



## **An Examination of the Pennsylvania Veterans Employment Program Grant**

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## Executive Summary

The VETERANetwork<sup>1</sup> within the Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at Penn State (Clearinghouse) examined the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry's (L&I) Veterans Employment Program (VEP) grant to gain an in-depth understanding of programs funded by the grant and the impact of these programs on veterans in the Commonwealth. VEP grant funds are intended to support organizations that provide services to address veteran employment barriers. The information in the report was obtained via Right to Know Requests (RTK) submitted to L&I.

This report describes the grant application process, selection criteria, and reporting requirements, and then presents the awarded grant program descriptions, budgets, and performance data. Data from eight program grants that operated during Program Year (PY) 2021 (April 1, 2022 – December 31, 2023) and PY 2022 (April 1, 2023 – December 31, 2024) were examined. The tables below display each grantee, the amount they were awarded, the location of their services, the proposed number of veterans to be included in their programming, the number of veterans who enrolled in their program, and the number of veterans who completed the program. For PY 2021, the following four organizations received a total of \$785,364 in funding: Educational Data Systems, Inc. (EDSI), Lackawanna Workforce Development Board (WDB), NuPaths, Inc., and Private Industry Council of Westmoreland-Fayette (PIC). For PY 2022, the following four organizations received \$737,671 in funding: Delaware County Community College (DCCC), EDSI, NuPaths, and the Veterans Leadership Program (VLP).

### *VEP Grant Awardees for Program Years 2021 & 2022*

Organization name and type	Grant amount	Location of services	Proposed number of veterans enrolled	Number of veterans enrolled	Services provided and number employed	Cost per veteran hire
<b>PY 2021</b>						
EDSI For-profit	\$200,000	Delaware County	40	10	10 were provided career services --- 3 were employed	\$66,666
Lackawanna WDB Local WDB	\$192,332	Lackawanna County	35	53	53 received employment counseling --- 17 obtained unsubsidized job offers	\$11,313
NuPaths For-profit	\$199,998	Initially Beaver, Delaware, Fayette Counties. Expanded statewide	24	24	12 graduated --- 4 were employed	\$49,999

<sup>1</sup> VETERANetwork = Veterans Research and Evaluation Network.

Organization name and type	Grant amount	Location of services	Proposed number of veterans enrolled	Number of veterans enrolled	Services provided and number employed	Cost per veteran hire
PIC Non-profit	\$193,034	Fayette and Westmoreland Counties	36	18	16 completed training --- 5 were employed	\$38,606
<b>PY 2022</b>						
DCCC Community College	\$137,692	Delaware and Chester Counties	30	25	17 courses were completed --- Number employed was unknown	Unknown
EDSI For-profit	\$200,000	Delaware County	40	40	40 were provided career services and 64 supportive services were delivered --- 17 were employed	\$11,764
NuPaths For-profit	\$199,979	Beaver, Clearfield, Delaware, Fayette, Lackawanna and Lycoming Counties	24	24	12 completed programs --- 7 were employed	\$28,568
VLP Non-profit	\$200,000	Beaver, Fayette and Clearfield Counties.	40	79	42 were provided job readiness services and supportive services --- 42 were employed	\$4,762
PY 2021 Total	\$785,364		135	105	91 were served --- 29 were employed	Average cost: \$27,081/ veteran hired
PY 2022 Total	\$737,671		134	168	111 were served --- 66 were employed	Average cost: \$11,176/ veteran hired

Note: DCCC's quarterly and final reports did not provide participant employment data.

### *Findings*

Analyzing the VEP grant was limited because L&I denied portions of the RTK requests and redacted significant sections of applications and grantee reports. In addition, some grantee

reports lacked details or failed to report performance metrics. Nevertheless, findings emerged and are as follows:

1. In PY2021, \$785,364 was spent to help 29 veterans gain employment for an average cost of \$27,081 per veteran hired.
2. In PY2022, \$737,671 was spent to help 66 veterans gain employment for an average cost of \$11,176 per veteran hired.
3. Among veterans who completed training or received services, 47% (PY 2021) and 61% (PY 2022) gained employment even though significant expenditures were made to for-profit companies, non-profit organizations, a community college, and a local workforce development board.
4. The cost per employed veteran is extremely high, with an average of \$16,031 spent on each employed veteran.

### *Recommendations*

The following recommendations are directed to L&I and are offered to strengthen the VEP grant program to support Commonwealth veterans seeking employment.

- 1. Modify VEP grant-selection criteria to prioritize organizations with a proven track record of reaching and working with veteran populations and using evidence-informed program components for employment outcomes.**
  - The grant recipients struggled to find veterans to participate and offered training courses and program services that were undesirable or not needed. Funding organizations with a demonstrated ability to access and work with veterans and use program components that are likely to lead to desired outcomes could increase the return on investment of these grants and help more veterans find employment.
- 2. Prioritize using evidence-informed employment strategies within the VEP grant program before considering innovations to those strategies.**
  - The VEP grant has dual goals: to prioritize innovation and to place veterans in employment. These two goals, however, may not support each other. Programs must first meet the threshold of providing evidence-informed components that are linked to employment. After this has been completed, programs should implement innovative modifications, such as funding new services to address barriers to employment.
- 3. Strengthen performance reporting requirements so the effectiveness of the VEP grant is easily determined.**
  - Develop common, robust performance measures through a data collection system that supports evaluating program outcomes consistently and accurately across grantees. L&I collects quarterly and final questionnaires from recipients; however, significant response variability exists, which leads to difficulty in analyzing program data.
- 4. Fund grant recipients on a multi-year basis.**
  - All grant recipients over the 2-year period requested and received an extension. Lengthening the performance period could allow additional preparation time for hiring staff and upfront administrative tasks before the programming tasks begin.

**5. Host a network or community of practice for grantees to share promising practices with one another.**

- Use available communication channels to facilitate ongoing learning and sharing of findings across recipients and the veteran-serving community.

## Introduction

As part of a funded effort that is supported by The Heinz Endowments, the Veterans Research and Evaluation Network (VETERANetwork), which is a line of effort within the Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at Penn State (Clearinghouse), is working to advance data-driven decision-making and evidence-informed policy and programs within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Two areas of focus are veteran employment and state workforce development; therefore, this report investigates the Pennsylvania Veterans Employment Program (VEP) grant. The VEP grant is the only Commonwealth-funded program designed to help veterans gain employment or improve their employment situation.

## Pennsylvania Labor and Industry Veterans Employment Program Grant

The Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry (L&I) annually funds the VEP grant with Pennsylvania Industry Partnership Heroes Path and other reemployment subsidies. Grant data from Program Year (PY) 2021 (April 1, 2022 – December 31, 2023) and PY 2022 (April 1, 2023 – December 31, 2024) were examined for this report. During each of these years, \$800,000 was available to organizations that provided services that addressed veteran employment barriers. Local workforce development boards, non-profit entities, community-based organizations, educational and post-secondary providers, labor or business organizations, and economic development groups were eligible to apply for funding. According to the VEP Notices of Grant Availability, up to four grants were available each year, and one of the grants was reserved for the top applicant who proposed services in Delaware County. The Fiscal Code specifically directs funding of a workforce development program for veterans in Delaware County. The grants were awarded based on competitive scoring and fund availability. Each grant award was limited to a maximum of \$200,000.

The information below was obtained via Right to Know Requests (RTK) submitted to L&I. The requests were submitted to gain information on the VEP grant application and selection processes and to examine the grant recipients' reports and performance outcomes.

## Application, Selection Criteria, and Reporting Requirements

The VEP grant application consisted of an application form, project summary cover page, project narrative, local board notification, letters of support, budget form, and budget justification. The grant application was limited to 12 pages at maximum. The Notices of Grant Availability listed Beaver, Fayette, Lackawanna, Clearfield, and Lycoming Counties as the counties with the highest veteran unemployment rates in the state. Based on this information, L&I indicated a desire to expand the reach of this funding to those counties. A VEP selection committee used the following criteria and weighting to select the grantees: project design and management plan (40 points), performance outcomes (15 points), stakeholder engagement (15 points), impact and sustainability (10 points), other evaluation criteria (i.e., data-driven, evidence-based innovation; leveraging other resources; and outreach to areas with the greatest need) (15 points), and budget form and justification (15 points). Application materials, evaluation criteria, and priority counties appeared to be identical for both program years. Clearinghouse scientists requested additional information on the selection process and the merit score sheet for the applicants; L&I denied the request.

Grant awardees were required to provide quarterly and final reports to L&I. Although a report template was provided, the level of detail of information in the reports varied among grant recipients.

## Overall Summary

Analyzing the VEP grant was limited because L&I denied portions of the RTK requests and redacted significant sections of applications and grantee reports. In addition, some grantee reports lacked details, some information in the reports was exactly the same from one quarter to the next quarter, and some grantees failed to report performance metrics. Therefore, Clearinghouse scientists could not complete an analysis of each program. Nevertheless, despite these challenges, themes emerged.

## Findings

The examination of the VEP grant program revealed significant expenditures to for-profit companies, non-profit organizations, a community college, and a local workforce development board. Among veterans who completed training or received services, 47% (PY21) and 61% (PY22) gained employment through the program. Expenditures of over \$1.5 million in support of eight programs led to the enrollment of 273 veterans or veteran spouses. Of those participants, 202 completed programs or received services, and 95 gained employment. Therefore, without considering the differences in the types of interventions offered, placing each veteran into employment costs an average of \$16,031.<sup>2</sup> Veterans average completion rate across the programs was 73%.

The grant was intended to help veterans gain employment or improve their employment situation. Using the number of participants who found work as a proxy for program evaluation, the Lackawanna Workforce Development Board (WDB); Educational Data Systems, Inc. (EDSI), during PY 2022; and Veterans Leadership Program (VLP) were most successful in finding employment for veterans. Lackawanna WDB enrolled 53 veterans, and 17 of these veterans were employed. EDSI enrolled 40 veterans, and 17 of these veterans were employed. VLP enrolled 79 veterans, and 42 of these veterans were employed. Notably, EDSI and VLP primarily provided career and supportive services rather than occupational skills training. Lackawanna WDB provided career services to all participants and skills training to those who showed interest. However, as mentioned earlier, without information on the quality of the position and other employment outcome data, determining the impact of this investment is not possible. L&I could strengthen its support to Commonwealth veterans by standardizing the data collected from VEP grant recipients, evaluating program outcomes, and modifying future grant criteria based on lessons learned through VEP grant data analysis.

## Themes

- **Encountered problems starting programs.** Five of the eight grant recipients faced difficulties regarding program commencement. Challenges arose from slower-than-expected staff hiring and problems recruiting veterans for participation.
- **Faced challenges with finding participants.** To recruit participants, two organizations dedicated portions of their budgets to marketing and outreach—NuPaths, Inc. (NuPaths), spent over \$32,000, and the Lackawanna WDB spent over \$59,000. Grant recipients conducted outreach by using public advertising (e.g., billboards, posters at Veteran Service Organizations and libraries, social media), attending veteran-related events and career fairs, contacting veterans receiving unemployment compensation, and performing

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<sup>2</sup> WIOA reports that the cost per adult participant served for career services is \$1,597, while the cost for training services is \$2,439 for FY2023.



outreach to veterans' representatives at PA CareerLink. Despite these efforts, some challenges were found, including:

- Finding veterans to participate was a major challenge for all grantees in PY 2021 and half of the grantees in PY 2022.
- The return on investment in terms of expenditures for recruitment and marketing and the number of people reached was extremely low. NuPaths spent \$1,362 per enrolled participant, and Lackawanna WDB spent \$1,128 per enrolled participant.
- Recipients were asked which outreach method worked best, and there was no consensus among the reported responses.
- **Confronted difficulties in following up with participants after program completion.** The number of participants who gained employment after program completion and the quality of the position acquired could not be evaluated because of the difficulties encountered in following up with program participants. There was no requirement for grant recipients to address how they would maintain contact with participants; therefore, identifying the demonstrable impact of these programs is not feasible.
- **Offered strategies with unproven program elements.** Recipients must use evidence-informed program components that are linked to employment.
- **Received grant extensions.** All of the grant recipients received extensions to the published performance period. Some reasons extensions were requested and granted include problems recruiting participants, delayed staff hiring, or difficulty delivering training. Note that other recipients did not indicate why the performance period was extended. The Lackawanna WDB proposed allocating the funds on a multi-year basis to allow time to hire staff and advertise the program to the local veteran community and other stakeholders.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations are directed to L&I and are offered to strengthen the VEP grant program to support Commonwealth veterans seeking employment.

1. **Modify VEP grant-selection criteria to prioritize organizations that have a proven track record of reaching and working with veteran populations and using evidence-informed program components for employment outcomes.**
  - a. The grant recipients struggled to find veterans to participate and offered training courses and program services that were undesirable or not needed. Funding organizations that have a demonstrated ability to access and work with veterans and use program components that are likely to lead to desired outcomes could increase the return on investment of these grants and could help more veterans find employment.
2. **Prioritize using evidence-informed employment strategies within the VEP grant program before considering innovations to those strategies.**
  - a. The grant has dual goals—prioritize innovation and seek to place veterans in employment. These two goals, however, may not support each other. Programs must first meet the threshold of providing evidence-informed components that are linked to employment. After this has been completed,

programs should implement innovative modifications, such as funding new services to address barriers to employment.

3. **Strengthen performance reporting requirements so the effectiveness of the VEP grant is easily determined.**
  - a. Develop common, robust performance measures through a data collection system that supports evaluating program outcomes consistently and accurately across grantees. L&I collects quarterly and final questionnaires from recipients; however, significant response variability exists, which leads to difficulty in analyzing program data.
4. **Fund grant recipients on a multi-year basis.**
  - a. All grant recipients over the 2-year period requested and received an extension. Lengthening the performance period could allow additional preparation time for hiring staff and upfront administrative tasks before the programming tasks begin.
5. **Host a network or community of practice for grantees to share promising practices with one another.**
  - a. Use available communication channels to facilitate ongoing learning and sharing of findings across recipients and the veteran-serving community.

The sections below describe the grant details, which are the basis for the findings and recommendations.

### **Organizations Awarded the VEP Grant for PY 2021**

For PY 2021, 11 organizations applied for VEP grants, and the following four organizations received funding: EDSI, Lackawanna WDB, NuPaths, and Private Industry Council of Westmoreland-Fayette (PIC). The seven applicants that did not receive funding were Keystone College, Make it Happen Philly, North Central WDB, Northeast Training Institute, Southwest Corner WDB, Veterans Community Initiatives, and Veterans Leadership Program. EDSI received \$200,000 to provide industry-specific career-acceleration programs; short-term, online training courses; career coaching; and placement assistance for 40 veterans in Delaware County. The Lackawanna WDB received \$192,332 to augment existing veteran services through outreach, case management, employment counseling, and skills training for 35 veterans in Lackawanna County. NuPaths was awarded \$199,998 to provide training for entry-level Information Technology (IT) jobs to 24 veterans in Beaver, Delaware, and Fayette Counties. PIC was awarded \$193,034 to provide training to help 36 veterans in Fayette County gain employment in the following areas: transportation, welding, and building performance auditing. In addition, participants were offered career pathways classes (e.g., career exploration, resume writing, interviewing skills) and group therapy sessions that addressed lifestyle changes. Which recipient received the set-aside grant for Delaware County was not noted in the documents obtained through the RTK requests. However, EDSI was the only grant recipient that provided services solely to Delaware County residents. The performance period was published as April 1, 2022 – March 31, 2023; however, extensions were granted to all four recipients. Lackawanna WDB and EDSI were granted extensions to June 30, 2023. NuPaths and PIC received extensions through December 31, 2023.

Table 1 displays each grantee, the amount they were awarded, the location of their services, the proposed number of veterans to be included in their programming, the number of veterans who enrolled in their program, and the number of veterans who completed the program.

**Table 1**

*VEP Grant Awardees for Program Year 2021*

Organization name and type	Grant amount	Location of services	Proposed number of veterans enrolled	Number of veterans enrolled	Services provided and number employed	Cost per veteran hire
EDSI For-profit	\$200,000	Delaware County	40	10	10 were provided career services --- 3 were employed	\$66,666
Lackawanna WDB Local WDB	\$192,332	Lackawanna County	35	53	53 received employment counseling --- 17 obtained unsubsidized job offers	\$11,313
NuPaths For-profit	\$199,998	Initially Beaver, Delaware, Fayette Counties. Expanded statewide	24	24	12 graduated --- 4 were employed	\$49,999
PIC Non-profit	\$193,034	Fayette and Westmore-land Counties	36	18	16 completed training --- 5 were employed	\$38,606
Total	\$785,364		135	105	91 were served --- 29 were employed	Average cost: \$27,081/veteran hired

Key takeaway: \$785,364 was spent to help 29 veterans gain employment for an average cost of \$27,081 per veteran hired.

The next sections present information regarding the four awarded programs and their data.

## **Awarded Grant Program Descriptions, Budgets, and Performance Data**

### **EDSI**

EDSI is a for-profit company that offered the Veterans Career Accelerator Program in Delaware County in 2021. This grant was listed as a continuation award from the previous year. The grant proposed to fund participation for 30 veterans in a 5-week Career Accelerator Program (CAP) in

the following areas: IT, healthcare, construction/skilled trades, or customer service. The CAP consists of facilitator-led and self-guided lessons that intend to help the participant create a career pathway plan. Veterans could pursue short-term, online certification training; full-time employment; or on-the-job experience through dual enrollment in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) or a Registered Apprenticeship program. CAP also offers military-to-civilian transition assistance through veteran-specific courses, career counseling, and placement services. In addition to the 30 CAP participants, grant-funded comprehensive career services (e.g., resume building, interview workshops, job search assistance) were available to 10 additional veterans. EDSI was awarded \$200,000.

EDSI provided career services to 10 veterans. No CAPs were offered due to a lack of interest. Of the 10 participants, 3 gained employment. The cost per veteran hired was \$66,666.

The grant performance period was extended through June 30, 2023 for unknown reasons.

The following goals were listed as program outcomes in the EDSI application:

- Enroll 40 veterans: 100% of participants.
- Completion of all CAP activities and any offered certifications: 90% of participants.
- Placement into employment: 75% of participants.
- 6-month retention rate: 70% of participants.
- Metrix learning badge acquisition/certification: 50% of participants.
- WIOA co-enrollment: 25% of participants.
- Placement into further training/apprenticeships or enrollment into Peirce College: 15% of participants.

Table 2 provides selected program performance data that EDSI submitted to L&I. Figure 1 provides the budget breakdown for EDSI.

**Table 2**

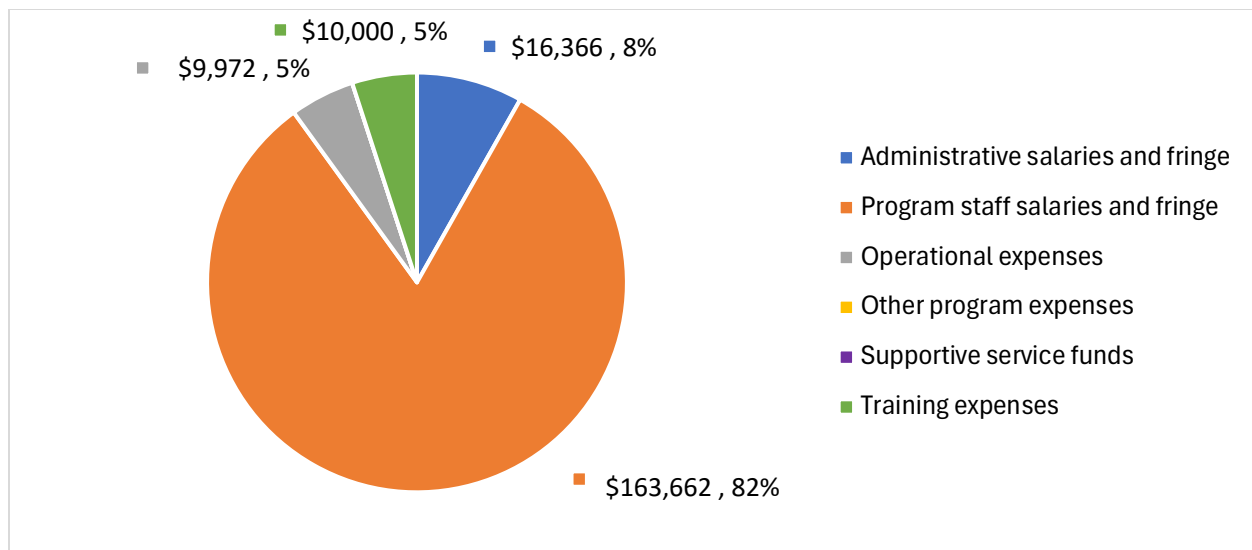
*EDSI Program Performance Data for Program Year 2021*

	Number of participants	Completion of all CAP activities	Placement into employment	6-month retention rate	Metrix learning badge acquisition
Goal	40 - 30 in CAPs - 10 in career services	27	30	28	20
Actual	10 - 0 in CAPs - 10 in career services	0	3	Unknown	Unknown

Note: *Unknown* was data not provided in the quarterly or final reports.

**Figure 1**

*EDSI Budget for Program Year 2021, \$200,000*



Note: *Other program expenses* and *Supportive service funds* expenses were not listed in the EDSI budget.

### Lackawanna WDB

The Lackawanna WDB proposed augmenting existing veterans' services in the county by providing one-on-one assistance, supportive services, and links to training and employment to 35 veterans and veterans' spouses. The program operated out of the Lackawanna office of PA CareerLink. It leveraged existing programs, such as the WIOA, Title II Adult Basic Education, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, to support veterans and their spouses. The application did not list the barriers this program would address. The Lackawanna WDB was awarded \$192,332.

The program enrolled 53 veterans and veteran spouse participants. Of the 53, 19 participated in occupational skills training in the following areas: IT Help Desk, IT Cyber Security, electrical construction, project management, heavy equipment operator, Commercial Driver's License (CDL), welding certification, medical billing/coding, and forklift operator. Of those who enrolled in a training course, one was certified in gas welding, two were certified as forklift operators, and three each received a CDL. All 53 participants received employment counseling, and 17 were placed in unsubsidized employment positions. In addition to employment counseling and training costs, grant money was used for work-related supplies; gas gift cards used by participants to get to trainings; and gift cards given to participants for completing training, obtaining certification, or verifying employment for at least 30 days. The cost per veteran hired was \$11,313.

The grant performance period was extended through June 30, 2023, because of participant recruitment problems. After initial staff hiring and participant recruiting problems were solved, the board reported no issues implementing the grant.

The following goals were listed as performance outcomes in the Lackawanna WDB application:

- Enroll 35 or more participants.
- 32–25 participants (94%) will participate and receive services.
- 28–23 participants (86%) will receive occupational or employment counseling.
- 27–30 participants (80%) will receive supportive services.

- 8–10 participants (26%) may receive subsidized skills training or on-the-job training.
- 12–15 participants (37%) will receive unsubsidized job offers/placement.

Table 3 provides program performance data that Lackawanna WDB submitted to L&I. Figure 2 provides the budget breakdown for Lackawanna WDB.

**Table 3**

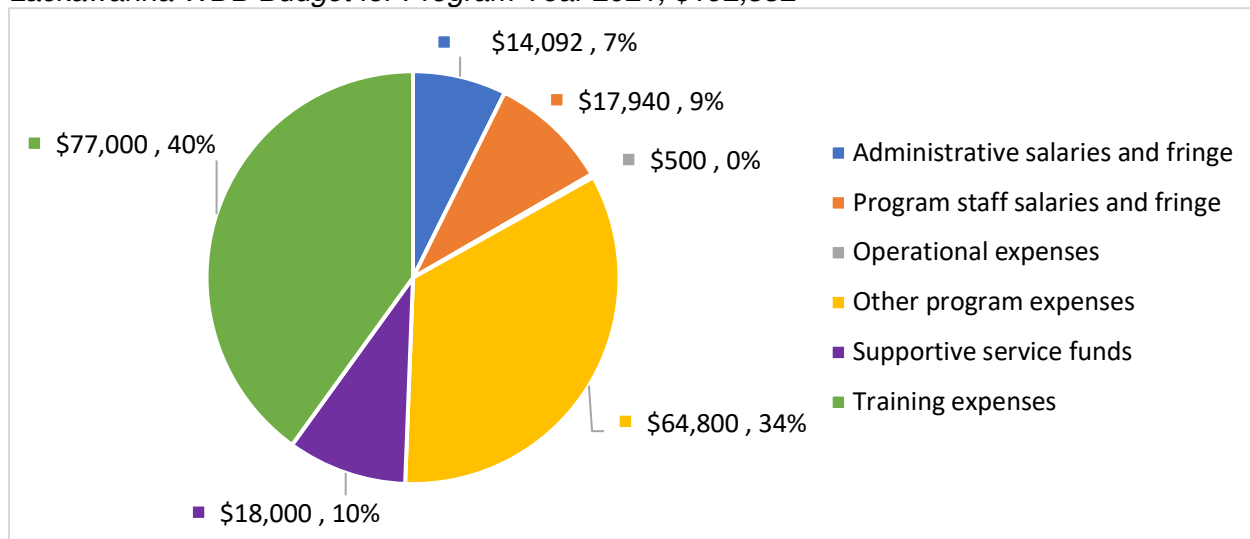
*Lackawanna WDB Program Performance Data for PY 2021*

	Number of participants	Participants who received employment counseling	Participants who received support services	Participants who received occupational-skills training	Participants who received unsubsidized job offers
Goal	32-35	28-32	27-30	8-10	12-15
Actual	53	53	8*	19	17

Note: \*This number is less than planned due to fewer participant needs as determined by career counselors.

**Figure 2**

*Lackawanna WDB Budget for Program Year 2021, \$192,332*



Note: *Other program expenses* included \$59,800 for marketing. The budgeted amount for *Operational expenses* was \$500.

## NuPaths

NuPaths is a for-profit technology education company. NuPaths proposed training 24 veterans who lived in Beaver, Delaware, and Fayette Counties for Network Technician and IT Security Analyst careers. Each study path included 3 technical courses, 5 certifications, 8 college credits, 1 project, and business skills workshops. The programs were administered in a distance-learning format and provided technical skills training, industry certifications, job search assistance, and

employment readiness skills. Lack of preparation, unrealistic expectations, and employer bias were the barriers to employment that NuPaths planned to mitigate. NuPaths was awarded \$199,998.

NuPaths enrolled 24 students, and 12 students graduated. Of the students who graduated, four are employed, and the employment status of the remaining eight graduates was listed as unknown. The cost per veteran hired was \$49,999. NuPaths noted that maintaining contact with graduates after course completion was a challenge.

As emphasized in the VEP Notice of Grant Availability, NuPaths originally focused on providing services in Beaver, Delaware, and Fayette Counties. However, due to problems recruiting participants, NuPaths received permission to open the program statewide and was granted an extension through December 2023.

The following goals were listed as program outcomes in the NuPaths application:

- Number of certifications earned per student: three certifications per student.
- College credits earned per student: five credits per student.
- Number of Certificates of Completion earned: minimum of 60% of students should earn a Certificate of Completion.
- Number of students placed in apprenticeships or full-time jobs within 6 months of graduation: 80% of graduates will be employed.

Table 4 provides program performance data that NuPaths submitted to L&I. Figure 3 provides the PY 2021 budget breakdown for NuPaths.

**Table 4**

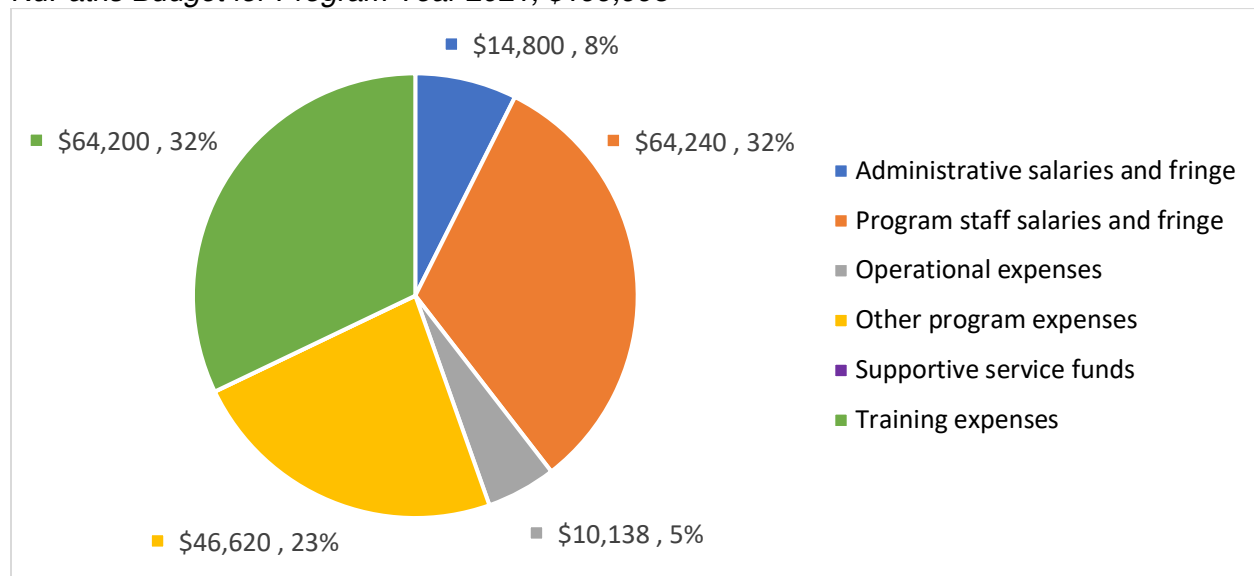
*NuPaths Program Performance Data for PY 2021*

	Number of veterans enrolled	Program retention	Certifications per student	College credits per student	Graduate employment
Goal	12 students in Network Technician program  12 students in IT Security Analyst program	At least 70%	3 certifications	5 credits	At least 80% employed within 6 months of graduation
Actual	8 students in Network Technician program  16 students in the IT Security Analyst program	Retention rate was 50%	3.75 certifications  Results are from students who completed the program and attempted all of the certification exams in a program	6.5 credits  Results are from students who completed the program and attempted all of the courses in a program	Of 12 graduates, 4 (25%) are employed, and the employment status of 8 is unknown



**Figure 3**

*NuPaths Budget for Program Year 2021, \$199,998*



Note: *Other program expenses* included \$32,700 for marketing and outreach, \$10,800 for laptops, and \$3,120 for tutoring. *Supportive service funds* were not listed in the NuPaths budget.

## PIC

PIC is a non-profit organization that operates educational, training, and employment programs in southwestern Pennsylvania. The PIC VEP intended to help 36 veterans in Fayette County by supplementing existing programs to overcome barriers to employment. The program planned to operate from the Fayette County Veteran's Bureau and have PA CareerLink staff on site. Based on a case manager-administered needs assessment, referrals to job placement assistance, training opportunities, and social services were made as needed. Veterans completed a 20-hour career pathways class that assisted with exploring career options, building soft skills, and providing interview and resume writing support. If a veteran was interested in job-skills training, three opportunities were offered: training to obtain a CDL, attaining credentials in Building Performance Trades Auditing (i.e., auditing the energy efficiency of structures), and acquiring welding certification.

Veterans participated in group sessions with a Behavior Support and Learning Support Specialist to address lifestyle changes. Enrolled veterans also received a \$10/day stipend for transportation and other expenses. Personal, institutional, and relational barriers were the main obstacles to employment that PIC planned to address. PIC was awarded \$193,034.

The PIC VEP enrolled 18 veterans, and 16 veterans completed career training. Five participants were employed. The cost per veteran hired was \$38,606.

The grant performance period was extended through December 31, 2023, due to problems with the training providers (e.g., the need to renegotiate contracts and providers unable to deliver training). The grant was expanded to include spouses of veterans and veterans in Westmoreland



County. PIC reported that they did not spend all of the grant money because training providers stopped offering classes, and there was limited interest in the three training courses offered.

The following goals were listed as performance outcomes in the PIC application:

- Enroll 36 participants.
- 100% of participants will complete the pre-program survey.
- 100% of participants will meet with a case manager.
- 95% of participants will enroll in Career Pathways/Lifestyle Changes courses.
- 95% of participants will register as a WIOA participant.
- 90% of participants will enroll in one of three career training pathways.
- 85% of participants will have a successful outcome, which is defined as finding employment in their chosen career path.
- 80% of participants entering training will have their income increase, which is defined as showing income greater than the median income in Fayette County.
- 50% of participants will enroll in “Bring Your ‘A’ Game,” which is a work ethics certificate program.

Table 5 provides selected program performance data that PIC submitted to L&I. Figure 4 provides the budget breakdown for PIC.

**Table 5**

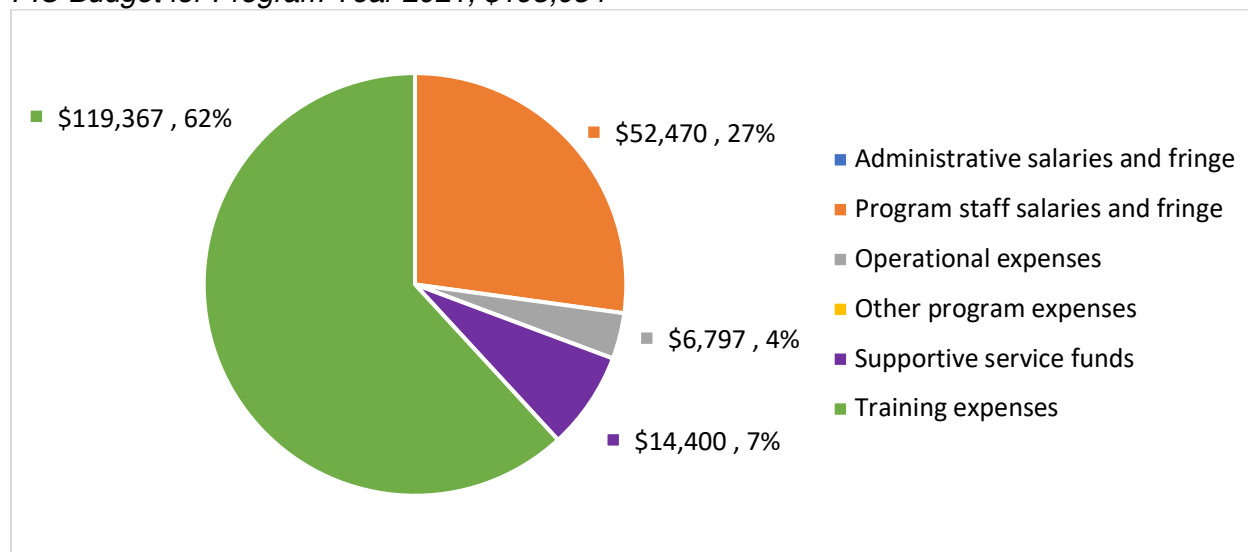
*PIC Program Performance Data for PY 2021*

	Number of veterans enrolled	Enrolled in career training pathway	Completed career training	Completed Career Pathways course	Employed in a related field
Goal	36	32	31	34	31
Actual	18	19*	16	18	5

Note: \*PIC indicated 18 veterans were enrolled in the program; however, they reported 19 veterans participated in training. Perhaps one veteran enrolled in two courses.

**Figure 4**

*PIC Budget for Program Year 2021, \$193,034*



Note: *Administrative salaries and fringe expenses and Other program expenses* were not listed in the PIC budget.

### **Organizations Awarded the VEP Grant for PY 2022**

Eight organizations applied for the VEP Grant for PY 2022, and the following four organizations received funding: Delaware County Community College (DCCC), EDSI, NuPaths, and VLP. The four organizations that did not receive funding were Community Options, Lackawanna WDB, PIC, and Veterans Education and Transition Services. DCCC was awarded \$137,692 to provide career exploration activities, no-cost skills training for high-priority occupations, professional skills development training, and job placement assistance to 30 veterans in Delaware and Chester Counties. EDSI was awarded \$200,000 to provide career acceleration programs; skills assessment and career planning; short-term, online training opportunities; and employment placement support to 40 veterans and veteran spouses in Delaware County. NuPaths was awarded \$199,979 to provide training for entry-level IT jobs to 24 veterans statewide, but NuPaths focused on veterans who lived in Beaver, Clearfield, Delaware, Fayette, Lackawanna, and Lycoming counties. VLP was awarded \$200,000 to provide case management, training programs, job search assistance, and supportive services to 40 veterans in VLP's 28-county service area, but VLP focused on veterans who lived in Beaver, Fayette, and Clearfield Counties. Which recipient received the set-aside grant for Delaware County was not noted in the documents obtained through the RTK requests. The published grant period of performance was from April 1, 2023 – March 31, 2024; however, all four recipients received extensions. VLP received an extension through September 30, 2024. DCCC was granted an extension through December 15, 2024. EDSI and NuPaths received extensions through December 31, 2024.

Table 6 displays each grantee, the amount they were awarded, the location of their services, the proposed number of veterans to be included in their programming, the actual number of veterans who enrolled in their program, and the number of veterans who completed the program. Unknown data indicate the grantee did not provide it in the quarterly or final reports.

**Table 6***VEP Grant Awardees for Program Year 2022*

Organization name and type	Grant amount	Location of services	Proposed number of veterans enrolled	Actual number of veterans enrolled	Number served and employed	Cost per veteran hired
DCCC Community College	\$137,692	Delaware and Chester Counties	30	25	17 courses were completed --- Number employed was unknown	Unknown
EDSI For-profit	\$200,000	Delaware County	40	40	40 were provided career services and 64 supportive services were delivered --- 17 were employed	\$11,764
NuPaths For-profit	\$199,979	Beaver, Clearfield, Delaware, Fayette, Lackawanna and Lycoming Counties	24	24	12 completed programs --- 7 were employed	\$28,568
VLP Non-profit	\$200,000	Beaver, Fayette, and Clearfield Counties.	40	79	42 were provided job readiness services and supportive services --- 42 were employed	\$4,762
Total	\$737,671		134	168	111 were served --- 66 were employed	Average cost: \$11,176/ veteran hired

Note: DCCC's quarterly reports did not provide participant employment data.

Key takeaway: \$737,671 was spent to help 66 veterans gain employment for an average cost of \$11,176 per veteran hired.

The next sections present the four awarded programs and their data.

## **Awarded Grant Program Descriptions, Budgets, and Performance Data**

### **DCCC**

DCCC proposed a pilot project called Opportunities Abound, which would assist 30 veterans by providing career exploration opportunities, no-cost skills training for high-priority occupations, professional skills workshops, and job search assistance. Training courses were offered in the following areas: IT, healthcare, automotive, skilled trades, project management, real estate, and financial planning. DCCC was awarded \$137,692.

DCCC reported that their program was initially slow moving due to two main factors: lack of staff to support the grant goals and difficulties recruiting veterans who were interested in enrolling. During the second quarter of the grant, the DCCC was able to hire suitable staff and began recruiting veterans from the existing student population. As of December 2024, 25 veterans had enrolled in courses, received resume and job search assistance, and obtained help with Veterans Affairs claims. DCCC reported that 17 training courses had been completed. Participant employment data were not provided in the quarterly or final reports; therefore, the cost per veteran hired could not be determined.

DCCC was granted an extension until December 15, 2024, due to difficulties in hiring staff, and this delayed program implementation.

The following goals were listed as performance outcomes in the DCCC application:

- Increase enrollment in Opportunities Abound from semester to semester with a goal of 30 veterans participating in the program.
- 90% of veterans will complete career training coursework and receive certification within 4 months.
- 90% of veterans will participate in orientation, at least one professional development workshop, and one Pathway to Careers Event.
- 80% of veterans will be employed (or attain enhanced employment) in a chosen field within 6 months of completing a career training program.

Table 7 provides program performance data that DCCC filed with L&I. Figure 5 provides the budget breakdown for DCCC.

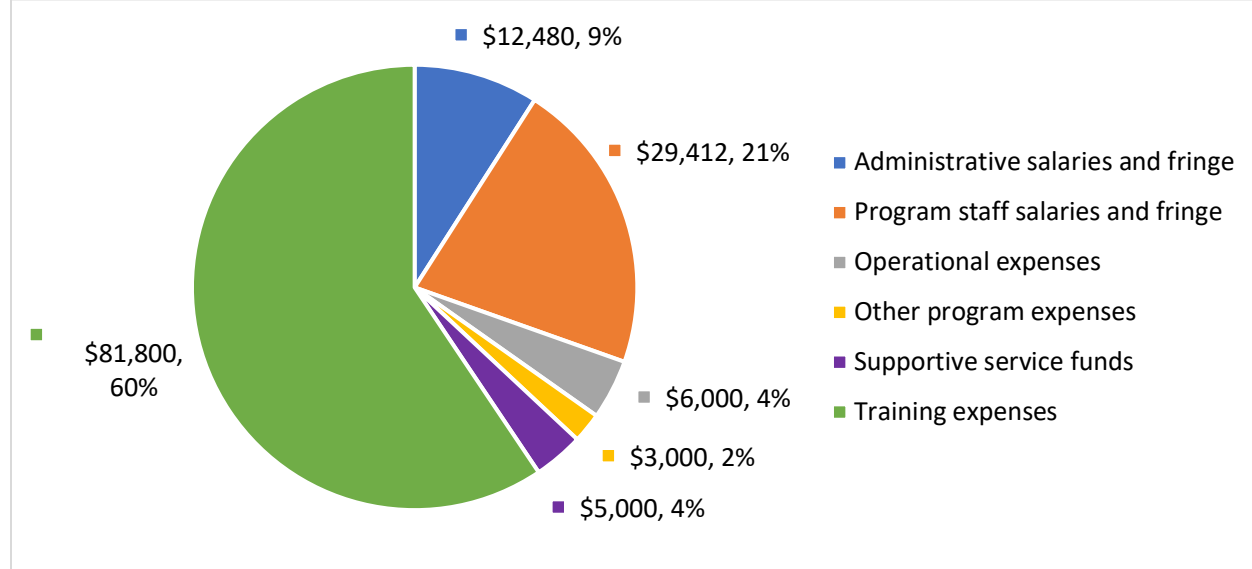
**Table 7**  
*DCCC Performance Data for Program Year 2022*

	Number of participants	Completed career training coursework	Participated in orientation at least 1 professional development workshop and 1 Pathway to Careers event	Employed in chosen field within 6 months
Goal	30	90% of participants	90% of participants	80% of participants
Actual	30	17 courses were completed	Unknown	Unknown

Note: *Unknown* was data not provided in the quarterly or final reports.

**Figure 5**

*DCCC Budget for Program Year 2022, \$137,692*



## EDSI

EDSI is a for-profit company that proposed offering a Veterans Career Boost (VCB) program to 40 veterans and active duty and veteran spouses in Delaware County. The program is a re-branded version of the Veterans Career Accelerator Program that has been offered since 2021. VCB provides individualized career assistance through skills assessment and career planning; short-term, online training opportunities; and employment placement support. Of the 40 participants, 10 will be eligible to enroll in a construction/skilled trade or an Information Technology CAP. CAPs last 2.5 weeks, are customized to meet the needs of local employers, and consist of facilitator-led and self-guided lessons that intend to help the participant create a career pathway plan. Based on their career plans, veterans will be supported in pursuing short-term, online certification training; full-time employment; or on-the-job experience through dual enrollment in WIOA or a Registered Apprenticeship program. CAPs also offer military-to-civilian transition assistance through veteran-specific courses, career counseling, and placement services. EDSI intended to have VCB address employment barriers, such as housing instability and transportation issues, with supportive services. EDSI was awarded \$200,000.

The VCB program began slowly because hiring program staff took longer than expected, and participant recruitment was challenging. EDSI did report building a partnership with fellow grantee DCCC, which allowed them to gain better access and engagement with potential participants while conducting on-site campus outreach. As of December 2024, EDSI provided career services (e.g., resume assistance, interview preparation, effective communication training) to 40 veterans, and 17 participants secured employment. Quarterly reports did not mention CAPs. The cost per veteran hired was \$11,764.

EDSI was granted an extension until December 31, 2024 for unknown reasons.

The following goals were listed as program outcomes in the EDSI application:

- Enrollment 40 veterans: 100% of participants.
- Completion of all CAP activities and any offered certifications: 9 of 10 veterans

- Placement into employment: 75% of participants (i.e., 30 veterans).
- 6-month retention rate: 70% of participants (i.e., 28 veterans).
- Metrix learning badge acquisition/certification: 50% of participants (i.e., 20 veterans).
- WIOA co-enrollment: 75% of participants (i.e., 30 veterans).

Table 8 provides selected program performance data that EDSI submitted to L&I. Figure 6 provides the budget breakdown for EDSI.

**Table 8**

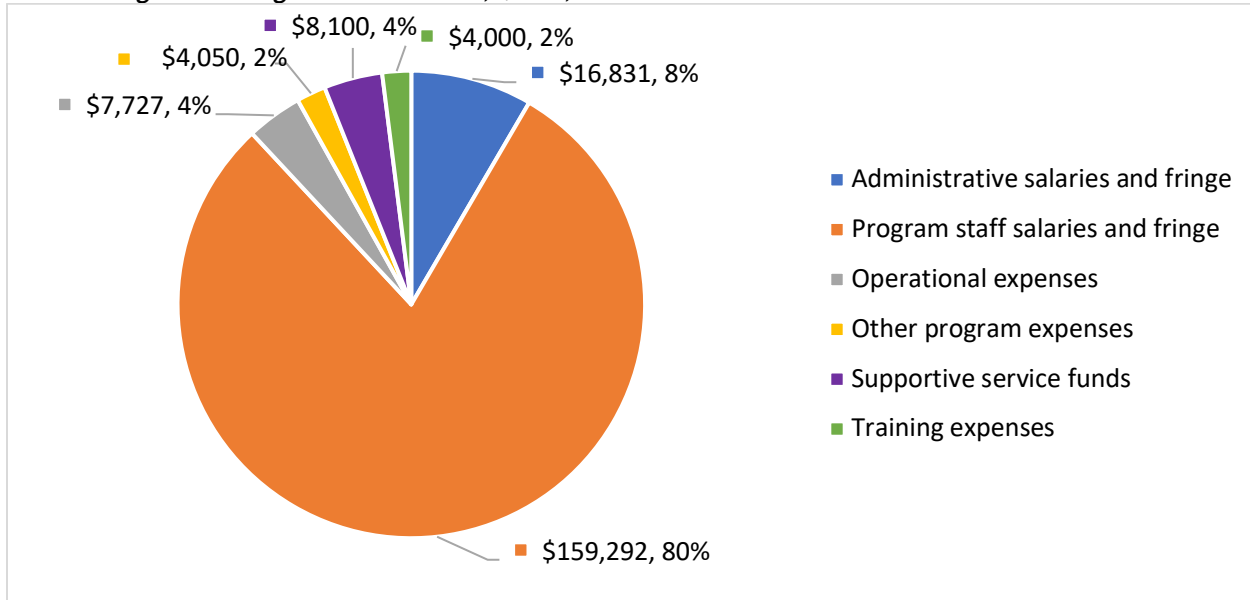
*EDSI Program Performance Data for Program Year 2022*

	Number of participants	Completion of all CAP activities	Placement into employment	6-month retention rate	Metrix learning badge acquisition
Goal	40 - 10 in CAPs - 30 in career services	9	30	28	20
Actual	- 40 in career services	0	17	10	Unknown

Note: CAPs were not mentioned in quarterly reports. *Unknown* data was not provided in the quarterly or final reports.

**Figure 6**

*EDSI Budget for Program Year 2022, \$200,000*



Note: The \$4,000 training expense was allocated for payments provided to participants in recognition of meeting training activity performance goals. Each veteran could receive \$100.

## NuPaths

NuPaths is a for-profit technology education company. NuPaths proposed training 24 veterans in Beaver, Clearfield, Delaware, Fayette, Lackawanna, and Lycoming Counties. NuPaths was also

available to veterans statewide for Software Testing Analyst and Project Analyst careers. The 26-week programs included 4 technical courses, 5–6 certifications, 9–10 college credits, 1 project, and business skills workshops. Programs were administered in a distance-learning format and provided technical skills training, industry certifications, job search assistance, and employment readiness skills. Lack of preparation, unrealistic expectations, and employer bias were the barriers to employment that NuPaths planned to address. NuPaths was awarded \$199,979.

NuPaths reported they had no difficulties locating veterans to participate in the program or implementing the grant. As of December 2024, 24 veterans had been enrolled, 10 in the Software Testing program and 14 in the Project Analyst program. 12 students completed the program, and 7 were employed. The cost per veteran hired was \$28,568.

NuPaths was granted an extension through December 31, 2024, for unknown reasons.

The following goals were listed as program outcomes in the NuPaths application:

- Number of certifications earned per student: 3 certifications per student.
- College credit earned per student: 5 credits per student.
- Number of Certificates of Achievement earned: a minimum of 60% of students should earn a Certificate of Completion.
- Number of students placed in apprenticeships or full-time jobs within 6 months of graduation: 80% of graduates employed.

Table 9 provides program performance data that NuPaths filed with L&I. Figure 7 provides the budget breakdown for NuPaths.

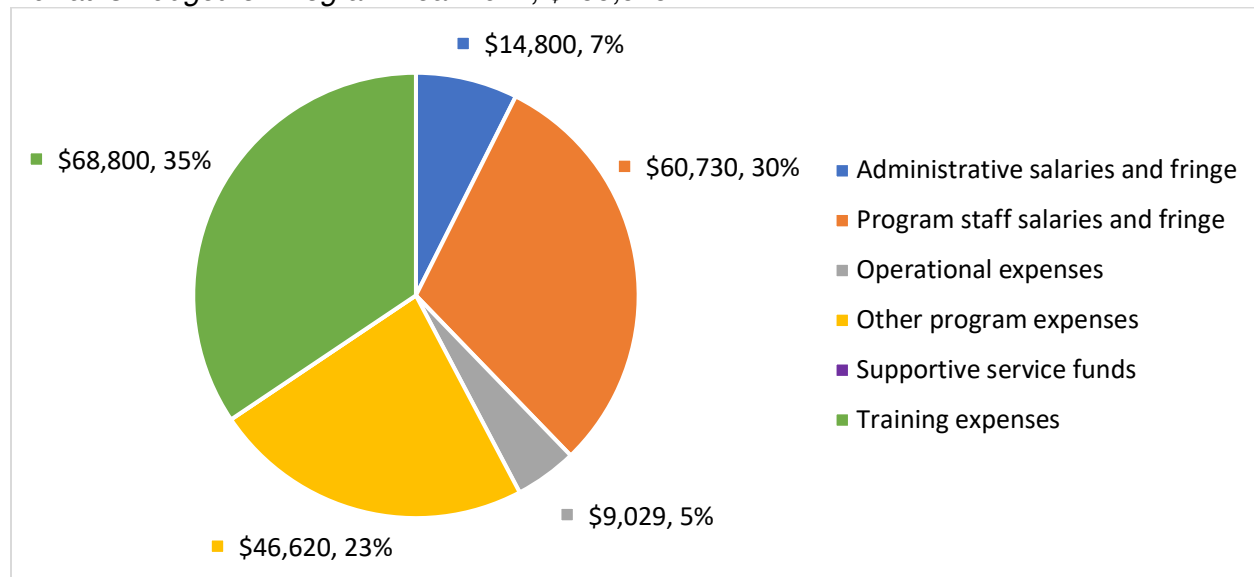
**Table 9**

*NuPaths Program Performance Data for Program Year 2022*

	Number of veterans enrolled	Certifications per student	College credits per student	Certificates of Achievement earned	Graduate employment
Goal	12 students in Software Testing Analyst  12 students in Project Analyst	3 certifications/student	5 credits/student	60% of students earn a Certificate of Completion	At least 80% employed or in apprenticeship within 6 months of graduation
Actual	10 students in Software Testing Analyst  14 students in Project Analyst	2.58 certifications/student	7.58 credits/student	2 students (17%) earned a Certificate of Completion	7 graduates (58%) are employed

**Figure 7**

*NuPaths Budget for Program Year 2022, \$199,979*



Note: *Other program expenses* included \$32,700 for marketing and outreach, \$10,800 for laptops, and \$3,120 for tutoring. These amounts were the same as in NuPaths PY 2021 budget. *Supportive service funds* expenses were not listed in the NuPaths budget.

## VLP

VLP intended to support 40 veterans in gaining employment through individualized case management that would provide extensive support and coaching throughout the job search and employment processes. Case managers would assist participants with career planning, resume writing, and practice interviews and would provide connections to veteran-friendly employers, employment skills sessions, and transition check-ins. Veterans would be connected to training and educational partners, legal assistance, Department of Veterans Affairs claims assistance, and financial support for employment-related expenses (e.g., tools, uniforms, training, laptop computers, transportation costs) as needed. Beaver, Fayette, and Clearfield Counties' residents would receive priority, but any veteran throughout VLP's 28-county service area would be eligible to join the program. Transportation, mental health, criminal backgrounds, and gaps in employment were barriers VLP recognized in the veteran population and intended to mitigate. VLP was awarded \$200,000.

VLP did not report problems implementing the grant; however, they encountered problems locating programs that cost money to spend grant funds. VLP enrolled 79 veterans, and 42 of these veterans were placed into employment and earned an average wage of \$19.52/hour. The cost per veteran hired was \$4,762.

For unknown reasons, VLP was granted an extension until September 30, 2024.

The application materials did not include performance measures; however, the following goals were identified from the quarterly reports:

- Total enrollments - 40 participants
- Employment placement rate - 80% (32)
- Average hourly wage - \$15.50/hour



Table 10 provides program performance data that VLP filed in quarterly reports with L&I. Figure 8 provides the budget breakdown for VLP.

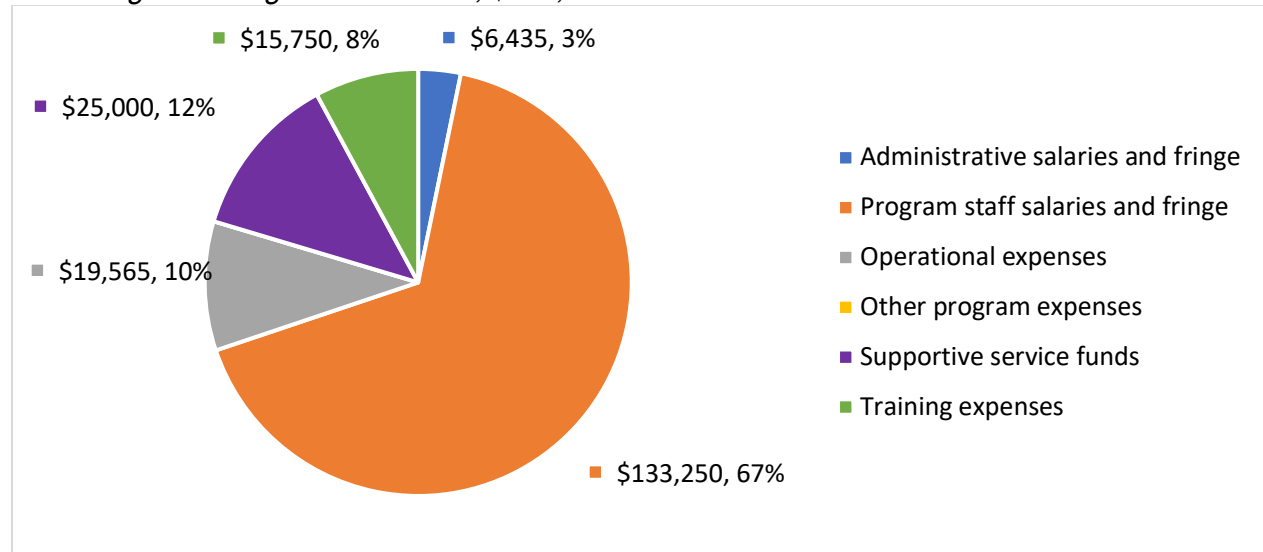
**Table 10**

*VLP Program Performance Data for Program Year 2022*

	Number of veterans enrolled	Employment placement rate	Hourly wage
Goal	40	80% of participants (32)	\$15.50/hour average wage
Actual	79	42	\$19.52

**Figure 8**

*VLP Budget for Program Year 2022, \$200,000*



Note: *Other program expenses* were not listed in the VLP budget.