Building a Competitive Workforce:

Final Report

Presented by: Strategic Workforce Alignment Group (SWAG)

March 15, 2013
STRATEGIC WORKFORCE ALIGNMENT GROUP (SWAG)

FINAL REPORT

BACKGROUND:
The Cleveland/Cuyahoga County Workforce Investment Board (WIB) approved the creation of a new workgroup called the Strategic Workforce Alignment Group (SWAG) at its quarterly meeting on May 17, 2012. This action was based on the recommendations of a WIB subgroup that was formed to develop an approach for the WIB to improve the alignment of workforce employment, training and education programs with the needs of employers for skilled workers. SWAG was formed and began meeting on an aggressive monthly schedule for six months starting August 14, 2012. The membership roster is attached.

Purpose:
There is broad agreement that a trained and educated workforce is necessary for economic growth and regional prosperity. However, there is also a common concern that not all members of the current and future workforce have the skills, education and credentials needed by employers to sustain the job growth anticipated and needed in the region. In response, compelling and creative initiatives have been launched by all levels of government as well as industry associations, educational institutions and community-based organizations that are aimed at specific components of the education and training shortfall – e.g., college completion initiatives; industry-based career exploration campaigns.

Even so, there remains a need to address the various gaps and mismatches that constrain the alignment of supply and demand such as:

- Information gaps: current and prospective workers do not know about opportunities and employers do not know about available workers;
- Skill gaps: current and future workers often lack basic, technical, communication and professional skills that enable them to fill positions; and
- Location mismatches: job growth is occurring in areas that are difficult for many prospective workers to access because of transportation barriers.

The **GOAL** of the SWAG is to address these gaps by proposing specific strategies to better align workforce and education programs and services, including support services, with employers’ needs for skilled workers in order to produce a pool of talented workers.
These strategies in turn:

- Support business retention, expansion and attraction;
- Provide current and future workers pathways to good jobs and careers; and,
- Contribute to community prosperity and quality.

The major **DELIVERABLE** for the SWAG was to develop a set of specific strategies toward achieving the goal that are actionable by businesses, jobseekers, students, educators, trainers, workforce intermediaries including the WIB, career counselors, and the general community.

**Workgroup Guiding Principles:**

- The geographic focus area is Cleveland/Cuyahoga County but regional connections occurred through members who represent regional organizations.
- The aim is to develop connections to existing data, programs, initiatives and resources in different and better ways that makes the skills and jobs information better aligned, available and actionable.
- The SWAG will not review specific employment, training or education programs for efficiency or effectiveness.
- This effort will complement other work that is underway such as the Regional Economic Competitiveness Strategy work and the Governor’s workforce initiative led by the Office of Workforce Transformation.
- The Group will seek ways to build off “what works.”

**STRATEGIC GOALS:**

The SWAG organized its work around three categories: Work Readiness; Employer-Jobseeker Alignment; and Skills-in-Demand.

It also adopted the approach that strategies must be “SMART,” i.e., specific, measurable, achievable, realistic with a timeline; and to also identify who should work on implementing each specific goal.

The following section outlines the SMART Strategies across the three categories.
## SMART STRATEGIES MATRIX

### A. WORK READINESS

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<tr>
<td>What do we want to accomplish/change?</td>
<td>Specific</td>
<td>Measureable</td>
<td>Achievable</td>
<td>Realistic</td>
<td>Timeline</td>
<td>Who will take the lead?</td>
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<td>1. Address the problem of lack of work readiness or “soft skills:” establish a unified standard for work readiness like National Career Readiness Credential after running a pilot program, consulting with employers, and collecting information on whether local workforce organizations use this or something else.</td>
<td>Same Standard = Efficiency in Job match; improved retention; common language of work readiness across different organizations, jobs and industries.</td>
<td>Consult Employers. Review Evaluations. Design Pilot Program. Collect information on current assessments or tools used, - What are we (local SWAG members) using? Determine resource needs for pilot and implement if secured. Determine resource needs for CAS and implement if secured.</td>
<td>60 days: consult with employers, collect information; and design pilot under (a). + 30 days: Identify resources needed for NCRC pilot and CAS scale-up. + 30 days: implement pilot and/or expansion.</td>
<td>Who will take the lead? (Suggestions)</td>
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<td>2. Completers/Graduates of Tri C, high school and Training Programs who want to work are entered into data base at Employment Connection.</td>
<td>Bigger Talent Pool = Increase job orders + more placements.</td>
<td>Consult between WIB, Tri-C and CMSD. Analyze numbers &amp; operational issues (capacity). Look at LCCC info and how it works there.</td>
<td>45 days</td>
<td>WIB • Tri-C • Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD)</td>
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<td>3. Expand NEONI Job Shadowing to IT industry to pilot whether it can support more industries.</td>
<td>More work experience = increased job matches. Increase job shadowing experiences in IT industry.</td>
<td>RITE Board to work with NEONI to expand initiative. Identify resources to expand application and matching processes. Design evaluation process to include whether the system can be expanded further.</td>
<td>45 days to develop plan.</td>
<td>Northeast Ohio Nursing Initiative (NEONI) • Regional Information Technology Engagement (RITE) Board</td>
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| 4. Establish central place to find out about internship opportunities. Expand access to economically disadvantaged individuals. | Internship opportunities easier to find. More access to students. | Complete a review of how internship opportunities are currently advertised. Develop recommendations to streamline and expand access by working with the efforts that have been put in place through TeamNEO, NOCHE (Northeast Ohio Council on Higher Education), etc. | Review completed by May. | • Center for Health Affairs/NEONI  
• Northeast Ohio Health Science and Innovation Coalition (NOHSIC)  
• CMSD  
• Other industry associations |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5. Expand WVIZ/NOTA to more Schools + Industries and identify resources to strengthen the quality of the career exploration programs. Connect more industry Programs to schools. | Greater interest in careers in middle-skills in-demand jobs. Build the talent pipeline for career pathways. Increase in talent Pool = increased job matches. | Look at existing examples. Determine what works best. Identify resources to expand and strengthen programming. Develop plan and implementation timetable. | 90 days | • Manufacturing Advocacy and Growth Network (MAGNET)  
• CMSD  
• Industry Assns  
• WIB |
| 6. Expand career information to more schools, across industries. Get input from guidance counselors and educators. | More career information to more schools across industries. More interest in jobs in healthcare, manufacturing, IT, energy and construction. | Hold roundtable discussion(s) with high schools and Tri-C to generate expansion strategies. Build on existing activities to create a sustainable process to widely communicate career information. | Roundtable discussion(s) designed and held 90 days. Process designed + 90 days. Process implemented (TBD). | • CMSD  
• Tri-C  
• WIB  
• Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services (ODJFS)  
• Business/industry associations |
### B. EMPLOYER-JOB SEEKER ALIGNMENT (Driven by Employer Demand)

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<td><strong>Specific</strong></td>
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<td>How will we know the goal is reached? What will be the measurable difference? Outcome, not output.</td>
<td>What resources do we need to reach this goal?</td>
<td>When will we achieve this change?</td>
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| **1.** | Create a cross-industry talent pipeline for middle-skills jobs in construction, manufacturing and energy by identifying common foundational competencies and their stackable credentials. | Bigger, better, more diverse pipeline. More career pathway options. Reduce hiring costs. Improve retention. | Concept needs further development before it can be determined A and R. Consult with industry associations, GCP, COSE, etc. May need additional resources to build the middle-skills model and training curriculum. Identify and use existing models. Build off of the successful Cleveland Public Power model. | Consult with industry, etc. by May. Secure resources by July. Develop model by December. | • MAGNET  
• WIB |
| **2.** | WIB issues a quarterly jobs “snapshot” to share info on in-demand, anecdotal information, and to highlight an industry, occupation, or skills, tools, or programs. | Raise awareness in community of the demand for workers and programs. Helps fulfill WIB’s strategic role in community. | Develop the quarterly snapshot process which uses data that is available; input gathered from employers through normal business to add the anecdotes; and choosing a “feature” of the quarter – e.g., cool new job; electronic tool. Determine how the snapshot is disseminated. | Format and process developed in April and reviewed by WIB at May meeting. Snapshot launched at August WIB meeting. | • WIB  
• United Labor Agency (ULA)  
• ODJFS-Labor Market Information (LMI) |
| **3.** | Roundtable on other hiring issues, e.g., drugs, criminal background checks, that result in additional action steps. | Action steps will be generated as a result of the meeting. | Employers state that drug use is a major problem for applicants. For this, and maybe other issues, determine what action should be taken: e.g., info campaign; new policy of WIB re training dollars; PSAs, etc. | Plan Roundtable by May. Host by July. | • WIB  
• Greater Cleveland Partnership (GCP)  
• Towards Employment |
| **4.** | Design and implement a manufacturing pilot program. | Better retention of hires. More productive. Positive return on investment. | Create a pilot to award 2 credentials to job seekers, MSSC and NCRC, with employer commitments to hire and provide OJT. Need to secure additional resources. | Design pilot: by July. Recruit employers: by October. Implement by November (pending funding). | • MAGNET  
• Wire-NET  
• WIB  
• Education partners  
• Towards Employment |
## C. SKILLS IN-DEMAND

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1. **Incentives to employers to hire workers with less than 100% of skills needed in in-demand jobs through:**
   - Providing On-the-Job Training resources
   - Support to consortia of employers doing training
   - Support specific training providers with good track record
   Faster job vacancies filled (employer). Faster reemployment (employee). Increase individual skill levels
   Focus on specific sectors (Manuf., IT):
   - ID common job vacancies
   - ID potential trainees
   - ID Training resources ($) and providers
   - ID length of time
   Invest in jobs that have a realistic career pathway.
   Identify participating employers and agencies by summer 2013,
   Identify jobs by summer 2013,
   Commit training dollars by fall 2013
   - Industry Associations
   - GCP
   - WIB
   - Cleveland Foundation
   - Towards Employment

2. **Establish/utilize a common diagnostic to determine that jobseekers have the necessary skills for the job --e.g., work keys.**
   Better assessments = better matches for training/jobs.
   More assessments.
   Create working group to determine feasibility; design processes; and identify resources.
   Workgroup created in May.
   Initial deliverable by EOY 2013.
   - MAGNET
   - Towards Employment
   - WIB

3. **Improve job-matching process:**
   - Meeting/focus groups with employers/recruiters, etc.
   - Assistance with tools to improve job postings (competency model)
   - Identifying credentials
   Improve system efficiency for hiring employers.
   Educate business and industry associations.
   Through employer input, document causes of hiring issues, e.g., have not hired in some time, too many applications, and veterans-too many programs.
   ID issues in job banks/matching process in public system.
   Same job description as 10 years ago.
   Identify number and composition of meetings 90 days.
   Conduct meetings and compile results 90+ days. Develop improvements to job matching +60 days. Implement (TBD).
   - GCP
   - WIB
   - ULA
   - ODJFS
| 3 | Improve job-matching process (cont’d):  
   - Work with business and industry associations  
   - Focus on WIB process for improvements. | Increased number of low-skilled workers linked to services. Increased candidate pool of workers for entry-level, gateway positions. Use OJT in connection with supportive services to increase retention rate. | Develop strategic partnership between EC and Towards Employment, CEOGC, ODJFS, County TANF and others to address hurdles and provide soft skills for low skilled adults. Bring together ABLE programs with training providers and possibly employers to conduct needs analysis for contextualized literacy programs to address skills gaps due to literacy needs. | Meeting between EC and supportive services agencies by spring 2013, partnership developed by summer 2013. Planning sessions with ABLE programs and training providers and possibly employers on literacy needs for low-skilled workers by summer 2013. | • Employment Connection  
• Towards Employment  
• CEOGC  
• The Literacy Cooperative  
• Cuyahoga Community College |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | Improve collaboration with supportive service agencies to connect low skilled adults to wraparound services and specialized job training programs. | • Connect and promote available information on industry/occupation specific skills-in-demand; projections for job vacancies/growth; emerging occupations; credentials valued; and other assets. Develop a process/system to make these data and assets easily available and usable by all who need and provide career information. | Increase the number of individuals/organizations who know about in-demand/new career opportunities and pursue the training/credentialing. Improve effectiveness of good research which is being conducted and published by industry associations and others. Improve labor market efficiency by making available information on job and career opportunities that are not widely known. | A small group to be convened to explore options for achieving this goal. As the information already exists, the challenge is to make it easily accessible and usable across industries and organizations by workforce organizations, educators, jobseekers, and others. Potential options should include building it into an existing system(s) of information/career exploration; perhaps conducting a challenge to create a fun and easy app that could be used; etc. | Create exploration group by May, develop options by October. | • WIB  
• RITE Board  
• Tri-C  
• CMSD  
• Center for Health Affairs  
• MAGNET |
IMPLEMENTATION:

- **Roll-out the Strategies**: An event is planned for March 15, 2013 at Corporate College East to engage the larger community (businesses, educators, government, community based organizations, organized labor, philanthropy, etc.) in, validating and implementing the goals. This meeting will provide a forum to discuss the workforce supply and demand issues and how these actions will improve connections.

- **High-Level implementation Planning**: The March 15th meeting will be a working session to create an implementation plan for each goal, including identifying the resources needed, a lead organization for each strategy, and the identification of organizations/entities who will join the team to implement the goal.

- **Complementing the Regional Economic Competitiveness Strategy (RECS)**: At the same time the SWAG has been developing strategies, RECS has also been working to identify Driver and Emerging industries and skills needed for the 18-county region. Its goal to meet the employment demand for driver and emerging industries such as manufacturing, hospitals/biotech and other high-demand occupations will be advanced through the implementation of the SWAG strategies.

- **Provide an Implementation Structure**: The Cleveland/Cuyahoga County WIB will create a structure to ensure the implementation of the SWAG strategies. Through its Cleveland DOL member, the White House Council on Strong Cities, Strong Communities will continue to provide consultation and facilitation to the effort. Work will begin immediately following the March 15th meeting.

THANK YOU

These action strategies were developed by the SWAG and the WIB thanks the members for their active participation in and contributions to this process. Thanks is also extended to Cuyahoga Community College for providing meeting space for the Roll-Out Event and to the Cleveland Foundation for providing grant support for the event through Living Cities.

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