

Mahoning Valley Business Advisory Council

Plan of Action

2018 – 2019

Prepared by the Mahoning County Educational Service Center
with support from EnvisionEdPlus, LLC. Approved by MVBAC
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Overview

The Mahoning Valley Business Advisory Council (BAC) represents schools and districts throughout a three-county region. The council is convened and supported by the Mahoning County Educational Service Center, on behalf of 21 schools and school districts under established service agreements. These school districts and schools include: Austintown Local Schools, Boardman Local School District, Brookfield Local School District, Campbell City School District, Canfield Local School District, East Palestine City School District, Lowellville Local School District, Mahoning County Career and Technical Center, Mahoning Unlimited Classroom, Poland Local School District, Rootstown Local School District, Sebring Local School District, South Range Local School District, Southeast Local School District, Springfield Local School District, STEM+ME² Academy, Struthers City School District, Warren City School District, West Branch Local School District, Western Reserve Local Schools, and Windham Exempted Village School District.

Members of the BAC were nominated by officials from represented schools and school districts and appointed by the Mahoning County Educational Service Center Board of Education in January 2018. The membership represents key industry sectors in northeast Ohio, as well as economic development agencies and trades associations.

The BAC met five times in the Spring 2018 to establish its bylaws, mission and vision; conduct regional assets and needs assessments; and identify high priority action steps for the 2018-19 school year. This action plan is the product of those meetings and will serve as the basis for upcoming endeavors of the BAC and required reporting to the Ohio Department of Education. It was adopted by the BAC on August 22, 2018.

VISION

A well-prepared workforce that contributes to the economic development and improved quality of life throughout the Mahoning Valley region.

MISSION

To advise, support and empower Mahoning Valley educators in delivering the instruction and experiences students need to develop relevant, in-demand employment skills as part of their academic and technical preparation for college, careers and/or military service.

Assets and Needs Assessment

In January through March of 2018, members of the BAC participated in school tours and heard presentations from educators about current efforts to align educational programming to industry needs. Members also presented information formally and informally about business and industry efforts to recruit and train a qualified workforce for available, well-paying careers in key industries, including trades, advanced manufacturing and health care. It has been agreed that such learning opportunities must continue in 2018-19 and future years to enhance the collective understanding of both workforce gaps and education opportunities. In May 2018, the members conducted a needs analysis and began to prioritize action steps to advance the BAC mission.

Members participated in a facilitated protocol to identify the region's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in relation to its established vision. The protocol, known as a SWOT analysis, was conducted in small groups. The results described below have been prioritized by the group and consolidated.

Strengths – Existing programs, services and community attributes that are aligned to the vision and are going well:

The members identified a robust network and collaboration, emphasizing but not exclusive to the manufacturing industry, as a key strength of the Mahoning Valley. Examples of key network nodes included:

- The [Mahoning Valley Manufacturing Coalition](#):
 - Has established comprehensive plan and existing services to support recruitment and training for careers in advanced manufacturing;
 - Coordinates apprenticeships; and
 - Is part of the Oh-Penn Manufacturing Collaborative, which has a mission to stimulate interest in manufacturing careers among young people of eastern Ohio and western Pennsylvania across multiple disciplines and connect them with the opportunities available to them.
- The [Ohio Means Jobs Center of Columbiana, Mahoning and Trumbull Counties](#):
 - Participates in a strong network that includes public libraries, educational service centers, career technical centers and higher education;
 - Provides linkages between employers and job seekers; and
 - Manages federal workforce dollars in the region.
- The [Youngstown-Warren Regional Chamber of Commerce](#):
 - Is the leading provider of regional economic development services;
 - Employs an education director whose job duties include outreach and service to area schools; and
 - With Ohio Community Connectors grant funding, has initiated mentoring and job placement services for students in Austintown, Warren and Youngstown schools.

- The [Mahoning County Career and Technical Center](#):
 - Provides diverse and relevant career pathways within the evidence-based career academy model;
 - Provides comprehensive adult training and re-training programs; and
 - Has business advisory boards for each of its programs, with a combined membership of more than 300 industry and employer representatives.
 - Engaged institutions of higher education including Eastern Gateway Community College, Kent State University Trumbull, and Youngstown State University.

Weaknesses – Aspects of existing programs and services that need improvement, or areas of need that are not being addressed.

The BAC members identified two critical areas of weakness. The first is related to communications, messaging and understanding among educators, parents and students. Specifically, members named persistent silos (K-12 education, higher education and workforce development programs); lack of knowledge/accurate information about the trades; poor messaging that leads to misperceptions among educators, parents and students; and poor image of career and technical programs. Generally, the BAC found fault with the “college for all” culture and advocated for individualized pathways consistent with [Each Child, Our Future: Ohio’s Strategic Plan for 2019-2024](#). The second, also in sync with the state strategic plan, has to do with inequity of opportunities from one community to the next. Small and rural communities often have less proximity to large employers and workforce training opportunities, or lack capacity to plan strategically to leverage opportunities that do exist.

Opportunities – External forces that have positive impact on the BAC vision

Existing demand was the most commonly identified opportunity. BAC members identified demand among employers for qualified recruits for the trades, health care and manufacturing as an opportunity that could lead to employer leadership and investment. They also named demand by schools and families for youth development programming and youth employment opportunities as opportunities to leverage.

Other unique opportunities included:

- The Ohio Manufacturers Association has recognized local efforts as a statewide model, which might influence state efforts;
- Growth and change in the oil and gas industry;
- The Mahoning Valley’s geographical location makes it important in the logistics industry;
- Emerging technologies in manufacturing and health care are enticing to young people; and
- Mahoning Valley Innovation and Communication Center (MVICC) is under development.

Threats – External forces that have positive impact on the BAC vision

Population loss and business relocations/closings were cited as dual, related threats. These threats have been exacerbated by problems of mindset, according to BAC members. Employers, frustrated when young people are not attracted to open jobs, may choose to leave the area, while young people's misperceptions about the nature of manufacturing and related careers (that they are dirty, unsafe) causes them to overlook opportunities for well-paying careers. The perceptions that there are limited, if any, job opportunities in the region leads to young people relocating to larger urban areas such as Pittsburgh, Columbus and Cleveland. Again, the college-for-all mindset was cited as problematic, and issues of inequity were blamed for smaller, rural communities being left behind.

Strategies Brainstorm

By evaluating the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, the BAC generated lists of potential action steps that would build on assets and address areas of need. Members considered combinations of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for create four distinct lists of potential action steps. These ideas are captured here, without prioritization, so that they may be revisited by the BAC members as the action plan evolves over time.

Strengths + Opportunities – Proposed actions that represent “low-hanging fruit” or could accelerate positive impact.

- Focus on improving and scaling existing programs, including sharing information and removing barriers;
- Ohio Means Jobs’ marketing plan utilize MCECSC career counselors for dissemination;
- Create new marketing plans for jobs/careers/workforce (including information about salaries, backgrounds needed);
- Improve cycle of education, chamber, apprenticeship programs;
- Be intentional about work-based learning with tours, job-shadowing and internships
- Create ways for all partners to “row together” - how do we balance cooperation with competition?
- Bring partnerships under an umbrella;
- Find ways to expose kids to new jobs ⇒ hands-on shadowing, boot camps, talk with employers;
- Short-term internships (minimum wage);
- Scaffold experiences (shadow ⇒ intern ⇒ apprenticeship);
- Business adopt a school or district (ongoing);
- Figure out what is the best time to show kids the right jobs for their interests; and
- Create communications plan.

Strengths + Threats – Proposed actions that leverage existing capacity to “keep an eye on” negative external forces.

- Develop intentional plan to plug gaps in networking;
- Consistent messaging and structure to marketing and outreach;
- Institutionalize best practices;
- Use career counselors to help deliver message;
- Early messaging targeting K-5;
- Brand local companies; and
- Social media use.

Weaknesses + Opportunities – Ideas to address gaps that might need additional resources or outside investments

- Leverage Ohio Manufacturing Association opportunity for demonstration and evaluation - pool local and state funds to support;
- Policy advocacy through OMA, inform their agenda;
- Intentionally visit smaller communities with apprenticeship outreach;
- Connect marketing to student demand;
- Strengthen ESCs as hubs for messaging to schools;
- Need to get information to give kids in poverty opportunities for learning about careers;
- Establish interest in workforce, mindset shift;
- Provide related field trips for kids during school and in after-school and summer programs, including food and transportation;
- Career Days - ask kids about their interests, lunches with business people; and
- Job-shadow days.

Weaknesses + Threats – Ideas to address urgent needs where capacity is lacking, “the things that keep us up at night.”

- Build connections/infrastructure among smaller communities;
- Identify businesses where the most opportunity lies;
- Expansion of businesses that offer apprenticeships/internships/job shadowing;
- Projecting job needs/ anticipating training needs;
- Transfer skills/ interests with new job opportunities;
- Leverage the opportunities that are coming;
- Not all kids are “book kids,” so create ways to help them learn hands on careers;
- Create ways to make students engaged in learning by linking K-12 and postsecondary education to interests;
- How can we show kids the return on their investment? (ie. social-emotional rewards, salary ranges, fringe benefits)
- Message: articulate pathways using stackable credentials;
- Connect kids with apprenticeships and with recent grads to share stories and responsibilities; and
- Advocacy to regional and state leaders.

Action Steps for 2018 – 2019

The BAC selected four high priority strategies and developed preliminary action plans for each. The BAC, MCEC and represented schools/districts have secured funding for many of these steps through Ohio’s Expanding Opportunities for Each Child grant. The Warren City School District is the lead applicant and fiscal agent for the award, which totals \$450,000 through September 30, 2020.

<h3>I. Projecting Job Needs / Anticipating Training Needs</h3>
<p>MVBAC members emphasized the need to access and understand current employment data, trends, and projections so that emerging talent pipelines could be adjusted as needed. The first step is establishing agreement on a tool for understanding current job demand and understanding of what validates that tool’s accuracy and reliability. The MVBAC wishes to use such a tool to develop talent pipeline guidance over time to influence the creation/ expansion/ replication of career pathways, as well as to inform direct instruction to students through career exploration and planning programming. MVBAC members also discussed “applying common sense” and acknowledging changes in workforce demand as they happen.</p> <p>Preliminary priorities established by the MVBAC include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guide training interest in math and technology, which are likely to transition into future workforce needs; • Help students and young adults identify transitional skills, and determine the shortest paths to careers; and • Commit personally to staying informed on what is happening in the economy and the world to help guide job-seekers.
<p>Timeline: Implementation by 10/30/18</p>
<p>Lead Individuals: MCEC Career Counselors / BAC Nick Santucci</p> <p>Collaborating Organizations/Roles: The MCEC career counselors will work with a subcommittee made up of a representative from the trades, MVMC, and Workforce Development Board. The Youngstown/ Warren Regional Chamber will provide technical assistance.</p>
<p>Action Steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Career counselors and OhioMeansJobs Center staff publicize what is currently available through OhioMeansJobs.com and the state’s in-demand jobs list 2. Determine as a committee what additional labor market data would be beneficial 3. Develop a mechanism to collect information on local need regarding current and emerging careers 4. Deliver message to employers and trades organizations that want to be included in local composite data 5. Establish a process for reviewing current employment data, trends, and projections 6. Identify transitional skills that will help them adapt, and determine the shortest paths to transition to new jobs 7. Work with the MCEC marketing team to establish a process for branding and informing district personnel, students, and parents about the employment data.

2. Develop and Deliver a Common Mantra

Consistently since its first meeting, the BAC has emphasized the importance of a common, unified message to engage schools and businesses in partnership toward their shared goals. This strategy is meant to shift away from the “college for all” mantra and to a mantra that supports varied pathways to success for all students, in close alignment with the strategies outlined in the state’s draft strategic plan.

Timeline:

Support tool development, recruitment, and activity schedule / completed by 11/1/2018

Pilot implementation completed by 6/1/2019

Full implementation 8/1/2019 - 6/30/2020

Lead Individuals: MCESC Julie Bercik / BAC

Collaborating Organizations/Roles: The MCESC marketing team and career counselors will support a BAC subcommittee (Missy Smith, Tim Callion, Art Daly, Bert Cene, John Wilson), employers, trades in developing and delivering a common, unified message to employers, educators, students and families.

Action Steps:

1. Brand the BAC message and establish buy-in from all stakeholder groups, so that all members are using the same playbook.
 - a. Branding Message: "**Journey to Earning**"
2. Develop communication methods that are consistent, repeated and constant. Create a formal marketing plan to reach students and families, including strategies for penetrating smaller, rural communities with information about regional opportunities.
 - a. **All Choices Matter (ACM)** electronic platform provider: Parents, Students and educators will have account access to: [\(Grant funded for two years\)](#)
 - i. Professionally produced workplace and trade videos.
 - ii. Employer, trades and marketing input
 - iii. Student internships during production
 - b. Website module to digitally connect mentors and students [\(Grant funded for two years\)](#)
 - i. Increase interaction between mentors (employer/trades) to students/parents
 - ii. Increase volume of available mentors
 - iii. Employer / Trades posting - list of future jobs, the training and education required, starting salary for the job, trades/manufacturers who will have vacancies, opportunities for employee career advancement, etc.
 - c. Provide “Industry Credential Information”
 - i. Promotional information: workforce development curriculum, internships, apprenticeships, available openings, future jobs, the training and education requirements, income information, trades etc.
3. Implement and deliver the message to the right people (target audience), including parents, teachers, students and employers.
 - a. Explore social media and other marketing strategies promoting awareness and interaction with the communication tools. This will include in participating districts, an awareness campaign to parents, educators and applications.
4. Measure the effectiveness of the message (Is it increasing knowledge about career opportunities and

- pathways at the district, parent, student, and employer levels).
 - a. Collect student, parent, educator, employer, trades usage data.
 - b. **My Advancement Path** app (Grant funded for two years)
 - i. Collects students' progress data for three years.
- 5. Revise/Review quarterly, monitoring that there is a constant drumbeat.

3. Building (Internal, network) Communications Infrastructure

The BAC identified the need to improve communications among organizations and existing formal and informal networks that are engaged in workforce development, training and education. Members identified the Regional Chamber's education and workforce infrastructure, as well as the MCEC's deployment of career counselors, as strengths to be leveraged.

Timeline: Implementation by 5/1/19

Lead Individuals: MCEC Julie Bercik / BAC _____

Collaborating Organizations/Roles: The MCEC and Youngstown/Warren Regional Chamber will support a sub-committee of the BAC in purposeful communications strategies among formal and informal network workforce development networks.

- Action Steps:**
1. Expand the reach of the Regional Chamber's Community Connector Program by integrating the program with the work of the MCEC's career counselors (**contingent upon funding**).
 - a. Funding for additional personnel (part-time mentorship and jobs placement coordinators) has been requested from a foundation.
 2. Increase knowledge among students, parents and educators of both career pathways opportunities and workforce preparation programs by:
 - a. Having the Regional Chamber work with career counselors to disseminate information in schools;
 - b. Leveraging school activities, such as parent-teacher conference nights and student assemblies to market programs and careers; and
 - c. Build connections among individual schools and businesses.
 3. Increase capacity of career counselors and educators to support parents, students and community knowledge of career pathways opportunities and workforce preparation programs by:
 - a. Career Counselor - Professional development for **career counselors** that incorporate findings of the MVBAC in regard to workforce trends and predictions. This will be a train-the-trainer model, so that career counselors are prepared to support the teachers and counselors; and (**Grant funded**)
 - b. Career Counselors provide professional development for **educators** to improve understanding of regional workforce trends and existing career pathways. (**Grant funded**)

4. Expanding Work-Based Learning

The BAC recognizes that, in addition to increasing students' knowledge of, interest in and access to existing programming, more opportunities must be created. The Mahoning Valley has many strong examples of high-quality career exposure and preparation programs inside and outside of schools, however the percentage of overall students benefiting from these programs is far too small. Hands-on career exposure must begin early, at least by middle school, and must be presented with frequency and consistency across schools.

Implementation between 9/1/18 - 5/1/19

Lead Individuals: Jessica Borza, Tammy Tansey, Tom Baringer

Collaborating Organizations/Roles: MCEC and employers, as subject-matter experts, will support a BAC subcommittee in developing and delivering work-based learning opportunities, as well as expanding and linking students to workforce development opportunities such as apprenticeships.

Action Steps:

- I. Identify work-based learning opportunities and developmentally appropriate activities by industry sector within a continuum, aligned to the Ohio Career Connections framework;
 - a. **Career Exploration:**
 - i. Week long **boot camps** that include direct instruction in career opportunities and soft skills, workplace visits and recruitment for existing pathway programs. Four locations - Warren, Youngstown, Portage County and Columbiana County (**Grant funded**)
 - ii. Field trips/event at workplaces over the next two school years (**Grant funded**)
 - iii. A professionally created cache of employer and trade videos that parents, students, and educators can access in real time (**Grant funded**)
 - iv.
 - b. **Career Planning**
 - i. Employer and trade team mentoring **electronic network** for parents, students and educators (**Grant funded**)
 - ii. Students select **twice** a year / each year, a particular earning pathway; The selected pathways will be matched with the (**employer / trades / service branch**) for a variety of activities created by identified pathway mentors (**employers / trades / service branch**)
 - iii. Senior registration for "**My Advancement Path**" app - This will track the pathway progress for 3 years, providing valuable data beyond graduation
 - iv. Fall "**Signing Day**" celebration event held in each participating district - The signing matches them up with the necessary **mentor and resources** to reach the finish line of their K-12 "Journey to Earning" (**Grant funded**)
 - c. **Career Experience**
 - i. Ongoing Subcommittee work to establish new Work-Based Learning experiences by **1/1/2019**
 - ii. Explore **Work-Based Learning** opportunities that might be held at Mahoning Valley Innovation and Communication Center (MVICC), Eastern Gateway Community College, Trade Union Apprenticeship sites and MCTCC. (**Pilot new program starting 11/1/18**)

2. Support dissemination
 - a. Create toolkit with materials and instructions for schools
 - b. Create toolkit with materials and instructions for employers
 - c. Disseminate toolkit while identifying and expanding work-based learning opportunities
 - d. Support career counselors and educators in using the toolkit. (See grant-funded professional development for career counselors and educators in Goal 3, Action Step 3 above.)
3. Identify gaps and work with employers to create new opportunities to complete the continuum and meet demand from students.

Outcomes Metrics and Reporting

Program evaluation for the next two years will be funded by the Expanding Opportunities for Each Child grant. The MCECSC will collect data from participating schools and monitor progress toward established goals. Annual student data collection will include information about career exploration activities and student participation; information about field trips and student participation; pre- and post-survey data for students participating in career exploration activities; pre- and post-survey data for students participating in career advising programs; student application to and participation in identified work-based learning and career pathways programs in and out of school; graduation outcomes for students participating in career advising programs; and post-graduation data measuring how many served students are enrolled and succeeding in a post-high school learning experience, including an adult career-technical education program, an apprenticeship and/or a two-year or four-year college program (15 semester hours); serving in a military branch; earning a living wage; or engaged in a meaningful, self-sustaining vocation.

The MCECSC will also collect data about adult implementation and participation, including professional development attendance and evaluation survey outcomes; and pre- and post-surveys measuring adult awareness of regional career and workforce needs and of available career pathways and work-based learning opportunities for students. The MCECSC has been conducting a sophisticated research evaluation related to components of its Mahoning Valley Prepared for Success initiative. It has the capacity to coordinate this program progress monitoring and evaluation seamlessly with the ongoing research, adding depth and context to the outcomes. At the same time, data collection and analysis will be distinct so that outcomes can be linked directly to the activities in this plan. The MCECSC will provide a progress monitoring reports to the MVBAC and the Boards of Education or governing authorities of all partner organizations.

In alignment with Ohio's Career Connections Framework, student-level outcomes will be measured at three levels:

Career Exploration: The first level is focused on career exploration strategies for students in grades 7 through 8. Pre- and post-surveys will be used to determine students' understanding of regional industries and related careers, and to measure their knowledge and perceptions of existing pathways programs, including career technical programs, career academies, boot camps, internships and apprenticeships.

Career Planning: The second level will examine whether students' knowledge of and interest in career pathways leads to access and participation. Applications to career pathways programs will be monitored annually to determine whether interest is increasing, to what degree the targeted at-risk students are represented among the applicants, and to what degree the targeted students gain access to the programs.

Career Experience: Among students who are directly served by high school career counselors or pathways programs, outcomes will be examined for graduation and one-year post-graduation. The consortium will target annual increases in the number and percentage of served students who meet one of the following criteria one year past high school graduation: Enrolled and succeeding in a post-high school learning experience, including an adult career-technical education program, an apprenticeship and/or a two-year or four-year college program (15 semester hours); or serving in a military branch; or earning a living wage; or engaged in a meaningful, self-sustaining vocation.