



Setting Ohio's Talent Agenda

A Report to Governor Ted Strickland
and Lieutenant Governor Lee Fisher
with Action Recommendations
from the Ohio Talent Tiger Team

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The importance of talent development has never been greater!

For Ohio to compete successfully in today's global economy, it must have a world-class, 21st century workforce. Its workers must have strong work ethics, but they also must have strong academic, workplace and technical skills. Along with technology and capital, knowledge and skills are the core drivers for economic success. This means that Ohio workers must have marketable credentials in high-wage, high-demand occupations.

This challenge is reflected clearly in a recent report issued by the Workforce Strategy Center: *"In the globally competitive economy of the 21st century, state economies in large part will thrive or decline based on how well they cultivate and retain 'knowledge workers': individuals who possess postsecondary educational credentials (though not necessarily a bachelor degree), technical aptitudes, the ability to learn rapidly, and an entrepreneurial approach to employment."*



Ohio's talent challenge is clear ... and not meeting that challenge will have devastating consequences for Ohio's economy, just as it will limit the opportunities of Ohioans in a fiercely competitive global economy.

The Strickland-Fisher Turnaround Ohio plan recognizes that one of Ohio's top priorities must be to enact and carry out policies – and support practices – that develop an educated and skilled adult workforce to fill the jobs of existing and new employers. It also acknowledges that policies must be developed and implemented by a workforce system that is “best-in-class” – a system that is adult-focused, accessible to youth, fully and effectively aligned, affordable for all Ohioans and accountable for results.

In building that kind of workforce development system, policy makers must embrace a new mindset – and they must confront two realities:

- 1. Ohio's workforce development system must be demand driven.**
 - It must support sectors of the economy that are growing good jobs at a rapid pace, and it must engage aggressively with businesses to support them and build partnerships that bolster the state's economy – and its regional economies – in areas of strength.
 - It must reflect a strong business culture, and it must build and nurture a strong reputation for meeting and exceeding business needs for customized, flexible and industry-driven skills training.

- It must develop employers into business customers by working with them – not just to obtain a job order, but to expand the universal services available to meet their needs, develop an ongoing relationship and provide maximum focus on the efforts to develop talent.

2. Policy makers need to respect and build on working partnerships and relationships with employers that are already in place, and they must pursue new relationships that enhance customer service.

- Efforts to build new infrastructures can bring needed synergy, but they must be sensitive to existing rules, roles and relationships. The restructuring of governance systems should be phased in and managed effectively in order to minimize disruptive forces that distract people from the critical work that defines their mission. In addition, changes should be designed to improve customer service – where the system “listens” to its customers and identifies problems and solutions through data-driven, brain-storming sessions.

Ten Key Assumptions

1. Ohio's system for developing the talent of its citizens must be customer friendly. The system must be responsive to the needs of employers, just as its services must be readily accessible to workers and to those who want to acquire the knowledge and skills that will make them more productive and successful in the workplace.
2. Incremental changes are not sufficient; Ohio's workforce training system requires bold changes and new initiatives. Yet, while fundamental change is needed, we should build on the things that are already in place – things that are working (or could be made to work) for businesses and employees alike.
3. Change needs to be phased in – not everything we do can be started immediately.
4. Workforce development is a key “driver” of Ohio's economic development strategy – and it should be treated accordingly.
5. Ohio's workforce development efforts should be inclusive, addressing both the state's higher-skilled human capital agenda and the needs of lower income Ohioans for whom training can open the doors to better jobs and an improved standard of living.
6. Ohio's workforce training and development system should focus on high-growth sectors and areas of opportunity.
7. Ohio needs to make better use of its postsecondary and adult education assets.
8. Ohio needs to find ways to strengthen collaboration among regional stakeholders because partnerships across jurisdictions and functional areas are critically important.
9. Ohio's workforce development initiatives should be performance-based – they should target resources to those activities that will have the greatest difference for Ohio workers and the state's economic prosperity.
10. Ohio's talent development solution is not necessarily more money; rather, it is finding ways to make better use of the resources that are already available.

Ohio's Vision . . .

Ohio will be a leader in *talent development* – in giving the state's employers a competitive edge by meeting and exceeding their needs for customized, flexible and industry-driven skills training, and in helping workers acquire the knowledge, skills and dispositions that will allow them to get good jobs that pay family-sustainable wages and to succeed in the 21st century global economy.

Four Areas of Strategic Action

Ohio's talent development vision is clear. Yet, to realize that vision, we must re-evaluate and redesign the state's workforce training and delivery system. We must ensure that Ohio's talent development initiatives are properly conceived and efficiently managed, and we must direct funding toward education and training that responds to both employer and employee needs.

For this purpose, the redesign of Ohio's workforce training and delivery system will be structured around four strategic actions:

- 1. Customer Usage and Satisfaction**
Improving Ohio's ability to meet and exceed employers' and workers' needs
- 2. Responsiveness to Change**
Making system innovation and learning a workforce development priority
- 3. Targeted and Effective Use of Ohio's Talent Building Assets**
Making better use of Ohio's education and workforce training resources
- 4. Structures and Processes**
Improving the design and operation of Ohio's talent development system

Targeted actions are required in each of these areas. For this purpose, the Ohio Talent Tiger Team recommends the initiatives identified on the following pages.



Ohio's Talent Development Goals ...

- Growth in personal income
- Growth in jobs and employment
- Improved customer satisfaction

Customer Usage and Satisfaction

Improving Ohio's ability to meet and exceed employers' and workers' needs

Identify and Use Performance Metrics

- Develop customer usage and satisfaction metrics that are tied to the key talent development goals of income growth, job growth and customer satisfaction.
- Create an Economic Opportunity Outcome Scorecard, in coordination with economic development entities, for identifying and measuring performance at state and regional levels.
- Create a common set of performance metrics based on information generated by the Ohio Business Roundtable's market study designed to provide information about the jobs available now and in the future for postsecondary students/graduates, and what knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors are needed to succeed in those jobs.
- Link future funding to performance metrics.



Make the One-Stop System More Business Friendly

- Establish quality assurance processes for One-Stops to improve their "physical front door."
- Create a system-wide brand name (possibly "Workforce Opportunity Centers") for One-Stops that meet new standards.
- Expand access points to talent development services by developing a wider network of "express sites" tied to the brand.
- As part of the branding initiative, require One-Stops to create a specific Business Services Program that refines the menu of services offered to employers and explores options for new or expanded items (e.g., tax credits, discounts and targeted training) to better respond to employers' needs.
- Offer incentives to employers to raise their participation in the One-Stop system.

Improve Job Matching Capabilities

- Improve "virtual front door" of One-Stops by integrating their electronic job-matching system with a broader array of data from economic development and education systems; and tie the newly integrated data system to the broader branding initiative.
- Establish the "Ohio Open Door Card" and make it available to adult learners at every state-funded training provider so they may have a transportable record of learning accomplishments and education/training program participation and eligibility.

Raise Public and Employer Awareness of Talent Development Services

- Launch a multi-faceted, multi-year statewide marketing campaign aimed at increasing employers' and employees' use of the state's talent development system.

Responsiveness to Change

Making system innovation and learning a workforce development priority

Establish an Ohio Regional Industry Sector Initiative

- Encourage employers and economic development, education and training organizations to form alliances that work in new ways, with the dual goals of meeting the talent development needs of industries and advancing the employment and job quality of low-skilled and unemployed workers.
- Implement a data-driven planning process – supported with state funds – through which regional alliances identify critical industries within regional markets and develop customized workforce and economic development solutions that can address talent development needs of multiple employers in their specific region and identified industry.
- Provide state support for regional alliances through technical assistance, economic and labor market data, and peer support and learning.
- Align state funding streams to finance regional sector solutions, such as WIA discretionary funds, Ohio Skills Bank initiative and credentialing (i.e., the career pathways initiative and Career Readiness and Manufacturing).
- Seek federal funding through the U.S. Department of Labor’s WIRED (Workforce Innovation and Regional Economic Development) program for initiatives – modeled after already proven programs in neighboring states – that drive regional competitiveness through the alignment of workforce training and postsecondary/adult education services.



Use Labor Market Information Strategically

- Create state-regional cooperation on a “strategic intelligence” network by re-working labor market information responsibilities to ensure that LMI activities are linked more closely to related economic development initiatives.

Implement Career Pathways Initiative Statewide

- Take the Ohio Bridges to Opportunities pilot career pathways model to scale throughout the state.

Provide Trained Workers for Growth Industries

- Pilot an Ohio Workforce Guarantee targeting dollars to the state’s growth industries – and to attracting more growth industries to the state.

Seek Federal Waivers to Tailor Federal Workforce Funds to Meet State and Local Needs

- Increase the workforce development system’s efficiency and flexibility in providing needed employee training services – at both the state and local levels – through additional waiver requests to the U.S. Department of Labor related to the implementation of the Workforce Investment Act.

Targeted and Effective Use of Ohio's Talent Building Assets

Making better use of Ohio's education and workforce training resources

Make Postsecondary and Adult Education More Affordable

- Work with the state's education policy leaders, as well as employers and other stakeholders in the state's workforce development system, to improve the affordability of postsecondary and adult education opportunities.

Reduce Barriers to Attaining Education and Training Credentials

- Work with the Ohio Board of Regents to improve articulation and transfer opportunities among postsecondary and adult education programs.
- Increase flexibility in movement through education and training system by developing "stackable certificates."
- Fully implement and expand AccelerateOhio's certificate-based services through adult career-technical centers, two-year campuses and One-Stop centers.



Make Education More Readily Accessible

- Expand online and distance learning resources and opportunities.
- Support apprenticeships, student internships, faculty externships and mentoring/coaching initiatives with businesses.

Target Funding to Initiatives that Develop Talent

- Support employees' careers as well as business growth by giving priority across state and federally funded programs to those projects that will result in workers receiving new skill-related credentials; and redirect funding to those talent development initiatives that have the greatest potential for helping employees upgrade their job-related knowledge and skills.
- Wherever appropriate, pool discretionary funding from multiple sources to promote new, desired behaviors and to create performance-based funding strategies.

Support Small and Emerging Businesses

- Promote entrepreneurship through the expansion of specialized postsecondary curriculum and targeted workforce supports and services for small and emerging businesses.

Organizing Structures and Processes

Improving the design and operation of Ohio's talent development system

Reconstitute the Governor's Workforce Policy Board Structure and Mission

- Reduce the size of Governor's Workforce Policy Board, ensuring representation from emerging industries and all sizes of businesses, as well as labor and the state's non-profit, community-based organizations.
- Broaden the Governor's Workforce Policy Board's mission beyond federal compliance to a wider economic and workforce development agenda, while focusing its work around a tightly defined set of goals, strategies and results that are consistent with the needs of the system's customers.
- Provide a cross-agency staff for the Governor's Workforce Policy Board office.



Establish a Cabinet-Level Talent Council

- Form a small, focused Talent Integration Council chaired by the Lt. Governor to direct the Governor's Workforce Policy Board Office.

Increase Coordination Among Education, Workforce and Economic Development Systems

- Create a cohesive economic and workforce development structure to build synergy between economic and workforce development staff, as well as among state-funded initiatives at the Ohio Department of Development and the several U.S. Department of Labor-funded programs currently housed at the Ohio Department of Job & Family Services.
- Shift adult workforce training initiatives (i.e., ABLE. adult career-technical centers) from the Ohio Department of Education to the Ohio Board of Regents (where there should be a new workforce education division) to ensure policy alignment and to enhance the accessibility and effectiveness of services; and work with the Regents to ensure that the responsiveness of career-technical centers to employer needs is not jeopardized.

Redesign and Expand Rapid Response Services

- Create a Rapid Response Strike Force, under the leadership of the Governor's Office, to better address the needs of dislocated workers and to avert business closures and layoffs in both large and small and public and privately held firms.
- Consider best practices in developing Rapid Response services:
 - Rapid Response initiatives implemented by local and regional entities with state direction (i.e., the state would be responsible for Rapid Response services and for an early warning system that is sensitive to both positive and negative environmental changes).
 - Layoff aversion as a critical element of Rapid Response plans and practices.
 - Rapid Response plans that include the establishment of labor-management committees as described by the Workforce Investment Act.
 - Rapid Response initiatives that integrate WIA and TAA.

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The Ohio Talent Tiger Team commenced its work on February 1, 2007. During the course of its deliberations, Team members benefited from written and/or oral presentations by the following individuals:

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