

CITY OF ALLENTOWN

PHASE 2 RECOMPETE PLAN

AS SUBMITTED 04.25.2024



RECOMPETE

PILOT PROGRAM | U.S. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

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CITY OF ALLENTOWN

PHASE 2 RECOMPETE PLAN

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Allentown requests approximately \$20 million in EDA Distressed Area Recompete Pilot Program funding to support implementation of our Phase 2 Recompete Plan.

The strategies contained within the City of Allentown Recompete Plan (“the Recompete Plan”) are proposed to advance workforce development goals, invest in capacity-building and programmatic infrastructure, and support additional planning, pre-development, and project design. Eight component projects have been prepared as part of this Plan, and they are organized by four key strategies. Ultimately, this Plan is crafted as a PAEG-reduction strategy, one that lowers unemployment, lifts per-capita wages, and raises the median household income.

1a. PROPOSING A STRATEGIC, ASSET-BASED APPROACH: Through Phase 1 of the EDA Recompete Program, the City of Allentown and its partners were tasked with one, identifying the primary conditions to its high prime-age employment gap (PAEG), and two, submit a comprehensive strategy that combats this indicator of persistent economic distress. Three distinct barriers to employment had been identified in [Allentown’s Phase 1 proposal](#), and they are clarified through this Phase 2 application. They include the following: skills and education gaps (inclusive of language barriers), limited access to quality, affordable childcare, and limited transportation choices and connectivity to attainable jobs.

These barriers and their intersections inform strategic development of this Recompete. Residents in underserved communities will face fewer barriers to entry into the workforce because this Plan partners with labor unions and employers to expand apprenticeships, skills training, and reentry programs; invests in transportation options; grows capacity of childcare providers; and funds urban manufacturing site development.

The Plan prioritizes employment in manufacturing and healthcare, two of the largest employing and producing sectors in the region, and the catalytic industries of the Lehigh Valley’s growth. Manufacturing is on the rise in the Lehigh Valley. This sector records \$8 billion GDP output, accounting for 16% of regional output – 33% higher than manufacturing’s proportion of national GDP (12%).^[i] More than 700 manufacturers employ 37,000 workers, recording 22% job growth and average annual wage increases of over \$20,000 over the past decade.^[iii] **An investment in Allentown, Pennsylvania is an investment to strengthen American manufacturing.** Manufacturing has a home in the Lehigh Valley; we are prepared to further demonstrate its staying power, and its legitimacy as a pathway into a good-paying career.

1b. CITY OF ALLENTOWN RECOMPETE AREA: The City of Allentown, located in eastern Pennsylvania, is the third largest City in the State with a population of 125,250. Allentown is the largest municipality within the region known as the Lehigh Valley. The Lehigh Valley, which spans over both Lehigh and Northampton Counties, is one of the fastest-growing regions in Pennsylvania. As the largest municipality in the region, Allentown is the beating heart of the Lehigh Valley, just as the Recompete Area, which we have identified, is the heart of our city. While the entire City of Allentown qualifies as a distressed local community^[iii], this Recompete Plan

identifies six of the city’s most diverse and disadvantaged Census Tracts, centering Allentown’s most vulnerable in our capacity-building interventions. The City of Allentown Recompete Area is defined by Census Tracts 4, 5, 9, 10, 18, and 20.^[iv] These neighborhoods – known as the Wards, Center City, and Franklin Park – constitute roughly 950 contiguous acres within the core of the Allentown, and they are home to 23,152 residents.

The prime-age unemployed population of the Recompete Area is estimated to be **1,122, equaling a localized PAEG of 12.1%**. This rate is double the citywide PAEG (6.1%). Per-capita income among these tracts is \$17.5k, 35% less than the citywide level. The median household income is \$43.0k, and this lags 18% behind the citywide median.^[v]

1c. INVESTMENT THESIS: The Lehigh Valley is strong and growing, expanding its GDP output by more than 20% over the last 5 years, reaching \$50.2 billion in 2022. However, GDP growth does not capture the full picture of an area’s economic conditions. Observing the high PAEG and low per-capita incomes, many neighborhoods within Allentown remain burdened by economic distress. The Lehigh Valley witnesses strong results from indicators of regional economic activity, but poor measures of the equitable distribution of these regional gains. This strategy seeks to reconcile that gap.

The City of Allentown Recompete Plan will grow a diverse, expanded, and trained workforce in order to ensure greater, more equitable participation in citywide and regional economic growth.

1d. REDUCING THE PRIME AGE EMPLOYMENT GAP: Consistent with the Recompete Pilot Program goal to uplift disadvantaged communities from persistent economic distress, this Recompete Plan aims to reduce the citywide PAEG to below 5% over the course of a 5-year performance period (2025-2030). This target will be achieved through strategic interventions into the Recompete Area, neighborhoods where the city’s highest prime-age employment gaps and lowest per-capita wages are concentrated [7. *Measuring Success*].

2. STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT: PROGRESS SINCE PHASE 1

This application represents substantial progress from the City of Allentown Phase 1 submission. The past four months have involved the following key milestones: robust project development, clarifying many of our initial strategies; inclusion of 18 new local and regional partners, more than doubling the Plan’s roster of active partners; and welcome progress of new investment and policy change, aligning complementary grants programs with Recompete Component Projects, and launching the City of Allentown zoning code update, [ZONE Allentown](#), public review phase.

Having earned the EDA’s endorsement of its Phase 1 Recompete Plan four months prior, the City of Allentown expeditiously enlisted support of dozens of local and regional partners to strengthen its original strategies. Working with its partners, the City of Allentown has prepared an integrated Phase 2 implementation strategy that is responsive to the identified PAEG conditions. Allentown was also one of several Phase 1 finalists who was also awarded a Strategy Development Grant (SDG). The City is prepared to formally initiate this phase of our Recompete project spring 2024. The progress which has been made to elevate this Recompete Plan over just the past four months speaks directly to the strength and spirit of what partnership means in the Lehigh Valley.^[vi] There

is incredible awareness of the magnitude of this opportunity and the urgency to deliver this level of investment into the center of Allentown, the beating heart of the Lehigh Valley.

Recompete has initiated new partnerships between service providers and industries through the strategic planning process of this Phase 2 application. Exposing vested community partners to challenges that have not historically been within their purview has contributed greatly to the robust and innovative design of these strategies. The diversity of partners involved in this Recompete Plan has produced a multi-disciplinary approach to reducing the PAEG. The success of these partnerships through this pilot program will demonstrate the power of a multi-disciplinary approach which can be applied to project design in the Lehigh Valley moving forward.

3. COMPONENT PROJECTS

Four overarching strategies organize the City of Allentown Recompete Plan. The component projects associated with facilitating local employment, expanding access to needs-responsive childcare, investing in transportation options, and building connections to high-opportunity industries will meet this Plan's objective: to ensure greater, more equitable participation in citywide and regional economic growth.

3A. STRATEGY I: FACILITATE LOCAL EMPLOYMENT

Component Project 1^{lviii}: Create a diverse, connected continuum of career readiness. **Project Lead:** City of Allentown. **Description:** This project is designed to build a network of Recompete Resource Navigators (RRNs) who will support partners to deepen their connection in the community and with each other, tailor services to the prime-age unemployed population, and activate proposed capacity-building infrastructure. **Budget:** \$4,932,500.

Component Project 2^{lviii}: Grow careers in advanced manufacturing and other high-demand professions. **Project Lead:** City of Allentown. **Description:** This project is designed to grow pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programming, preparing the prime-age Recompete Area workforce and youth to earn jobs in the high-opportunity industries of healthcare and manufacturing, as prioritized in this Recompete Plan. **Budget:** \$1,650,000.

Component Project 3^{lix}: Foster inclusive community development through reentry workforce preparedness. **Project Lead:** City of Allentown. **Description:** This project is designed to grow and diversify Muhlenberg College's Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program, expanding program offerings to align with Recompete priority industries and skills. **Budget:** \$1,017,500.

3B. STRATEGY II: EXPAND ACCESS TO NEEDS RESPONSIVE CHILDCARE

Component Project 4^{lx}: Support available, inclusive, flexible, conveniently located childcare. **Project Lead:** City of Allentown. **Description:** This project is designed to pilot a coordinated care network (CCN), testing a series of interventions to build provider capacity, bolster career pathway programs to build the pipeline of early educators, sustain inclusive care resources and programmatic capacity, and address location and logistical needs of families. **Budget:** \$2,550,000.

Component Project 5^{lxii}: Support families' economic upward mobility through affordable childcare and connection to supportive services. **Project Lead:** City of Allentown. **Description:**

This project is designed to expand cost-alleviating resources and design infrastructure that connect systems and reduces barriers to employment through affordable childcare. **Budget:** \$2,775,000.

3C. STRATEGY III: INVEST IN TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

Component Project 6^[xii]: Supplement LANTA service with expanded transportation options. **Project Lead:** City of Allentown. **Description:** This project is designed to build first-and-last mile connections and provide transportation alternatives to supplement Lehigh and Northampton Transit Authority (LANTA) service, advancing job access and mobility choice, alongside city priorities to support walk-to-work, proximate opportunities, and safer streets. **Budget:** \$1,850,000.

3D. STRATEGY IV: BUILD CONNECTIONS TO HIGH-OPPORTUNITY INDUSTRIES

Component Project 7^[xiii]: Accelerate AEDC Urban Sites Program. **Project Lead:** City of Allentown. **Description:** This project is designed to accelerate the Allentown Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) Urban Sites Program by establishing a revolving loan fund (RLF) which will support the development of small footprint, urban manufacturing sites within and proximate to the Recompete Area. **Budget:** \$3,375,000.

Component Project 8^[xiv]: Integrate regional health network training and career pathway programs. **Project Lead:** City of Allentown. **Description:** This project is designed to engage the region's largest employers and establish a host of program offerings which invest in, upskill, and connect Recompete Area residents with good paying jobs in healthcare. **Budget:** \$1,850,000.

4. HIGH-LEVEL OVERVIEW OF DELIVERABLES AND KEY MILESTONES

Recompete investments in the City of Allentown **build capacity, urbanize opportunity, and endorse the power of proximity**. Component Projects of the City of Allentown Recompete Plan will: build a network of resource navigators; redesign reentry workforce preparedness; expand childcare subsidies to over 4,000 new Recompete Area residents; secure more state funding for childcare providers; meet demand for more small-footprint, urban manufacturing sites; enhance alternative transportation options; and sponsor more than 550 prime-age residents through career pathways in healthcare, early education, and the building trades.

Component project investments are supplemented by **136 unique community commitments and leveraged assets** from nearly 40 local, regional, and statewide partners.^[xv] Together, community commitments to this Recompete Plan will pilot preventative-PAEG interventions, build capacity among community partners, and demonstrate the power of proximity.

5. COMPLEMENTARY INVESTMENTS, POLICY CHANGES, OR OTHER RELEVANT COMMITMENTS

Targeting the Recompete Area as the priority focus area of this Plan has continued a course charted by the City of Allentown's Vision 2030 Comprehensive Plan, and it has further enabled a wider variety of new planning efforts, private and public funding opportunities, and initiation of new projects.

External funding opportunities are aligned to concentrate planning efforts and economic development strategies within this specific location. **Statewide:** Recompete Plan component

projects align directly with Governor Shapiro’s vision for the future of Pennsylvania, and they are ready to leverage new state programs to amplify impact.^[xvi] Already, the City of Allentown was recently designated as a 2024 Blueprint Community through FHLBank Pittsburgh and Pennsylvania Downtown Center. This program channels a host of neighborhood planning benefits into the city over the next **10-years**.^{[xvii][xviii]} **Private:** [Love Your Block](#) is a community-driven initiative aimed at revitalizing neighborhoods and fostering community engagement in the Franklin Park neighborhood of Allentown^[xix]. Led by the Mayor’s Office of Civic Innovation, the program powers grassroots organizing through a hiring a new position and releasing a series of mini-grants dedicated to collaborative projects. Love Your Block aims to address challenges such as blight, lack of green spaces, and community disengagement by mobilizing resources and building partnerships. Long-term goals include enhancing neighborhood resilience, promoting equitable development, and fostering a sense of pride and ownership among residents. These programs are real opportunities to organize layers of investment which the city anticipates concentrating in the Recompete Area.

Recompete investments will activate the gains from City of Allentown’s Blueprint Community designation, State programs, the Love Your Block initiative, as well as the anticipated impact of the city’s zoning code rewrite, ZONE Allentown. The City of Allentown is in the process of rewriting its zoning code, updating its subdivision and land development ordinance, and redrawing its zoning map. The city is boldly transitioning away from rigid Euclidian zoning to a growth-oriented, modernized, form-based code, with the projected goals of growing Allentown’s housing supply and affordability, support walkable neighborhoods and transit-oriented development, and unconventionally, maintain the city’s history and identity of a manufacturing economy.^[xx]

These projects are the leading complementary commitments to ensuring the long-term sustainability of this Recompete Plan’s impacts. Aligning neighborhood planning and zoning reform with already targeted interventions is what will enable this Plan to first, realize its PAEG-reduction goals, and second, sustain the benefits accrued within the Recompete Area thereafter.

6. COHESION OF COMPONENT PROJECTS

The eight component projects to the City of Allentown Recompete Plan are cohesively arranged within the four overarching strategies as established in section 3 of this Plan. **Each strategy depends on each other;** the first three propose interventions tailored to addressing PAEG conditions as identified in Phase 1, and the fourth strategy makes the jump from reducing barriers to generating employment. Through its Phase 1 application, the City and its partners recognized the compounding effect barriers to employment have on residents; the intersection of skills gaps, childcare needs, and transportation access culminate in compounding burdens, raising the barrier to entry into the workforce and keeping the city’s PAEG high. Therefore, it is appropriate to mirror the intersectional barriers to employment with solutions designed to cross multiple barriers and deconstruct silos. The overarching strategies to this plan aim at that root of these intersections and they are dual-action-oriented; **combined, this Recompete Plan effectively removes the primary barriers to prime-age employment and builds connections to high-opportunity industries.**

Developing a local Recompete ecosystem through investments in capacity-building infrastructure is the foundation to this Plan’s success. Component Project 1, the Plan’s keystone, invests in this

ecosystem that reinforces local and regional assets, grows capacity of partners, and institutionalizes connection points across partners, projects, and industries. The Recompete Plan Coordinator (RPC) and RRNs activate this ecosystem; together, they will serve as connection points between partners, projects, residents, and Recompete resources. Building infrastructure to grow partner capacity is a critical component to the success of this Plan, and it ensures Allentown's ability to remain competitive beyond the performance-period of this project.

7. MEASURING SUCCESS

Consistent with the Recompete Pilot Program goal to uplift marginalized residents from persistent economic distress, the City of Allentown Recompete Plan aims to reduce the citywide PAEG to below 5% over the course of a 5-year performance period (2025-2030). This target will be achieved through strategic interventions into the Recompete Area, neighborhoods where the city's highest prime-age employment gaps and lowest per-capita wages are concentrated.

7a. LONG-TERM OUTCOMES: To determine geographic eligibility for this Recompete Pilot Program, the EDA operationalized "distressed local communities" as areas with an average prime-age employment gap (PAEG) of at least 5% and a median household income of no more than \$75,000. The City of Allentown, the only qualifying local community in Lehigh County, fit within this definition of economic distress reporting a citywide PAEG of 6.1% and a median household income of \$47,703.^[xxi]

The EDA operationalized definition of an economically distressed local community informs our Recompete Plan performance goals. This plan proposes a series of PAEG-reduction interventions to bring the citywide gap below 5%. Piloting these strategies in the Recompete Area, the neighborhoods with the highest employment gaps and the lowest per-capita wages, will cut the localized PAEG in half, and bring the City of Allentown to a sub-5% PAEG. This Plan's eight component project combine to develop a high-impact, PAEG-reduction strategy, one that lowers unemployment, lifts per-capita wages, and raises the median household income. Increasing prime-age employment by building connections to high-opportunity industries will in turn raise per-capita wages and lift the median household income closer to and then beyond \$75,000. The average annual wage for Lehigh Valley manufacturing jobs in highest demand is \$64,134, **nearly 50% higher** than the current Recompete Area median household income.^[xxii]

By 2030, this Plan will have employed a minimum of **659 Recompete Area residents** to achieve a citywide PAEG that is sub-5%. These employment gains would **slash the localized PAEG by nearly 60% and reduce the citywide PAEG by 22%**. Employment will be prioritized in high-priority, good-paying jobs primarily in the manufacturing and healthcare sectors. Facilitating connections of this type is designed to close employment gaps *and* raise per-capita wages and median household incomes. This combination puts Allentown and its Recompete Area on the path to transcend persistent economic distress. **By 2030, the City of Allentown PAEG will be less than 4.75%**, and therefore, no longer classified as an economically distressed local community per Recompete eligibility criteria.

These performance goals represent a meaningful increase in prime-age employment. Moreover, this approach demonstrates the Plan's basis in distributive justice. Performance goals apply to the

entire Recompete Area, but the degree of strategic intervention requires to bring the PAEG below 5% varies across Census Tract. This strategy will have the highest impact in Census Tracts 4 and 10, where attaining a sub-5% PAEG equals a drop greater than 75% in the neighborhood PAEG.

7b. SHORT-TERM OUTPUTS: The City of Allentown and its partners will track and report on the information in the following categories to inform an annual evaluation of the Plan’s progress and overall impact within the Recompete Area: employment, programming, administration, resources generated, engagement, and ancillary needs. Short-term outputs include, but are not limited to, the following:

Employment: jobs created/retained; change in PAEG; change in per-capita wages; change in median household income; employment sites brought online through AEDC Urban Sites program; health network career pathway engagement/completion; **Programming:** Recompete Area engagement with services within continuum of career readiness; enrollment in pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships; number of Inside/Out cohorts completed; childcare providers joined to Coordinated Network of Care **Administration:** Recompete capacity-building staff trained/hired (RPC, RRNs); annual Plan updates; Recompete dollars disbursed annually; **Resources Generated:** type, source, and amount of funding leveraged; type, source, and amount of broader resources invested in projects (public, private, non-profit); type, source, and amount of external grants (state or federal) aligned to Recompete projects; **Engagement:** number of community meetings held (including location and attendance); **Ancillary Needs:** change in cost of childcare as a proportion of Recompete Area AMI; housing units constructed/rehabilitated; bus-passes provided; change in transportation ridership.

8. CONSIDERATION OF CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

It is well documented that low-income communities and communities of color have and will continue to bear a disproportionate share of detrimental environmental and health impacts throughout Pennsylvania and the United States. Tools such as [PennEnviro Screen](#) and the [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool](#) (CEJST) confirm this disparity, highlighting areas within the City of Allentown as among the most environmentally and economically burdened communities in the State and nationally. Notably, *the entire Recompete Area* ranks within the 95th percentile statewide and above the 90th percentile nationally in various categories such as high energy burden, poverty levels, unemployment, legacy pollution, asthma, and more. Five of the fifty most environmentally burdened communities across Pennsylvania are within the City of Allentown, specifically in or within one quarter mile of the Recompete Area.^[xxiii]

To address this inequality, any initiatives targeting these communities will prioritize climate and environmental responsibility and seek opportunities to reduce future harm. Currently, AEDC supports the city revolve nearly \$1 million through an EPA RLF to support targeted brownfield remediation. AEDC will continue this work; supporting their Urban Sites Program with Recompete funds^[xxiv] will reverse historical environmental justice disparities, notably concentrated within and nearby the Recompete Area. Additionally, by integrating training for manufacturing, labor trades, and healthcare, this Recompete Plan aims to simultaneously advance economic progress along with goals related to decreasing greenhouse gas emissions and improving health outcomes. Emphasizing impact for the Recompete Area and priority environmental justice

(EJ) communities, this approach fosters long-term resilience, ensuring a healthier and more equitable future for Allentown.

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection Office of Environmental Justice (PA DEP) recently published an updated EJ policy that prioritizes PA DEP funding for EJ communities. Noting the preferred funding status toward these areas, PA DEP funding will be explored as an opportunity for layered investment within the Recompete Area. These grant dollars will catalyze capacity-building and harm reduction efforts within EJ communities like the Recompete Area. Environmental justice funding programs align strongly with strategies identified in component projects 6 and 7 (e.g., investments in alternative transportation modes, walkable commutes, brownfield remediation and redevelopment, etc.). These interventions endorse the power of proximity: increasing equitable access to alternative transportation, helping the city grow local employment, and creating active and vibrant communities, all while fostering a healthier and more sustainable environment.

9. RESPONSE TO EVALUATION CRITERIA

9a. OVERALL VISION AND STRATEGY: To actualize our investment thesis, this Recompete Plan effectively removes the primary barriers to prime-age employment and builds connections to high-opportunity industries. Strategic, capacity-building interventions in our local workforce development systems will foster a person-first career readiness approach. This approach will capture and respond to non-traditional, ancillary needs. This establishes the critical foundation to a local ecosystem suitable for equitable economic growth. The city and its partners are confident that implementation funding in Phase 2 will put Allentown workers in a stronger position to earn higher wages, travel shorter distances to work, and create new chapters of opportunity for their communities. Ultimately, this Plan is crafted as a PAEG-reduction strategy, one that lowers unemployment, lifts per-capita wages, and raises the median household income.

9b. COMMITMENTS TO EQUITY: The City of Allentown Recompete Plan approaches a commitment to equity by designing two distinct, equally important components: procedural and distributive justice.

I. PROCEDURAL JUSTICE: The City of Allentown Recompete Plan strives to ensure civic and economic justice. The city has enlisted the support of local and regional partners to build procedurally just community engagement models; we are prepared to invest nearly \$500,000^[xxv] over the next 5-years to design and execute our shared-vision of procedural justice.^{xxvi} Procedurally just engagement involves three foundational principles: one, designing inclusive engagement processes, considering accessibility and safety for all community members, ensuring broad participation and representation; two, integrating community voice into the administration of each component project, ensuring continuous inclusion and adaptation; and three, ensuring diverse representation to incorporate varied perspectives and demographics, driving collaboration and trust-building. These guiding priorities clarify the community engagement planned through the City of Allentown Recompete SDG as well as inform what is considered procedural justice in each of the Component Project narratives. Recompete investments will catalyze procedurally just project design, and will yield a national model for equitable, capacity-building community engagement.

II. DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE: Distributive justice is inherent to this Recompete Plan. Every strategy of this Plan is designed to target the Recompete Area^[xxvii]. While the entire city qualified as eligible per the EDA Recompete criteria, the City of Allentown Recompete Leadership team proactively identified these communities as a priority area for these interventions. Understanding the impact of low opportunity, the city and its partners are prepared to channel the Recompete efforts into the neighborhoods where economic distress is at its highest. The Plan intentionally selects the Census Tracts as the Recompete Area to center Allentown's most vulnerable in capacity-building interventions. Allentown's journey to transcend persistent economic distress begins in these neighborhoods, where the highest PAEG and lowest per-capita wages are concentrated.

9c. SUSTAINABLE PARTNERSHIPS AND COMMITMENTS: The City of Allentown Recompete Plan aligns neatly with [Allentown's 10-year comprehensive plan, Vision 2030](#). The City of Allentown adopted Vision 2030 in late 2019 and has upheld this document to be the city's roadmap for development and progress through 2030. This Recompete Plan design will enforce many of the principles and priorities outlined in the document, including the following: facilitating local employment; increase access to training and skill building; increase connectivity and create mobility choices; connect to regional markets; enhance land values; and foster inclusive and welcoming communities. Furthermore, this strategic project investment is directly connected with all other development activities and priorities happening in the city.

Sustained benefits require strong partners and smart interventions. First, partners have been embedded in project development, ensuring community buy-in, mitigating risk, and proactively building consensus. Strategies build from a foundation of partners' historical commitment to work in the Recompete Area. Secondly, Recompete strategies are designed to target root causes of high PAEG conditions. Our team is keenly aware that creating economic opportunity requires attacking the underlying conditions that keep residents from accessing and maintaining employment. By developing needs-responsive solutions to eliminating barriers like skills gaps, childcare access, and transportation access, this Plan and its component projects will alleviate systemic distress and promote social and economic empowerment. These design features will contribute to the project's success year-over-year and will yield sustainable, long-term benefits as a result.

9d. LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE: The City of Allentown submits this Recompete Plan as the lead applicant. As one of the few municipal leads in this competition, staff has demonstrated, one, impressive capacity to scale the City of Allentown Recompete Plan from its Phase 1 submission to this Phase 2 product, and two, **a municipality's unparalleled power to convene**. Partners have answered our call to reimagine Allentown's economic future. To enter the implementation period of the Plan's proposed 5-year pilot, the city has secured a particularly strong partner in AEDC, the Plan's primary sub-recipient. The City of Allentown is the strategic lead for the Recompete Plan and is partnering with AEDC to support the overall Plan's execution as well as coordination among the eight component projects.^[xxviii] Through the partnership between the city and AEDC, this Plan will fulfill the EDA mandate to hire a Recompete Plan Coordinator (RPC). The RPC will report directly to the AEDC Executive Director, and they are the agent responsible to coordinate implementation of the Plan, advancing the four strategic goals established in this application. Primary responsibilities of this position include strategic project management and meaningful partner coordination.^[xxix] This job description has been prepared as

part of this application process, and it will be funded through Phase 2 Recompete implementation dollars.

9e. OVERALL IMPACT AND RISK MITIGATION: The key performance indicators of this plan align with those established by the EDA. Impact of the strategies that compose this Plan will be measured primarily by change in PAEG, change in per-capita wages, and change in median household income. Tracking will cover results within the Recompete Area and citywide. Project success is achieved if by the end of the project’s fifth year, we have employed at least 659 Recompete Area residents, reducing the localized PAEG by 60%.

Mitigating risk is important to achieving project success. This submission is a vision document, not an immovable, unamendable strategy. Our team is prepared to pivot where necessary over the five-year performance period. Through the Advisory Board to this project, we build flexibility and transparency into our governance structure. The Advisory Board to this Recompete Plan will include seven (7) members: one representative from a sub-awarded partner coming from each of the four (4) overarching strategies, and three (3) residents from within the Recompete Area. The primary role of this body is to support the Recompete Plan Key Personnel^[xxx] by guiding the annual update to the Recompete Plan, providing recommendations for course correction as necessary if the proposed strategies appear to stall. Not only will an annual update to the Recompete Plan help meet tracking and reporting requirements, but it institutionalizes data-driven decision making and community voice in the maintenance and administration of the Plan. The first annual update of the Plan is an anticipated deliverable of the city’s Recompete SDG.

10. CONCLUSION

The EDA Recompete Pilot Program has initiated a regional convergence of partners, resources, and strategies. Recompete implementation dollars are needed to advance the momentum here in the Lehigh Valley. The City of Allentown is at an **inflection point** in its 262-year-long history: a long-standing American city, with a storied past and a bright future, prepared to double down on the diversity of its people and its economy by restoring economic pathways to good-jobs and reignite the heart of the Lehigh Valley as a thriving, future-looking, local economy for all residents.

This is the Lehigh Valley’s collective opportunity to channel local, regional, statewide, and now federal investment into the City of Allentown through the Recompete Area. Joined by our partners, Allentown is ready to offer a focused and deliberate infusion of workforce, education, training, employment, and community-based supportive services, all positioned to realize this Recompete Plan’s investment thesis: grow a diverse, expanded, and trained workforce in order to ensure greater, more equitable participation in citywide and regional economic growth. **An investment in Allentown, Pennsylvania is an endorsement that smaller cities are prepared to grow, adapt, and remain competitive in a changing national and global economy.** Look no further than the Lehigh Valley to pilot this investment, and support our strategy, proving the staying power of American manufacturing and its viability as a pathway into a good-paying career.

CITY OF ALLENTOWN

PHASE 2 RECOMPETE PLAN | REFERENCES

ⁱ [The Manufacturing Renaissance In Lehigh Valley, PA - Lehigh Valley, PA - Lehigh Valley Economic Development | Allentown, Bethlehem, Easton, Pennsylvania](#)

ⁱⁱ [The Manufacturing Renaissance In Lehigh Valley, PA - Lehigh Valley, PA - Lehigh Valley Economic Development | Allentown, Bethlehem, Easton, Pennsylvania](#)

ⁱⁱⁱ Per EDA Distressed Area Recompete Pilot Program geographic eligibility criteria.

^{iv} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Recompete Area Mapping (p3-4).

^v All Census data reference in the Phase 2 Recompete Plan, unless otherwise stated, has been collected from the 2022 ACS 5-year datasets. The values documented within this submission shall represent the Recompete Area baseline for which change will be evaluated against year-over-year.

^{vi} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Letters of Commitment (p106-107)

^{vii} See EDA-APP#00006857_City of Allentown_Narrative

^{viii} See EDA-APP#00006858_City of Allentown_Narrative

^{ix} See EDA-APP#00006859_City of Allentown_Narrative

^x See EDA-APP#00006860_City of Allentown_Narrative

^{xi} See EDA-APP#00006861_City of Allentown_Narrative

^{xii} See EDA-APP#00006862_City of Allentown_Narrative

^{xiii} See EDA-APP#00006863_City of Allentown_Narrative

^{xiv} See EDA-APP#00006864_City of Allentown_Narrative

^{xv} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Letters of Commitment (p17)

^{xvi} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Letters of Commitment (p88)

^{xvii} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Letters of Commitment (p24-25)

^{xviii} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Letters of Commitment (p22-23)

^{xix} Census Tracts 42077001800 and 42077002000 of the Recompete Area. See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Recompete Area Mapping (p3-4).

^{xx} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Letters of Commitment (p50-52)

^{xxi} Per Recompete Eligibility Mapping Tool.

^{xxii} [High Priority Occupations \(HPOs\)](#) (PA Center for Workforce Information and Analysis, 2023).

^{xxiii} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Recompete Area Mapping (p6).

^{xxiv} See EDA-APP#00006863_City of Allentown_Narrative

^{xxv} See Component Project Budget Narratives (OTHER, Community Engagement).

^{xxvi} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Letters of Commitment. Each partner involved in this Plan has proudly pledged to participate in the co-design and implementation of procedurally just community engagement models through the City of Allentown Recompete Plan.

^{xxvii} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Recompete Area Mapping (p3-4).

^{xxviii} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Leadership Team (p3).

^{xxix} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Leadership Team (p9-10).

^{xxx} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Leadership Team (p4-8).

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PHASE 2 RECOMPETE PLAN

STRATEGY I: Facilitate Local Employment

COMPONENT PROJECT 1: Creating a diverse, connected continuum of career readiness

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Component project 1 is designed to build a network of **Recompete Resource Navigators (RRNs)** who will coordinate the diverse array of trusted community partners and their resources, and fill gaps to accelerate person-first job preparedness interventions within the Recompete Area^[i] and create a **continuum of career readiness**. As a foundational component to the City of Allentown Recompete Plan, this project institutionalizes connections across partners and systems throughout the region with the promise to deliver an integrated array of services to Recompete Area residents. The team of RRNs will support partners to deepen their connection in the community and with each other, tailor services to the prime-age unemployed population, and activate capacity building infrastructure like resource inventories and mobile resource hubs. In order to provide structure and ensure sustainability over time, the RRNs will be connected to the Lehigh Valley's workforce system through the Workforce Board Lehigh Valley (WBLV) i.e., PA CareerLink Lehigh Valley.

Investments designed in this project embrace the notion that supporting local champions and change agents with capacity-building infrastructure is essential to a successful workforce ecosystem. By building a network of Recompete Resource Navigators, this component becomes the foundation of the new, expanded workforce system designed first for the Recompete Area, and ultimately, as a model for the City of Allentown and the greater Lehigh Valley. In close partnership with WBLV, this continuum of career readiness is plugged into a strong operational structure, and will advance aligned priorities. This continuum of career readiness will be underwritten by a strong spirit of collaboration within the Lehigh Valley. Regional unification around this strategy should inspire confidence that partners to this plan will readily activate Recompete investments; the right people are already at the table and ready to work.^[ii]

This project is led by the City of Allentown and involves close collaboration with WBLV and its 21 one-stop workforce partners^[iii], Casa Guadalupe, Lehigh Carbon Community College (LCCC), Community Action Lehigh Valley (CALV), the Hispanic Center of the Lehigh Valley, the Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center, the Literacy Center, Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation (LVEDC), Pennsylvania College of Technology (PCT), Promise Neighborhoods of the Lehigh Valley (PNLV), and Allentown Health Bureau. This application requests **\$4,932,500** over a 5-year performance period to complete the scope of work prepared for this component project.

II. SCOPE OF WORK

Individuals reentering the workforce or in low-wage jobs often have limited resources available to them and are therefore unlikely to have the time or financial capital to navigate a career shift or enter a credential program that provides them with a new, highly marketable set of skills. A lack of financial resources particularly affects workers of color, who continue to be paid less than their white counterparts due to levels of discrimination. For example, racial pay inequities exist, when Black workers on average make almost 15% less than white workers in similar scenarios.^[iv]

Moreover, many unemployed or low-wage workers are unaware of what federal and state retraining assistance is available to them. Intergenerational privilege allows some to thrive while others struggle. This is the reality of most of the United States' career navigation "system" – people from well-resourced, white-dominant communities stand a better chance of attaining economic success. The reality is that current systems remain stratified. Some workers have access to information, social capital, skills and credentials, resources and social structures, enabling them to progress along high paying, fulfilling careers. However, many others struggle to escape low wage work due to the inaccessibility of those enablers. For adults who experience moderate-to-high levels of poverty during childhood, (51-100% percent of childhood years), between 35% and 46% maintain low to very low incomes throughout early and middle adulthood.^[v]

A coordinated career navigation system has the potential to be a great equalizer. Our proposed continuum of career readiness will pilot a career navigation system that is relationship based, personalized for each individual. Each individual will continue to work on plans that are asset framed, highlighting strengths and aspirations alongside their needs, and providing resources to participants to remove barriers, including facilitating connections to ancillary needs beyond "conventional" job readiness and placement journey.

Recompete Resource Navigators and the coordinated network of partners will deliver a higher quality of personalized service that is accessible and needs responsive. This component underscores the project's commitment to providing holistic support and guidance to individuals as they navigate their pathways to employment success. A holistic approach includes: (i.) the career training and preparation, (ii.) the provision of essential financial literacy such as budgeting and credit management, (iii.) health and wellness strategies, (iv.) guidance on resume writing and interviewing techniques, and (v.) identification of other ancillary needs (e.g., childcare, access to alternative transportation, housing, etc.).

This project will fund capacity-building infrastructure investments to the City of Allentown's education and workforce development ecosystem. Strategies are designed to establish a diverse, connected continuum of career readiness that will catalyze Recompete investments made in the complementary component projects to this Plan. **The strategies within this foundational component project lay the groundwork of the City of Allentown Recompete Plan**, enabling the City and its partners to realize our investment thesis and achieve our PAEG-reduction goals.

The following strategies will organize the continuum of career readiness:

A. Create a Recompete Resource Inventory. A Recompete Resource Inventory (RRI) will be a dual-purpose asset that organizing programming, services, assets, locations, staff contacts that are all within the Recompete Area. The RRI will be a shared database for Recompete Area service providers, and a public-facing website where residents can self-locate Recompete resource. A partner database is critical for success and continued operation of Recompete component projects, especially for smaller organizations with capacity constraints.^[vi] The RRI will create technological capacity for community partners to modernize data collection and storage, ultimately ensuring Recompete investments will support data-driven programming. Additionally, partners will give the RRI a physical presence, serving as "community resource hubs." Using a hub and spoke model, programs are strategically located within the Recompete Area, endorsing the **power of proximity**, and minimizing barriers to access. Existing infrastructure has been identified to host programming.

B. Build a network of Recompete Resource Navigators. Recompete Resource Navigators (RRNs) will bring the RRI to life. RRNs will be contracted by WBLV and serve as trained staff

who act as formal supports to the prime-age unemployed within the Recompete Area. They will build connection points between community partners and among Recompete Area residents. The RRNs will be trained across the RRI to connect prime-age residents to the Plan's outputs. The RRN network will be sufficiently staffed to engage with other component projects included in the Recompete Plan. Recruiting RRNs from within the Recompete Areas will foster a sense of community ownership and trust, enabling seamless access to essential resources and support systems. Supporting program participants become Peer Navigators will be a leadership development component of the RRN network. Peer Navigators will develop the skills necessary to become RRNs themselves, building sustainability into this component project beyond the performance period. Casa Guadalupe employs Principles of collaborative research, action research framework, resiliency framework through their Young Adult Program. This program will grow with the RRN network as it prepares to live in Casa's new, expanded space.^[vii] There is opportunity to build leadership pathways by aligning components of this program with the newly established RRN Network.

C. Develop a mobile delivery of services. Programmatic infrastructure investments also include operating a Mobile Resource Hub. This idea is inspired by the Goodwill Mobile Learning Lab^[viii] – a 24-foot trailer that houses a “learning lab” which provides digital skills, financial wellness, and job readiness training to upskill employees. Partners have communicated appetite to bring services and programming to the Recompete Area but face the challenges of locating suitable bricks-and-mortar space and reaching the population they intend to serve. On the other side, residents experience difficulties utilizing career development programming when it is inaccessible either by transportation or availability during the day. Investing in mobile delivery of these services is a tested approach to bridge this gap between residents and program providers. Furthermore, mobile delivery of services is preferred to establishing new community sites at this stage. There are already well-established, *trusted* community resource hubs within the Recompete Area (e.g., Casa Guadalupe, SLUHN Sacred Heart). Rather than compete with these locations or risk oversaturating locations within the Recompete Area, providing a Mobile Resource Hub (vehicle) supports more flexible delivery of service, filling a gap in the current service provision network. Mobile Resource Hub pop-ups will provide access to the RRI, on-site service, and registration for jobs and training opportunities. A mobile delivery of services will bring visibility to this project, build presence in the area, and generate engagement throughout the performance period.

D. Invest in community health. Additionally, the City of Allentown will hire a Violence Prevention Coordinator (VPC) through the Allentown Health Bureau. The National Offices of Violence Prevention Network and the mission of member cities inspires this hire to meaningfully invest in violence prevention and intervention strategies that strengthen neighborhood well-being and shrink the footprint of the criminal justice system. The City of Allentown VPC will grow the city's capacity to strategically intervene in distressed neighborhoods, build connections into the workforce, and sponsor community-supportive programming.^[ix]

E. Expand career readiness and job training programming. This project will support community partners to develop career readiness and job training programming. Preferred programs have been documented through the Letters of Commitment to this Plan.^[x] Funding will facilitate tailored, PAEG-reductive, programmatic interventions within the Recompete Area. Partners will respond to RFQs to (1) tailor existing programs to (1a) explicitly engage prime-age unemployed, Recompete Area residents, and (1b) advance the City of Allentown Recompete Plan strategic goals, (2) scale existing programming, and/or (3) launch a new service within the Recompete Area.

III. ANTICIPATED GOALS AND OUTPUTS

Goal: Create a diverse, connected continuum of career readiness, training, and navigation services

Outputs include the following:

- Develop the Recompete Resource Inventory (RRI) within Y1 of the performance period, and commit staff across partners to regular maintenance and expansion as necessary.
- Coordinate remote options, shared space models, and mobile delivery of service across partners within and around the Recompete Area (on-going).
- Hire and train five (5) Recompete Resource Navigators with Y1-Y2 of performance period.
- Hire the City of Allentown Violence Prevention Coordinator (Y1).
- Build or procure client software to track Recompete participants, their contact information, needs, outcomes, etc. (on-going).
- Utilize the PA Customized Workforce Development (CWDS) online system for registering Recompete Area prime-age unemployed population to ensure access to all job opportunities within the Lehigh Valley (on-going).
- Coordinate at least 6 pop-up events using the Mobile Resource Hub within Y1 of the project performance period. Arrange for consistent engagement (monthly) within the Recompete Area throughout Y2-Y5 of the performance period.

IV. RESPONSE TO EVALUATION CRITERIA

A. OVERALL VISION AND STRATEGY: Individuals reentering the workforce or in low-wage jobs also often have limited resources available to them and are therefore unlikely to have the time or financial capital to navigate a career shift or enter a credential program that provides them with a new, highly marketable set of skills. A lack of financial resources particularly affects workers of color, who continue to be paid less than their white counterparts due to discrimination.

Component project 1 illustrates this opportunity to braid funding; the strategies deployed by this project are supportive of existing programs. Investments are not duplicative, but rather supportive of concentrating program delivery within a targeted geographic area. Now is the moment for this team of partners to double down on their commitments to supporting the City of Allentown by channeling a significant proportion of their activity within the City into these neighborhoods. Recompete funding will build capacity of local and regional partners to enable these concentrated investments into an equitable workforce ecosystem.

Establishing a coordinated network of resources and programming will enhance the quality and delivery of career readiness services. This lays the foundation for lowered barriers to entry into the workforce and assists the other component projects tackle our PAEG-reduction goal. The goal is to **create a continuum of career readiness with RRNs** so that Recompete Area residents will have increased, personalized, access to training, services, education, and future employment. The continuum of career readiness will notably prioritize and delivers research-based programming focused on the most in-demand skills and jobs within Allentown's local and regional context. This investment will recognize and offer opportunity to scale existing, community-based work and commitment to the City, realigning services to concentrate on the Recompete Area. The Workforce Board comprehensively serves over 700 residents in a six-month period, and they are governed by performance standards set at the Federal level to ensure customer success. Casa Guadalupe serves over 4,000 adults and children monthly, who live predominantly within the Recompete Area. Additionally, the Literacy Center and the Hispanic Center experience long wait lists for their

services, currently totaling over 1,000 residents, largely seeking ESL courses.^[xi] Coordinating services through the RRI will decrease wait lists and increase employment opportunities.

The concept of continuum of career readiness is based on the continuum of care model. Repurposing an established approach to skills building, this is scalable. The success of small-scale capacity building in this project can be replicated in communities across the country, large and small. This project pilots a tight network of partners with added capacity from five (5) RRNs.

B. COMMITMENT TO EQUITY: Procedural justice is required to ensure the success of this project. We will continue to establish robust partnerships with non-profit and faith-based organizations deeply embedded in the Recompete Area, instilling into this Plan a profound understanding of and commitment to serving the unique needs of specific population groups, such as immigrants, citizens reentering the workforce, and opportunity youth. These partnerships will enhance our outreach and facilitate the delivery of tailored services where they are most needed. This project will actively engage the community in further strategy development. Incorporating resident input will shape project direction and efficacy through feedback, information sharing, and adaptive strategies. In the initial stages of developing the Plan, diverse working groups have already been convened to harness a wide array of perspectives and insights. Representatives from various backgrounds, including community leaders, advocates, and representatives from marginalized communities, played a pivotal role in crafting a comprehensive and inclusive approach. These working groups will remain instrumental during project implementation, ensuring that diverse opinions and perspectives continue to inform and enrich our efforts to fulfill the objectives of this component project.

C. CAPABILITY TO IMPLEMENT: The Allentown Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) commits to staffing a Recompete Plan Coordinator (RPC), whose primary responsibilities involve Recompete Plan implementation, assist component project management, and coordinate partner engagement.^{[xii][xiii]} Hiring the RPC fulfills the EDA program mandate, and it institutionalizes administrative “muscle” to ensure consistent, effective delivery of the Recompete Plan and this Component Project. To guide implementation of the component projects specifically included in *Strategy I: Facilitate Local Employment*, the City of Allentown has secured additional support through partnership of WBLV. The RPC will engage WBLV as a premier partner in the region’s workforce development ecosystem.

D. REALISTIC SCOPE AND WORKPLAN: Creating a continuum of career readiness and Recompete Resource Navigator Network is inspired by the well-established continuum of care model. Similar to a health services continuum of care, a continuum of career readiness involves an integrated system that guides and tracks clients over time to services, training and employment opportunities across all levels of need. Project partners will encourage collaborative approaches to career coaching and navigational support. No one system, however, can guide individuals throughout their education and career paths alone. We will foster strong partnerships among public systems to break down siloes, reduce redundancies, and smooth transition points for students and workers. Ultimately, incorporating capacity-building interventions within the existing workforce ecosystem will mitigate risk and ensure continuation of this investment beyond the performance period. A strong governance and oversight structure empowers this workplan with proper management and room for flexibility as new discoveries and challenges emerge.^[xiv]

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PHASE 2 RECOMPETE PLAN | REFERENCES

COMPONENT PROJECT 1

- ⁱ See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Recompete Area Mapping (p3-4).
- ⁱⁱ See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Letters of Commitment (p106-107)
- ⁱⁱⁱ [Training Providers | Workforce Board Lehigh Valley \(lvwib.org\)](#)
- ^{iv} [Understanding black-white disparities in labor market outcomes requires models that account for persistent discrimination and unequal bargaining power | Economic Policy Institute \(epi.org\)](#)
- ^v [Understanding black-white disparities in labor market outcomes requires models that account for persistent discrimination and unequal bargaining power | Economic Policy Institute \(epi.org\)](#)
- ^{vi} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown Letters of Commitment (p34-39)
- ^{vii} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown Letters of Commitment (p34-39)
- ^{viii} [Learning Lab - Goodwill Keystone Area \(yourgoodwill.org\)](#)
- ^{ix} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown Letters of Commitment (p46-47)
- ^x See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown Letters of Commitment (p1-17)
- ^{xi} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown Letters of Commitment (p110-113)
- ^{xii} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Narrative (p9)
- ^{xiii} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown Letters of Commitment (p18-19)
- ^{xiv} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Narrative (p9)

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PHASE 2 RECOMPETE PLAN

STRATEGY I: Facilitate Local Employment

COMPONENT PROJECT 2: Grow careers in advanced manufacturing and other high-demand professions

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Component Project 2 is designed to grow careers in high-demand professions, preparing the Allentown workforce to earn jobs in the high-opportunity industries of healthcare and manufacturing, as prioritized in this Recompete Plan. This component connects cohorts of Recompete Area residents with established pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships along career pathways of the recently established and innovative Industrial Training and Education Consortium of the Lehigh Valley (iTEC)^{[i][ii]}. By integrating a work-based training model, residents in apprenticeship programming are enabled to earn while they learn and receive on-the-job training when employed by local manufacturers. Pre-apprenticeships will be established and expanded to guide prime-age residents and secondary students to these high-demand job opportunities. Pathways into healthcare and the building trades will be piloted through PA Act 158^[iii], an act establishing alternative pathways to graduating high school and entering the workforce.

A critical piece of this proposal is its aim to enhance apprenticeship programs, recruit more apprentices, and explore the implementation of additional pre-apprenticeship initiatives as rooted in Workforce Board Lehigh Valley's (WBLV) Local Plan Goals. This will be achieved primarily by fostering partnerships with technical schools like Lehigh Career & Technical Institute (LCTI), and by strengthening the capacity of labor organizations like the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 375 (IBEW 375). This project will build networks, involve close collaboration with local manufacturers throughout the five-year performance period, support smooth adjustments to developing hiring needs, and thus empower future employees to effectively prepare for high-priority professions within the Lehigh Valley.

This project is led by the City of Allentown and involves close collaboration with WBLV, Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation (LVEDC), Pennsylvania College of Technology (PCT), LCTI, IBEW 375, the Century Promise, and the Allentown School District (ASD). This application requests **\$1,650,000** over a 5-year performance period to complete the scope of work prepared for this component project.

II. SCOPE OF WORK

Through regular coordination with local employers, organized labor, manufacturers, and other workforce development partners, tailored short-term and long-term programs will be developed to address the skill gaps identified. This will help ensure an alignment of skills with the requirements of the local job market. Ultimately, the project's overarching goal is to empower Recompete Area^{iv} residents with the requisite abilities and knowledge to secure gainful employment opportunities, thereby fostering economic growth within our target population and community more broadly. Accordingly, this plan encapsulates the project's commitment to fostering synergy between education and industry, with a focus on equipping individuals with the competencies needed to thrive in today's dynamic workforce landscape.

Six months ago, spearheaded by B. Braun Medical, a new partnership was formed at Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation (LVEDC) called iTEC, Industrial Training and Education Consortium. iTEC is a first-of-its-kind regional apprenticeship program established to provide industrial skills training and talent development to meet the needs of the Lehigh Valley’s growing manufacturing sector. Official community partners in the iTEC Consortium consist of LVEDC, WBLV, German American Chamber of Commerce, and Northampton High School. Industry, education, government, and community organizations across the Lehigh Valley will promote careers in advanced manufacturing.

The strength and diversification of our economy, driven by a growing \$8 billion manufacturing sector, attracts new business investment and creates job opportunities that make the Lehigh Valley more prosperous.^[v] The Lehigh Valley GDP grew to a record \$50.2 billion in 2022, with manufacturing continuing to be a leading driver. Allentown is prepared to activate the economic and workforce development gains which a robust manufacturing industry generates. The economic multiplier of manufacturing jobs is unmatched; for every 100 manufacturing jobs created, 629 indirect jobs are created as well.^[vi] A 6:1 ratio will rapidly support the city’s ambitious goal to reduce Recompete Area PAEG by 60% by 2030. The Lehigh Valley has the employer base ready to meet this goal. The region is proudly home to over 700 manufacturers making everything from medical devices to food equipment and everything in between. Such a robust array of manufacturers has employed 37,000 workers, recording 22% job growth and average annual wage increases of over \$20,000 over the past decade.^[vii] **The Lehigh Valley is at the center of what is considered the Fourth Industrial Revolution.**^[viii] The City of Allentown is actively reshaping its economic outlook to harness these headwinds. By investing in skills training now and forming our city for the future^{ix}, Allentown’s proactive approach to capture the gains of manufacturing will **urbanize these opportunities** and elevate the region as a strong, national competitor.

To meet the demand for high-priority professions in manufacturing and other high demand industries, **this project team approaches apprenticeship programming from a position of strength.** LCTI, PCT, and IBEW 375 are prepared to build on their existing programs and training curriculum to capture the demand. In fact, **LCTI** is in the process of bringing new programming online.^[x] **WBLV** was awarded an Apprenticeship Building America Grant from the PA Department of Labor and Industry to accelerate pre-apprentices and registered apprentices for the iTEC Consortium.^[xi] WBLV also serves as the Apprenticeship Navigator to iTEC ensuring an increase in apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships in the Lehigh Valley. **PCT** leadership is carefully examining opportunities to extend academic and/or workforce offerings to Downtown Allentown^{[xii][xiii]}. Expansion of this kind would not only represent a sea change in their desire for a more diverse campus community – one that is reflective of the Commonwealth as a whole – but also would give the College overnight proximity to the fastest growing regions in the state.

Strategies which organize this component project scope of work include the following:

A. Partner with organized labor. IBEW 375 is centrally located in downtown Allentown and is within walking distance to the Recompete Area. Their headquarters houses a state-of the-art Training Center that is the educational axis for our comprehensive apprenticeship programs and journey-level worker continuing education courses. Apprentices have the ability to experiment with, and learn motor control and PLC systems, learn the best practices of, and build real conduit structures, engage in the best safety training the industry can offer, troubleshoot and build real fire alarm and lighting systems, engage in wiring in an environment exactly like a residential location, and build-out and wire a telecommunications facility, all in one building. IBEW Journeyman take

advantage of the facility on a regular basis, elevating their skills, as well as training our apprentices on the latest technologies. Labs and classrooms are supported and equipped by industry leaders, both locally and nationally. The JATC and IBEW 375 work hard to ensure great relationships with the industry, allowing for this level of facility. The IBEW local receives 200-300 applications annually to the apprenticeship program and many cannot be admitted due in large part to applicants' insufficient math skills and lack of a driver's license. IBEW 375 currently admits 20 participants in each apprenticeship cohort per year. Residents who experience difficulty entering the apprenticeship programs, programming through Component Project 1 will connect residents to skills building supports. The gap between IBEW 375 apprenticeship enrollment and the interest the program initially receives is a testament less to program capacity but to the literacy, math, and spoken English skills of the Allentown population.

B. Build biliteracy within the Recompete Area. Deconstructing language barriers is a common theme among these component projects, and investments in building biliteracy will catalyze a huge lift in the upward mobility of these communities. Recompete funds will support translating program materials as one piece of creating a more inclusive workplace.

C. Invest in the power of proximity. LCTI works with any organization to provide training on LCTI campus or at the employer site. This project is actively exploring a site within or within close proximity to the Recompete Area to host an LCTI satellite location. This location would host machinery and equipment necessary to provide skills training related to the school's curriculum. Partners supporting this project's development have communicated an appetite to locate services within the City; the challenge is identifying a physical space capable of storing machinery and other equipment. LCTI has a flexible range of trainings they can bring to the Recompete Area, and with this flexibility comes different equipment needs and demands. The types of training offered are dependent upon the location(s) available; larger spaces that can capably support machinery will accordingly host a larger range of trainings. Smaller spaces, however, while not similar situated to host heavy machinery can support other technical training that requires smaller scale equipment and/or can be delivered digitally. Sites that are being explored through this project include space within IBEW 375's downtown Allentown location, the Allentown Public Library, and ASD facilities. Locating these trainings within the City of Allentown will lower the opportunity costs of leaving the city to obtain training, reducing transportation and time burdens. This strategy is another demonstration of the power of proximity. Locating opportunity closer to the Recompete Area also aligns with concurrent Recompete investments in childcare and transportation. These systems are less strained when opportunities are proximate and concentrated within a specific geography. LCTI provides job training for over 1,000 students every year, ranging from manufacturing, auto, heavy equipment, to commercial driving license (CDL).^[xiv]

D. Pilot preventative PAEG strategies. The Century Promise and the Allentown School District (ASD) are strong allies to this project. Strategic development of this component project includes a focus on preventative PAEG interventions, engaging ASD high-school students and introducing them to real pathways through the trades. This strategy is spearheaded by the Century Promise. Long term, sustained benefits mean investing in populations^[xv] with high likelihood of contributing to future PAEGs. Through the Century Promise's participation in strategy development, this project will demonstrate that PA Act 158^[xvi] is a legitimate alternative career pathway for students. This project is designed to build connections to manufacturing by reinvesting in apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeship programming, and related skills trainings. This team of partners is focused on building a career pathway model that facilitates connections into the

workforce at varying points of a Recompete Area resident's life. Programming supports the prime-age adult population through a non-traditional approach by leveraging ASD. By supporting the whole family, the career readiness strategies presented in this project will address the PAEG from two vantage points: one, directly, by engaging unemployed or underemployed caretakers of ASD students, and two, proactively, by building pathways into the workforce among Allentown's youth, insuring against the PAEG recycling post-performance period of the project. LCTI and IBEW 375 are partners who are ready and interested in aligning their trainings with ASD curriculum. This project will enable this set of partners to co-design a dual-enrollment program. Connected curriculum will yield outputs like NIMS and NOCTI credentialling and digital badging.

E. Commit investments to pre-apprenticeship programming. The proposed project aims to develop and implement pre-apprenticeships, customized short-term and long-term programs to support initiatives that will address the need to train residents in the City of Allentown. LCTI programs focus on training participants that will allow them to earn credentials and/or training via a combination of classroom training, hands-on learning, and practical experience to prepare participants for success in their fields. By implementing targeted strategies to address manufacturing skills gaps, foster collaboration, and promote innovation, Recompete Area residents can position themselves to be ready for success in the current digital age. LCTI is prepared to offer training for specialized short-term and long-term training opportunities for customized job training. The technical college offers an approved curriculum from the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) in addition to training specifically designed for an employer from an industry expert. LCTI is also a training partner for Industrial Training & Education Consortium (iTEC) of the Lehigh Valley. LCTI is waiting for state approval from PDE for apprenticeship programs in Mechatronics and Industrial Manufacturing Technician career pathways; approval is expected within a few months. Offerings are related to needs of the region's labor market that allows them to support and grow the workforce within the Recompete Area.

III. ANTICIPATED GOALS AND OUTPUTS

Goal: Connect and prepare Recompete area residents for careers in advanced manufacturing and high demand professions.

Outputs include:

- Develop partnerships with iTEC employers and local educational institutions
- Assess participants' needs to determine skills gaps needing remediation prior to apprenticeship or other training enrollment.
- Develop specific training programs with LCTI and PCT to meet employer demands
- Develop ASD curriculum by integrating math, reading, and spoken English education with technical skills training.
- Support LCTI expand mobile delivery of services/programs and bring equipment to an Allentown location.
- Incorporate NIMS/NOCTI coursework in ASD and pre-apprenticeship curriculums.
- Each year, support at minimum, 20 Recompete Area residents enroll in apprenticeships through IBEW 375, PCT and LCTI. Sponsor these participants as a "Recompete Cohort" throughout the performance period, covering the financial obligations of course enrollment; 300 total students sponsored over 5 years.

IV. RESPONSE TO EVALUATION CRITERIA

A. OVERALL VISION AND STRATEGY: This component aims to connect cohorts of Recompete Area residents with the Industrial Training and Education Consortium of the Lehigh Valley (iTEC) by expanding pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programming and capacity. With the new iTEC consortium and organizations such as LCTI, PCT, IBEW local 375 and the Workforce Board of the Lehigh Valley, the new project will be focused on specific programs for Recompete residents. Ultimately, component project 2 will upskill Recompete Area residents to meet the growing demand of local manufacturers, including iTEC members. This goal directly aligns with the Recompete Plan’s PAEG-reduction targets; meeting the demand of high-priority occupations by skilling the Recompete Area workforce will increase prime-age employment, grow per-capita wages, and build connections to a high-opportunity industry. Employers like B. Braun are prepared to grow their workforce. Partners at LVEDC and WBLV are critical to facilitating these connections, leveraging their strategic relationships to bridge training with employment.

B. COMMITMENT TO EQUITY: To enhance equity, this project will actively involve the community through ongoing working groups and an advisory committee. These platforms will ensure diverse voices shape decision-making, addressing the needs of all residents, especially underserved populations. Targeted workshops will engage residents and organizations to identify and overcome barriers to quality job access, fostering inclusive dialogue and co-created solutions.

Additionally, LCTI's online marketing campaign will ensure equitable access to opportunities across the Recompete Area. Active participation in community events and career fairs, along with presence in key locations like PA CareerLink Lehigh Valley, will further boost outreach efforts. By engaging directly with residents and disseminating information widely, the project aims to promote inclusivity and empower all members of the community.

Through these focused equity initiatives, the project aims to break down barriers and create pathways to economic prosperity for all. By prioritizing community engagement and accessibility, it seeks to foster sustainable growth and empowerment within the Recompete Area, benefiting individuals and the community at large.

C. CAPABILITY TO IMPLEMENT: The Allentown Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) commits to staffing a Recompete Plan Coordinator (RPC), whose primary responsibilities involve Recompete Plan implementation, assist component project management, and coordinate partner engagement.^{[xvii][xviii]} Hiring the RPC fulfills the EDA program mandate, and it institutionalizes administrative “muscle” to ensure consistent, effective delivery of the Recompete Plan and this Component Project. To guide implementation of the component projects specifically included in *Strategy I: Facilitate Local Employment*, the City of Allentown has secured additional support through partnership of The WBLV. The RPC will engage WBLV as a premier partner in the region’s workforce development ecosystem.

D. REALISTIC SCOPE AND WORKPLAN: Manufacturing is in the Lehigh Valley’s DNA. The partners enlisted in this project design are experts in the field of apprenticeship programming and skills training. Accordingly, industry insights and programmatic innovation are embedded within project development, and they will guide future implementation. The models proposed are in a concentrated geographic area which allows our strategies to be tested effectively. Plans will then be scaled over time to allow for more robust application. There is a strong governance and oversight structure that allows for proper management and flexibility as we make new discoveries.^[xix] Finally, performance goals and metrics have been defined that will serve as benchmarks of success.^{[xx][xxi]}

CITY OF ALLENTOWN

PHASE 2 RECOMPETE PLAN | REFERENCES COMPONENT PROJECT 2

- ⁱ About iTEC (<https://iteclehighvalley.org/>)
- ⁱⁱ See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown Letters of Commitment (p77)
- ⁱⁱⁱ About PA ACT 158 ([PA General Assembly Legislation](#))
- ^{iv} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Recompete Area Mapping (p3-4).
- ^v See LVEDC Press Release ([LVEDC, Dec. 2023](#))
- ^{vi} [Updated employment multipliers for the U.S. economy | Economic Policy Institute \(epi.org\)](#)
- ^{vii} [The Manufacturing Renaissance In Lehigh Valley, PA - Lehigh Valley, PA - Lehigh Valley Economic Development | Allentown, Bethlehem, Easton, Pennsylvania](#)
- ^{viii} [Industry Today, Volume 27, Issue 1, Supply Chain Ripple Effects Across Oceans by digitalmagazine.industrytoday.com - Issuu](#) (p5)
- ^{ix} EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Letters of Commitment (p50-52)
- ^x EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Letters of Commitment (p66-67)
- ^{xi} EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Letters of Commitment (p114-116)
- ^{xii} EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Letters of Commitment (p89-94)
- ^{xiii} EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Letters of Commitment (p106-107)
- ^{xiv} EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Letters of Commitment (p66-67)
- ^{xv} EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Letters of Commitment (p30-33)
- ^{xvi} About PA ACT 158 ([PA General Assembly Legislation](#))
- ^{xvii} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Narrative (p9)
- ^{xviii} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown Letters of Commitment (p18-19)
- ^{xix} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Narrative (p9)
- ^{xx} Section III. Anticipated Goals and Outputs (p3)
- ^{xxi} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Narrative (p6-7)

CITY OF ALLENTOWN

PHASE 2 RECOMPETE PLAN

STRATEGY I: Facilitate Local Employment

COMPONENT PROJECT 3: Foster inclusive community development through reentry workforce preparedness

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Component Project 3 is designed to foster inclusive and thriving communities for all people of Allentown. To grow and diversify Muhlenberg College's Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program, this component proposes to redesign the existing program offerings to align participant interests with Recompete priority industries and skills.

Accordingly, this project will pair program participants with technical and skill-based course work, a pre-apprenticeship curriculum, or courses connected to healthcare, manufacturing, or entrepreneurship. This pilot requires a series of investments tailored to program development and participant supports. Program redesign requires capacity-building investment in faculty training and the acquisition of required educational materials, as well as incentive payments for program participants. Recognizing program completion through one-time incentive payments will remove immediate barriers to reentry into the workforce, promoting economic empowerment and social inclusion.

This project is led by the City of Allentown and involves close collaboration with Muhlenberg College. The project further encompasses Workforce Board Lehigh Valley's (WBLV) Linking Employment Activities Pre-Release (LEAP) Program that will continue to enhance this targeted approach to serve the reentry workforce. Additional collaborators include Lehigh Career & Technical Institute (LCTI), Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation (LVEDC), Promise Neighborhoods of the Lehigh Valley (PNLV), and Pennsylvania College of Technology (PCT). This application requests **\$1,017,500** over a 5-year performance period to complete the scope of work prepared for this component project.

II. SCOPE OF WORK

The City of Allentown is prepared to channel Recompete Investments through the Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program. Local and regional partners are engaged to grow and diversify this program into a just and needs-responsive workforce initiative specifically for incarcerated adults released from the Lehigh County prison in Allentown. This initiative aligns with Allentown's trajectory of fostering inclusive communities outlined in the [City's 2030 Comprehensive Plan](#).

The stigma of incarceration and disconnection from the workforce are among the challenges people face when trying to find a job after release from prison or jail. People who have been incarcerated earn 52 percent less annually than they had earned prior to incarceration and are likely to have less upward economic mobility over time than those who have not been incarcerated.^[1] Before and after release from prison, incarcerated individuals need access to education, job training in fields where there is a labor demand in the community, as well as job readiness support.

Muhlenberg College is eager to support the innovative components of the City of Allentown Recompete Plan. Specifically, the College is prepared to expand and diversify the Muhlenberg College Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program, an ongoing collaboration between Muhlenberg and the Lehigh County Department of Corrections. The program, co-led by Professor of Psychology

Kate Richmond and Community Engagement Librarian Jess Denke, includes a college class held in Lehigh County Jail and a collaborative Community Think Tank. The mission of this program is to leverage the power of education as a tool to end mass incarceration and build healthy communities within the City of Allentown.^[iii]

The Inside-Out course, a hallmark of the program, is a unique experience that brings together the traditionally-enrolled Muhlenberg College students with Lehigh County incarcerated adults as classmates in a semester-long college-level academic course. To date, the College has successfully completed five courses in partnership with the Lehigh County Department of Corrections with plans to offer two courses per semester and to diversify the course content to include classes that will focus on the goals of the Recompete Plan.

Since 2018, Muhlenberg College has worked with the Lehigh County Prison through its Inside Out Prison Exchange Program. The program was designed to bring outside students (through Muhlenberg College) and inside students (through L. C. Prison) to work together on group projects relating to mass incarceration. The City of Allentown in partnership with Muhlenberg College will develop new pre- and post- incarceration workforce development programs and course in several different skills and industry focuses. This piloted re-design will grow and diversify Muhlenberg College's Inside/Out program a multi-disciplinary reentry pathway, and ensure alignment with Recompete priority industries and skills.

Currently in the re-design's planning phase, project partners will work to develop and deliver the following:

- Recruit local employers willing to participate in the design of the new programs and are willing to interview and hire the graduates. As this program is implemented, partners will prioritize approaching employers to secure written hiring commitments to employ returning citizens.
- The manufacturers, Lehigh Career and Technical Institute, and other partners will contribute to designing manufacturing skills-based curriculum along with post incarceration apprenticeships.
- Provide funding for transportation, educational materials, and faculty/trainer stipends.
- A stipend program will be developed to support the Inside-Out participants, recognizing program achievement, and supporting incarcerated individuals obtain financial flexibility and freedom quickly upon reentry. These funds will be available for participants to use for housing, transportation, and other needs, laying a positive foundation for the future of those transitioning out of the prison.

Length of stay in the prison is typically 60-90 days. There is a lag-time from reentry to employment, on average 30-90 days. This is an opportunity where Recompete dollars will have real impact. One-time payments will support program participants who reenter the community build a financial foundation to accelerate their connection to employment post-incarceration. Payments will be awarded to program participants upon completion of the program and reentry from the prison. \$1,000 in the form of Visa gift cards will be awarded to Inside-Out participants as a one-time payment recognizing completion of the program requirements. Moreover, these payments will remove immediate barriers to reentry into the workforce, promoting economic empowerment and social inclusion. We anticipate the recorded impact of these payments will incentivize further participation with the Inside/Out program.

III. ANTICIPATED GOALS AND OUTPUTS

GOAL: Grow and diversify Muhlenberg College’s Inside-Out Prison Exchange program, co-designing a multi-disciplinary reentry pathway that aligns with Recompete priority industries and skills.

Outputs and program design milestones include the following:

- Begin curriculum development and comprehensive program design (Y1).
- Recruit local manufacturers and employers interested in participating and committed to hiring incarcerated individuals who have completed the program and are reentering the community (Y1, on-going)
- Secure written hiring commitments from local and regional employers (Y1, on-going).
- Engage County Prison and LCTI to design on-site curriculum and programming, arranging for staff and equipment locations as applicable (Y1, on-going).
- Recruit minimum of 15 participants for program enrollment each semester, each program year; by 2030, a minimum of 150 incarcerated folks will have participated in the Inside-Out program.
- Conduct semesterly evaluation of program performance, tracking participant outcomes, and adjusting program design to as necessary (on-going).

IV. RESPONSE TO EVALUATION CRITERIA

A. OVERALL VISION AND STRATEGY: People recently released from prison are the most likely to be unemployed or underemployed, with a 32-percent unemployment rate among people released in the prior two years.^[iii] The stigma of incarceration and disconnection from the workforce are among the challenges people face when trying to find a job after release from prison or jail.

This component project will develop a short-term training program to assist incarcerated individuals prepare for reentry into the Allentown community. The piloted redesign of Muhlenberg College’s Inside-Out program as a multi-disciplinary reentry pathway is to ensure alignment with Recompete priority industries and skills. Supporting incarcerated individuals through this level of coursework serves as an opportunity equalizer, and it will advance meaningful employment prospects post-release. Studies show that incarcerated individuals who participate in a college course during their incarceration are least likely to recidivate and more likely to find and sustain employment after incarceration.^[iv] Furthermore, there is a significant financial impact of this work. The average cost for an individual to be incarcerated per day is \$121.85. The three-year recidivism rate in 2019 was 26.34%. Literature suggests that access to college education reduces the odds of recidivism by 16 to 19 percent.^[v] With an average length of stay in the Lehigh County Jail of 66 days, every individual who does not recidivate saves the County approximately \$8,040.^[vi] This is without accounting for the significant public costs of crime, the costs of victims, police, or courts, and the costs to families.

Growing Muhlenberg’s Inside-Out program aligns with the City of Allentown’s Comprehensive Plan, Vision 2030, as it fosters inclusive and welcoming communities.^[vii] This project supports the City of Allentown Recompete Plan to grow a diverse, expanded, and trained workforce in order to ensure greater, more equitable participation in citywide and regional economic growth. Ultimately, this project can be an adaptive model program not just for correctional facilities, but also for

institutes of higher education who are interested in engaging with community and economic development of the neighborhoods which they are part of.

B. COMMITMENT TO EQUITY: Working within the Recompete Area and serving incarcerated individuals about to be released are the hardest to serve participants. Reentering citizens are a higher percentage of color, and they are unemployed immediately upon reentry.

The collaborative community Think Tank that is part of the Muhlenberg College Inside-Out Prison Exchange program is an exercise of the College’s mission to empower students to understand the diversity of the human experience. Following participation in the Inside-Out class and release from prison, students are invited to join the Muhlenberg College Inside-Out Think Tank, which meets every six weeks, to share a community meal, and to deepen the network as participants work to implement community interventions to support successful reentry. Research shows that a key strategy to address mental health distress is to become involved in “giving back” to the community.^[viii] In this way, the Think Tank serve two important purposes: improve individual and community wellness during reentry.

C. CAPABILITY TO IMPLEMENT: The Muhlenberg College Inside-Out program has been supported by a recent \$231,000 U.S. Department of Education grant. This funding enabled the College to offer course credit to incarcerated participants creating a pathway to either sustainable employment and/or postsecondary education. Recompete dollars will sustain the investment initiated by U.S. Department of Education and supply further funding to support the capacity-building strategies proposed in this project. Specifically, Recompete funding through this project will support the training of additional faculty responsible for the administering new course offerings, acquiring education materials related to the new course offerings, and one-time program completion payment to Muhlenberg’s Inside-Out Prison Exchange participants.

The Muhlenberg College Inside-Out Prison Exchange program has the staff and program infrastructure in place to administer this program effectively. The Recompete Plan Coordinator, staffed through the City of Allentown Recompete Plan, will coordinate directly with the College’s identified program leadership to ensure effective administration of this component project’s goals.

The Allentown Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) commits to staffing a Recompete Plan Coordinator (RPC), whose primary responsibilities involve Recompete Plan implementation, assist component project management, and coordinate partner engagement.^{[ix][x]} Hiring the RPC fulfills the EDA program mandate, and it institutionalizes administrative “muscle” to ensure consistent, effective delivery of the Recompete Plan and this Component Project. To guide implementation of the component projects specifically included in *Strategy I: Facilitate Local Employment*, the City of Allentown has secured additional support through partnership of WBLV. The RPC will engage WBLV as a premier partner in the Lehigh Valley’s workforce development ecosystem.

D. REALISTIC SCOPE AND WORKPLAN: Partners like Muhlenberg College, WBLV, Promise Neighborhoods, and LCTI, are all committed to the project, and the training of the post release prison population. The City and AEDC leadership understand the importance of supporting incarcerated individuals obtain employment and training opportunities to prepare them for success in the community and with their families.

Serving this demographic, perhaps the hardest-to-reach Recompete Area resident, is undoubtedly a challenge to this project's design. That said, this component project is prepared to mitigate this risk by attaching Recompete interventions to existing programmatic infrastructure (e.g., Muhlenberg College Inside-Out Program). Rather than invent a program, this component redesigns what does exist, and has engaged College partners to tailor program design to align with Recompete Plan strategic objectives. It is important that component project has identified this existing infrastructure as a foundation, and embedded staff into this project design. In addition to tailoring Inside-Out operations to the Recompete Plan, Recompete investment will in-turn expand the program's scope, grow its recognition, and most importantly, sustain its continuance.

Because Muhlenberg College already has an existing program in the prison, and LCTI is interested in bringing training to the incarcerated individuals both in and out of the prison, project implementation seems feasible. There is demand for training and personal development for the incarcerated individuals about to be released.

Between Muhlenberg College's capacity as an Allentown anchor institution and the strong governance and oversight structure established in this Plan, proper management and flexibility is in place as this project proceeds.^[xi] Stable administration will ensure this project effectively reduces recidivism, generates financial freedom, social inclusion, and ultimately, gives incarcerated individuals more opportunities to meaningfully reengage with the community. Finally, performance goals and metrics, as they relate to this project and the broader Recompete Plan, have been defined that will serve as benchmarks of success.^{[xii][xiii]}

CITY OF ALLENTOWN

PHASE 2 RECOMPETE PLAN | REFERENCES COMPONENT PROJECT 3

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- ⁱ Brennan Center for Justice at New York School of Law, Report "Conviction, Imprisonment and Lost Earnings."
- ⁱⁱ See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown Letters of Commitment (p85-87)
- ⁱⁱⁱ Publication, Out of Prison and Out of Work, July 2018
- ^{iv} Stickle, B., & Schuster, S. S. (2023). Are Schools in Prison Worth It? The Effects and Economic Returns of Prison Education. *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, 48(6), 1263–1294. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12103-023-09747-3>
- ^v Stickle, B., & Schuster, S. S. (2023).
- ^{vi} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown Letters of Commitment (p85-87)
- ^{vii} Allentown Vision 2030.
- ^{viii} Ballard, P. J., Hoyt, L. T., & Pachucki, M. C. (2019). Impacts of Adolescent and Young Adult Civic Engagement on Health and Socioeconomic Status in Adulthood. *Child Development*, 90(4), 1138–1154. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.12998>
- ^{ix} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Narrative (p9)
- ^x See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown Letters of Commitment (p18-19)
- ^{xi} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Narrative (p9)
- ^{xii} Section III. Anticipated Goals and Outputs (p3)
- ^{xiii} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Narrative (p6-7)

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PHASE 2 RECOMPETE PLAN

STRATEGY II: Expand Access to Needs Responsive Childcare

COMPONENT PROJECT 4: Support available, inclusive, flexible, conveniently located childcare

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Component project 4 is designed to expand access to childcare that meets the needs of children and families, which for the purpose of this strategy, is care that is available, inclusive, flexible, affordable, and conveniently located. To deliver this type of care to families within the Recompete Area^[i], this project will pilot a coordinated care network (CCN), testing a series of interventions with the support of leading local providers, and philanthropic, non-profit, and private sector partners. The CCN will pilot shared back-office support among Recompete Area Providers, build provider capacity, bolster career pathway programs to build the pipeline of early educators, sustain inclusive care resources and programmatic capacity, and address location and logistical needs of families. By creating a CCN, key staff who navigate families to a provider that will best meet their needs will have more real-time information about potential slots available for incoming families.

Providers within the Recompete Area will have their capacity increased through several strategies. Funds will be disbursed through a grant model to support an array of sustainable capacity-building interventions, such as increasing Keystone STAR ratings, or covering start-up costs for small or family providers. The CCN infrastructure will connect staff with [Professional Development Organization \(PDO\)](#) or other pathways for education tracks, provide subsidy payments for Recompete slots, provide Recompete staff benefit packages, and provide the Recompete menu of training and service support. These investments ultimately build capacity within providers so that they can increase quality and availability of care, therefore, lowering cost and expanding access to families within the Recompete Area.

This project is led by the City of Allentown and involves close collaboration with the [Lehigh Valley Community Foundation](#) (LVCF), [Community Services for Children](#) (CSC), [Lehigh Valley Children's Centers](#) (LVCC), [Resurrected Community Development Corporation](#) (RCDC), the [Leonard Parker Pool Institute for Health](#) (LPPIH), and the Allentown Health Bureau. This application requests **\$2,550,000** over a 5-year performance period to complete the scope of work prepared for this component project.

II. SCOPE OF WORK

Through close collaboration with childcare partners, the project will assess the specific needs of the community and tailor childcare services accordingly. These strategies are crafted to provide available, inclusive, flexible, affordable, and conveniently located childcare, ensuring that parents have the support they need to pursue employment opportunities without facing childcare-related obstacles. This project contributes to local economic resilience and social inclusion, addressing the childcare needs of working parents by piloting a foundational intervention: **grow provider capacity to boost quality and in-turn, generate higher subsidy-rates**. Supporting accessible, needs-responsive childcare options fosters an environment where all individuals have the opportunity to participate fully in the workforce, regardless of personal circumstance. Ultimately, this initiative grows provider capacity, promotes workforce diversity, and empowers parents to pursue employment opportunities while ensuring the well-being of their children.

The key strategy to achieve desired outcomes requires building a Coordinated Care Network (CCN)^[iii] among small and family-run provider sites. Within the Recompete Area, there are 30 childcare providers, and within 0.25 miles of the Recompete Area, the number of providers expands to 70. The initiative will aim to build the CCN among these 70 Recompete Area Providers^[iii]. The CCN proposes to pilot shared back-office support among Recompete Area Providers who opt in to joining the network, bolster career pathway programs to build the pipeline of early educators, sustain inclusive care resources and programmatic capacity, and initiate a grant pool to support providers capacity building. The CCN proposes the below strategies that will specifically target small providers in the Recompete Area because these are the providers that can provide more flexible care and are the centers that have the potential to provide more childcare slots if they had more capacity.

Strategies which organize this component project scope of work include the following:

A. Design a shared-service approach to lowering costs, streamlining support, and providing increased quality of services. Co-design back-office support with smaller providers and family childcare providers within the Recompete Area, and key locations that are being utilized near a Recompete workplace and/or education location; For example, providers have expressed the need to do collective insurance buying, and need HR supports, especially with hiring, and onboarding; Some of the interventions that will be tested in the CCN include: (i.) data-sharing regarding open slots; (ii.) staff benefits packages such as free and reduced childcare to increase employee retention; (iii.) partner with healthcare providers for discounted vaccine/health checks for prospective hires; and (iv.) paying for guaranteed slots at a high-demand provider to ensure the availability of care.

B. Build provider capacity and deliver key services to families. In order to create open slots, providers themselves need to be sustainable. This project establishes a CCN that will pilot the following strategies to build capacity: (i.) connect providers with the existing state run [Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program](#); (ii.) provide a social worker (Recompete Resource Navigator, “RRN”) to the CCN to help assess family needs and facilitate connections with the necessary supports; (iii.) provide a “menu of trainings” for the network to utilize based on family’s needs, such as becoming a drop-off site of healthy foods (partnering with a local food bank), workshops on housing, finances, mental health, kindergarten preparation, workforce resources, diversity, equity and inclusion information, caretaker training for behavioral and mental health children, etc.; (iv.) create infrastructure to support small providers in communicating and relationship building with caretakers that come into their sites. This strategy will also (v.) create a grant pool to be used in coordination with a Revolving Loan Fund that will be launched parallel to this initiative by LVCF; these complementary tools support several capacity-building costs such as start-up costs, expansion costs, or costs associated with increasing the [Keystone STARS](#) rating. As of Aug. 2023, there are 170 childcare locations citywide, 70 of which are defined as Recompete Area Providers. Just 14 of the 70 have a 4-STAR rating, which is the rating eligible for the highest amount of funding from the state.^[iv] The Recompete grant pool and LVCF RLF represent multiple tools to boost Recompete Area Provider ratings, enabling them to lower costs for families through supplemental subsidies from the state through Keystone STARS, while also providing a consistent and higher amount of funding to support provider sites. Grant funding and/or the RLF is intended for combined deployment alongside the other strategies outlined in this project to build provider capacity more readily. The type of financial support and capacity building support that providers receive will be determined after an assessment of their current needs and goals.

C. Build a pipeline of educators to address availability of slots, quality through retention, while fostering cultural and racial representation of staff. Support CSC’s newly developed Child Development Associate (CDA) certificate pathway developed in conjunction with the Workforce Board Lehigh Valley (WBLV) and Lehigh Carbon Community College (LCCC) for caretakers sending children to their centers and community members, which will also lead to better representation of the community demographics in centers. This strategy will also raise awareness about the existing [Professional Development Organization](#)’s offering to pay for education for current staff to earn degrees.

D. Ensure inclusive care to reduce issue of expulsions/suspensions. CSC in partnership with [Unconditional Child Care](#) is currently funded through the state to pilot a [Rapid Response Team](#) (RRT) to provide the delivery of trauma sensitive, human-centered, collaborative short-term support in ECE programs struggling to support a child(ren) with challenging behavior at the risk for expulsion and facilitate quick referrals to additional supports for the child(ren). Recompete investment will enable this team to sustain the RRT and ensure that Unconditional Child Care has resources to continue the expansion of their work, especially after initial funding is expended.

E. Address location and logistical needs of families. CSC already has existing services to engage and direct families to care options that best meet the needs of families through the [Childcare Assistance Program](#). Through creating the CCN and connecting CSC with the CCN, there will be a stronger link between available slots that are in convenient locations and meet the logistical needs of families. There will be real-time information and the key relationships built that will better streamline referral services for families.^[v]

III. ANTICIPATED GOALS AND OUTPUTS

GOAL: Expand access to needs-responsive childcare, which for the purpose of this strategy, is care that is available, inclusive, flexible, affordable, and conveniently located. This will be achieved by growing provider capacity to boost quality and in-turn, generate higher subsidy-rates.

Outputs include the following:

- Provide more open slots to Recompete Area families, reducing capacity gaps among Recompete Area providers each year during the 5-year performance period (i.e., close the gap between current slots versus potential slots if center was operating at full capacity).
- Develop a CCN, and recruit 10 Recompete Area Providers within Y1; scale the CCN to include 30 Recompete Area Providers by Y5.
- Design a competitive employee support package, and measure: use of support package, as well as change in employee retention rate among providers.
- Support 8-10 prime-age adults per year to enter early educator track over the 5-year performance period; by 2030, at minimum 40 Recompete Area residents will have been enrolled in this program.
- Establish a baseline for suspensions in Y1; reduce that rate year-over-year to institutionalize inclusive care metrics.
- Prepare annual assessments on the number of families who were served through CSC’s family navigation services to direct them to a CCN provider, how many stayed, and how many were satisfied with their care.

- Track the number of providers who can keep costs lower and streamline services because of the utilization of back office administrative services (Y1-Y5, on-going).
- As of 2023, just 19 providers have a STAR-rating that is over 3 or 4; aim to increase the quantity of 3- and 4-STAR providers to 35 by Y5, ensuring 50% of Recompete Area Providers operate with the highest quality ratings (growth of 84% from 2023 baseline).

IV. RESPONSE TO EVALUATION CRITERIA

A. OVERALL VISION AND STRATEGY: The overall goal of the City of Allentown Recompete Plan is to ensure greater and more equitable participation in citywide and regional economic growth. The lack of access to affordable needs-responsive childcare is a contributing factor to families' inability to enter the Allentown workforce. By addressing the childcare needs of working parents, the project contributes to economic resilience and social inclusion within the community. Supporting needs-responsive childcare will foster an environment where all individuals have the opportunity to participate fully in the workforce, regardless of their schedule constraints. The vision for reducing the barrier to childcare is to create a strong, sustainable infrastructure that supports children and their families, early childhood staff, early childhood providers and the entire sector in order to deliver care that is available, inclusive, flexible and conveniently located. We envision children and families thriving because they are in caring, consistent environments so that families can have confidence when going to work. The key issues that these strategies are addressing are the availability of open slots, especially infant and toddler slots. Slot shortages are due to the current local and national staffing crisis due to non-livable wages and no benefits for staff. In a 2023 survey conducted by Start Strong PA and Pre-K for PA, per responses from 41 Lehigh County programs, 80% indicated staffing shortages, leading to 142 open positions, a waitlist of 838 children, 63 closed classrooms, and consequently, a capacity-related opportunity cost of 954 children unserved.

Another issue is the ability for small providers to be sustainable given the business model of childcare, where costs are high and funding sources are limited given that affordability is also a priority. Additionally, there is a high suspension and expulsion rate occurring in the early childhood system due to increased complex behavioral health and emotional health diagnosis and little to no resources or staff training to address the needs of children. Lastly, it's difficult for providers to offer childcare outside of traditional business hours, and for emergencies, such as when a child is sick. The strategies listed in the scope of work address these issues by providing direct support to children and families, providers, early childhood staff, and the system as a whole.

This project takes into account a range of local and state resources available, and leverages them to the full extent possible. Examples include resources from the state-run [OCDEL Professional Development Organization](#), [the Keystone STARs System](#), a recently awarded [OCDEL grant to CSC to create a rapid response](#) to care for children at risk of expulsion or suspension, LVCF's granting [focus on early childhood education](#), and the existing services through CSC that provides family with referral services for childcare.

These models are informed by best practices and models referenced in other communities such as the [Colorado Department of Early Childhood](#) initiatives funded by state and federal stimulus strategies. When the outcomes are achieved in the strategies employed in this component, there are multiple opportunities to share these learnings with other communities, as well as the opportunity to scale and deepen these models in communities across the Lehigh Valley.

B. COMMITMENT TO EQUITY: The origin of including childcare as a barrier in workforce participation derived from prior neighborhood planning efforts which sourced community input through several surveys and workshop sessions.^[vi] Centered on community voice from the outset, this project will continue to prioritize equity in the process and outcomes by co-designing the back office administrative and capacity building services with providers in the Recompete Area and centering relationship building through the CCN. Implementation planning will also be conducted by a committee with diverse representation, that will make key decisions alongside community leaders and also then be accountable to the outcomes of the work. Throughout the project, outreach materials and communication will be planned in multiple languages such as Spanish, English, and Arabic to reflect the local culture. Outreach to providers and community will be in the communication style that is most accessible to these groups. In terms of outcomes, piloting models of back-office support, employee benefits and development opportunities (growing the early educator workforce) will lead to resources being distributed to marginalized people and communities. **The idea of boosting the Keystone STARs rating to open new sources of funding for providers is the key to this component.** It is a sustainable way to use Recompete dollars by making the investment thus channeling State dollars into the Recompete Area, growing the capacity of the providers, expanding an early educator workforce that is better trained and higher paid, and ultimately bringing quality care in closer proximity to a Recompete Area resident.

This plan furthers equity and inclusion by training a workforce of early educators and caretakers that will have the opportunity to become early educators having this training subsidized by local childcare providers. This type of training empowers residents to enter the workforce, alleviating the costs of childcare and growing a workforce that is representative of the community it serves.

C. CAPABILITY TO IMPLEMENT: Allentown’s premier childcare providers have been intentionally embedded in the planning and design of the Plan’s childcare strategies; this thorough involvement will enable seamless transition from program design into implementation. Provider capacity has been well established through a robust portfolio of commitments to this Plan.^[vii]

The Allentown Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) commits to staffing a Recompete Plan Coordinator (RPC), whose primary responsibilities involve Recompete Plan implementation, assist component project management, and coordinate partner engagement.^{[viii][ix]} Hiring the RPC fulfills the EDA program mandate, and it institutionalizes administrative “muscle” to ensure consistent, effective delivery of the Recompete Plan and this Component Project. Furthermore, to guide implementation of the component projects specifically included in *Strategy II: Expand Access to Needs Responsive Childcare*, the City of Allentown has secured additional support through partnership of LVCF. The RPC will engage LVCF as a premier philanthropic partner in the region’s community development ecosystem.

D. REALISTIC SCOPE AND WORKPLAN: The social issues relating to needs-responsive care are complex, however the solutions proposed in this project are achievable, especially given the number of key providers that are embedded in plan development and committed to implementing this work. The models proposed are in a concentrated geographic area which allows the strategies to be tested effectively. Plans will then be scaled over time to allow for more robust testing. There is a strong governance and oversight structure that allows for proper management and flexibility as we make new discoveries.^[x] Finally, performance goals and metrics have been defined that will serve as benchmarks of success.^{[xi][xii]}

CITY OF ALLENTOWN

PHASE 2 RECOMPETE PLAN | REFERENCES COMPONENT PROJECT 4

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- ⁱ See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Recompete Area Mapping (p3-4).
- ⁱⁱ See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown Letters of Commitment (p53-55)
- ⁱⁱⁱ Recompete Area Providers are those in the Recompete Area or within 0.25mi.
- ^{iv} Allentown is within ELRC Region 14. The base subsidy rates for 2023 are provided [here](#), and the additional subsidy, per Keystone STAR rating is documented [here](#). Calculating the impact difference between a 1-STAR and 4-STAR subsidy are higher rates of +30% for Centers and +33% for Family providers (per most expensive care: infant).
- ^v See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown Letters of Commitment (p53-55)
- ^{vi} [FinalPlan_Landscape_5.12.22-compressed.pdf \(allentownpa.gov\)](#) (p5-26, 33)
- ^{vii} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown Letters of Commitment (p1-17)
- ^{viii} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Narrative (p9)
- ^{ix} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown Letters of Commitment (p18-19)
- ^x See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Narrative (p9)
- ^{xi} Section III. Anticipated Goals and Outputs (p3)
- ^{xii} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Narrative (p6-7)

CITY OF ALLENTOWN

PHASE 2 RECOMPETE PLAN

STRATEGY II: Expand Access to Needs Responsive Childcare

COMPONENT PROJECT 5: Support families' upward economic mobility through affordable childcare and connection to supportive services

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Component project 5 is designed to build upon the investment in needs-responsive childcare made in component project 4, and it will enable the upward economic mobility of families through ensuring that the cost of care is proportionate to household income and that the children and families' needs and wants beyond childcare are identified and navigated through an interconnected, strong safety net system. This strategy will require supporting children, families, providers, and the system as a whole to reduce barriers in accessing childcare and support the upward mobility of families. Integrating systems is key to lowering costs and connecting families with affordable care. Neighborhood assets – like Families First Franklin Park and the city's recently awarded Bloomberg Love Your Block grant – will be engaged as a foundation of family engagement. Piloted cost-alleviating resources will include establishing a new subsidy fund with higher income eligibility thresholds that complements existing childcare subsidies through Early Learning Resource Centers (ELRC), and establishing an emergency scholarship fund designed to support Recompete Area families.

This project is led by the City of Allentown and involves close collaboration with the [Lehigh Valley Community Foundation](#) (LVCF), [Community Services for Children](#) (CSC), [Lehigh Valley Children's Centers](#) (LVCC), [Resurrected Community Development Corporation](#) (RCDC), the [Leonard Parker Pool Institute for Health](#) (LPPIH) and the Allentown Health Bureau. This application requests **\$2,775,000** over a 5-year performance period to complete the scope of work prepared for this component project.

II. SCOPE OF WORK

This project aligns with the broader goal of promoting workforce participation and economic mobility within the community. It acknowledges the importance of affordable childcare in supporting working families and creating pathways to financial stability. Through ongoing assessment and feedback mechanisms, the project will adapt its approach to ensure that financial assistance for childcare remains responsive to the evolving needs of the community. By coordinating various forms of financial support, the project contributes to the overall well-being of families and strengthens the foundation for economic growth and prosperity within the Recompete Area^[1] neighborhoods.

This project will engage existing infrastructure – programmatic, bricks and mortar, and community connections – hosted by providers and other community partners to facilitate connections between Recompete Area residents and cost-alleviating childcare resources. Piloted cost-alleviating resources will include establishing a new subsidy fund with higher income eligibility thresholds that complements [Child Care Works](#), the existing childcare subsidies funded through the state and managed by the [Early Learning Resource Centers](#) (ELRC), which is a part of CSC's services, and establishing an emergency fund designed to support Recompete Area families.

Strategies which organize this component project scope of work include the following:

A. Design infrastructure to connect systems and reduce barriers. The strategies employed to design infrastructure to connect systems and reduce barriers include creating a Recompete Resource Navigator (RRN) position to oversee how different systems such as workforce, transportation, housing, childcare, and food access can be better linked in order to streamline services for families. Additionally, there are key partners that will be engaged to train their staff on each other's services to build better referral networks that will result in families accessing services more seamlessly. Within the Recompete Area, key frontline staff positions will be trained to be aware of all the resources available to families, especially within this grant so that they can make appropriate referrals. This project also plans to utilize [Families First in Franklin Park](#), a trusted community-based collaborative, which includes Recompete partners CSC and LPPIH, that currently focuses on supporting families with young children within specific areas within the Recompete Area, to both distribute information about different resources available, and also to gather and collect information about community wants and needs to better inform interventions. Families First in Franklin Park already has built trusted brand recognition, which this work will leverage and strengthen in order to ensure that this initiative will fulfill the goal of centering relationship building and creating trust and that there is cultural and racial representation and voice in the design and development of strategies. The project can utilize the existing infrastructure at Families First of outreach workers, community meetings, and planned community events to launch new services and products and gather and distribute information.

The project will additionally engage the Mayor's Office of Civic Innovation, and coordinate project implementation with the city's recently awarded Love Your Block grant. This is another community-driven initiative aimed at revitalizing neighborhoods and fostering community engagement in the Franklin Park neighborhood. The program powers grassroots organizing through hiring a new position and releasing a series of mini-grants dedicated to collaborative projects. Love Your Block aims to address challenges such as blight, lack of green spaces, and community disengagement by mobilizing resources and building partnerships. Key components of Love Your Block include volunteering opportunities, educational campaigns, community discussions, administering a mini-grant program, and policy and data analysis. By providing resources and support to local organizations and residents, Love Your Block aims to promote neighborhood stability, social cohesion, and economic opportunity. Long-term goals include enhancing neighborhood resilience, promoting equitable development, and fostering a sense of pride and ownership among residents.

B. Develop awareness building campaign. This project will work to better streamline services for families that are already engaged in system connections, while also developing an awareness building campaign in the community in order to ensure that those that are eligible for services know about the resources available. This project will run a targeted campaign in the places that community already is occupying and build a strong referral network. This campaign will specifically raise awareness about all the services currently available at the ELRC, which is needed due to lack of available funding to do necessary outreach about these services. The project envisions creating a single point of entry for all childcare resources and workforce resources. This point of entry will be advertised in places such as basketball courts, barbershops, bodegas, beauty shops, neighborhood restaurants, and among the Coordinated Care Network (CCN)ⁱⁱ.

C. Address Affordability. Create a new subsidy through the Early Learning Resource Center, which currently runs the [Child Care Works](#) state-funded subsidy program. The new subsidy product would allow for those that do not meet the income eligibility for the state-funded subsidy, which is currently 200% of the poverty level, to be eligible to receive some assistance to reduce the burden of the cost of childcare on families. It would also allow a subsidy to any families that are on the waiting list for the state-funded subsidy program. This strategy will essentially broaden the number of families that can receive financial assistance to cover the cost of childcare, as we propose operating with a new threshold of 300% of the poverty level. The second strategy to address affordability is to commit Recompete funding for an “emergency” scholarship fund to offset costs for families who circumstances trigger the use. The fund will also cover lost wages for caretakers who miss work due to an illness of their child. The parameters will be established in consultation with caretakers and providers. Lastly, in order to capitalize on existing resources and services already in existence, this project will leverage CSC Child Care Assistance Program services that assist families to finding care that meet their needs. These services will be leveraged to match potential eligible families into already existing affordable programs such as [Headstart](#), [Pre-K Counts](#), and the [Infant Contracted Slots](#) program.

III. ANTICIPATED GOALS AND OUTPUTS

GOAL: ensure that cost is proportionate to household income and that children and families’ needs and wants beyond childcare are identified and navigated through an interconnected, strong social safety net system.

Outputs include the following:

- Pilot a tracking system to view referrals to services, services received for families, and the impact of wraparound support (Y1, on-going).
- Successful training of 10 Recompete partners to build out a close referral network within Y1-Y2, increasing that number every year to scale up to 30 partners.
- Direct outreach to at least 2,000 residents with the Recompete Area to raise awareness about Recompete benefits; include marketing materials in over 60% of Recompete Area places of business, and public gathering locations (Y1-Y2, on-going).
- Establish a new subsidy fund which has a higher income eligibility threshold than the existing ELRC state-funded subsidy, and support 4,000 newly eligible Recompete Area residents over the five-year performance period (on-going).
- Establish an emergency scholarship fund, and support at least Recompete Area residents over the five-year performance period (on-going).
- Partner with Families First Franklin Park to engage families within the Franklin Park neighborhood through surveys and other engagement strategies over the performance period; engagement will track toward direct outreach goals (Y1-Y2, on-going).
- Establish a baseline of what percent of households within the Recompete Area spend greater than 10% of income on childcare expenses^[iii], and then lower this rate year-over-year, reducing the childcare cost burden (Y1, on-going).

IV. RESPONSE TO EVALUATION CRITERIA

A. OVERALL VISION AND STRATEGY: The overall goal of the City of Allentown Recompete Plan is to ensure greater and more equitable participation in citywide and regional economic growth. The lack of access to affordable childcare and barriers currently in place to

access system services is a contributing factor to families' inability to enter and continue to thrive in the Allentown workforce. Investing in families' economic upward mobility will employ more Recompete Area residents, and in-turn, increase long-term economic development in the city. The vision of this work is that families are no longer financially penalized for seeking upward mobility through seeking a better job opportunity, and that families feel supported through understanding and enrolling in the many different resources available to support their economic path. Component project 5 is designed to build upon the investment in needs-responsive childcare made in component project 4, and it will enable the upward economic mobility of families through ensuring that the cost of care is proportionate to household income and that the children and families' needs and wants beyond childcare are identified and navigated through an interconnected, strong safety net system. These strategies will address the issue that currently, while there are many different existing state and local initiatives that are designed to support children and families, these services are not widely utilized and there are barriers to accessing these systems, such as not being aware of the resources available, not knowing where to go to seek the information, or the information being hard to understand. In [Lehigh County](#), 64% of eligible children (or 4,081 children) for Child Care Works, the state subsidy, were not enrolled in childcare, therefore going unserved. Another issue is that the different systems available to support families are often siloed without strong interconnections to direct families to different services that would support all of their needs. In terms of affordability and subsidies, it is difficult for families to take a risk in a potential higher paying job or take a risk by entering the workforce if the perception and/or the reality is that they will lose some of their current benefits. By utilizing CSC's existing services to help families navigate the cost/benefit analysis of different opportunities, we are addressing this issue. Once families are employed, emergencies occur and/or children get sick which causes instability and often times forces the newly-employed person to quit or exit the workforce system.

The strategies included in this component are based on best practices and prior experience, and take into account other investments, policy commitments and regional activities. The expanded eligibility income for receiving subsidy model through the ELRC has already been launched in Berks County, PA, therefore we are able to take the lessons learned from Berks model to implement in Allentown. The Families First in Franklin Park model is based in well-researched and documented best practices in collective impact and collaboration, namely the [Lupton Center](#) and [Tamarack Institute](#). This initiative is part of [the BUILD Health Challenge](#), a nationwide initiative to create cross-sector collaboration for local change. Awareness building in community places is also well-researched and will use the approaches of [user-centered design theory](#). The [United Way of Pennsylvania](#) is currently building a cross-sector, multi-year advocacy campaign to address the issue of the benefits cliff in Pennsylvania, which will also have a specific effort geared toward policy change around the childcare crisis. Policy changes and advocacy efforts are also ongoing from initiatives like [Start Strong PA](#) and [Pre-K for PA](#). There are many other initiatives that this work will leverage such as [PA Navigate](#) and [2-1-1](#).

B. COMMITMENT TO EQUITY: This project is committed to equity in both process and outcomes. Strategies developed in these components were based on [data collected](#) from Families First in Franklin Park that surveyed over 200 residents in the Recompete Area about their experiences, needs, and wants in childcare. Nearly 70% of those surveyed indicated that financial stress is the biggest challenge their family faced, and nearly 50% of those surveyed identified cost as their top childcare concern. The initiatives will continue to be shaped by residents' voices by utilizing the infrastructure and brand recognition of Families First in Franklin Park. Key partners from the Recompete initiative will plan to attend regular community meetings and engage in topics

around Recompete consistently. Additionally, the same infrastructure that this project is building to engage residents in services and connect systems will be used as feedback mechanisms to influence the evolution of interventions. Similar approaches identified in component 4 will be utilized in this work as well, such as accessible outreach materials, co-designing interventions where possible, community perspectives represented in decision-making, and centering relationship-building. There will also be a consistent approach to sharing information transparently. In terms of outcomes, since the goal is to make childcare costs proportionate to household income, this strategy is rooted in equity. The Recompete Area has some of the highest poverty rates in the city and the lowest median household incomes. Further, these neighborhoods are home to the City's highest proportion of Black and Latino residents. Impact of making costs proportionate to income will be felt directly by Allentown's most disadvantaged communities. This project will ease cost-burden on families within the Recompete area; reducing cost will also create opportunity elsewhere, contributing to economic growth citywide.

C. CAPABILITY TO IMPLEMENT: Allentown's premier childcare providers have been intentionally embedded in the planning and design of the Plan's childcare strategies; this thorough involvement will enable seamless transition from program design into implementation. Provider capacity has been well established through a robust portfolio of commitments to this Plan.^[iv] The partners identified herein are leaders in their field and are fully committed to develop accessibility to quality, child-care services.

The Allentown Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) commits to staffing a Recompete Plan Coordinator (RPC), whose primary responsibilities involve Recompete Plan implementation, assist component project management, and coordinate partner engagement.^{[v][vi]} Hiring the RPC fulfills the EDA program mandate, and it institutionalizes administrative "muscle" to ensure consistent, effective delivery of the Recompete Plan and this Component Project. Furthermore, to guide implementation of the component projects specifically included in *Strategy II: Expand Access to Needs Responsive Childcare*, the City of Allentown has secured additional support through partnership of LVCF. The RPC will engage LVCF as a premier philanthropic partner in the region's community development ecosystem.

D. REALISTIC SCOPE AND WORKPLAN: Connecting systems and providing robust, wraparound services is inherently complex, although this is the work that must be done in order to ensure families can thrive. The scope is designed to pilot interventions on a manageable scale before deepening and expanding the work. By creating clear connection points through a staffing structure, it brings clarity around how we will build infrastructure and who will be responsible for the work. Additionally, there is already a stable foundation for much of this work – the Recompete project enables the opportunity to build catalytic infrastructure and tailored community engagement into existing, ongoing work. Additionally, there is a strong governance and oversight structure that allows for proper management and flexibility as we make new discoveries.^[vii] Performance goals and metrics have been defined that will serve as benchmarks of success for this project and the overall Recompete Plan.^{[viii][ix]}

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PHASE 2 RECOMPETE PLAN | REFERENCES COMPONENT PROJECT 5

ⁱ See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Recompete Area Mapping (p3-4).

ⁱⁱ See EDA-APP#00006860_City of Allentown_Narrative (p1-2)

ⁱⁱⁱ Department of Health and Human Services recognizes 10% as the childcare cost burden threshold. See [Child Care Cost Burden*](#) | [County Health Rankings & Roadmaps](#).

^{iv} LOC INDEX

^v See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Narrative (p9)

^{vi} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown Letters of Commitment (p18-19)

^{vii} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Narrative (p9)

^{viii} Section III. Anticipated Goals and Outputs (p3)

^{ix} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Narrative (p6-7)

CITY OF ALLENTOWN

PHASE 2 RECOMPETE PLAN

STRATEGY III: Invest in Transportation Options

COMPONENT PROJECT 6: Supplement LANTA service with expanded transportation options

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Component project 6 is designed to build first-and-last mile connections and provide transportation alternatives to supplement Lehigh and Northampton Transportation Authority (LANTA) service, advancing job access and mobility choice, alongside city priorities to support walk-to-work, proximate opportunities, greenhouse gas emissions reduction, and safer streets. This project supports the City of Allentown Recompete Plan to grow a diverse, expanded, and trained workforce in order to ensure greater, more equitable participation in citywide and regional economic growth.

This strategy aligns with local and regional planning from the City of Allentown’s Public Works Department and the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission (LVPC). Allentown’s newly adopted Vision Zero resolution^[i] and U.S. DOT Safe Streets for All (SS4A) Action planning, paired with [LVPC’s 2024 Priority Climate Action Plan](#) submitted through the U.S. EPA Climate Pollution Reduction Grant Program (CPRG), lay the foundation for investments in safe and sustainable transportation. This project will create a commuter advocacy program, tasked with rider education on modal selection and advocacy of last-mile connectivity initiatives. Infrastructure initiatives include targeted small-scale investments on city streets to provide safer and more accessible access to existing transportation resources. Modal selection education will help pair individual riders with the appropriate mode choice to meet their diverse needs, helping residents to understand the costs and benefits of all options. Long-term goals recognize the power of proximity; accordingly, this component involves partner commitments to bring opportunities closer to the Recompete Area, and the adoption of a zoning code rewrite supportive of transit-oriented priorities.

This project is led by the City of Allentown and involves close collaboration with LANTA, LVPC, the Coalition for Appropriate Transportation (CAT), Community Bike Works, and Promise Neighborhoods of the Lehigh Valley (PNLV). This application requests **\$1,850,000** over a 5-year performance period to complete the scope of work prepared for this component project.

II. SCOPE OF WORK

The project proposes to supplement LANTA service by investing in the public transportation systems of the Lehigh Valley. Through aligning the City of Allentown Recompete Plan with local and regional planning efforts (e.g., LVPC Priority Climate Action Plan, Safe Streets for All Action Plan, ZONE Allentown Zoning Code Update), and supporting service and programmatic investments related to alternative modes of transportation, this component project directly combats the transportation accessibility condition of the Recompete Area PAEG. Notably, the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission has recently completed their Priority Climate Action Plan (PCAP) through the EPA Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) Program.^[ii] As the Lehigh Valley’s first-ever Priority Climate Action Plan, this plan sets the foundation for transformative regional investments to reduce transportation emissions and advance safe and sustainable transportation. The document aligns neatly with several pieces of this Recompete Plan: one, the plan’s Justice40 commitment to channel benefits to low-income, disadvantaged communities elevates Allentown’s

Recompete Area as a priority investment area; and two, by identifying integration of land use planning and transportation as a project measure, the PCAP endorses the **power of proximity**, and commits to **urbanizing opportunities**. Recognizing Allentown as a priority, 40% of the projects identified in the PCAP as either a priority bicycle commuting corridor or a catalytic project are within the city; of this regional proportion, 67% of projects intersect the Recompete Area.

Another asset, the newly designed [Allentown Transportation Center](#) (ATC), is an anchor institution prepared to activate many Recompete Plan investments.^[iii] This location serves as the Hub for LANTA's Bus Rapid Transit System, EBS ("Enhanced Bus Service"). The system's two rapid transit lines converge in the City of Allentown through the ATC, strategically located in the center of downtown, and conveniently within the Recompete Area. As such, these routes run directly through the Recompete Area and serve as the new backbone of the city's transportation network. Recompete investments will support continued bus service, and thereby promote the revitalization of the Lehigh Valley's urban core, and encourage economic activity along route corridors, like N 7th Street, Tilghman, Turner, and Chew Streets which span the Recompete Area. Consequently, to sustain our intention to urbanize opportunity, the success of the Recompete Plan hinges on the ability to meet the diverse transportation needs of residents and effectively bridge existing gaps in the transportation network.

Strategies which organize this component project scope of work include the following:

A. Partner with City of Allentown Department of Public Works to align the city's Safe Streets for All Action Plan (SS4A) with Recompete Plan priorities. The City of Allentown Department of Public Works has recently initiated its U.S. Department of Transportation funded Safe Streets for All (SS4A) Action Plan.^[iv] The city and its partners anticipate that deliverables from this strategic planning process will include project recommendations for "Complete Street" and "Traffic Calming" investment within the Recompete Area. These investments are critical enabling infrastructure projects supportive of last-mile connections, and they provide safe and accessible spaces for micro-mobility and other alternate modes of travel. "Complete Streets" are public rights-of-way (ROW) that provide dedicated space for all modes, such as cars, buses, bicycles, and pedestrians. "Traffic Calming" is the concept of using physical features to slow drivers and thus making the ROW safer for walking and biking. Focusing on the existing ROW, we can reduce vehicles speeds and provide safe and accessible bike infrastructure through traffic calming and complete street principles. These strategic infrastructure interventions will be studied over the next 12 months by the diverse, well-represented SS4A advisory committee. Ultimately, these funding opportunities will align seamlessly; Recompete component project investments will support job seekers to find employment with reliable transportation, and Public Works, and the rest of the City, will actively work to resolve complicated intersections and crossing areas to make it safer and easier for everyone to mobilize. Ensuring safety and connectivity are non-negotiable components of the City of Allentown's walk-to-work employment strategies.

B. Invest in targeted pedestrian, bicycle, and walkability focused infrastructure. Per recommendations from the SS4A plan, the City will support public ROW investments that are supportive of safety and connectivity. With the alignment of these projects, a job creation and economic development lens will be applied to the SS4A plan; Recompete priorities will inform connectivity interventions. In turn, the SS4A leadership team commits to prioritizing future implementation funds within the Recompete Area neighborhoods.^[v] Funding for these interventions will be requested primarily through the U.S. Department of Transportation FY 2025 SS4A implementation Grants, among other statewide and local funding opportunities.

C. Create a commuter advocacy program. This project will establish, and commit initial operational and programmatic funding to, a commuter advocacy program. Similar to the South-Central Pennsylvania non-profit, [Commute PA](#), this program will be tasked with rider education on modal selection and advocacy of last-mile connectivity initiatives. Commute PA engages all stakeholders within the workforce development ecosystem. Services from a program of this kind will support commuters explore transportation options beyond single-occupancy-vehicle trips and engage employers on opportunities to provide transportation incentives as an added benefit to their workplace. The partners identified in this component project commit to exploring program design of such an educational advocacy program given this funding opportunity. Partners will respond to RFQs to either scale existing programming, and/or launch new service within the Recompete Area. The commuter advocacy program will facilitate these tailored, PAEG-reductive, programmatic interventions within the Recompete Area.

D. Conduct outreach regarding modal selection and transportation choices. Partners of this project will engage in targeted outreach to Recompete Area residents to reduce information barriers and costs associated with navigating alternative transportation modes. To generate effective yields on this Plan's investment in transportation options, we must commit staff and time to sharing information, raising awareness of public transportation services, increasing language access, and promoting the economic benefits of alternative modes of transportation.

E. Operate an alternative transportation mini-grant program. This component project will establish an annual \$10,000 alternative transportation mini-grant program to support community-led, micro-mobility interventions within the Recompete Area. Awarded projects will support Recompete goals associated with urbanizing opportunity and walk-to-work priorities. Anticipated projects will include: community safety demonstrations, VRU^[vi] supportive projects, educational campaigns, pedestrian ROW design contests, etc. Grants will average \$1,000 per award.

F. Provide LANTA bus passes to Recompete Area residents. This component project will connect to strategies across the Recompete Plan to cover the costs of bus passes for Recompete Area residents who participate in any partner-provided workforce development program (i.e., skills training, career pathway, apprenticeship program, etc.).

G. Adopt transportation-oriented zoning policies. The City of Allentown has recently launched ZONE Allentown, the citywide zoning code and subdivision and land ordinance rewrite, for public comment and review. As an authorized component to the City of Allentown Recompete SDG scope of work, adopting this updated zoning code is a priority, catalytic action to the entire Plan. Per ZONE Allentown, new transit-supportive and pro-walkability zoning regulations will reshape the City of Allentown's landscape and make alternative modes of transportation more accessible.^[vii]

III. ANTICIPATED GOALS AND OUTPUTS

GOAL: Advance job access and mobility choice, alongside city priorities to prioritize walk-to-work, proximate opportunities, greenhouse gas emissions reduction, and safer streets.

Outputs include the following:

- Partner with CAT to expand presence and programming into the Wards (on-going). Establish base-line engagement in Y1 and track increased growth year-over-year.
- Join Recompete with other planning efforts (e.g., Safe Streets for All (DOT SS4A), Vision Zero) to build the connection between walk-to-work and safe streets (Y1-Y2, on-going).

- Adopt ZONE Allentown to advance mixed use development, activate neighborhoods, and densify EBS routes and major corridors (Y1).
- Explore new modes of transportation and mobility options, inclusive of bike-share, ride-share, etc. (on-going).
- Conduct direct outreach to at least 2,000 residents with the Recompete Area to raise awareness about modal selection.
- Partner with LANTA and LVPC to explore the development of commuter coordination strategies (e.g., employer sponsorships, regional coordination), modeled after Commute PA (Y1-Y2).
- Support LANTA to establish a Commuter Advocacy Program; locate programming in to-be-developed space^[viii], organize at least four (4) advocacy events in Y1, and plan more consistent engagement through Y2-Y5.
- Establish alternative transportation mini-grant program in Y1, and award \$10,000 worth of grants to community organizations each year throughout performance period.
- Provide up to 750 LANTA bus passes, each year of the performance period, to Recompete Area residents if participating in a workforce development program (on-going).

IV. RESPONSE TO EVALUATION CRITERIA

A. OVERALL VISION AND STRATEGY: Despite 90% of Recompete Area residents traveling to work outside of their neighborhood, 1 in every 3 households in this area are without a personal vehicle. Many of the employment centers – with jobs attainable to Recompete Area residents given current skills and education levels – are located within the City’s suburban and rural periphery. These places of work are not adequately served by LANTA, the regional public transportation provider. Often, not only do LANTA routes lack direct service to these places of employment, coordinating a route between one’s place of residence, place of employment, and an affordable childcare provider is burdensome, if not impossible. Consequently, most jobs in the Lehigh Valley require transportation as a condition of employment. However, the process of obtaining a vehicle can be cost-prohibitive, especially for Recompete Area residents, and long-term vehicle maintenance is a substantial economic investment. The average cost of owning and operating a car is nearly \$12,000/year; when applied to the median household income of the Recompete Area, we can assume costs account for near or exceeding 30% of vehicle-owning residents annual income.^[ix]

By providing a variety of alternative transportation options, Recompete residents will have new opportunities to secure higher wage employment. First-and-last-mile connections will ensure that individuals can conveniently and reliably commute to employment centers not adequately served by existing public transportation routes, helping individuals overcome a crucial employment barrier. Ultimately, this project supports **urbanizing opportunity** and endorses the long-term **power of proximity**. Increased travel options and reduced transportation-related burdens, especially for those in the Recompete Area, will demonstrate that these investments create a more accessible, safe, connected, and thriving community. By providing an entire suite of transportation options and incentives, this project will serve as a model for other distressed cities looking to improve opportunities for their transportation disadvantaged populations.

B. COMMITMENT TO EQUITY: A lack of vehicle availability disproportionately affects disadvantaged communities. About 7.4% of Lehigh Valley households do not have a vehicle available. However, this rate is doubled in Allentown (15.7%), and tripled within the Recompete

Area (24.7%). This project will improve variability of public transportation as an alternative transportation mode by reducing barriers, such as availability of transit stops, shelters from the elements, and reducing time burdens because of bus frequency (supply) or trip travel times (demand). Increased travel options will provide flexibility for low-income households who do not have access to a personal vehicle (i.e., zero-vehicle households).

This component project will conduct focused outreach to involve Recompete Area residents, prioritizing their feedback to further customize interventions that address transportation challenges effectively. Importantly, this plan will continue its practice of involving community partners in the planning process, engaging stakeholders in ongoing dialogue, thereby ensure long-term project success through consensus-building.

This project aligns with broader goals of promoting social equity and inclusion by targeting transportation challenges in disadvantaged neighborhoods. In connection with the city's SS4A Action Plan, informed by Vision Zero principles, this project importantly builds community safety into our equity scope. This project endorses Public Works' pursuit of safer roadways and transportation networks and is prepared to be a catalytic action in advancing the transformative journey to prioritize safety enhancements and justify essential investments as promised through the SS4A Action Plan. Project alignment combines urban design, roadway safety, and economic development; **synergy between these federal investments will create a powerful revisioning of transportation equity across the country.**

C. CAPABILITY TO IMPLEMENT: The Allentown Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) commits to staffing a Recompete Plan Coordinator (RPC), whose primary responsibilities involve Recompete Plan implementation, assist component project management, and coordinate partner engagement.^{[x][xi]} Hiring the RPC fulfills the EDA program mandate, and it institutionalizes administrative “muscle” to ensure consistent, effective delivery of the Recompete Plan and this Component Project. To guide implementation of the component projects specifically included in *Strategy III: Invest in Transportation Options*, the City of Allentown has secured additional support through partnerships of the LANTA and LVPC^{xii}. The RPC will engage LANTA and LVPC as the premier leaders in the Lehigh Valley's transportation planning ecosystem.

D. REALISTIC SCOPE AND WORKPLAN: These strategies reasonably build on the momentum generated by LANTA's growing transportation network. Recompete investments will increase ridership, **urbanize opportunity**, and enhance transportation options. Partners to this Plan are uniquely capable to guide informed, data-driven interventions given their regional authorization. LANTA and LVPC are premier partners to support the city foster equitable transportation access and deliver more streamlined connections between employees and their workplaces. While given their regional purview, Lehigh Valley's top transportation authorities are the partners best position to activate and eventually scale Recompete investments. By committing focus to Allentown's Recompete Area, the models proposed within this Plan's concentrated geographic area do allow the strategies to be tested effectively. LANTA and LVPC are critical partners to involve now, in order for plans to then be scaled over time. Throughout the performance period, there is a strong governance and oversight structure that allows for proper management and flexibility as we make new discoveries.^[xiii] Finally, performance goals and metrics have been defined that will serve as benchmarks of success.^{[xiv][xv]}

CITY OF ALLENTOWN

PHASE 2 RECOMPETE PLAN | REFERENCES COMPONENT PROJECT 6

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- ⁱ [Allentown - File #: 15-6571 \(legistar.com\)](#) (unanimously approved, 02.21.2024)
 - ⁱⁱ [A Plan to Reduce Transportation Emissions \(lvpc.org\)](#)
 - ⁱⁱⁱ See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown Letters of Commitment (p61-63)
 - ^{iv} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown Letters of Commitment (p48-49)
 - ^v See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown Letters of Commitment (p48-49)
 - ^{vi} Vulnerable Road User (VRU).
 - ^{vii} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown Letters of Commitment (p50-52)
 - ^{viii} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown Letters of Commitment (p61-63)
 - ^{ix} USDOT (2023): Average Cost of Owning and Operating an Automobile | Bureau of Transportation Statistics (bts.gov)
 - ^x See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Narrative (p9)
 - ^{xi} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown Letters of Commitment (p18-19)
 - ^{xii} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown Letters of Commitment (p82-84)
 - ^{xiii} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Narrative (p9)
 - ^{xiv} Section III. Anticipated Goals and Outputs (p3)
 - ^{xv} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Narrative (p6-7)

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PHASE 2 RECOMPETE PLAN

STRATEGY IV: Build Connections to High Opportunity Industries **COMPONENT PROJECT 7:** Accelerate AEDC Urban Sites Program

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Component project 7 is designed to accelerate the Allentown Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) Urban Sites Program by **establishing a revolving loan fund (RLF) which will support the development of small footprint, urban manufacturing sites within the Recompete Area.** Operating an RLF through this component project is a strategic approach to bringing more high-demand, small footprint manufacturing sites (30,000-80,000 sf.) online. AEDC's Urban Sites program is trusted to address the need for suitable infrastructure necessary to facilitate urban manufacturing operations, ensuring that sites are equipped to support industrial initiatives. By supporting site selection and project financing, an RLF will quicken the process for AEDC to establish new manufacturing facilities within and in close proximity to the Recompete area, thereby accelerating economic growth and high-wage job creation.

As Allentown is working to rebuild more inclusive and resilient economy, urban manufacturing will provide an anchor for equitable community development. The proposed project supports site selection and construction costs of critical enabling infrastructure. Consequently, the project streamlines the process for businesses looking to establish or expand manufacturing facilities in the area, thereby fostering economic growth and job creation. AEDC is prepared to revolve funds through an EDA Urban Sites RLF and bring 4-5 sites online during the performance period and in the near-term future. **Success of AEDC's Urban Sites program will demonstrate the staying power of manufacturing and serve as a leading model to bring small footprint manufacturing sites online in communities across the country.**

This project is led by the City of Allentown and involves close collaboration with AEDC. Additional collaborators will include the Pennsylvania Departments of Environmental Protection and Community and Economic Development (PA DEP, PA DCED), the U.S. EPA, Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation (LVEDC), and Lehigh Valley Industrial Park (LVIP). This application requests **\$3,375,000** over a 5-year performance period to complete the scope of work prepared for this component project.

II. SCOPE OF WORK

This component project is prepared to establish an EDA Urban Sites Revolving Loan Fund ("Urban Sites RLF") which will accelerate the AEDC [Urban Sites Program](#) to support small footprint, urban manufacturing sites locate within and nearby the City of Allentown Recompete Area. The project supports The City of Allentown Recompete Plan to grow a diverse, expanded, and trained workforce in order to ensure greater, more equitable participation in citywide and regional economic growth. Like many cities across America, Allentown was once filled with factories that employed thousands of its residents. Many of these sites became vacant brownfield sites, and disinvestment from the City occurred. These good-paying jobs bled into Allentown's suburban periphery.

Lehigh Valley Economic Development's (LVEDC) 2021-2024 Strategic Plan discusses focusing on the "hard-to-do" in advocating and supporting economic development in areas such as urban

asset growth and brownfield reuse. AEDC is *the* premier leader in the field of revitalizing urban manufacturing. AEDC owns, operates, or manages more than 400,000 sf. of fully occupied manufacturing space with an additional 160,000 sf. presently under development. AEDC exists as a powerful regional asset and a ready partner who is prepared to strategically meet the demand for small-footprint manufacturing space.

AEDC's Urban Sites program actively remediates and redevelops vacant underutilized sites, removing the barriers to companies wanting to locate their businesses to these sites. Accelerating the Urban Sites programs will involve the following strategies: **targeting sites** within the City of Allentown, ideally within or within close proximate the Recompete Area, supporting site selection; **acquiring sites** and conducting environmental assessments; **remediating sites**, leveraging funding from state and federal agencies; **establishing an EDA Recompete Urban Sites Revolving Loan Fund**, sustaining opportunities to bringing new urban manufacturing sites online in perpetuity; and support financing of new construction, engineering and permitting costs.

The initial target for this component project is **928 American Parkway**, a 6.75-acre site within the Wards (Recompete Area, Census Tract 4). This project specifically supports AEDC's Urban Sites and Urban Made programs. The proposed project is an ideal candidate to initiate an EDA RLF investment in. 928 American Parkway will support the following strategic themes identified on AEDC's Plan for Urban Sites: protect manufacturing sites, workforce accessible jobs, and fulfill demand for smaller spaces. The project will also serve to support the expansion of economic activity, job creation and wage growth identified as a strategic theme under the Urban Made program of AEDC. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is supporting this project with their Targeted Brownfields Assessment (TBA) program as Phase 1 is already underway. Following the success of 928 American Parkway, AEDC has a list of 4-5 additional sites, which the city already maintains some level of site control over, that are on its radar to redevelop.

Long in a period of decline, the City of Allentown and AEDC is committed to cleaning up Brownfield sites and bringing manufacturing jobs to city residents. Redevelopment of contaminated properties has been part of that commitment. Brownfields sites will provide business and industry with the opportunity to locate near customers, potential employees, and transportation routes. The potential for projects to generate hundreds of jobs is one of the most compelling arguments in support of brownfields. AEDC's Urban Sites program will help ensure that no one is left behind in today's economic expansion.

Effective collaboration will help create efficient utilization of resources to expedite site selection and construction processes. AEDC currently works closely with the City of Allentown, Allentown Commercial and Industrial Development Authority (ACIDA), LVEDC, and the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission (LVPC). These partners understand, and are committed to, the development of these complex sites and to bringing manufacturing jobs into the City of Allentown.

III. ANTICIPATED GOALS AND OUTPUTS

GOAL: Establish an EDA Recompete Urban Sites Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) that will support site selection and project financing, accelerating the AEDC Urban Sites Program to establish new manufacturing facilities within and in close proximity to the Recompete area.

Overall project outputs include the following:

- Revolve \$3,000,000 through the EDA Urban Sites Revolving Loan Fund.

- Support the development of 4 Urban Sites projects over the 5-year performance period, aiming to create at least 100 jobs accessible to Recompete Area residents.
- Fulfill the regional demand for small-footprint manufacturing spaces (30,000-80,000 sf.); measure change in the vacancy rate for industrial space, relative to the current rate of 4.3%. This will be the performance baseline for the purpose of this performance-period.
- Reduce the cycle time for project completion, accelerating the timeline to bring urban manufacturing sites online.
- Grow the inventory list of future projects beyond the 4-5 currently identified; this is an ongoing task as the EDA Urban Sites RLF is maintained.
- Generate more workforce accessible, living wage jobs for residents in the city, in particular the Recompete Area; this project will measure change in the Recompete Area median household income and per-capita wages relative to their respective project baselines of approximately \$43,000 per household and \$17,500 per capita.

Outputs and goals specific to the 928 American Parkway project include the following:

- Engage EDA Urban Sites RLF loan to support project development, ultimately constructing a 50,000-80,000 sf. industrial building by mid-2025.
- Create approximately 30 new manufacturing jobs for Allentown residents, specifically good-paying, walkable jobs for residents of Census Tract 4.
- Project Milestones / Timeline:

2024			2025	
Q2	Q3	Q4	Q2	Q3
Engineering, Site Characterization	Remediation	Site acquisition, utility extensions	Roadway construction (by others)	Building development

IV. RESPONSE TO EVALUATION CRITERIA

A. OVERALL VISION AND STRATEGY: Working in partnership with AEDC, the project accelerates the revitalization of vacant and underutilized sites, transforming them into viable locations for manufacturing enterprises. This project directly targets the historical disinvestment that happened in Allentown taking manufacturing to the suburbs. Importantly, the plan aligns with the power of proximity, as these jobs will be walkable to residents and/or readily accessible by LANTA Enhanced Bus Service routes (EBS). Allentown's Vision 2030 Neighborhood Plan for the 1st and 6th wards found that the manufacturing sector was the second largest employer of residents (15.2%). However, to be employed, 90% of Recompete Area residents must travel to work outside of their neighborhood – a hurdle for many families, when 1 in every 3 households is without a personal vehicle. This project promotes accessible and *local* manufacturing jobs which is a priority for the City as Allentown continues to have a higher unemployment rate than the surrounding region. Like the 928 American Parkway site, projects will be prioritized when they are located within the Recompete Area.

According to Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation's Q3 2022 Commercial Real Estate Report, the vacancy rate for industrial space is at a low 4.3% in the Lehigh Valley. AEDC's Urban Sites Program is working to provide more small footprint industrial spaces in the 30,000-80,000 square foot range to help overcome this shortage. Helping cure the vacancy shortage in turn provides more manufacturing jobs for the residents of Allentown. As Allentown is working

to rebuild more inclusive and resilient economy, urban manufacturing will provide an anchor for equitable community development. Manufacturing creates quality jobs that foster economic well-being by providing living-wage incomes and opportunities for career mobility. The average annual wage for Lehigh Valley manufacturing jobs in highest demand is \$64,134, **nearly 50% higher** than the current Recompete Area median household income.^[i] The challenge, however, is ensuring that the prime-age unemployed are able to connect to these high-wage, high-priority opportunities. In this way, component project 7 is supported by, and supports in turn, the component projects that compose *Strategy I: Facilitate Local Employment*. The relationship between Component Project 7 and Component Projects 1-3 strongly demonstrates the mission of the overall Recompete Plan to effectively remove barriers to prime-age employment *and* build connections to high-opportunity industries. Simultaneous investments in growing a skilled workforce and increasing the stock of small footprint manufacturing sites mutually reinforce each other; these strategies coordinate to meet the demand for urban manufacturing, supplying both new sites and new workers.

Component Project 7 is a critical piece of *Strategy IV: Build Connections to High Opportunity Industries*. By accelerating AEDC's Urban Sites program, this project will create more manufacturing jobs that are walkable for residents. Manufacturing is the 3rd highest leading employment sector in the Lehigh Valley and is responsible for 30% of regional job growth over the last 5 years.^[ii] LVEDC's Hot Careers Dashboard also shows that some manufacturing roles only require a certification or specialized training and offer salaries ranging from \$47,700-\$78,900. For every resident that obtains a manufacturing role, that household income raises to meet or exceed the median household income in the City of Allentown. The median household income in Allentown in 2022 was \$52,449.^[iii]

Component Project 7 additionally aligns with, and informs, tenets of ZONE Allentown. The city is boldly transitioning away from rigid Euclidian zoning to a growth-oriented, modernized, form-based code, with the projected goals of growing Allentown's housing supply and affordability, support walkable neighborhoods and transit-oriented development, and **unconventionally, maintain the city's history and identity of a manufacturing economy.**^[iv]

Reviewing individual projects completed through the Urban Sites program, many are positive examples for other distressed communities. The Urban Sites program is proof that the hardest urban projects can be accomplished. An EDA RLF will scale AEDC's evidenced success.

B. COMMITMENT TO EQUITY: As Allentown is working to rebuild a more inclusive and resilient economy, urban manufacturing will provide an anchor for equitable community development. Manufacturing creates quality jobs that foster economic well-being by providing living-wage incomes and opportunities for career mobility. Strategically located projects will create more local, good paying jobs. Therefore, this strategy commits to equitable outcomes in both advancing the power of proximity and alleviating environmental burdens within the City of Allentown and the Recompete Area.

Brownfields are an issue of social justice and environmental equity. Across America and in Allentown, Brownfield sites are typically in closer proximity to more communities of color, more low-income, and more linguistically isolated populations. Several of Allentown's Brownfields are located in close proximity to Recompete Area neighborhoods which are home to predominantly communities of color and low-income residents. Polluting industries and businesses were frequently allowed to locate in these areas, despite the potential health and safety threat posed to

residents. Historically lacking the financial resources or political clout, low-income, communities of color neighbor facilities that would not have been allowed to locate in other, more affluent and whiter areas. The contaminated sites in these communities must be cleaned up properly and redeveloped into non-polluting, employment-generating land uses. Supporting economic growth, addressing environmental issues and empowering Allentown's Environmental Justice (EJ) communities have been concerns and issues that AEDC has committed to addressing through its Urban Sites program.

C. CAPABILITY TO IMPLEMENT: With 45 years in existence, AEDC has a proven track record with over 27 projects completed totaling 91+ acres that have been returned to productive use in Allentown, **AEDC has extensive knowledge and experience in urban development, rehabilitating properties, and remediating brownfield sites.**^v South 10th Street and multiple other AEDC projects that are completed and on-going are evidence that bringing urban manufacturing jobs to residents and elevating the economic status of Allentown's Black and brown communities is possible. Completed AEDC projects that are specific to manufacturing total over 500,000 sf. include: **Allentown Metal Works** 11-year project for AEDC, \$40+ million-dollar project, new owner will occupy two buildings totaling over 160,000 square feet creating at least 80 new manufacturing jobs for Allentown residents; **Bridgeworks by the Creek** 87,500 square foot building, \$6 million dollar project constructed by AEDC, supporting 150+ jobs; **Bridgeworks Enterprise Center** 64,000 square foot industrial building redeveloped by AEDC-now houses AEDC office but is also a manufacturing small business incubator run by AEDC established in 1989. Over 70 companies have been through the program since establishment with job creation increasing yearly; **Plant #1** Renovation of 263,00 square foot vacant manufacturing building into multi-tenant industrial building by AEDC (units are approximately 24,000 sq. Ft.) with 44,000 square feet of high bay crane operating space. Since 2012, AEDC has helped the city revolve \$948,000 in EPA Brownfields RLF dollars, cleaning up 22.5 acres and leading to more than \$50 million in development.^[vi]

Furthermore, AEDC commits to staffing a Recompete Plan Coordinator (RPC), whose primary responsibilities involve Recompete Plan implementation, assist component project management, and coordinate partner engagement.^{[vii][viii]} Hiring the RPC fulfills the EDA program mandate, and it institutionalizes administrative "muscle" to ensure consistent, effective delivery of the Recompete Plan and this Component Project.

D. REALISTIC SCOPE AND WORKPLAN: This scope of work reflects the proven process that AEDC utilizes to complete projects and return them to productive use. Accordingly, the City of Allentown is confident that an Urban Sites RLF is a strong, stable investment to be made now and continuing beyond the 5-year performance period. The City and AEDC are prepared to track and report metrics for this project and the other identified in the near-future: cycle time for project completion, # of acres returned to productive use, # of buildings/ sq ft developed, # of jobs created, real estate taxes from AEDC projects, acreage of Brownfield sites remediated, and other economic activity generated from the project. Historical partnership between the City of Allentown and AEDC strongly underwrite each entity's ability to execute this Plan and adapt where necessary. The Urban Sites program is an Allentown hallmark deserving up EDA championship through reinvestment and up-scaling. Per this component narrative and the Draft RLF documents^[ix] submitted through this competition, support our team demonstrate the power of American manufacturing.

CITY OF ALLENTOWN

PHASE 2 RECOMPETE PLAN | REFERENCES COMPONENT PROJECT 7

ⁱ [High Priority Occupations \(HPOs\)](#) (PA Center for Workforce Information and Analysis, 2023).

ⁱⁱ [LVEDC 2023 Annual Report](#)

ⁱⁱⁱ See ([ACS 2018-2022](#))

^{iv} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Letters of Commitment (p50-52)

^v EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Leadership Team (p22)

^{vi} EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Letters of Commitment (p18-19)

^{vii} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Narrative (p9)

^{viii} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown Letters of Commitment (p18-19)

^{ix} EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_RLF Documents

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PHASE 2 RECOMPETE PLAN

STRATEGY IV: Build Connections to High-Opportunity Industries

COMPONENT PROJECT 8: Integrate regional health network training and career pathway programs

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Component project 8 is designed to develop healthcare career pathway solutions by leveraging connections across the Lehigh Valley’s major health networks, community colleges, and local 2-4yr universities. Through **engaging the region’s largest employers**, this proposal establishes a flexible host of program offerings which invest in, upskill, and connect Recompete Area residents with good paying jobs in healthcare. Program design will elevate career pathways to positions like nurse’s aides, emergency medical technicians, and community health workers. This pilot deconstructs industry and network silos and facilitates clear entry points into the workforce for Recompete Area residents. Strong infrastructure within the Recompete Areaⁱ, like the joint-venture St. Luke’s University Health Network – Hispanic Center of the Lehigh Valley **Linguistic and Cultural Workforce Development Center** and the Workforce Board Lehigh Valley (WBLV) PA Career Link Center within St. Luke’s Sacred Heart Campus, will be engaged to advance program reach. Activating anchor institutions of the Recompete Area ensures continuation of services throughout and beyond the performance period, providing a permanent and sustainable workforce service structure.

This project is led by the City of Allentown and involves close collaboration with the WBLV, Lehigh Valley Health Network (LVHN), St. Luke’s University Health Network (SLUHN), Good Shepherd Rehabilitation Hospital (GSRH), Hispanic Center of the Lehigh Valley (HCLV), Lehigh Carbon Community College (LCCC), Cedar Crest College, DeSales University, Pennsylvania College of Technology (PCT), and the Century Promise. This application requests **\$1,850,000** over a 5-year performance period to complete the scope of work prepared for this component project.

II. SCOPE OF WORK

Fostering partnerships between healthcare providers and educational institutions, the project seeks to facilitate transitions for individuals seeking employment in the healthcare industry. These collaborations ensure that prospective employees receive the necessary training and support to pursue careers in healthcare effectively. The success of this initiative relies on strong collaboration between healthcare organizations and educational institutions. By aligning training programs with the needs of the local healthcare industry, the project contributes to the development of a skilled workforce and enhances employment opportunities in the healthcare sector.

The proposed project supports local health network training and career pathway programs through partnerships with three local hospitals. These partnerships involve collaborating with two major hospital systems and one rehabilitation center to provide specialized training and career development opportunities. Healthcare facilities within and in close proximity to the Recompete Area already have specific training programs in place for their employees, but prospective workers may require additional skill training from local community colleges or technical institutes. This component of *Strategy IV: Build Connections to High-Opportunity Industries* aims to bridge this gap by offering a flexible host of program offerings which invest in, upskill, and connect Recompete Area residents with good paying jobs in healthcare.

Strategies which organize this component project scope of work include the following:

A. Build a “Learn-to-Earn” career pathway model. Recompete Area residents will connect with educational opportunities including, but not limited to the following: career counseling services, short-term certificates, accelerated college coursework, etc. Each of these offerings are designed to build understanding and awareness of various career pathways within the healthcare sector, and place Recompete Area residents on a pathway to employment with higher wages in a high-priority profession^[ii]. The “Learn-to-Earn” model designed through this Recompete program will expand on historical collaboration between major health networks (e.g., LVHN, SLUHN, Good Shepherd) and institute of higher education (e.g., DeSales University^[iii], Cedar Crest College^[iv]). For example, LVHN pathway programs have engaged over 700 people since 2022, contributing a robust supply of talent to the Lehigh Valley workforce.^[v] Programs like these will be leveraged to the Recompete Plan and will be specifically tailored to engage prime-age Recompete Area residents. Pre- and post-programmatic investments will be made in Recompete Area residents who enroll in any partner-provided career pathway. These supportive investments to program participants will include waived enrollment costs and one-time payments awarded upon completion of the program.

B. Support the joint-ventured St. Luke’s University Health Network and Hispanic Center Lehigh Valley Linguistic and Cultural Workforce Development Center. This project will engage the SLUHN-HCLV Linguistic and Cultural Workforce Development Center^[vi] (the Center) and Workforce Board Lehigh Valley (WBLV) as anchor institutions and trusted community resources. Programming through the Center, hosted at St. Luke’s Sacred Heart campus – in the center of the Recompete Area – will demonstrate the **power of proximity**, being a conveniently located hub for workforce development geared toward high-priority healthcare professions, and needs-responsive career readiness training. The Center promotes cultural competency, supports linguistic development, and provides equitable employment opportunities for participants. Supporting residents with comprehensive, bilingual assistance aligns with Recompete Plan objectives to grow a diverse and expanded workforce. Training through SLUHN will actualize this principle, meeting demand of local employers while paying living wages along the way.

C. Invest in training a network of community health workers. Recompete Area residents will be supported to pursue Community Health Worker (CHW) training through [PA Area Health Education Center](#) (PA AHEC). This represents a targeted workforce development strategy for building connections to the healthcare industry, that will accrue benefits within the Recompete Area beyond the project’s five-year performance period. Studies show that community health worker programs generate positive returns on investment, where every \$1.00 invested in a CHW returns \$2.47 to an average Medicaid payer within the fiscal year.^[vii] CHWs will serve as a liaison between communities and healthcare organizations, provide guidance and social assistance to community residents, advocate for individuals and community health, provide referrals, coordinate follow-up services, etc. They are trusted intermediaries between resident and health network, and function similarly to the Recompete Resource Navigators (RRNs) created through Component Project 1 of the Recompete Plan. This strategy incentivizes and rewards completion of CHW training through PA AHEC. Pre- and post-programmatic investments will be made in Recompete Area residents who pursue PA EHEC training. These supportive investments to program participants will include waived enrollment costs and one-time payments awarded upon completion of the training.

D. Incentivize healthcare skills training and career pathways. Recompete dollars will waive program enrollment costs, removing any financial burden that may pose a barrier to entry into these training opportunities. This project also commits investment to digitizing components of course delivery, providing some flexibility desired by Recompete Area residents to participate in skills development around *their* schedule as opposed to balancing opportunities costs associated with traditional models.

E. Expand healthcare career pathways and training programming. This project will support healthcare partners to develop career readiness and job training programming. Preferred programs have been documented through the Letters of Commitment to this Plan.^[viii] Funding will facilitate tailored, PAEG-reductive, programmatic interventions within the Recompete Area. Partners will respond to RFQs to (1) tailor existing programs to (1a) explicitly engage prime-age unemployed, Recompete Area residents, and (1b) advance the City of Allentown Recompete Plan strategic goals, (2) scale existing programming, and/or (3) launch a new service within the Recompete Area.

III. ANTICIPATED GOALS AND OUTPUTS

GOAL: Develop healthcare pathway solutions that generate industry awareness among residents within the Recompete area, building and scaling pathway initiatives and inclusive talent acquisition programs, and ensuring coordination across organizations.

Outputs include the following:

- Establish a host of program offerings that institutionalize connections across health networks, community colleges, and local 2-4yr colleges and universities.
- Build upon articulation agreements between partners; measure growth relative to baseline number of agreements.
- Invest in a network of community health workers (CHWs); support 10 Recompete Area residents complete training each year over the 5-year performance period (50 by 2030).
- Provide financial flexibility to the program participant through waived enrollment costs in order to remove barriers to entry into the workforce, skills training, etc. Support 40 Recompete Area residents enroll in partner-provided training each year, over the 5-year performance period (200 by 2030).
- Further incentivize healthcare skills and career pathways through one-time payments awarding program completion. Award 40 one-time payments each year, over the 5-year performance period (\$200,000 by 2030).

IV. RESPONSE TO EVALUATION CRITERIA

A. OVERALL VISION AND STRATEGY: The strategies outlined in this proposal supports the City of Allentown Recompete Plan objective to grow a diverse, expanded, and trained workforce in order to ensure greater, more equitable participation in citywide and regional economic growth. This project will engage the region's largest employers to facilitate connections into the Lehigh Valley's largest economic sector. Partnerships across health networks, institutions of post-secondary education (inclusive of private 2-4yr college and universities, technical school, and community colleges), and workforce development organizations will establish a flexible host of program offerings which invest in, upskill, and connect Recompete Area residents with good paying jobs in healthcare. Convening local partners with anchor institutions will unlock new points of access for Recompete Area residents to receive career training and skills development in a good-

paying, local, and high-opportunity industry. Centering high-priority professions, like those in healthcare, in workforce development training demonstrates how component project 8 is supported by, and supports in turn, the component projects that compose *Strategy I: Facilitate Local Employment*. The relationship between Component Project 8 and Component Projects 1-3 strongly evidences the mission of the overall Recompete Plan to effectively remove barriers to prime-age employment *and* build connections to high-opportunity industries.

B. COMMITMENT TO EQUITY: The commitment to equity in this initiative is fundamental to its strategies and partnerships, aiming to empower residents within the Recompete Area by providing equitable access to training and employment opportunities in the healthcare sector. Through collaborations with major health networks, educational institutions, and community organizations, the project ensures that individuals from diverse backgrounds receive the necessary support to pursue careers in healthcare. Efforts are focused on addressing barriers faced by marginalized communities, such as language barriers and economic constraints, by leveraging assets like the SLUHN-HCLV Linguistic and Cultural Workforce Development Center providing culturally competent training and employment services to underserved populations.

Waiving enrollment costs and providing financial incentives for program completion helps remove financial barriers hindering access to career advancement opportunities. By emphasizing community engagement and feedback collection, the project remains responsive to the needs of Recompete Area residents. Actively involving community members in the planning process and fostering ongoing dialogue with stakeholders ensures tailored interventions that effectively address transportation challenges and promote social equity and inclusion within the community.

Overall, the project's comprehensive approach to workforce development reflects a strong commitment to equity, striving to create a more inclusive healthcare workforce that mirrors the diversity of the community it serves. Through targeted outreach, culturally responsive programming, and ongoing collaboration, the project aims to break down barriers and establish pathways to success for all residents within the Recompete Area, irrespective of background or circumstances.

C. CAPABILITY TO IMPLEMENT: Premier health networks (LVHN, SLUHN), educational institutions, and community organizations are embedded in the development and implementation of this component project. Involved in implementing this project are deeply committed and highly experienced in providing training for healthcare positions. These institutions have facilities located in the Recompete Area which this Plan will engage as Recompete programming anchors. and they understand career pathways and they are eager to provide solutions.

The Allentown Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) commits to staffing a Recompete Plan Coordinator (RPC), whose primary responsibilities involve Recompete Plan implementation, assist component project management, and coordinate partner engagement.^{[ix][x]} Hiring the RPC fulfills the EDA program mandate, and it institutionalizes administrative “muscle” to ensure consistent, effective delivery of the Recompete Plan and this Component Project. To guide implementation of the component projects specifically included in *Strategy IV: Build Connections to High-Opportunity Industries*, the City of Allentown has secured additional support through partnership of WBLV. The RPC will engage WBLV as a premier partner in the region’s workforce development ecosystem and leverage their expertise to facilitate connections between regional health networks, institutes of higher education, and Recompete Area residents.

WBLV and its PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley workforce delivery system contributes a one-stop comprehensive training, education, supportive services, and employment system charged with increasing the knowledge, skills and abilities of our workforce, with a targeted approach to enhancing numeracy, literacy, customer service, occupational skills training, and educational attainment, all leading to career pathway options for job seekers in our region’s most at-risk, underserved and under-represented urban areas such as the City of Allentown. WBLV is committed fiscally, systematically, and programmatically to skills-based organizations to increase occupational and skills training and thereby improve the educational achievement of our region’s workforce.

D. REALISTIC SCOPE AND WORKPLAN: Connecting Recompete Area residents to meaningful employment requires tailored interventions be made within an ultra-specific area (relative to the vast reach of regional Health Networks). Needs of the prime-age unemployed population, particularly within Allentown, are susceptible to be declassified as “niche” or lesser-tier investment priority. Notably, this is **not** the case among Lehigh Valley healthcare providers and this Plan’s public, private, and non-profit partners. Two major health networks, Lehigh Valley (LVHN) and St. Luke’s (SLUHN) employ tens of thousands of workers within the Lehigh Valley. The magnitude of their presence is tangibly felt through facilities across the region, including three in or nearby the Recompete Area. Proximity is powerful to the feasibility of this Plan’s goals to connect residents to meaningful opportunity. As established through strong letters of commitment to this Plan, LVHN and SLUHN manage a robust portfolio of programmatic assets which they are prepared to leverage as part of this component project.^{[xi][xii]}

This work scope is strong because it builds upon this robust portfolio of assets. Integrating regional assets, educational programming, and skills-building will advance coordinated service delivery into the Recompete Area. This integration model will be insulated from large-scale risk as it will be designed for a concentrated geographic area (i.e., Recompete Area). Success of this integration model will inspire broader application. Risk is further mitigated because this Recompete Plan establishes a strong governance and oversight structure that allows for proper management and flexibility as we make new discoveries.^[xiii] Finally, performance goals and metrics have been defined that will serve as benchmarks of success.^{[xiv][xv]}

CITY OF ALLENTOWN

PHASE 2 RECOMPETE PLAN, REFERENCES COMPONENT PROJECT 8

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- ⁱ See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Recompete Area Mapping (p3-4).
- ⁱⁱ [High Priority Occupations \(HPOs\)](#) (PA Center for Workforce Information and Analysis, 2023).
- ⁱⁱⁱ See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown Letters of Commitment (p56-57)
- ^{iv} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown Letters of Commitment (p42-43)
- ^v See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown Letters of Commitment (p78-81)
- ^{vi} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown Letters of Commitment (p108-109)
- ^{vii} Kangovi, S., et. al. (2020). Evidence-Based Community Health Worker Program Addresses Unmet Social Needs and Generates Positive Return on Investment. *Culture of Health, Health Affairs*, 39(2), 207-213.
- ^{viii} LOC INDEX
- ^{ix} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Narrative (p9)
- ^x See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown Letters of Commitment (p18-19)
- ^{xi} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown Letters of Commitment (p78-81)
- ^{xii} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown Letters of Commitment (p108-109)
- ^{xiii} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Narrative (p9)
- ^{xiv} Section III. Anticipated Goals and Outputs (p3)
- ^{xv} See EDA-APP#00006709_City of Allentown_Narrative (p6-7)

CITY OF ALLENTOWN

PHASE 2 RECOMPETE PLAN

RECOMPETE AREA MAPPING



RECOMPETE

PILOT PROGRAM | U.S. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

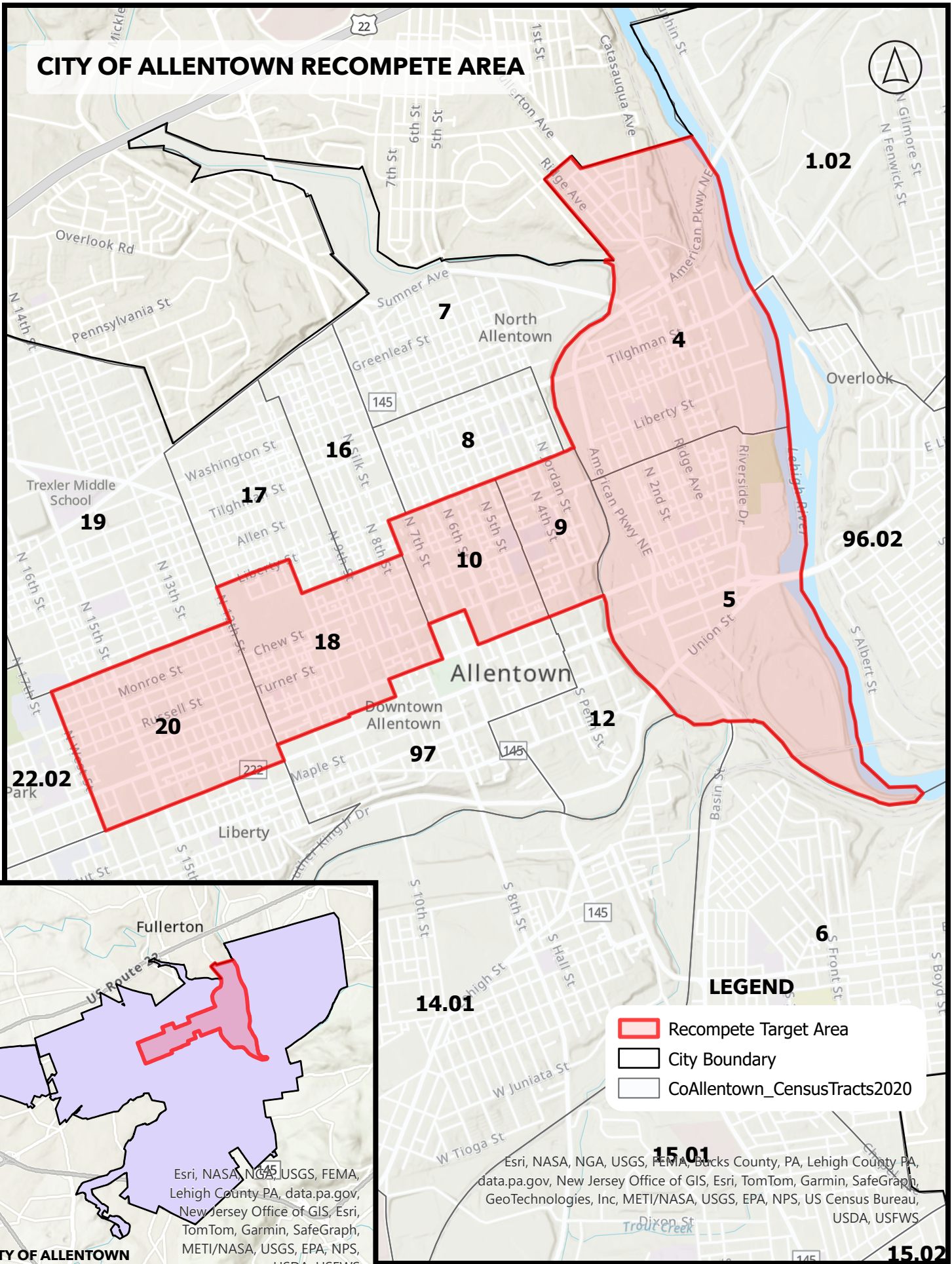
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ALLENTOWN, PA SERVICE AREA

APPLICANT ORGANIZATION NAME	PROJECT NAME	NAME OF SERVICE AREA	STATE OF SERVICE AREA	SERVICE AREA TYPE	SERVICE AREA GEO-ID
CITY OF ALLENTOWN	CITY OF ALLENTOWN RECOMPETE PLAN	CENSUS TRACT 4, LEHIGH COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA	PA	TRACT	42077000400
CITY OF ALLENTOWN	CITY OF ALLENTOWN RECOMPETE PLAN	CENSUS TRACT 5, LEHIGH COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA	PA	TRACT	42077000500
CITY OF ALLENTOWN	CITY OF ALLENTOWN RECOMPETE PLAN	CENSUS TRACT 9, LEHIGH COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA	PA	TRACT	42077000900
CITY OF ALLENTOWN	CITY OF ALLENTOWN RECOMPETE PLAN	CENSUS TRACT 10, LEHIGH COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA	PA	TRACT	42077001000
CITY OF ALLENTOWN	CITY OF ALLENTOWN RECOMPETE PLAN	CENSUS TRACT 18, LEHIGH COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA	PA	TRACT	42077001800
CITY OF ALLENTOWN	CITY OF ALLENTOWN RECOMPETE PLAN	CENSUS TRACT 20, LEHIGH COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA	PA	TRACT	42077002000

CITY OF ALLENTOWN RECOMPETE AREA



LEGEND

- Recompete Target Area
- City Boundary
- CoAllentown_CensusTracts2020

Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS, FEMA, Bucks County, PA, Lehigh County PA, data.pa.gov, New Jersey Office of GIS, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, SafeGraph, GeoTechnologies, Inc, METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, US Census Bureau, USDA, USFWS

CITY OF ALLENTOWN

CITY OF ALLENTOWN RECOMPETE PLAN | RECOMPETE AREA MAP

THE CITY OF ALLENTOWN RECOMPETE AREA is defined by Census Tracts 4, 5, 9, 10, 18 and 20.

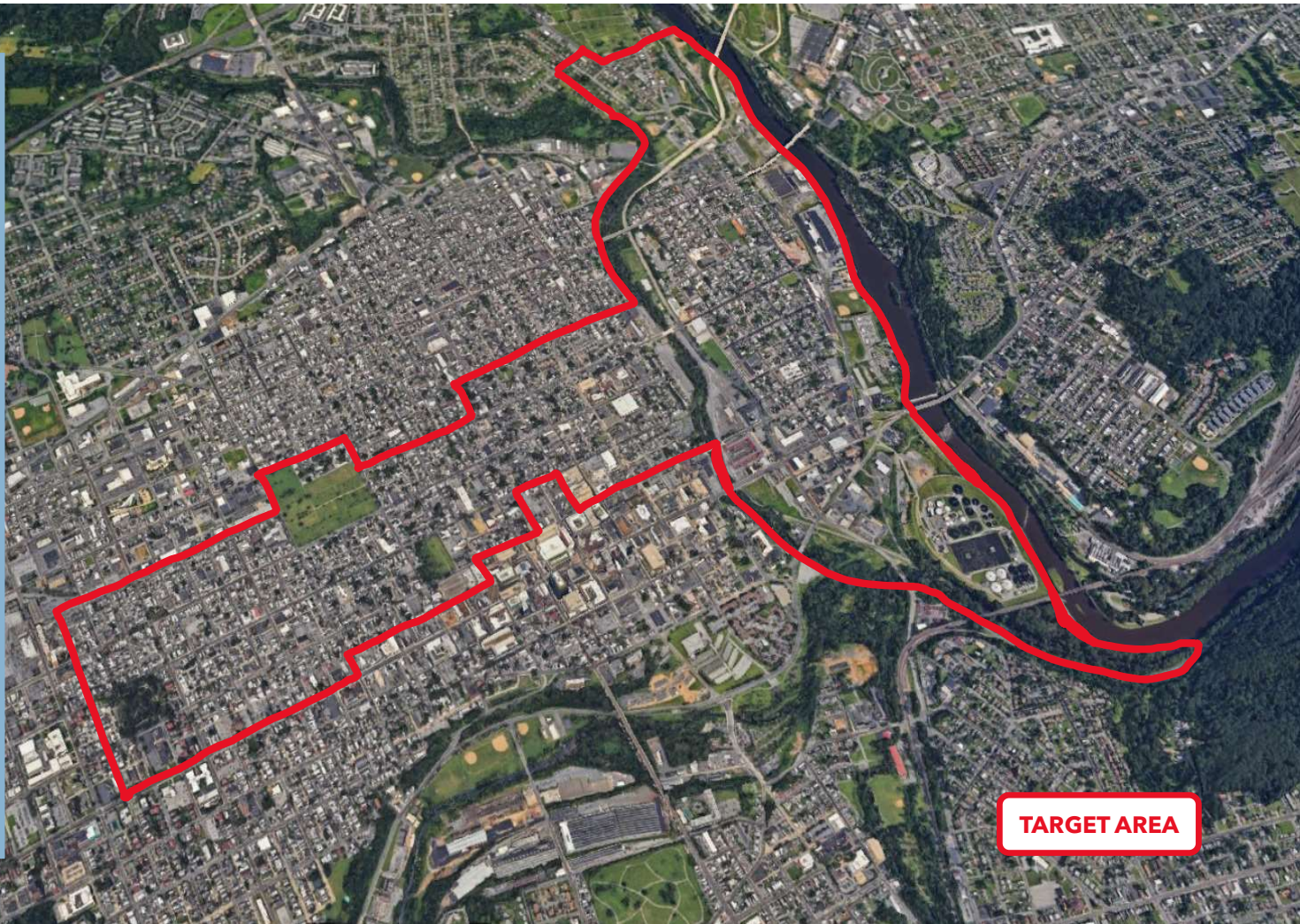
These neighborhoods are known as the Wards, Center City, and Franklin Park.

The total population of this area is 23,152 (2022 ACS 5yr). Around 40% of residents are between the ages of 25-54 years old. The PAEG population is estimated to be **1,122** (12.1%).

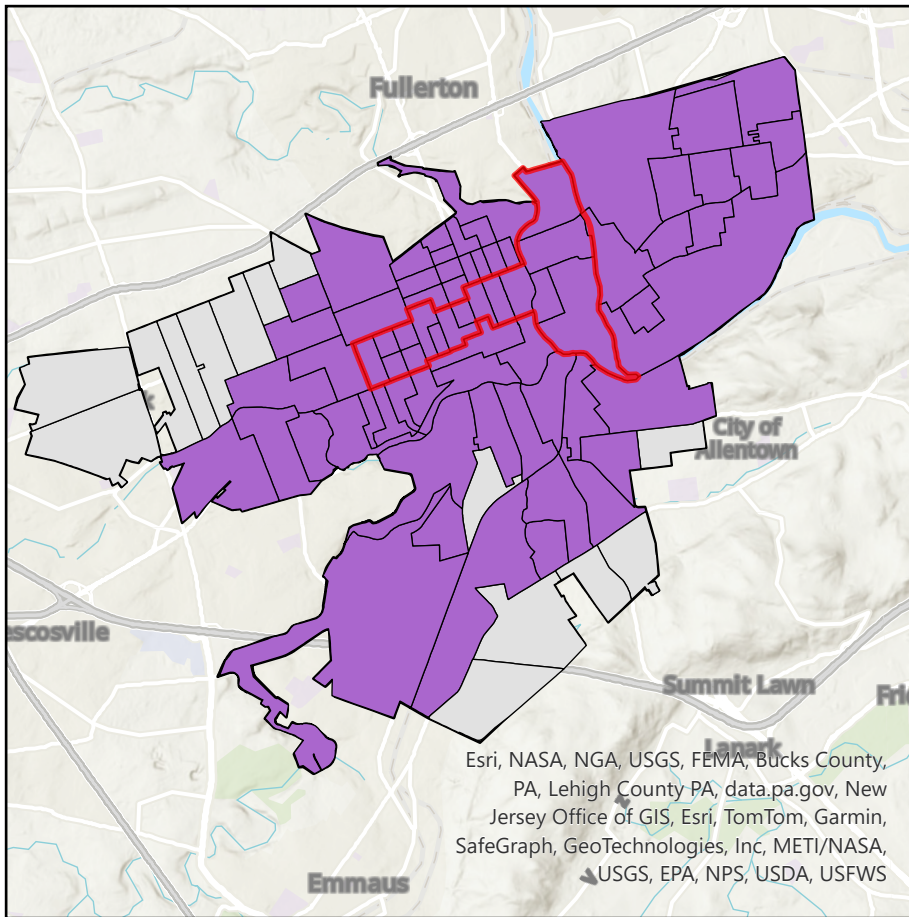


RECOMPETE

PILOT PROGRAM | U.S. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION



TARGET AREA



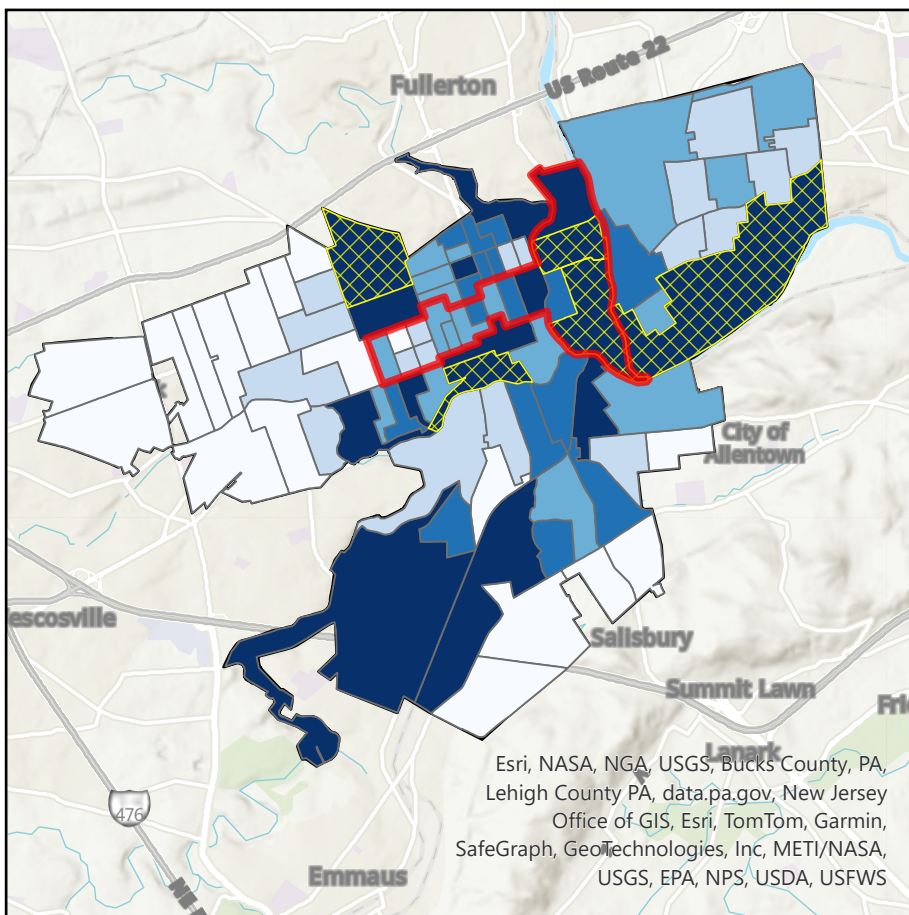
Environmental_Justice_Areas_COA

EJ AREA

- no
- yes

An EJ Area has been defined as any census tract where 20 percent or more individuals live at or below the federal poverty line, and/or 30 percent or more of the population identifies as a non-white minority.

PA Department of Environmental Protection (2023)



Environmental_Justice_Areas_COA

PERCENTILE SCORE

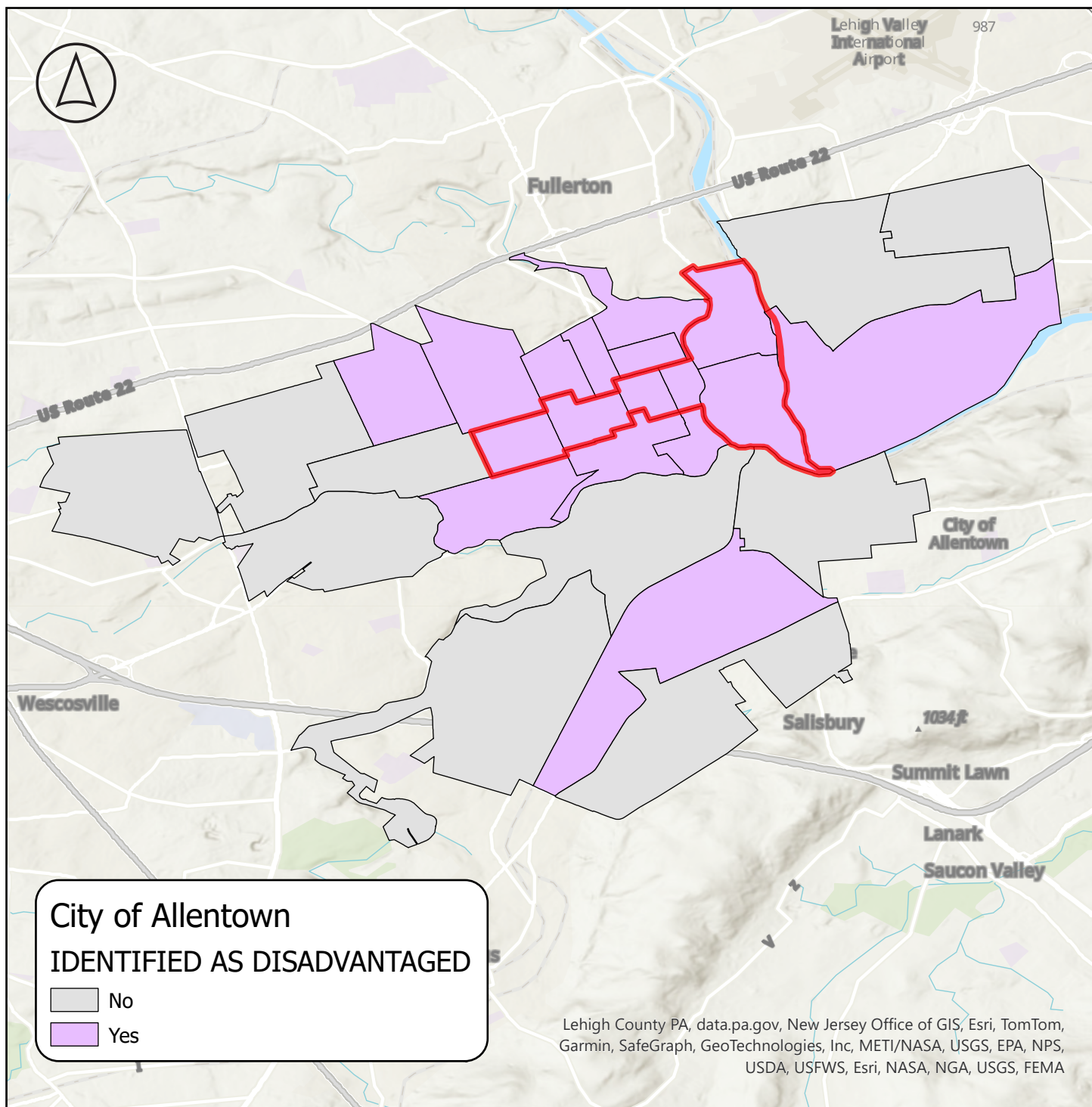
- 45 - 81
- 82 - 89
- 90 - 93
- 94 - 96
- 97 - 100

PA Highest Burdened Communities

- PA Highest Burdened Communities

The Pennsylvania Environmental Justice Mapping and Screening Tool identifies communities facing environmental justice issues using more than 30 environmental, health, and socioeconomic indicators.

PA Department of Environmental Protection (2023)



Census tracts that are overburdened and underserved are highlighted as being disadvantaged on the map. Tracts are considered disadvantaged if they meet more than one burden threshold and the associated socioeconomic threshold. Burden thresholds include: climate change, energy, health, housing, legacy pollution, transportation, water and wastewater, and workforce development.

(Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool, 2024)



DATA SOURCE: Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool
(screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/#11.64/40.6039/-75.4792)

