Northeast Ohio Workforce (NOW) Plan

Ashtabula County

City of Cleveland / Cuyahoga County

Geauga County

Lake County

Lorain County

Medina County

Portage County

Summit County
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Northeast Ohio Workforce (NOW) Regional Plan
Executive Summary

The Northeast Ohio Workforce (NOW) region was designated as a Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) Region by Governor John Kasich and is comprised of the eight counties of Lorain, Cuyahoga, Lake, Geauga, Ashtabula, Portage, Summit and Medina. The five distinct Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) that represent Ohio Workforce Areas #2, 3, 4, 5, and 19 have been working together to formalize the Regional WIOA NOW Plan and to coordinate their policies, services and strategic initiatives. The five boards have identified the region's key sectors and industries which are economic drivers in the economy and are: Healthcare; Manufacturing and Information Technology. They have also coordinated their efforts with the Chief Local Elected Officials (CLEOs), the region's four community colleges (Lorain County Community College, Cuyahoga Community College, Lakeland Community College, and Stark State College), local and regional economic development entities, Workforce Board and Committee members, businesses and business intermediaries, workforce employment and training providers, and OhioMeansJobs (OMJ) staff and leadership. A highlight of regional engagement was the opportunity to co-sponsor a day-long Workforce Summit with the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland on June 1, 2016 which was attended by over 200 participants who provided input to this plan. Upon acceptance, the plan will be in effect for four years from 2017 - 2021.

The NOW Plan's Guiding Principles

1. The NOW Regional Plan is aligned with the Combined State Plan.

2. The Workforce Development Boards representing the eight counties of the Northeast Ohio Workforce (NOW) region collaborated to produce this plan to achieve the following goals:
   - identify policies and practices to support workforce priorities in the region which could be standardized for our common customers (individuals and businesses);
   - coordinate their work on industry sectors, career pathways, business engagement, etc. to maximize employer input and to simplify and streamline business outreach;
   - produce the regional economic analysis to direct strategies and actions based on data; and
   - share and adopt successes and promising practices.
3. The NOW Directors (the five WDB Area Executive Directors/Directors) have committed to meet at least quarterly to continue to implement the agreements reached in the development of the regional plan and to identify new solutions and innovations.

4. Strategies addressed in the regional workforce plan, will not be repeated in each of the five required local plans (but may be referenced).

5. Chief Local Elected Officials (CLEOs) identified their workforce concerns and priorities to help shape this plan.

6. The biggest "system" that develops future workers in the NOW Region is the education system and its size, funding and complexity dwarfs the workforce system. This plan does not address reforms or improvements that may be needed in the education system broadly. However, Workforce Boards will work closely with those education institutions that provide adult basic education, career technical training and other post-secondary credentials that are in demand. The boards will also deliver Youth workforce programs to address the needs of youth who are disconnected from the education systems.

7. This plan is required by WIOA but is a plan addressing the entire northeast Ohio workforce, not just a plan to address the resources provided through WIOA to serve businesses and job seekers. The Workforce Boards will align their strategies to achieve the goals of the plan.

8. For purposes of the regional plan, regional initiatives and strategies do not require all five workforce areas to sign-on. Instead, if two or more of the five WDBs are working together to achieve a goal, objective or activity, it will be considered regional.

9. This plan leverages work that has been led or conducted by others in intersecting spheres of influence, to be more efficient and to utilize the needed expertise from the community. For example, other organizations are addressing the transportation issue. We have also used research and information from pertinent sources such as the Center for Community Solutions.

10. The plan incorporates the major priority of addressing individuals who have been left behind by the higher-skills economy to provide more choices/options for a career path.
The NOW Regional Plan Requirements

There are eight required areas of content that are addressed in the NOW regional plan:

- Establishing regional service strategies, including the use of cooperative service delivery agreements;
- Developing and implementing sector initiatives for in-demand industry sectors or occupations for the region;
- Collecting and analyzing regional labor market data;
- Establishing administrative cost arrangements, including the pooling of funds for administrative costs, as appropriate for the region;
- Coordinating transportation and other supportive services, as appropriate for the region;
- Coordinating of services with regional economic development services and providers;
- Establishing an agreement concerning how the planning region will collectively negotiate and reach agreement with the Governor on local levels of performance for, and report on, the performance accountability measures described in section 116(c), for local areas or the planning region; and
- Incorporating local plans.

Note that throughout the NOW Plan, required regional and local planning elements are bold, italicized and appear in a green font color.

The State of Ohio requires that all regional plans address the 22 elements that are required under WIOA for local plans. The 22 elements are described in the regional plan and are cross-referenced in each of the local workforce area plans that are attached to this regional plan. At present, this plan does not require administrative cost pooling, so that strategy is not included at this time. Also, the state has dealt with each of the five local areas regarding performance negotiations and it is not anticipated that performance will be negotiated at a regional level.

The Chief Local Elected Officials indicated that their top priority in developing the regional plan was to address the needs of low income residents to develop strategies to move those individuals into family wage jobs in the key sectors and industries that are identified within the plan. Additionally, the plan must address the needs of businesses related to occupational
demand and the creation of talent development pipelines to ensure that the current and future
talent pool acquire the needed skills. The CLEOs also are concerned about the lack of
transportation options for many of the counties and the impact of transportation related issues
on residents in workforce, education, training and employment activities.

**Addressing Northeast Ohio’s Workforce Challenges Driven by Data**

Included in this report and its appendix is a review of the labor market of northeast Ohio.
Workforce development strategies must be responsive to the needs of businesses for jobs and
skills in demand as well as an understanding of the supply-side. These notes summarize
Workforce Demand and Workforce Supply highlights from the following sources:

- Cleveland/Cuyahoga County Labor Market Analysis Full Report (March 2016) by Judy
  Simpson under a grant to the Cleveland/Cuyahoga County Workforce Board from the
  Cleveland Foundation.

- “Economy, Jobs and Workforce Quality in NOW Region” by Dr. James Shanahan funded
  by a DOL grant through the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services to fund this
  Regional Plan. Dr. Shanahan is part of the Workforce Institute consulting team procured
  to develop this Regional Plan. He and principal, Robert Visdos, also utilized Burning Glass
  and EMSI which are proprietary tools for labor market analysis in this work.

- Input received from the Workforce Summit sponsored by the Federal Reserve Bank of
  Cleveland and co-hosted by the 5 Workforce Boards on June 1, 2016, including the 9
  papers/presentations given at the Summit.

- Center for Community Solutions “Demographic Profile of the Labor Force of Northeast

- Center for Health Affairs NEONI recently released analysis on “Northeast Ohio Nurses.”

- Data analysis conducted by Dr. Robert Gleeson, Levin Chair of the Levin College of Urban
  Studies, Cleveland State University.
**Workforce Demand:**

- Total number of jobs has not recovered to 2008 levels; job growth is sluggish.
- Most job vacancies are caused by employee job churn/turnover.
- Employers cite as hiring problems: shortage of "soft" or job readiness skills, specific occupational skills and digital skills; and ability to pass drug test.
- Top jobs posted in the region include: RNs, Truck Drivers, Retail Sales, Computer Systems Analyst, Customer Service Rep; General Maintenance & Repair; and Secretary/Administrative Assistant.
- There are three priority regional industry sectors: Healthcare; Manufacturing; and IT.
- By far the largest sector in the region is Health Care and Social Assistance which represented 238,531 jobs in 2016. Seven healthcare employers in northeast Ohio are included on the list of the 100 largest employers in Ohio. The rankings and total employees are: #1 - Cleveland Clinic – 48,200; #7 - University Hospitals – 26,000; #44 – Summa Health Systems – 7,400; #55 – MetroHealth – 6,000; #65 – Aultman Health Foundation – 5,000; #69 – Akron Children’s Hospital – 4,765; and, #99 (tie) - Lake Hospital Systems – 2,900
- In 2016, there were a total of 1,502,569 jobs in the region, of which 789,258 (53%) were located in Cuyahoga County. About 94% of businesses in Cuyahoga County are small businesses.

**Healthcare:**

- There is a current regional shortage of 750 RNs; Projected shortage of 3,500 RNs by 2020.
- Demand is high for Medical and Clinical Lab Technicians and Medical Assistants.
- Non-clinical jobs in demand are: Office Administration, Medical Secretary and Sales Reps.
- Digital skills in job postings include: electronic health records, health information exchange standards and portable medical devices. Occupations seeking these skills include: Patient Care Technician; Medical Assistant or Secretary; Patient Service Rep; and Medical Coder (and some RN posts).
- Low-skill, low-paid occupations that are projected to grow include Home Health Aides and Personal Care Aides.
Manufacturing:

- The most in-demand occupations are Production jobs and Machine Operators (Machinist, CNC Operator, Welders, etc.)
- Manufacturing sector employs more of the following mid to high-skill jobs (35%) than any other industry: Management; Business & Finance; Computer & Math; and Engineers & Scientists. Manufacturing is a very important part of the economy but productivity and technology gains continue to reduce the number of jobs that currently exist and are expected to shrink a bit further, although there will still be a high number of jobs.
- Manufacturing has suffered a misperception due to years of layoffs, insufficient career counseling and the loss of vocational training programs.

Digital Skills

Increased Demand for Digital Skills Results in Lower-skill Occupations Becoming Middle-skill Opportunities as "Pathways Out of Poverty" and Career Employment

- Many traditional occupations already have been up-skilled. The increased importance of working with digital data, processes, and equipment explains why former lower-skill jobs are now middle-skill, and why they now pay a better than average wage. Many even offer a living wage for workers without a college degree. Nationally, these jobs pay an average of $15 per hour.
- Productivity software skills refer to spreadsheet and word processing tools like Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Word, as well as enterprise management software like Oracle or SAP. These are foundational skills workers increasingly need in traditional support roles.
- Hundreds of job posts include these skills for entry-level office, sales and bookkeeping positions. Proficiency in these skills can enhance an individual’s chances of being hired by an employer that values these skills sufficiently to pay better than average wages. Targeting these opportunities to clients most often using WIOA assistance can help employers connect with quality workers and improve economic inclusion.
- Among the top 30 in-demand middle-skill jobs that require digital skills are: secretaries, administrative assistants, bookkeepers, customer service reps, sales reps, medical
assistant and medical secretary.

✓ Numerous breakthrough technologies are not only transforming the advanced industries sector but in many respects redefining it. The cross-cutting nature of many of these disruptive technologies reinforces the ongoing convergence of production and innovation, manufacturing and services, and material and digital. The most defining technology trends are in the "disruptive technologies" and include: Additive Manufacturing; the Internet of Things; Cyber-Security; Cloud Computing; "Big Data" Analytics; and Advanced Robotics.

**Soft/Essential/Work Readiness/Baseline/Foundational Skills**

- These skills are most needed in occupations that involve higher levels of personal interaction relative to technical activities. Customer Service Support, Clerical and Administrative, Human Resources, Hospitality, Sales and Management are all areas where employers place an emphasis on these skills. Burning Glass (a proprietary LMI tool) has conceptualized the broad range of these skills into six clusters: customer service, presentation & persuasion, detail oriented, supervision, positive disposition, and project management, research & strategy.

**Workforce Supply in the NOW Region**

The overall population in the NOW Region in 2016 was 2,860,288 which was 36,901 (-1%) less than in 2007. In 2016, the working age population between 16 – 69 years of age was 2,031,044.

- In 2016, ethnicity in the region included a White, Non-Hispanic total population of 2,099,211 (74%) with a Black, Non-Hispanic population of 497,821 (17%) with all other minority classifications totaling 263,256 (9%).
- Population demographics also showed that of the 2,860,288 people living in the region, 1,474,950 (52%) were females and 1,385,338 (48%) were males.
- In August 2016, a total of 74,701 individuals in the NOW Region were unemployed.
- In 2016, there were a total of 1,502,569 jobs in the region with $57,221 in average earnings.
• In October 2016, the State of Ohio published unemployment rankings by county along with the corresponding unemployment rate. The eight counties were rated as follows: 
  #27 – Ashtabula – 5.4%; #30 - Cuyahoga – 5.2%; #65 – Geauga – 4.1%; #49 – Lake – 4.4%;
  #23 – Lorain – 5.6%; #63 – Medina – 4.1%; #48 – Portage – 4.6%; and, #42 – Summit -
  4.7%.
• The labor force participation rate of 63% is lower than it was before the 2008 recession.
• Nearly 200,000 people in the Akron and Cleveland metro areas are veterans, representing about 9% of the adult civilian population in the region, the U.S. Census Bureau estimates.
  In the five-county Cleveland-Elyria metro area, there are an estimated 140,773 veterans, 8.8 percent of all civilian adults. This area consists of Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain and Medina counties. There are another 50,970 veterans, or 9.3 percent, in the Akron metro area of Summit and Portage counties.
• There are too many low-income, low-skilled individuals both inside and outside of the workforce:
  ✓ Poverty demographic data from the American Community Survey for the State of Ohio and sub-state areas shows: an estimated 1,786,000 people in Ohio were poor – that is 15.8% of all persons for whom poverty status was determined; and an estimated 340,000, or 11.6%, of Ohio families were poor. The NOW Regional data shows: 17.3% of the people in urban places (densely populated areas of 2,500 or more) were poor; and, 28% percent of those living in the central or principal cites of metropolitan areas (Akron, Cleveland, East Cleveland, Elyria and Lorain) were poor. By contrast, 11.1% of those in rural areas (farms and smaller places) were poor, while 11.1% of metropolitan area residents outside of the principal and central cities were poor.
  ✓ 2016 Educational Attainment levels for the region’s population show: 70,058 (3.5%) less than 9th grade; 149,309 (7.5%) 9th grade to 12th grade; 638,319 (32.1%) possess a high school diploma; 417,364 (21.0%) have some college; 152,662 (7.7%) hold an associate’s degree; 345,507 (17.4%) hold a bachelor’s degree; and 213,915 (10.8%) have attained a graduate degree or higher.
Jobseekers have other barriers to employment:

- Ex-offenders: Cuyahoga County alone has more returning citizens than any other Ohio county at an estimated 3,700 people per year.
- Disability: 98,554 (12.8%) residents of Cuyahoga County and 35,998 (10.8%) residents of Summit County, between 18-64 years old, have a disability.
- Transportation: Public means of transit in the NOW Region, outside of Metro areas, can be difficult (especially time schedules) or non-existent.
- Substance Abuse: Ability to pass a drug test is still a requirement of hire and a challenge for many job seekers.

Also, Jobseekers face a number of existing obstacles that create challenges for “upskilling” to address employer occupational demand needs. The ability to get better jobs and earn higher wages is directly tied to skill upgrades and occupational advancement along career pathways.

Hurdles to improving skills:

- Weak literacy, numeracy and academic skills leave some in need of remediation to increase reading, math, etc. before they can start job training/skill upgrading courses.
- Lack of information about labor market, colleges, career technical training courses and, therefore, good jobs and career paths.
- Enrollments/completions of post-secondary courses in fields with little labor market value or low demand for workers. Expect to transfer a Liberal Arts AA to a four-year school but most don't follow through.
- High School Diploma or Equivalency is not easily accessible. GED has become more challenging academically, more expensive to take, and only accessible on the internet.
- Support services like child care are not widely available to assist people in training.
- Many low-skilled workers are working and cannot stop working to take training.
- There is a strong need to increase the number of "Learn and Earn" opportunities like: apprenticeships, internships, co-ops, work experience opportunities, etc.

Three strategic issues present challenges to the NOW region as it tries to keep pace with the
national and global economy and achieve its regional economic and workforce development potential. Understanding these issues will help the region's WDB leadership to agree on how to address them while further developing a quality workforce system within the region, meeting industry workforce needs, and helping all segments of the workforce achieve their full potential.

**Issue 1:** Since 2007, the region's job recovery has not kept up and is not expected to keep pace with Ohio or the nation overall. Total jobs in the region remain well below the level in 2007.

**Issue 2:** The NOW Region consists of overlapping local labor markets where significant shares of residents of one county or workforce area work in another. With Cuyahoga County having half or more of the region's jobs, but less than half of the region's current workers, surrounding counties are providing a large portion of employees that industries in Cuyahoga need.

**Issue 3:** Technology is driving changes in industry products and services and how they are produced and delivered to markets. As industries adopt new methods, occupational structures and jobs are being impacted. The end result is that occupations across the spectrum are being up-skill; traditionally lower-skill jobs are now middle-skill. This means that workers need more digital awareness and skills to work in traditional jobs in manufacturing, healthcare and any other sector.

**Goals for the Workforce**

- A workforce with the skills that are needed for business growth.
- Developing Career Pathways to prepare under-skilled and low-income workers for family-sustaining wage jobs.
- Create a coordinated regional workforce system.

In Cuyahoga County, a branding programmatic efforts is underway designed to address these three goals as “Propel Cuyahoga”.
**Regional Workforce Strategies**

1. The five boards (later referred to as the boards or WDBs) will work together with local entities which now produce Labor Market Information and other economic analyses to generate the data needed to inform the Boards' actions and priorities and to share widely across the region. These data will help manage the interface between the demand side and the supply side (workforce system, community colleges and others). This effort will be undertaken in Year 1.

2. The WDBs will work together during Year 1 to create a common message for employers regarding the services of OhioMeansJobs centers throughout the region. In subsequent years, consideration will be given to a regional marketing approach that may include internet-based and social media components.

3. In Year 1, the WDBs are committed to working with the Boards and CLEOs to standardize policies for Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) and On-the-Job (OJT) Training to improve our interaction and effectiveness with common business customers. We will also work together to develop a standardized Incumbent Worker Training Policy during the first 2 years. This will include optimization of local programming that may be in place that could benefit regional employers, such as the “Skill-Up Program” that is funded through the Cuyahoga County Department of Development.

4. The Boards, in conjunction with business organizations and intermediaries, will convene employers in key industries and sectors on a regional basis to document trends and changes. The workforce system will work with them on developing career pathways and other solutions for their respective industries.

5. The Boards will continue working in a very dynamic way with, and between, the region's community colleges on projects such as the recently completed grant application under the America's Promise grant solicitation that was developed regionally. Additionally, the Boards' Chairs, Executive Directors/Directors and the Presidents of Cuyahoga Community College, Lakeland Community College, Lorain County Community College, and Stark State College (or their respective designees) will meet at least twice per year to identify/examine regional workforce opportunities. The goal is to generate innovations and to create greater
impact and efficiencies through joint regional work.

6. The Boards will share board materials such as new member training materials to promote efficiency. An appropriate mechanism will be identified for facilitating this exchange of information such as a NOW Regional Dropbox location for posting and sharing these and other materials.

7. The Boards have a deep commitment to service delivery models that are demand-facing and driven by the needs of employers for skilled workers. Each of the business service teams work with employers and also with the economic development entities across the region. Jobs Ohio is the state economic development initiative and operates in northeast Ohio as TeamNEO and we have met with them about a new workforce initiative that is part of this plan.

8. Through this planning process a need has been identified to "define the workforce system through mapping and other efforts." In Cuyahoga County, these mapping efforts are being led by a County Executive Team who are working on one unified approach. It has partnered with Cuyahoga Community College to convene and survey providers and to begin aligning efforts to achieve better outcomes for all providers and their clients. There is an opportunity for all regional WDBs to utilize survey documents and lessons learned from the mapping efforts to help drive enhanced service delivery and coordination in other areas of the region in partnership with Lorain, Lakeland and Stark State Community Colleges.

9. The Boards on a local and regional level will lead the one-stop system toward further integration with state programs such as unemployment insurance, trade adjustment assistance, and other partners to strengthen the seamless delivery of services to customers per the Combined State Plan. The Boards will work together throughout the duration of the regional plan to share qualitative information on training providers in order to continuously improve our use of training programs and their results across the NOW Region.

10. The local Boards will advocate for transportation funding and policies at the state level to address workforce transportation needs, on an on-going basis.

11. The local Boards will work together to determine whether it is feasible to align local
policies related to supportive services beginning in Year 2.

**The Public Comment Process for the Regional Plan**

Throughout the development of the NOW Regional Plan input was sought and received from the public, employers, organized labor and others.

On June 1, 2016 the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland took the lead in sponsoring a day-long Workforce Summit which was co-sponsored by the five Workforce Boards and attended by over 200 people. The Regional plan consultants conducted 114 interviews/meetings with the leadership from all aspects of the workforce system.

A draft of the NOW Regional Plan, which incorporates the input gathered from the Workforce Summit, and all Local Plans were made available on February 27, 2017 for public comment via a dedicated webpage and comment collection system.

To ensure all comments were gathered and recorded, the NOW Regional Plan and all Local Plans were posted at one web address - [https://www.summitomj.org/plans-about](https://www.summitomj.org/plans-about). This page and its axillaries were live until March 19, 2017, to allow sufficient time for public comment. All Areas provided links on their own websites to this page. From this page, the public may access the plans via a link to [https://www.summitomj.org/plans-documents](https://www.summitomj.org/plans-documents). Members of the workforce development community and the public were able to submit comments via a web-based comment solicitation form found at [https://www.summitomj.org/plans-comments](https://www.summitomj.org/plans-comments). The comments that were received, were reviewed by the team who developed the draft plan and responses are submitted to the State of Ohio with the NOW Regional Plan and the Local Plans as addenda #12a and 12b.

-Executive Summary End-
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Northeast Ohio Workforce (NOW) Regional Plan

On July 22, 2014, President Obama signed the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) (Pub. L. 113-128), a comprehensive legislation that reforms and modernizes the public workforce system. The Northeast Ohio Workforce (NOW) region was recently designated as a Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) Region by Governor John Kasich and is comprised of the eight counties of Lorain, Cuyahoga, Lake, Geauga, Ashtabula, Portage, Summit and Medina. The five distinct Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) that represent Ohio Workforce Areas #2, 3, 4, 5, and 19 have been working together to formalize the Regional WIOA NOW Plan and to coordinate their policies, services and strategic initiatives. Hereafter, the five boards will be referred to as the Boards or WDBs.

The boards have identified the region’s key sectors and industries which are economic drivers in the economy and are: Healthcare; Manufacturing and Information Technology. They have also coordinated their efforts with the Chief Local Elected Officials, the region's four community colleges (Lorain County Community College, Cuyahoga Community College, Lakeland Community College, and Stark State College), local and regional economic development entities, Workforce Board and Committee members, businesses and business intermediaries, workforce employment and training providers, and OMJ staff and leadership. A highlight of regional engagement was the opportunity to co-sponsor a day-long Workforce Summit with the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland on June 1, 2016 which was attended by over 200 participants who provided input to this plan. The plan will be in effect for 4 years from 2017 - 2021.

Ohio Governor Kasich created the Office of Workforce Transformation (OWT) and the Governor’s Executive Workforce Board. Both entities are committed to strengthening Ohio’s workforce development system and has prioritized its work into three strategic goals:

1. **Identify Business Needs.** Workers and training institutions need a reliable, consistent method for identifying the most in-demand jobs and the skills that workers need to fill them.

2. **Connect Businesses and Workers.** The state goal is streamlining and simplifying the workforce system to better serve employers and individuals, and create a more cost-
3. **Align Training to Business Needs.** Accurate forecasts of businesses’ most urgent job needs must be identified for the education and training system can respond with training programs that best meet the needs of employers.

Over the last three years, OWT has laid the foundation for a more unified workforce system. Ohio’s Combined State Plan builds upon the 10 reforms laid out in the 2014 Unified Plan:

1. Require registration for services in OhioMeansJobs.com;
2. Require a common application for Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE), Title I employment and training programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth) and Carl D. Perkins Adult Career Technical Schools;
3. Develop integrated case management;
4. Develop a statewide common assessment strategy;
5. Allow co-enrollment between programs and services;
6. Require a regional/local combined plan;
7. Increase access to remedial education and high school credential training;
8. Embed job readiness and soft-skills training in all workforce training programs;
9. Ensure career counseling opportunities for individuals accessing workforce programs;

and,

10. Develop common measures across multiple workforce programs.

In 2015, Governor Kasich signed into law the state’s biennial budget, which integrates funding from the WIOA Youth program and Ohio Works First, the financial assistance portion of the state’s Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, to create a Comprehensive Case Management and Employment Program (CCMEP) for individuals ages 16 to 24. The Combined State Plan also builds on Ohio’s work to serve veterans as a ready workforce through the formal inclusion of the Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG), an optional program. Nearly 900,000 veterans and military service members call Ohio home, the 6th largest veteran population in the United States. Veterans are a valuable, talented and skilled workforce.
Ohio’s Combined State Plan also includes new alternative high school credentials, alignment of vocational rehabilitation training programs to Title I employment and training programs, additional policies that support Ohio’s in-demand jobs, continued enhancements to OhioMeansJobs.com, and strategies to ensure older jobseekers become a workforce solution for employers. The 2016 Combined State Plan continues Ohio’s commitment to build a strong economic climate in collaboration with local workforce development partners.

**The NOW Region’s Guiding Principles for the Plan**

1. The NOW Regional Plan is aligned with the Combined State Plan.

2. The Workforce Development Boards representing the eight counties of the Northeast Ohio Workforce (NOW) region collaborated to produce this plan to achieve the following goals:
   - identify policies and practices to support workforce priorities in the region which could be standardized for our common customers (individuals and businesses);
   - coordinate their work on industry sectors, career pathways, business engagement, etc. to maximize employer input and to simplify and streamline business outreach;
   - produce the regional economic analysis to direct strategies and actions based on data; and
   - share and adopt successes and promising practices.

3. The WDB Board Directors have committed to meet at least semi-annually to continue to implement the agreements reached in the development of the regional plan and to identify new solutions and innovations.

4. Strategies addressed in the regional workforce plan, will not be repeated in each of the five required local plans (but may be referenced).

5. Chief Local Elected Officials (CLEOs) identified their workforce concerns and priorities to help shape this plan.

6. The biggest "system" that develops future workers in the NOW Region is the education system and its size, funding and complexity dwarfs the workforce system. This plan does not address reforms or improvements that may be needed in the education system broadly. However, Workforce Boards will work closely with those education institutions
that provide adult basic education, career technical training and other post-secondary credentials that are in demand. The boards will also coordinate with Youth workforce programs to address the needs of youth who are disconnected from the education systems.

7. This plan is required by WIOA but is a plan addressing the entire Northeast Ohio workforce, not just a plan to address the resources provided through WIOA to serve businesses and job seekers. The Workforce Boards will align their strategies to achieve the goals of the plan.

8. For purposes of the regional plan, regional initiatives and strategies do not require all five workforce areas to sign-on. Instead, if two or more of the five WDBs are working together to achieve a goal, objective or activity, it will be considered regional.

9. This plan leverages work that has been led or conducted by others in intersecting spheres of influence, to be more efficient and to utilize the needed expertise from the community. For example, other organizations are addressing the transportation issue. We have also used research and information from pertinent sources such as the Center for Community Solutions. Plus, the plan incorporates work that was generated to transform the workforce by the Cuyahoga County Executive’s Office, and others.

10. The plan incorporates the major priority of addressing individuals who have been left behind by the new, higher-skills economy to provide more choices and options for their career pathways.

The Regional and Local Planning Processes Required by WIOA

Governor Kasich has designated local “Workforce Investment Areas” each of which has established a local Workforce Development Boards (WDB). Customers benefit from a “Workforce Service” delivery system, with centrally located One-Stop career centers, where they can access career training and employment services and be referred directly to job search assistance, training/education that is necessary for employment or other services related to job placement, employment retention and/or increased wages.

In consultation with the local workforce development boards and the chief elected officials, the State assigned local workforce development areas to planning regions. As part of this assignment, the State considered the following criteria for determining planning regions:
single labor market; common economic development area; common economic development area; possession of Federal and non-Federal resources to administer workforce development activities; commuting patterns, which show movement of workers from their residence to their workplace; population centers; labor force conditions, including unemployment data; Industrial composition; and geographic boundaries.

Ohio has identified the following planning regions:

![Map of Ohio showing workforce planning regions]

Each of the workforce areas have local workforce development boards that were appointed by the WIOA designated chief elected official.

WIOA requires the local boards and chief elected officials within a planning region to prepare, submit, and obtain approval of a single regional plan.

**State Required Plan Areas of Content**
There are eight required areas of content that must be addressed in the regional plan which are more fully described below:

- **Establishing regional service strategies, including the use of cooperative service delivery agreements;**
- **Developing and implementing sector initiatives for in-demand industry sectors or occupations for the region;**
- **Collecting and analyzing regional labor market data;**
- **Establishing administrative cost arrangements, including the pooling of funds for administrative costs, as appropriate for the region;**
- **Coordinating transportation and other supportive services, as appropriate for the region;**
- **Coordinating of services with regional economic development services and providers;**
- **Establishing an agreement concerning how the planning region will collectively negotiate and reach agreement with the Governor on local levels of performance for, and report on, the performance accountability measures described in section 116(c), for local areas or the planning region; and**
- **Incorporating local plans.**

The State of Ohio also required that all regional plans address the twenty-two elements required under WIOA for local plans. Those elements are described in the regional plan and are cross-referenced in each of the local workforce area plans that are attached to the NOW regional plan.

**The Process Used in Developing the NOW Regional Plan**

The NOW Regional Plan has been developed through a collaborative process that involved the workforce development boards and was led by the NOW Regional Plan Steering Committee which included representatives from each of the five areas and other key players. The Steering Committee worked together to develop a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a competitive bid
process to select a consulting firm to develop the NOW Regional Plan. The selected firm was the Workforce Institute, Inc. (WII) from Portland, OR who developed the plan.

The five local workforce area executive directors/directors are committed to meet on a quarterly basis throughout the duration of this NOW Regional Plan.

A number of interviews with representatives from partner entities were held in person or via conference call to gather input from key constituents. Interviews included:

- The five local WDB Chairs along with the respective executive directors/directors;
- Seven chief local elected officials from each jurisdiction, as well as five additional county commissioners and executives/administrators, and three chiefs of staff (15 total);
- Five group interviews of workforce partners/board members from each of the five workforce areas (42 total individuals);
- Executive leadership and workforce development leadership from the four community colleges in the region (a total of 16 individuals);
- Employers and employer intermediaries (23 employer representatives some of whom are also WDB members and four intermediary group staff);
- One-Stop Center leadership and staff (eight total staff members);
- Economic development entities including Team NEO and Chambers of Commerce (five individuals); and
- Secondary education leadership (those serving on WDBs).

In addition, more than 200 individuals participated in a day-long Workforce Summit on June 1, 2016 that was jointly hosted by the five WDBs with the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland. The Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland issued a call for papers as part of the preparation and planning for this major event. Papers that highlighted workforce programs and workforce issues were selected for presentation at the summit. As part of that meeting all of the participants worked in small groups to provide feedback on three major topics: economic inclusion; employer engagement; and direct input into the regional plan. The results of those focus group efforts can be found as an attachment to the regional plan.

The Chief Local Elected Officials indicated that their top priority in developing the regional plan was to address the needs of low income residents in their respective jurisdictions and to
develop strategies to move those individuals into family wage jobs in the key sectors and industries that are identified within the plan. They also expressed a strong desire to address the needs of businesses in their respective areas related to occupational demand and the creation of a viable talent development pipeline to ensure that the current and future talent pool addressed their needs while still addressing economic inclusion. These two priorities are aligned with the WIOA’s intent to address local and regional economic inclusion and business engagement and are further supported by the State of Ohio’s prioritization of those strategies in the planning process. The CLEOs also are concerned about the lack of transportation options for many of the counties and the impact of transportation related issues on residents in workforce, education and training and employment activities.

**Economic and Labor Market Analyses**

The intent of this section of the NOW Plan is to provide the WDB leadership in northeast Ohio with data-based insights, implications, recommendations and the labor market dynamics needed to inform the regional as well as local plans for the five workforce areas (Areas 2, 3, 4, 5 and 19) that includes counties from the Cleveland and Akron MSAs plus Ashtabula County.

Three strategic issues are challenges to this region in terms of keeping pace with the national and global economy and achieving its economic and workforce development potential. The regional plan for this eight-county area of northeast Ohio reflects the joint efforts of the five WDB Boards and OMJ Centers to agree on strategic directions to guide local goals and actions over the next four years. Understanding these issues can help WDB leadership to agree on their role in addressing them and how to develop a quality workforce system within the region, while meeting industry workforce needs, and helping all segments of the workforce achieve their full potential.

**Issue 1: Since 2007, the region’s job recovery has not kept up with and is not expected to keep pace with Ohio or the nation overall.** Total jobs in the region remain well below the level in 2007. This lackluster job gain for the region is not sufficient to provide new opportunities for all who want to achieve gainful employment. Industry sectors that have great impact on NEO
economic health and job production are: Manufacturing; Professional, Technical and Scientific Services; Finance and Insurance; Wholesale Trade; and Health Care and Social Assistance. With the exception of Health Care, total jobs in all these sectors remain lower than in 2007, now eight years into recovery.

Long term, either adults of working age relocate to other regions where jobs are available, or more and more older workers drop out of the labor force and remain living in the region. And, for employers, an increased need to import workers may result unless the region’s workforce can be improved and begin to narrow the skills and numbers gaps.

While the sluggish rate of creating jobs is an economic development concern, the region can benefit from expanded current efforts to increase the number of existing and emerging workers seeking careers and skills/credentials. This increased pool of talent is critical for industry to realize their growth potential, especially industry growth that is driven by technological advancement. [See discussion on disruptive technologies on page 40]. Note that italicized blue font colored notes in Section a. and b., reflects the interpretations and recommendations of Dr. James Shanahan, a noted Labor Market Economist who authored the labor market review and analysis for the NOW Plan.

Issue 2: The NOW Region is a confluence of overlapping local labor markets where significant shares of residents of one county or workforce area work in another. With Cuyahoga County having half or more of the region’s jobs, but less than half of the region’s current workers, surrounding counties are provide Cuyahoga industries need.

Regional cooperation has never been more important in NEO. There is a need for all entities with talent development as part of their core mission to coalesce around the vital roles postsecondary education and the WIOA workforce systems have in improving workforce quality and keeping pace with rapid changes in sought after skills. This is especially true for working age persons that, without help, are unable to keep pace with economic change impacting the labor market.

The regional plan reflects the reality that the majority of jobs are in two counties that are part of two different workforce areas; and that the labor market opportunities for workers and
employers alike are not aligned with the political boundaries created for the five workforce areas. However, there are many ways for the five local workforce systems to work together to improve outcomes for the region as a whole. The regional and local plans identify ways to pursue regional cooperation.

**Issue 3:** Technology is driving changes in industry products and services and how they are produced and delivered to markets. As industries adopt new methods, occupational structures and jobs are being impacted. The end result is that occupations across the spectrum are being up-skilled and traditionally lower-skill jobs are now middle-skill. This means that workers need more digital awareness and skills to work in traditional jobs in manufacturing, healthcare and any other sector.

Relatively fewer jobs are available for workers with no more than a high school credential. The chances of being employed today in NEO jumps dramatically as workers complete some college, and even more so when Associate’s and Baccalaureate degrees are attained. In 2010, the employment rate for workers with only a high school credential was 52% in NEO while 72% of those with an Associate’s degree were employed.¹

Not all workers have kept pace with the rate of change in skill and job requirements in demand. Moreover, many workers face barriers that prevent them from gaining the necessary skills to benefit from the region’s jobs recovery and wage gains.

*The region’s primary infrastructure for improving an existing and emergent workforce are the very entities that make up our workforce system: postsecondary education (especially colleges and universities); the public workforce system (funded by federal and state resources); economic development organizations; and other major efforts to support talent development that addresses the region’s skill gaps. Greater alignment and partnership among these regional workforce development partners is vital to hastening the pace that improves workforce quality for the employer. The NOW Regional Plan embraces the challenges and opportunities that are*

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¹ Joseph Ahern; *Demographic Profile of the Labor Force in Northeast Ohio, 2011-2013; Center for Community Solutions, June 2016*
possible in a collaborative system, one in which WDB leadership and roles are articulated clearly and agreed upon. [See disruptive technologies and impact on skills/jobs in demand discussion on page 40.]

In summary, all three issues derive from several dynamics occurring within the economy that impact the demand for workers in the labor market. The result is imbalances between employer demand for new hires and the supply of qualified workers. In Northeast Ohio, such skill gaps exist, and will only get worse without new approaches to workforce development.

Existing and Emerging Labor Market Conditions that Create Supply Shortages

‘The region’s labor market continues to experience skill gaps between what skills and education employers demand and what job seekers have to offer’. This assertion is accepted knowledge but is seldom empirically verified sufficiently to clearly identify specifically how secondary and postsecondary institutions address and impact the gap.

Labor Market Skills Gap: Important to Produce Hard Data to Inform Action

NEO leaders have repeatedly voiced the need to address the ‘skills gap’ for middle and higher skill jobs. A decade later the first data from online job postings were being quoted. “The region suffered from thousands of jobs not filled” in manufacturing, IT, etc. The inference was that employers found too few qualified applicants within the region to meet hiring requirements. Today, despite prior efforts to quantify which occupations experience large shortages of qualified applicants from within the region, current research methodologies and available data on applicants for in demand jobs and their ability to satisfy employer skill and education demands is limited. Data are not known about skills, proficiency levels and prior work experience for job seekers. These are not well-documented for individuals in the labor force, or employed or active job seekers.

The scope of the regional investigation did not allow for an equally in-depth effort to learn more about active job seekers and to assess their readiness for jobs in demand throughout the region.
However, if employers complain that either the number or qualifications of job applicants fall short of demand, then there must be a shortage in the supply of these workers. To a large degree this rests on the assumption that the supply of qualified workers lags behind growth in the number of jobs requiring skills emerging in job ads.

In addition, this investigation pioneers new depths of hard data on the changing demand for skills and jobs within the region to determine where demand is greatest and how the region’s workforce development system can create better alignment of the region’s workforce with emerging demand for jobs and skill sets.

**Researching Regional Gap Analysis**

*This investigation, summarized in this section, clarifies the issues around both conditions of demand and, to a much lesser extent, supply of workers in the NEO job market and establishes what is known and not known. This is vital to understanding the potential role and opportunities available to WDB leaders to set goals, strategies and objectives.*

**Workforce Demand.** A deeper understanding is provided of changing conditions of workforce demand given analysis of the region’s economy and job production, especially during recovery from the recent hard recession, and what is expected in the next few years.

More importantly though, *insights and hard data of the dynamics at play in the labor market itself are used to identify where improved opportunities exist for workers, especially those that meet employer demand for middle and higher skill jobs. This requires a new approach to research by using new data sources.*

**Workforce Supply.** As noted, available secondary sources of data on individuals in the labor force, those who are employed, and in real time, those actively seeking jobs in which employers are hiring are limited. Aggregate data on demographics is provided, as well as on those employed in 2015 by occupation and industry. Beyond that, it is only an inference at this time that employers are up-skilling occupations that creates job postings that exceed the ability of the region’s workforce supply. Thus creating the need to raise their skills and competencies that correspond with the specific needs of employers.
**New Approach to the Study of Labor Market Demand**

Several new approaches were used in researching the labor market issues that need to be addressed in the NOW Region:

- Combining *Burning Glass Data Analytics* extracted from online job postings with traditional LMI data produced hard data on labor market activity that includes *job churn* impacts and *real-time information* on *trending* employer demand for skills and jobs by occupation.

- To establish trending demand for skills and jobs, the process started with emerging *skills* then search for the occupations that require the skills as the primary way to define real-time jobs in demand. (e.g. 17% of all job ads in Northeast Ohio list Excel as a skill in demand. Excel is the largest single skill in demand across all jobs.)

- Skills are the common language that employers and educators/workforce development professionals can use to determine what students need to better prepare them to meet employer expectations. Working together, improved career information, job seeker skill assessments, and better alignment of Career and Technical Education programs are possible. A service delivery strategy should be implemented to assist WIOA mandated and priority populations in identifying in demand jobs that typically do not require a Bachelor degree yet pay a living wage ($15 to $17 per hour) on a full time basis.

**In-Depth Labor Market Demand**

In the region, jobs in demand for skilled workers are evenly split between middle- and higher-skill jobs, based on a comparison of total job ads for middle- and higher-skill jobs for the eight-county region. This corresponds to national projections into the year 2020. Demand for lower-skill jobs is declining in in-demand industry sectors where employers are up-skilling these jobs. Notable exceptions to this trend are in *Accommodations and Food Preparation*, which remains an industry sector with strong growth in lower skill service and food preparation and serving jobs. This investigation gave little attention to these in-demand jobs because they pay poorly, are not stable, and workers typically experience high job turnover. The focus was on searching for jobs that are increasingly becoming middle-skill jobs based on increased importance of specific technical, digital and soft skills.
The level of postsecondary education that employers typically seek serves as a proxy for differences in skill level. Middle-skill jobs typically require less than a Bachelor degree and pay better than average earnings. Thousands of these in demand jobs exist in the region and present the best employment opportunities for the two-thirds of the region’s workforce who lack a four-year degree.

According to researchers at the Bureau of Labor Statistics, “A number of them (jobs) are in growing STEM fields – science, technology, engineering and math. We’ve identified a number of STEM jobs that need less than a Bachelor degree to get started, and also pay close to or above the median for all occupations in May 2015: $36,200.”2

Labor market research completed by the NOW Regional Plan consulting team shows that:

1. Foundational digital skills are needed throughout the economy at every level. There is a tremendous demand in Northeast Ohio for middle-skill jobs where digital skills are as important to employers as the specific technical skills needed for the positions.

2. Digital proficiencies include a multitude of office and organizational software skills that are needed to be productive on the job. These start with Excel, Office Suite, and VPN, ERPs, etc. The demand for these skills in a wide range of technician and support jobs throughout the economy are well documented in real-time online job postings, and are the reason these jobs are predominately middle-skill in today’s economy.

The research showed that up to 90%+3 of job postings include a digital component ranging from knowledge of different software to coding skills and beyond. Further, the research supported the notion that all employees (both current and future) need to have foundational skills in digitization, which will enhance their employment outlook in the northeast Ohio marketplace and qualify them for moving into middle- and higher-skilled positions.

3. Based on current employer needs, there are 30 good-paying middle-skill occupations in demand in Northeast Ohio. Twenty-two (22) of these jobs require digital skills with several of those skills being common to all the positions. In these cases, skills training,

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2 By Christopher Harper and T. Alan Lacey July 28, 2016 Get a STEM Job With Less Than a 4-Year Degree; https://blog.dol.gov/2016/07/28/get-a-stem-job-with-less-than-a-4-year-degree/

3 Burning Glass Technologies, Crunching the Numbers: The Digital Skills Gap in the Workforce, March 2015, p 11.
not job training is a more effective way to upgrade workers’ proficiencies for a number of employment opportunities.

4. In many technology-based industries in NEO, and not just in IT occupations, the ability of workers to write code is the key to meeting employer expectations for higher-skill jobs and qualifies job seekers to advance along or between career paths.

5. The impact of Disruptive Technologies, such as 3-D fabrication, advanced uses of robotics, and the digitizing of data on just about everything has led to challenges of managing Big Data and increased attention to how to analyze and use masses of data to improve success of industry and consumer experiences. These technologies are impacting Advanced Manufacturing; Healthcare and Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services. As evidenced in recent job posting data, there is a merging of engineering, IT and business intelligence and process skills, and transforming job assignments and occupational structure.

   Specific soft skills, in many cases, are as important as the technical or specific skills needed to perform well in an occupation. This is especially the case for middle-skill jobs that pay a living wage.

6. Beyond entry-level, employers are primarily seeking expertise when hiring new workers, not job-specific skills. This is why skills associated with a particular expertise (e.g. cybersecurity) are found in several specific occupations. This reflects the reality that securing a firm’s information and data systems is a team effort.

**Demand for Middle- and Higher-Skill Jobs**

National labor market researchers agree that the greatest demand for workers from now to 2020 and beyond will be in occupations that require higher- or middle-skills, which are measured by employers using the level of postsecondary education that the candidate or employee has attained. That being said, the size of demand at each skill level is roughly the same. The two definitions below represent two distinct sub-markets that are important to understanding the changing labor market demand in Northeast Ohio.

Middle-skill jobs in demand typically require a high school credential and some training or college, up to and including an Associate degree. These jobs are primarily found in Healthcare;
Sales; Office/Administrative Support; Installation; Maintenance and Repair; and Production. In addition, a small share of jobs in management and STEM are available to job seekers with less than a Bachelor degree.

Upper-middle to Higher-skill jobs in demand typically require a Bachelor degree. These jobs mostly are found in Management; STEM; and Healthcare Professional and Technical occupations. Industries with the most job ads are in Professional Services; Healthcare; Manufacturing; Finance and Insurance; and on a smaller scale, IT industries.

**Increased Demand for Digital Skills Results in Lower-skill Occupations Becoming Middle-skill Opportunities as Pathways Out of Poverty and the Pursuit of Career Employment**

- Many traditional occupations already have been up-skilled. The increased importance of working with digital data, processes, and equipment explains why former lower-skill jobs are now middle-skill, and why they now pay a better than average wage. Many even offer a living wage for workers without a college degree. Nationally, these jobs pay an average of $15 per hour.

- Up-skilling of occupations varies across occupations and industry. It is important to determine how these changes are occurring in the NEO labor market based on employer online job postings.

- The volume of demand in Northeast Ohio for a Bachelor's degree is about equal to demand for an Associates. In some cases, the same occupations have postings that require a Bachelor’s degree while others will accept less than a four-year degree. Whether job ads for an occupation requires a Bachelor's degree or not varies by industry and by employer. Addressing these findings with employers is needed to determine how to best respond to employer and job seeker needs.

**Digital Productivity Skills** refer to occupations that require only productivity software skills and no other digital skill group. Productivity software skills refer to spreadsheet and word processing tools like Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Word, as well as enterprise management software like Oracle or SAP. These are foundational skills workers increasingly need in traditional support roles.
• Hundreds of job postings include these skills for entry-level office, sales and bookkeeping positions. Proficiency in these skills can enhance chances of being hired by an employer that values these skills sufficiently to pay better than average wages. Targeting these opportunities for clients through WIOA assistance provided at the OMJ Centers can help employers connect with quality workers and improve economic inclusion.

• Advanced digital skills now appear in job ads for important non-IT occupations. The ability to write code is not needed. Rather, these are specific, and more advanced applications for those working in customer relations, computer support, digital media, and social media. These opportunities may be appropriate for experienced workers that are unemployed or under-employed and for young adults. Frequently these jobs are in occupations that do not usually require these skills. It is the exception to the rule and offers an opportunity for some workers to secure middle-skill, good paying jobs. Skills training and an Associate’s degree may be required to meet the expectations of the employers seeking these advanced digital skills.

• While national initiatives have put emphasis on coding skills as a strategy to enhance employment prospects, job ads that stipulate coding skills are primarily limited to IT professional occupations which typically require a Bachelor's degree. Web developer ads almost always identify specific needs relative to coding abilities.

Implications for the Regional Plan Based on Increased Demand for Digital Skills

• Given that two-thirds of NEO workers have yet to earn a college degree at any level, the focus over the next four years of the NOW Plan should be on helping individuals achieve Productivity and Advanced digital skills that satisfy employer demand for middle-skill job openings. Some older workers may experience a steeper learning curve in this area.

• Targeting the state’s three priority sectors of Manufacturing, Healthcare and IT demand for all industry sectors reveals that many of skills and jobs just discussed are needed in Manufacturing and Healthcare. In addition, in-demand jobs are in Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services and Finance and Insurance in the NOW Region.
Today’s Importance of ‘Baseline’ Skills

Baseline skills, or what is often called ‘soft’ or non-technical skills are critical in today’s workforce. These are not the typical ‘show up on time’ workplace attributes. Rather skills mentioned in job ads that are more germane to successful performance on the job. These include communication, writing, problem solving skills, etc.

1. By using Burning Glass, the consulting team found that the mix of baseline skills, like technical skills, varies across occupations—even within broad occupational families:

   “Baseline [soft] skills are most emphasized in roles that involve higher levels of personal interaction relative to technical activities. In Customer Support roles, over half of all requested skills are baseline skills. Clerical and Administrative, Human Resources, Hospitality, Sales, and Management are the other areas where employers place the greatest emphasis on baseline skills.”

As a general proposition, it is never clear what employers mean when complaining about ‘soft’ skills. Burning Glass has conceptualized the broad range of soft or foundational skill sets into six clusters that are required for some occupations and industries. Those skill sets are: Customer Service; Presentation and Persuasion; Detail Oriented; Supervision; Positive Disposition; and, Project Management, Research and Strategy. These new focused data provide a start to understanding what can be taught and what is best learned through experiential learning.

Implications for the NOW Regional Plan

- The implication is that employers, educators and case managers need to work together to address these soft skill gaps. This is just as important as efforts to improve technical skill attainment of students/job seekers.

- It is important to further document how different occupations stress different combinations of these nine soft skills and how they contribute to job performance. In addition to, in what ways are the outcomes influenced by industry or organizational culture in the workplace?

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Determine Potential Need for Upgrading Skills of Workers: Is there a Skills Gap in Northeast Ohio?

The increased importance of these skill sets to employers for these specific high-demand occupations will be the potential difference between earning a living wage or not, for many of the regions’ job seekers.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Middle-skill Occupations Among Top 30 Based on Job Posts Shared by Cleveland and Akron Region</th>
<th>High Demand for Digital and Complementary Skills</th>
<th>Digital Skills</th>
<th>Customer Service &amp; Sales</th>
<th>Excel</th>
<th>Baseline Skill Importance</th>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Productivity</td>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>Occupation Specific</td>
<td>Customer Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secretaries &amp; Administrative Assistants</td>
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<td>Supervisors of Secretaries &amp; Administrative Assistants</td>
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<td>Customer Service Reps</td>
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<tr>
<td>Others Not in Top 30</td>
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<td>Medical Secretary</td>
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</table>

Demand for these skills by employers varies across industries. Yet the majority of ads for these jobs are now demanding some combination of these skills when hiring. Current lower skill workers, employed or not, will likely need specific training and on-the-job experience to learn and hone these skills to meet employer expectations.

- It is important to engage employers demanding these skills to learn more about their ability to fill these positions with job seekers and the level of proficiency they expect. This is especially important for the productivity digital skills (Excel in particular).
- It is important to understand the demographics of successful job seekers and if disconnects exist between employers who are hiring and lower-skill workers that, with appropriate and responsive skills training, could compete for these opportunities and earn a living wage.

At this time, no concerted effort has been launched to explore the need for workforce development strategies to assess and improve proficiencies of job seekers in the specific skill sets as shown above. Equipping lower-skill workers with the combination of digital and soft skills important to employers can potentially lift them into occupations that provide economic self-sufficiency and the possibility of future advancement.
Where to focus workforce development priorities for Advanced Manufacturing and Healthcare Industry Sectors?

High-Skill Jobs Are Growing in NEO Manufacturing

Despite overall lackluster job recovery, over 25 specific industry market niches already have more jobs than in 2007 and most middle-and higher-skill occupations also employ more workers than in 2007. The problem for many workers, however, is that these employers have up-skilled many jobs and have potentially up-credentialed many as well. Many of these jobs require more skills than in the past no matter what the occupation is.

Manufacturers are hiring a wide range of workers, not just those working near or on the factory floor. Sales Representatives had the most total job posts recently. Software Developer/Engineer is second. These two very different workforce needs are by far the most posted of all occupations within the families of Sales and IT occupations. Not a surprise, then, that they rise to the top even for manufacturers.

Analysis is based on recent online job posts as well as the most recent data of job gains since 2007. Middle- and higher-skill jobs are in Management; Business and Finance; Computer and Math; Engineers and Scientists occupational groups. In 2015, Manufacturing employed more of these workers than any other industry sector—35% with more jobs in these middle- to higher-skill jobs in manufacturing based on data about online job posts during the last 365 days:

- These positions comprise 49% of 2015 jobs in Aircraft Engine and Engine Parts, which is large and growing sharply in NEO. Top professional and technical occupations have experienced steady, modest increases in total jobs in NEO’s manufacturing sector.
- Most industries with these jobs use advanced technology.
- These occupations employ from 20% to nearly 50% of all jobs, depending on the specific nature of manufacturing, and their use of advanced technology.
- Manufacturers with corporate or technical/research centers in the region depend heavily on these occupations.
Manufacturing Jobs on or near the factory floor are in demand

Production Jobs and Machine Operators are the most in demand. There were substantial job postings for Machinist; CNC Operator; and other jobs on the factory floor. The need to hire new workers persists even as the job losses for manufacturing as a sector continue to remain thousands below 2007 levels.

Of most importance is the number of ‘factory floor’ occupations which now need strong IT or other digital skills. Traditionally, skilled training programs for these occupations have not included an emphasis on digital skill development as part of training.

Jobs with the most posts are skilled positions requiring specific skill sets and at least an Associate's degree in most cases. This list confirms the often-voiced demand for Machinists; CNC Operators and Programmers.

- New digital skills are required to perform these jobs.
- Hundreds of ads list these types of specialized skills for working in today’s Northeast Ohio manufacturing environment.

The Healthcare Sector is a major driver of the NOW Region’s Economy - Middle-skill jobs for healthcare workers are in great demand

Across the region RNs are 17% of all workers in the Healthcare Sector, and in high demand. Over the next six years, total employed is expected to increase by 13%; current job posts are over 14,000 in the last 365 days. Employers still recruit for more Associate Degree Nurses (ADNs) than Bachelor of Science Nurses (BSNs): There are eight postings for RNs with Associate degrees to every six with a Bachelor's.

The Center for Health Affairs NEONI Initiative provides data on registered nurses across the broader 18 county region of northeast Ohio. Data is provided for RNs and for APRNs (Advanced Practice Registered Nurses). They projected a RN shortage during 2015 of 750, and worsening by the year 2020 to 3,500. While the supply of RNs is fairly stagnant at 62,000 for the entire region, APRNs are increasing in number at a rate of 10% per year.

Median hourly earnings for RNs are $31.48 in the region. While Medical and Clinical Lab Technicians and Medical Assistants account for less than one percent of all employed in the Healthcare Sector, the demand is high, measured by growth rates of 9% and 12%, respectively,
in the next six years. Job postings are 540 and 1,205, respectively. Lab Techs typically require an Associate's degree while Medical Assistants typically require only postsecondary training to acquire needed skills.

Among non-clinical occupations, several were jobs in Management and support staff in Office Administration. Jobs such as Sales Representatives and Medical Secretaries represent employment opportunities for individuals that, if employed, are not earning a living wage. Those working at these support positions in Healthcare likely require more skills than is required if they worked in most other industry sectors.

It is likely that job seekers who have yet to benefit from the recovery lack the foundational skills, as revealed to be important to employers earlier in this research: these postings are more likely to emphasize the importance of customer service and Microsoft skills, for example.

- Health informatics focuses on Electronic Health Records (EHR), health information exchange (HIE) standards and portable medical data collection devices. Employers are incorporating the need for these skills into existing occupations within their organizations, including patient care and other occupations. Most jobs with these skills are support occupations: Medical Assistant/Secretary; Registrar/ Patient Service Rep; and Medical Coder. On a small scale, RN posts report these skills.

- Cleveland Clinic and University Hospitals dominate the demand based on job postings for workers. No other provider accounts for more than two percent of all jobs posted for healthcare workers and others to work in healthcare organizations.

- Two out of three of these posts are for job sites in the Cleveland/Cuyahoga County workforce area. Healthcare providers based in the other four workforce areas have fewer jobs than is needed to provide employment and career opportunities for their residents. While many residents are employed in their home communities, others from throughout the region already commute to Cuyahoga County for employment in healthcare organizations.
Opportunity for NOW Regional Leadership

Healthcare needs for information technology differs from other industry sectors, especially manufacturing in NEO.

- Healthcare does not place as much emphasis on developer roles as manufacturers.
- While Software Developer/Engineer dominates the jobs in demand in manufacturing, it is Systems Analysts that were the most in-demand in healthcare in the last 365 days.
- Clinical Data Systems Specialist/ Manager, which had the second most job postings, is a position responsible for software needs in the healthcare industry in terms of IT applications needed to manage health information systems.

This is expected given that the two sectors appear to have different needs related to the use of information technology. As two of the top industries that employ IT professionals, more needs to be known about how to advise, prepare and connect emerging talent with what these two industries are seeking.

- The demand from manufacturers appears to be more advanced than for healthcare, based on specific IT languages and software.
- The specific skills and order of importance, based on number of postings, clearly differ for these two priority industry sectors in NEO.

This warrants discussion with major employers within the region to develop a better understanding of the differing IT solutions needed by manufacturing and healthcare. Educators and workforce development specialists can then better respond with education and training programs.
Seven Forces that Impact Advanced Manufacturing; Finance & Insurance; Healthcare; and Professional Services; and Healthcare

DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES DEFINE THE ADVANCED INDUSTRIES SECTOR

Numerous breakthrough technologies are not only transforming the advanced industries sector but in many respects redefining it. The cross-cutting nature of many of these disruptive technologies reinforces the ongoing convergence of production and innovation, manufacturing and services, and material and digital. Among the most defining technology trends are:

- **Additive manufacturing / 3-D printing**: 3-D printing is the additive process of building objects through layering. Additive manufacturing has the potential to substantially reduce the cost and time of prototyping in production industries and could also enable the mass customization of products.

- **Advanced materials**: Advanced materials are developed from compounds at a molecular level through applied physics, materials science, and chemistry. Advanced materials hold the prospect of reducing the weight of vehicles without losing strength, creating efficient clean energy, and more durable machinery.

- **Advanced robotics**: Automation and advanced robotics allow for greater speed, consistency, and complexity in the production process. Although robotics are not new, only recently has artificial intelligence become sophisticated enough to automate nonroutine tasks such as assembly line quality control monitoring.

- **Big data/ advanced analytics**: Big data refers to data sets that are too large for traditional computing tools and require unique software and skilled technicians to store, manage, and analyze. Big data are important for not only managing complex global supply chains or customer relationships, but also learning and innovation in the production process.

- **Cloud computing**: Cloud technology allows nearly all computing applications to be delivered through networks or over the internet. By radically reducing operating costs, cloud computing can potentially revolutionize business models in every industry from retail to software development.

- **Internet of Things**: Advanced software, robotics, cheap sensors, and network connectivity are combining to allow objects to interact digitally. As technologies improve, networked smart devices can bring new dynamism to old tasks and systems.

- **Next-generation genomics**: Genomics is the study of DNA to unlock new organic knowledge. Low-cost gene-sequencing machines hold promise for revolutionary drug treatments, new biofuels, and drought- and pest-resistant crops. Coming technologies will likely even yield radical innovations in gene manipulation.


Top occupations in demand for Disruptive Technologies: Northeast Ohio

The table below includes the Top Five Specialized Skills that are listed the most among postings seeking persons with specific proficiency in each of the disruptive technologies. In the table, the five skills listed first were most in-demand for jobs in an Additive Manufacturing environment with only Project Management as a skill appearing in more than disruptive technology.
Common and Unique Skills for Six Disruptive Technologies

The table on the next page identifies the Top Five Occupations linked to each distinct disruptive technology and the challenges that employers face that require the specific skills from the first table. In this case, the diversity of assignments that Software Developer/Engineers are asked to address is evident in this occupation, is in the top five for each of IT-based technical area of expertise. Also this is the case for Network Engineer/Architect and Cyber/Information Security Engineer/Analyst.
Common and Unique Occupations for Six Disruptive Technologies

Companies engaged in emerging industries such as Big Data, Cloud Computing, and the Internet of Things have rapidly created a need for highly skilled information and network security professionals.

It appears that employers are concerned with what skills are needed (many new tools emerge out of need) and then determine which occupations are best suited to address the need. While a single new occupation at the mid-level now exists for cyber-security, basic skills and knowledge is the responsibility of other positions as well—even an Auditor.

**Major trends to track:** 1) What industries and employers in NEO are impacted; 2) What evidence already exists in employer job ads of new skills and education in demand; and, 3) What is the evidence that middle-skill jobs existing today are being impacted by adoption of Disruptive Technologies in the NEO Economy?
Labor Market Supply

In 2016, the overall population in the NOW Region was 2,860,288 that was 36,901 (-1%) less than in 2007. The total working age population between 16-69 years of age in 2016 was 2,031,044.

The Cleveland Center for Community Solutions (CCCS) recently released a labor force report for the eight-county NOW Region in support of the regional planning effort, as required by WIOA. The purpose was to report on the working age population of the eight-county region and their status in the labor market and to determine differences by age, gender, race and ethnicity and level of education. Key findings as reported by CCCS\(^5\) and through other sources were:

- In 2016, ethnicity in the region included a White, Non-Hispanic total population of 2,099,711 (74%) with a Black, Non-Hispanic population of 497,821 (17%) with all other minority classifications totaling 263,256 (9%).
- Population demographics also showed that of the 2,860,288 people living in the region, 1,474,950 (52%) were females and 1,385,338 (48%) were males.
- In August 2016, a total of 74,701 individuals in the NOW Region were unemployed.
- In 2016, there were a total of 1,502,569 jobs in the region with $57,221 in average earnings.
- In October 2016, the State of Ohio published unemployment rankings by county along with the corresponding unemployment rate. The eight counties were rated as follows: #27 – Ashtabula – 5.4%; #30 - Cuyahoga – 5.2%; #65 – Geauga – 4.1%; #49 – Lake – 4.4%; #23 – Lorain – 5.6%; #63 – Medina – 4.1%; #48 – Portage – 4.6%; and, #42 – Summit - 4.7%.
- The labor force participation rate of 63% is lower than it was before the 2008 recession.
- Nearly 200,000 people in the Akron and Cleveland metro areas are veterans, representing about 9% of the adult civilian population in the region, the U.S. Census Bureau estimates. In the five-county Cleveland-Elyria metro area, there are an estimated 140,773 veterans, 8.8 percent of all civilian adults. This area consists of

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\(^5\) Joseph Ahern; *Demographic Profile of the Labor Force in Northeast Ohio, 2011-2013; Center for Community Solutions, June 2016*
Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain and Medina counties. There are another 50,970 veterans, or 9.3 percent, in the Akron metro area of Summit and Portage counties.

- There are too many low-income, low-skilled individuals both inside and outside of the workforce:
  - Poverty demographic data from the American Community Survey for the State of Ohio and sub-state areas shows: an estimated 1,786,000 people in Ohio were poor – that is 15.8% of all persons for whom poverty status was determined; and an estimated 340,000, or 11.6%, of Ohio families were poor. The NOW Regional data shows: 17.3% of the people in urban places (densely populated areas of 2,500 or more) were poor; and, 28% percent of those living in the central or principal cites of metropolitan areas (Akron, Cleveland, East Cleveland, Elyria and Lorain) were poor. By contrast, 11.1% of those in rural areas (farms and smaller places) were poor, while 11.1% of metropolitan area residents outside of the principal and central cities were poor.
  - 2016 Educational Attainment levels for the region’s population show: 70,058 (3.5%) less than 9th grade; 149,309 (7.5%) 9th grade to 12th grade; 638,319 (32.1%) possess a high school diploma; 417,364 (21.0%) have some college; 152,662 (7.7%) hold an associate’s degree; 345,507 (17.4%) hold a bachelor’s degree; and 213,915 (10.8%) have attained a graduate degree or higher.
  - The earlier CCCS Report showed that increasing educational attainment levels were associated with higher labor force participation and percent employed, and decreasing unemployment.
  - The CCCS Profile also showed that in 2013 almost three-fourths worked full-time in the past year (i.e., 35 or more hours per week), and 61 percent worked full-time and full-year (50 to 52 weeks). A lower proportion of younger (under 25), older (65 or over), female, African American, Hispanic, and less-educated workers were full-time/full-year.
  - In 2013, more than half of all employed workers were in: Manufacturing; Health Care and Social Assistance; Retail Trade; Education; and Accommodation and Food Services.
  - Median annual earned income for all workers in the region in 2011-2013 was $29,980 (in 2013 dollars), lower than the median of $30,351 in 2008-2010. For those who worked
full-time, full-year, the median in 2011-2013 income was $43,028, not significantly
different from the 2008-2010 median of $43,432.

- In 2013, females working full-time, full-year had a median earned income of $37,255, only
  75 percent of the median for males ($49,708). Full-time, full-year medians for African
  Americans ($32,541) and Hispanics ($31,980) were only 71 and 70 percent, respectively,
  of the median wage for Whites ($45,941).

The impact of the level of education attainment on employment status is dramatic for those
living in Northeast Ohio. Only 52% of adults with a high school credential only were employed
at the time they responded to the census. In contrast, 72% of working-age adults with an
Associate’s degree were employed. Having a college degree creates the largest increase, with
more modest increases in rates of employment the higher the level of college degree.

More on demographics of employed workers: This investigation found that African Americans
are employed most often in lower skilled occupations. Few were employed in Science,
Technology (IT), Engineering, or Math (STEM) or Management jobs. They also are under-
represented in these industries that traditionally have provided jobs for white males:

- Construction (1 in 20 are African American)
- Manufacturing (1 in 11 are African American)
- Wholesale Trade (1 in 14 are African American)

Using sample data from the Decennial Census, Male workers are 90% to 100% of workers in
162 of the nearly 700 occupations, to the exclusion of women.

- Efforts to improve the inclusion of African Americans will need to address skills, education
  and other barriers.
- Efforts to include women in Management and STEM careers can improve the overall
  effectiveness of the region’s workforce.

Based on age of workers by occupation, the only occupational groups with a significant share
of workers that were ages 55 to 64 were Production and Installation, Maintenance and Repair
occupations. For the economy as a whole, no other occupations employ a workforce as likely to
produce large numbers of retirements in the next five to ten years.
**Conclusion:** Many working-age adults in Northeast Ohio still do not feel the benefit of this growing economy in their own lives. Too often they lack the skills and experience to access better jobs with bigger paychecks.

The McKinsey Global Institute also estimates that by 2020 the U.S. will have a potential shortfall of 1.6 million “middle-skill” workers—those with greater education than high school, but less than a Bachelor's degree.

**Environmental Scan of Workforce Programs**

*Please note that italicized notes in this font color are the responses to the specific plan required elements that were published by the Department of Labor and the State of Ohio.*

Taking into account the analyses described in section B.1, identify options to work with the entities that carry out the core programs to align resources available in the local areas to achieve improved outcomes, efficiencies and innovations.

Each of the local WDBs have established strong working relationships with the community colleges that serve their area, as well as with the mandatory partner entities. This collaboration is reflected in each area’s MOU with its partners for the operation of the local OhioMeansJobs centers. The MOUs provide the impetus to carry out the core programs and also bring about the alignment of resources through cost-sharing to achieve improved outcomes, efficiencies and innovations.

*Describe the workforce development system in the region by identifying the programs that are included in that system, including programs of study authorized under the Perkins Act that support the strategy identified in the State Plan.*

Many of the core and partner programs have implemented policy and programmatic changes in support of the state’s in-demand jobs. Through state policy, Title I employment and training programs require that 85 percent of occupational skills training funded with individual training accounts be in one of the state’s in-demand occupations. Ohio’s Perkins Act programs support these occupations with quality training as well as ensure they are part of the career pathways that are being developed statewide.
The programs offered by the four participating colleges and other training programs that are available from non-profit and for-profit training providers were previously identified on the Eligible Training Providers List (ETPL) which is now referred to as the Workforce Inventory of Education and Training (WIET) in the Combined State Plan. All of the WDBs have provisions in their respective policies that enable them to address the training needs of customers who are close (within one to two semesters) to the completion of an associate or baccalaureate degree. These provisions require the customer to verify their status with a local community college or university, their remaining course requirements for the degree to be conveyed, and the employment opportunities that are, or are projected to be, available upon program completion and graduation.

**Regional Plan Strategy:** The WDBs are working together with their respective staff to formulate a consistent policy that will address Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) in terms of training duration, training caps, etc. It is anticipated that the completion of this policy and its subsequent approval of the policy by the five boards and CLEOs will occur during the first year of the NOW Regional Plan.

As a key strategy to helping address issues related to economic inclusion, we will commit to evaluating and improving the coordination and integration of activities between WIOA providers and human services providers. A well-coordinated, multi-service system can specifically address issues of economic inclusion, as it provides for a wider array of support services to individuals than would otherwise typically be available via a sole provider.

_Describe how local boards, working with the entities carrying out core programs, will expand access to employment, training, education and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment. Address how the local Boards will facilitate the development of career pathways and co-enrollment, as appropriate, in core programs, and improve access to activities leading to a recognized postsecondary credential (including a credential that is an industry-recognized certificate or certification, portable, and stackable)._ 

OWT has worked with the Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) to map workforce
supply – how many skilled individuals Ohio's education and training institutions complete training every year. Together, supply and demand create the simple economics of the workforce system, informing the state on how to best utilize its resources to meet the needs of Ohio employers.

Expanding access to core services including access to employment, training, education and supportive services for all residents is critical to the success of the NOW Region’s Workforce System. It is also paramount to the desires of the chief local elected officials in the region as they particularly are interested in ensuring economic inclusion for low income residents, legal immigrants, and other populations that can benefit from strong core services including disabled individuals, veterans and military families, long-term unemployed and those who are under-employed. They are equally concerned about the engagement of employers in developing well-defined career pathways that lead to middle- and high-skilled employment in the region’s key sectors.

The regional and local efforts will build on the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) and the Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) efforts which substantially expanded their work in the creation of career pathways for Ohio’s in-demand jobs. Their pathway efforts provide a roadmap by which an individual might reach employment in a certain occupation. One important component of the State agencies’ efforts has been the development of common definitions of certificates at the secondary and postsecondary level to ensure that certifications and licensures are addressing the needs of business. ODE and ODHE have worked to ensure that pathways exist to leverage career technical education certificates into degree programs. These are valuable tools for both individuals and the workforce professionals serving them to make informed choices about training and employment in occupations that are in-demand in Ohio.

Local workforce areas have included their postsecondary and secondary (predominantly Perkins funded) partners, economic development and local employers in discussion to further define career pathways and identify the programs that need to be tied to those pathways in key sectors. The outcome of these efforts are tools that can be used by OMJ Center core services staff in working with customers to identify occupations with credentialed training that lead to
living wage employment that will support the customers and their family, after the successful completion of training and subsequent placement into competitive employment.

Throughout the region many of the partners have come together to address the needs of these targeted populations as well as employers as they attempt to identify skilled workers to fill job vacancies. Three of the workforce areas are currently testing a new approach to skills-based hiring through the use and promotion of WorkKeys assessments. Cuyahoga and Summit Counties are participating in a pilot which is funded by several foundations called TalentNEO and Lorain County has adopted a similar approach through the Work Ready Community initiative supported by ACT.

The success of these efforts are critical to the ability to expand and strengthen core services that are offered by workforce partners, especially in attracting and preparing targeted populations to enter into education and training programs that are aligned with the career pathways. Additional information regarding the strategies and processes that have been used to addressing core services, career pathways and developing and offering training that results in industry certifications and post-secondary credentials can be found in the next section of the regional plan.

**Workforce Strategies and Services**

*Identify workforce strategies and services in order to: Facilitate engagement of employers, including small employers and employers in in-demand industry sectors and occupations, in workforce development programs.*

The five local WDBs have all been heavily involved in employer engagement activities over the past several years as they have aligned their services with the needs of business for skilled workers. They have also been working closely with their respective community colleges and other community-based and faith-based organizations as they have either directly (or in collaboration with others) sought funding through grant opportunities at the Federal and State level(s). In developing this regional plan, the five workforce boards sought and received employer input into the plan and further identified opportunities to address specific hiring and training needs of employers in the region’s key sectors, including small businesses.
Specific recent events/processes that engaged employers included: the Workforce Summit that was convened by the five boards and the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland; the Akron/Summit County TechHire Project that identified employer needs in the IT-industry across all sectors; the NOW America’s Promise Project (NOW-APP) to prepare a grant proposal on behalf of the region’s WDBs, the four community colleges, TeamNEO and six of the region’s largest employers in the Healthcare Sector to address the critical talent needs.

Over the past several years the WDBs have also actively participated in (or led) other employer engagement initiatives that addressed the specific needs of the Advanced Manufacturing, IT, and Healthcare Sectors. The longest on-going employer engagement activity has been working with the region’s IT employers across key sectors through the Regional Information Technology Engagement (RITE) Board initiative since 2008. Many of these effort were tied to the various Federal and State funded workforce projects that were awarded to the four community colleges and workforce boards. The descriptions of many of those programs can be found in the attachments section of this plan.

**Regional Plan Strategy:** Instead of individually convening employers in industry sectors, the WDBs have agreed that future employer industry sector convening will be done together at a regional level and through industry conveners.

**Support a local workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses in the local area.**

Employers’ needs and issues that were identified through this process are:

- Workers with soft/job readiness skills
- Workers with in-demand technical skills.
- Workers who can pass a drug test.
- Funding for paid work experience based learning (internships/coop programs/apprenticeships, and mentoring) is needed. Many of the employers were working to make these experiences available.
- There is a need for more “learn and earn” opportunities.
• Better lines of communication/collaboration between business and educators, workforce agencies and Community Based Organizations are needed to project workforce needs, and to fill skills gaps.
• WDB business services units need to be industry-focused and connect with employers.
• Sector partnerships to develop career pathways led by industry intermediary are needed.
• Intermediaries need to lead incumbent worker system strategies (career lattice/ladder approach) and to link employers and job seekers
• Better career counseling in high school, colleges, and workforce agencies is needed along with enhanced promotion of internships and externships

Employers are currently addressing some of these needs through:
• Incumbent worker training
• Investing in training schools to broaden the pool of ‘job ready’ candidates
• Promoting Skills based training, developing core competencies, all of which are informed by employer needs.
• An expansion of the University Hospital Systems Model is needed.

The University Hospital (UH) System Model is important since it lays out a replicable strategy for employers to follow in addressing the training and skills upgrading of their employees to meet current and future hiring needs, especially in technologically demanding occupations. The WDBs are extremely supportive of this model and other models that are emerging from employers in the region’s key sectors related to skills upgrading.

**Regional Plan Strategy:** the Boards will work together to create a common message for employers regarding the services of OhioMeansJobs throughout the region during Year 1. In subsequent years, consideration will be given to a regional marketing approach to businesses.

Better coordinate workforce development programs and economic development.

As indicated in the Combined State Plan, Ohio has a solid infrastructure for workforce reform and collaboration among economic development and workforce and training programs. Each of the WDBs and their respective workforce system operations have relationships with local chambers of commerce, city and county economic development entities and agencies and
others that are engaged in activities to expand, attract or retain companies in their areas. Many of the WDBs actively participate with their local economic development partners in directly working with employers to address their needs. In that scenario, the workforce system typically will provide needed services to prepare current and future workers for the company, provide a highly qualified candidate pool, offer incumbent worker training (as appropriate and supported by local policies), and in coordinating services with the local community college and other training providers.

**Regional Plan Strategy:** The WDBs will work with the state’s economic development agency in the region, TeamNEO, on implementing its new workforce initiative while continuing to build on and strengthen successful local strategies with economic development entities.

*Strengthen linkages between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs.*

Strong and consistent linkages exist between the one-stop delivery system throughout the region and the State’s Unemployment Insurance Programs. The relationship is defined in the State Combined Plan and is further defined at the local level in each workforce area’s MOU that defines OMJ Center operations including services.

To provide early intervention services to individuals who receive workforce and employment-related services the WDBs work with the ODJFS offices of Unemployment Insurance Operations and Workforce Development which provides the WDBs with local workforce administrative entities data and information. Local areas requesting data enter into a Data Sharing and Confidentiality Agreement with OWD. Each quarter, OWD pulls participants enrolled in Title I employment and training from the Ohio Workforce Case Management System (OWCMS) who received services during the reference quarter or four previous quarters; combined with participants who exited the program during the reference quarter or four previous quarters. These participants are matched against the Ohio Wage Record data identified in the Data Sharing and Confidentiality Agreement.

From the wage record file, local area points of contact receive wages, number of weeks worked, the year and quarter wages are reported, NAICS 6-digit code, and NAICS title. The point of contact also receives the information to identify each participant. On a monthly basis,
the Office of Unemployment Insurance Operations emails a report that lists claimants who are within four weeks of exhausting their UI benefits and claimants who were profiled for RESEA and UCRS (WPRS) services. The NOW Region is deeply committed to working with the State and to further improve information sharing and coordination of program activities that will further enhance our commitment to expediting services to laid-off workers. This will lead to claimants being served earlier in their UI claim and enabling a return to work by shortening claim duration which averaged between 14.3 - 15.9 weeks in November 2016.

The state is currently in the process of reviewing the state-funded programs such as UI and Wagner-Peyser that operate at the local level and the Workforce Boards will continue to work with the state on improving integration of services and customer services in the OMJ centers.

Describe business service strategies that may include the implementation of initiatives such as incumbent worker training programs, on-the-job training programs, customized training programs, industry and sector strategies, career pathways initiatives, utilization of effective business intermediaries and other business services and strategies, designed to meet the needs of employers in the region.

Each of the WDBs are working with their local employers, higher education partners, economic development partners and others to address strategies that are designed to meet the demand for skilled workers.

**Regional Plan Strategy:** In Year 1, the Boards will work to standardize policies across the region for Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) and On-the-Job Training (OJT) contracts to improve our interaction and effectiveness with common business customers. In Year 2, we will work to develop a common Incumbent Worker Training policy.

The WDBs are also engaged in a number of initiatives throughout the region to define the career pathways in key sectors. Many of these initiatives are directly tied to the Federal and State grant-funded workforce projects that are being operated with or by the community colleges (see attachments). There are also statewide career pathway initiatives that are defined in the State’s Combined Plan which the WDBs and community colleges are committed to participating in at the regional and local level.
**Regional Plan Strategy:** While the WIOA describes a primary role for workforce boards as convening employers within sectors to develop career pathways, the WDBs will work with identified business intermediaries in the region to participate with them in the convening role and to do so on a regional basis to address workforce development issues that impact employers and individual customer alike. Where no business intermediary exists or can be developed, the WDB(s) will determine jointly the best approach to hosting the convening on a regional level.

All WDBs operate on a service delivery model that is based on the demands of local businesses and employers for skilled workers. Additionally, the state requires that at least 85% of all career technical training investments under WIOA be made in “in-demand” occupations. This in-demand or demand-facing approach has been shown to work for employers and job seekers alike as documented by major increases in results as well as two independent reviews conducted on Cleveland/Cuyahoga County’s (OMJ|CC) model. The first review was conducted by Policy Matters and can be found online at [http://www.policymattersohio.org/employment-apr2013](http://www.policymattersohio.org/employment-apr2013). The second review was conducted by the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland and can be found at [https://www.clevelandfed.org/newsroom-and-events/publications/special-reports/sr-20141107-a-wib-turns-to-demand-helping-job-seekers-by-serving-employers.aspx](https://www.clevelandfed.org/newsroom-and-events/publications/special-reports/sr-20141107-a-wib-turns-to-demand-helping-job-seekers-by-serving-employers.aspx).

The demand-facing approach to training to meet business needs is a means to increase placement, retention, and wages rather than a goal in itself. OMJ|CC allocates training resources to fill open jobs through career technical training programs and to provide targeted, on-the-job training that allows nearly qualified individuals to eventually meet all the employer’s job requirements. Outside training providers are under performance-based contracting that holds them accountable for job placement. The providers (excepting public institutions) are paid at three milestones: 25 percent on enrollment; 50 percent when training is completed; and 25 percent when the job seeker is placed in a job. OMJ|CC tripled the number of job placements made over 5 years through this service delivery model even though funding and staff resources were actually reduced. In addition to the re-focus on the needs of business for skilled talent, there was a new focus on business services and the employment of business representatives who could work with them more effectively – to “speak their language.”
The Area 19 Workforce Board implemented the “Business Resource Network (BRN)” which is a partnership representing chambers of commerce, workforce and economic development organizations, universities, colleges, career and technical centers, community organizations, and state and local government agencies. The BRN structure provides a seamless delivery system for a full range of programming resources, important funding streams, and real solutions for businesses. Tailored information on incentives, tax breaks, employment and training assistance, succession and/or business plans, marketing, exporting assistance, expansion or upgrades and more are examples of client needs and challenges that can be addressed by the BRN.

Since July, 2012, BRN has assisted over **1690 businesses** access over **$10.6 million** in workforce and economic development programs and incentives through three account executives with one assigned to work in each of the three counties in Area #19. The Area engages 38 organizations in its partner network. The BRN creates a single access point for employers. Through a 60-minute comprehensive and confidential interview, employers can help their business access the partners and their resources to help the business thrive. The BRN services are free, confidential and staff do not ask for proprietary information. The goal of BRN is to retain businesses in the region and help them grow by delivering key services and incentives with as little hassle and bureaucracy as possible. BRN Staff use a three step process in working with business customers:

**Step #1 – Learning about the Business** - By asking the right questions, staff uses the *Synchronist Business Information System* to quickly and efficiently get a sense of the challenges and opportunities the business faces.

**Step #2 – Creating and Delivering a Customized Solution** – BRN staff pull together the best ideas from the Network organizations and then presents the business with a comprehensive package of customized solutions that are responsive to the company's needs.

**Step #3 – Providing Continued Support** - A dedicated BRN account executive manages and coordinate the services the business selected from the Network partners and identifies new ways to assist the business over time.
Additional information on the BRN can be found in “Final Report: Evaluation of the Ohio Business Resource Network Expansion” that was conducted and authored by Public Policy Associates, Inc. in June 2016. Specific information on the Case Study that was conducted on the Area #19 BRN effort can be found in the attachments to that report.

The Lorain County WDB is an active partner in the Lorain County Growth Partnership (LCGP). The partnership includes representatives from the Lorain County Chamber of Commerce, Lorain County Community College, Lorain County JVS, Lorain County Small Business Development Corporation, Lorain County Community & Economic Development and the Lorain County Workforce Development Agency.

The Lorain County Growth Partnership (LCGP), developed by the Lorain County Board of Commissioners, is building a collective vision among the partners for the successful future growth of Lorain County. The purpose of the LCGP is to work with Lorain County organizations and businesses to compete more effectively in a regional marketplace and to provide seamless services for anyone looking to expand or relocate their business in Lorain County.

The achievement of sustainable economic development requires a new approach to policy making and its implementation. Lorain County Commissioners view this partnership as a way to allow for greater integration and coordination of policy making and its implementation. This approach is characterized by greater partnership between county government, local government, and community organizations. This collaborative effort promotes the growth of an inclusive, innovative economy that will benefit Lorain County businesses and residents.

In the Lake County workforce area due to the size of their service area and the small staff size, an individualized approach that is customized to their employer’s needs is utilized.

In developing each of the three models for business engagement, economic development has been a key player(s) and representatives from economic development throughout the region have actively participated in the development of the NOW Regional Plan.
Coordination with Economic Development

Describe how the local boards will coordinate workforce investment activities with economic development activities carried out in the region, including economic activities of TEAM NEO, as well as the economic development in both metro and non-metro counties, promote entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services.

Each of the five local areas has established a strong working relationship with their respective economic development agencies and Chambers of Commerce. Since 2007, Team NEO, the regional economic development agency, has attracted 86 new company operations, more than 7,400 new jobs and $330 million in annual payroll to NEO and has also helped 216 NEO-located companies create or retain almost 59,000 jobs and added almost $3 billion in capital investment.

**Regional Plan Strategy:** Team NEO is implementing a new workforce strategy that will connect up with the five Boards and the OMJ Centers on specific economic development projects in the region. The Business Resource Network (BRN) in Workforce Area #19 uses a strong engagement with local economic development departments. It is a “promising practice” and is described in detail above, as is the relationship that Area #4 has in place through the Lorain County Growth Partnership. Other Boards engage in similar ways through their Business outreach activities with economic development agencies to assist in identifying and developing the workforce for various business growth projects. Jay Farran, senior vice president for business attraction at Team NEO provided the following input, “We are regularly challenged to provide workforce development solutions tailored to meet companies’ needs. In recent years, we have enjoyed particular success with the demand-facing model deployed by the local (Cleveland/Cuyahoga County) Workforce Development Board.”

The Cuyahoga County Department of Development has a new service called SkillUp which is designed to help employers of all sizes to upskill existing or new employees by providing talent advisory services along with financial reimbursement for some of the costs employers incur when upskilling employees for skilled roles. Another promising practice identified was in Cuyahoga where the City of Cleveland and the Cuyahoga County Economic Development Departments both require businesses who are receiving public loans which will create jobs to
enter into a “Workforce Development Agreement” with OhioMeansJobs|Cleveland/Cuyahoga County. In the Workforce Development Agreement, the business agrees to list the job opening with OMJ|CC and to consider all qualified candidates referred by the agency. This ensures that these new jobs being created by public investments are being made available to the public as opportunities. In calendar year 2015, over 35 businesses hired over 200 workers through these agreements. Lorain County is also in the process of implementing the same agreements through the partnership that the OMJ center has with the Lorain County Community and Economic Development Department.

**Analysis of the One-Stop Service Delivery Systems**

*Describe how local boards will ensure the continuous improvement of eligible providers of services through the system and ensure that such providers meet the employment needs of local employers, and workers and jobseekers.*

The performance of eligible providers is monitored and evaluated on an on-going basis by each of the five workforce system staffs and that performance is reported to the WDB at minimum on an annual basis. The WDB staff use the evaluative information to work with the providers to continuously improve the performance of that provider as part of the overall workforce system. The achievement of performance metrics by each provider becomes the basis to work with that provider to identify both positive and negative outcomes and to hone in on issues that must be addressed to further improve the achievement of their metrics to better serve both individual and business customers.

In the event that a metric falls more than 10% below the projected level of performance on either an annual or quarterly basis, then a corrective action plan may be warranted that would be developed by the provider. The plan would identify the facts related to the cause(s) of the performance deficiency and how the entity will resolve the problem(s). The corrective action plan would also include the actionable steps that the provider will take to enhance performance and bring that particular metric(s) into a range that lessens the deficient performance within a set period of time.
Once the corrective action plan is received, reviewed and agreed upon by the local WDB staff, the entity will implement those changes and will be monitored on a quarterly (or possibly more frequent) basis. Should the deficiency continue, the local staff may recommend that the contract with the provider be terminated, or that the number of participants being served and a reduction in the contract amount. Corrective action plans will be shared with the local WDB as will the action of the local staff to remedy the substandard performance should the eligible provider fail to correct performance.

**Regional Plan Strategy:** The WDBs will work together throughout the duration of the regional plan to share qualitative information on training providers in order to continuously improve our use of training programs and their results across the NOW region.

An *description of how local boards will facilitate access to services provided through the one-stop delivery system, including in remote areas, through the use of technology and through other means.*

All of the OhioMeansJobs centers throughout the NOW Region are commonly branded and offer similar core services through their respective mandatory and optional partners. The OMJ Centers in each area represent a partnership of local organizations that deliver comprehensive, customer-friendly services designed to meet education, training and employment needs. The state on-line site, OMJ.com offers a robust suite of on-line services to support the entire One-stop system and provides a key focal point for the state and the region. All jobs and resumes reside on this site, and tools to explore careers and store records and certifications for young customers are used throughout the region. Additionally, all of the regional WDBs have websites that enable remote access to services as well as on-line registration for services.

OhioMeansJobs centers in the NOW Region offer the following services for employers and job-seekers:

**Services for Job-Seekers**

The OMJ centers work directly with employers to find qualified job candidates. In addition, the staff work with the job seekers to identify their unique employment situations and develop strategies to overcome specific barriers.
The centers offer hands-on and self-directed services in the physical One-Stop locations as well as a variety of online services. OhioMeansJobs.com is more than a job board and resume bank, as it provides a multi-faceted online career counseling center that provides a menu of career services options for all Ohioans, especially those residing in rural areas with limited access to a physical OMJ center location. OhioMeansJobs.com also provides a front door for individuals and businesses that are interested in employment programs. While the majority of the services are delivered through the OMJ centers throughout the region, several of the Workforce Areas also utilize local libraries to deliver job-seeker service.

OhioMeansJobs Centers in the NOW Region offer the following Job Seeker Services:

- Career Counseling
- Career Advancement Education and Training Opportunities
- Job and Labor Market Information
- Informational Interviews
- Preparation of an Individual Employment Plan
- Information about Job Openings, Skills and Education Requirements, Wages and Benefits
- Resume Preparation and Job Interviewing Skills
- Job Referral and Placement
- Skill and Interest Inventories
- Job-Search Workshops and Seminars
- Links to Programs at community colleges, not-for-profit and faith-based organizations
- Career Information and Guidance Assistance in Identifying Financial Resources to Support Employment, Education and Training Related Expenses
- Connections to Community Resources

Basic Skills Assessment

Skill Building and Career Exploration Tools that are available at the OMJ Centers include:

- **My Plan** is an Online Career Planning Resource that is available at no cost to students and career changers;
- **WorkKeys** assessments measure "real world" skills that employers believe are critical to job success. Test questions are based on situations in the everyday work world; and,
KeyTrain Online provides a comprehensive learning system for common skills required by all jobs.

Virtual online services
Virtual online services are available for use by individuals who can access it online through OhioMeansJobs.com.
The site offers registered users step-by-step instructions to help register for online services including:

- A virtual backpack that includes a document storage element, school, scholarship, career and employment program searches;
- Information on local career fairs and workshops; and,
- Free practice testing including ACT, SAT, GED, WorkKeys.

Information on apprenticeship program and internships includes:

- A budget calculator with cost of living calculations;
- Labor Market Information; and,
- In-Demand and Green Careers.

OhioMeansJobs Centers in the NOW Region offer the following Employer Services:

- Help employers streamline the job applicant screening and hiring process;
- Assist employers in retaining and training employees; and,
- Provide employers with access to resources to maintain a competitive edge.

OhioMeansJobs Center staff in the NOW Region assist employers in posting job orders, conducting mass recruitment of potential job candidates based on employer job descriptions, providing pre-employment skill testing and screening, and scheduling and hosting employer interviewing sessions. Some of the OMJ Centers in the NOW Region enter into partnerships to deliver consulting services while others deliver services using existing staff. Typically, services include providing information on labor market trends and working with a business to identify and meet all of their human resource needs.
**Workforce and Incumbent Worker Services**

These partnerships can link employers to a variety of education and training providers including the vast resources of the region’s four community colleges, and several Joint Vocational School and their Adult Career Center. Access to experts with proven skills to assist in establishing registered apprenticeship training programs is also available.

**Restructuring Workforce**

Services are available to assist companies to manage change in the workplace and to develop alternative strategies to reduce or avoid layoffs. Employers that are down-sizing or closing with more than fifty employees being impacted are eligible to access Rapid Response Services for their employees. Those employers are also required to provide a WARN Notice in writing prior to the dislocation occurring.

**Financing Workforce Training Efforts**

The following resources may be available to assist companies finance employer recruitment, hiring and retention needs:

**OJT (On-the Job Training)**

The OJT model involves training that is provided by an employer (or in combination with a designated training entity) under a contract between the OMJ Center and the employer. As part of that contract, the paid participant (employee) is engaged in productive work in a job that provides:

- knowledge or skills essential to the full and adequate performance of the job;
- reimbursement to the employer of a flat fee of $3,000 per OJT or 50% of the wage of the participant, whichever is lower, for the extraordinary costs of providing the training and additional supervision related to the training; and (this is not currently the fee structure but will be proposed in a future OJT regional policy during Year 1);
- limited duration training as appropriate to the occupation for which the participant is being trained, taking into account training content, the participant’s prior work experience, and the participant’s service strategy, as appropriate.
Customized Training

- designed to meet the special requirements of an employer (or a group of employers);
- developed and carried out through a commitment by the employer to employ, or in the case of incumbent workers, continue to employ, an individual upon successful completion of the training; and
- paid for by the employer, with a requirement of covering at least 50% of the cost of the training.

Individual Training Accounts (ITA)

Throughout the region Individual Training Accounts can be established on behalf of an individual customer to purchase training services from an eligible provider (on the State approved eligible training provider list) that he/she selects in consultation with a OMJ Center case manager.

Incumbent Worker Training (IWT)

Provides both workers and employers with the opportunity to build and maintain a quality workforce. Incumbent worker training can be used to help avert potential layoffs of employees, or to increase the skill levels of employees so they can be promoted within the company and create backfill opportunities for the employers. Under section 134(d)(4) of WIOA, local boards can use up to 20 percent of their adult and dislocated worker funds to provide for the federal cost share of the cost of providing Incumbent Worker Training. IWT takes into account:

- The characteristics of the participants in the program;
- The relationship of the training to the competitiveness of a participant and employer; and
- Other factors the State of local boards may determine appropriate (e.g., the number of employees participating in the training, wage and benefit levels of those employees (both pre- and post-participation earning), and the existence of other training and advancement opportunities provided by the employer).

Employers are required to pay for a significant cost of the training for those participants in IWT; this can be done through both cash and/or in-kind payments. Wages paid to participants, while in training, may be considered as a source of matching funds. Under
section 134(d)(4)(D) of WIOA, the minimum amount of employer share in the IWT depends on the size of the employer:

- At least 10 percent of the cost, for employers with 50 or fewer employees;
- At least 25 percent of the cost, for employers with 51 to 100 employees; and,
- At least 50 percent of the cost, for employers with more than 100 employees.

**OMJ Centers Serve as an access point for entrepreneurs through the following programs:**

**Small Business Development Centers**

The Ohio SBDC is the only statewide system that works with entrepreneurs in all industries, at all stages of business growth. Access to the SBDC services may occur at the OMJ Center (if the SBDC is co-located at the Center) or through a referral. The SBDC may also be engaged in the development of microenterprises in their respective service delivery area.

**Ohio Business Gateway**

The 1st Stop Business Connection is the easiest way to learn about starting a business in Ohio. It provides free state-level information needed to get started or for a customer to continue on their entrepreneurial journey. Additional information on this system and the registration process can be found at [http://business.ohio.gov/](http://business.ohio.gov/).

**OMJ One-Stop Center Locations in the NOW Region:**

**Medina County – WDA #2**
OhioMeansJobs | Medina County (affiliate/satellite center)
3721 Pearl Rd.
Medina, OH 44256
(330) 723-9675

**Summit County – WDA #2**
OhioMeansJobs | Summit County (comprehensive center)
1040 East Tallmadge Ave.
Akron, OH 44310
(330) 633-1050

**City of Cleveland / Cuyahoga County – WDA #3**
OhioMeansJobs -Downtown Location (comprehensive center)
1020 Bolivar Road
Cleveland, OH 44115
(216) 664-4673
OhioMeansJobs - Brookpark Location (affiliate/satellite location)
11699 Brookpark Road
Parma, OH 44130
(216) 898-1366
(216) 898-1497 Fax

OhioMeansJobs - Westshore (affiliate/satellite location)
9830 Lorain Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44102
(216) 939-2599
(216) 939-2596 Fax

Ashtabula County – WDA #19
OhioMeansJobs | Ashtabula County (comprehensive center)
2247 Lake Avenue
Ashtabula, Ohio 44004
(440) 994-1234

Geauga County – WDA#19
OhioMeansJobs | Geauga County (affiliate/satellite center)
Auburn Career Center
12480 Ravenwood Dr.
Chardon, OH 44024
(440) 285-9141
(440) 285-1218 Fax

Portage County – WDA#19
OhioMeansJobs | Portage County (affiliate/satellite center)
253 Chestnut St.
Ravenna, OH 44266
(330) 296-2841
(330) 296-7805 Fax

Lake County – WDA#5
OhioMeansJobs | Lake County (comprehensive center)
Lake County Employment & Training Division
177 Main Street, Painesville, OH 44077
(440) 350-4000 Main
(440) 918-4000 Lake County West
(440) 428-4838 Lake County East

Lorain County – WDA#4
OhioMeansJobs | Lorain County (comprehensive center)
Main Office
42495 North Ridge Road
Elyria, OH 44035
(440) 324-5244
A description of how entities within the one-stop delivery system, including one-stop operators and the one-stop partners, will comply with Section 188, if applicable, and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities, including providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities.

All of the OhioMeansJobs Centers comply with Section 188 and comply with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 in terms of physical and programmatic accessibility. The One-Stop certification process which is conducted by the Workforce Boards for the One-Stop centers will ensure that Section 188 is being followed.

A description of the roles and resource contributions of the one-stop partners.

The roles and the resource contributions of each of the mandatory and optional one-stop partners are identified in the five local plans which are attached to the NOW Regional Plan.

A description and assessment of the type and availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities in the local area.

The description of the type and availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities in each local area are defined in the five Workforce Development Boards’ local plans that are attached to this regional plan.

This region is a key performer in the entire state of Ohio for the adult and dislocated worker programs. In program year 2015, 48.8% of all placements made in the state of Ohio in these two WIOA programs came from this northeast Ohio region, with OMJ|CC leading the way with over 33% of the placements. The five Boards have developed the following Regional Plan Strategies as part of this planning process to further improve our services to adult and dislocated worker customers:

- We will work together to coordinate the production of Labor Market Information on a regional basis to support employment and training activities on the supply and the demand side and to inform the creation of career pathways and sector strategies.
• We are working to standardize our policies regarding On-the-Job training (OJT), Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) and Incumbent Worker Training in order to make it easier for our business and jobseeker customers across the region.

• We have agreed to convene employers in industry sectors through intermediaries on a regional basis instead of an individual local area basis.

• We have committed to meeting with leadership from the four community colleges on a regional basis twice per year to align employment and training activities and to discuss opportunities for innovation.

• We will work with regional partners to locate resources to better define the workforce system through mapping and other efforts to address the concern that the system is confusing and more attention needs to be devoted to awareness and access to the system.

• We have committed to share qualitative information on training providers in order to continuously improve our use of training programs across the region.

• We have set a goal to explore the feasibility of aligning local policies related to supportive services.

• We have committed to working together to identify and seek additional federal, state and other grant funding that supports the alignment with NOW Plan goals/strategies.

**Prioritizing Services to Veterans**

The State of Ohio recognizes veterans as a valuable, talented and skilled workforce, and to that end is committed to increasing the number of military service members and veterans living and working in Ohio. Ohio has implemented executive orders and legislation to ensure veterans are receiving the appropriate credit and credentialing for their military training and experience. These efforts have focused on streamlining the occupational licensing process for veterans to ensure their relevant military education, skills training, and experience are taken into account when determining equivalency for issuing licenses and certificates. As part of its Ohio Values Veterans initiative, the Department of Higher Education (ODHE) has formed the Military Strategic Implementation Team (MSIT) to work with Ohio’s public institutions to
conduct a thorough review of current institutional policies and practices, and to improve the process for awarding college credit for military training, experience, and coursework.

Veterans and eligible spouses receive priority of service consideration for all DOL-funded job training programs, including WIOA programs. Priority of service is discussed in DOL Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) 10-09. Further, representatives funded through Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG), a required partner program under WIOA, are located in many OMJ Centers.

The WIOA Title I Adult program also provides priority services for public assistance recipients, other low-income individuals, or individuals who are basic skills deficient. States and local areas must apply priority of service in the order below:

- First, to veterans and eligible spouses who also are included in the groups given statutory priority for WIOA adult formula funds. This means that veterans and eligible spouses who also are recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals*, or individuals who are basic skills deficient would receive first priority for services provided with WIOA adult formula funds.
- Second, to non-covered persons (individuals who are not veterans or eligible spouses) who are included in the groups given priority for WIOA adult formula funds.
- Third, to veterans and eligible spouses who are not included in WIOA’s priority groups.
- Fourth, to any other populations identified by the Governor or Local Board for priority.
- Fifth (last), to non-covered persons outside the groups given priority under WIOA.

Service members exiting the military, including, but not limited to, recipients of Unemployment Compensation for Ex-Military members (UCX), generally qualify as dislocated workers.

Dislocated Worker funds under WIOA Title I can help separating service members enter or reenter the civilian labor force. Generally, a notice of separation, either a DD Form-214 from the Department of Defense or other appropriate documentation (such as separation orders) that shows a separation or imminent separation from the Armed Forces, qualifies as the notice of termination or layoff to meet the required dislocated worker definition. In most instances an individual will have to be eligible for or have exhausted entitlement to unemployment
compensation (including UCX) in order to receive dislocated worker services. In the case of separating service members, or those on a terminal leave from the military, OMJ Center staff can begin providing career services while the service members are still on Active Duty but have imminent separation dates. It is appropriate to provide career services to separating service members who will be imminently separating from the military, provided that their discharge will be anything other than dishonorable.

Separating service members are required to participate in the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) in order to ensure they are prepared for civilian employment. During this program, separating service members and their spouses are encouraged to contact OMJs in the area in which they wish to seek services. WIOA expands the definition of dislocated workers to include military spouses who have lost employment as a direct result of a relocation to accommodate a permanent change in the service member’s duty station.

Military spouses also may qualify if they are a dependent spouse of a member of the Armed Forces on active duty whose family income is significantly reduced, as determined by the State or local area, because of a deployment, a call or order to active duty, a permanent change of station, or the service connected death or disability of the service member. Military spouses also can qualify if they are unemployed or underemployed and are experiencing difficulty in obtaining or upgrading employment.

*A description of how the local boards will coordinate education and workforce investment activities carried out in the local area with relevant secondary and postsecondary education programs and activities to coordinate strategies, enhance services, and avoid duplication of services.*

Each of the WDBs has a strong and long-standing relationship with the community college that serves their jurisdiction. In most areas, the college president or a senior college administrator serves on the WDB. In many areas a secondary school principal or superintendent serves on the WDB or in an advisory role on a Youth Committee. This engagement with secondary and postsecondary education has resulted in local efforts to strengthen the delivery of educational and workforce services that address the critical hiring needs of employers while preparing residents to fill those middle and higher-skilled positions.
This focus was expanded to a regional collaboration that recently occurred during the process of developing this regional plan. The WDBs had the opportunity to work together with the four community colleges, the major hospitals in the region, (Akron Children’s Hosp., Cleveland Clinic Foundation, LakeHealth, MetroHealth, Mercy Hospitals, Summa Health System and University Hospitals), economic development and others to address the specific training and hiring needs of the region’s healthcare employers. Although the proposal under the U.S. Department of Labor’s America’s Promise Funding Opportunity Announcement was not successful in the grant competition, the process of working together regionally on the proposal provided great insight into the talent needs of the healthcare industry in the region as well as several solutions we can jointly pursue.

**Regional Plan Strategy:** The five Boards’ Chairs and Executive Directors will meet at least twice per year with the Presidents of the four community Colleges to identify/examine regional workforce development opportunities, generate innovations and create greater impact and efficiencies through joint regional work.

**Workforce Services for Youth**

*A description and assessment of the type and availability of youth workforce investment activities in the local areas, including activities for youth who are individuals with disabilities.*

*Identify successful models of youth workforce investment activities.*

WIOA outlines a broader youth vision that supports an integrated service delivery system and gives a framework through which states and local areas can leverage other Federal, State, Local, and philanthropic resources to support in-school and out-of-school youth. The WDBs are implementing the youth programs with a commitment to providing high quality services for youth and young adults beginning with career exploration and guidance, continued support for educational attainment, opportunities for skills training in in-demand industries and occupations, culminating with a good job along a career pathway or enrollment in post-secondary education.

Ohio has legislated a new program for WIOA youth with the TANF program which became effective on July 1, 2016 called the Comprehensive Case Management and Employment
Program (CCMEP). Ohio has developed a common application, initial assessment strategy and tools, and individual opportunity plan and case management system for WIOA youth and TANF programs, through CCMEP. This benefits both the individual and the workforce system by providing consistency, simplifying referral and service delivery, supporting co-enrollment, and maximizing resources. Ohio requires each county Department of Job and Family Services and workforce development area to develop a county CCMEP plan that details how the two program funding sources and entities will coordinate, align services, focus on individualized case management and employment planning, address each individual’s barriers to employment, and provide supportive services.

Starting with youth and young adults ages 16 to 24, Ohio’s goal is to break the generational cycle of dependency among low-income families. The CCMEP plans for each county in the region are currently under review by the state. The WDBs in the region each passed resolutions approving the use of WIOA youth funds in the CCMEP program and retain the responsibility for the oversight of this component of the program. The County Executives and County Commissioners for each of the eight counties in the region were required to designate a lead agency for the operation of the CCMEP program. All counties except Lorain County have designated the county department of Job and Family Services as the lead agency. The Workforce Development Agency has been designated as the lead in Lorain County.

At the same time as CCMEP is being put in place, the Boards are implementing changes to youth service as directed by WIOA law. These new regulations include a minimum of 75 percent of Local youth funding to be used for out-of-school youth and the creation of a standing WDB Youth Committee instead of a stand-alone Youth Council.

Changes to WIOA Youth Eligibility resulted in defining out-of-school youth as being at least 16 years of age and not older than 24, not attending any school, and meeting one or more of the following conditions: a school dropout; being within age of compulsory attendance but not having attended for at least the most recent complete school year calendar quarter; holding a secondary school diploma or recognized equivalent and is low-income and is basic skills deficient or an English language learner; subject to the juvenile or adult justice system; homeless, runaway, in foster care or aged out of the foster care system, eligible for assistance...
under Section 477 of the Social Security Act, or in out-of-home placement; pregnant or parenting; an individual with a disability; low income person who requires additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program or to secure and hold employment. In-school youth must be aged 14-21, attending school, be low income, and meet one or more of the following conditions: Basic skills deficient; English language learner; an offender; homeless, runaway, in foster care or aged out of the foster care system; pregnant or parenting; an individual with a disability; person who requires additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program or to secure and hold employment.

Five new Youth Program elements have been established: (1) Financial Literacy; (2) Entrepreneurial skills training; (3) Services that provide labor market and employment information in the local area; (4) Activities that help youth transition to postsecondary education and training; and, (5) Education offered concurrently with, and in the same context as, workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster. There is an emphasis on work-experience, with at least 20 percent of local Youth formula funds required to be used for work experiences, such as summer and year-round employment, pre-apprenticeship, on-the-job training, or internships and job shadowing.

The CCMEP program initially will focus on young adults, ages 16 to 24, with incomes at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level. Because the CCMEP program is new and is being implemented statewide under the new state law, there is no separate regional workforce strategy for youth needed or anticipated at this time. However, there are specific youth efforts within some of the workforce areas to note:

- OMJ|CC has worked on a new youth initiative led by a major training provider, Towards Employment in partnership with the county department of Job and Family Services and the Fund for our Economic Future called Generation Work which is funded by a grant from the Annie E. Casey foundation. We have jointly developed a plan for youth ages 16 – 29 which is included in Area 3’s local plan. The plan incorporates major roles for the Youth/Young Adult Resource Center which operates at the downtown office as well as the Youth Standing Committee.

- OMJ|Summit-Medina and OMJ|CC will be implementing a workforce innovation grant
called Wage Pathways beginning in 2017 through 2018 to test effective approaches for youth to forge a pathway to achieve a living wage.

**Describe how local boards will coordinate workforce investment activities with relevant secondary and postsecondary education programs and activities to coordinate strategies, enhance services, and avoid duplication of services.**

As described earlier, each of the five local WDBs maintains a strong working relationship with its area’s community college. Northeast Ohio has a strong postsecondary educational presence that includes four community colleges: Cuyahoga Community College (CCC); Lakeland Community College (LCC); Lorain County Community College (LCCC); and Stark State College (SSC). In addition, the region hosts several public universities and private colleges, including: Cleveland State University; the University of Akron; Kent State University; Case Western Reserve University; Baldwin Wallace University; Hiram College; Notre Dame College; John Carroll University; and Oberlin University.

Northeast Ohio's four community colleges are pursuing innovation in providing quality, affordable education. Each year, the four community colleges educate more than 92,000 students. CCC and LCCC are partners in the Accelerated Study in Associate Programs grant. LCCC leads a Department of Labor-funded TAACCCT Round IV grant with CCC, Lakeland and Stark State as part of 11 educational partners. Stark State is leading the development of a federal grant to expand joint apprenticeship training at all four of the institutions. Lakeland, LCCC and CCC are participants in the Steelworkers of the Future Program, and LCCC and Stark are gearing up for the Right Skills Now program pioneered at CCC. All four colleges are engaged in MAGNET (Manufacturing Advocacy and Growth Network), an organization committed to advancing manufacturing, and are all working with employers to ensure that the skills of the graduate match employer needs.

Among the governor’s new initiatives are "3 + 1" programs that enable students to complete three years of a degree program at their community college, earn an associate degree and then transfer to a four-year institution to complete a bachelor’s degree. For example, students can become registered nurses at a community college and then go on to a
university to earn a bachelor's degree in nursing. These smart 3+1 pathways can save students and families 80 percent of the cost of the traditional bachelor's degree. LCCC pioneered many 3 + 1 pathways – and similar programs are in place at all four institutions.

Another critical element that the WDBs, the community colleges and the region’s employers place great value on is work-based educational experiences. The value of work experience – connecting education to on-the-job experiences – cannot be overstated. At both the local and regional levels the workforce and higher education are working together with industry to expand work-based learning opportunities for students. In addition, OWT is working with public and private colleges and universities, as well as employers, to embed work experiences (including co-ops and internships) for in-demand jobs into the curriculum of degree programs. Students, educators and employers will be able to access OhioMeansJobs.com as the central location for work experience information and opportunities.

Rosters of the workforce-related funded programs at Cuyahoga Community College, Lakeland Community College, Lorain County Community College and Stark State College are can be found in addendum #11 to the Regional Plan. A total of 45 funded workforce programs are depicted on the rosters. The programs cover the development of training and related programs to address the needs of key sectors in the region, the acquisition of equipment, and the promotion of work-based learning and work experiences. The majority of the funding that supports these initiatives originates with the U.S. Department of Labor, other Federal agencies, or corporate and charitable foundations and were awarded as a result of successful grant applications.

**Transportation and Supportive Services**

_Identify and describe employment and training related transportation issues and any solutions which are being pursued. Describe other supportive services policies of each local workforce area in order to identify opportunities to standardize policies._

During the interview processes throughout the region, all of the WDBs and CLEOs indicated a strong desire to make sure that economic inclusion was the priority issue. The issue was specifically centered on “how to create opportunities for low income residents (unemployed,
underemployed, and never employed) to prepare to enter the workforce and to obtain employment along well-defined career pathways in high-demand industries and sectors that will pay living wages for the resident and their families. As part of those discussions several of the groups looked at the impact of certain factors on the success of these individuals.

In addition, the topic of economic inclusion was a major focus at the Northeast Ohio Workforce Summit in June 2016 that was sponsored by the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland and the five WDBs. More than 200 local leaders, approximately 60 of whom were representatives from the region’s businesses attended the Summit. The following recommendations were recorded, analyzed, synthesized and reported from the overall Economic Inclusion Breakout Session:

- Develop a clearly articulated system of industry specific career pathways that identify needed skills and uses common assessment (founded on more industry-driven collaboration with job seekers and trainers.)
- Approach should include wrap around services to support/develop a viable pipeline for hiring felons and other workers with challenges, while creating more opportunities to “earn and learn” for the workers who desire to improve their skills but need wages to support them in the process.
- Match-up public transportation access with job opportunities.
- Offer life-skills courses in middle and high schools, and summer job opportunities, and more opportunities to develop digital literacy.
- Wage a regional campaign to upskill.
- Implement more post-employment coaching – learn from WorkAdvance and Step Up to UH; two promising practices that were featured at the Workforce Summit.
- Engage customers directly – get the voice of the customer.
- Instead of taking time off work to visit caseworkers, caseworkers should visit work sites.

Central themes that emerged from the discussions were: transportation; data; wrap-around services; and, articulating the system through mapping.

Foremost in the minds of many of the boards and CLEOs throughout the overall interview process was the correlation of specific needs such as transportation and child care to the
success of low income residents in training, and in being matched to employment opportunities. From a transportation perspective there was an identified need for working more closely with the region’s local transportation systems to improve services that will be critical to getting individuals to and from training, as well as a job.

The local elected officials in Lorain and Workforce Area #19 expressed a desire to address this issue head on using a combination of elected officials and business leadership from their respective Workforce Development Boards to negotiate transportation policy changes at the State level. This effort would also lead to potential regional board policies that address the need for additional transportation solutions that would enable low income, underemployed or unemployed worker to be able to travel to locations outside their respective neighborhoods to locations where living wage jobs can be obtained. The WDBs have also adopted a guiding principle to leverage work that is being led or conducted by other organizations in the region, such as the Northeast Ohio Area Coordinating Agency (NOACA) work on transportation.

** Regional Plan Strategy:** The WDBs will support efforts to change transportation funding and policies at the state level to address workforce transportation needs.

Supportive services can be said to be major key to programmatic success for a segment of our customers. Recent evaluation regarding the 5 year-long Work Advance initiative indicates that individuals have a significantly higher probability of advancing in jobs (and earning higher wages) if they receive a comprehensive set of aligned services, including support services and pre- and post-employment coaching. Work Advance was funded by the Fund for our Economic Future and implemented by Towards Employment and was featured at the Workforce Summit.

The priority of service for this plan is on those individuals who are low-skilled, low-income and currently disconnected from good jobs and wages. These customers need access to supportive services in order to pursue and achieve a career pathway that leads to family-sustaining wages. The WIOA programs and the OMJ One-stop centers alone have insufficient resources available to provide the supportive services that are needed.

For example, childcare was an issue in identified in each area, including care for sick children. The lack of childcare for sick children is an issue for workers at all levels, more so if the children are dependents of a single parent. Often times for participants in training the lack of services
for sick children may cause the parent or guardian to miss substantial amounts of training or work, which hinders their success.

Other emergency types of supportive services such as rent, car repairs, emergency food and health services are typically addressed throughout the region through a network of non-profit organizations or through county JFS offices. For youth programs, the new resources made available through CCMEP from TANF funds provide much needed new resources for support services. For adults, there is no single solution to this the lack of supportive services in the region and the Workforce Development Boards and community leaders need to continue to pursue solutions.

Promising and meaningful efforts towards achieving these outcomes are being pursued by Cuyahoga County which committed $6 million and significant human capital in order to create career and wage pathways and deliver coaching and post-placement services.

** Regional Plan Strategy:** The WDBs will work together to determine whether it is feasible to align local policies related to supportive services.

## Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Services

*A description of plans and strategies for, and assurances concerning, maximizing coordination of services provided by the State employment service under the Wagner-Peyser Act services provided through the one-stop delivery system, including ways to improve service delivery and avoid duplication of services.*

Per the Ohio Combined State Plan, ODJFS has implemented a number of changes and improvements to support maximum integration of service delivery for businesses and jobseekers. The reorganization of the ODJFS Offices of Unemployment Insurance Operations and Workforce Development has facilitated coordination, alignment and provision of services. The Wagner-Peyser (W-P) employment service staff in each OhioMeansJobs Center are required by WIOA to provide integrated service delivery with all partners in the one-stop career center. ODJFS is in the process of identifying and improving the operation of the Wagner-Peyser program throughout the state and has scheduled meetings with local areas to discuss. We anticipate this will promote further service integration for improved services to our customers.
**Adult Education and Literacy**

*A description of how workforce investment activities will be coordinated with the provision of adult education and literacy activities under WIOA Title II, including a description of how the local boards will carry out, consistent with subparagraphs (A) and (B)(i) of section 107(d)(11) and section 232, the review of local applications submitted under Title II.*

Per the State’s Combined Plan, Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE) services will be well coordinated with local partner programs as Title II representation on the local workforce development boards is a new requirement under WIOA. In addition, Title II local plans will be reviewed by the local WDBs to ensure that ABLE activities are aligned with local needs. Coordinated career pathways will also be established to provide all participants access to high-demand, regionally significant employment and training services.

Each Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE) grantee is required to have a postsecondary education and training partnership or Bridge Program. The intent of the Bridge programs is to prepare adults with limited academic or limited English skills to enter and succeed in postsecondary education and training programs, thereby reducing the need for remedial education provided at the postsecondary institutions.

The connections between adult education, postsecondary education and workforce development will be strengthened as a result of the local review of the Title II local plans. The WDBs will place a strong emphasis on ensuring that State and Local providers offer adult education and skills development, including Career Pathways, to accelerate achievement of diplomas and credentials, but most importantly, to become a partner in their children’s education and improving their family’s economic futures.
Coordination with Rehabilitation Act Services

A description of the agreements with entities administering the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 with respect to efforts that will enhance the provision of services to individuals with disabilities and to other individuals, such as cross training of staff, technical assistance, use and sharing of information, cooperative efforts with employers, and other efforts at cooperation, collaboration, and coordination.

WIOA’s Adult program provides priority of service to individuals with disabilities and requires that the Ohio Office of Disabilities (OOD) be a mandatory partner in the OMJ centers to provide services to jobseekers with disabilities. All WDBs have an executed MOU with OOD. The Ohio Combined State Plan indicates that Ohio’s standards for OhioMeansJobs center certification will also include requirements to not only comply with the ADA, but also Sec 188 of WIOA. Certification requires that OhioMeansJobs staff receive training to understand and better serve individuals with disabilities. All of the OMJ Centers throughout the region are in compliance with ADA requirements and each area is committed to participate in any and all training that is prescribed or recommended by OOD to understand and better serve persons with disabilities.

Describe the Operations of the One-Stop Systems

One-Stop System operations and services are very similar in each of the five workforce areas and are described in each area’s attached local plan.

As mentioned previously, Ohio requires all participants of Title I employment and training, Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE), vocational rehabilitation, Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education (Perkins) Act, and Senior Community Service Employment Program to register in OhioMeansJobs.com to ensure consistency among programs, enhance job readiness and placement efforts, and support career planning. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients enrolled in the Comprehensive Case Management and Employment Program (CCMEP) and unemployment insurance claimants also register.

Many of the key workforce reforms and strategies in the State’s Combined Plan focus on building continuity, especially related to local service delivery. The programs are working together to move the state’s workforce system forward making the system easier to navigate,
building consistency across providers and programs, and aligning with business needs.

*Identify the entity responsible for the disbursement of grant funds described in section 107(d)(12) (B)(i)(III) as determined by the chief elected official(s) or the Governor for each local area.*

See the local plans that are attached to this plan.

*A description of the competitive process to be used to award the subgrants and contracts in local areas for activities carried out under WIOA.*

See the local plans that are attached to this plan.

*A description of the local levels of performance negotiated with the Governor and chief elected official pursuant to section 116 (c) to be used to measure the performance of the local areas.*

The specific negotiated measures can be found in each area’s local plans which are attached to this plan. The measures are standard across the region.

*A description of the actions the local board will take towards becoming or remaining a high-performing board, consistent with the factors developed by the State board pursuant to section 101(d)(6).*

On a regional basis, the five local boards are committed to working towards becoming or remaining a high-performing board and focusing on continuous quality improvement in services and results.

**Regional Plan Strategies:**
- The WDB Board Directors have committed to meet at least semi-annually to continue to implement the agreements reached in the development of the regional plan and to identify new solutions and innovations.
- The WDBS will share board materials to promote efficiency.

Each of the local boards has depicted its strategy for becoming or remaining a high-performing board consistent with the factors developed by the State Board pursuant to section 101(d)(6) in their respective local plans which are attached.
A description of how training services will be provided including how the use of such contracts will be coordinated with the use of individual training accounts under that chapter and how the local board will ensure informed customer choice in the selection of training programs regardless of how the training services are provided.

Each of the local WDBs has provided a description of how training contracts are provided and coordinated with ITA accounts in their respective local plans which are attached to this plan. Previously depicted in this document are regional strategies to share qualitative information on training providers and to standardize ITA policies in the region.

A description of how one-stop centers are implementing and transitioning to an integrated, technology-enabled intake and case management information system for programs carried out under this Act and programs carried out by one-stop partners.

The intake and case management system for programs carried out under WIOA by the local workforce system are all technology-enabled. Participant data is entered into the ODJFS Ohio Workforce Case Management Systems (OWCMS) which is used for client tracking, providing data on enrolled participants in the various programs, participants who are co-enrolled in WIOA and other participants who may be enrolled in DOL funded projects that are offered by the four community colleges or the WDBs. The system is used to track all programs and services that are delivered through the region’s OMJ Centers.

A description of how Rapid Response will be implemented on a regional as well as local level, so as to further refine current practices.

Each of the local WDBs has a defined Rapid Response process in place to address the needs of impacted workers. Typically, the Rapid Response efforts are triggered by the receipt of a WARN Notice from the affected employer that announces the lay-off of 50 or more employees and/or the closing or down-sizing of a business that impacts 50 or more employees. Once the WARN Notification is received the local workforce system immediately begins to arrange to deliver services to the impacted workers.
If two or more of the local WDBs are serving impacted workers who reside in their jurisdiction, then the response will be considered regional. The regional response will be in the form of coordination of rapid response efforts between the workforce systems. Multi-jurisdictional responses can also be the result of a company or companies that have facilities or operations in one or more of the region’s workforce areas that are covered under the WARN Notification.

Each of the OMJ Centers defined Rapid Response processes for their jurisdiction are included in the attached local plans.

Describe the Public Comment Process

A description of the process to provide an opportunity for public comment, including comment by representatives of businesses and comment by representatives of labor organizations, and input into the development of the local plan, prior to submission of the regional plan.

Throughout the development of the NOW Regional Plan input was sought and received from the public, employers, economic development, organized labor and others.

On June 1, 2016 the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland took the lead in sponsoring a day-long Workforce Summit which was co-sponsored by the five Workforce Boards and attended by over 200. The Regional plan consultants conducted 114 interviews/meetings with the leadership from all aspects of the workforce system.

A draft of the NOW Regional Plan, which incorporated input gathered from the Workforce Summit, and all Local Plans were made available on February 27, 2017 for public comment via a dedicated webpage and comment collection system. To ensure all comments were gathered and recorded, the NOW Regional Plan and all Local Plans were posted at one web address - https://www.summitomj.org/plans-about. This page and its axillaries were live until March 19, 2017. All Areas provided links on their own websites to this page. From this page, the public had access to the plans via a link to https://www.summitomj.org/plans-documents. Members of the workforce development community and the public were able to submit comments via a web-based comment solicitation form found at https://www.summitomj.org/plans-comments.
COMMENTS WERE DUE BY MARCH 19, 2017 at 4:30 PM. The comments that were received along with our responses were submitted to the State of Ohio with the NOW and Local Plans.

Assurances

The following assurances are being provided by the local WDBs as required in WIOA Policy Letter 16-03 regarding regional planning:

- The local Workforce Development Boards within the planning region assure that they will establish fiscal control and fund accounting procedures to ensure the proper disbursement of, and accounting for all funds received through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.
- The local WDBs assure that they will keep records that are sufficient to permit the preparation of reports required by the Act and shall maintain such records, including standardized records for all individual participants, and submit such reports as the State may require.
- The local WDBs assure that they will collect and maintain data necessary to show compliance with the nondiscrimination provisions of the Act.
- The local WDBs assure that funds will be spent in accordance with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, regulations, written Department of Labor Guidance, written Ohio Department of Job and Family Services guidance, and all other applicable Federal and State laws.
- The local WDBs assure that veterans will be afforded employment and training activities authorized in the Jobs for Veterans Act and 20 C.F.R. Part 1010.
- The local WDBs assure that they will comply with any grant procedures prescribed by the Secretary which are necessary to enter into contracts for the use of funds under WIOA, but not limited to the following:
  - Assurances and Certifications – SF424B – Assurances for Non-Construction Programs; 29 C.F.R. Part 31,32 – Nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunity Assurance (and Regulation); 29 C.F.R. Part 93 – Certification Regarding Lobbying (and Regulation); 29 C.F.R. Parts 94 and 95 – Drug Free Workplace and Debarment and Suspension; Certifications (and Regulations).
**Signature Pages**

The signature pages for the regional plan attests that all assurances have been met and that the regional plan and accompanying local plans represent the local workforce development boards’ efforts to maximize resources available under Title I of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and to coordinate these resources with other State and Local programs in the planning region.

The effective date of the regional plan and the local plans will be July 1, 2017 and remain in effect through June 30, 2021, a period of four years.

These signatures further certify that the local workforce development boards in the planning region will operate the WIOA program in accordance with the regional plan and applicable Federal and State laws, regulations, policies, and rules.

Below are the signature pages for Areas #2, #3, #4, #5, and #19 respectively. Each Area’s sign-off on the NOW Plan depicts a signatory line for the local WDB Chairperson, the local workforce area’s Director or Executive Director, and the Chief Local Elected Official for the workforce area, with their typed name and position on the line below the signature.
Area 2 - Signatures.

By signing my name below, I hereby attest each of the following for the NOW Regional Plan and the Area 2 Local Plan Addendum, effective from July 1, 2017, through June 30, 2021:

- All of the Assurances indicated on Page 83 of the NOW Regional Plan and of the Area 2 Local Plan Addendum have been met and that this plan represents the Local Area WDB’s efforts to maximize resources available under Title I of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and to coordinate these resources with other state and local programs within the planning region.

- The Area 2 WDB will operate the WIOA program in accordance with the regional plan and applicable federal and state laws, regulations, policies, and rules.

Anthony Esposito, Chair, Area 2 Workforce Development Board  
4/10/2017

Christine G. Marshall, Director, Area 2 Workforce Development Board  
4/12/17

Ilene Shapiro, County Executive, County of Summit  
4/17/17

Adam Friedrick, Medina County Commissioner  
11/4/2017

Patricia G. Geissman, Medina County Commissioner  
4/11/17

William Hutson, Medina County Commissioner  
4/6/2013
Area 3 - Signatures.

By signing my name below, I hereby attest each of the following for the NOW Regional Plan and the Area 3 Local Plan Addendum, effective from July 1, 2017, through June 30, 2021:

- All of the Assurances indicated on Page 83 of the NOW Regional Plan and of the Area 3 Local Plan Addendum have been met and that this plan represents the Local Area WDB's efforts to maximize resources available under Title I of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and to coordinate these resources with other state and local programs within the planning region.

- The Area 3 WDB will operate the WIOA program in accordance with the regional plan and applicable federal and state laws, regulations, policies, and rules.

Quentin L. McCorvey, Sr., Chair, Area 3
Cleveland/Cuyahoga County Workforce Development Board

Grace A. Kilbane, Executive Director, Area 3
Cleveland/Cuyahoga County Workforce Development Board

Frank G. Jackson, Mayor, City of Cleveland

Armond Budish, County Executive, Cuyahoga County
Area 4 - Signatures.

By signing my name below, I hereby attest each of the following for the NOW Regional Plan and the Area 4 Local Plan Addendum, effective from July 1, 2017, through June 30, 2021:

- All of the Assurances indicated on Page 83 of the NOW Regional Plan and of the Area 4 Local Plan Addendum have been met and that this plan represents the Local Area WDB’s efforts to maximize resources available under Title I of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and to coordinate these resources with other state and local programs within the planning region.

- The Area 4 WDB will operate the WIOA program in accordance with the regional plan and applicable federal and state laws, regulations, policies, and rules.

Frank DeTillio, Chair, Area 4 Workforce Development Board

Date

Mike Longo, Director, Area 4 Lorain County Workforce Development Board

Date

Lori Kokoski, President, Lorain County Board of Commissioners

Date
Area 5 - Signatures.

By signing my name below, I hereby attest each of the following for the NOW Regional Plan and the Area 5 Local Plan Addendum, effective from July 1, 2017, through June 30, 2021:

- All of the Assurances indicated on Page 83 of the NOW Regional Plan and of the Area 5 Local Plan Addendum have been met and that this plan represents the Local Area WDB’s efforts to maximize resources available under Title I of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and to coordinate these resources with other state and local programs within the planning region.

- The Area 5 WDB will operate the WIOA program in accordance with the regional plan and applicable federal and state laws, regulations, policies, and rules.

Allen Weaver, Chair, Area 5 Workforce Development Board  
3/2/2017  
Date

Robert J. Dawson, Executive Director, Area 5 Workforce Development Board  
3/3/2017  
Date

Jerry C. Cirino, President, Lake County Commissioners  
3-9-1  
Date
Area 19 - Signatures.

By signing my name below, I hereby attest each of the following for the NOW Regional Plan and the Area 19 Local Plan Addendum, effective from July 1, 2017, through June 30, 2021:

- All of the Assurances indicated on Page 83 of the NOW Regional Plan and of the Area 19 Local Plan Addendum have been met and that this plan represents the Local Area WDB's efforts to maximize resources available under Title I of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and to coordinate these resources with other state and local programs within the planning region.

- The Area 19 WDB will operate the WOA program in accordance with the regional plan and applicable federal and state laws, regulations, policies, and rules.

\[Signature\]

Judy Cheney, Chairperson, Area 19 Workforce Development Board

\[Signature\]

Craig F. Sernik, Executive Director, Area 19 Workforce Development Board

\[Signature\]

Casey C. Kozlowski, Ashtabula County Commissioner
Chief Elected Official
Northeast Ohio Consortium Council of Governments

\[Signature\]

Walter M. Claypool, Geauga County Commissioner
Vice Chief Elected Official
Northeast Ohio Consortium Council of Governments

\[Signature\]

Sabrina Christian-Bennett, Portage County Commissioner
Member
Northeast Ohio Consortium Council of Governments
Addenda to the NOW Regional Plan

Addendum #1 - Language on Regional and Local Planning from the WIOA Act

Addenda #2 - #6 – Local Plans

#2 – Cleveland/Cuyahoga County Local Plan
#3 – Geauga-Ashtabula-Portage Counties Local Plan
#4 – Lake County Local Plan
#5 – Lorain County Local Plan
#6 – Summit-Medina Counties Local Plan

Addendum #7 – 2016 Cleveland/Cuyahoga County Labor Market Analysis – J. Simpson

Addendum #8 – Labor Market Analytics Report to Inform the NOW Regional Plan – Dr. James Shanahan

Addendum #9 – “Demographic Profile for the Labor Force in Northeast Ohio, 2011-2013” – Joseph Ahern, Center for Community Solutions

Addendum #10 – Results from Workforce Summit Focus Group Sessions

Addendum #11a – Community College Programs that Support the Region’s Workforce Efforts: Cuyahoga Community College & Lorain County Community College

Addendum #11b – Community College Programs that Support the Region’s Workforce Efforts: Stark State College

Addendum #12a – Public Comments: Submitted via www.summitomj.org

Addendum #12b – Public Comments: William Hanigan