

Van Wert Area Business Advisory Council Plan 2025– 2026

Council Information

Name of Business Advisory Council: Van Wert Area Business Advisory Council

Structure: Independent collaborative (Crestview Local Schools, Lincolnview Local Schools, Van Wert City Schools, Vantage Career Center) facilitated by Van Wert Area Economic Development Corporation

JobsOhio Region: Northwest; Regional Growth Partnership

District Contacts

District	District primary contact and role	Primary Contact email	District Secondary Contact and role	Secondary contact email
Crestview Local Schools	Matt Dube, Superintendent	Dube.matt@crestviewknights.com	Brett Latman, Director of Curriculum and Instruction	Latman.brett@crestviewknights.com
Lincolnview Local Schools	Jeff Snyder, Superintendent	jsnyder@lvknights.com	Katey Lloyd, Guidance Counselor	klloyd@lvknights.com
Van Wert City Schools	Mark Bagley, Superintendent	m_bagley@vwcs.net	Kerry Koontz, CEO Program Coordinator / Careers Counselor	k_koontz@vwcs.net
Vantage Career Center	Rick Turner, Superintendent	turner.r@vantagecareercenter.com	Ben Winans, Principal	winans.b@vantagecareercenter.com

BAC Membership & Industry Representation

BAC Member	Title	Email	Industry
Brent Stevens	Executive Director, Van Wert Area	bstevens@vanwerted.com	Economic Development

	Economic Development Corp.		
Lauren Buchanan	Workforce Development Manager, Van Wert Area Economic Development Corp.	workforce@vanwerted.com	Economic Development / Workforce
Mark Verville	Executive Director, Van Wert Area Chamber of Commerce	mark@vanwertchamber.com	Economic Development
Dr. Jon Tomlinson	Dean, Northwest State Community College, Van Wert Campus	jtomlinson@northwest.edu	Higher Education
Jena Wierwille	VP Human Resources, Central Insurance Co.	jwierwille@central-insurance.com	Insurance
Josh Fritzsche	Human Resources, Danfoss	joshua.fritzsche@danfoss.com	Manufacturing
Chris Cooney	President & CEO, Alliance Automation	ccooney@allianceautomation.com	Robotics / Manufacturing
Kim Keeling	Director of Human Resources, Alliance Automation	kkeeling@allianceautomation.com	Robotics / Manufacturing
Vince Ozier	Human Resources Director, Braun Ambulances	vincento@braunambulances.com	Manufacturing/Electrical /Autobody
Lindy Buzard	Human Resources Generalist, Braun Ambulances	lbuzard@braunambulances.com	Manufacturing/Electrical /Autobody
Sara Zura	President, Alexander & Bebout	sara@alexanderbebout.com	Construction / Skilled Trades
Ross Shartzner	Human Resource Manager, Alexander & Bebout	ross@alexanderbebout.com	Construction / Skilled Trades
Mindy Eales	Workforce Development Supervisor, Ohio Means Jobs	Mindy.Eales@jfs.ohio.gov	Workforce / State Services
Scott Manz	Director of Human Resources at Truland Equipment	Scott.manz@trulandequip.com	Agriculture Services
Kyle Luth	Van Wert Branch Leader, Flagstar Bank	kyle.luth@flagstar.com	Banking/Finance
Amber Davis	Owner, Red Oak Realty	davisfam16299@gmail.com	Real Estate

Cory Michaud	VP Business Development, Millwork Brands / President, Career Connections of Van Wert County	corym@millworkbrands.com	Manufacturing
Seth Baker	CEO, Van Wert Co. Foundation	seth@vanwertcountyfoundation.org	Non-profit / Community Services
Paula Stabler	COO, OhioHealth Van Wert Hospital	pstabler@vanwerthealth.org	Healthcare
Angie Fahy	Adult Education Director, Vantage Career Center	fahy.a@vantagecareercenter.com	Education / Training & Skilled Trades
Jeri Steinbrook	Workforce Coordinator, Center to Advance Manufacturing	jeris@bgsu.edu	Workforce
Lu Cooke	Northwest Regional Liaison Lt. Governor's Office	LuAnne.Cooke@governor.ohio.gov	Government Resources
Joseph Wendell	Workforce Sales Coordinator, Custom Training Solutions at Northwest State Community College	jwendell@northweststate.edu	Workforce/Higher Education
Donovan Delong	Production Manager, TekniPlex	Donovan.delong@tekni-plex.com	Manufacturing
Jacob McClure	Business Representative, Central Midwest Regional Council of Carpenters	jmcclure@cmrcc.com	Carpentry
Tyler Helentjaris	Value Stream Manager, Danfoss	Tyler.helentjaris@danfoss.com	Manufacturing
Wendy Cotterman	Human Resources Manager, Store & Haul	Wendy.cotterman@storeandhaul.com	Transportation/Logistics
Melissa McClurg	Superintendent, Western Buckeye ESC	mmcclurg@wbesc.org	Early Childhood Development/Special Education

Meeting Schedule 2025–2026

The BAC meets bimonthly (and as needed), on the 3rd Thursday of scheduled months, 2–3 p.m. rotating across county business sites.

- August 21, 2025
- October 16, 2025
- December 18, 2025
- January 15, 2026
- March 19, 2026
- May 14, 2026
- July 16, 2026

Mission & Vision 2025–2026

Mission: Empowering a synergistic partnership between schools, businesses, and communities to align education with industry needs and foster a skilled, adaptable, and future-ready workforce.

Vision: An interconnected ecosystem where schools, businesses, and Van Wert County communities collaborate seamlessly to prepare students for productive careers and strengthen the local economy.

Quality Practice I: Develop Professional Skills for Future Careers

Initiative 1

Let's Get Down to Business (5th grade career exploration)

- Districts: Crestview, Lincolnview, Van Wert City, St. Mary of the Assumption
- Businesses: 50+ local employers across all major industries including skilled trades, manufacturing, healthcare, and social services, teach students about careers in Van Wert County that align with their soft skills.
- Skills: Communication, teamwork, financial literacy, early career awareness; Skills gaps in dependability and reliability are addressed so students understand the importance of soft skills
- Students impacted: ~250 5th graders annually; Students with disabilities are guided through activities modified to their needs

Initiative 2

Real Money Real World (7-8th grade financial literacy)

- Districts: Crestview, Lincolnview, Van Wert City
- Partners: OSU Extension, Career Connections, business leaders from top employers in the county
- Skills: Budgeting, decision-making, money management tied to education/career choices; Sharing realistic budget with local job and housing market so students can focus on becoming the employees and leaders they want to be instead of learning about budgeting as they navigate adulthood
- Students impacted: Entire 8th grade cohorts across districts; Students with disabilities are guided through activities modified to their needs

Additional initiatives: Portrait of a Graduate (Crestview), Project Lead the Way (Lincolnview, Van Wert, Vantage), Project-Based Learning Showcase School (VWCS, Crestview), YouScience career aptitude (county-wide for middle schools and high schools)

Quality Practice II: Build Partnerships

Initiative 1

OhioMeansJobs Backpack & Career Navigation

- Students use OMJ Backpack tool for career clusters, testing resources, in-demand job exploration. This is a job fair open for students, and later the general public, to promote employment, enrollment, or enlistment depending on aptitudes and interests
- Districts: Crestview, Lincolnview, VWCS, St. Mary of the Assumption; Students with disabilities are accompanied by a support person to help them navigate relevant opportunities for their skillset
- Businesses involved: Dozens of businesses in the region highlight the different departments and types of skillsets needed to keep their company running. Businesses are a reflection of the most in-demand careers in the region and share career paths and realistic starting salaries with students.

Initiative 2

Education on Location (teacher externships)

- Districts: Crestview, Lincolnview, Van Wert City, Vantage
- Partners (top employers): Central Insurance, OhioHealth, Alliance Automation, Alexander & Bebout, Braun Ambulances, Millwork Brands, Van

Wert County Foundation, Universal Lettering, TekniPlex, Trucent, Cool Machines, Northwest State Community College, Vantage Career Center, etc.
 - Impact: 17 educators toured 24 employers in 2025 and created lesson plans to implement activities to address skills gaps outlined by employers

Other partnerships: County-wide College Fair (juniors/seniors), Vantage Mock Interviews, Regular Business/Industry Tours.

Quality Practice III: Coordinate Experiences

Initiative 1

Build Your Future (Freshmen/Sophomores)

- Districts: Crestview, Lincolnview, Van Wert City, Parkway, Paulding, Antwerp, Wayne Trace
- Businesses: Alexander & Bebout, Ayers Mechanical, ATR, Metzger Masonry, Vantage Career Center, OhioHealth Van Wert, Paulding County Hospital, Danfoss, OhioMeansJobs Van Wert County
- Skills: Healthcare, Manufacturing, Skilled trades exposure (welding, wiring, rebar, equipment operation)
- Impact: 500 students participated in 2025; Students with disabilities were guided in one-on-one settings with Vantage Student Mentors

Initiative 2

CEO Program (Senior internships)

- Districts: Crestview, Lincolnview, Van Wert City
- Businesses: 80+ employers annually (healthcare, construction, manufacturing, banking, nonprofits, etc.)
- Skills: Work readiness, career-specific training, professional networking
- Students impacted: 100+ students placed

Additional initiatives: Vantage Early Placement (allows students who have met required attendance, GPA, and lab accomplishment criteria to flex schedule to gain work experience in their lab field for academic credit)

District	Percentage of Students with Student Success Plans Completed
Van Wert City Schools	100% of our students identified as “at risk” of meeting the graduation requirements set by The Department of Education and Work-force Development have a Student

	Success Plan.
Crestview Local Schools	100% of our students identified as “at risk” of meeting the graduation requirements set by The Department of Education and Work-force Development have a Student Success Plan.
Lincolnview Local Schools	100% of our students identified as “at risk” of meeting the graduation requirements set by The Department of Education and Workforce Development have a Student Success Plan.
Vantage Career Center	N/A

District	Percentage of Students with Graduation Plans Completed
Van Wert City Schools	100% of the students have a current Graduation Plan renewed yearly.
Crestview Local Schools	100%
Lincolnview Local Schools	100%
Vantage Career Center	N/A

Data & Awards Addendum (2024–2025 Accomplishments)

- Work-Based Learning placements: 325 senior students placed across internships, apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeships; Multiple students received Ohio Readiness Seals
- Vantage Career Center issued 2,913 industry-recognized credentials for the 2024-25 school year.

- Business partners engaged: 125+ employers across healthcare, advanced manufacturing, skilled trades, finance, IT
- Educator PD: 17 teachers in externships (Education on Location), 40+ business tours offered annually
- Student impact: ~1,200 in career days/industry visits, 800+ in workshops/seminars

COMMITMENT STATEMENT

The Van Wert Area Business Advisory Council, established in 2018, serves as a vital bridge between our local educational institutions and the business community. Comprising school superintendents, business leaders, and economic development partners, the council convenes bi-monthly to foster collaboration and communication.

Our primary objective is to equip students with the skills and knowledge necessary for successful careers in our communities. To achieve this, we have planned a series of events throughout the 2025-26 school year, including job fairs, hands-on career exposure, student tours, and job shadowing experiences at local businesses, manufacturing plants, and healthcare facilities. Additionally, we are proud of “Education on Location,” a three-credit college course hosted by the council. This initiative provides educators with firsthand exposure to local businesses, enabling them to incorporate relevant workforce skills into their curriculum.

Recognizing the critical need for workers in healthcare, manufacturing, and skilled trades, we partner with local stakeholders to organize the Build Your Future event, which has grown drastically to 500 students across six school districts. Through hands-on activities and informative sessions, students gained valuable insights into various careers, including various departments in a healthcare setting, manufacturing, HVAC, electrical, plumbing, welding, carpentry, and construction.

To further guide students in their career exploration, we have implemented YouScience, a program funded by Vantage Career Center, that serves 12 area school districts. This innovative platform utilizes engaging brain games to identify students' aptitudes and matches them with high-demand careers. This empowers students to make informed decisions about their futures.

In addition to the initiatives outlined in this plan, we have facilitated connections between educators and business leaders by compiling a database of willing speakers eager to share insights about their organizations, educational pathways, and personal experiences with students.

Our overarching goal is to foster a deeper understanding of the challenges facing local employers and to forge lasting partnerships that benefit students, businesses, and residents alike in Van Wert County.

Matt Dube

Superintendent of Crestview Local Schools

Mark Bagley

Superintendent of Van Wert City Schohools

Jeffrey T. Snyder

Superintendent of Lincolnview Local Sschools

Rick Turner

Superintendent of Vantage Career Center

Lauren Buchanan

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