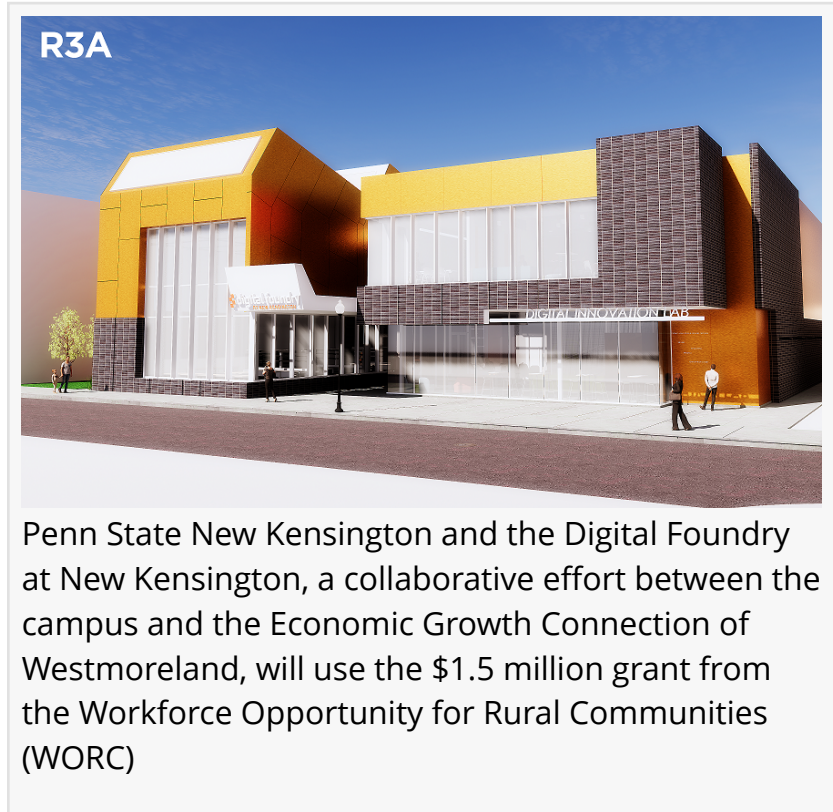


Penn State awarded \$1.5 million federal Workforce Opportunity for Rural Communities Initiative grant

New Kensington campus, Digital Foundry to lead project targeting Southwestern Pennsylvania region

NEW KENSINGTON, PA, UNITED STATES, November 4, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Penn State has been awarded a \$1.5 million grant to create workforce education and reskilling programs targeting the southwestern Pennsylvania region. The University's New Kensington campus, along with its Digital Foundry at New Kensington, will lead the project known as "[Growing and Reskilling Our Workforce in Pennsylvania \(GROW PA\)](#)", which is being funded through the third round of [Workforce Opportunity for Rural Communities \(WORC\) Initiative](#) grants from the Employment and Training Administration (ETA), in partnership with the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) and Delta Regional Authority (DRA).



Penn State New Kensington and the Digital Foundry at New Kensington, a collaborative effort between the campus and the Economic Growth Connection of Westmoreland, will use the \$1.5 million grant from the Workforce Opportunity for Rural Communities (WORC)

"The WORC Initiative is designed to promote sustainable job opportunities and long-term economic vitality through workforce development activities that prepare dislocated workers, new entrants to the workforce and incumbent workers for good jobs in high-demand occupations aligned with regional economic development strategies," explained Sherri McCleary, executive director of the Digital Foundry at New Kensington, which is a collaborative effort between Penn State New Kensington and the Economic Growth Connection of Westmoreland County. "Our GROW PA project focus is directly aligned with our broader mission and reason we exist."

The GROW PA project, which will be funded in its entirety by the \$1.5 million grant from the WORC initiative, will address three grant program areas including: 1) site readiness by addressing challenges of regional manufacturing with access to credentialing programs and hands-on

training tools and equipment; 2) work readiness by creating pathways and providing work-ready training to a targeted number of individuals such as new entrants, dislocated workers, veterans and incumbent workers, as well as providing advanced manufacturing technologies and training to local businesses; and (3) operation readiness by establishing an operating model to deliver technical skills training and credentials, as well as social support services, events and recruiting tools to connect trainees to employment opportunities.

"This grant and our mission at the Digital Foundry at New Kensington are all about building the foundation to support a strong pipeline of current and future talent and innovative technology," said McCleary. "If we want to have a pipeline that sustains both current and future talent needs and promotes the implementation of game-changing technologies, we need to be investing in our local talent at all levels and across all demographics."

According to the recent funding announcement, "WORC Round Three grants encourage strategies designed to achieve economic opportunity and address historical inequities." Round Three also "funds projects supporting rural communities in aligning workforce development efforts with economic development plans, serving areas hard-hit by economic transition and recovering slowly in the Appalachian and Lower Mississippi Delta Regions."

The Richard King Mellon Foundation awarded \$5.5 million in funding for the Digital Foundry at New Kensington, currently being built along the city's Corridor of Innovation, a five-block stretch of Fifth Ave. between the campus' innovation hub, The Corner, and Westmoreland County Community College New Kensington. In addition to the foundation's support, Penn State has also provided \$1 million in matching support, which will help create an endowment for ongoing operating support of the facility, through the Economic Development Matching Program, an initiative of its current campaign, "A Greater Penn State for 21st Century Excellence." The Digital Foundry is also part of the New Kensington campus-led Nextovation™ initiative and will serve as the epicenter for future-ready training and access to modern technology for a variety of stakeholders in the region.

About Digital Foundry at New Kensington

The Digital Foundry at New Kensington will be a 15,044-square-foot innovation and manufacturing lab space aimed at building future-ready awareness and skill sets for the manufacturing industry, K-16 education sector, current and future workforce and community members in southwestern Pennsylvania. A collaborative effort between Penn State New Kensington and the Economic Growth Connection of Westmoreland, the Foundry's mission is to drive the growth of ideas, learning and problem solving through application of digital technologies. Stay up-to-date with the Digital Foundry at DigitalFoundryNK.com.

About Penn State New Kensington

Penn State New Kensington is one of twenty-four campuses that are comprised by The

Pennsylvania State University. Located just seventeen miles from the city of Pittsburgh, the campus is nestled on 72 wooded acres of Upper Burrell, Pennsylvania and is easily accessible from almost anywhere in Allegheny, Armstrong, Butler, Indiana and Westmoreland Counties. Penn State New Kensington offers 10 baccalaureate and five associate degrees, as well as the first two years of almost all of Penn State's 275+ majors through the University's 2+2 plan.

The campus continues to fulfill the University's land grant mission through its ongoing efforts in the city of New Kensington to drive economic development, revitalization and to prepare the Rust Belt region for the next industrial revolution. For more information about Penn State New Kensington, please visit www.newkensington.psu.edu.

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