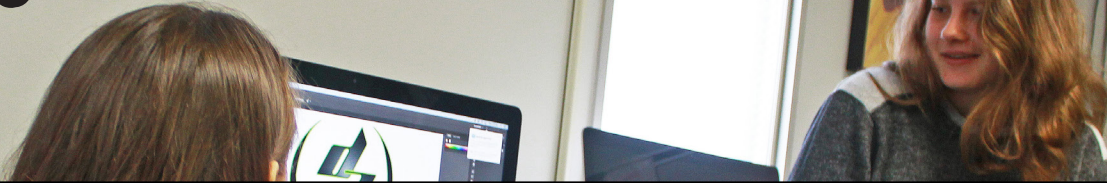


collaboration.



Columbus State Community College students Megan Vesey (left), Marqwyn Williams (middle), and Timerie Blair (right), collaborating on a class assignment.

Regional Workforce Collaborations

Guidelines for Action



John R. Kasich, Governor

Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation

Ryan D. Burgess, Director

The State of Ohio is an Equal Opportunity Employer and Provider of ADA Services

Executive Summary

The major objectives of the workforce policies in Governor John Kasich's FY18-19 Executive Biennial Budget are intended to:

- Better connect business and education.
- Create a culture of continuous learning.
- Grow and diversify alternative career pathways.

Achieving these objectives require real system change.

While change certainly is underway in Ohio to develop a robust talent pipeline for employers and to give jobseekers more and clearer options and career pathways, there clearly is room for improvement. Across Ohio, good things are happening in workforce development – just not consistently or systemically. For that reason, the most recent state budget bill directs the Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation, Ohio Department of Education, and Chancellor of the Ohio Department of Higher Education to develop a model for creating a proven, systematic workforce development strategy – ***regional workforce collaborations***.

In response to the charge, we interviewed representatives of **EIGHT** regional workforce collaborations reflecting a diverse mix of communities, partnership drivers, workforce challenges and regions of the state – as well as alignment with the legislative focus on connecting business, education and jobseekers. The purpose of this document is to share information and insights from those interviews.



Target audiences for this document include local chambers of commerce, economic development organizations, businesses and business organizations, secondary and postsecondary education organizations, and Ohio college tech prep regional centers. The primary beneficiaries are:

- Students and job seekers, who will have better awareness of job requirements, career opportunities and career pathways;
- Businesses, who will have access to a deeper, more highly skilled talent supply chain; and
- Communities, who will have more robust local and regional economies, and increased social capital.

A healthy economy and job market lead to healthy communities, which lead to healthy businesses and healthy families. That is the social imperative for effective regional workforce collaborations. Bottom line: There is no growth without talent. Partnerships that nurture, grow and diversify the talent pipeline are vital to Ohio's overall economic development strategy.

A single, universally relevant model of collaboration seems ideal; however, a one-size-fits-all approach is neither feasible nor practical for a state as diverse as Ohio. So this document presents a range of insights, examples and learnings from the eight featured partnerships, which we believe will be useful to other communities setting out to start their own regional workforce collaboration.



Regional Workforce Collaborations: Guidelines for Action

The Governor's Charge

In September 2016, as part of his ongoing pursuit of for transformative ideas to shape Ohio's workforce, Governor John R. Kasich challenged the Governor's Executive Workforce Board to work with appropriate stakeholders in response to this charge:

Identify ways to prepare and continuously retrain Ohioans of all ages for the jobs of today and tomorrow.

The purpose of that assignment was to identify the most prominent challenges in early, secondary, postsecondary and adult education, with the goal of identifying solutions to ensure Ohio's businesses have access to a skilled and productive workforce.

Recommendations from the Board's report, "Building Ohio's Future Workforce," became the foundation of the workforce policies included in the Governor's FY18-19 Executive Biennial Budget. The major objectives of those policies are to (a) better connect business and education, (b) create a culture of continuous learning, and (c) grow and diversify alternative career pathways.

What we're talking about here is real system change. While change certainly is underway in Ohio to develop a robust talent pipeline for employers and to give jobseekers more and clearer options and career pathways, there clearly is room for improvement. Across Ohio, good things are happening in workforce development – just not consistently or systemically. For that reason, the most recent state budget bill directs the Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation, Ohio Department of Education, and Chancellor of the Ohio Department of Higher Education to develop a model for creating regional workforce collaborations.

Budget Bill Language

"The model shall provide guidance on how the JobsOhio regional network, local chambers of commerce, economic development organizations, business, business associations, secondary and postsecondary education organization, and Ohio college tech prep regional centers, that are jointly managed by the Department of Education and the Chancellor, shall collaborate to form a partnership that provides career services to students. Career services to students may include, but are not limited to, job shadowing, internships, co-ops, apprenticeships, career exploration activities and problem-based curriculum developed in alignment with in-demand jobs." (ORC, Sec. 6301.21)

In response to that directive, the Office of Workforce Transformation interviewed representatives of eight regional workforce collaborations representing a diverse mix of communities, partnership drivers, workforce challenges and regions of the state – as well as alignment with the legislative focus on connecting business, education and jobseekers. The purpose of this document is to share information and insights from the eight regional partnerships. Readers will find a selection of guiding principles, suggested process steps, lessons learned and practical tips for success culled from the interviews with partnership representatives.

Target audiences for this document include local chambers of commerce, economic development organizations, businesses and business organizations, secondary and postsecondary education organizations, and Ohio college tech prep regional centers. The primary beneficiaries, however, are three-fold:

- Students will have better awareness of job requirements, career opportunities and career pathways;
- Businesses will have access to a deeper, more highly skilled talent supply chain; and
- Communities will have lower unemployment rates and more robust local and regional economies, and overall quality of life.

A healthy economy and job market lead to healthy communities, which lead to healthy businesses and healthy families. That is the social imperative for effective regional workforce collaborations. Bottom line: There is no growth without talent. Partnerships that nurture, grow and diversify the talent pipeline are vital to Ohio's overall economic development strategy.

Alignment Is Key

Critically, all local workforce development efforts need to align with a regional strategy and coordinate with the JobsOhio network.

While our focus in this document is primarily on connecting and aligning business with K-12 and postsecondary education, many principles can also be applied to workforce challenges that impact adult learners. The workforce solutions we seek will not only address the needs of employers – the end user in the talent supply chain – but could also address the needs of the emerging workforce (K-12 and college students), the transitional or dislocated workforce (individuals in need of retraining) and the incumbent workforce (employees in need of up-skilling basic and technical skills).

TIP: Successful partnerships require high levels of trust.

Ideally, a single, universally relevant model of collaboration could be developed; however, we quickly concluded that a one-size-fits-all approach is neither feasible nor practical for a state as diverse as Ohio. So this document presents a range of insights, examples and learnings from the eight featured partnerships, which we believe will be useful to other communities setting out to start their own regional workforce collaboration.

One of the major messages to emerge from the partnership interviews is that forming effective partnerships requires a strong shared vision. That foundation is necessary because forming a regional workforce collaboration is not easy. It's hard work. Nor will it happen overnight. It will take time to build relationships, reach consensus and engage key stakeholders. Everyone involved must understand that the required investment of time, energy and money is worthwhile.

Forming a regional workforce collaboration is not easy. It's hard work. Nor will it happen overnight. It will take time to build relationships, reach consensus and engage key stakeholders.

Global and Local Workforce Imperatives

Communities across Ohio face the dual challenge of ensuring that (a) every citizen has the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in the 21st century workplace, and (b) every business can find the skilled, adaptable workers needed to compete and thrive locally, regionally, nationally and globally.

As the “Building Ohio’s Future Workforce” report noted, today’s workforce transformation efforts must reflect the reality that we are living in a world of massive, rapid and often disruptive technological change, and that tomorrow’s jobs will be increasingly technology-intensive. Just as important, we also must acknowledge the very strong focus over the past 15 to 20 years to move all citizens toward a college degree – despite the fact that a college education is not necessarily the best option for all students leaving the K-12 system or for adults looking to connect with sustainable wage careers. It’s increasingly clear that our education, apprenticeship and training strategies need to invest more time and attention to assisting students with an upfront look that at what interests them as individuals and how to align those interests and their strengths with an occupation, then connecting those students to an appropriate career pathway based on those interests. In a world where the majority of jobs are technology-intensive and require some level of technical knowledge and skills, such informed career exploration can broaden a student’s career options and expedite their education journey toward numerous viable pathways to occupational success.

However, many disconnects between employer expectations and job-seeker capabilities exist. Of particular concern is the fact that Ohio currently has a substantial shortage of working-age adults with the degrees, certificates and credentials required to be successful in the labor market.

Making Connections

There is much work to be done in terms of communicating and building resources to help families connect with pathways, help businesses connect with schools, and help educators connect with strategies to prepare their students for careers. The partnerships featured in this document are examples of what is possible when those connections are forged.

Strengthening Ohio's workforce development system is perhaps the most compelling economic imperative we face as a state. It is a **global** imperative. At stake are the following:

- the connection of Ohioans with job opportunities that bring sustainability to themselves and their families;
- our appeal to businesses across the globe seeking to locate, expand and invest;
- the ability of existing companies to grow; and
- Ohioans' future economic opportunity, prosperity and quality of life.

Input from employers, students, job seekers and families makes it clear that now is the time for system-wide transformation and realignment of workforce and education strategies, training strategies, and workforce programs and priorities.

TIP: Be clear you are not in competition with prospective partners.

All of this creates a **local** imperative to work collaboratively to make sure businesses clearly communicate their workforce needs, gaps and opportunities. Businesses must help shape training by:

- forming partnerships with education providers, workforce development organizations, labor organizations and others at all levels;
- playing a meaningful role in the development of curriculum, credentialing programs and work-based learning experiences; and
- working with education and training providers to match students with appropriate work-based learning experiences to help those entering or transitioning within the workforce get a better feel for available career opportunities.

Conversely, education providers, workforce development organizations, labor organizations and others must find ways to meet those employer needs. These stakeholders must collaborate to develop education and training initiatives that will ensure a workforce capable of quickly adapting to new and evolving business needs. And, critically, all local workforce development efforts need to align with a regional strategy that assists Ohio business sustainability and growth as well as supports Ohio's economic development efforts as defined by the JobsOhio Network industries, regions and occupational focus areas. (See Appendix 3 for map of JobsOhio regions.)

TIP: Leverage local public libraries for workforce development

Guiding Principles

There are many different ways to build a regional workforce partnership. However, based on interviews with representatives of the eight featured workforce partnerships, we have identified a set of general guiding principles to follow for increased success:

- **Take time to build relationships and understanding.** That's key to generating support and making things happen. It starts by getting the right people in the room.
- **Secure strong civic champions.** It's critical to create a compelling case that will drive private-sector leadership to step up to the plate and provide civic leadership.
- **Adopt a broad, community-wide or regional point of view.** It's absolutely essential to include partners who have the best interest of the community in mind – not just the potential benefit for their specific company or organization.
- **Foster a culture of trust and collaboration.** Successful partnerships require high levels of trust. Building trust brings people together.
- **Be clear that your partnership does not seek to compete with prospective partners.** The objective is not to compete, but rather to share a unified voice and common goals.
- **Communicate clearly and regularly.** Members of the community – especially partners – need to know what the partnership is, what it's doing and why it's important.
- **Summon the political will to make tough decisions.** Partnerships are not easy – they require hard work. You have to be committed to understanding and conveying why the work matters.
- **Seek and share early successes.** Focus on implementing a few ideas initially before introducing more ideas. This will help provide traction for ongoing recruitment efforts
- **Set performance goals and measure progress toward those goals.** Data matter. Seeing the data confirms not just the need for action, but also the urgency.

10-Step Process Outline

Building and launching a regional workforce partnership is no easy task. Nor is prescribing a universal partnership-building model that suits all regions and communities. There are many variables to take into consideration when determining an appropriate approach. For example:

- What is the magnitude of the geographic imprint you seek to have?
- How are you aligned with the JobsOhio Network's economic development efforts?
- Is your partnership largely urban, rural or suburban in scope and character?
- Are you building your partnership from scratch, or will you leverage existing assets?
- Will your partnership have a singular focus on one industry, or are your aspirations more broadly focused?
- Do you have a history of successful collaboration among your key partners, or are you exploring new territory?
- What kind of financial resources are available?

TIP: It's all about relationships - and getting the right people in the room.

There are many others. Nonetheless, we recommend the following generic 10-step process for building and launching a regional workforce partnership. The 10 Steps are not necessarily meant to be linear; how the process unfolds may vary from one community to another. Think of it as a flexible process template that is a composite of the various approaches we discovered during our interviews with the eight featured partnerships.

Step 1: *Engage key stakeholders in identifying your pain point(s)* – i.e., the specific problem(s) you're trying to address. Viewed another way, what opportunities for continuous improvement exist and demand action?

Step 2: *Identify a convener/facilitator/broker.* This could be a person or an organization – serving in a convening or facilitating role – as long as they are respected and trusted in the community and can build consensus.

Step 3: *Make an initial connection* to a broader group of stakeholders. Share the pain point(s) and determine if there is an adequate level of interest and commitment.

Step 4: *Build a strong leadership team* that reflects the diversity of the community, including civic champions ready and willing to roll up their sleeves and get to work.

Step 5: *Identify targeted industries.* Whether the focus is on a single industry or multiple industries, consensus is key.

Step 6: *Conduct a data-driven opportunity analysis* of your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to inform and guide planning and decision-making.

TIP: Every partnership needs a business plan.

Step 7: *Create a formal strategy*, with clear goals, roles and responsibilities, to guide your work. It doesn't matter what the strategy is, as long as you *have* one.

Step 8: *Create a partnership identity* – a brand that properly reflects your shared values, interests, goals and priorities.

Step 9: *Determine resources needed* for short-term and long-term success, and secure sustainable sources of funding. To do that, you've got to get beyond relying solely on initial grant funding.

Step 10: *Develop metrics, and measure and report progress.* This will be critical information that will drive the continuous improvement of your strategy for your business partners, funders and supporters.

TIP: You have to be committed and understand why the work matters.

Overcoming Common Obstacles

In the words of one of this project's interviewees, engaging businesses and educators in meaningful, collaborative, mutually beneficial ways "will not be a smooth process." A few common obstacles you may encounter from prospective partners:

From business leaders:

- Reluctance of businesses to invest above and beyond their tax dollars that already support schools*
- Preoccupation of businesses on keeping their operations lean and mean, sometimes at the expense of investing in workforce development*
- Generic "good for the community" messages that fail to demonstrate to businesses adequate potential and distinguishing value*
- Economic struggles that keep some businesses focused on just trying to stay afloat – rather than looking for new opportunities*

From education leaders:

- Limited time and energy for local school leaders consumed by their existing requirements to try new approaches*
- Entrenched views of many educators about which students should have access to career information, experiences and training*
- Pressure on educators to send more high school graduates to college, which creates more challenges for recruiting middle-skill jobs*
- Educators' perceived lack of respect and appreciation from non-educators, and thus suspicion about non-educators' motives in engaging in school improvement efforts*
- Lack of awareness and confidence among educators regarding their role in making their students aware of available career pathways*

How to respond? With business leaders, speak to both short-term and long-term return on investment. Stress the need to consider both short-term and long-term priorities and benefits. Craft messages that stress benefits for business beyond "value to community" because that's what businesses hear from all other community organizations. With education leaders, focus on the end goal of preparing students for success and speak to both the short-term and long-term benefit to students and families. With both, demonstrate respect, trust and understanding. Overcoming these and other periodic obstacles requires hard work: You have to be committed and understand and convey why the work matters.

Collecting Data and Identifying Metrics

All of the featured partnerships agree that clear metrics are essential to gauge the effectiveness and value of regional workforce collaborations. Most of the partnerships cited in this document are relatively young, some still in development, and have minimal results data. Most would agree, however, that two indispensable metrics are (1) growth in the number of job vacancies filled, and (2) number of jobseekers placed in living wage occupations.

Other feedback from the interviews of featured partnerships revealed the following:

- All stakeholders-business partners, education partners, investors, government and economic development partners – are interested in the outcomes and impact of regional workforce collaborations.
- Capturing stakeholder interest requires relevant labor market data, which can be sourced from individual business partners, economic development organizations, OhioMeansJobs.com, OhioLMI.com and other sources. For example:
 - The Governor’s Office of Workforce Transformation, in collaboration with the State Workforce and Education Alignment Project (SWEAP), has launched a [Workforce Supply Tool](#) that provides businesses with historical information on graduates from high-demand fields in Ohio, and projections for the number of graduates available in 2016 and 2017. The occupation information is available for the State of Ohio as a whole, and for individual JobsOhio regions. Individual occupations have two types of information: (1) background data on the occupation, with actual earnings and individuals with unemployment claims in specific occupations; and (2) supply of potential workers in specific occupations by educational level.
- Solid metrics are often tough to find, and many of the featured partnerships are still in the very early stages of tracking outcomes and collecting and analyzing data. When data are scarce and qualitative metrics are hard to measure, trust among stakeholders becomes even more important.
 - Here’s an example of progress on the metrics front: Governor’s Office of Workforce Transformation has launched Ohio’s [Workforce Success Measures Dashboard](#), a new interactive tool to allow Ohio’s policymakers to measure the success of Ohio’s largest workforce development programs. Ohioans can use the new dashboard to see statewide, county and provider-level data on the number of Ohioans completing workforce transformation programs.
- It’s advisable to focus on a few very clear measures to demonstrate initial successes. This will help gain momentum and traction moving forward.

- Surveys are commonly used to obtain labor market data (hiring needs) from employers and career interest and, after graduation, career success data from students. Information also can be obtained from OhioMeansJobs.com.
- There is a broad consensus that partners need to track students beyond K-12, ideally over at least a five-year period after high school graduation. What are students doing after high school? Are they in college or pursuing another career pathway? Are they employed? Have they been hired through the regional partnership? And those questions lead to another: *What's the mechanism for capturing data for students who don't go to college?* It was suggested by some that the data can be collected by contacting recent graduates to see where they are, what they are doing, and if they need help. An alternative approach would be to create a new, regional software portal accessible to school districts, students and businesses, and that complements and integrates the OhioMeansJobs.com backpack. Such data collection questions would be an ideal topic for discussion at an annual Workforce Collaboration Summit, which was suggested by several of the featured partnerships.

TIP: Information about skilled trades should be available to all students in all schools, regardless of socioeconomic status.

Different Approaches to Getting Started

The origins of effective regional workforce collaborations are many and diverse. Drivers may range from (a) a shortage of job opportunities to a shortage of skilled workers, (b) inability to grow local businesses due to talent needs; (c) up-skill training needs for displaced workers to outflow of young people from the community, and (d) inadequate soft skills to a lack of higher-level technical skills needed to compete in today's workplace.

As noted earlier, Ohio is a diverse state. No one-size-fits-all approach is likely to be effective. The catalyzing forces behind the following eight regional workforce collaborations featured in this document show clearly that diversity, not uniformity, characterizes the efforts to-date in Ohio that are developing a model for creating regional workforce collaborations.

Following are brief overviews of how each of the eight featured regional partnerships got started. (See Appendix 1 for more detailed profiles, including contact information.)



Auglaize/Mercer Business-Education Alliance (AMBE).

The Alliance was formed to support all industries by creating greater awareness among local educators about career opportunities in local community businesses. AMBE identified a need to create a bridge between its businesses' workforce efforts and its local schools' education efforts. The owner of a local electrical company had exhausted existing sources of workers, having maxed out the local career centers. Upon discovering that local school counselors did not have information on skilled trades, he then reached out to the Mercer County Economic Development Director. Together, in 2014, they formed a 501(c)3, worked to secure buy-in from the business community, raised money to hire a full-time director and outreach coordinator.

Building Bridges to Careers.

(Washington and surrounding counties). While serving on the Washington County Family and Children First Council, the Superintendent of Marietta City Schools became concerned about the number of area youth graduating high school without clear career pathways. In 2006, the Council developed a Shared Plan that led to the development of the [Teen Career Awareness Initiative](#) and implementation of a Senior Exit Survey to gather data about students' career education, plans and pathways. Data indicated that "firsthand experience" had the biggest influence on a student's career choice; thus, a job shadowing project was developed and conversations began around developing a high school career class. In 2012, Building Bridges to Careers was founded in order to expand upon the career awareness initiatives.

The Central Ohio Compact.

In response to data regarding student remediation rates (students graduating from high school and going to college but not ready to do college-level work), and to the Lumina Foundation's goals related to equipping more individuals with certifications and degrees, the President of Columbus State Community College and the Superintendent of the Educational Service Center of Central Ohio reached out to area school superintendents and The Ohio State University to discuss the viability of a regional strategy focused on educational access and degree attainment. The education partners held a regional summit on college completion and career success in Spring 2011, laying the groundwork for development of an action plan. The Central Ohio Compact was launched in 2011, with businesses first becoming partners in 2013. The Compact has embraced the role of intermediary, advancing the region's need for a highly-skilled workforce by connecting high schools to colleges, and both to employers.

ConxusNEO. ConxusNEO partners with companies to identify skills needed to transform the way people are prepared for great careers, so companies thrive and residents prosper. In 2015, the then-Summit County Executive convened a small group (staff, funders, strategic partners) to assess the county's workforce system, a process facilitated by the Fund for Our Economic Future. The group identified assets, gaps and recommendations for building a more demand-driven, data-informed, talent development system. In June 2015, a decision was made to begin the redesign of Summit Workforce Solutions (SWS) to drive the strategy, culminating in the launch of the ConxusNEO brand in March 2017.





The Firelands Partnership. Responding to the departure of heavily unionized industry from the Firelands region and the transition to a more balanced economy, business, education, civic and government leaders joined to develop a multi-county team to provide scale and more effective economic development efforts with a more recent focus on workforce development. Early efforts focused on educating stakeholders on regionalism and the value of broad-based collaboration to foster economic opportunities, as well as sharing successful stories, including the merging of two county Convention and Visitor Bureaus. Initially a collaboration of Ottawa and Erie Counties, The Partnership now includes Sandusky and Huron Counties.



NEXTWORK. Manufacturers had been coming to the Wickliffe School District leaders for years seeking help to address an expected employment deficit in the future. In 2015, Wickliffe directly contacted the Alliance for Working Together (AWT), a consortium of more than 100 manufacturers, to deliver this message: “We can help.” A team consisting of the Wickliffe School District, Lake County Educational Service Center and members of AWT, representing small, medium and large manufacturing companies. The team hammered out the details of the partnership (initially called the Lake and Geauga Counties K-12 Manufacturing Partnership) and created a strategic plan.



North Central Workforce Alliance. The Alliance is a business-driven partnership with nine founding area businesses who came together to address common workforce problems. The Alliance’s work is focused on reducing turnover, increasing productivity, reducing costs and changing perceptions. Initially focused on manufacturing, the group reached out to the Mahoning Valley Manufacturing Coalition for help. The Alliance then decided to diversify into seven or eight other nonmanufacturing industries, and reached out to the local School Superintendent, Board of Education and Business Advisory Council, as well as other local businesses. It was determined that the organization would remain business-driven and the school district would play the role of convener.



Raise the Bar Hancock County. Findlay-Hancock County Economic Development took the lead in creating Raise the Bar, a workforce initiative modeled after a program in Findlay’s “sister city,” Columbus, Indiana. Developed out of a three-year process involving more than 100 people representing 35 corporations, nonprofit organizations and education institutions, Raise the Bar is a long-term approach to organically grow the workforce of the future requiring collaboration among education, social services and industry. Economic Development identified a specific workforce problem: Growth in the community is not keeping pace with growth in employment. The Raise the Bar Hancock County workforce coalition was launched in 2016 and strategically markets the community to potential employers, regionally and nationally, to recruit to the region.

Key Operational Considerations

	Community	Main Challenge	Driver of the Work	Key Positions	Funding
AMBE	Rural	Prepare students for future jobs	Business community with collaboration of local ESCs	Executive Director & Board of Directors (business community)	Initial & Sustained: private (local business community)
Building Bridges to Careers	Rural	Close the gap between education and employment	Initially by a local gov't organization; then by K-12 education; now self-driven	No employees; six people (one full-time) are paid by partner organizations	Initial: private (local grants) Sustained: private (local funds, grants, membership fees)
Central Ohio Compact	Urban Suburban	Achieve Ohio's 65% postsecondary credential goal to create a regional workforce pipeline that meets evolving employer needs	Columbus State Community College (CSCC) convened k-12 districts, higher education institutions and employers	CSCC's Office of Workforce Innovation: Supt. of School & Community Partnerships; Executive in Residence for Workforce Innovation; two support staff	Initial & Sustained: public and private grants, and Columbus State Community College
ConxusNEO	Urban Suburban	Address skills needs, build partnerships and communication, improve hiring practices	Business community in partnership with educators, economic development, and workforce development	President, VP, Director of Manufacturing Engagement, Operations Coordinator, new position in 2018 – all full-time	Combination of public (earned revenue), grants and private-sector sponsorship
Firelands Partnership	Suburban Rural	Support and funding for a regional workforce development plan	Business community with some government employees	Currently an ad hoc committee	Self-funded
NEXTWORK	Urban Suburban Rural	Create a pipeline of future employees in the manufacturing sector	Secondary institution with business community	Co-directors and a consultant working with business community; no full-time employees; consultant is only person to receive compensation	Initial: Cleveland Foundation and State of Ohio grants Sustained: subscribers to NEXTWORK organization & portal
NCWA	Rural	Achieve something great to demonstrate value to the region	Business community and Executive Director	Executive Director (20 hours per month), Officers, Executive Board	Initial & Sustained: business and organization memberships; one-time grant from Ashland County Community Foundation
Raise the Bar Hancock County	Rural	Address workforce shortage	Economic / Workforce development organization	One employee: Executive Director	Combination of private and public sources

TIP: If you don't staff it, it won't get done.

Conclusion

Much inspiring work is under way in Ohio to address pressing workforce challenges and needs. This document presents a selection of guiding principles, suggested process steps, lessons learned and practical tips for success culled from interviews with successful collaboration representatives. Because Ohio is such a highly diverse state where no one-size-fits-all workforce solution exists, we have provided a collection of insights and information that can be used to help launch new regional workforce collaborations.

Communities of all sizes and makeups can learn from the lessons of others such as the initiatives highlighted in this document. Whichever model or pathway you follow, or create yourself, it should reflect the values, culture, assets, challenges and priorities of your community. To maximize impact, regional and local workforce collaboration efforts should be in collaboration with the JobsOhio Regional Network.

A strong case can be made that building Ohio's future workforce should be priority one for our state's job creators and job seekers. If we are to succeed, it is essential that policymakers, employers, educators, and job seekers must be aligned on that point:

“Businesses and educators must communicate to each other more often, more clearly and more candidly about their needs and expectations. Collaboration will be the key – to creating economic opportunity for our youth and adult workers, to strengthening the competitiveness of Ohio businesses, and to spurring economic growth and prosperity for all.”

–Building Ohio's Future Workforce, page 20

Next Steps

We encourage readers to identify one or more of the eight featured regional collaborations that most closely mirrors their community, their critical partnership drivers, and their specific workforce challenges. Representatives of the eight collaborations are justifiably proud of their efforts and eager and willing to share information about their partnerships with other interested communities.

APPENDIX 1:
Profiles of Featured Workforce Collaborations

The Auglaize/Mercer Business-Education Alliance

The mission of the **Auglaize/Mercer Business-Education Alliance (AMBE)** is to align businesses and schools to help foster connections. Area business leaders developed this alliance to address the workforce issues in Auglaize and Mercer counties by working together with schools to build and develop programs to prepare students for future local jobs. We want to drive the workforce for a sustainable future.

Overview of AMBE:

- Worked closely with area businesses, schools, and students to educate the area on the careers available locally and the skills required for those careers.
- Engage local educators beginning at K-12 through 4-year universities to develop and strengthen curriculum to meet the needs identified by AMBE.
- Identify and build awareness of the local industry in the Mercer and Auglaize County and the career pathways to enter and succeed in skilled, high-wage occupations.
- Worked closely with the Mercer and Auglaize County Educational Service Center to develop curriculum within the schools for career exploration.
- Provide a network for local businesses and local schools to share ideas and resources to promote development of a skilled workforce.
- Resource for schools, parents, and teachers. For example: job shadow, tours, classroom presenters, individual coaching, or anything business/career related.
- Consolidate the skills needs of employer members identifying the skill needs for current employees and the future workforce.
- Work with the schools to influence decisions related to our local talent pipeline, address relevant issues, and create strategic career exploration programs as a result of the partnership between the schools and the businesses.

AMBE is locally funded and locally controlled. The goal is to retain and grow the world-class workforce that has made our community strong in innovative products and services. The local businesses have made a member investment in AMBE which has demonstrated commitment to our youth and communities. These programs and initiatives have accomplished great momentum in educating everyone on the wealth of opportunity that exists in Auglaize and Mercer County.

Contact

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Building Bridges to Careers

Building Bridges to Careers (BB2C) is dedicated to bridging the gap between education and employment for all students by building community networks that provide students with experiences in a variety of career fields and help them attain their life goals. Working to coordinate, not duplicate, career development efforts in Washington County and the surrounding area, BB2C has developed multiple programs that connect students, parents and teachers to local businesses and employers. Over the last five years, more than 2,100 students have been directly impacted through the implementation of BB2C projects because of the community partnerships that were created. The Marietta Community Foundation is the fiscal agent for BB2C, allowing for grants and donations that support the developed projects.

Job shadowing and internships allow for students to gain firsthand experience with a career and with local employers. Career Mentoring and the Problem Scenario Project provide avenues for community adults and businesses to be a part of the school and the curriculum. Student Ambassadors develop leadership skills by connecting their peers to the BB2C opportunities. Career Pathway Stories allow for unlimited access to career pathway information, and the Family Career Awareness Day directly connects parents and their children to local employers. The Epicenter is a Youth and Entrepreneurial Development Center that brings the vision of BB2C to life by providing the area's first small business incubator and community makerspace.

BB2C projects address the various facets of the community in order to engage them in youth, community and economic development. Through the connections that are made and the information that is provided, we are able to help our students experience success and our communities to prosper.

Contact

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www.buildingbridgestocareers.org

The Central Ohio Compact

The Central Ohio Compact is a regional strategy for college completion and career success. Led by Columbus State Community College, the Central Ohio Compact is a partnership among K-12, higher education and economic development leaders committed to a big goal for our community: We aspire to reach the 65 percent mark for postsecondary degree or certificate attainment in our region by the year 2025.

Through a collective, integrated approach, partners in the Central Ohio Compact strive to:

- Dramatically increase the number of students earning a postsecondary credential
- Ensure that all college-bound high school graduates are college ready
- Increase the number of high school graduates with credit toward a college degree or certificate
- Increase the number of community college graduates earning bachelor's degrees through guaranteed pathways to completion
- Employ specific strategies for working adults, low-income and first-generation college students, and students of color
- Provide consistent, accurate, and timely communication with students and families to eliminate uncertainty and ensure success at the college level
- Advance the region's need for a highly skilled workforce, including an emphasis on STEM fields, by aligning with regional workforce and economic development efforts
- Manage the costs of education for students, families, and taxpayers through dual enrollment, 2+2 and 3+1 bachelor's degree programs, shared facilities and services, and integrated planning

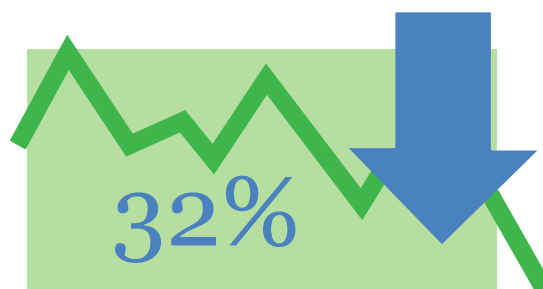
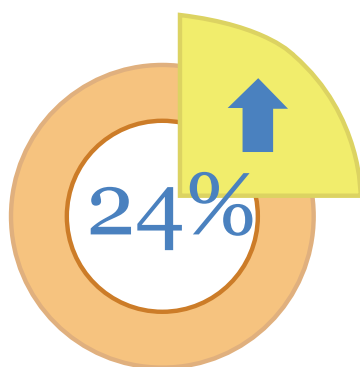
The Central Ohio Compact, Cont.

Measuring Success

Central Ohio Compact leaders have outlined measures that are critical in demonstrating the region's progress towards its 65 percent goal. Positive trends have started to emerge. For example, from the 2010-11 to 2014-15 school years, the region has seen the following:

- 24 percent increase in high school students earning college credit before graduation
- 32 percent decrease in remedial coursework taken by high school graduates who go straight to college
- 21,055 ninth-graders who graduated on time, a 0.1 percent increase

These trends are noteworthy. The population of Central Ohio high-school students has started to decline and to become more diverse and economically challenged over the same five-year period.



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ConxusNEO

Brand Purpose: ConxusNEO partners with companies to identify skills needed to transform the way people are prepared for great careers so they prosper and companies thrive.

Value Proposition: ConxusNEO is providing leadership, expertise, and facilitation to improve talent system partner performance while laying a foundation for system-wide transformation.

ConxusNEO provides value by bringing an increasing level of sophistication in the way labor market information is compiled, communicated and utilized to take collective action in the community. Producing an in-depth analysis of specific high demand, sustainable wage occupations that identifies the skills needed within each occupation, ConxusNEO supports training and education partners to better align curriculum to deliver talent with the skills companies need. Private sector leaders are engaged in a review of this information and positioned to help lead collective action.

The main area that distinguishes ConxusNEO's approach is the starting point. Traditional workforce programs often start with the needs of a specific population, and focus on helping that group overcome the obstacles they face in finding gainful employment. The talent development system ConxusNEO is cultivating starts with the needs of companies, and focuses on getting the right people, with the right skills, to the right place, at the right time.

The organization approaches its work utilizing the supply chain model. Establishing a recognized end-customer (company employing residents) provides direction and purpose and is a precondition for generating shared value across all partners in the supply chain (the talent development ecosystem). Supply chain management coordinates those activities needed to best serve the requirements of the end-customer and, in so doing, achieves the best mix of responsiveness and efficiency for the market being served. At the same time, partners within the supply chain are supported to build their capacity to deliver value.

Moving forward, the supply chain model will be used to identify leverage points where a small amount of concentrated effort can make a significant difference in the performance of the overall system. "Leverage points" are similar in nature to the transition points within the Summit Education Initiative Cradle to Career continuum. While they don't have the same linear attributes as transition points, "leverage points" are identifiable by data and, if addressed, will measurably improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the pipeline.

ConxusNEO, Cont.

Key Functions

The improvement of the talent system is dependent upon high-performing players working collectively to take action on shared goals. ConxusNEO plays a critical role to:

- **Identify** where there is the greatest unmet demand for a skilled workforce within targeted industry sectors
- **Mobilize** key stakeholders to respond to that demand
- **Track** results to determine whether the resulting interventions are making a difference, and to gain insights into what works and what doesn't



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The Firelands Partnership

The Firelands Partnership is a business driven engine that functions as the voice of the regional business community. It is the consistency-building group for shared priorities that provide broad-base foundational support related to the growth and development of economic opportunities within the region. The Partnership began in 2015 when several business and governmental leaders met to discuss the concept of regionalism as an economic driver for the Erie, Huron, Ottawa and Sandusky county area. The group understood that regions are the new economic driver and collaboration among several counties in our area can advance the economic competitiveness of the region.

The public introduction of the partnership began through a series of open forums and meetings of over 150 business leaders and community stakeholders in the four county area. Through this process, the Partnership began to educate and build multi-county support for a regional approach to economic development. In these meetings, The Partnership introduced a variety of professionals and experts who related their first-hand experience on economic success through collaboration, and the pitfalls to avoid along the journey. The Partnership used the information gathered during these sessions to identify five priority areas to guide The Partnership's role in the regional community. The priority areas are to:

- **ADVOCATE** for regional business priorities
- **FACILITATE** communication amongst business leaders in the Firelands region
- **EDUCATE** the public of key business issues facing the region
- **COORDINATE** assistance to existing agencies to facilitate and mobilize development efforts
- **ELEVATE** the role of economic development organizations across the region to function at the highest level

The Partnership next identified Workforce Development as the most important issue facing our region and its first regional project initiative. Working with the economic development agencies and business leaders in all four counties, we are in the process of creating a regional workforce development plan that will address the current and future needs of our area. The goals of the plan will include improving the workforce development system in the Firelands region so that system effectiveness is measured, the system is more employer-focused and accessible, and the system responds to employer needs more effectively.

Going forward, The Firelands Partnership will continue to speak in a unified voice to drive economic opportunity and achieve impact by enhancing economic competitiveness and growth and constantly encouraging a spirit of collaboration and innovation. Along with workforce development, The Partnership plans to collaborate on education alignment and partner with government and the private sector to address infrastructure needs throughout the region.

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Governor's Office of
Workforce Transformation

NEXTWORK

NEXTWORK (Lake and Geauga Counties) is regional partnership focused on connecting K-12 education with local manufacturing employers to provide career exposure for students

Introduction

Over the past two years, representatives from the manufacturing sector, K-12 education, and higher education have been working collaboratively to form a partnership to improve career and workforce development in Lake and Geauga Counties.

Manufacturing is 40 percent of Lake County's workforce, supporting over 33,000 jobs and it is estimated that 25 percent (or over 8,000 jobs) of the workforce will be retiring in the next 10 years. In Geauga County, 193 manufacturers are facing a similar workforce shortfall as in Lake County.

The partnership has been created to address the workforce needs and serve as a catalyst to economic prosperity in Lake and Geauga Counties. The partners include all of the public school districts in Lake and Geauga Counties, the Alliance for Working Together (AWT), the Manufacturing Advocacy Growth Network (MAGNET), the Geauga Growth Partnership (GGP) and Lakeland Community College.

Mission

NEXTWORK's mission is to provide quality job opportunities to its students by providing exposure, training and life skills required to be successful in a manufacturing environment, while helping to sustain and expand manufacturing in Lake and Geauga Counties.

Vision

The manufacturing community and K-12 education will work collaboratively to:

- Create an organizational structure that will centralize the process of providing these experiences / opportunities in order to coordinate all efforts seamlessly:
 - Providing experiences and opportunities for students to become familiar with careers in the manufacturing sector so that they may make thoughtful and strategic decisions about Career Technical training, college and careers.
 - Providing experiences and opportunities for school staff and community members to become aware of and understand the manufacturing sector.

The NEXTWORK project is aligned with the Governor's mission to grow Ohio's economy by developing a skilled workforce, promoting effective training programs and connecting Ohio's employers with qualified workers.

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**Governor's Office of
Workforce Transformation**

North Central Workforce Alliance of Ohio

The North Central Workforce Alliance of Ohio (NCWA) is a business-driven partnership consisting of employers from North Central Ohio whose focus is to share resources and ideas to solve common problems in attracting, training, and retaining the qualified and dedicated employees needed to grow area businesses.

- **Understand common needs** through timely research on economic and industry trends critical to the region. While specific technical skills differ from one sector to the next, the core skills of a strong workforce are universal.
- **Share a single, powerful voice** to communicate needs to the education and workforce development communities. Working together as a cohesive group provides a greater and more effective means to address workforce challenges and open up opportunities that businesses cannot afford to pursue individually.
- **Influence education and training** by providing feedback to schools about the skills required to successfully enter into in-demand occupations, so they can offer training programs that reflect real-time market needs to ensure a well-qualified pool of graduates who possess specific competencies desired by industry. Provide recommendations to generate career pathways that promote high-wage career opportunities.
- **Decrease recruitment and training costs** by ensuring a pool of qualified workers is ready for industry recruitment and/or advancement with skills based on industry needs.
- **Influence education and training** by Influencing perceptions about individual sectors to attract a more highly skilled workforce by using common messages and promoting key careers throughout the community.
- **Participate in an ongoing forum for information sharing and strategic discussion** to share ideas and best practices through networking and create a “sounding board” for solutions on common issues.
- **Link to funding for workforce development and training**, which may include On-the-Job Training, Customized Training, Internships, etc., and work collaboratively to get new funding to support regional priorities.

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Raise the Bar Hancock County

Raise the Bar Hancock County is a partnership of education, business, social services, and community leaders focused on aligning and integrating the Hancock County, Ohio learning system with economic growth and high quality of life. Raise the Bar developed out of a three-year process involving more than 100 people representing 35 corporations, nonprofit organizations, and education institutions. The adoption of the cradle-to-career approach and the stakeholder engagement process allows Raise the Bar to address workforce at the systems level rather than a programmatic level.

Mission: Connect a trained labor force with Findlay-Hancock County businesses to meet their workforce needs.

The mission is being accomplished with the creation of two innovative initiatives addressing workforce needs in the short- and long-term. To address future needs, an organic, long-term workforce supply strategy requiring the collaboration among education, social services and industry is being developed through educational pathways including K-12, regional 2-year community colleges, and regional 4-year undergrad and graduate programs. In parallel, short-term community workforce needs are being addressed in partnership with Findlay Hancock County Economic Development where recruiting efforts and alignment of social services, in collaboration with Ohio Means Jobs – Hancock, address incumbent training program gaps, assistance program alignment, and industry vacancies.

To support the needs of the organization, a community-wide support system through The Findlay-Hancock County Center for Civic Engagement (CCE) at the University of Findlay has been developed. The CCE helps to facilitate the work of Raise the Bar by bringing individual talents and knowledge together to generate dialogue and create social initiatives that shape the lives of individuals and the community's future.

The strength of the program is in the collaborative efforts and commitment across all segments of the community, paired with the implementation of a common process and language. Raise the Bar a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization funded collectively through grants from community partners, United Way of Hancock County, Hancock County Community Foundation, The City of Findlay, Hancock County Commissioners, and Economic Development.

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**APPENDIX 2:
Sample Programs and Initiatives**

Following are selected examples of various tactics, initiatives, programs, etc. that have been deployed by the eight featured regional collaborations. Individually and collectively, these programs are opening up more pathways to careers and success for students and workers, while also aiding businesses in finding workers with the knowledge, skills, traits and credentials needed to succeed in the workplace.

Career Awareness & Exploration

- **Talent Connection Forum** (Auglaize/Mercer Business-Education Alliance). The Business-Education Alliance (AMBE) hosts an annual Talent Connection Forum for high school juniors and seniors at all school districts in Auglaize and Mercer Counties. Alliance business members present on nearly 50 professions from a wide range of industries. The AMBE Executive Director works with area guidance counselors to obtain a career interest survey for each junior and senior utilizing the Hometown Opportunity website. Those results are compiled with help from the Auglaize and Mercer County Educational Service Centers. More than 800 students and 168 employers participated in the 2017 Forum. Local business members of the Alliance meet with seniors in roundtable discussions to discuss the career profession, the education requirements and future career opportunities, co-ops and internships available at their companies.
- **Family Career Awareness Day** (Building Bridges to Careers). The purpose of this annual event is to increase awareness and knowledge of potential career opportunities by showcasing local businesses to students and parents. The objective of the day is to engage students in grades 7-12, and their parents, because ten years of student surveys have made it clear that mom and dad have the most influence on a student's career decision. This event is purposely designed to have parents and children hear career information directly from employers. Families tour more than 50 employer displays together and talk with local employers about the types of jobs in the area and what path needs to be taken to get those jobs.
- **Shadowing** (Building Bridges to Careers). This is an opportunity for students to gain real-world knowledge of a career. Students go on site for one day during a 4- to 6-hour placement. They observe what a career in their field of interest really entails, which helps them determine if that career is something they definitely want to pursue, or not. Job shadowing also offers a chance to begin networking and to gain valuable information about needed education or training while exposing students to the reality of a job or career. Students can then use this information to make informed career decisions.
- **High School Internship** (Building Bridges to Careers). The goal of the High School Internship Program is to provide an experience for Washington County high school students that will allow them to apply classroom knowledge in a field of interest tied directly to their potential career as well as increase their soft skills. This is different than a part-time job in that students are expected to reflect on the experience and use what they have learned to help them determine a postsecondary pathway. Career awareness and development are the main goals of the program, along with learning about the world of work and the soft skills needed to be successful.

- **Career- and Interest-Based Programs** (ConxusNEO). Based upon the strategic nature of engagement with the Manufacturing Network, Akron Public Schools invited ConxusNEO to serve as the community convener to launch the College and Career Academies of Akron (CCAA), the first Ford Next Generation Learning community in Ohio. A combination of the high expectations and academic rigor of college preparatory programs with the real-world relevance and precision of career and technical education is available for every student through the CCAA. Key characteristics of such programs include (a) a program of study in which students pursue an area of personal interest by presenting core academic knowledge through that lens; (b) extensive real-world contact with adults working in the field or area of interest, both in and out of the classroom; and (c) an opportunity to earn college-level credits and secure summer internships while still in high school. Students belong to smaller, personalized learning communities engaged around career and college interests. Instruction is project-based, applied and integrated. Businesses and postsecondary institutions are heavily engaged.
- **Annual Career Fair** (The Firelands Partnership). Annually for the past five or six years, local employers have held a Career Fair targeting ninth-graders in the area. Students are bussed from one location to another where they learn about various companies and jobs directly from the employers. The Ottawa County Improvement Corporation supports the Partnership's Career Fair work by donating human and financial resources. Students who participated in the initial years of the Career Fair are now graduating from high school. The Partnership has received a grant to track where these students end up in 5 to 10 years.
- **Job Shadowing** (NEXTWORK). Job shadowing experiences enable students to observe all elements of the manufacturing environment, including technicians, operators, research and development, marketing and sales, human resources, accounting and financial operations, clerical staff, management, training and professional development, and engineering and scientific process. The shadowing experiences begin in grades 9 and 10, with students having multiple exposures to see many different aspects of a company's work.

Project/Work-Based Learning

- **Summer STEM Camp** (Auglaize/Mercer Business-Education Alliance). The Summer STEM initiative focuses on science, technology, engineering and math, and targets all seventh-grade and eighth-grade students in Auglaize and Mercer Counties. Partners include the Alliance, Rhodes State Community College, Ohio Manufacturing Extension Partnership, St. Marys Schools, county educational service centers, local businesses and economic development professionals. More than 100 students participate in the hands-on project learning camp, where they learn how STEM skills apply to certain careers. These experiences can spur enthusiasm for STEM careers and start students on a career pathway in areas such as manufacturing, IT or concrete technology. Participating educators learn how to connect industry concepts to classroom instruction.
- **Real World Problem Scenarios Project** (Building Bridges to Careers). Through Building Bridges to Careers, Washington County and surrounding areas work to create

networks that connect teachers to local businesses for the purpose of raising awareness of current employment and career options in the county and increase the amount of in-class career experiences that include local community adults from various careers. This is the basis of the Real-World Problem Scenarios Project. The program is a professional development opportunity for teachers that partners them with a local business/employer representative. Together, the partners develop a real-world problem scenario from the business perspective that connects to the teacher's curriculum. The employer then spends time in the classroom to help students develop their solutions, a critical element that adds authenticity to the experience. Throughout the three years of the Problem Scenarios Project, more than 700 students ranging from grades 3-12 have worked with local business representatives to solve real-world problems.

- **Epicenter** (Building Bridges to Careers). The Building Bridges to Careers Epicenter is a comprehensive entrepreneurial education center – a “bricks and mortar” center for real-world work experiences that provides space and time for strategic collaboration. Small businesses housed in the Epicenter are supported in an incubator-style environment while they grow. High school and college students collaboratively participate in programming alongside the entrepreneurs-in-residence to increase soft skills and explore different career paths. Students also get to experience what it is like to run their own business. Plans are in the works to expand the Epicenter to include a “makerspace” (a community space where people come to create, invent and learn) with learning labs.
- **Great Lakes College and Career Pathways Initiative** (The Central Ohio Compact). The goal of this initiative is to create high-quality grades 9-14 pathways that incorporate a continuum of work-based learning experiences. Major elements include (a) development of work-based learning lessons to be integrated with 9-14 curriculum in participating districts; (b) professional development for high school/college faculty; (c) regional training events for participating districts to share experiences, lessons learned and ideas for expanding work-based learning experiences for students; and (d) industry field trips for teachers and administrators to meet businesses and gain a deeper understanding of the workplace in order to shape students' learning experiences. The Initiative is funded by a \$400,000 grant from Joyce Foundation.
- **Modern Manufacturing Work-Study Program** (The Central Ohio Compact). In an effort to train the next generation of skilled manufacturing technicians, Columbus State Community College, Honda of America, Mfg., and Worthington City Schools collaborated to create the Modern Manufacturing Work-Study Program, where electro-mechanical engineering students can get a jumpstart on college credits through their high school engineering classes. They complete core subjects before moving onto a paid work-study site. As of 2017, the program has expanded to nine manufacturing companies and 11 school districts.

Student-Focused Initiatives

- **Career Mentor Program** (Building Bridges to Careers). Getting career information to students earlier than high school is important because decisions made in middle school affect high school and what occurs after graduation. The Career Mentor program connects local adult volunteers with middle school and high school students in classes, in small groups and as individuals. The goal of the Career Mentor Program is to help students develop decision-making skills that will aid them throughout the rest of their school years and help them choose a career path that matches their interests and needs. The Career Mentor program is making measureable progress. **When** BB2C started the program in 2015-2016, there were 18 mentors in one school. The program has since grown to include 49 mentors in 3 districts and 5 buildings in Washington County.
- **Career Pathway Stories** (Building Bridges to Careers). Making a decision about which career to pursue can be tough. Career Pathway Stories feature Washington County-area residents who have found great careers while living in the Mid-Ohio Valley. In video format and housed on the Building Bridges to Careers website, Career Pathway Stories are used by Career Education teachers, Career Mentors, educational institutions and others as a means to spark conversation with students about the variety of ways to obtain a career. Each Career Pathway Story describes the process a person went through to make his or her career decision. It is hoped that sharing these stories will inspire students and young adults to choose a career they will enjoy and be proud to do.
- **Student Ambassadors** (Building Bridges to Careers). Recognizing the need to communicate directly and effectively with students, Building Bridges to Careers has developed a Student Ambassador program. Student Ambassadors are recruited from participating high schools to help spread the word about the career resources available through Building Bridges to Careers. This provides students with leadership opportunities within their high school while broadening the awareness of resources available from BB2C on a peer-to-peer basis.
- **Preferred Pathway Program** (The Central Ohio Compact). The Preferred Pathway Program guarantees community college graduates a university placement, which enables them to turn their 2-year degree into a 4-year degree at a fraction of the normal cost. Transfer agreements with nine Preferred Pathway partners – regional colleges and universities – guarantee that students completing the first two years of requirements in their chosen major at Columbus State Community College (CSCC) can then transfer seamlessly and complete a bachelor's degree at a participating university. Preferred Pathway saves students both time and money because they take only the courses needed to earn their degree.
- **Credits Count** (The Central Ohio Compact). A partnership of Columbus City Schools and Columbus State Community College, Credit Counts seeks to improve college- and career-readiness for 3,000 students in five participating high schools. The program engages young students in STEM-focused careers and creates dual enrollment pathways that lead to students earning at least 12 college credits or a job certification in a STEM-

related field. Elements of the program include college advising for high school students; college and STEM-based trips for students; summer enrichment programs; scholarships for eligible students pursuing a STEM-related postsecondary credential; college and career preparatory camps and workshops; and professional development for teachers and staff. The program is funded by a \$5 million grant from American Electric Power Foundation.

- **Partnership for College and Career Readiness Expansion** (The Central Ohio Compact). The goal of this partnership of a dozen Central Ohio education institutions is to work with 10,000 area students from participating schools to ensure that at least 90 percent of high school students will graduate with some college credit. The approach includes (a) instructional coaches and career counselors for high schools, (b) professional development for high school/college educators, and (c) development of academic and career planning services for students. This effort is funded by a U.S. Department of Education Investing in Innovation grant of \$11.5 million.

- **Student Ten-Year Plan** (NEXTWORK). Students in grades 4-12 engage in college and career planning as an intentional process of setting and achieving goals as part of a larger K-12 college and career readiness curriculum. The Ten-Year Plan is a career and workforce development program in which all Wickliffe City Schools students participate beginning in fourth grade. The purpose is to provide academic and career planning for students to enable them to be best prepared for college or career when they graduate from high school – ready to be enrolled, employed, enlisted or an entrepreneur. Students participate in a wide range of programming including regular individual meetings with their school counselors to build and/or modify their plan; site visits; interactions with professionals in a wide variety of careers; job shadowing experiences; and internships. Toward this end, each and every fourth-grade student will have more than 100 career experiences/site visits by the time he or she graduates from high school.

- **Leader in Me** (Raise the Bar). Leader in Me is a program that focuses on helping students develop leadership skills. Raise the Bar has made a major, school district-wide commitment to Stephen Covey’s business and self-help book, *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. Covey presents an approach to being effective in attaining goals by aligning oneself to what he calls “true north” principles that he says are universal and timeless. The focus is on how the principles connect to a business setting. Initially, Raise the Bar adapted the “7 Habits” to an elementary school context; it was later expanded to middle school and is now a K-12 initiative. In high school, the expectation is that student “habits” will be self-led by the students themselves. Students who complete four related elective courses earn a Leadership Certificate. This initiative is resulting in an intense cultural transformation through the schools.

Teacher-Focused Initiatives

- **Teacher Tours** (Auglaize/Mercer Business-Education Alliance). In an effort to help teachers recognize local communities' dire need for skilled workers, the Auglaize/Mercer Business-Education Alliance (AMBE) and Tri Star Career Compact collaborate to offer company field trips for local teachers. The purpose of the tour is to provide teachers an opportunity to view work at local businesses, learn what businesses are looking for in employees, as well as education/training expectations, and any other pertinent information businesses want to share. Companies in both Mercer and Auglaize Counties provide groups of local educators with an opportunity to meet with their representatives and learn about their specific employment needs and job requirements, as well as ideas for suggested career paths. This past summer, 24 Mercer and Auglaize County teachers toured 29 companies over the course of six days. Teachers receive CECs for participating in the program.
- **Teacher & Student Visits to Work Sites** (NEXTWORK). These are structured site visits for K-12 students and teachers to explore broad manufacturing experiences. The focus is on raising awareness about career opportunities and skill requirements. Each participating school district and company designates a point person to lead all communication.
- **Teachers' Boot Camps** (North Central Workforce Alliance of Ohio). 2017 is the second year for Teachers' Boot Camps sponsored by the North Central Work Alliance of Ohio (NCWA) in cooperation with the Ashland County Community Foundation and Ashland County-West Holmes Career Center. The Boot Camp is designed to make teachers and counselors more aware of the local business and industry climate and its skill needs. The Boot Camp is made possible by a substantial grant to NCWA from the Ashland County Community Foundation's Strategic Grants Committee, supported by in-kind contributions from local businesses. Attendees at the two-day workshop hear presentations by business leaders and visit six area businesses. Teachers who attend the entire workshop may earn continuing education credits through Ashland University, and each teacher will be given \$250 to use in the classroom to aid as they put their boot-camp learning into practice.

Job Preparation

- **News Skills at Work Initiative** (The Central Ohio Compact): The goal of the New Skills at Work Initiative is to train Central Ohio residents with the skills local employers need by building a platform that implements the Compact's goals and brings replicable models to scale. The Initiative has established a leadership team to coordinate partnerships with K-12 school districts; higher education institutions; regional employers; social service agencies; and government and community stakeholders. The Initiative also includes a Central Ohio Compact Dashboard, an online tool for measuring the region's progress towards its 65 percent attainment goal (see below). The Initiative is funded by a \$2.5 million grant from JP Morgan Chase & Co.

- **Manufacturing Network** (ConxusNEO). A Manufacturing Network consisting of company owners, HR managers and training directors began to meet with education partners, TeamNEO, economic development organizations, the public sector and the Summit Education Initiative in March 2015. A review of labor market data confirmed significantly decreasing numbers of high school students are choosing manufacturing as a career, while thousands of baby boomers are retiring. In response, manufacturers partnered with the Akron Public Schools and others throughout the county to engage teachers, counselors, students and parents in facility tours, orientation sessions, career days, job shadowing and classroom sessions. Manufacturers are also engaged with several education partners in the design of new buildings that will include relevant curriculum and lab facilities. The Network is also partnering with MAGNET to work with companies to address their immediate hiring needs by working with career centers and community colleges to create fast-track training programs in manufacturing that include paid internships and NIMS certifications.
- **TechHire Akron/Summit County** (ConxusNEO). This designation, received in August 2015 from the White House, encourages the development of accelerated training programs to prepare residents for good jobs that require IT skills. Companies, education/training providers, public workforce, community-based organizations and economic development offices (a) reviewed labor market data to identify top IT skills and the occupations most in demand and (b) partnered with local education and training providers to deliver accelerated training that aligns with high-demand occupations. After a recent in-depth review of labor market information, the TechHire Network has evolved to set broader priorities to attract more students into IT occupations experiencing a gap between supply and demand, address mechanisms that could assist with up-skilling incumbent workers for mid-level jobs and identify innovative funding models so residents can access training.

Technology Solutions

- **Hometown Opportunity Website** (Auglaize/Mercer Business-Education Alliance). The goal of Hometown Opportunity is to ensure that everyone in the community is aware of the jobs and careers available. Local companies are in need of our local talent, who all too often do not realize the great opportunity right in their own backyards. The website serves as a place where employers can post jobs and students and job seekers can post their resumes, apply for jobs and explore careers. County Commissioners in both counties allocated \$25,000 each to build the website.
- **Education Data Dashboard** (The Central Ohio Compact). Launched in 2016, the dashboard is the Compact's first step toward answering questions such as: Where are its graduates after high school? Are they successful in postsecondary education? Are they working in high-demand industries in Ohio? Dashboard data enable education leaders to identify best practices and areas in need of attention, equip students to make more informed decisions on their future, and help employers find skilled workers to satisfy

their needs. Among key features of the site is a simulation tool that shows how factors such as high school graduation rates and college completion rates affect the Compact's 65 percent postsecondary attainment goal.

- **TalentNEO** (ConxusNEO). This skills-based hiring pilot uses ACT WorkKeys assessments (which assess a person's skill set against employer job requirements) to provide opportunity for jobseekers to quantify and articulate workplace skills to potential employers. Partner companies post jobs on the OhioMeansJobs website, each of which automatically receives WorkKeys skills score. Jobseekers apply for positions for which they have matched scores, and employers agree to interview these candidates, regardless of whether they have the education and experience typically required. Community-based organizations and the OhioMeansJobs Summit County Center serve as proctored assessment sites, and Project Learn leads up-skilling offerings. While the pilot is ending in September 2017, opportunities for continuous improvement within the public workforce system and the larger ecosystem as a whole are already being considered.

Miscellaneous

- **20 Under 20 Awards** (Auglaize/Mercer Business-Education Alliance). The purpose of the 20 Under 20 Awards program is to recognize talented students, educators and businesses from Darke, Mercer and Auglaize Counties who have worked collaboratively to provide training and/or career development for residents under the age of 20. This is primarily focused on mentoring, part-time work, job shadowing, internships, co-op programs and other business/education partnerships. Presented jointly by Darke County Economic Development and AMBE, the award program demonstrates that leaders in the region have been proactive in trying to find solutions to meet the region's workforce demands. The 20 Under 20 Awards are intended to draw attention to regional partnerships in the hope that Darke, Mercer and Auglaize Counties' best and brightest students will eventually all return to the area to work and raise their families.
- **Regional Summits.** (The Central Ohio Compact). As the convener of The Central Ohio Compact, Columbus State Community College has hosted regional summits each year since the Compact's formation in 2011, bringing together public and private college and university presidents, school superintendents, college and K-12 faculty and staff, workforce and economic development professionals, and government officials. By adopting a regional approach, The Compact has created a national model of collaboration intended to bring about a dramatic increase in college success for Central Ohio students and position the region as a leader in economic growth, per-capita income and quality of life. The Compact has established a regional strategy and authored a joint resolution that provides governing boards an opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to Compact principles.

- **Firelands Forums** (The Firelands Partnership). For the past two years, the Firelands Partnership has hosted a number of Firelands Forums showcasing a variety of leaders and experts who relate their firsthand experience with economic success through collaboration, as well as pitfalls to avoid along the journey. The Partnership has the input collected from these sessions to identify a number of shared priorities that are to be addressed through a hybrid of strategies and public policy advocacy.
- **Professional Speakers Series** (NEXTWORK). Professional speakers share information that enable students, staff and parents to learn about the manufacturing industry. The starting point is creation of a database of speakers. Both student and staff programs include individual speakers for large and small groups, virtual programming and panel discussions.
- **Special Programming for Parents and Adults** (NEXTWORK). This initiative involves opening up businesses to parents and adults, and also includes creating an informational program for parents/adults at the annual Think Manufacturing Expo to share employment information. The school districts promote and market events to parents and adults.
- **Workforce Alliance Summits** (North Central Workforce Alliance of Ohio). The Alliance holds an annual Summit (three have been held to date) to engage current and prospective employer members in discussing ways the Alliance can educate parents, teachers and young people about local employment opportunities and the skills that are needed to fill those jobs. The Summit tackles common workforce challenges such as turnover, absenteeism, drug use and an unwillingness to learn, and seeks to make connections with companies and educators that are able to work across county boundaries and jurisdictions. The Summit moves to a different county each year to engage new businesses and schools.
- **Girls with Goggles** (North Central Workforce Alliance of Ohio). In this initiative, sixth-grade girls and their parents are invited to spend a day at the Ashland County-West Holmes Career Center. There the girls are introduced to nontraditional, industry-related activities and careers, and learn about the various programs available at the Career Center.
- **Trauma Informed Care** (Raise the Bar). One of two major Raise the Bar initiatives is a Trauma Informed Care initiative in which all 800-plus school district teachers and staff have been trained in the principles of Trauma Informed Care, making people better able to identify and address mental health and substance abuse issues that often affect employability.

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