



WIOA REGIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Biennial Update for 2023

Prepared in partnership by the following:



Workforce Council
of Southwest Ohio



BCW|Workforce

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SUMMARY

Consideration to review updates to the Southwest Ohio Region's Four-Year Strategic Workforce Development Plan, serving Hamilton, Butler, Clermont, and Warren Counties, in adherence to the [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act \(WIOA\) of 2014](#), the [Ohio Department of Job and Family Services \(ODJFS\), Office of Workforce Development](#) has requested local workforce development boards and regions to review their Four-Year Strategic Plans "post COVID" and make such changes as warranted by updates in demographics, labor market information and local/regional economies. A review of our region's economic data has resulted in the updates to our Regional Plan described below. As the proposed modifications are material, a local workforce board and chief elected official approval is needed.

BACKGROUND

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires states, local workforce development boards and regions to develop a Four-Year Strategic Regional Plan and requires states and local areas to consider whether a modification would be appropriate every two years. We have reviewed the Plan for our Region and are proposing the changes identified in the Discussion section of this Memo.

The Plan is divided into two distinct parts. The first section, which is regionally directed, and the second sections, which contain the addendum from each of the local areas comprising Ohio Local Workforce Development Areas 12 (Butler, Clermont, and Warren Counties) and 13 (Hamilton County). The local area addenda was submitted to the State in 2021, along with the initial Regional Plan, and described services provided locally in each area with great specificity. *Although relevant updates were made to the local area addenda, the vast amount of updates were primarily made to the Regional section of the Plan.*

To help enhance the readability of the updated Plan for the State, local board members and community partners, all updates to the Plan were made in [Blue](#). Modifications include material and non-material changes.

DISCUSSION

The following are key highlights of the proposed modifications to the Plan. The Plan must also be posted for 30 days to allow for comments from community partners and the public. Once tentative approval of the Plan is granted, it will be posted on the Area 12 and 13 websites to solicit comments during the 30-day comment period.

1. Name Change to Local Workforce Development Boards

Both local boards adopted a name change. The Plan has been updated and everywhere the Plan read:

Area 13 / The Southwest Ohio Region Workforce Investment Board was updated with a new trade name: [The Workforce Council of Southwest Ohio](#);

and

Area 12 / The Workforce Investment Board of Butler, Clermont and Warren Counties now reads [BCW/Workforce](#), including the Plan addendum as the name change was completed prior to the Plan addendum.

2. The updated Plan acknowledges the fact that, although the greatest challenges of the pandemic have subsided, the Region is now facing challenges supplying the talent pipeline. Modest population growth, fewer individuals entering the workforce, new technology advances (e.g. automation, AI, etc.), along with transportation and childcare challenges, have significant impacts on the local labor markets, creating/expanding opportunities for innovation. Both areas will partner to pursue promising and/or innovative practices to help address these challenges.
3. The presentation of the local governance structures was repositioned near the beginning of the document, rather than being spread throughout the Plan. The information is partially repeated in areas where the state has asked for the description, including in the Plan addenda.
4. Individual Training Account (ITA) caps vary in the two areas. Individual participants in two-year training programs within Area 12 can receive up to \$15,000, while Area 13 offers up to \$5,000. However, Area 13 historically serves 2-3 times more participants, despite receiving a similar amount of WIOA federal funding allocations as Area 12. Given inflation and comments received regarding the lack of mobility for individuals in entry level jobs, increased availability of funds for ITAs may encourage more individuals to enter training resulting in higher paying jobs. This is an area identified for additional consideration during the balance of the planning period. However, WIOA federal allocations have declined since its launch in 2014. Fiscal year 2024 federal allocations decreased by over 7% for Area 12 and 12% for Area 13.
5. Depending on the length of the OJT and the wage rate, the reimbursement for the hourly wage may be the same in both Areas, although the length of the OJT might vary and that reimbursement caps are not the same. The living wage in 2023 for the Region including Cincinnati is \$15.68, for a single adult with no children.¹ However to move entry level employees into higher skilled jobs, a review of hourly OJT caps may be warranted by the increase in employers in the Region and the skill level required for new jobs. For employers with operations in multiple counties in the Region, there may be advantages to considering a consistent reimbursement for the Region. Other considerations include available funding and the number of individuals targeted to be served.

¹ [Living Wage Calculation for Warren County, Ohio, https://livingwage.mit.edu > counties](https://livingwage.mit.edu/counties)

Also www.salary.com/research/cost-of-living/cincinnati-oh

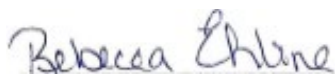
6. Changes in the labor market signals a need to increase STEM Careers, which will also contribute greatly to the economy of the Region.

Along with Intel moving to Central Ohio, [JobsOhio](#) helped support a new Cincinnati Innovation District in March 2020, focusing on applying technology across all disciplines. This first-of-its-kind partnership between JobsOhio, the University of Cincinnati, and Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center aims to accelerate more than 15,000 STEM graduates and \$2 billion in research to bring up to 20,000 new jobs and \$3 billion in annual economic impact.

7. We have requested ODJFS for a 75% transfer ability between the WIOA adult and dislocated worker funding streams to help optimize the Region's responsiveness to employer and industry demands.
8. With business growth exploding in Ohio, collaboration between Ohio Workforce Areas 13 and Area 12 will present a more unified approach to employers. Areas of consideration include:
 - a. Expansion of services through the locations of additional OhioMeansJobs (OMJ) Centers, which may include virtual access, as Ohioans have become much more familiar with virtual services as a result of the pandemic, which represents a more economical and flexible approach than conventional bricks and mortar facilities;
 - b. Regional coordination of hiring events and job fairs for the convenience of employers that draw their workforce from both areas;
 - c. Economic and workforce development collaboration, which includes connection to the Cincinnati Innovation District through the University of Cincinnati;
 - d. Labor market driven decision making, which takes into account the influx of new companies, the opportunity to address the population in the distressed communities within the Region by working with our education partners to prepare jobseekers for the proliferation of quality jobs in Ohio.
9. Labor market data has been updated for the region. Unemployment rates have decreased by up to 1.5% across the region. Some areas in the region are almost .5% lower than the statewide rate. Demographics and labor market information were updated, with additional details indicated via footnotes or citations in the updated Plan. Further, the impact of expanding and/or new businesses, such as Kroger, Cincinnati Children's, Medpace, TQL, Purina, Vega, Rhinestahl and Precision Castparts are creating new jobs and opportunities throughout the Region. Additionally, major infrastructure projects, such as the new Western Hills Viaduct and Brent Spence Bridge Corridors will have significant impact on the regional workforce ecosystem and economy. Both areas are working collaboratively to meet these increased demands,

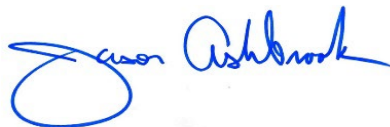
while also expanding partnerships with regional workforce providers through the [Talent Collaborative of Greater Cincinnati](#), the region's newly-launched network of workforce partners, covering Southwest Ohio, Northern KY, and Southeast Indiana. Area 13's Executive Director serves as the 2022/2023 Chair of The Collaborative.

10. Strategies to address challenges have been expanded and are also indicated by the updates to the Plan (shown in blue text). As workers experience high inflation and employers struggle with labor shortages, the combined regional workforce system will focus on in-demand sectors to assist employers with meeting their talent needs utilizing creative strategies, such as job sharing, remote work (where feasible), upskilling their current workforce and backfilling with entry level workers in the OMJ system. In this regard, consideration may be given to Incumbent Worker Training to help upskill workers and promote job mobility. However, all workforce strategies and efforts of the Region will focus on racial and gender equity, both of which are challenges that were further perpetuated by the COVID pandemic. Promoting racial and gender equity in the workforce will ultimately support growth and prosperity for the entire region.
11. Strategies to increase utilization of regional workforce resources, and simultaneously, the number of individuals accessing OMJ services and entering in-demand training programs, are identified and are subject to review by the local boards for implementation.
12. Strengthening and expanding regional workforce partnerships will be essential to effective regional coordination of workforce resources/services as well as the collective impact of the resources. As such, both local areas will actively participate in the [Talent Collaborative of Greater Cincinnati](#).
13. Expanding the area's talent supply to meet current and forecasted employer/industry needs will require a robust population/talent attraction strategy for the Greater Cincinnati region. Both local areas and Workforce Boards will partner with regional and state economic development entities to support such a strategy to help combat the declining population in the region and state to help meet ongoing workforce needs.



Rebecca Ehling, Executive Director
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May 15, 2023
Date



Jason Ashbrook, Executive Director
Workforce Council of Southwest Ohio (Area 13)

05.15.23
Date