping them to grow and expand by building solid relationships with business owners or key decision makers and economic development partners and their representatives.

The economic development entities awarded the grant includes the following: Clarion County Economic Development Corporation, Clarion University Small Business Development Center, Duquesne University Small Business Development Center, Economic Progress Alliance of Crawford County, Erie Regional Chamber and Growth Partnership, Forest County Community and Economic Development, Gannon University Small Business Development Center, Greenville Area Economic Development Corporation, Lawrence County Economic Development Corporation, Venango County Economic Development Authority, and Warren County Chamber of Business and Industry.



Left to Right: Jennifer Feehan, Northwest Commission; Shannon Barrios, Clarion County Economic Development Corporation; Rhett Atwood, Valley Bike Shop; and Tracey Reinsel, Clarion University SBDC.



Left to Right: Tara Fleming, Forest County Business Alliance; Robin Corapi and Rowan Rose from the Forest County Community and Economic Development; Flora Madison, Hair by Flora; and Amy Keth, Clarion University SBDC.

The first contract year for the NWPA Engage! Program ran from February 1, 2018 – June, 30, 2019. The program was highly successful and surpassed all goals set for the fiscal year.

226

Action Plans Developed

164

Action Plans Accepted For Implementation

362

Surveys Completed

37

Walk/Focus Groups

132

Referrals to Partners

Transportation Planning

The Northwest Commission serves as the Northwest Rural Planning Organization (RPO) Planning Partners for the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT). In partnership with the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) comprised of local leaders from the five-county region of Clarion, Crawford, Forest, Venango and Warren, projects are prioritized to meet the current and future needs of the region.

The RPO works collaboratively with PennDOT, member communities and municipalities, and modal operators in reaching consensus on the best way forward for implementing regional transportation priorities.

Impact in Action

In 2018, the RPO decided to look at/update the Functional Classification in the region. It had not been updated in years and the region had evolved in that timeframe with changes in land use and travel demand. Due to changing land development patterns and travel demand characteristics, with updated guidelines set forth by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Northwest Commission initiated a comprehensive assessment of its functional classification in the fall of that year. The RPO worked closely with Michael Baker International to update the Functional Classification in the five-county region and identified roads that were eligible for upgrades and/or downgrades.

As a result 23 classification changes (including six new Principle Arterials) were identified totaling 37.8 miles of road that are now eligible for funding.

Over \$81 Million

Invested Last Year in NWPA Roads and Bridges

Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP)

The Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP) provides local municipalities with technical training, technical assistance and other services.

Classes address topics such as roadway maintenance, safety, drainage and signage and are offered to municipalities in the counties of: Clarion, Crawford, Erie, Forest, Mercer, Venango and Warren.

LTAP classes are requested and scheduled throughout the year. In addition, if a municipality has a specific issue and would like one of LTAP's professionals to assist them, a technical assist can be done via telephone or an LTAP professional can offer on-site assistance. LTAP services are provided at no charge to the municipalities.

15

LTAP Trainings Held

175

Municipal Officials Trained

2018 - 2019 Board of Directors

The Northwest Commission's Board of Directors is comprised of public and private citizens representing eight counties in Northwest Pennsylvania. The board contains an Executive Committee that oversees administrative duties, responsibilities and goals of the entire board.



L to R: John Stroup, Commissioner Albert "Chip" Abramovic, Dan Gracenin, Commissioner Scott Boyd, Commissioner Ben Kafferlin, Debb Kapp, Peter Frisina, Commissioner Basil Huffman, Commissioner Steve Craig, Commissioner Francis Weiderspahn

Commissioner Albert "Chip" Abramovic-Venango County

Councilman Carl Anderson, III-Erie County (Alternate from 1/25/2018 to 1/9/2019 then appointed 1/10/2019)

Jim Becker-Economic Progress Alliance of Crawford County

Kristin Bowers-Erie County Executive's Alternate

Commissioner Scott Boyd-Mercer County

Commissioner Steve Craig-Lawrence County

Cindy Crytzer-Tionesta Borough

County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper-Erie County

Jim Decker-Warren County Chamber of Business & Industry

Councilwoman Kathy Fatica-Erie County (from 1/25/2018 to 1/9/2019)

Peter Frisina-Erie County

Dan Gracenin-Mercer County Planning Commission

Commissioner Basil Huffman-Forest County

Commissioner Ben Kafferlin-Warren County

Debb Kapp-Action Auto Service, Inc.

Tom McKinley-McKinley Technical Services

Lizette Olsen-AWARE, Inc.

John Stroup-Clarion Hospital Foundation

Commissioner Ted Tharan-Clarion County

Commissioner Francis Weiderspahn-Crawford County

Kim Zippie-Commodore Perry School District

Board Officers

Commissioner Basil Huffman, Chair | Commissioner Albert "Chip" Abramovic, Vice Chair

Lizette Olsen, Secretary | John Stroup, Treasurer

Staff Contacts

395 Seneca Street | Oil City, PA 16301 | P: 814.677.4800 | northwestpa.org



Lisa Beach (x121)
Loan Closing Coordinator
lisab@northwestpa.org



Meghan Keely (x112)
Economic & Community Dev. Manager
meghank@northwestpa.org



Rebecca Beach (x115)
Loan Program Manager
rebeccab@northwestpa.org



Katelyne Dittman (x100)
Receptionist
katelyned@northwestpa.org



Melissa Becker, CPP (x124)
Government Contracting Specialist
melissab@northwestpa.org



Deanna Milford (x111)
Economic Dev. Admin. Assistant
deannam@northwestpa.org



Hilary Bienio (x117)
International Trade Specialist
hilaryb@northwestpa.org



Mitchell Obenrader (x131)
Marketing/Project Specialist
mitchello@northwestpa.org



Vonda Caldwell (x104)
Executive Assistant
vondac@northwestpa.org



Israel Power (x119)
Fiscal Controller
israelp@northwestpa.org



Jo Cramer (x113)
Loan Servicing Coordinator
joc@northwestpa.org



Travis Siegel (x123)
Regional Planning Manager
traviss@northwestpa.org



Jennifer Feehan (x106)
Economic & Community Dev. Coordinator
jenniferf@northwestpa.org



Judy Tenney (x102)
Fiscal Specialist
judyt@northwestpa.org



Jill Foy (x116)
Executive Director
jillf@northwestpa.org



Kelly Weaver (x108)
Government Contracting Specialist
kellyw@northwestpa.org



Dorte Heffernan, CGBP (x110)
International Trade Manager
dorteh@northwestpa.org



Robyn Young, CPP (x130)
Government Contracting Manager
robyny@northwestpa.org



395 Seneca Street | Oil City, PA 16301 USA
814.677.4800 | northwestpa.org