



Thank you for attending the WVCC Little Kanawha Area Networking Event. We truly appreciate your time, engagement, and willingness to share your insights.

The conversations were thoughtful and productive, and the feedback we received was extremely valuable. We encourage you to look over the notes and share any additional thoughts or items we may have missed.

## **Common Themes**

### **Industry Advisory Boards (IABs) as a Critical Bridge**

- ✓ IABs connect educators and employers to align curriculum with workforce needs
- ✓ Regular meetings (annual to quarterly) help keep programs current
- ✓ They support job placement and ensure graduates are workforce-ready
- ✓ Building effective IABs takes time, consistency, and relationship-building

### **Importance of Exposure and Real-World Experience**

- ✓ Early exposure to careers is especially important in rural/isolated areas
- ✓ Work-based learning (internships, clinical hours, etc.) is key to career awareness
- ✓ Hands-on experience helps students understand career options and preferences

### **Emphasis on Practical and Transferable Skills**

- ✓ Students need more practical, job-ready skills earlier (not just in college)
- ✓ Transferable (durable) skills like communication, teamwork, and problem-solving are essential
- ✓ Education systems don't always show how skills connect across disciplines

### **Barriers to Workforce Participation and Retention**

- ✓ Infrastructure challenges (transportation, housing, broadband) impact both access and retention
- ✓ Low labor participation requires broader, coordinated solutions
- ✓ Regional isolation limits awareness and opportunity

### **Big-Picture Challenges and Opportunities**

- ✓ Silos between education, workforce, and policy hinder implementation
- ✓ Need for better coordination and shared strategies across sectors
- ✓ Workforce development should be viewed as a connected ecosystem, not separate efforts

## **What We Learned**

- ✓ IABs Work—When They're Active and Engaged
- ✓ Curriculum Must Be Flexible and Responsive
- ✓ Early and Meaningful Career Exposure Is Essential
- ✓ Transferable Skills Are as Important as Technical Skills
- ✓ Retention Is More Than Jobs
- ✓ Collaboration Must Move Beyond Conversation

Core Executive Team (CET):

- Logan Harrison, Career Counselor/CET, Glenville State University/ARC POWER Grant, Logan.Harrison@glenville.edu, 304.462.6062
- Lloyd Ford, Work-Based Learning Coordinator/CET, Fairmont State University/ARC POWER Grant, Lloyd.Ford@fairmontstate.edu, 304.368.7116
- Tracey Kennedy, Director of Economic and Workforce Development/CET, Fairmont State University/ARC POWER Grant, Tracey.Kennedy@fairmontstate.edu, 304.368.7144
- Maggie Sorensen, Industry Partnership Manager/CET, Glenville State University/ARC POWER Grant, Maggie.Sorensen@glenville.edu, 304.462.6065



The WV Career Collaborative is supported by the Appalachian Regional Commission under Award Number: PW-21904-IM