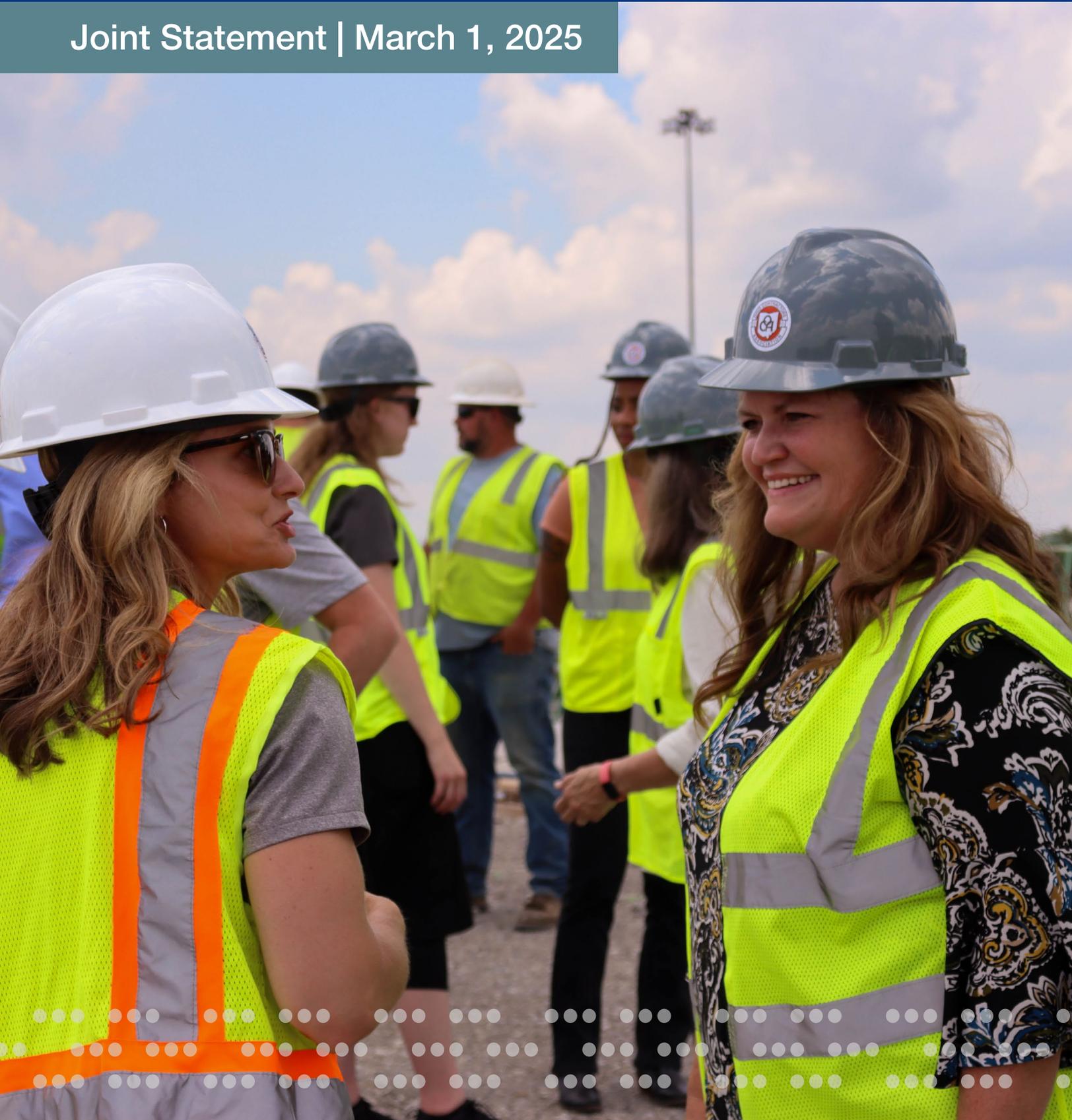


Business Advisory Council

Joint Statement | March 1, 2025





The ESC of Central Ohio's Regional Business Advisory Council (BAC) issues the following Joint Statement to report on progress outlined in its plan for the 2024-2025 school year, summarize actions taken and actions pending, and specify how the BAC, the ESC Governing Board, and the boards of BAC member school districts have fulfilled their responsibilities under state law.

For more information regarding the ESC of Central Ohio Regional Business Advisory Council, please visit: <https://www.escco.org/BusinessAdvisoryCouncil>

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

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

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Meeting Summaries

October 17, 2024 at the ESC of Central Ohio BAC Presentation Agenda | Central Ohio Industry Sector Partnerships

The meeting began with a welcome from Robb Gonda, Director of College and Career Success at the ESC of Central Ohio. Robb greeted attendees and talked about the power of one and that every member of the BAC was an important cog for providing future opportunities for students.

Phil Washburn, President and CEO of the Furniture Bank of Central Ohio, delivered the opening remarks under the theme “Stronger Together.” Phil’s message was both inspiring and practical, focusing on the transformative power of the High School Tech Internship to create meaningful change in the community. He underscored how collective efforts between education, industry, and community organizations are essential to addressing challenges and creating opportunities for students and businesses alike.

Following this, the meeting transitioned to a presentation titled *Our Impact, Our Plan*. Attendees received a recap of the accomplishments achieved during the 2023-2024 school year, with a focus on successful collaborations that bridged gaps between education and industry. The presentation also outlined the ESC’s vision and plan for the current school year, highlighting key goals and strategies aimed at deepening connections between schools and workforce partners.

The highlight of the meeting was the Industry Sector Partnership Panel, facilitated by John Hambrick, Work-Based Learning Coordinator. This panel brought together four leaders from the four Central Ohio industry sector partnerships to share their insights and experiences. Courtney Thraen from HCCOCO spoke about the importance of building partnerships in the healthcare sector and creating pathways for students to enter high-demand fields. Rae Ellen Douglas from COMP offered perspectives on advancing manufacturing opportunities by aligning education with industry needs. Thomas Gunn from ITAP discussed the value of apprenticeships in technology and how they are addressing workforce shortages in IT fields. Finally, Dennis Franks from COCAP provided compelling examples of how partnerships in construction and skilled trades are equipping students with valuable career skills. Each panelist brought a unique viewpoint, yet they collectively emphasized the importance of collaboration and innovation in preparing students for success in the workforce.

The meeting concluded with a networking session, allowing attendees to connect, share ideas, and explore opportunities for further collaboration. Attendees were encouraged to visit the BAC committee table, where they could sign up to receive more information or get involved in committee work for the 2024-2025 school year. This was a key opportunity for participants to deepen their engagement and contribute to the vital work of the Business Advisory Council.



December 12, 2024 at the ESC of Central Ohio BAC Presentation and Agenda | Moving Forward: Transportation and Logistics in Central Ohio

The Business Advisory Council meeting on December 12, 2024, began with a welcome from Robb Gonda, Director of College and Career Success at the ESC of Central Ohio. Robb opened the meeting by sharing announcements, setting the stage for the day's agenda, and engaging attendees in an interactive activity designed to foster collaboration and connections among participants.

The focus of the meeting shifted to the future of transportation and logistics in the Central Ohio region, a vital topic as the area continues to grow as a hub for innovation and industry. This discussion served as a prelude to the feature presentation by Rich Granger, Managing Director, Workforce and Economic Development - DriveOhio and Rae Ellen Douglas, Project Manager, Ohio Manufacturing Association, who explored the topic of preparing Ohio's workforce for the rapidly evolving fields of automotive and advanced mobility. Rich and Rae Ellen shared insights into the emerging skills and training required to meet the demands of this dynamic sector, providing attendees with actionable ideas for aligning educational programs with workforce needs.

Following this, Aslyne Rodriguez, Senior Director of Regional Strategic Partnerships at the Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA), presented an update on LinkUS. She detailed the region's strategic transit and mobility plans, emphasizing the importance of equitable and innovative transportation solutions to support both economic growth and workforce accessibility. Her presentation highlighted opportunities for collaboration between education, business, and transit organizations to create pathways for students into high-demand transportation and logistics careers.

After the presentations, attendees participated in a networking session. This informal time allowed participants to connect, exchange ideas, and explore potential partnerships. The meeting concluded with committee work time in which attendees divided into focus groups to address three key areas: developing professional skills for future careers, building partnerships, and coordinating experiences. Each group worked collaboratively to brainstorm ideas and develop strategies to strengthen connections between education and the workforce.



February 20, 2025 at the ESC of Central Ohio BAC Presentation and Agenda | Information Technology

The meeting began with a welcome from Robb Gonda, Director of College and Career Success, who shared important announcements and set the tone for the session focused on bridging the gap between IT education and workforce success.

The first discussion, “Bridging IT and Workforce Success,” explored the growing demand for IT professionals and how education can evolve to meet the needs of the industry. This discussion emphasized the importance of preparing students for careers in technology and the workforce’s increasing reliance on skilled workers in this field.

The main highlight of the event was the IT Panel Discussion, expertly facilitated by John Hambrick, Work-Based Learning Coordinator. Panelists shared their experiences and insights on how the IT industry intersects with education and workforce needs. Todd Seufer, Director of Product Development at G & J Pepsi, discussed the innovative technologies his company uses and the need for skilled IT workers in the business world. Carla Easley, Chief Operating Officer at Tech Corps, shared her organization’s efforts to engage students in IT education and bridge the gap between students and employers. Darian Kovach, Director of Technology at Licking Heights Local Schools, spoke about the importance of building a strong foundation for technology education in K-12 schools to ensure students are well-equipped for future IT roles.

The event also featured a live feed update from the Healthcare Career Collaborative of Central Ohio, giving attendees a glimpse into efforts aimed at creating healthcare career pathways for students in the region.

A key topic covered during the meeting was the IT Student Opportunities, including high school tech internships and pre-apprenticeships. These programs were highlighted as critical opportunities for students to gain hands-on experience in the tech industry, giving them a head start in building the skills necessary to thrive in IT careers.

The event concluded with networking time, where participants were encouraged to connect with the panelists and other attendees to expand their professional networks and explore new opportunities for collaboration. This networking session provided a valuable opportunity for businesses and educators to discuss ways to support students’ career development and foster connections that will drive success in the future.



Plan & Implementation Progress

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

The Business Advisory Council has done this work through focusing on three quality practices with committee work happening in these areas in between quarterly BAC meetings. These areas of focus are:

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

Business Advisory Council Work for Academic Year 2024-2025 to Develop Professional Skills for Future Careers:

Initiative 1

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



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



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



Spring 2025 Update: In-Progress: Four Career Pathway Audits have been completed with Six currently being conducted in the following BAC member school districts: Buckeye Valley Local Schools, Cardington-Lincoln Local Schools, Canal Winchester Local Schools, Delaware City Schools, Grandview Heights City Schools, Licking Heights Local Schools, Olentangy Local Schools.

Initiative 2

Explore and implement partnerships to provide simulated work-based learning experiences for students.



Intended Outcome: Prepare students for real world work experiences through high-quality simulations developed in collaboration with industry partners.



Data Measurement: Measure student participation, skill improvement, satisfaction with simulations, and the establishment of relevant partnerships through a post-survey of participating youth.



Spring 2025 Update: In-Progress: Currently in the development phase of determining viable options for business and student participation.

Initiative 3

Provide regional educator professional development through the Central Ohio Career Readiness Council's (COCRC) monthly meetings and Central Ohio Workforce Readiness Collaborative (COWRC) Communities of Practice (CoP) centered on targeted populations.



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



Data Measurement: Number of meetings held, participants, barriers, and solutions implemented during the 2024-2025 school year.



Spring 2025 Update: In-Progress: Six COCRC meetings have been held, with an average monthly attendance of 64. Additionally, three CoP meetings focused on target populations have been conducted, with action items identified for completion and reporting by the end of the 2024-2025 school year.

Business Advisory Council Work for Academic Year 2024-2025 to Build Partnerships:

Initiative 1

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



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



Data Measurement: Measured through metrics such as partnership engagement, student performance, workforce readiness, community involvement, and continuous improvement feedback.



Spring Update 2025: In Progress: The 2025 Columbus Compact is scheduled for May 15, 2025 at Columbus State Community College.

Initiative 2

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



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



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



Spring Update 2025: In Progress: 2025 Careers2Classroom event scheduled for June 2-5 and 13, 2025. Educator registration is ongoing throughout the Spring.

Initiative 3

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



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



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



Spring Update 2025: In-Progress: As of January 2025, pre-apprenticeships have increased from 106 recognized pre-apprenticeship at the end of the 2023-2024 school year to 263. This is a 145% increase of opportunities for students to take part in these work-based learning options. Additionally, pre-apprenticeships have been created in 12 of the 16 career clusters providing a multitude of opportunities that align to their interests and aptitudes.

Business Advisory Council Plans for Year 2024-2025 To Coordinate Experiences

Initiative 1

Develop systems to support student work-based experiences in multiple career fields.



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



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



Spring Update 2025: In-Progress: Two pilot middle school programs are in development for implementation in May 2025. The first is a drone experience in collaboration with Columbus City Schools. This event will be focused on exposure to career fields in unmanned flight and computer science and other core subject competencies necessary to access these future employment opportunities. The second is a lifestyle fair in collaboration with Hilliard City Schools. This pilot will involve all middle level students in the Hilliard City Schools and provide speakers and activation stations aligned to student interests and passion. This event will be coordinated in part as a partnership with the Find Your Grind learning platform.

Initiative 2

Partner with healthcare and construction industries on student events and resources.



Intended Outcome: Expose high school students in Central Ohio area to in-demand careers in the fields of healthcare and construction.



Data Measurement: Number of events and students involved in the activities.



Spring Update 2025: Completed: HCCOCO Healthcare Summit in February hosted almost 2,000 students over two days with hands-on engagement across six different healthcare occupations. **In-Process:** Build Your Future hands-on construction event is planned for October 2025.

Initiative 3

Develop a regional Chamber of Commerce event to enhance networking and sharing of program information happening through area career technical centers, the ESC, industry sector partnerships, and individual businesses.



Intended Outcome: Develop a regional Chamber of Commerce event to enhance networking and disseminate program information through area career technical centers, the ESC, industry sector partnerships, and individual businesses.



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



Spring Update 2025: Completed: On October 29, 2024 the first Academic Workforce Alliance Meeting occurred at the ESC of Central Ohio in collaboration with OhioMeansJobs and the Columbus Chamber of Commerce. Various presenters shared best practices, challenges and ways to integrate K-12 and industry throughout the region. Anchoring the session was Michael Wilkos from the United Way of Central Ohio who shared insights in the changing landscape of our housing needs amidst the growing population in our region. A follow up meeting is in the planning stage for Spring 2025.

Business Advisory Council Participants



Required Questions/ Other Activities & Accolades

ODEW Required Joint Statement Questions:

1. Are there any changes to your Business Advisory Council's structure or leadership since you submitted your plan for this academic year? None
2. Of goals submitting in your 2023 Business Advisory Council Plan, on a scale of 1-10 with 10 being goal accomplished. 5- Established goals and initiatives are in progress with an anticipated completion day of June 2025. What goals were you able to accomplish? N/A
What challenges have you experienced implementing your goals? Establishing new committee work and processes has taken more time than expected to establish. Further refinement of this engagement will continue throughout the remainder of the academic year. Additional feedback will be obtained through a member survey to further refine the process for the next academic school year's BAC.
3. What new partnerships have your Business Advisory Council formed for the SY24? - Amazon Web Services - Andelyn Biosciences - Applegate Talent Strategies - Apprenti Consulting - ASH Healthcare - Ashland University - Atlas Butler - Builders Exchange - CCI Engineering Services – CompDrug – COSI – Danis - Delaware Area Chamber of Commerce - Doyle HCM - Educational Empowerment Group - Epik, Ltd. - Express Pros - Fusion Alliance - Graphic Media Alliance - Grove City Economic Development - Igel Construction - Junior Achievement of Central Ohio - Ohio Life Sciences - The Ohio Society of CPA's - Sarnova Health and Safety – SCORE - Singleton Construction, LLC - Status Solutions
4. Have you added or removed any goals submitted in your SY24 Business Advisory Council plans? If so, please provide details. No Goals have been removed.
5. Have you received any media coverage or participated in any case studies as a Business Advisory Council? If so, please share. No formal press coverage has been conducted as of the time of this publication.

Other Related Activities and Accolades:

Career Z Challenge: ESC of Central Ohio is one of ten national finalists in the U.S. Department of Education's Career Z Challenge which focuses on work-based learning experiences for all students grades 9-12. Participation in this work requires communities of practice that involve community, business, and K-12 stakeholders. In each BAC meeting updates are given on this work and how it is benefiting BAC members and students throughout our region.

PAYA: The ESC was invited to apply for membership into the Partnership to Advance Youth Apprenticeship (PAYA) and was accepted in January 2025. This national network focuses on promoting pre-apprenticeships and removing technical and financial barriers to student access these opportunities.

Council Recognition: Throughout the year recognizing our BAC members has been highlighted with certificates, window clings, and upcoming business engagement awards at our final meeting of the school year. To help anchor this work a BAC logo was developed (see to the right) and will be used in future publications and presentations.



Advice & Recommendations

Across the Central Ohio region, a persistent “skills gap” remains due to a mismatch between the skills of job seekers and the needs of employers. To address this challenge, we must continue fostering strong collaboration between education, business, and industry. This includes expanding regional workforce initiatives, enhancing career exploration and counseling efforts, increasing business engagement opportunities for students, and more. Resources focused on economic and job market trends, along with strategies to bridge the skills gap, can be found on the Business Advisory Council (BAC) website, particularly within the BAC’s purpose document.

BAC members recognize the critical need to align education with the evolving economic landscape, especially as new large employers establish a presence in Central Ohio. While progress has been made in developing educational pathways that equip students with the skills needed for in-demand jobs, more must be done to scale up work-based learning experiences, expand employer participation, and increase access to industry-recognized credentials.

Additionally, BAC members stress the importance of reaching students and families earlier—particularly at the middle school level to expose them to diverse career pathways, support future career planning, and ensure they have the skills and resources needed for success. Parent awareness efforts remain a key component of this strategy.

Finally, the BAC remains committed to a regional approach to workforce and career development while recognizing the importance of local outreach and implementation. Sharing insights and strategies at the regional level is essential, but equally critical is ensuring that schools, businesses, and community partners apply this information effectively within their local contexts.

By working together, we can strengthen the bridge between education and industry, better preparing students for the workforce and meeting the talent needs of Central Ohio’s growing economy.

Central Ohio Workforce Partners







educational service center
of Central Ohio

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