

Organizational Resilience: Persistence through Change



JUNE 2025 Cohort Launch

THE REGIONAL CHALLENGE:

Limitations of Program Data

Partner4Work (P4W) is the public workforce development board for Allegheny County and the City of Pittsburgh. In a single year, P4W may engage hundreds of employers, help more than 1,000 people find jobs, and assist even more in job seeking. The organization tracks this high level of activity with a case management system, CWDS (the Commonwealth Workforce Development System), which allows for comprehensive tracking of participants while they're in a WIOA-sponsored program. The moment someone leaves their program, however, that visibility drops off.

Partner4Work identified the limited ability to track and communicate long-term education-to-employment outcomes as a critical gap in their regional workforce ecosystem. Because WIOA participants aren't incentivized to stay in touch with case managers after finding a job, P4W doesn't always know if someone got a job or left services for another reason. Normal participant follow-up also does not capture all the jobs participants get, so P4W suspected its self-reported placement rate was lower than its "true" placement rate as measured by WIOA performance indicators. This can make it difficult to evaluate program impact: if the workforce board doesn't see participants' longer-term wage progress after program completion, there is little evidence to support whether its programs are helping people as intended.

That gap reaches beyond P4W itself. Workforce training providers in the region have limited information about the return on investment of their individual programs, local elected officials need more information to inform workforce policies and budgets. **A better understanding of how programs impact participants over the long run would help P4W provide the most targeted and effective training and identify the "weak" spots where participants may not be seeing the benefits they should.** With this in mind, Partner4Work set out to rebuild its lapsed wage data sharing agreement, put that data to use in wage analysis, and build an external-facing dashboard that could demonstrate the long-term return on investment of its programs for the region.

AT A GLANCE

Organization

Partner4Work

Organization Type

Workforce Development Board

Key Sector(s)

N/A

Geographic Context

Urban/Suburban

Key Partner Organizations

Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry (L&I)

“Our new goal is simply to provide data or information that can be used both by Partner4Work and other organizations to adeptly respond to changing workforce need.”

—Carolyn Cullen, Labor Market Research Manager, Partner4Work

THE DATA-DRIVEN APPROACH:

Finding a Path Back to Wage Data

Partner4Work had two main goals: expand their wage data analysis and build an external-facing dashboard that could report on regional labor market changes. To capture long-term impacts for participants, they sought to establish and strengthen data-sharing agreements with the Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry, Pennsylvania Department of Education, and educational institutions to track student progress into the workforce over the intermediate and longer-term. The team also wanted to more clearly communicate these performance metrics to partner organizations in the region.

At the launch of the program, P4W identified a wide slate of potential partners who could help demonstrate the longer-term employment trajectories of people completing Partner4Work-funded programs, including the Community College of Allegheny County, the University of Pittsburgh, Carnegie Mellon University, Point Park University, Chatham University, the Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry, the Allegheny County Department of Human Services, the Allegheny Conference on Community Development, and Allegheny County school districts. To make sense of that landscape, the project team built an ecosystem map showing where data sharing agreements already existed and how strong each relationship was — green for a strong relationship, yellow for one that exists but needs strengthening, and red for no data sharing relationship at all.

Figure 1.*Initial Partner4Work Ecosystem Map*

That mapping exercise gave P4W a clear next move: prioritize the data sharing agreement with the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry first, then meet internally to decide which higher education institutions and K-12 schools to pursue next for new data sharing relationships. The former goal was straightforward; the organization had to renew a previously held data sharing agreement with the State of Pennsylvania that provided access to individual wage data, letting P4W track people across time and demonstrate impact. The latter goal, however, proved to be much more difficult.

FEB. 2026 — Wage Data Requests Submitted & Dashboard Development Begins

APRIL 2026 — Unexpected Leave Delays Dashboard Progress

EARLY RESULTS & MILESTONES:

What the Wage Data Revealed

Partner4Work's year began with real momentum in June 2025. By fall, the team signed a new data sharing agreement with the PA Department of Labor and Industry, opening access to recent wage data reports and more detailed employment information. **That momentum met its first real test just a month later, when staffing turnover left the project with reduced capacity right as the work of building out the wage data and dashboard was getting underway.** Rather than pushing forward with a smaller team, the project slowed as the team focused on clarifying ownership, priorities, and what could realistically get done. During this process, the team made the decision to not pursue data sharing agreements with education institutions due to both internal capacity and a renewed focus on local employers.

Despite that setback, the team submitted its first round of wage data requests for program participants by early 2026, kicking off dashboard development. The data surfaced value beyond what the team originally set out to measure: **using state wage data, P4W was able to identify errors in its application process, specifically, participants who could have been categorized as incumbent workers due to their employment status.** To ground the dashboard in both state and national labor market context, the team drew on four data sources: the PA Department of Labor and Industry, Lightcast, Census data, and the Federal Reserve Economic Database. P4W also wanted more data on what happens after participants and non-participants exit educational institutions, in order to build career pathways grounded in real regional data.

Key Takeaway #1

Internal alignment before external engagement is what allowed the project to withstand repeated staffing disruption; each time the team lost capacity, they worked out ownership and priorities internally before the gap could affect outside partners or the work itself.

Progress continued into the spring, until an unexpected staff leave in April 2026 slowed the dashboard's development a second time. By this point, the project team was used to disruptions and once again recalibrated timelines while still maintaining the project's central goal. This work paid off in June 2026, when the earlier analysis fed directly into a completed dashboard draft. The team presented the dashboard internally to gather P4W staff feedback before taking it further, following the same internal-first sequencing that had carried the project through two separate staffing disruptions. An external dashboard demo meeting will showcase the finished product to partners and stakeholders, marking the transition from proof of concept to a shared tool.

LESSONS LEARNED & WHAT'S NEXT:

Persistence Through Change

Partner4Work's next steps will build on these lessons. **The team will continue to integrate wage data into the program data story retrospectively, use it in longitudinal analysis to determine impact as originally intended, and keep building out the regional dashboard for internal and external use.**

Getting to this point took real persistence. Over the course of the year, Partner4Work went through several organizational changes in addition to shifting its own priorities mid-project, moving away from education institutions as the primary focus for career pathways and toward businesses and employers instead. Persistence, and focusing on a broader outlook and goal that could withstand interorganizational changes, defined how Partner4Work approached this work.

Key Takeaway #2

Wage data at this level of granularity is most naturally suited to longitudinal analysis, not short-term conclusions. It should not be expected to align neatly with program data or perfectly "fill the holes" in the program data story. Its applications, however, are broad and worth the effort in the long term.

Even once the wage data was transferred, the data itself came with real limitations. While the DSA provides P4W with individual-level information, they can only estimate hourly wages and cannot draw many conclusions about quarters in which someone was a WIOA participant and/or not employed full-time. P4W had hoped this data would help close gaps in its job placement information, but determining something as basic as when someone started a job, and whether it fell before or after their participation start and end dates, has not been straightforward. **Proving the value of the additional data now depends less on persistence and more on the technical work of reconciling two data systems that were not originally built to talk to each other.**

Learn more about Partner4Work [here](#).