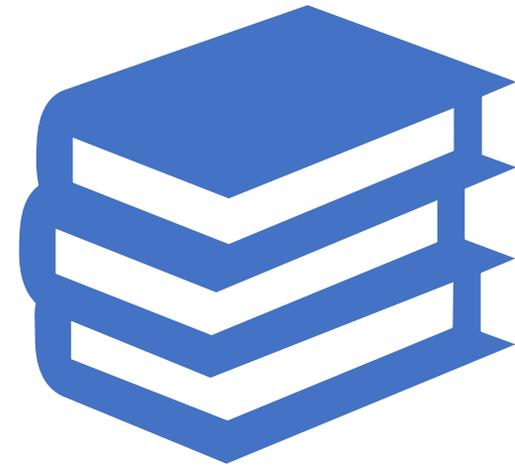# Serving Vulnerable Populations

Women Empowering Women in the Workforce through Policy and Advocacy

Policy Focus Area: Serving Vulnerable Populations

- **<u>Policy Statement</u>**

- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in our Workforce System is of paramount importance as we strive to meet the needs of our Commonwealth's citizens. As we serve individuals from a myriad of backgrounds, diversity and representation in our workforce system staff and cultures is vital for participant buy in, involvement, and ultimately faith in the system. Representation at all levels matters. By approaching workforce system policies, procedures, and programs from a Racial Equity lens, the system will be better prepared to engage their target populations and deliver services in a meaningful and successful way. According to *Race and the Work of the Future: Advancing Workforce Equity in the United States*, "Deep structural inequities are often masked by aggregated data and metrics that do not attend to the specific experiences of different groups of people." The Pennsylvania workforce system collects detailed demographic and employment history data on individuals participating in workforce services. However, this data is not readily available to local boards and front-line staff who have the power to use it for improved programming and policies. By freeing the data, workforce professionals and advocates could analyze the relevant data in system wide efforts to increase service accessibility for those most in need and further incorporate the voices of those most affected by workforce policies in the decision-making processes of service delivery design.

Policy Background

- **In thinking about your topic, where do you think your group could have the most impact?**

- In policy

- Problem Statement: How to make the workforce system more reflective of the vulnerable populations they serve.

- According to *Race and the Work of the Future: Advancing Workforce Equity in the United States*", Businesses, government, and workforce development institutions should invest in robust, disaggregated data collection and reporting systems, and utilize granular insights on differential outcomes in order to drive systems change." Therefore, we are suggesting a significant evaluation and investment into workforce system data collection and analysis to accurately capture the diversity of those we serve to better inform workforce system policies, procedures, programs and staff recruitment.

Defining the Problem

- Lack of access

- Lack of data disaggregation

- Data systems not talking to each system within the public workforce system

- Messaging and communication

- Workforce system staff not reflective of the communities they serve

- **What data do you have to support your opinion? Can be programmatic, research from the field, etc.**

- Joint Report

- Inclusive Work: Marginalized populations in the workforce of the future (https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/focus/technology-and-the-future-of-work/future-of-the-workforce-vulnerable-populations.html)

- Employment Help for the Most Vulnerable: Adapting the Individual Placement and Support Model in a Crisis (https://www.mdrc.org/publication/employment-help-most-vulnerable-adapting-individual-placement-and-support-model-crisis)

- Racial disparities in unemployment rates persist, despite claims of a labor shortage 2021Q3 | State unemployment by race and ethnicity | Economic Policy Institute (epi.org)

What is the Problem?

- The public workforce system, as defined by the US Department of Labor, is a network of federal, state, and local government-funded agencies and programs that provide services to workers, job seekers, and employers "to support economic expansion and develop the talent of our nation's workforce". The Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act is designed to better connect vulnerable populations with employers. However, WIOA prohibits the use of funds to provide supportive services, regardless of the individuals needs during transition periods.

- The living wage in the United States is $16.54 per hour, or $68,808 per year, in 2019, before taxes for a family of four (two working adults, two children), compared to $16.14 in 2018.

- The minimum wage does not provide a living wage for most American families. A typical family of four (two working adults, two children) needs to work nearly four full-time minimum-wage jobs (a 75-hour work week per working adult) to earn a living wage. Single-parent families need to work almost twice as hard as families with two working adults to earn the living wage. A single mother with two children earning the federal minimum wage of $7.25 per hour needs to work 138 hours per week, nearly the equivalent of working 24 hours per day for six days, to earn a living wage. (Nadeau, 2020). The increased collection and dissemination of data will enable government leaders and the workforce system to better understand the changing demographics of the region and therefore respond to the needs of the community and stakeholders.

- According to the Economic Policy Institute, a November 2021 journal quoted "As the national unemployment rate continues to fall, Black and Hispanic unemployment rates remain high relative to white unemployment rate. In 2020, 11.7% of black and African American population were unemployed while the national unemployment rate was 8.1% (Moore, 2021).

Why does it Matter?

- Racial disparities in unemployment
  - In 2020, 11.7% of black and African American population were unemployed while the national unemployment rate was 8.1%
- Ensuring employers have workers (Diversifying the talent pipeline)

- Increase the skills and wages of vulnerable population

- Positive impact on the socio-economic community

What is the "ASK"?

Expand	Increase	Leverage
Expand the foundation and principles (in law) of WIOA for the holistic needs of those with multiple barriers	Increase supportive services-filling the gaps of current supportive services	Leverage what workers already know by building on the skills workers already have and targeting occupations with similar skill profiles

Dissemination Strategy

1. Development of our policy brief.

2. Identification of Coalition Members (Workforce Development Boards, PA CareerLink centers, WIOA Partners and Providers, Post-Secondary Education Providers, Secondary Schools including Career and Technical Centers, identifying/engaging potential coalition members.

3. Messaging – Development of a communication guide and materials that includes many formats such as radio, newspaper, social media (Facebook, Linked In, Twitter and ClearView Social as well as identification of the audience for the messaging.

4. Set up meetings with Stakeholders to discuss their support of the policy and solicit feedback.

5. Identify opponents of our policy. Opposition will come from those concerned about sharing of information and data concerns. Identify a member(s) of the State house who are willing to introduce and back our policy.

Dissemination Strategy - WIOA

- At the Federal level, WIOA- Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act is a major part of the legislation in our policy brief. WIOA acts as a guiding principle in legislation and state level funding. WIOA also prohibits the use of funding to provide supportive services. Additionally, our policy brief includes vulnerable populations which are explicitly called out in many WIOA programs. As we delve to address some of the barriers of WIOA, we must include the racial disparities that exist due to these barriers. In addressing the racial disparities of WIOA one of the largest drawbacks was data. Data, data sharing and disaggregated data are also large components of our policy brief.

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Phase 1: *Developing Policy Brief*	Phase 2: Identification of Coalition Members	Phase 3: Messaging – Development of a communication guide and materials that includes many formats such as radio, newspaper, social media	Phase 4: Set up meetings with Stakeholders to discuss their support of the policy and solicit feedback.	Phase 5: Identify opponents of our policy. Opposition will come from those concerned about sharing of information and data concerns. Identify a member(s) of the State house who are willing to introduce and back our policy.
Develop policy brief and problem statement	Engage members that are currently seeking to do similar projects with Data with an emphasis in DEI..	Develop elevator speech	Engage elected officials that are currently working on initiatives that align with the policy brief. work of the policy	Identify elected officials that oppose policy brief and why.
Identify current efforts that align with data and DEI strategies in advocacy organizations like Minority Chambers, NACM-National Action Council for Minorities, and Coalition for Workforce Diversity	Starting with state agencies, Labor and Industry, DCED, Education. Also identify local and regional level agencies and organizations	Engage community organizations, state and local agencies to share the message.	Engage community members and organizations that would benefit from the work of data disaggregation.	Garner support from elected officials whose agenda align with the policy brief.

Dissemination Strategy