



Northeast Ohio Workforce Connect **Business Advisory Council (BAC) Plan: 2026-2027**

Welcome to the *Northeast Ohio Workforce Connect* comprehensive Business Advisory Council Plan created jointly by the Educational Service Center of the Western Reserve and Auburn Career Center, designed to address the pivotal aspect of workforce development within our area schools. In today's rapidly evolving career landscape, an adept and motivated workforce is the cornerstone of sustainable success. This plan aims to leverage the collective wisdom of k-12 school officials, industry leaders, higher education experts, and community stakeholders to offer strategic insights and actionable recommendations that will empower the students of tomorrow to develop professional skills for future careers via building partnerships and coordinating experiences. By fostering an environment of collaboration, innovation, and adaptability, we aspire to drive to increase professional skills and career trend data across k-12 grades. The council works with governing boards, labor organizations, higher education partners and member districts to collect and analyze the changing needs of the workforce landscape.

The following plan will describe and showcase the distinctive action steps in order to meet goals aligned to *developing professional skills for future careers, building partnerships, and coordinating experiences*. This means that there is engagement and professional development for educators and employers to continuously evaluate skills for currency. These action steps will be oriented around: educator engagement, professional development, and employer involvement. In order to meet the goals put forth in this plan, we will engage in a collaborative approach of placing students in work-based learning experiences to earn industry-recognized credentials and OhioMeansJobs Readiness Seals.

Northeast Ohio Workforce Connect

Business Advisory Council (BAC) Plan: 2026-2027

Name: *Northeast Ohio Workforce Connect*
Structure: Educational Service Center and Career Center
JobsOhio Partner: TeamNEO
Contacts:

Primary Contact: Jennifer Felker
 Superintendent- ESCWR
jfelker@escwr.org

Secondary Contact: Dr. Joe Glavan
 Superintendent- Auburn Career Center
jglavan@auburncc.org

2026-2027 Northeast Ohio Workforce Connect Advisory Council Members: *Business Partners*

Advisory Council Member	Business	Industry Represented
Jeff Allenby	Ordnance Technology Service	Technology
Jacqueline Auer	HC Companies	Mechanical
Cliff Babcock	Junction Auto	Automotive/Business
James Blazey	Ohio Means Jobs	Job Center Network
Keith Cox	Block Digital	Technology
Brian Cunningham	HC Companies	Mechanical
John Epprecht	Great Lakes Cheese	Food Processing
Kate Gehlfuss	Ravenwood Health	Health Care
Kelly Kehn	Tarkett USA, Inc.	Manufacturing
Myranda Keister	Lake Development Authority	Government
Lynn Keller	DA Surgical	Medical
Sergeant Tyler Kelly	U.S. Army	Military
Suzanne LaRocca	Mercury Plastics	Manufacturing
Kimm Leininger	Geauga Growth Partnership	Network for Businesses

Eric Lewis	Signature Health	Health Care
Leslie Mapes	Fieldstone Farms	Agriculture
Amy Murfello	Leadership Geauga	Network for Businesses
Liz Nelson	Signature Health	Executive
Patrick Newby	Lubrizol	Manufacturing
Becky Oliver	Great Lakes Cheese	Manufacturer
Ray Paganini	Cornerstone IT	Software Technical Support
Dave Patterson	Patterson Farms	Agriculture
Pat Preston	Preston Auto Group	Automotive/ Business
Brittany Paul	Ravenwood Health	Health Care
Jason Savage	Avery Dennison	Manufacturing
Erica Scleicher	Avery Dennison	Manufacturing
Susan Seger	Mercury Plastics	Manufacturing
Craig Sernik	Area 19 NOC COG	Business Connections
Neil Singh	ISSQUARED	Executive
Teresa Simons	Alliance for Working Together	Job Center Network
Sergeant Shane Simplot	Air Force Reserve	Military
Tiffany Smetana	Solid Rock	Mental Health
John Stoneback	JM Performance	Automotive
Jeff Tomblin	Jeff's Garage	Automotive
Cory Vojack	LCOPEDA	Workforce Development
Eric Wachob	MJM Industries	Manufacturing
McKenna Walker	Bloc Digital	Technology
Halle Wilkerson	Cabinet Works Group	Manufacturing
Lauren Wiertel	Component Repair Technologies	Turbine Engine Repairs

2026-2027 Northeast Ohio Workforce Connect Advisory Council Members: *Educational Partners*

Advisory Council Member	School District	Title
Jennifer Felker*	ESC of the Western Reserve	Superintendent
Joe Glavan	Auburn Career Center	Superintendent
Nancy Benincasa	West Geauga School District	Superintendent
Jack Cunningham	Cardinal School District	Superintendent
Aireane Curtis	Crestwood School District	Superintendent
Josh Englehart	Painesville School District	Superintendent
Deanna Elsing	Auburn Career Center	Secondary Director
Craig Heath	Mentor School District	Superintendent
Steve Johnson	Willoughby-Eastlake School District	Operations Supervisor
Jim Kalis	Lake Erie College	Director Clinical Experiences
Geoffrey Kent	ESCWR Governing Board	Board President
Jim Kish	West Geauga School District	Director of Career Pathways
Andrea McKinstry	Auburn Career Center	Business Partnership Coordinator
Vicki Morley	Willoughby-Eastlake School District	Director of Workforce Development
Kelly NewVine	Hiram College	Professor
Lucy Ott	Lakeland Community College	Career Tech Coordinator
Todd Porcello	Perry Local Schools	Superintendent
Dan Rambler	Madison Local School District	Superintendent
Chris Rateno	Riverside Local School District	Superintendent
Karl Schneider	Fairport Harbor School District	Superintendent
Tim Snyder	ESCWR Governing Board	Board Member
Angela Spalsbury	Kent State University – Geauga	Dean and Chief Administrative Officer
Robert Timmons	ESCWR & Auburn Career Center	Coordinator of Workforce Development
Patrick Ward	Willoughby-Eastlake School District	Superintendent
Allen Wilson	iSTEM Early College High School	Chief Academic Officer

Schedule of Meetings:

The planned meeting dates for the 2026-2027 school year include:

- September 15, 2026
- October 23, 2026- Workforce Connect Professional Development Conference
- November 10, 2026
- February 2, 2026
- April 6, 2026

Mission Statement (Per ORC 3313.84): The mission of the Northeast Ohio Workforce Connect Advisory Council (BAC) is to foster cooperation among our member schools, businesses, and the communities they serve to make our education system more aware of the local labor market; promote work-based experiences within businesses; and help students prepare for successful learning and employment opportunities.

Sunshine Laws: The Northeast Ohio Workforce Connect BAC will comply with Ohio’s public records and open meetings laws, collectively known as the “Sunshine Laws” as required by law.

Member Appointments:

- ESCWR County Superintendent (permanent member) serves as Executive Chair.
- Superintendents and representatives from ESCWR Member Districts (permanent members)
- Representative from Geauga Growth Partnership (permanent member).
- Superintendent from Auburn Career Center (permanent member).
- Representatives from Higher Education: Kent State, Lake Erie College, Hiram College, Lakeland (permanent members).
- At least 8 members from local or regional businesses and industries that represent diversity in the business communities (staggered terms).
- Additional At-large Members may be added at the discretion of the BAC in multiples of 2 (3 year) terms.
- Representative from workforce development. At the discretion of the BAC for a 3 year term.
- Voting authority – two members from the same entity – 1 vote.

Roles of the BAC (Per ORC 3313.84):

1. To *advise* local school districts on changes in the economy and job market and the area in which future jobs are most likely available;
2. To *advocate* for the employment skills most critical to business and industry and the development of curriculum to teach these skills;
3. To *aid* and *support* local school districts by offering suggestions for developing a working relationship among businesses, labor organizations, and educators;
4. To *advise* workforce development on how to be responsive to the Northeast Ohio job market.

Appointment & Responsibility of Officers:

Officers for the following offices: Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, and Secretary shall be appointed by the ESCWR Superintendent each year. Officers shall be appointed from active Board members and will be appointed for 1 year terms.

The responsibilities of each office are as follows:

- Chairperson – Superintendent of County:
 - Provide leadership to ensure the committee functions properly
 - Promote full participation during the meetings
 - Ensure that all relevant matters are discussed and that effective decisions are made and implemented
 - Lead and Facilitate each meeting
- Vice Chairperson:
 - Assume the responsibilities of the Chairperson in his/her absence
- Secretary (Assumed by ESCWR Representative):
 - sends out meeting agenda
 - records notes at meetings

Terms of Service:

2 Businesses – 1 year

3 Businesses – 2 year

3 Businesses – 3 year

Thereafter all 3 years

The BAC shall avoid potential conflicts of interest when appointing members. The ESCWR Superintendent has the right to remove BAC members due to potential conflicts of interest, lack of attendance/participation, lack of cooperative spirit, or any other reason as determined by ESCWR.

Amendment of Bylaws: Bylaws of the BAC may be amended at any official BAC meeting by a majority vote of BAC members present at the meeting.

The Northeast Ohio Workforce Connect Advisory Council operates under three quality practices:

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

Develop Professional Skills for Future Careers

Initiative 1

Describe in detail the plan associated with implementing this quality practice.

For the 2026–2027 school year, our primary objective is to deliver targeted training and professional development across high-demand career pathways to expand work-based learning opportunities for K–12 students and drive curriculum revisions that align with evolving local labor market trends. As an active participant in the Career Pathways Support Network, we will leverage shared resources to implement data-driven Career Technical Education (CTE) quality and capacity-building initiatives that strengthen existing frameworks and improve career outcomes for students with disabilities. To support this vision, we are committed to maximizing stakeholder awareness of the benefits of rigorous career pathways, optimizing both existing and alternative funding mechanisms, and cultivating collaborative networks where member districts can seamlessly share resources and best practices. Furthermore, we will deliver career-aligned professional development for career-tech instructors to build specialized learning communities that elevate classroom instruction. Building upon the middle-grade programs recently established to comply with the Ohio Revised Code, our next phase focuses on transitioning these foundational classes into comprehensive, full-scale pathways that extend through high school graduation. To guarantee classroom relevance, we will continuously analyze local employment data, core professional skill requirements, and emerging career trends through our Business Advisory Council and immersive Educator Bootcamps. This collaborative approach will enable us to design meaningful classroom activities, provide early exposure to high-growth industries, and conduct systematic curriculum reviews to ensure student competencies perfectly match the needs of our local business community.

List all districts impacted.

Primary Partner Districts: Auburn Career Center, ACE Academy, Cardinal Schools, Crestwood Schools, Educational Service Center of the Western Reserve, Fairport Harbor Schools, iStem School, Madison Schools, Painesville Schools, Perry Local Schools, West Geauga Schools.

Secondary Partner Districts: Berkshire Schools, Chardon Schools, Kirtland Schools, Kenston Schools, Mentor Schools, Riverside Schools, Wickliffe Schools, Willoughby-Eastlake Schools.

We anticipate growing this initiative so that each school district has a career pathway program which could serve over 3,000 students.

List all businesses and specify industries involved. What role does the business play in implementation?

Great Lakes Cheese- Business and Logistics

Patterson Farms- Agriculture

Bloc Digital- Technology

Cornerstone IT- Technology

Avery Dennison- Manufacturing

Lubrizol- Engineering

HC Companies-Logistics

Ravenwood- Healthcare

Tarkett-Industrial

Mercury Plastics- Manufacturing

DA Surgical- Healthcare

Solid Rock- Healthcare

Signature Health- Healthcare

Mercury Plastics- Manufacturing

Ravenwood Health- Healthcare

Fieldstone Farms- Agriculture

MJM Industries- Manufacturing

JM Performance- Automotive

Jeff's Garage- Automotive

These Business Advisory Council partners serve as vital strategic links between classroom learning and the local economy, driving implementation through several core initiatives. First, industry partners actively collaborate with educators to review, revise, and co-create curriculum, sharing their technical expertise and real-time market data to ensure student competencies perfectly match current job market demands. Second, they provide essential work-based learning and experiential exposure for students by hosting facility tours, delivering career talks, conducting mock interviews, and offering structured internship and mentorship opportunities. Third, these partnerships enhance educator professional development by granting teachers immersive insights into modern industry challenges, cutting-edge tools, and emerging fields, which allows them to integrate contemporary workplace technologies directly into their instruction. Finally, participating businesses act as vital community advocates, leveraging their involvement to market and validate these career pathways throughout the region, thereby building public awareness and fostering long-term workforce sustainability.

How does this initiative help support or teach relevant, in-demand technical and professional skills for students and educators?

Career pathways are designed to align educational programs with the needs of our workforce. This ensures that students are learning skills that are not only relevant but also in demand in the job market. For students, this means gaining practical, technical skills—like coding, cybersecurity, data analysis, or advanced manufacturing techniques—that are highly valued by employers. For educators, it offers the opportunity to stay up-to-date with emerging trends and incorporate industry-relevant skills into their teaching.

Our career pathways will include internships, apprenticeships, and hands-on learning experiences, which are essential for developing technical and professional skills. By integrating real-world tasks and industry exposure into education, students learn by doing, giving them practical knowledge that theoretical lessons cannot always provide. This is particularly valuable in fields like healthcare, IT, engineering, and the heavy trades, where students can apply what they learn in the classroom directly to a real-world environment.

Career pathways are developed in partnership with industries that are experiencing growth or have high levels of demand for skilled workers. This ensures that students are being trained in sectors with promising career opportunities. Fields like artificial intelligence, robotics, renewable energy, healthcare, and software development are prime examples of sectors where the demand for skilled workers is growing rapidly in Northeast Ohio. By providing career pathways in these fields, students are better prepared to enter the workforce and pursue well-paying, sustainable careers.

By integrating career pathways into a k-12 model, both students and educators are better positioned to develop the technical and professional skills necessary for success in the workforce. This approach not only empowers students to pursue meaningful careers but also ensures that educators are prepared to teach relevant, in-demand skills that keep pace with a rapidly changing job market. Recently, several of our partner Districts have created VM courses to meet the requirements of Ohio Revised Code. We will continue to build upon our efforts to increase these courses in the eleven member Districts that are served by the ESCWR and Auburn Career Center.

What skills gap or talent pipeline challenge does this initiative address to help your area/region? What data supports the identified skill gap or pipeline challenge?

This initiative directly addresses a critical talent pipeline imbalance and skills gap within Northeast Ohio by accelerating the development of rigorous career pathways that guide k-12 students toward high-demand, high-wage local occupations. By equipping teachers with the training and industry insights necessary to prepare students for these critical roles, the initiative aims to build a sustainable pipeline of qualified workers, effectively mitigating regional labor shortages and driving local retention of home-grown talent. The urgency of this pipeline challenge is validated by comprehensive regional economic data, most notably the *Aligning Opportunities in the Northeast Ohio Region* report published by

our local [JobsOhio](#) partner, [Team NEO](#). Specifically, data beginning on page 18 of the report highlights a profound supply-and-demand mismatch, illustrating that regional credential completions are failing to keep pace with the surging volume of job postings in crucial sectors. Furthermore, this misalignment is tracked continuously via [Team NEO's Talent Dashboard](#), a core component of the Vibrant Economy Indicators (VEI) system, alongside workforce metrics provided by [Lightcast](#). Synthesizing these authoritative data sources allows our Business Advisory Council to precisely pinpoint widening skills gaps, ensuring our newly built pathways are highly impactful, sustainable, and perfectly attuned to the shifting economic realities of our local business community.

How does this initiative impact students with disabilities?

Career pathways can serve as a bridge for students with disabilities, moving them from the education system into successful, fulfilling careers. These programs provide the support, resources, and preparation they need to navigate potential challenges and achieve their goals. Career pathways benefit students with special needs by promoting early awareness and self-advocacy, encouraging inclusive education, gaining skills, fostering a transition to independent living and reducing the risk of unemployment. This initiative will ensure career awareness/engagement by removing barriers to CTE programs and pathways. It will also resolve barriers within instruction, accommodations, transition services and work-based learning opportunities by increasing equitable access.

Develop Professional Skills for Future Careers

Initiative 2

Describe in detail the plan associated with implementing this quality practice.

Our objective is to create a series of ***Career-Tech Regional Collaboration Forums*** engaging area school districts and Career-Tech Planning Districts focusing on sharing best practices that have made an impact within the local business community.

Our goals are to identify key indicators of successful programs; identify areas for local alignment and expansion of work based learning initiatives; Foster networking and collaboration opportunities for Districts to share resources and best practices.

Expand career awareness and readiness activities that connect students to regional in-demand careers. Build upon existing career exploration and college and career readiness programs through the use of speakers, panels, career fairs, class presentations etc.

Provide professional development for current career-tech instructors aligned by careers to create learning communities. The Forums will also act as incubators for reviewing data on professional skills and career trends so as to reduce skills gaps. Business participation will provide for authentic experiences where educators can identify methods to bring awareness and exposure to in-demand careers.

List all participating school districts. What percentage of students within the business advisory council will be impacted by this initiative?

Primary Partner Districts: Auburn Career Center, ACE Academy, Cardinal Schools, Crestwood Schools, Educational Service Center of the Western Reserve, Fairport Harbor Schools, iStem School, Madison Schools, Painesville Schools, Perry Schools, West Geauga Schools.

Secondary Partner Districts: Berkshire Schools, Chardon Schools, Kirtland Schools, Kenston Schools, Riverside Schools, Wickliffe Schools, Willoughby-Eastlake Schools.

Additionally, our regional partners from Euclid, Mayfield Excell TECC and Mentor Schools will be participating.

We are planning on impacting a minimum of 30% of the students in each District via this Train- the- Trainer program.

List all businesses and specify industries involved. What role does the business play in implementation?

Great Lakes Cheese- Business and Logistics

Patterson Farms- Agriculture

Bloc Digital- Technology

Cornerstone IT- Technology

Avery Dennison- Manufacturing

Lubrizol- Engineering

HC Companies-Logistics

Ravenwood- Healthcare

Tarkett-Industrial

DA Surgical- Healthcare

Solid Rock- Healthcare

Mercury Plastics- Manufacturing

ISSQUARED- Technology

Our BAC members play a critical role in providing professional development for career-tech teachers by offering real-world insights, resources, and expertise that help educators stay current with industry trends,

technologies, and best practices. Their role in the Forums will be to participate in sharing their needs to help ensure the curriculum is relevant. They will assist with developing opportunities for teacher externships along with expanding participation and involvement from additional business partners. Businesses serving as partners promote opportunities for mentors, host for tours, job shadowing, reviewers of projects and insight of workplace etiquette and expectations. Ultimately, our BAC members help to bridge the gap between education and industry, ensuring students graduate with the skills employers need. These Forums will be an opportunity for businesses to directly impact a program's curriculum as they conduct curriculum audits and review local job market data.

How does this initiative help develop relevant, in-demand skills for students and educators?

Creating these professional development forums helps ensure that both educators and students are aligned with real-world workforce needs. The ability to create industry alignment activities will provide insight into current technologies, practices, and skill requirements. Teachers can then integrate these directly into

their instruction so students are prepared for the workforce. Partnerships with businesses give teachers ongoing exposure to industry trends, tools, and standards that keep their teaching fresh and relevant. Through engagement with local business leaders, teachers gain firsthand experience of how classroom concepts apply in real-world settings. This helps them design lessons that are more practical and career-focused. Businesses can help identify skill gaps between what schools teach and what employers need. To strengthen and expand business representation, our Business Advisory Council is executing a major strategic reorganization by merging our two previous county-based sub-groups into a single, unified entity called the **Northeast Ohio Workforce Connect**. This consolidation streamlines our operations and allows member school districts to capitalize on a larger, more collaborative network of employers. To further expand this ecosystem, we are intentionally targeting and absorbing independent, district level business advisory councils to align them with our broader regional initiatives. Crucially, we are scaling our membership by integrating the Executive Directors of our local Chambers of Commerce and regional Economic Development Directors, both of whom possess deep expertise in local market needs and established networks of business leaders. Additionally, we are partnering with the newly expanded business engagement departments of four local higher education institutions to ensure absolute alignment across the K-16 continuum.

This initiative directly tackles regional workforce shortages and projected employment deficits by establishing a highly collaborative, data-driven framework with [ASACOH](#) and [OHIOMeansJobs](#). Our strategy is explicitly guided by regional labor research, utilizing key insights from [Team NEO's](#) landmark study, [Aligning Opportunities in the Northeast Ohio Region](#), to precisely identify the high-demand industries facing the most severe talent pipeline gaps. By introducing earlier, more meaningful career exposure and experiential teaching the specialized competencies local employers expect, this initiative proactively mitigates talent shortages before students graduate. Ultimately, the combined impact of our Building Professional Skills initiatives establishes an intentional, focused process that seamlessly bridges the gap between classroom instruction and the evolving economic priorities of our regional business community. This targeted engagement not only enables our council to build sustainable, responsive career pathways that answer immediate employer needs, but it also provides our higher education partners with the data necessary to align their institutional programs with the regional economy.

What skills gap or talent pipeline challenge does this initiative address to help your area/region? What data supports the identified skill gap or pipeline challenge?

This initiative directly tackles regional workforce shortages and projected employment deficits by establishing a highly collaborative, data-driven framework with [ASACOH](#) and [OHIOMeansJobs](#). Our strategy is explicitly guided by regional labor research, utilizing key insights from [Team NEO's](#) landmark study, [Aligning Opportunities in the Northeast Ohio Region](#), to precisely identify the high-demand industries facing the most severe talent pipeline gaps. By introducing earlier, more meaningful career exposure and experiential teaching the specialized competencies local employers expect, this initiative proactively mitigates talent shortages before students graduate. Ultimately, the combined impact of our Building Professional Skills initiatives establishes an intentional, focused process that seamlessly bridges the gap between classroom instruction and the evolving economic priorities of our regional business community. This targeted engagement not only enables our council to build sustainable, responsive career pathways that answer immediate employer needs, but it also provides our higher education partners with the data necessary to align their institutional programs with the regional economy.

How will the council draw feedback from business and industry to inform decisionmaking?

As we begin our year, we will be able to reach out to local business and industry through a series of engagement activities. We plan to create and issue surveys targeted to local employers to gather broad input on skills, certifications, and hiring trends. From the data received from the surveys, we intend to hold a series of *Listening Sessions* where we will conduct in-depth conversations with small groups of employers by career field, about specific skill needs and employment gaps. We will also create a common agenda item for the multiple councils utilized by Auburn Career Center and our local Districts that will focus on collecting input on skills gaps. Other methods of gaining insight will include student outcome data, student-employer work based learning evaluations and internship feedback. This information will be helpful as compared to regional workforce data to validate trends.

What is the business advisory council's plan to utilize feedback and guidance from business and industry partners to increase skills for students and educators?

By systematically leveraging industry guidance and feedback, the council ensures that students graduate with workforce-ready skills and educators receive targeted, ongoing professional growth to build a more resilient regional talent pipeline. Through structured listening sessions and direct, one-on-one conversations with business partners, we will actively diagnose specific skill gaps between current educational program outcomes and evolving employer expectations. This vital intelligence allows us to prioritize the emerging technologies, industry-recognized credentials, and core workplace competencies most critical to immediate employability. Once captured, this industry feedback will be systematically reviewed with Career Technical Education staff and directly translated into actionable program curricula, professional-learning modules, and work-based learning recommendations. Ultimately, by sharing these insights with our local higher education partners, we can bridge existing training gaps and construct seamless, highly aligned pathways that empower students to confidently transition either directly into high-demand careers or into post-secondary education.

How will identified industry partners co-develop relevant in-demand skills for students and educators?

The work from our Business Advisory Council can assist with developing relevant in-demand skills by directly shaping learning experiences around real workforce needs. We will provide a forum for our industry partners to collaborate with our local educators to integrate current technologies, processes, and standards into a program's lesson plans. Our industry partners have been instrumental in identifying certifications that employers value. This work will be a continuation from last year's Educator Boot Camp that was conducted by our Business Advisory Council. As we expand the size and scope of offering business sponsored internships, apprenticeships, and job shadowing, students will gain hands-on

experience, while teachers see first-hand how classroom concepts translate to the workplace. We plan to implement teacher externships or site visits by career field so educators stay current with industry practices. Our intent is to initially focus on the highest in-demand career fields first where students are able to attain quick entry into the workforce at a sustainable wage.

It is our vision that our industry partners can be seen as co-educators equipping teachers with up-to-date knowledge and giving students the applied skills that make them more competitive in the job market.

How will partners impact career readiness for students with disabilities?

The melding of a business partner with an educational program through internships, apprenticeships, and job-shadowing opportunities provides opportunities for a tailored work approach with appropriate accommodations. Industry partners will be encouraged to provide accessible career experiences. Partners will also provide feedback about workplace support and collaborate around equitable access for career experiences. This creates flexible pathways so students can demonstrate skills in multiple ways. Students practice job-specific technical skills alongside essential employability skills that reinforce workplace expectations in a supportive, authentic environment. When students with disabilities graduate with practical experience, industry-recognized skills, and professional networks, this helps to make them more competitive and prepared for long-term career success. Educators gain insight into inclusive workforce expectations, and employers build a stronger, more diverse talent pipeline.

Building Partnerships

Initiative 2

Describe in detail how the business advisory council plans to strengthen and expand business and industry representation.

We will create a **Workforce Training Center** acting as a hub that connects education, business, and the community to build a skilled workforce. The physical space will be located at Auburn Career Center which is strategically situated between Lake and Geauga Counties and serves eleven of our member Districts. The Center will provide a central location for conducting job shadowing, mentorship connections, career fairs, employer-led demonstrations and virtual reality simulations for career exploration. The creation of a Center will afford us the ability for employer forums and roundtables, innovation labs where businesses and educators co-develop curriculum, as well as, offering entrepreneurship and small business support programs. The Center will facilitate a connection between student, business and our local high education partners to eliminate speed bumps for student achievement and streamline a student's career pathway.

What is the business advisory council plan to utilize insights from business and industry to increase skills for students and educators?

The Business Advisory Council provides industry insights in a structured way to ensure both students and educators are gaining the most relevant, in-demand skills. Through regular meetings and feedback loops, we will review local labor market data, job postings and employer feedback to identify skills gaps. This will assist local educators in real-time updates to curricula. The insights will assist with building a more connected talent pipeline from middle school exploration through high school/CTE, post-secondary education, internships, credentials and employment. As business leaders work with educators to co-develop or revise course content to match current industry standards, they will also identify “sunset skills” (skills being phased out) to prevent outdated training.

How will identified expanded industries develop relevant in-demand skills for students and educators?

Through intentional participation in the Center, new industries will be able to work with local educators to develop curricula that correlates to specific competencies related to their industry. New industries will participate in career exploration activities intended to increase awareness of the skills required to be successful in their career field. Following the identification of high demand occupations, credential alignment and training for educators will be needed. The Center will provide a location where students, educators and industry can engage collaboratively to prepare students for real in-demand careers. By hosting a series of *Industry Incubators* we will intentionally connect expanded industries with educators and curriculum directors to create lessons that relate to the industry and can be quickly implemented.

How will partners impact career readiness for students with disabilities?

Through business leaders collaborating to create authentic learning experiences, students with disabilities will be able to engage in the curriculum hands on. Educators and businesses will collaborate on strategies to make training accessible to students with disabilities. They will be able to appropriately identify and provide for adaptive technologies, mentors or job coaches through the business partnerships. This will help to ensure career readiness activities are appropriate and equitable.

Coordinating Experiences

Initiative 1

Describe in detail how the business advisory council plans to increase Work Based Learning for students.

Develop systems and opportunities that facilitate and support student work-based experiences across multiple career fields to enhance practical learning and career readiness. Our goals are to design industry-specific challenges; student project based competitions; integrate challenges into coursework; and

organize pre-apprenticeship information sessions. We will increase work-based learning experiences, by coordinating with regional employers. Build upon relationships established and continue with career exploration and employer engagement. We will create student centered career challenges by career cluster for our member Districts to participate. The challenges will align with the OhioMeansJobs Readiness Seals to encourage student attainment. We will also provide Districts the opportunity for students to earn CPR credentials and align our current grant award for Teen Driving for students to secure their driving license. This plan will also help businesses identify and nurture future talent.

List all districts impacted.

Primary Partner Districts: Auburn Career Center, ACE Academy, Cardinal Schools, Crestwood Schools, Educational Service Center of the Western Reserve, Fairport Harbor Schools, iStem School, Madison Schools, Painesville Schools, West Geauga Schools.

Secondary Partner Districts: Berkshire Schools, Chardon Schools, Kirtland Schools, Kenston Schools, Mentor Schools, Perry Schools, Riverside Schools, Wickliffe Schools, Willoughby-Eastlake Schools.

List all businesses involved.

Alliance for Working Together, DA Surgical, Geauga Growth Partnership, Geauga Mechanical, Great Lakes Cheese, ISSQUARED, Masco Cabinetry, Mercury Plastics, Ohlman Family Living, Patterson Farms, Ravenwood, Solid Rock, Tarkett, Component Repair Technologies, Avery Dennison, Cornerstone IT, Lubrizol, MJM Industries, Torque Transmission, Fieldstone Farms, Bloc Digital, Army, Air Force.

What role does business play in planning and implementation?

Our business partners will assist and participate in creating High Demand, High Wage Job Panels where the businesses can showcase their industry and students can engage in discussions that align with their career interests. Other key aspects of the role of businesses will include communicating placement expectations, workplace competencies identified, providing mentors, evaluating student performance and identifying employment opportunities. Businesses will also host local competitions where students will solve real-time, real-world problems and provide CPR training to interested students.

Coordinating Experiences
Initiative 2
<i>Describe in detail how the business advisory council plans to increase work-based learning?</i> We will build and formalize the employer network and recruit council members from diverse industries reflecting local labor market needs (healthcare, manufacturing, IT, finance, skilled trades, agriculture, etc.) This will enable us to establish a shared database of participating employers, tracking capacity, industry sector, and type of WBL opportunity offered The council typically pushes for a tiered model so all students — not just those in CTE pathways — have access: These levels are: • <i>Awareness level:</i> Guest speakers, career fairs, industry site tours, virtual job shadow days • <i>Exploration level:</i> Job shadowing, informational interviews, mentorship programs, career panels • <i>Preparation level:</i> Internships (paid/unpaid), clinical rotations, service learning tied to career pathways • <i>Training level:</i> Apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeships, co-ops, and dual-credit work-study programs Through working with the Auburn Business Partner Liaison, they will be in a position to manage logistics, placements, and employer relationships. They will focus on creating a shared online platform/portal where employers can post opportunities and teachers/counselors can match students. Our Council members serve as ambassadors, recruiting additional businesses through their professional networks (chambers of commerce, rotary clubs, industry associations) This will enable us to explore grant funding, WBL incentive programs, and tax credit opportunities for employer partners.
<i>List all districts impacted.</i> <i>Primary Partner Districts:</i> Auburn Career Center, ACE Academy, Cardinal Schools, Crestwood Schools, Fairport Harbor Schools, iStem School, Madison Schools, Painesville Schools, West Geauga Schools. <i>Secondary Partner Districts:</i> Berkshire Schools, Chardon Schools, Kirtland Schools, Kenston Schools, Mentor Schools, Perry Schools, Riverside Schools, Wickliffe Schools, Willoughby-Eastlake Schools.
<i>List all businesses involved.</i> Alliance for Working Together, DA Surgical, Geauga Growth Partnership, Geauga Mechanical, Great Lakes Cheese, Masco Cabinetry, Mercury Plastics, Ohlman Family Living, Ravenwood, Solid Rock, Tarkett, Component Repair Technologies, Avery Dennison, Cornerstone IT, Lubrizol, MJM Industries, Torque Transmission, Army, Air Force.

What role does business play in planning and implementation?

Our business partners will participate in offering authentic WBL opportunities via job shadowing, internships and job placements. There will be opportunities for businesses to co-design projects, provide expertise and equipment, support credentialing opportunities along with communicating workforce expectations.

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