



**Business Advisory
Councils**



March 1, 2025 Annual Report/ Joint Statement - NwOESC Business Advisory Council

Name of Business Advisory Council: Northwest Ohio ESC Business Advisory Council

Primary Contact: Kerri Weir – NwOESC Superintendent and BAC Co-Chair

Secondary Contact: Mike Remer – NwOESC Business Education Liaison and BAC Co-Chair

Additional Contact: Andy Hunter – NwOESC Director and BAC Co-Chair

1. Are there any changes to your Business Advisory Councils' structure or leadership since you submitted your plan for this academic year?

There are no changes in structure or leadership since our previous submission. The following District Boards of Education and the Northwest Ohio ESC agree that the NwOESC's Business Advisory Council shall represent the business of the school districts consistent with the authority granted by the Ohio General Assembly. This agreement is in effect until the Board(s) or ESC terminates the same by formal resolution.

Archbold-Area Local	Fulton
Ayersville Local	Defiance
Bryan City	Williams
Central Local	Defiance
Defiance City	Defiance
Edgerton Local	Williams
Edon Northwest Local	Williams
Evergreen Local	Fulton
Fayette Local	Fulton
Hicksville Exempted Village	Defiance
Holgate Local	Henry
Liberty Center Local	Henry
Millcreek-West Unity Local	Williams
Montpelier Exempted Village	Williams
Napoleon Area City	Henry
North Central Local	Williams
Northeastern Local	Defiance
Patrick Henry Local	Henry
Pettisville Local	Fulton
Pike-Delta-York Local	Fulton
Stryker Local	Williams
Swanton Local	Fulton
Wauseon Exempted Village	Fulton

1. Membership:

- a. The Superintendent of the NWOESC;
- b. The Economic Development Directors from each of Defiance, Fulton, Henry, and Williams Counties;
- c. The Superintendent of School for each School District passing a resolution indicating that it has elected to have the NWOESC BAC serve as its BAC;
- d. The Superintendent from Four County Career Center;
- e. A Representative from Northwest State Community College, as selected by the President or Dean of Academic Affairs.
- f. Up to three (3) Representatives from the NWOESC/NWOCA STEAM panel, as selected by the NWOESC Superintendent.
- g. Up to two (2) Representatives for the Advanced Manufacturing Consortium (AMC), as selected by the NWOESC Superintendent.
- h. Members of the Ohio Legislature Representative of our Northwest Ohio area will be encouraged

2. BAC Mission, Vision, and Structure:

- a. NWOESC BAC Vision: A well-prepared workforce that contributes to the economic growth and development and improved quality of life throughout the Northwest Ohio region.
- b. NWOESC BAC Mission: The mission of the Northwest Ohio BAC is to bring together on a regional level the leaders in business, education, and government to advise, support and enhance the awareness, instruction and experiences students are provided in striving to gain relevant, in-demand job skills as part of their preparation for future career success.
- c. Structure:
 - i. Economic Development Director updates at each meeting – an opportunity for each county director or designee to provide information and updates to connect business and education stakeholders. A key focus is on communicating local economy and job information.
 1. Matt Gilroy – Fulton County
 2. Erika Willitzer – Defiance County
 3. Ashley Epling – Williams County
 4. Jennifer Arps – Henry County
 - ii. NWOESC BAC Liaison – Investment in personnel to support regional endeavors and further education/business linkages. Growth and expansion continue with the goal to build capacity across all four counties.
 1. Mike Remer serves part-time as liaison
 - iii. An email distribution list makes it convenient for BAC members to pass along information about events and offerings that would be beneficial for the group.
- d. BAC meetings were held at NWOESC on the following dates:
 - i. March 5, 2024
 - ii. May 14, 2024
 - iii. September 17, 2024
 - iv. December 19, 2024

3. Of goals submitted in your 2024 Business Advisory Council Plan, on a scale of 1-10 with 10 being goal accomplished. What goals were you able to accomplish?

a. Goal: Educator Boot Camp – Enhancing our Future Workforce by Inspiring Educators; Score: 10

In June 2024, the NWOESC hosted its third annual Educator Bootcamp in collaboration with the economic development directors of Henry, Fulton, and Williams Counties. This weeklong event offered area educators the opportunity to tour select local businesses in the region to better understand the opportunities and needs present in our own backyard. Participants then returned to present some of their takeaways and ideas on how they might incorporate what they learned into their curriculum. Through Ashland University and with support from the Lieutenant Governor’s office, educators were able to earn college credit. The event was a resounding success, with our students emerging as the real winners as they will now have increased exposure to opportunities as relationships between area businesses and educators continue to flourish. Another Bootcamp is being planned for the Summer of 2025. We plan to continue this effort and expand to increase the number of participating businesses, and the number of educators who take advantage of the program. *Defiance County provides a different option for Educators to connect and learn from regional businesses.

b. Goal: Fostering collaboration, beyond the Council, among business, labor, and education personnel; Score: 10

- i. Business and Education Spotlights at each BAC quarterly meeting continue to be an integral part of our BAC. Business spotlights provide opportunity for area businesses and to share information related to operations, challenges, and successes as partnerships are strengthened with education. Education spotlights provide opportunity for education entities to share practices and initiatives designed to bring awareness, experiences, and instruction to students as they prepare for future career success.

- 1. Education Spotlight: Wapakoneta Internship Networking (WIN) Program – On March 5, 2024,** Laura Mears, Career Counselor at **Wapakoneta Schools**, provided an overview of the **Wapakoneta Internship Networking (WIN) program**, which connects students with real-world work experiences.

Launched in **2020 with 13 students**, the program has grown to **74 participants** and continues to expand. To participate, students must have **two back-to-back study halls** Monday through Friday, allowing them time for their internships. The program runs for **one or two semesters**, and students earn **0.5 academic credit** for every **60 hours** of completed work.

Key Program Requirements:

- Both **students and parents must sign participation agreements.**
- Internship opportunities are available in various fields, including **hospitals, veterinary clinics, churches, courthouses, and office settings.**
- Most internships are **unpaid**, with some exceptions.

A video presentation highlighted **student experiences and business partnerships**, showcasing the program's impact on career readiness.

District Superintendent Aaron Rex reflected on the program’s success, noting that over the past three years, **seniors at WHS have gained valuable hands-on**

experience in fields such as law, accounting, healthcare, law enforcement, and manufacturing. As a result of these internships, students have earned scholarships, received college funding, secured job offers, and gained deeper insight into post-high school career pathways.

The WIN program continues to provide **invaluable career exposure**, equipping students with the tools they need to make informed decisions about their futures.

2. **Business Spotlight: Northwest Ohio Piping Industry Training Center – On March 5, 2024, Steve Frazier**, a retired pipe fitter and Curriculum Specialist/Instructor at the Northwest Ohio Piping Industry Training Center, presented information about career opportunities in the skilled trades and the training available to students and adults.

The Northwest Ohio Piping Industry consists of more than **1,400 skilled journeymen and apprentices**, specializing in **plumbing, pipefitting, welding, and HVAC (heating, ventilation, and air conditioning)** services across **12 counties in Northwest Ohio**.

Frazier regularly speaks with **8th-grade students** to educate them about **career options, wages, and benefits** associated with **17 skilled trade professions**. He emphasized the high earning potential of **journeyman positions**, as well as the growing demand for skilled labor.

Training Program Overview:

- The **Piping Industry Training Center** in **Northwood, Ohio**, offers a **five-year apprenticeship program** for adults who hold a **high school diploma** and pass a **General Aptitude Test**.
- Upon completing the program, students will have accumulated **2,200 hours of training, graduated debt-free**, and obtained their **Journeyman's Card**, providing them with immediate career opportunities.

This apprenticeship model not only supports workforce development but also helps **graduates enter the workforce with no student loan debt**, positioning them for long-term career stability and financial success.

For more information about apprenticeship opportunities and skilled trade training, individuals are encouraged to contact the **Northwest Ohio Piping Industry Training Center**.

3. **Business Spotlight: Future Plans – On May 14, 2024, Pamala Mohler** introduced her new role at **Future Plans**, a nonprofit organization dedicated to identifying workforce development and education gaps in rural areas of Northwest Ohio. The organization's mission is to reduce poverty by assisting individuals in finding employment that aligns with their strengths and skills.

Future Plans serves as a **state initiative for rapid reskilling**, working closely with employers to match them with the right employees. Initially focused in Lucas County, the program has now expanded to **13 counties** across Northwest Ohio.

The initiative primarily targets **individuals aged 16 to 24**, providing **personalized assessments and one-on-one coaching**. Each participant completes the program with a **personalized action plan** designed to guide them toward career success.

Future Plans has secured **federal funding to support 1,000 individuals**, with a **December 2025 deadline** to utilize these funds. If the target is met, the funding will be **automatically renewed**, allowing for continued expansion and support.

4. **Education Spotlight: Northwest State Community College (NSCC) - Textbook Reimbursement & College Credit Plus (CCP) Impact – On May 14, 2024**, Dr. Todd Hernandez, along with NSCC staff members **Sean Burres** and **Amy Thomas**, provided updates on educational opportunities and initiatives at Northwest State Community College.

Dr. Hernandez highlighted **NSCC's full reimbursement program** for textbooks purchased through the college. While this is currently in place for the **2024 academic year**, NSCC is actively seeking funding through the **NSCC Foundation** to extend the benefit into future years.

He also noted that **students who take College Credit Plus (CCP) courses in high school** are significantly more likely to continue their education beyond graduation, reinforcing the importance of early college exposure.

Innovation in Early Childhood Education

Amy Thomas introduced the **Innovation in Early Childhood Education program**, designed for individuals pursuing careers in **preschool education, paraprofessional roles, and early childhood education (ECE)**. This **fully online, two-year program** includes a **field experience requirement** in a school district, ensuring hands-on learning for students.

Graphic Design Program & Internship Opportunities

Sean Burres discussed the **Graphic Design program**, a **two-year track** that prepares students with skills in:

- **Web design**
- **Layout and branding**
- **Photography and multimedia**
- **Video production**
- **3D modeling**

As part of the program, students participate in **co-op experiences and internships**, gaining real-world experience before graduation. Graduates leave prepared to either **enter the workforce or transition into a four-year program** for further education.

5. **Business Advisory Council Meeting Hosted by Miller Brothers Construction - On September 17, 2024**, Miller Brothers Construction (MBC) hosted a **Business Advisory Council (BAC) meeting**, bringing together industry and education leaders to discuss **workforce readiness** and strategies for addressing the **skills gap** in the construction industry.

The event featured **opening remarks** from the MBC team, followed by **three interactive rotations** that allowed attendees to experience:

- **Hands-on heavy equipment operation**

- **A simulator demonstration**
- **A virtual field trip showcasing MBC's operations**

The meeting concluded with **closing remarks**, emphasizing the importance of fostering **stronger partnerships between education and industry**.

Dave Lersch, Vice President of Administrative Operations, underscored the **critical need for collaboration** among businesses, industries, schools, and government agencies. He cited programs like **Bootcamp** as successful models for **bridging the workforce gap** and encouraged school districts to contact **Jamie Volant** to arrange **on-site demonstrations**. These demonstrations provide students with hands-on simulator experiences and insights into career opportunities within the **construction sector**.

Lersch also addressed a **pressing industry challenge**, noting that **41% of the construction workforce is projected to retire by 2031**, leaving a **significant labor gap**. To mitigate this issue, MBC is **seeking support from school districts** to help identify and **prepare the next generation of workers**. He emphasized that **early career exposure, particularly in late elementary school**, is crucial to **generating interest in construction careers**.

Mike Ritter, Safety Director at MBC, reinforced the company's unwavering commitment to **safety as a core value**. He highlighted MBC's proactive approach, which encourages **Safety Managers to build relationships with employees**, clearly communicate the **"why" behind safety protocols**, and implement **best practices** to reduce workplace incidents, injuries, and citations.

To further **strengthen partnerships with local school districts**, MBC will be **distributing an interest survey** to gauge schools' enthusiasm for **future collaborations**. This initiative aligns with MBC's ongoing efforts to **close the skills gap, prepare students for careers in construction, and build a stronger workforce for the future**.

MBC remains committed to fostering **education-industry partnerships** and ensuring students have the skills and opportunities necessary to succeed in the evolving workforce.

- 6. Director Dackin's Vision for K-12 Public Education and Workforce Integration in Ohio:** On December 19, 2024, Director Stephen Dackin (ODEW) outlined a comprehensive vision for improving K-12 public education in Ohio, with a strong focus on aligning education with workforce needs and addressing key challenges affecting student success.

Key Points:

- **Career Exploration in Schools**
 - Students need exposure to different career pathways during their K-12 education to determine whether college, the workforce, or the military is the right fit for them.
- **Early Literacy Challenges**

- Currently, 40% of third graders are not reading at grade level, prompting the implementation of the Science of Reading mandate to improve literacy outcomes.
- **Integrating Workforce Education**
 - Workforce readiness should be embedded in education to ensure students understand career opportunities beyond college and the military.
 - A recent Ohio Department of Education and Workforce (ODEW) survey of students not enrolled in college revealed that career discussions in high school largely focused on higher education and military options, with minimal attention to workforce pathways.
- **Demographic and Workforce Challenges**
 - With an aging baby boomer population and a smaller emerging workforce, Ohio faces labor shortages that must be addressed through strategic workforce initiatives.
 - Currently, 69% of Ohio's 136,000 high school graduates do not have a college degree, highlighting the need for initiatives that connect them with quality entry-level jobs.
- **Statewide Workforce Strategy**
 - The Governor's plan emphasizes that every student should graduate with a defined pathway, whether in higher education, the military, or the workforce.
 - CNBC ranks Ohio as the 7th best state for business, yet workforce development and skill gaps remain the top concerns for employers.
- **Post-Graduation Follow-Up and Career Engagement**
 - Schools should capitalize on students' interest in workforce careers by providing sustained engagement and follow-up opportunities.
 - Programs like Honda's two-year internship model benefit both businesses and students by allowing companies to evaluate potential employees while giving students hands-on experience.
- **Parental and Student Career Awareness**
 - High school graduates should leave with a clear career plan, and parents should be informed about available post-secondary options.
 - Earn-and-learn partnerships should be expanded to provide students with real-world job experience.
- **Career Technical Education Expansion**

- Career technical education should be made available to all students, especially as declining high school enrollment frees up space for these programs.
- **Attendance and Engagement Concerns**
 - ODEW is seeing rising absenteeism rates, particularly among high school students who lack motivation to attend school and parents of young children who do not view early education as essential.
 - Schools should consider replacing homerooms with advisory periods to foster stronger student-staff relationships.
- **The Three R's for Student Success**
 - **Rigor:** Establishing high expectations.
 - **Relevance:** Ensuring students understand the real-world value of their education.
 - **Relationships:** Strengthening connections between educators and students to improve engagement.
- **Workforce Barriers: Driver's License Costs**
 - The cost of obtaining a driver's license is preventing some students from entering the workforce. ODEW is developing a budget proposal to address this issue.

Director Dackin's vision emphasizes a more integrated approach to education and workforce development, ensuring that students graduate with a clear, actionable path forward. By strengthening career readiness, expanding technical education, addressing absenteeism, and reducing barriers to employment, Ohio aims to better prepare students for future success while meeting the state's workforce needs.

c. Goal: Advanced Manufacturing Consortium - Expansion of Collaboration - Building Partnerships, Coordinating Activities; Score: 5

- i. The Advanced Manufacturing Consortium (AMC) is an employer-driven sector partnership that strives to bring together stakeholders within the manufacturing industry. Through collaboration with manufacturers, K-12, higher education, private, government, and economic agencies, the AMC serves as the voice of manufacturing in Northwest Ohio. The AMC's mission is to provide an efficient and effective network with proven solutions to manufacturing's most challenging issues. Industry Sector Partnerships are a proven workforce development strategy that puts employers in the driver's seat and have demonstrated effectiveness across the country. Manufacturers within a regional labor market work together to influence alignment around common solutions with education and training, economic and workforce development, and community organizations. Collaboration between the NwOESC BAC and the Advanced Manufacturing Consortium (AMC) got off the ground in 2023. Expanded collaboration has been a challenge. The NwOESC BAC supports the work of the AMC, but as a council, does not have the time, personnel, or any resources to be "hands on" with AMC initiatives. Individual members contribute and are involved as they are able.

4. What challenges have you experienced implementing your goals?

- a. There is no funding for BACs across Ohio to assist with coordination or initiatives. With no targeted support, challenges exist related to direct student activities, time, and personnel.

5. What new partnerships have your Business Advisory Council formed for the SY24?

- a. The NWOESC BAC has been a catalyst for each county and school district therein to develop more community specific connections, inclusive of local businesses and education, with the support of the Economic Development leaders in each respective county.

6. Have you added or removed any goals submitted in your SY24 Business Advisory Council Plans? If so, please provide details.

- a. No

7. Have you received any media coverage or participated in any case studies as a Business Advisory Council? If so, please share.

- a. The Educator Bootcamp had excellent social media coverage. A video of the week's events was created and used for further promotion.
- b. The Quarterly BAC meeting held at Miller Brother Construction received a significant amount of press and coverage.
- c. The Quarterly BAC meeting in which Director Dackin provided the keynote drew media attention.

8. Council's Advice and Recommendations on Employment Skills and Curriculum Development

The council emphasizes the importance of aligning **education with workforce needs**, ensuring students develop the **essential skills and experiences** necessary for success in today's job market.

Key Recommendations:

- Prioritize Fundamental Employment & Soft Skills
- Strengthen programs that teach reliable attendance, teamwork, communication, problem-solving, organization, and conflict resolution.
 - Reinforce **work ethic and civic pride** through school and community initiatives.
 - Continue **drug-free prevention efforts**, as substance abuse remains a workforce barrier.
- **Enhance Career Pathways & Credentialing**
 - Expand **student credentialing and apprenticeship opportunities**, ensuring more pathways into skilled careers.
 - Increase **internship and job placement programs**, connecting students with local businesses, industries, and vocational schools.
- **Leverage Technology & Industry Exposure**
 - Broaden access to **STEAM learning labs, robotics clubs, and eSports**, fostering hands-on engagement with technology and innovation.

- **Ensure all students (K-12) have access to technology and digital devices** to develop necessary 21st-century skills.
- Explore **artificial intelligence (AI) in education** as a tool for future learning and workforce development.
- **Strengthen Community College & Workforce Training Connections**
 - Utilize **Community College resources**, such as:
 - **TechCred** (upskilling current employees).
 - **Strengthening Community College Training Grants** (expanding workforce education).
 - **Choose Ohio First and Earn & Learn programs** (financial incentives for students pursuing high-demand careers).
- **Increase Industry Awareness in Schools**
 - Implement **creative strategies to expose students to manufacturing and skilled trades** earlier in their education.
 - Strengthen **K-12 career awareness efforts**, helping students make informed decisions about future career paths.

9. Council's Advice on Economic and Job Market Changes

The council recognizes **shifting economic trends** and the **importance of preparing students for in-demand careers** in Northwest Ohio.

Key Recommendations:

- **Expand Awareness of Manufacturing Careers**
 - Manufacturing remains a **dominant industry in Northwest Ohio**, yet misconceptions persist. Parents and students need **accurate information** about the evolution of manufacturing, which now offers **high-paying, skilled positions**.
 - Schools should provide **firsthand exposure** to manufacturing environments through **vocational school visits, business tours, and internships**.
- **Strengthen Key Industry Pathways**
 - **Retail and construction** remain **major employment sectors** that require continued workforce development efforts.
 - Promote **STEAM education and initiatives (P-16 levels)** to align with emerging industry demands and attract higher-paying employers.
- **Use Data-Driven Workforce Strategies**
 - Regularly review **labor market trends and in-demand job data** to shape career education and advising.
 - Utilize **regional job and manufacturing fairs** to connect students with employers and career opportunities.
- **Support Economic Growth & Talent Retention**

- **Retaining young families** is critical for sustaining the workforce. Communities should assess housing, amenities, and local quality-of-life factors to attract and retain residents.
- Conduct **wage and benefits surveys** across the five-county area to ensure competitive compensation and benefits.
- Recognize that **demand for employees remains high**, and **attraction and retention strategies** are essential for sustaining workforce growth.

10. Council's Advice on Strengthening Business-Education Partnerships

The council continues to support **stronger collaborations among businesses, labor organizations, and educators** to enhance workforce development.

Key Recommendations:

- **Build Capacity for Stronger Business-Education Connections**
 - Advocate for funding to support **dedicated workforce liaison positions** at Ohio ESCs, ensuring every county has a representative focused on **connecting students to regional career opportunities**.
- **Leverage Economic & Workforce Development Initiatives**
 - Use **housing and labor market studies** to inform workforce planning and share insights with stakeholders.
 - Encourage continued participation in **NwOESC BAC meetings**, providing a platform for networking, knowledge sharing, and collaborative problem-solving.
 - Strengthen engagement with **economic development agencies**, recognizing the critical role of education in **attracting new businesses and residents**.
- **Maximize Regional Education & Training Resources**
 - **Northwest State Community College** continues to be a valuable asset, offering **affordable, high-quality education and workforce training**.
 - **Four County Career Center** provides students with hands-on, experience-based education that prepares them for careers, further education, and industry certifications.
- **Expand Pre-Apprenticeships & Work-Based Learning**
 - Utilize **Manufacturing Grants (Good Jobs Challenge) and AMC efforts** to increase **apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship opportunities**.
 - Strengthen efforts to **offer educator experiences with local businesses** through **professional development and bootcamp programs**.
- **Engage Small Businesses in Workforce Development**
 - Develop strategies to **increase small business involvement** in **NwOESC BAC presentations and activities**, ensuring their workforce needs are considered in regional planning.

These recommendations reflect the council's **commitment to strengthening the regional workforce**, ensuring students **graduate with the skills, connections, and knowledge needed** for success in **high-demand careers**.

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