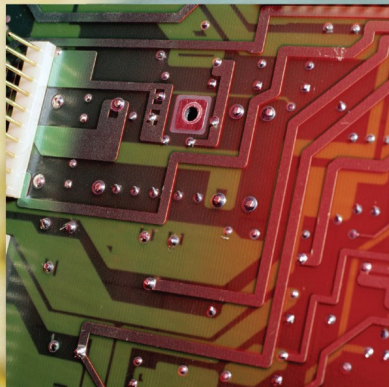
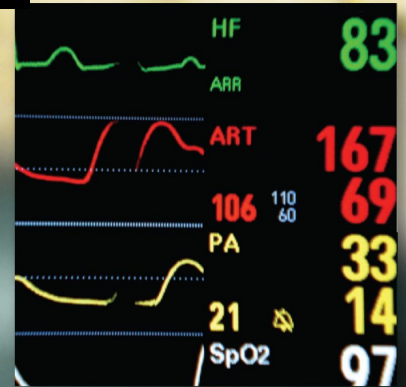
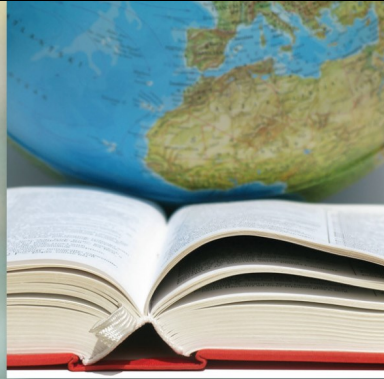


# The Institute

*Turning Information into Insight*

**2021**

***Year in Review***



A collaboration among Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine, Johnson College, Keystone College, King's College, Lackawanna College, Luzerne County Community College, Marywood University, Misericordia University, Penn State Scranton, Penn State Wilkes-Barre,

The Wright Center for Graduate Medical Education, University of Scranton, Wilkes University & the business community





# The Institute

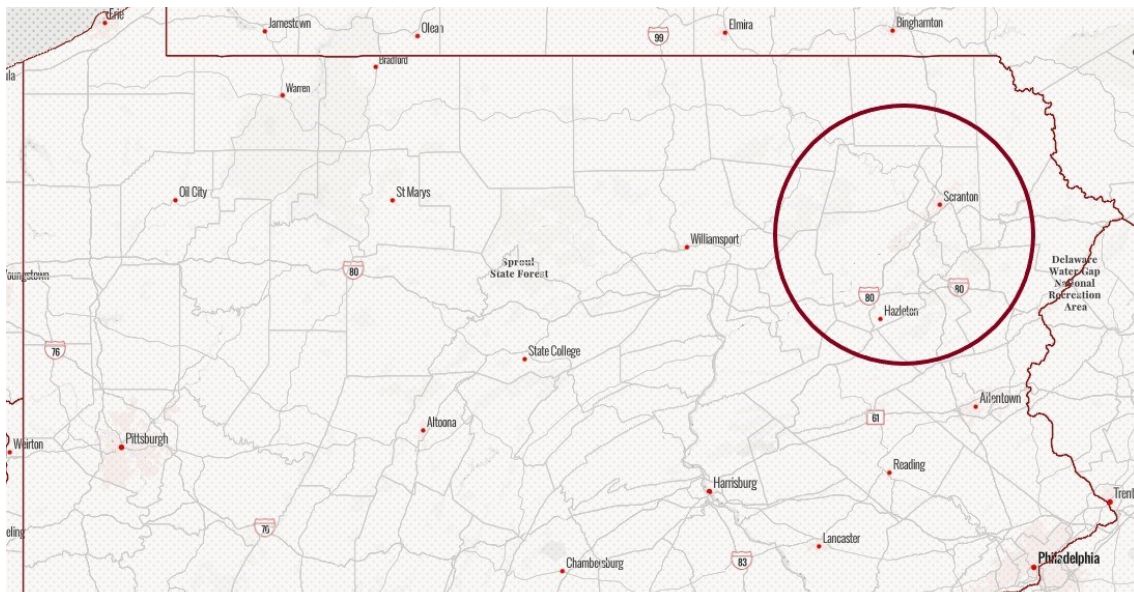
*Turning Information into Insight*

## Annual Report 2021

The Institute was founded on the belief that good decisions are driven by good data. Since 2004, it has been our public mission to serve organizations and communities by providing empirical, objective research that drives discussion and informs decisions. Our goal is that Institute data and research on a wide range of topics will help policymakers and community leaders from the public, private, and non-profit sectors understand and address some of the region's most challenging problems.

Each year, the annual report gives us the opportunity to thank our generous community of supporters who care deeply about the region they call home. Our work would not be possible without these academic partners, stakeholders, advisory board members, task force teams, and clients who entrust us to solve problems and create opportunities.

These partnerships have helped Institute research initiatives positively impact the region and its residents. Our successes are your successes and it is your commitment that will help ensure that data and research continue to drive decisions that fuel greater economic vitality for business, residents, and the region as a whole. A heartfelt thanks to each of you.



***Turning Information into Insight***

A collaboration among Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine, Johnson College, Keystone College, King's College, Lackawanna College, Luzerne County Community College, Marywood University, Misericordia University, Penn State Scranton, Penn State Wilkes-Barre, The Wright Center for Graduate Medical Education, University of Scranton, Wilkes University & the business community

## *Thank you to our Academic Partners & Research Underwriters*

### ***Academic Partners***

Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine, Johnson College, Keystone College, King's College, Lackawanna College, Luzerne County Community College, Marywood University, Misericordia University, Penn State Scranton, Penn State Wilkes-Barre, The Wright Center for Graduate Medical Education, University of Scranton & Wilkes University

### ***Research Partners***

#### **Signature Underwriters**

Andrew J. Sordoni Foundation  
Luzerne County  
PPL Electric Utilities  
Sordoni Family Foundation

#### **Contributing Underwriters**

Borton-Lawson  
Geisinger Health System

#### **Supporting Underwriters**

Berkshire Asset Management  
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Prudential Retirement Services  
The Luzerne Foundation  
The Wright Center for Community Health  
UGI Utilities

### ***Event Sponsors***

#### **Main Event Sponsor**

The Wright Center for Community Health

#### **Gold Sponsors**

Allied Services  
Coal Creative  
Scranton Area Community Foundation  
UGI Utilities

#### **Silver Sponsor**

Marywood University  
The Scranton Plan

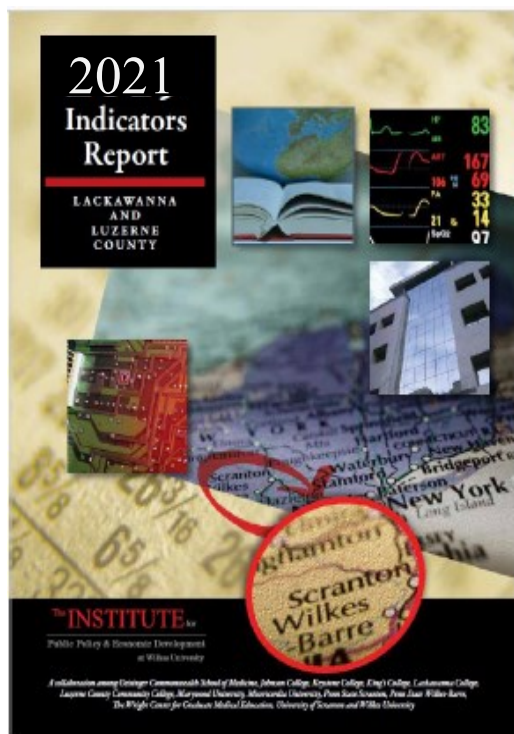
#### **Bronze Sponsor**

Berkshire Hathaway Guard Companies  
Community Bank  
Johnson College  
Luzerne County Visitor Bureau

# The Year in Review

## Indicators Initiative 2021

May 2021—via ZOOM



Over 150 guests attended Indicators 2021 on Zoom. The event included the Indicators and task force research presentations.

Since the event, the report has been distributed to the entire northeast delegation of both federal and state elected officials, Indicators sponsors, local government, and to the public through social media and e-blasts.

This year's Indicators also addressed the influence of COVID-19 on the region, and how it will impact trends and patterns moving forward. Some of *The Institute's Insights on COVID 19* research was also highlighted.

This year's task force research was presented in video by our task force chairs. Their presentations can be viewed on our YouTube channel. The studies are located on our website and summarized on the next page.

## Community-Based Research Initiatives

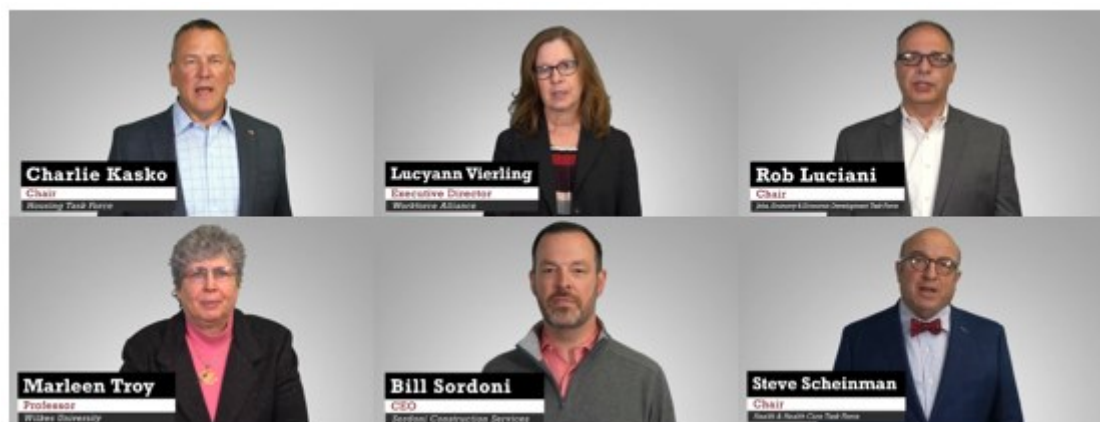
Community-based research is at the core of The Institute's mission. This work, funded by our academic partners and stakeholders, is made available to organizations and communities needing reliable research, data, and best practices to make smart decisions.

Studies are focused primarily on northeastern Pennsylvania, but also include other counties and statewide perspectives.

Community-based research underwriting dollars support the Indicators Initiative, Task Force Research, the Quarterly Economic Tracker, Cost of Living Index, Special Projects Research, The University & College Student Poll, the Student Internship Program and Information Requests.

Almost \$18,000 of research time was devoted to fulfilling information requests from local non-profits, governments, elected officials, higher education institutions, health care, media, and business and industry.

In addition, The Institute applied over \$18,000 in research time in support of proprietary research projects for our local non-profits.



**Task Force Research Presentations**— Topic-based research is generated from volunteer task force teams consisting of diverse groups of professionals. Insight from their respective expertise helps the team evaluate opportunities to improve our region in critical areas. Representatives from business, government, non-profit, economic development, and institutional sectors serve on the task forces.

Research agendas are established each June by the task forces. Task force members vet the research and are responsible for dissemination and advocacy around the research findings. This research has served as a basis for legislation, has been used in legislative testimony, and has helped organizations increase their impact.

Community-Based Research	
Task Force	Task Force Research Topics
Education and Workforce Development	<a href="#">“Talent Development, Attraction, and Retention”</a> - As the economy recovers from the pandemic, it is important to plan for tight labor market conditions and shortages of skilled workers in key occupations. This study reviews previous studies to consider which certifications and skills are most needed, and how to attract and retain people in the region. Data from student polls and other sources are analyzed to understand factors driving out-migration of talent. Research covers the role of higher education institutions, K-12 education, and even teacher and parent engagement in developing a workforce pipeline. It also considers ways to attract an increasingly remote workforce as part of a comprehensive regional talent attraction and retention strategy.
Jobs, Economy, and Economic Development (JEED)	<a href="#">“Real Estate &amp; Economic Development in a Post-COVID World”</a> - COVID-19 has accelerated several major economic changes. This report inquires about the area’s ability to compete economically in light of heightened logistics and manufacturing, remote work, and automation across all industry sectors. Impacts on commercial real estate are detailed, as well as changing residential real estate needs and capabilities within the technology infrastructure. These factors are correlated with wages and quality of life, for comparison to those in other locations.
Housing	<a href="#">“Equity in Housing”</a> - This study explores regional housing issues (via both rental and ownership) as they relate to race, ethnicity, age, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and gender identity. It includes secondary data for comparative analysis of housing security and status among different populations, and maps the current state of housing segregation along with historical origins. Implications from COVID-19 are considered as well. Local, state, and federal policies are examined and stakeholder recommendations put forth.
Health & Healthcare	<a href="#">“Public Health Infrastructure in Pennsylvania”</a> - This is a study of the public health infrastructure in Pennsylvania, including historical context, policy issues, and implications for resilience to future public health emergencies. Changes to the number and distribution of public health offices, the organizational structure of public health functions, and policy and administrative issues are described. The roles of local-level health departments are considered, and their advantages and disadvantages identified. These issues are compared to structures and best practices elsewhere, and used to inform recommendations.
Planning, Land Use, Transportation and Infrastructure (PLuTI)	<a href="#">“Transportation &amp; Municipal Services After COVID-19”</a> - A continuation of the transportation theme from the past few years, with a focus on how COVID-19 might impact transportation (and land use), this research asks how transit agencies cope with social distancing. It asks whether people are afraid to ride buses, and how increased telework and/or less economic activity in urban cores impact transit. This study also contains an assessment of municipal services in communities struggling for revenue. Short-term and long-term impacts are addressed, including the ways small communities handle infrastructure repairs and improvements.
Energy	<a href="#">“Alternative Energy and Its Impact on Fleet Vehicles”</a> - Shifting energy production to non-fossil fuel energy sources (including nuclear and renewables) has been emphasized by policymakers and business leaders alike in order to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions. Industries centered on transportation, such as Northeastern Pennsylvania’s logistics sector, are key stakeholders in these efforts as major users of energy. The environmental and economic impacts of electricity and natural gas are researched and compared to alternatives in order to determine best practices.



# Polling

In 2015, The Institute began a polling initiative to assess the opinions and perceptions of the region's college student population. The Institute polls students at our 13 partnering institutions twice per year — once in the fall on issues of public policy and civic engagement, and then in the spring on post-graduation plans, an assessment of northeastern Pennsylvania, and their levels of preparation for college upon high school graduation.

In March 2021, The Institute received 1,980 responses to the Spring Poll. Students from all class years, a variety of majors, and part-time and graduate statuses are well-represented in the data.

**When deciding where to launch their careers, job availability and cost of living are top priorities.** The results showed that **students from NEPA are likely to stay in NEPA, but others are not as likely to do so.** Students planning to stay in the area were likelier than average to assign higher value to a location's proximity to family and its suitability to raise a family. Conversely, students planning to depart the area after graduation were likelier to value diversity and inclusiveness, as well as entertainment, recreation and dining options.



**When evaluating job opportunities, students also prioritize starting salary along with the opportunity to make a positive impact.** When asked to rank six possible factors to consider when evaluating job opportunities, students placed opportunities in their desired fields higher than any other option, with 62.4 percent placing the category first or second on their lists. In descending order, they also consider fringe benefits, desirability of location, and workplace culture.

**Completion of a regional internship may induce students to remain in the region after graduation.** Nearly 88 percent of students planning to remain in the area have completed internships in the region—compared to 53.6 percent unlikely to stay in Northeastern Pennsylvania.

A total of 2,200 students participated in the 2021Public Policy & Civic Engagement fall survey. The poll concluded that the **top three most important national public policy issues are cost of education, healthcare policy, and jobs and economic development**. Policies related to national debt were rated least important.

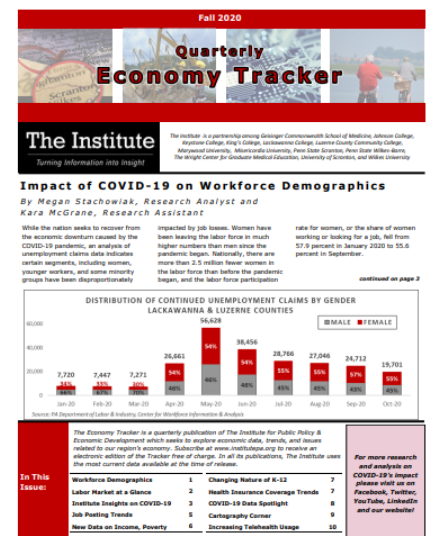
**Students also shared their opinions regarding federal and state responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.** More than 72.0 percent of the respondents reportedly did not think the federal government appropriately handled the public health crisis. With regard to the state government, the disparity between responses was significantly greater. Over 47.0 percent agreed that the state government appropriately handled the public health crisis, and 53.0 percent did not.

The findings of all the polls are located on The Institute's website and provide valuable insight into relevant issues from the perspective of college students.

## Stay Informed with the Quarterly Economy Tracker (QET)

We would like to thank **Sordoni Family Foundation**, our Signature Underwriter, for providing the seed capital and ongoing support for the QET, as well as our generous Supporting Underwriter **UGI Utilities**.

The Institute is part of a national effort of **Cost of Living Index (COLI)** researchers to collect data on cost of living indicators. The Institute publishes periodic updates in the QET.



## ***2021 Clients***

**Non-profit:** Catholic Youth Center, CASA Luzerne County, Commission on Economic Opportunity (CEO), Greater Scranton YMCA, Hazleton Partners in Education (PIE), Leadership Wilkes-Barre, SHINE Luzerne County, Lehigh Carbon Community College SHINE, St. Joseph's Oblates, Telespond, Wayne/Pike Workforce Alliance SHINE, Wyoming Valley YMCA

**Foundations:** AllOne Foundation, The Moses Taylor Foundation, Scranton Area Community Foundation, William G. McGowan Charitable Fund

**Government:** U.S. Economic Development Administration

**Educational Institutions:** Alvernia University, Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine, Lehigh Carbon Community College, The Wright Center for Community Health and Graduate Medical Education

**Economic Development:** Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission

**Business & Industry:** Famous Reading Outdoors, Greater Wyoming Valley Chamber, Laird Landscape Architecture, LLC for Earth Conservancy, Geisinger, Williams Transcontinental Pipeline

***Many thanks to our 2021 clients!***

### **Propelling Higher Education Investment**

#### **Alvernia University**

Reading CollegeTown is a strategy and model for championing economic redevelopment in downtown Reading. Through partnerships and collaborations with the city as well as local businesses and organizations, the university serves as a strategic enabler for strengthening the downtown economy. The Institute is conducting an annual economic impact study and evaluation of the investment and a market study of proposed regional campuses expansion.

#### **The Wright Center for Community Health and Graduate Medical Education**

The Institute completed an economic impact report of the organization's collective work in Northeastern Pennsylvania.

### **Supporting Business and Economic Development**

#### **U.S. Economic Development Administration**

PIVOT is a collaborative project designed to accelerate workforce training and upskill opportunities for displaced workers. The Institute is assisting with the planning component by conducting an impact study of regional business closures on various industries and the labor market.

#### **Famous Reading Outdoors**

Famous Reading Outdoors has repurposed 20,000 acres of coal land for motorized and non-motorized recreation in Carbon, Schuylkill, and Northumberland Counties. An economic impact study and market analysis were completed to support the need for and procurement of funding.



### **Laird Landscape Architecture, LLC for Earth Conservancy**

The research team supported a market study on the use of conservancy land for off-roading and hiking activities. An economic impact study and market opportunities are evaluated based on the findings.

### **Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission**

With the goal of shaping a resilient economy, The Institute is preparing an economic development plan for the five-county northern tier region. Research considers the availability of childcare, manufacturer needs, education and skills gaps, supply chain challenges, livable wages, and real estate analytics, as well as other threats and opportunities.

### **Williams Transcontinental Pipeline**

The team is creating a companion piece to support an economic impact study of a pipeline expansion in Luzerne and Monroe Counties, as well as enhancements to compressor stations in Chester and York Counties. The companion report will document findings and highlight community leader perceptions of the project.

### **Wilkes-Barre Connect**

Coding the Coal Region is an educational pilot program designed to enhance computer programming skills of Luzerne County residents. The Institute completed a formative evaluation, with recommendations for replicable and scalable long-term program implementation.



### **Evaluating Education Outcomes & Youth Development**

#### **Lehigh Carbon Community College SHINE**

LCCC SHINE celebrated its 17th successful year in 2019. For the past six years, The Institute has served as a data analyst and has prepared annual trend data reports that include numerous measures of program outcomes. These are additions to other data-driven reports that can be used for outreach and fundraising.

#### **Lehigh Carbon Community College (LCCC) S-STEM Research**

The Institute serves as the primary researcher for the LCCC's National Science Foundation S-STEM grant of the Start SMART—Self-Motivated, Academic, Reflective, Talented program. Research assesses e-Portfolios and the STEM program's impact on students.

#### **Luzerne County SHINE**

The Institute continues to support this innovative and successful after-school and summer program with assessment of program data, evaluation, and reporting. The SHINE program in Luzerne County began as a result of Institute research indicating that such programs effectively deter youth from participation in gang activity. This project replicated the Lehigh Carbon Community College SHINE model. In the 2018-19 school year, the SHINE program served over 467 students in pre-K through 8<sup>th</sup> grade from five Luzerne County school districts.

#### **Wayne/Pike Workforce Alliance SHINE**

The launch of a SHINE program in Wayne and Pike Counties (also replicating the Lehigh Carbon Community College SHINE model) allows The Institute to build on existing evaluation and reporting efforts.



## Empowering Health Care Clients



### **Geisinger**

The CDC is funding a study on vaccine hesitancy (COVID and flu) by cohort. Furthermore, on behalf of the **Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine**, researchers are conducting an assessment of behavioral health needs throughout Northeastern Pennsylvania. Secondary data is used to track trends and changes in behavioral health metrics. Surveys and interviews help gather information regarding available resources, barriers to service, gaps in service, and other accessibility issues.

### **The Wright Center for Community Health**

The Institute provides quantitative research services to assess the efficacy of the Healthy Mom program (addressing opioid use disorder in pregnant women).



## Working to Improve Equity



### **CEO: Commission on Economic Opportunity**

In a consulting capacity, The Institute assists CEO with a research and planning grant from the Robin Hood Foundation. The Mobility Labs project is designed to identify local factors influencing poverty and economic mobility, and to create and realign structures and systems to address those factors.

### **Telespond**

On behalf of Telespond, The Institute's research team studied the extent of demand for senior day care and individual personal care services in Lackawanna, Luzerne, and Wyoming Counties. Analysis covered the socio-economic composition and health status of current and future seniors over the next decade, to identify potential areas of growth.



### **William G. McGowan Charitable Fund**

The Institute is responsible for a formative and summative evaluation report that identifies course corrections and best practices within NEPA RISE (Readiness in Skilled Employment), a workforce development program. The report will detail the program's ability to achieve projected outcomes and outputs, replicability and scalability, and the project's benefits as they compare to economic costs.

## Helping Non-Profits, Foundations, and Government Clients

### **AllOne Foundation**

The Institute is conducting a multifaceted program evaluation for the organization's autism program. The Autism Collaborative Centers of Excellence (ACCE) was formed to enhance the service delivery system and minimize the service gaps for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and their families living in Northeastern and North Central Pennsylvania.



### **CASA Luzerne County**

The strategic planning committee for CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) Development commissioned a three-year plan. With the exception of children served, all stakeholder groups offered input which The Institute's research team synthesized into recommended strategies and initiatives.

### **Catholic Youth Center**

The Institute is evaluating the Taste and See pilot program, a meal-kit distribution effort with the goal of reducing food insecurity and improving food parity in Wyoming Valley. This initiative is also designed to educate participants about basic nutritional principles while promoting family bonding.

### **Greater Scranton YMCA**

With the proposal of an additional facility, The Institute conducted a market study in the region of the potential new site. The research included a socio-economic profile and identification of competing programs and organizations within the footprint, accompanied by recommendations for action.

### **Hazleton Partners in Education (PIE)**

The Institute's research on workforce needs, as well as education and training opportunities, in the greater Hazleton area informs initiatives for PIE's strategic plan.

### **Leadership Wilkes-Barre**

LWB is working with The Institute to conduct an evaluation of its five major programs, and to prepare an impact report. The project will evaluate participants using a mixed-methods approach over a span of 18 months. The data gathered will serve as the basis for the evaluation and formal economic impact study.

### **Moses Taylor Foundation**

The Institute is serving as the program evaluator for the MTF five-year strategic initiatives – school-based health and senior isolation. These two initiatives form the cornerstone of MTF efforts through 2023. Working with the Foundation, The Institute is developing metrics and protocol to measure outcomes through a formal evaluative process.

### **St. Joseph's Oblates**

This market study included demand indicators such as trends in population and household size, economic and community profiles, an overview of local housing opportunities, and identification of new developments in the area. The Institute leveraged this data to determine feasibility for a housing initiative and put forth relevant recommendations.

### **The Scranton Area Community Foundation**

The Institute acts as executive in residence and provides short-term technical assistance and consulting to nonprofits. For example, The Institute is currently working with Junior League Scranton to secure information on member expectations while exploring impact areas, strategies, and anticipated outcomes. A strategic planning session will be conducted as well.

### **Wyoming Valley YMCA**

The Greater Wyoming Valley YMCA is gathering information about the attitudes of community members as they relate to important health issues such as high blood pressure. The Institute is synthesizing insights from focus groups and interviews, so that they may shape programmatic responses to such issues.



## Project STIR: Sparking Transformation, Using Information & Research

The concept was developed by LaTida Smith, former President and CEO of Moses Taylor Foundation, in an effort to provide foundations, their grantees, and the community at large with education and information on a variety of issues that affect the region, their work, and their clients. One of the funded initiatives resulted in a publication called the *Institute Review*. This is an equity, economic, and social innovation weekly newsletter.

In addition, a public policy initiative was developed and implemented whereby The Institute develops an annual issues briefing book with policy briefs and analysis on education, workforce, public safety, environment, government, health care, equity, and social services. The book was presented to the federal and state northeast delegation in a private retreat each September. The Scranton Area Community Foundation and The Willary Foundation supported the initiative. In 2021, The Robert H. Spitz Foundation and the McGowan Charitable Trust joined the consortium.

# The Institute Review

*Your insight into health, social services, economic, equity, and policy news from the local to the international levels.*

SCRANTON AREA  
*Community* FOUNDATION



William G. McGowan Charitable Fund

The  
Robert H. Spitz  
Foundation



**The Moses Taylor Foundation, and The Institute also** entered into a partnership to produce the **Quarterly Policy Tracker**. This Tracker focuses on public policy briefs to identify potential legislative solutions for regional and statewide challenges.

## Sponsored Research

*Sponsored research is research funded by a foundation, business, educational institution, government, or non-profit on a specific topic with the goal of sharing the findings with the whole community so that different sectors and stakeholders can benefit from the information.*

*In 2020, The Institute implemented a very robust Institute Insight on COVID-19 series with nearly a dozen regional reports, video briefs, and infographics underwritten by the Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce, Sordoni Foundation, and UGI with additional funding from the Luzerne County COVID-19 Emergency Response Fund of The Luzerne Foundation, the Scranton Area Community Foundation COVID 19 Fund and the Wells Fargo Foundation.*

Also, in 2020, The Robert H. Spitz Foundation at the Scranton Area Community Foundation funded the regional study on the Impact of Redlining in our Communities and its inherent role in systemic poverty.

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## *Institute Insights into COVID—19*

The Institute realizes regional leaders needed reliable information, unbiased fact-based analysis, and real-time data to make the tough decisions necessary for a successful economic recovery. These decisions needed to be data-driven - and The Institute answered the call.

Studies including research on the economy, workforce, business and industry, local government, education, housing, social services, health, and emergency planning were completed in 2020 and further research continued into 2021 supported by UGI Utilities.



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## *Corporate Social Responsibility*

Companies tend to invest in communities typically where their corporate headquarters are located. For communities without a major base of headquarters, they are often left out of opportunity to better the workforce, the residents, the community, and the environment. More and more companies are recognizing the mutual benefits as well as increased opportunities to attract, engage, and retain their talent. This winning proposition is a must for all business and industry.

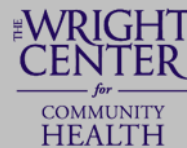


William G. McGowan  
Charitable Fund

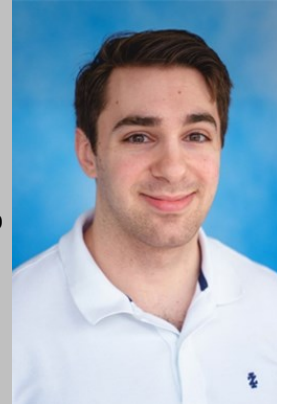
## Academic Accomplishments

### Supporting medical resident health research

"The Wright Center for Graduate Medical Education (TWCGME), an affiliate of the non-profit organization the Wright Center for Community Health, sponsors and supports a number of Faculty, Fellow, and Resident projects that are aimed at systematically investigating study questions in medicine, mental health, community-based population health, and a variety of other areas in healthcare. An identified need of TWCGME's in this pursuit is a greater degree of scientific rigor, which necessitates statistical analysis of the study outcomes to demonstrate significance and strength of the results.



Beginning in August 2021, the Institute has been offering ad hoc support/consultation with TWCGME projects, including studies designed to build knowledge in the areas of psychiatry and infectious disease (COVID-19, in particular); ultimately, the hope is to contribute to the literature on these topics through presentation and publication. TWCGME's future goals in this relationship include analytical support of community-based population health projects.



Through the Institute's support in creating statistical analysis plans at the protocol design phase, and in running the analyses once data has been collected, we hope to develop and contribute stronger studies at our non-profit, community-based healthcare organization. Evidence-based medicine is at the core of all healthcare delivery, and we hope that improving TWCGME's ability to contribute the literature (and allowing our investigators to learn statistical reasoning in the process) will ultimately result in better clinical reasoning and patient care."

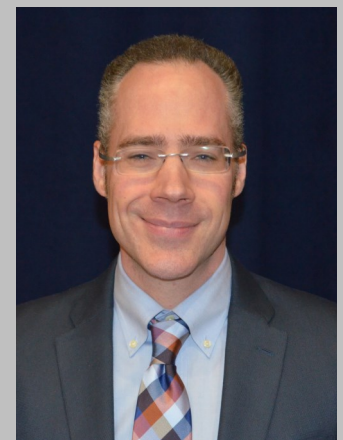
**Nathan Cardona, MSOT** | Director of Scholarly Activity, Institutional Research, and IRB Administration Office of Research Support and Compliance

### Supporting our future physicians -Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine

*"In September 2021, Andrew Chew started mentoring two teams of Master of Biomedical Science students enrolled in the Community Health Research (CHR) course at Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine. During the first quarter of the course, taught by Reema Persad-Clem, PhD, MPH, teams developed a proposal to conduct research on aspect of community health. One team elected to investigate food insecurity in urban and rural households in Pennsylvania, whereas the other team decided to characterize the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health of health care workers across the country. As part of the proposal, students justified how their research could have a significant impact at the community level of intervention. During the second quarter of the course, beginning in January 2022, taught by Brian Piper, PhD and Elizabeth Kuchinski, MPH, teams will conduct the research and present their work in the form of a paper and a scholarly talk. Research mentors support teams by providing research direction, feedback on course deliverables, and general project guidance during regular meetings over the course of the two quarters."*



Geisinger  
Commonwealth  
School of Medicine



**Reema Persad-Clem, PhD, MPH**  
Adjunct Assistant Professor of Data Science

**Brian J. Piper, PhD, MS**  
Associate Professor of Neuroscience



**Student Interns** — In 2021, eight undergraduate students completed internships, and one graduate student completed a capstone project with The Institute. The represented three of The Institute’s 13 partnering higher education institutions, and a variety of study areas. Their majors included applied and computational mathematics; economics; global and international studies; government, law, and national security; health care policy and administration; history; political science; and sociology. They contributed to community-based research as well as the 2021 Indicators and multiple client projects. Together, they completed 950 hours of work and received skills training and mentoring in the process. Some of these students elected to receive academic credit for their internships. Since their time at The Institute, students have embraced opportunities such as entering law school and assuming roles of policy analyst, economic consultant, and research analyst.

Furthermore, two cohorts of students in the master of biomedical science program at the Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine have received mentorship in the areas of research and statistical analysis.

When surveyed regarding their internship experiences, all respondents strongly agreed that:

- staff members were available when they had questions or needed help
- that the experience helped improve their research skills
- they would recommend the internship to friends.

All 2021 respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they felt adequately trained or prepared to complete their assignments!

All agreed or strongly agreed that the internship:

- helped them feel more prepared for their careers
- related to their majors or fields of study
- challenged them

Asked to identify the greatest benefits provided by the internships, students shared comments such as:

- ◇ *“This internship allowed me to further my writing and research skills while also learning so much about Excel.”*
- ◇ *“This internship made me realize that I want to find a job doing this type of research after I graduate.”*
- ◇ *“Having the opportunity to contribute to research and help provide facts and information to those in the community.”*



### Intern Insight



“This internship aligned perfectly with both my business and healthcare administration coursework.”

**Lucas Mahabir, University of Scranton, '21**  
Graduate student pursuing dual degrees in MBA and MHA



### Intern Insight



“The Institute offered me an opportunity to fulfill my program's field placement requirement, focusing on macro social work—exactly the kind of experience I was hoping to find.”

**Sandy Castillo, Marywood University, '21**  
Studying social work, with an emphasis on policy, research, and advocacy

## 2021 News

### Institute Team Changes

The Institute welcomed **Jolene Carey-Pace, Ed.D.**, research analyst in October. Jo served as a business consultant at the Wilkes University SBDC prior to her appointment at The Institute. **Sarah Bender**, research assistant, joined in May. Sarah, a former Institute intern was a statistics major at Misericordia University.

Departing The Institute this year were Research Analyst Megan Stachowiak, who joined in a health care organization in a research capacity, and Research Assistant Joe Gallo, who migrated back to his home state of Massachusetts.



### Advisory Board Changes

During 2021, The Institute saw several changes. First, The Institute's Vice Chair, Frank Joanlanne, President & CEO of Borton Lawson resigned from the board. Frank joined the Board of The Institute in 2010 and became its second Vice Chair in 2014. Frank led The Institute's strategic planning process that year and has served as coordinator of The Institute's seven issue based task forces.



Charlie Kasko, Classic Properties joined The Institute board in 2006 and served as the inaugural chair of the Housing Task Force. Charlie now serves as Vice Chair of the Advisory Board. He will retain coordination of the task forces under his purview and adds the Board's new issues committee to his responsibilities.

Other changes include the addition of Dan Myers, Ph.D., serving as Misericordia University's new President & CEO, and Fr. Thomas Looney, CSC, Ph.D., King's College President & CEO. Fr. Looney replaces Fr. Jack Ryan, who has served on the board since the start of his Presidency. The Institute also said farewell to Steven Scheinman, MD, President of the Geisinger Commonwealth of Medicine. Dr. Scheinman's retirement leaves a void on The Institute's Health & Health Care Task Force. Heather Acker, CFO at Gentex Corporation, also retired in 2021. Finally, we welcome Fr. Joseph J. Marina, SJ, as the University of Scranton's new President.

### Research in the Community: Conferences & Presentations

A full year of COVID measures did not deter The Institute from sharing insights at conferences and other gatherings. For instance, presentations to the **Scranton Chamber of Commerce** addressed regional indicators and workplace skills. Andrew Chew also presented to the **Chamber Nonprofit Council**, discussing economic recovery and opportunities to prioritize equity. These areas of interest were shared with **Leadership Wilkes-Barre** in October as well.

In August, Teri Ooms and Megan Stachowiak spoke at the Scranton Area Foundation's Learning Conference. They engaged the audience in a conversation about building cultures of assessment and evaluation. Andrew Chew spoke at the same conference on how organizations can use data to understand community needs. Teri Ooms also testified at the **Pennsylvania Black Caucus Legislative Hearing on Equity** and participated in **Senator Bob Casey's Forum on Community Social Needs**.

Finally, staff presented to the **Hazleton and Wyoming Valley Chambers of Business and Industry**.

## Marketing & Outreach Report

### Outreach

Outreach continues to current, former, and potential underwriters. Visits with past, current, and potential clients are ongoing as well. Community and board engagement includes organizations such as AHEC, Circle 200, Diamond City Partnership, the Greater Wyoming Valley Chamber, Luzerne County Head Start, the Scranton Chamber, Scranton Tomorrow, The Appleseed Foundation, United Way of Wyoming Valley, and Volunteers in Medicine. All efforts raise The Institute's profile.

### Media

The **Times Leader** published weekly research updates for seven months in 2021, covering all The Institute's community-based research. The Indicators and studies were covered on **RealClear Public Affairs'** Pennsylvania page. The team also made one television appearance and one radio/podcast appearance, and WVIA has launched a public affairs program using The Institute's research for issue identification and information. The Institute has been active on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn as well. The number of followers has reached 1,253 and grows by the month. Additionally, the organization has launched a YouTube channel, showcasing videos of task force presentations and COVID-19 highlights. As a result, of this partnership, The Institute's articles were reprinted in the Philadelphia Inquirer, Pittsburgh Tribune Review, and a national enews brief called Governing Daily.

Executive Director Teri Ooms was featured on **Newsmakers** with **Jayne Ann Bugda** and **Andy Mehalshick**. They discussed The Institute's latest research and its impact on important programs and services in the region. **Keystone Edition**, the new **WVIA public affairs** show is *"Guided by research from [The Institute for Public Policy & Economic Development](#) and ideas from a volunteer editorial advisory panel, including veteran journalists throughout the region, Keystone Edition explores important topics in economic development, community affairs, education, workforce development, business, public health, organized labor, climate change, arts and culture, all with a goal of improving the quality of life in our region."* The live show airs Thursdays at 8 pm.



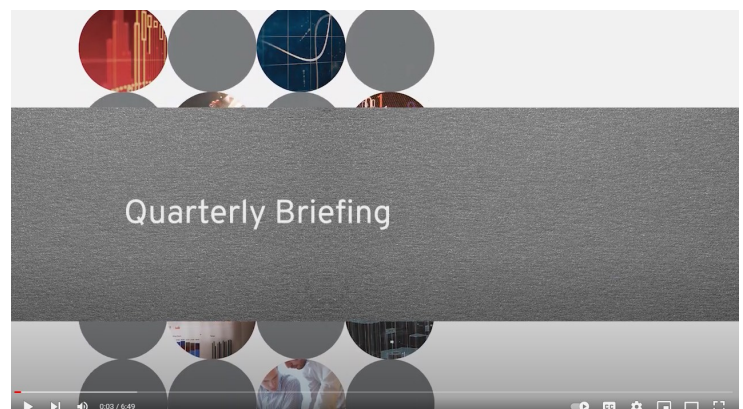
### Website

Top page visits include the home page, About Us, Indicators, Institute Insights on COVID-19, QET, Staff and Students. Most keywords were unidentifiable, although others included *economic development, economic research, public policy, institute, institution*, and staff names. There were visitors from traditional networks as well as the U.S. House of Representatives, the U.S. Senate, the PA State Senate, and major universities. Networks or users in at least nine other countries were reported. There were 13,349 website hits and over 23,270 page views.

### Data Briefings

On a quarterly basis, Director of Research Andrew Chew compiles and presents video briefings. These briefings cover emerging issues in Northeastern Pennsylvania, with data surrounding important topics like population changes and public health trends. All briefings are available on YouTube.

[Subscribe Here](#)





## Research in Action

It is our goal that policymakers and community leaders put Institute research into action to address big challenges and help improve our region. Here are some examples of positive outcomes resulting, in part, from Institute research. The Institute asks clients and community members to tell the story of how data, research, analytics, and planning helped to inform their projects or program. Most of these vignettes are in their own words.

### Information Requests & In-kind Research Support—The Institute Gives Back! Over \$36k in research support to the local community

The research team accommodated 66 requests for information throughout the year. This accumulated to over 113 research hours for four for-profit organizations, 10 elected officials and government agencies, 41 nonprofits, four educational institutions, six media outlets, and one student at a value of **almost \$18,000** of Institute in-kind time. In calendar year 2021, The Institute has been able to provide in-kind research support to regional non-profits valued at over \$18,000 to reduce the cost of their projects. The Institute's total donation of in-kind support since its inception is over \$1,013,000

### Public Policy

In the Institute's 2021, health care task force study, there was a call to have PA join the Nurse licensure compact to be able to increase nurse employment in PA. The bill was signed by Governor Wolf this past summer.

### Developing Solutions

#### Moses Taylor Foundation's Senior Isolation Program



*"The Institute for Public Policy & Economic Development has been a key partner in **Moses Taylor Foundation's Reducing Older Adult Isolation Initiative** since its inception, supporting the work in many different ways. The research and local data they provided helped us identify the issue as a focal point to begin with. As our work progressed, they assisted with gathering and synthesizing insight from community partners to further target our work toward the creation of a specific plan to reduce older adult isolation in Lackawanna County. Ultimately, developing this plan fell to a collaborative of nearly 30 organizations led by the **United Way of Lackawanna & Wayne Counties**.*



*The Institute was a dedicated partner in this work. The plan consists of three main components: a screening tool for isolation implemented by various organizations across the community, a system of trained navigators to work one-on-one to connect those who are isolated to services to reduce their isolation, and a community public awareness campaign. As the plan was being developed, the Institute provided key insight into the current isolation and loneliness screening tools that exist as the group worked to choose the best one for our community. Beyond that, they were a valued thought partner in general, bringing a wealth of community knowledge to all the group's work. They were also key in gathering input from older adults to inform the overall design of the plan – remaining flexible and creative during COVID to ensure that there were safe opportunities to provide feedback. Now as this project shifts into the pilot phase, the Institute will continue their vital role by helping to set outcome goals and collect and evaluate the data that will allow the group to identify what parts of the plan are working, where weaknesses might exist, and make necessary changes. Ultimately, these results will be vital to the success and sustainability of a new system to reduce older adult isolation in Lackawanna County."*

**Christine Marcos, Senior Program Officer | Moses Taylor Foundation**

## Research in Action (continued)

### Informing Strategy



Established in 1954, the Scranton Area Community Foundation (the Foundation) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to enhancing communities in Northeastern Pennsylvania through the development of organized philanthropy. The Foundation has granted millions of dollars to assist the educational, human service, environmental, civic, and arts & cultural organizations in our area. In the past decade, the Foundation's role as convener and catalyst has grown exponentially. We act as a neutral third party to solve our communities' challenges by bringing stakeholders together, leveraging resources and connecting needs to solutions.

The role of the Institute in helping to shape the Foundation's work in the area of community initiatives cannot be overstated. The Institute's research gives our stakeholders a voice and often provides important confirmation of what we hear from our community. This research informs our focus areas, while the evaluation of established programs affirms our efforts and investments, or highlights the need to shift attention elsewhere. In essence, the institute is an important partner in the Foundation's strategic direction.

A clear example of the important partnership between the Scranton Area Foundation and the Institute can be seen in our work on equitable transportation. Shortly after the Foundation formed an Equitable Transportation Council, now known as NEPA Moves, we commissioned the Institute to perform a qualitative study to better understand the transportation challenges faced by individuals in our community. A series of 12 focus groups were conducted throughout Lackawanna and Luzerne counties to learn about transportation barriers faced by community members, particularly those from underrepresented backgrounds and those most at risk of facing transportation difficulty. This study helped pave the way for effective solutions to address transportation barriers that impact access to employment, healthcare, and other quality of life issues. The Institute's detailed research also informed specific action, such as the expansion of a bus route to include regular service to the Mid Valley Industrial Park, Valley View Business Park, Jessup Small Business Center and Rock Creek Corporate Center, providing individuals critical access to these hubs of employment.

Another example of the Institute's important partnership can be found in its work with the Foundation's Center for Leadership and Nonprofit Excellence, which serves the organizational and infrastructure capacity building needs of the nonprofit and civic community in Northeastern Pennsylvania. The Institute has evaluated the Center's many training programs and conferences, leading the Foundation to adapt and innovate programs to continually meet the educational needs of the nonprofit sector. This feedback also helped us to shape the Executive in Residence grants program, which gives nonprofit professionals in the region the opportunity to receive one-on-one support from an expert in one of several fields, such as financial management, leadership development and fundraising. Similarly, the Institute has provided critical feedback on our Women in Philanthropy focus areas, helping us understand the various ways they impact women, girls, and their families, and to adapt or evolve these programs to create results.

The Scranton Area Community Foundation is grateful for the Institute's high-quality research and timely, relevant information briefs, which strengthen our ability to be responsive grant makers, catalysts, and conveners who focus on relevant and important issues facing our communities. The Institute continues to shape our work, particularly as we focus on barriers to attainable housing, and areas of opportunity surrounding diversity, equity and inclusion. We look forward to our continued partnership, based on our mutual goal of critical, positive change in our communities.

**Laura Ducceschi, MBA, MA, CAP®, CFRE**

**President & CEO | Scranton Area Community Foundation**



## Research in Action (continued)

### Developing our Workforce NEPA RISE



William G. McGowan  
Charitable Fund

The McGowan Fund wants to express our deep gratitude for Teri Ooms and the entire team at The Institute. Your expertise, ongoing support, and partnership in our efforts to improve lives for those living well below the poverty line in Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties is invaluable.

In late 2020, McGowan's team of local trustees—Gert McGowan, Leo McGowan, and Dan McGowan—and I began conversations around supporting a comprehensive workforce development initiative that would remove all barriers for participants as they took classes toward certifications to obtain sustainable, living wage jobs. We'd learned much from other programs about necessary elements to help people succeed, and we knew the area was rich in resources. We reached out to Johnson College in hopes of working together and bringing in other partners. In particular, we knew measurement would be crucial. In nearly all the work we do, the Fund establishes key measures up front so that we may identify strengths and weaknesses and make changes accordingly.

Six months later, we had a strong collaborative comprised of Johnson College, United Neighborhood Centers, and The Institute. We met for hours each month as a full team and in specific teams around programming, wraparound services, and evaluation and measurement. You see, we wanted to create a program that would not experience a cliff effect after the grant period, and one that could become an evidence-based quantifiable program that the state could possibly assume as a proven model for workforce and economic development. Quantifiable evidence would also help us learn what is working along the way and then make needed tweaks. Lastly, having robust evaluation metrics would also be necessary to expand into other regions.

Every meeting was high energy and engaging. Last summer, after much deliberation, the name NEPA RISE was born. The time investment was a heavy lift for all, but the shared vision led to an on-time implementation. The first NEPA RISE cohort began classes at Johnson College in January, and we are eager to follow and support participants every step of the way.

While the RISE story itself is tremendous, the bigger story is that of partnership. We often hear that it is difficult to bring non-profits together, even when there is a shared vision. This could not have been further from the truth with the NEPA RISE team. Our vision remained firmly trained on the region's 24 percent poverty rate and the suffering that we might alleviate among low-income and no-income families and neighbors. Members of the working group included:

- Teri Ooms and Andrew Chew from The Institute for Public Policy & Economic Development
- Lisa Durkin, Jessica Walla, and Terilynn Brechtel of United Neighborhood Centers of North-eastern Pennsylvania
- Dr. Katie Leonard, Karen Baker, Dr. Kellyn Williams, and Doug Cook of Johnson College
- Gert McGowan, Leo McGowan, Dan McGowan, and Diana Spencer of the William G. McGowan Charitable Fund
- Liz Finley and George Sweda of Sweda Advertising

The power of collaboration comes from an openness to a shared purpose and to creativity, as well as the ability to put aside any feelings of competition. Add a big desire to celebrate and have fun together, and it's a superpower.

That said, we know there will be challenges along the way, and also know that we will tackle them together and make the program stronger. We look forward to sharing outcomes in the future, but moreover to participating in more collaboratives to help families reach their highest potential, defined only by them.

**Diana Spencer, executive director | William G. McGowan Charitable Fund**



"In 2021, **The Johnson College Economic Impact & Graduate Study** continued to help us demonstrate to potential industry partners and local organizations, through videos and webpages, the impact our alumni have on our region. It was also important in helping us create our fundraising outreach strategy."

**Dr. Katie Leonard, President & CEO | Johnson College**





## Informing Public Policy

Since the spring of 2020, the Institute has collaborated with **RealClear's** Pennsylvania media program, which launched an online portal focused on state policy and political analysis, in addition to a syndication network that republishes RealClear originals in state-level newspapers. **Charles McElwee, editor of RealClear's Pennsylvania media program**, has worked with the Institute to showcase its Indicators research in more than 30 "charticles," summaries showcased on RealClear's Pennsylvania portal. Charles has also edited policy-focused op-Eds by Institute staff. Following publication at RealClear, the pieces, which have addressed regional policy trends, have been republished in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, the *Scranton Times-Tribune*, and the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*, among other publications. In 2022, the Institute and RealClear will continue its collaboration work.

**RealClear** Politics



## Defining Impact

### Informing Strategic Initiatives - CASA

**CASA of Luzerne County** commissioned The Institute to complete a needs assessment and strategic planning framework. The Institute conducted surveys and interviews of a large and diverse group of key stakeholders - including board members, advocates, staff, the court, and other external agencies. Each of these parties are key to fulfilling our mission to leverage the power of community volunteers to give a voice to abused and neglected children in Luzerne County.



The data gathered through this survey process was invaluable. The Institute's meticulous and analytical approach took the largely qualitative input from the many, important voices of our stakeholders and translated it into clear, actionable insights. This holistic method not only allowed us to better understand the strengths of the organization, but also identified areas of focus foundational to developing an informed strategic plan. In addition to a detailed array of findings, The Institute leveraged their wealth of planning knowledge to provide a strategic planning tool kit - including scorecards and granular KPIs - informed by the insights gleaned during the survey. As we build towards our long term strategic plan, we will return back to the results of the survey to guide our goals and tactics, and the tool kit to measure results. Simply put, The Institute's work has been nothing short of game-changing for CASA of Luzerne County - providing the foundational data needed to continue our important work.

**Alex Grover | Vice President CASA Board of Directors**

### Informing Strategic Initiatives - Telespond

In the fall of 2020, **Telespond Senior Services, Inc.**, a provider of senior daycare and in-home, non-medical services, was in the early stages of recovery from the devastating effects of COVID-19 on their client population. The daily daycare census, averaging just over 30 prior to March, 2020, had fallen to 3-4 clients daily after closing in June reopening in August. The following actions were taken by the Board of Directors at that time:



A new President/CEO was hired with the mandate to bring Telespond back to financial solvency. One of the first actions by the CEO was to outline a 10 point action plan, reorganizing staff duties and responsibilities, "right-sizing" staffing levels, and pledging to conduct a strategic plan to guide the organization through the next 2 years. The plan was to include an analysis of the current business model, assessing regional competition, and identification of potentially new revenue sources.



To assist in the data gathering and analysis portion of the plan, Telespond engaged the services of the Institute on Public Policy and Planning to conduct a region-wide demand study for daycare and in-home services and a comprehensive competitor matrix.

These valuable pieces of research continues to guide our decision-making process as we fortify existing lines of business, examine new programs, and expand geography into adjacent counties.

The experience was very positive and informative particularly for our board of directors, who unanimously voted to include the studies as appendices to the strategic plan, the first ever in Telespond history.

**Joseph J. Grilli, MPA, DPA President and CEO | Telespond Senior Services, Inc.**



# The Institute

*Turning Information into Insight*

## The Team



### **Teri Ooms, Executive Director**

Teri was appointed Executive Director of The Institute in 2004. Since its inception, she has been responsible for all facets of research, organizational strategy, and management. Her strategic skills have allowed The Institute to expand its services to the private and non-profit sectors for research and analysis. Under her direction, The Institute has completed over 100 client and community-based studies. These studies have resulted in new jobs, new programs, sustained initiatives, and new legislation throughout Pennsylvania and New York. Ooms also serves on a number of local and regional non-profit boards. She holds an MBA in finance and a bachelor's degree in public administration from the University of Scranton.



### **Andrew Chew, AICP, Director of Research**

Andrew is a policy, economic development and urban planning professional. Andrew joined The Institute in 2013, and helps guide several of The Institute's community-based research initiatives and is responsible for data analysis and report preparation for numerous studies and reports. Andrew contributes his skills in Geographic Information Systems (GIS), statistical software, and other research tools to many of The Institute's projects. He holds a master's degree in city and regional planning from Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers University and a bachelor's degree in political science from Muhlenberg College. Since 2017, Andrew has been a member of The American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP).



### **Jill Avery-Stoss, Director of Operations**

Jill joined The Institute in June 2018 to fill a newly-created role that was a crossover position covering both research and operations. Her responsibilities continued to grow as her talent and skills manifested themselves. Jill now services as Director of Operations and is assuming greater organizational operational responsibilities in addition to her current functions. She also is responsible for communications and social media for the organization. .

Following a successful career in the nonprofit sector, Jill directed her attention to online content creation and editing. She produced hundreds of articles, press releases, and other copy on a wide array of topics. Jill studied English and Women's Studies at Penn State University. Her background and knowledge of underserved populations are ideally suited to the region's development needs.

## The Team (Continued)



### **Jolene Carey-Pace, Ed.D., Research Analyst**

Carey-Pace joined the team in 2021. As a research analyst, Jolene carries out research/development activities, analyzes data, and interprets results. Jolene also contributes to the design and delivery of research projects and collaborates with researchers to develop, execute, and interpret research projects and perform complex data collection and study methods. Jolene is experienced in quantitative and qualitative research, specializing in implementing, conducting, and analyzing interviews and focus groups.

A recent graduate of Wilkes University, Jolene earned her Doctorate of Education degree in Educational Leadership Studies. Jolene also earned a Master's degree in Organizational Management and a Bachelor's degree in English. Jolene also holds certificates in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Workplace and Post-Crisis Leadership from the University of South Florida MUMA.



### **Sarah Bender, Research Assistant**

Sarah works under the supervision of the Director of Research on community-based and client projects by way of data accumulation, quantitative research, and analysis. As a Research Assistant, Sarah has been working on the annual Indicators report, authoring articles for the Quarterly Economic Tracker and working on survey analysis for client projects.

Sarah, a former Institute intern, joined The Institute in April 2021. During her internship at The Institute, Sarah working on taskforce studies, survey analysis, and public policy briefs.

Sarah graduated from Misericordia University in 2020 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Statistics and minors in Management and Mathematics.

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*Economic, Impact, Health,  
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Research, Evaluation, and  
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