

Business Advisory Council

Joint Statement | March 1, 2026





The ESC of Central Ohio's Business Advisory Council (BAC) issues the following Joint Statement to report on progress outlined in its plan for the 2025-2026 school year, summarize actions taken and actions pending, and specify how the BAC, the ESC Governing Board, and the boards of BAC member school districts have fulfilled their responsibilities under state law. For more information regarding the ESC of Central Ohio Business Advisory Council, please visit: <https://www.escco.org/services/workforce-readiness-collaborative/business-advisory-council>.

BAC Mission: To leverage regional partnerships to connect all students with career opportunities and support workforce development in Central Ohio

BAC Vision: To make Central Ohio a leader in workforce innovation, equipping all students with the skills and connections for career success

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Meeting Summaries

October 23, 2025 at the ESC of Central Ohio BAC Presentation and Agenda | Central Ohio Career Technical Education

The ESC of Central Ohio Business Advisory Council (BAC) convened on October 23, 2025, bringing together education and industry partners to strengthen career-connected learning and regional workforce alignment. The meeting opened with welcome remarks and announcements from Robb Gonda, Director of College and Career Success, who introduced the theme “Woven Futures” and emphasized the intentional alignment of education, business, and community partnerships to support student success across Central Ohio.

The primary focus of the meeting was Central Ohio Career Technical Education (CTE). Representatives from Columbus City Schools, Delaware Area Career Center, Eastland-Fairfield Career & Technical Schools, South Western City Schools, and Tolles Career & Technical Center shared insights into their CTE programming, regional workforce connections, and collaborative efforts. The discussion highlighted the importance of cross-district alignment, employer engagement, and CTE’s role in preparing students for high-demand careers.

Dedicated networking time provided BAC members and partners the opportunity to engage directly with featured speakers and establish new connections. This structured networking was designed to expand partnerships that support both business needs and student career exploration, work-based learning, and future employment opportunities.

The meeting concluded with committee work focused on Industry Sector Partnerships, with emphasis on:

- Developing professional skills aligned to future careers;
- Building and sustaining partnerships between education and industry; and
- Coordinating meaningful career-connected experiences for students.

Participants were also invited to provide feedback through a post-meeting survey to inform continuous improvement of BAC meetings and guide topic selection for the 2025–2026 school year. This feedback will support the ongoing effectiveness and relevance of the ESC of Central Ohio Business Advisory Council.



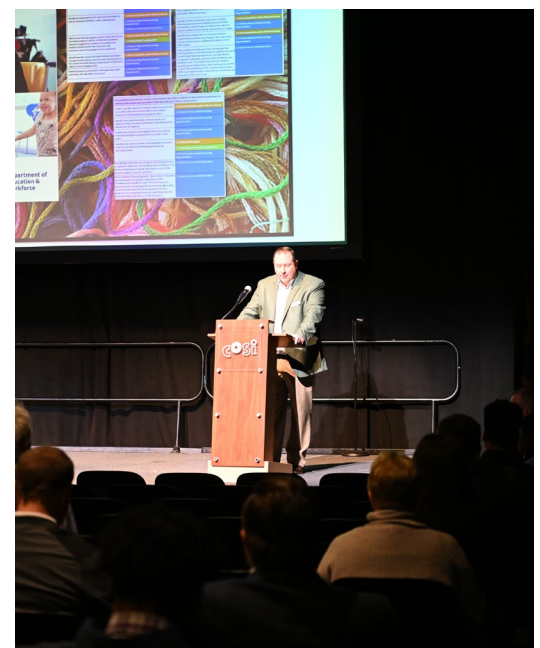
December 11, 2025, at COSI BAC Presentation and Agenda | STEM X BAC

The ESC of Central Ohio Business Advisory Council (BAC) met on December 11, 2025, convening education, workforce, and industry partners to advance regional collaboration and career-connected learning. The meeting opened with welcome remarks and announcements from Robb Gonda, Director of College and Career Success. Key updates included an overview of the Department of Education and Workforce (DEW) report, progress on the Pre-Apprenticeship Video Series, and the launch of the Career Pathway Support Network (CPSN) Gap Analysis Survey. These updates reinforced the Council's commitment to data-informed decision-making and continuous improvement across career pathways.

The meeting's featured topic, STEM x BAC, highlighted the critical role of STEM partnerships in preparing students for future careers. Presentations were delivered by Andy Aichele, Vice President of Education at COSI; Matthew Williams, STEM Relationship Manager with the Ohio STEM Learning Network (OSLN); and Evan Garver, Workforce Development Program Manager at Goodwill Columbus. Each speaker shared perspectives on STEM education, workforce development, and employer engagement, emphasizing scalable strategies to connect classroom learning to real-world applications and career opportunities.

Structured networking time allowed BAC members to engage directly with featured speakers and establish new connections designed to expand opportunities for students and strengthen partnerships with the business community. These interactions supported the Council's goal of aligning education systems with regional workforce needs.

The meeting concluded with committee work focused on Industry Sector Partnerships, including a discussion on developing professional skills for future careers, building sustainable partnerships, and coordinating meaningful career-connected experiences for students. Participants were encouraged to provide feedback through a post-meeting survey to guide future BAC topics and continuous improvement for the 2025–2026 school year.



February 19, 2026, at the Ohio Chamber of Commerce BAC Presentation and Agenda | Legislative Updates

The Business Advisory Council (BAC) meeting on February 19, 2026, focused on strengthening the alignment between education and industry across Central Ohio. The meeting opened with announcements from Robb Gonda, Director of College and Career Success, including updates on the 2025–2026 Community Connector Award nominations, Careers 2 Classrooms registration and programming, and the High School Tech Internship initiative. These announcements highlighted ongoing efforts to expand educator and industry connections and provide students with authentic career exploration and work-based learning opportunities.

The primary meeting theme, Education + Industry, featured updates and insights from key regional partners. Ohio State University leaders Randy Smith and Rob Griffiths shared perspectives on workforce development directions and emerging talent needs, while Justin Barnes from the Ohio Chamber of Commerce provided a legislative update impacting education, workforce, and industry partnerships. These presentations informed council members of current trends, policy considerations, and opportunities for collaboration between schools and employers.

Participants engaged in structured networking and committee work time focused on industry sector partnerships, developing professional skills for future careers, building partnerships, and coordinating student and educator experiences. Attendees were encouraged to connect with featured speakers and new partners to expand opportunities for students and businesses. The meeting concluded with a feedback request to inform future BAC topics and planning for the 2025–2026 school year and beyond, along with updates on upcoming meeting dates and coordination with the Columbus Compact meeting.



Plan & Implementation Progress

To meet the diverse needs of our BAC members, we have taken a regional approach to leverage and connect with the work happening across Central Ohio. We have done this by working in partnership with the Central Ohio Compact, workforce development boards, chambers of commerce, the Central Ohio Pre-Apprenticeship Hub, non-profit organizations, and workforce development agencies. We have created regional programs and plans to expose students to in-demand careers and to earn industry-recognized credentials, scaled internship and pre-apprenticeship opportunities for students, and supported regional mentoring programs to connect students directly with business and industry mentors.

The Business Advisory Council has done this work by focusing on three quality practices, with committee work happening in these areas in between quarterly BAC meetings.

These areas of focus are:

- Develop Professional Skills for Future Careers
- Build Partnerships
- Coordinate Experiences

Business Advisory Council Work for Academic Year 2025-2026 to Develop Professional Skills for Future Careers:

Initiative 1

Conduct career pathway audits for interested BAC member school districts to explore possibilities to expand work-based learning opportunities for all students.



Intended Outcome: Creation of the “what” and “why” for non-funded, partial-funding, and fully funded college and career pathways.



Data Measurement: Number of audits conducted, and instructional pathways and programs implemented.



Spring 2026 Update: In-Progress: Five Career Pathway Audits have been completed, with six currently being conducted in the following BAC member school districts: Bexley City Schools, Canal Winchester Local Schools, Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools, Jonathan Alder Local Schools, New Albany-Plain Local Schools, and Reynoldsburg City Schools.

Initiative 2

Identify the top five skills needed by students across eight Industry Sector Partnerships (ISPs) in the Central Ohio region.



Intended Outcome: School district partners will be able to align current portraits of a graduate/ learner and OhioMeansJobs-Readiness Seal skills with current in-demand careers.



Data Measurement: Evidence will include meeting agendas, a finalized list of identified skills, and professional learning sessions for member districts delivered during the scheduled quarterly BAC meetings.



Spring 2026 Update: In-Progress: Three meetings have been held with the eight ISPs in the Central Ohio region, and initial skills have been identified during our February gathering. This group will continue to meet to determine action steps for the next school year, including the possibility of a data-storytelling platform for each industry sector.

Initiative 3

Provide regional educator professional development through the Central Ohio Career Readiness Council (COCRC) and Tech Talk Tuesday Communities of Practice (CoP).



Intended Outcome: Identification of barriers and developing solutions for all students accessing work-based learning opportunities throughout their academic careers.



Data Measurement: Number of meetings held, participants, barriers, and solutions implemented during the 2025-2026 school year.



Spring 2026 Update: In-Progress: Six COCRC meetings have been held, with an average monthly attendance of 64. Additionally, four Tech Talk Tuesday CoP meetings focused on Career Technical Education topics have been held.

Business Advisory Council Work for Academic Year 2025-2026 to Build Partnerships:

Initiative 1

Coordinate with the Central Ohio Compact to facilitate committee work involving community, government, business, and K-12 partners.



Intended Outcome: Enhance educational quality and workforce alignment in Central Ohio through collaborative efforts among community, government, business, and K-12 partners.



Data Measurement: Measured through metrics such as partnership engagement, student performance, workforce readiness, community involvement, and continuous improvement feedback, along with Lumina Foundation's Credentials of Value goal.



Spring Update 2026: In Progress: The 2026 Central Ohio Compact is scheduled for April 24, 2026, at Columbus State Community College.

Initiative 2

Partner with the Columbus Chamber of Commerce and 16 BAC businesses to hold the fourth annual Careers2Classroom Educator Workforce Boot Camp for 48 educators from Central Ohio school districts.



Intended Outcome: Equip 48 Central Ohio educators with industry insights and practical skills through the third annual Careers2Classroom Educator Workforce Boot Camp in partnership with the Columbus Chamber of Commerce and 16 BAC businesses.



Data Measurement: Measured by tracking educator participation, feedback on the Boot Camp's effectiveness, and subsequent integration of industry knowledge into classroom teaching.



Spring Update 2026: In Progress: 2026 Careers2Classroom event scheduled for June 1-4 and 12, 2026. Educator registration is ongoing throughout the Spring.

Initiative 3

Host regional chamber of commerce events to enhance networking and sharing of program information happening through area career technical centers, the ESC, industry sector partnerships, and individual businesses.



Intended Outcome: Expand the regional Academic Alliance for regional chambers of commerce to enhance networking and disseminate program information through area career technical centers, the ESC, ISPs, and individual businesses.



Data Measurement: Measured by tracking events, attendance, participant feedback, the number of new partnerships formed, and subsequent engagement in the highlighted programs.



Spring Update 2026: In-Progress: Meeting scheduled for March 9, 2026, at the ESC of Central Ohio. The meeting will focus on career technical education opportunities and on networking among chamber of commerce attendees.

Business Advisory Council Plans for Year 2025-2026 To Coordinate Experiences:

Initiative 1

Develop systems aligned with the newly formed Career Pathway Support Network (CPSN) to enrich students' work-based experiences across multiple career fields.



Intended Outcome: Develop systems to facilitate and support student work-based experiences across multiple career fields to enhance practical learning and career readiness.



Data Measurement: Measured by tracking the number of work-based experiences offered, student participation rates, employer feedback, and student post-internship employment or educational advancements.



Spring Update 2026: In-Progress: A gap analysis of our region's K-12 school districts has been conducted to establish a baseline of programs and areas needing additional resources and technical assistance. As part of this work, a resource hub is in development to expand access to WBL opportunities for students and to provide resources for all community, business, and K-12 partners.

Initiative 2

Partner with Industry Sector Partnerships and community organizations to create and implement student events and resources.



Intended Outcome: Expose high school students in the Central Ohio area to in-demand careers in those fields.



Data Measurement: Number of events and focused sectors, as well as students involved in the activities (grade levels, number of students).



Spring Update 2026: Completed: Construction Event, In-Progress: The 3rd annual HCCOCO Healthcare Summit is scheduled for April 2026 with an anticipated student participation of 2,500. The 2nd annual Find Your Grind Festival is scheduled for May 2026, with a focus on 7th grade and anticipated attendance of 1,500 students. The BAC and CPSN are also supporting the Central Ohio Manufacturing Partnership by promoting its ambassador program, which will pilot it with six districts in the Spring.

Initiative 3

Facilitate the continued expansion and sustainability of youth pre-apprenticeships as part of the Central Ohio Pre-Apprenticeship Hub.



Intended Outcome: Sustain and expand youth pre-apprenticeships within the Central Ohio Pre-Apprenticeship Hub to provide more students with hands-on training and career readiness.



Data Measurement: Measured by tracking the number of new pre-apprenticeships opportunities created, student enrollment and completion rates, and post-program employment or further education placements.



Spring Update 2026: In-Progress: As of February 2026, the number of pre-apprenticeships has increased from 260 at the end of the 2024-2025 school year to 552. This is a 112% increase in the number of opportunities for students to take part in these work-based learning options. It is anticipated that this participation number will increase as Summer participants are currently being recruited.

Business Advisory Council Participants



Required Questions/ Other Activities & Accolades

ODEW Required Joint Statement Questions:

1. Are there any changes to your Business Advisory Council's structure or leadership since you submitted your plan for this academic year? None
2. Of goals submitting in your 2025-2026 Business Advisory Council Plan, on a scale of 1-10 with 10 being goal accomplished. 5- Established goals and initiatives are in progress with an anticipated completion date of June 2026.
What goals were you able to accomplish? N/A
3. What challenges have you experienced implementing your goals? Establishing new committee work and processes has taken longer than expected. Further refinement of this engagement will continue throughout the remainder of the academic year. Additional feedback will be obtained through a member survey to further refine the process for the next academic school year's BAC.
4. What new partnerships has your Business Advisory Council formed for the 2025-2026? –
5. Have you added or removed any goals submitted in your 2025-2026 Business Advisory Council plans? If so, please provide details. No goals have been removed.
6. Have you received any media coverage or participated in any case studies as a Business Advisory Council? If so, please share. No formal press coverage has been conducted as of the time of this publication.

Other Related Activities and Accolades:

Career Z Challenge: In the fall of 2025, the ESC of Central Ohio was recognized as one of nine national winners of the U.S. Department of Education's Career Z Challenge, an initiative focused on expanding high-quality work-based learning experiences for students in grades 9–12. This recognition underscores the ESC's leadership in convening communities of practice that unite K–12 education, business, and community partners across Central Ohio. The ESC of Central Ohio Business Advisory Council (BAC) plays a central role in advancing this work, with updates shared at each BAC meeting to highlight progress, partner engagement, and the direct benefits to both BAC members and students through strengthened partnerships and expanded access to career-connected learning opportunities.

Career Pathway Support Network: The ESC of Central Ohio was one of seven organizations statewide selected to serve as a Career Pathway Support Network (CPSN) for the 11-county Central Ohio region. This designation expanded the ESC's capacity to support regional collaboration across education, workforce, and industry partners and strengthens alignment of career pathways throughout the region. A key milestone of this work was the first joint regional Business Advisory Council meeting, held on December 11, 2025, at COSI, which convened partners from across Central Ohio to advance shared goals in career-connected learning. Additional regional convenings and collaborative events are currently in the planning stages.

Business Recognition and Student Design Challenge: The 2nd Annual Business Community Connector Awards will be presented at the April Business Advisory Council meeting. This year, the awards were uniquely designed and created by students at Licking Heights High School through an ESC-sponsored design challenge, highlighting student creativity and real-world application of skills. The final awards were produced in partnership with BAC business partner Form 5, exemplifying the power of collaboration between education and industry to elevate student voice and celebrate impactful community partnerships.

Advice & Recommendations

Across the Central Ohio region, a persistent skills gap persists due to the misalignment between the skills students and job seekers are developing and employers' evolving needs. Addressing this challenge requires systems thinking and a coordinated regional approach that intentionally connects education, business, and industry around shared goals and outcomes. BAC members emphasize the importance of strengthening regional workforce initiatives, expanding career exploration and counseling, increasing authentic business engagement opportunities for students, and leveraging labor-market and economic-trend data to guide decision-making.

As Central Ohio continues to grow and welcomes major employers, aligning education pathways with the regional economic landscape is more critical than ever. While progress has been made, additional focus is needed to scale high-quality work-based learning, broaden employer participation, and expand access to industry-recognized credentials. BAC members also stress the importance of earlier and more intentional exposure to career pathways—particularly at the middle school level—to support long-term planning and increase awareness among both students and families. By balancing regional strategy with strong local implementation, the BAC remains committed to creating a cohesive system that expands opportunities for all students while meeting the talent needs of Central Ohio's growing economy.

Central Ohio Workforce Partners

- A Tribe for Jazz
- Advance Auto Parts
- AEP
- Amazon Web Services
- ASPRY Workforce Development Board of Central Ohio
- AT&T
- Big Brothers Big Sisters in America
- Capitol City Trailers Inc.
- Cardinal Health
- CGI
- Charlie Health
- City Barbeque
- ClearView Management Resources
- Columbus Airport/REAN
- Columbus Chamber of Commerce
- Columbus Foundation
- Community Shelter Board
- COTA
- Danous Calling
- Dayton Region
- Delaware County
- Dreams on Horseback
- DriveOhio(Ohio Dept. of Transp.)
- Ease
- EasyIT
- EcoPlumbers
- Embold
- Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland
- Fluvitex-USA
- FlyOhio
- Franklin County Children Services
- Franklin County Department of Jobs and Family Services
- FST Logisticts
- G&J Pepsi
- Goodwill Industries
- Hamilton Parker
- Honda
- I Know I Can
- Ignite Industrial
- Ingram-White Castle Foundation
- Kokosing Construction Company
- Maker Space Central
- MedVet
- Mid-Ohio Food Collective
- Nationwide Children's Hospital
- NetSteady
- NIFCO
- Ohio 529
- Ohio Contractors Association
- Ohio Department of Development
- Ohio Department of Education and Workforce
- Ohio National Guard
- OhioHealth
- Omni Alliance, LLC
- Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities
- OSA Technology Partners
- Path Robotics
- Performance Automotive
- Sheridan-Buckley Consulting
- Significance LLC
- Status Solutions
- Strait & Lamp Group
- TechCorps
- The Actions that Matter for Youth
- The Ohio Society of CPAs
- The Ohio State University
- THK Manufacturing of America
- TransfrVR
- Turner Construction
- WCR
- Wendy's
- Worthington Industries





educational service center
of Central Ohio

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