

# The Institute

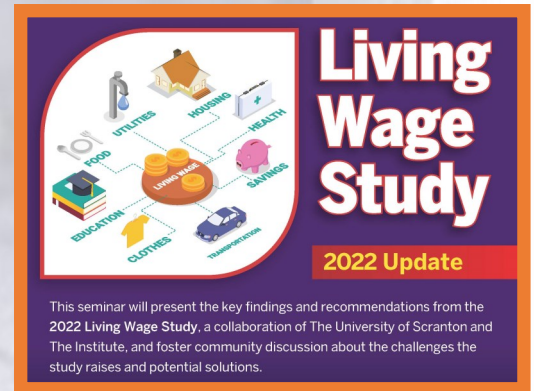
*Turning Information into Insight*

*Economic, Impact, Health,  
Social, and Education  
Research, Evaluation, and  
Consulting*

## What does it mean to earn a living wage in Northeastern Pennsylvania?

The latest updates to our Living Wage Report, produced in partnership with the University of Scranton, are now available. Findings and key recommendations cover:

- Racial disparities
- A persistent benefits cliff
- Lagging median household income
- An acute need for affordable housing
- A widening gap between minimum wage and livable wage



[Access the full study here](#)



### *In this Issue:*

- Special Thanks to Sponsors
- Foundation Highlight
- Data visualization series
- New Staff
- Underwriting opportunities
- Recent Publications
- Client Solutions

*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 or Graduate Medical Education, University of Scranton, Wilkes University, and the business community*

# Sincere Thanks

to our 2023 community-based research underwriters and Indicators event sponsors

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

Signature Underwriters

The Wright Centers

Main Event Sponsor

Johnson College

Silver Sponsor

- Altitude Philanthropies
- Borton Lawson
- Geisinger Health System
- The Luzerne Foundation
- UGI Utilities
- Villaume Foundation
- Wayne County Community Foundation

Contributing Underwriters

The Woodlands Inn

Venue Sponsor

WVIA Public Media

Virtual Event Sponsor

- BlackOut Design
- FNCB
- Greater Hazleton CANDO
- Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield
- KMLA Group
- M&T Bank
- PNC
- The Wright Center for Community Health

Supporting Underwriters

Bellefonte c/o  
Tabataaie Family

Individual Gifts

## *An Abundance of Gratitude for Community Support!*

As we embark on a new year of community-based research, we extend our sincere appreciation to all our supporters—the latest of whom include our friends at the Robert H. Spitz Foundation and Geisinger Health System.

# Geisinger



### Sponsor Benefits:

#### Main Event Sponsor (1 available), \$3,500

- Speaking role at event
- 2-page spread in event program
- All other Platinum level benefits

#### Platinum Sponsor, \$2,500

- Recognition on presentation lead slide
- Recognition by presenter at event
- Full ad in program
- Recognition in newsletter to over 1,000 community & business leaders
- Recognition in all event materials including slide deck
- Website and social media recognition and link
- 6 tickets to event\*

#### Gold Sponsor, \$1,000

- Recognition in event program
- 1/2 page ad in program
- Recognition in newsletter to over 1,000 community & business leaders
- Recognition on all event materials including slide deck
- Website and social media recognition
- 4 tickets to event\*

#### Silver Sponsor, \$750

- 1/4 page ad in program
- Recognition in newsletter to over 1,000 community leaders
- Recognition in all event materials including slide deck
- Website and social media recognition
- 2 tickets to event\*

#### Bronze Sponsor, \$500

- 1/8 page ad in program
- Recognition in newsletter to over 1,000 community leaders
- Recognition in all event materials including slide deck
- Website and social media recognition
- 1 ticket to event\*

#### Individual Donor Sponsor, \$250

- Recognition in event program
- Individual donor name listing in program

#### Task Force Sponsors, \$5,000 ( up to 5 per task force)

- Logo on task force study publication and in task force video
- 1/2 page ad in program
- Recognition in newsletter to over 1,000 community leaders
- Recognition in all event materials including slide deck
- Website and social media recognition
- 2 tickets to event\*

To join the growing list of supporters for 2023, contact [ooms@institutepea.org](mailto:ooms@institutepea.org)



*Attention! We have some big announcements for Indicators 2023!*

In addition to new in-person and virtual event options, the Indicators publication is expanding to encompass Wayne County! We could not have made this expansion without the Wayne County Community Foundation and the John and Helen Villaume Foundation behind us.



*"We're so thrilled that The Institute has recognized that Wayne County is a county in NEPA that needs its story told more through research and data. We're looking forward to collaborating with Teri and her wonderful team to bring more awareness to the needs of our community and work together to find solutions."*

Ryanne Jennings  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
Wayne County Community Foundation



*The John and Helen Villaume Foundation was established by Honesdale natives John and Helen Villaume, in 2000.*

*The foundation is dedicated to benefit charitable, religious, scientific, literary and educational programs within Wayne County.*

## *Now Underway: 2023 Task Force Research*



*Here's a sneak peek!...*

### **Jobs, Economy, and Economic Development:** A Strategic Approach to Growing the Region's Economy

This research will serve as a blueprint for regional economic development by identifying growth opportunities and providing a guide for increasing economic diversity.

### **Health and Health Care:** Lifestyle Medicine Issues in Northeastern Pennsylvania

Lifestyle medicine refers to practice of medicine through a lens of modifiable behaviors, such as diet choices, physical activity, and substance use. The study will focus on a broad range of lifestyle medicine issues as they pertain to the region.

### **Housing:** An Action-Focused Plan for Meeting Housing Demand

This study will serve as a continuation of the task force's study on workforce housing opportunities completed in 2022. It will include recommendations for local governments to modify policies and zoning codes to promote development.

### **Education and Workforce Development:** Bringing Young Adults Into Education & the Workforce

In this case, research will reveal a deep dive into the phenomenon of "checked out" young adults (aged 18-25) who have not pursued postsecondary education and are unemployed or underemployed. It will review factors leading to this issue, including economic dynamics, disillusionment, substance use, and educational gaps.

### **Regionalism:** Best Practices for Regional Planning Coordination

The Institute will compile national and state best practices for regional approaches to land use, transportation, and economic development to explore opportunities to improve planning effectiveness and capacity. Special attention will also be given to ways in which regional planning can be used to more effectively address emerging challenges.

### **Planning, Land Use, Transportation, and Infrastructure:** Community Impacts of Investing in Transportation and Infrastructure

This study will outline various ways in which investments in transportation and infrastructure lead to economic growth. Previous reports, data, and studies on economic impact of major proposed projects (such as the restoration of passenger rail service to Northeast PA) will be analyzed to connect the dots between capital investments and regional well-being. The report will align closely with funding sources and priorities identified in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

### **Energy:** Electric Vehicle Infrastructure

The study will examine trends related to electric vehicle adoption nationwide and regionally, economic impacts, and a special emphasis on charging infrastructure. It will review the current policy landscape related to funding of this infrastructure, local and state planning activities, and make recommendations around effective regional planning for electric vehicle charging. Freight electrification implications will also be analyzed in light of the region's concentration of distribution industries.

## NEW! Data Visualization Video Series!



WVIA, in partnership with The Institute, produced a series of *Data Visualization Videos* to help explain critical issues in Northeastern Pennsylvania.

The short videos focus on three key areas, using data from the annual Indicators Report and community task force research studies. They will be featured on the WVIA website as well as The Institute's YouTube channel.

The first video addresses **workforce issues**.

The second video addresses **housing inequality**.

The final video addresses **child abuse**.



[Find us on YouTube](#)

— The —  
Robert H. Spitz  
— Foundation —

SCRANTON AREA  
*Community* FOUNDATION

**Mark Shaffer**  
**Research Analyst**



Mark joined The Institute as a Research Analyst in 2022.

After graduating from Dickinson College in 2016 with a Bachelor's degree in Economics and Political Science, Mark began his career in workforce development with EDSI, a national workforce development and talent solutions company. For the last six years, Mark served as a data analyst at Pennsylvania Career-Link Luzerne and Schuylkill County, monitoring performance and doing quality control with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, a program which is designed to help unemployed and low-income county residents find new jobs or enroll in school.

In 2022, Mark graduated with a Master's in Public Policy and Public Administration from American University. For his capstone project, he studied green energy spending in the state of New York, with a focus on the impact of the state's contracting practices on broader social justice issues.

In addition to his professional work, Mark is deeply involved in community organizing. As one of the founders of the Wilkes-Barre Worker Bees, Mark regularly hosts street cleanups with a team of volunteers across the city of Wilkes-Barre. In October, the Worker Bees won the Environmental Partnership Award from the Pennsylvania Environmental Council for their joint work on cleanups and tree plantings in the city.

As a Research Analyst, Mark works on the annual Indicators report, authors articles for the Quarterly Economic Tracker, and primarily conducts quantitative data analysis for client projects as well as community-based research.

---

**Ethan Van Gorden**  
**Research Assistant**



Ethan's expertise is in primarily qualitative data analysis. He has gathered information related to the COVID-19 pandemic through oral history interviews, assisted in research focused on women working in the glass industry in western Pennsylvania, and presented research on the Sakdal Movement in the Philippines. Ethan brings a skill set that is oriented toward community outreach and primary source interpretation.

Having studied anthropology and interned at the Anthracite Heritage Museum, Ethan has a strong understanding of community engagement methodologies as well as a practical sense of public research. As an intern, Ethan assisted researchers interested in the coal mining history of northeastern Pennsylvania. As a student, he worked with local historical societies to create brochures highlighting community buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).

In addition to his public research experience, Ethan has conducted a substantial amount of archaeological and historical research. These projects include artifact and database analysis related to his fieldwork in western Pennsylvania and primary source interpretation later presented in his senior thesis. His thesis was later awarded the best historical topics paper of his graduating class.

As a Research Assistant, Ethan works on the annual Indicators report, authors articles for the Quarterly Economic Tracker, and conducts primary and secondary data analysis and interpretation for client projects and subject matter task force research.

Ethan is a recent graduate of Indiana University of Pennsylvania with majors in Anthropology and History. He also has certificates in Public History and Foundations of Interpretation. Currently, Ethan is enrolled at PennWest University and is pursuing his Master's degree in Information and Library Science.



## The Institute needs your support!

Data-driven decisions are essential for enhancing the vibrancy of the region and ensuring its long-term economic prosperity. That's why we hope you will contribute to our community-based research. Consider joining our growing list of underwriters.

To learn more, contact Teri at [ooms@institutepea.org](mailto:ooms@institutepea.org).

### In case you missed them...New publications are now available!

RealClear Pennsylvania published an op-ed by The Institute's Director of Research, Andrew Chew. It addresses issues surrounding property tax assessments.

[Read it here](#)

RealClear Pennsylvania also published an op-ed by Jill Avery-Stoss, Director of Operations. It explores healthcare workforce challenges.

[Read it here](#)

In the Summer 2022 edition of the **Policy Tracker**, read about:

- the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)
- details from the state budget
- national and state legislative activities
- climate-related provisions in the Inflation Reduction Act
- and more!

[Access the issue here!](#)

## Client Solutions

Market & Feasibility Studies  
Indicators- Indexes  
Community Needs Assessments  
Housing Studies  
Economic Development Strategies  
Economic and Tax Impact Studies

Survey Research  
Industry Studies  
Workforce Studies  
Education Studies  
Policy Analysis  
Site Selection Research  
Arts & Culture Studies

Economic and Demographic Profiles  
Grant and Program Evaluation Support  
Research Validation and Peer Review  
Tourism Strategic Plans  
Comprehensive Plans  
Asset Maps



## Who We Are

The Institute is dedicated to empowering business and community leaders with researched-driven strategies for informed decision-making.

We conduct community-based, empirical research to identify the opportunities and challenges unique to our region, and offer innovative solutions for the problems facing our communities. **This research is funded by generous academic partners and sponsors who share our vision for a strong regional economy and vibrant communities.**

### Community-Based Research

Access the latest regional research on The Institute's website. [www.institutepa.org](http://www.institutepa.org)

### Regional Indicators Data & Research

Indicators data tracks the region's progress over time. They include economy, healthcare, environment, education and infrastructure measures.

<https://www.institutepa.org/dashboard/>

### Task Force Research

Recent and archived research studies identify and address the region's challenges. This research is a driving force behind many important economic development and community revitalization initiatives, which produce positive outcomes for our area.

<https://www.institutepa.org/research-hub/>

### Quarterly Economic Tracker

This quarterly electronic publication explores the region's economic and business trends.

<https://www.institutepa.org/economy-tracker/>

### Policy Tracker

This tracker covers state and federal policy focused research and aims to educate and inform the reader about the challenges, opportunities, and potential non-partisan solutions.

<https://www.institutepa.org/policy-tracker/>

### Polling Program

Better understand the subject matter interests, public policy views, and civic engagement of our local college students and future leaders.

<https://www.institutepa.org/polling-center/>

## Thanks to our 2023 Research Underwriters!

**Sincere thanks to our generous stakeholders who share our vision for a strong regional economy and healthy communities. Your support makes our work possible!**

### Signature Underwriters

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

### Contributing Underwriters

Altitude Philanthropies  
Borton-Lawson  
Geisinger Health System  
The Luzerne Foundation  
UGI Utilities  
Villaume Foundation  
Wayne County Community Foundation

### Supporting Underwriters

BlackOut Design  
FNCB  
Greater Hazleton CANDO  
Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield  
KMLA Group  
M&T Bank  
PNC  
The Wright Center for Community Health  
WVIA Public Media

### 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

**Locations in:**

**Scranton and Wilkes-Barre, PA**

**[www.institutepa.org](http://www.institutepa.org)**

**570.408.9850**

**[info@institutepa.org](mailto:info@institutepa.org)**

**Staff**

*Teri Ooms*

*President & CEO*

[ooms@institutepa.org](mailto:ooms@institutepa.org)

*Andrew Chew*

*Director of Research*

[chew@institutepa.org](mailto:chew@institutepa.org)

*Jill Avery-Stoss*

*Director of Operations*

[averystoss@institutepa.org](mailto:averystoss@institutepa.org)

*Jolene Carey-Pace, Ed.D.*

*Research Analyst*

[carey-pace@institutepa.org](mailto:carey-pace@institutepa.org)

*Mark Shaffer, MPA*

*Research Analyst*

[shaffer@institutepa.org](mailto:shaffer@institutepa.org)

*Sarah Bender*

*Research Assistant*

[bender@institutepa.org](mailto:bender@institutepa.org)

*Ethan Van Gorden*

*Research Assistant*

[vangorden@institutepa.org](mailto:vangorden@institutepa.org)



**Board of Directors**

**Charlie Kasko, Chairperson of the Board, Classic Properties**

**Alana Roberts, Vice Chairperson of the Board, PPL Electric**

**Bill Sordoni, Secretary/Treasurer, Sordoni Construction**

Don Brominski, UGI Utilities

Greg Cant, Wilkes University Ex Officio Member

Robert Korjeski, KMLA Group

Robert Luciani, Empower

Paul Rushton, Rosenn Jenkins & Greenwald, LLP

**Advisory Board**

**Chair - Greg Cant, Ph.D., Wilkes University**

**Vice-Chair – Charlie Kasko, Classic Properties**

**Vice Chair—Mary Persico, IHM, Ed.D. — Marywood University**

Ron Beer , MHA, FACHE – Geisinger Health System

Don Brominski — UGI Utilities

Julie Byerley, MD — Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine

John Cefaly — Cushman & Wakefield

Robert Durkin — Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce

Lynda Goldstein—Penn State University Wilkes-Barre

Lindsay Griffin — Greater Wyoming Valley Chamber

Thomas Leary — Luzerne County Community College

Thomas Looney, C.S.C., Ph.D. — King’s College

Katie Leonard, Ed.D.—Johnson College

Joe Lettiere —CAN DO, Inc.

Robert Luciani — Empower

Rev. John G. Marina, S.J. — University of Scranton

Carla McCabe — WVIA Public Media

Jill Murray, Ph.D — Lackawanna College

Daniel Myers, Ph.D.—Misericordia University

John Pullo — Keystone College

Alana Roberts —PPL Utilities

Matthew Sordoni — Sordoni Construction

Linda Thomas-Hemak, M.D. – The Wright Center

Marleen Troy, Ph.D., — Wilkes University

Lucyann Vierling — Workforce Alliance

Marwan Wafa, Ph.D. — Penn State University Scranton

Tara Mugford Wilson — Power Engineering Corporation

Join our growing list of research underwriters !

To learn more, contact Teri at [ooms@institutepa.org](mailto:ooms@institutepa.org).