

## Connecting Businesses and Education

A Business Education Partnership (BEP) grant from the PA Department of Labor & Industry was awarded to NWPA Job Connect. NWPA Job Connect is the local workforce board for Northwest PA including the six (6) Counties of Clarion, Crawford, Erie, Forest, Venango, and Warren. The \$150,000.00 grant will provide local businesses/industries the opportunity to provide education on occupations included on the High Priority Occupation (HPO) and In Demand Occupation List (IDOL). According to the 2023 PA IDOL, 64.3% of the 238 occupations listed do not require a college degree. This project will bring awareness to careers within these sectors along with how students can prepare for employment in them.

Through the grant, local businesses will showcase their industry and what careers are available within them. A variety of in-person career exploration experiences will be offered to students along with virtual tours of businesses within specific sectors. The virtual tours will be captured in an electronic format for the school districts, students, and parents within the six (6) Counties. These videos will showcase what essential career ready skills are needed for the jobs along with how these skills can be developed. The videos will also be available on the NWPA Job Connect website at <https://www.nwpajobconnect.org/>.

Two organizations will implement this project - Erie Together (ET) and the Northwest Industrial Resource Center (NWIRC). ET focuses on the Erie region, and their work will include three major activities: (1) working with employers to develop and deploy career exploration experiences that highlight HPO occupations and/or focus on Profile of a Graduate ([www.erietogether.org/grad](http://www.erietogether.org/grad)) skills; (2) developing a Profile of a Graduate Activity Book that parents, caregivers, and youth-serving organizations can utilize to help foster development of those skills in youth; and (3) translating existing and new career exploration resources into other languages to benefit non-English speaking youth and families. Recent conversations with Erie County employers affirm the importance of the Profile of a Graduate skills and the need to focus on these with local youth to strengthen the preparedness of job candidates and entry-level employees. This project will support the development of career ready skills in middle and high school youth to address this need.

NWIRC will focus on providing the information for Crawford, Clarion, Forest, Venango, and Warren Counties. This partnership between businesses and education has the potential to have every student view non-college degree career options, tour local facilities, and prepare for a life sustainable wage paying job after graduating from high school.

Prior BEP grants have reached over 300 students from across several Erie and Crawford County School Districts through various career exploration activities. ET's Skilled Trades Project ([www.erietogether.org/skilled-trades](http://www.erietogether.org/skilled-trades)) collaborated with 10 local labor unions to create and execute career exploration experiences including employer panels, training center tours, a series of skilled trades videos, and more. Participating unions included Plumbers, Steamfitters, Roofers, Electrical Workers, Painters & Allied Trades, Ironworkers, Operating Engineers, Carpenters, Bricklayers & Allied Craftworkers, and Sprinkler Fitters.

The 2022 BEP grant also partly supported the Uniquely Able Academy for CNC Machinist through the NWIRC with host schools Crawford Technical School and Erie County Community College.

For more information on the BEP grant or other workforce information, please visit the NWPA Job Connect website.

Carrie Symes, Equal Opportunity Officer: 1174 Elk Street, PO Box 831, Franklin, PA 16323, 814-758-0659 or 711. WIOA Equal Opportunity employer/program; auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.

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