

Findings & Recommendations

Workforce Development Transformation

Prepared for:
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Workforce Investment Board
Butler | Clermont | Warren



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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
Objective of this Scope of Work	4
Data Collection Process.....	4
Data Collection Meetings.....	7
Collected Data	9
Analysis	11
Findings and Conclusions	16
Recommendations.....	18
Phase 2 Implementation Plan Strategy	21

Executive Summary

Members of the WIBBCW Executive Board and a group of representatives from 26 employers from Butler, Clermont, and Warren Counties were asked to rank ten workforce development issues from 1 to 10, identifying which workforce issues were the most pressing to resolve.

Findings:

- The overwhelmingly favored issues in the ranking were 1) the removal of employment barriers (drug abuse, police record, child care, transportation, housing, literacy, mental and physical health issues), and 2) the cultivation of soft skills (work ethic, attitude, professionalism, etc.).
- Employers interviewed were more concerned about workforce issues with entry-level and lower-skilled employees than mid-to-upper professional employees.
- Engagement of employers with the WIBBCW and OMJ needs to increase significantly for programs to succeed.
- Awareness of WIBBCW and OMJ services by employers needs to increase in order for employers to benefit from the offerings of the local workforce system.
- More communication between employers about what they need and training institutions about what they offer is needed to close the skills gap.
- The 34,000 high school students at 42 high schools in Butler, Clermont, and Warren County should be intimately familiar with the opportunities at manufacturing firms in all three counties.
- To provide a job coach role (critical to achieve “soft skills” improvement), the three counties will probably have to normalize distribution of clients among the existing case workers. Otherwise, Butler County’s two case workers are serving 75% of the clients in the three counties.
- Assign an area-wide Business Service Rep to serve as liaison and central point of contact for all three areas in order to ensure that the three-county WIB framework strategy to succeed.

In the Recommendations section of this report, specific strategies are provided for addressing the findings described above.

Objective of this Scope of Work

The objective of this scope of work is to determine the most pressing workforce issues that need to be addressed in Butler, Clermont, and Warren counties, and then propose mitigation strategies for those identified issues of concern.

The Workforce Investment Board of Butler, Clermont, and Warren Counties contracted with Transform Consulting, LLC, Cincinnati, Ohio, to perform this data gathering, evaluation, and recommendation process, based on the credentials and experience presented by Transform Consulting in its proposal submitted to the WIB on October 25, 2016.

Data Collection Process

Individuals were asked to identify the most pressing workforce issues needing to be addressed, in their opinion, by presenting the individuals with a list of ten (10) of the most common workforce challenges faced by communities around the U.S. These challenges are based on research and investigative experience by the Transform Consulting team over the last decade. Transform Consulting presented these issues in a one-hour small group discussion setting to several groups: members of the WIB and invited employers from each of the three counties. The sessions began with a brief description and discussion of each of the ten challenges to ensure a common understanding and definitions of the issues among the participants.

The question was posed: "If you had a million dollars to spend fixing only one of the workforce issues, which issue would give your company (or your County) the biggest bang for the buck?" With this view as the focal length, the participants were then asked to rank the issues on the list, with a ranking of "1" being the most pressing and "10" being the least pressing of the challenges. The participants were told that "ties were ok," and that they could even just give their top 3 most pressing issues each a rank of "1," if they preferred. They were told that the important thing was that they consider all ten issues for a moment, and then give them a ranking compared to the other issues listed.

The issues were presented on a form with space for participants to indicate their rankings, as shown below. The first group meeting was with the Workforce Investment Board of Butler, Clermont, and Warren Counties on December 9, 2016. Instructions given to this group were to identify and rank the issues most pressing for Butler, Clermont, and Warren Counties, and their ranking form indicated that focus. This was different than the instructions and form given to employer representatives from the three counties, who were asked to identify and rank the workforce development issues most pressing for their own specific company. While the issues to be ranked were the same as those for the WIB, the syntax of the form's purpose was changed slightly to make certain each employer focused on their own company's needs.

Ranking Form Used With the WIB

Workforce Inhibitors?

**What issues are preventing a thriving workforce in Butler/
 Clermont/Warren counties?**

Please rank and prioritize the issues below in order of importance to Butler/Clermont/Warren counties from 1 (most critical) to 10 (least important), ties are ok.

To which issues should we commit our resources in 2017 to begin fixing our most pressing workforce challenges?

Ranking	Issue
	We don't have the right local talent with the right skills to fill immediate job openings.
	We don't have enough young local talent coming up to fill the jobs of our aging workforce who could retire.
	The vast majority of the local talent is not aware of the job opportunities that exist locally, resulting in a "talent drain."
	K-12 is not cultivating the quantity or quality of talent needed for the future growth and sustainability of our local businesses.
	Our efforts to attract talent to the region are thwarted by the perception that Butler/Clermont/Warren counties are NOT the place for individuals to build a future for themselves and their families.
	Our social services agencies do not understand the challenges a business must overcome to thrive and grow.
	The skill levels of our local employment candidates are below what we need, requiring us to recruit from outside the region.
	Local training programs are not adequately addressing the skills local employers need.
	The "soft skills" (work ethic, professionalism, math and reading skills, etc.) of local candidates are substandard and must be better addressed before employment can be considered.
	Too many of our employment candidates present personal or social barriers that make it difficult to hire them (drug abuse, mental health, housing, transportation, child care, etc.)
	Other?

Ranking Form Used With Employers

Most Pressing Workforce Challenges?

Which workforce issues are presenting the biggest challenges to your company?

Please rank and prioritize the issues below in order of importance to your organization from 1 (most critical) to 10 (least important). Ties are ok.

Ranking	Issue	
	Lacking talent with the right skills	We don't have the right local talent with the right skills to fill immediate job openings.
	Lacking enough up and coming young talent	We don't have enough young local talent coming up to fill the jobs of our aging workforce who could retire.
	Losing talent because they are not aware of local opportunities	The vast majority of the local talent is not aware of the job opportunities that exist locally, resulting in a "talent drain."
	K-12 not sufficient	K-12 is not cultivating the quantity or quality of talent needed for the future growth and sustainability of our local businesses.
	Place has a bad reputation	Our efforts to attract talent to the region are thwarted by the perception that Butler/Clermont/Warren counties are NOT the place for individuals to build a future for themselves and their families.
	Inadequate Social services agencies	Our social services agencies do not understand the challenges a business must overcome to thrive and grow.
	Low skill levels	The skill levels of our local employment candidates are below what we need, requiring us to recruit from outside the region.
	Training programs inadequate	Local training programs are not adequately addressing the skills local employers need.
	"Soft Skills" unacceptable	The "soft skills" (work ethic, professionalism, math and reading skills, etc.) of local candidates are substandard and must be better addressed before employment can be considered.
	Personal barriers (drugs, police record, child care, etc.)	Too many of our employment candidates present personal or social barriers that make it difficult to hire them (drug abuse, mental health, housing, transportation, child care, etc.)
		Other?

Data Collection Meetings

The initial meeting with members of the WIB was scheduled for December 9, 2016, as an extended use of its regularly scheduled meeting. In attendance on December 9, 2016 were Shannon Bryant (Sinclair Community College), Carey Curtis (US Bank), David Fehr (Butler County Economic Development), Ted Groman (OhioMeansJobs Clermont County), Richard Jones (People's Bank), Marlon Bailey (ART Metals Group), Jerome Kearns (Butler County Department of Job and Family Services), John McMahan (DRS Technologies), Matt Schnipke (Warren County Economic Development), Karen Whittamore (OhioMeansJobs Warren County), Mardia Shands (Miami Valley Gaming), Adam Jones (WIBBCW), Amy Pond (WIBBCW), and Martin Russel (Warren County).

As proposed by Transform Consulting, three subsequent meetings were scheduled – one with employers from each county. All three meetings were scheduled for different times on January 24, 2017, giving Transform Consulting and WIB representatives adequate time to travel to each county's home location.

One meeting was established for Warren County employers, one for Clermont County employers, and one for Butler County employers. The OhioMeansJobs Business Services Representative from each county was asked by the WIB Director to identify and reach out to employers in their county, with a goal of inviting a wide distribution of employer sectors to their county's meeting. A list of employer sectors was provided to each Business Services Representative, along with a sample invitation email that could be used to invite the employers to send a representative.

The Warren County meeting was scheduled for 8:00AM and was modestly well attended, with eight Warren County employers sending a representative to the meeting. Warren County attendees included Holly McIntosh (Speedway LLC), Kathy Fiorenza (Alfins Haan INL), James Northern (Mane), Brian Johnson (Alfins Haan INL), Ryan Ketterer (INX International Ink Co), Lynda Anello (VRI), Cindy Guyett (VRI), Jessica Temmy (Mane), Adam Jones (WIBBCW), Amy Pond (WIBBCW), and Matt Fetty (OMJ Warren County).

The Clermont County meeting was scheduled for 11:00AM, and was not well attended, with only two Clermont County employers sending representatives. Clermont County employers in attendance included Lee Trueblood (Raising Cane's), Kyle Judy (Burd Brothers), Adam Jones (WIBBCW), Sherry Bowling (OMJ Clermont County), and Greg Cottrell (OMJ Clermont County).

The Butler County meeting was scheduled for 3:00PM, and was not attended by any Butler County employer representatives. However, two representatives from the Butler County Regional Transit Authority joined -- Rob Griffin and Matthew Dutkevicz -- and the meeting's agenda was modified to use the time with WIB and BCRTA productively. The individuals present explored the transportation barriers that affect workers and how the RTA is working to mitigate those barriers.

The aggregate number of individuals from employers completing the ranking was determined to be less than ideal to be considered a representative sample, and a second round of employer meetings was scheduled with the help of the Business Services Representative in each county. Transform Consulting contacted those individuals who were invited to the first county meeting on January 24th but did not attend. A second Butler County employers meeting was held on February 16, 2017. A second Warren County employers meeting was held on February 17, 2017. And a second Clermont County employers meeting was held on March 7, 2017. The result of this effort was several additional employers participating.

In order to gather still more data from employers, the WIBBCW converted the ranking form provided by Transform Consulting into an online survey using Survey Monkey. WIB personnel distributed the survey to employers in all three counties who had not yet participated in the ranking exercise, and delivered the results on receipt to Transform Consulting for analysis.

At the conclusion of all data gathering meetings and surveys, thirty-two (32) individuals had completed the ranking exercise. While this number of participants is less than an ideal response, we believe it is sufficient to summarize the data and draw conclusions from their implications with confidence that the conclusions represent the priorities of the communities studied.

Collected Data

WIB stakeholder raw and weighted workforce issue rankings on December 9, 2016 yielded virtually identical results. Weighted methodology and rationale are explained in the **Analysis** section.

Ranking	Workforce Issue That Needs to Be Mitigated	Raw Average Placement (low = top)	Raw Aggregate Placement (low = top)	Total Weighted Composite Score (high = top)
1	Too many of our employment candidates present personal or social barriers that make it difficult to hire them (drug abuse, mental health, housing, transportation, child care, etc.)	1.0	14	70
2	The "soft skills" (work ethic, professionalism, math and reading skills, etc.) of local candidates are substandard and must be better addressed before employment can be considered.	1.5	21	58
3	We don't have the right local talent with the right skills to fill immediate job openings.	2.9	38	29
4	We don't have enough young local talent coming up to fill the jobs of our aging workforce who could retire.	3.6	47	28
5	The vast majority of the local talent is not aware of the job opportunities that exist locally, resulting in a "talent drain."	5.6	78	17
6	K-12 is not cultivating the quality or quantity of talent needed for the future growth and sustainability of our local businesses.	5.8	81	18
7	The skill levels of our local employment candidates are below what we need, requiring us to recruit from outside of the region.	6.2	81	14
8	Our social services agencies do not understand the challenges business must overcome to thrive and grow.	6.4	83	14
9	Local training programs are not adequately addressing the skills local employers need.	6.8	89	14
10	Our efforts to attract talent to the region are thwarted by the perception that BWC counties are NOT the place for individuals to build a future for themselves and their families.	7.8	102	13

Employer representative rankings were identical to WIB representatives for the top five ranked workforce issues needing to be addressed. Variations in ranking of the bottom five issues among employers was expected, in that each employer has a different perspective on “additional influencers” and how they affect their specific industry. There was no disagreement between employer and WIB representatives on the primary workforce issues demanding attention.

Ranking	Issue.	Description	Weighted Score (high=top)	Raw Score (low=top)
1	Barriers prevent hiring	Too many of our employment candidates present personal or social barriers that make it difficult to hire them (drug abuse, mental health, housing, transportation, child care, etc.)	154	92 - 2nd
2	"Soft skills" are lacking	The "soft skills" (work ethic, professionalism, math and reading skills, etc.) of local candidates are substandard and must be better addressed before employment can be considered.	144	75 -1st
3	Don't have the right talent with the right skills	We don't have the right local talent with the right skills to fill immediate job openings.	96	106
4	Need young talent to replace retirees	We don't have enough young local talent coming up to fill the jobs of our aging workforce who could retire.	86	121
5	Talent unaware of opportunities	The vast majority of the local talent is not aware of the job opportunities that exist locally, resulting in a "talent drain."	64	134
6	Training programs inadequate	Local training programs are not adequately addressing the skills local employers need.	51	164
7	Local area not attractive enough	Our efforts to attract talent to the region are thwarted by the perception that BWC counties are NOT the place for individuals to build a future for themselves and their families.	51	157
8	K-12 is deficient.	K-12 is not cultivating the quality or quantity of talent needed for the future growth and sustainability of our local businesses.	34	161
9	Low skill levels	The skill levels of our local employment candidates are below what we need, requiring us to recruit from outside of the region.	32	126
10	Social service agencies not filling needs	Our social services agencies do not understand the challenges business must overcome to thrive and grow.	32	185

Analysis

The data received on forms and on the online surveys were consistent with the anecdotal evidence observed and noted during the working sessions.

With the exception of one employer representative – Tom Rocklin of Siemens – who reported a different workforce need than all of the other employers (needing engineers and senior IT personnel with Bachelors and advanced degrees to replace his retiring workforce of experts), all of the employers defined their most critical workforce needs around finding quality **unskilled, low-skilled, and entry-level labor** who only need a high school diploma to be hired.

Weighting and Weighted Scores

Participants were asked to rank the ten issues presented by assigning each issue a number from 1 to 10 representing their perceived order of importance. The decision to rank an issue as #1, #2, or #3, particularly #1, was considered significant and worthy of substantially more weighting than issues rated #4 or higher.

To reflect that scoring importance, an issue given a ranking of #1 was assigned 10 points. An issue given a ranking of #2 was assigned 5 points. An issue given a ranking of #3 was assigned 2 points. All other rankings, #4 through #10, were assigned 1 point. An issue with its rating left blank received 0 points. This weighting method successfully captured the differentiated decisions of the participants as they determined what was truly most important to them.

The net impact of this weighting approach made the distinguishing between ratings clearer, but it did not have any impact on the overall ranking order of the first five issues. The order of these five issues was virtually the same for the raw scores as for the weighted scores.

Highest Ranked Issues

The employers all spoke about challenges finding reliable entry-level and low-skill hires. When presented with the universal plea among typical manufacturers to *"PLEASE give me somebody who will pass the drug test... and will actually show up for work!"* -- all but a few heads in the room were nodding knowingly in agreement.

This perspective, reflected in the consensus highest ranking of **1) employment barrier removal** and **2) cultivation of missing soft skills**, does not ignore the other factors that make staffing for growth or staffing to maintain a challenge. Rather, it puts a spotlight on the urgency of the top two issues.

Employment Barrier Removal

It is understandable that employers who hire unskilled and low-skilled workers would identify and rank “removal of employment barriers” as their highest workforce concern. Employment candidates who bring with them barriers to employment are presenting the employer with issues that are, quite simply, not the employer’s problem.

Employment barriers presented by job candidates may include:

- Drug / substance abuse
- Prior felony / police record
- Child care that is unreliable
- Transportation to work that is unreliable
- Housing that is unstable
- Literacy issues
- Mental health / physical disabilities

The employer wants an employee who will “pass the drug test... and show up for work.” An employee NOT showing up for work can be the result of any one of a number of social, financial, health, or life management issues – car wouldn’t start, child care provider is ill, family illness, depression, evicted, hangover from prior night excesses, etc.

But from the employer’s perspective, it just doesn’t matter why. The employer needs their workers at work on time, on the job, sober, clear-headed, and able to work. Nothing else is good for business.

The only reasons why the employer might consider attempting to accommodate a job candidate’s barriers are:

- a) because they can’t otherwise find qualified candidates,
- b) the employer is in denial about the impact and cost of the barrier on the business, or
- c) the employer is so accustomed to high attrition for low-skilled jobs that he/she expects to lose and replace the employee in a relatively short time, and simply budgets for training the next employee as a cost of doing business (which is usually a denial of the real costs of attrition, estimated by some at 160% of first year’s salary.)

“**Employer-ready**” job candidates need to be “**barrier free**.” Everything else requires a compromise by the employer, is an additional cost to the employer, and is typically a setup for ultimate failure for the job seeker, who most likely will not be able to overcome their employment barriers on their own.

Employers routinely attempt to deal with employment barriers as a matter of course, not being presented with many options, except to recruit from further and further away. They increase the

size of their candidate pools to improve the chances that they will find the qualified, employer-ready few they are seeking.

In order for the WIBBCW to make a significant contribution to the employers it serves, the WIBBCW needs to consider taking on the task and challenge of “barrier removal” in its job seeker population to the benefit of both the employers and the job seekers. Nothing would be deemed of greater value to the region’s employers than to be delivered “**barrier-free**”, truly “**employer-ready**” job candidates.

Specific recommendations are provided in the Recommendations section of this report.

Cultivation of Soft Skills

The impact of unacceptable soft skills in a job seeker or newly hired employee are potent and can have a long-term impact on the attitude and management style of the employer's staff.

Observed soft skills deficits can include:

- Work ethic, timeliness, attention to detail, problem-solving, attendance, calling in
- Handling relationships, handling confrontations with co-workers or management, anger management
- Professionalism in dress, presentation, demeanor, hygiene
- Oral communication style, appropriate language
- Politeness, respectful behavior, manners, attitude
- Written communication skills, literacy, penmanship
- Math skills
- Reading skills

While the importance of appropriate soft skills on the success of the employee is undeniable, closing a soft skills gap can be very difficult and in some cases, next to impossible. The root cause of a soft skills deficit will likely go back to an individual's upbringing, family situation, early schooling, and current lifestyle. Even more insidious than an employment barrier like drug use, child care, or transportation which are circumstantial, a soft skills issue may involve lifelong habits and behaviors that can be rationalized with "That's just the way I am."

That said, people are clearly able to change if motivated to do so. They are inclined to change when they want what is offered to them, and when they are presented with clear, consistent guidelines, consequences, and incentives.

Because of the high importance placed by the employer community on cultivating soft skills in job seekers, it is anticipated that the WIBBCW will have much support from employers in the development and offering of a soft skills cultivation program for job seekers.

But the WIBBCW and county OhioMeansJobs operations must be appropriately staffed in order to intersect with local jobseekers in a meaningful way, not as administrators and clerks, but as mentors and job coaches. Using data mined from the Ohio Workforce Case Management System, in 2016, two Butler County case workers served 307 clients, an average of 153 clients per case worker. Three Clermont County case workers served 54 clients, an average of 27 clients per case worker. Three Warren County case workers served 49 clients, an average of 16 clients per case worker. Clearly there may be an opportunity for load-leveling.

Specific recommendations are provided in the Recommendations section of this report.

Issue Ranking #3

The #3 ranked issue – “*We don’t have the right talent with the right skills*” – is one of the most frequently expressed workforce challenges nationally. The issue is particularly prevalent in middle-skilled and upper-skilled professional and technical positions, but exists at a crisis level for some lower-skilled positions as well.

For example, State Tested Nursing Assistant (STNA) is considered low-to-middle-skilled, paying just \$12 per hour. And while it doesn’t require a high school diploma, STNA certification does require 75 hours of specialized training. STNAs are in severe shortage.

Thousands upon thousands of mid- to upper-mid-level STEM and skilled trades openings sit unfilled in information technology and healthcare, as well as tradespersons such as welders, boilermakers, plumbers/pipefitters, and CDL drivers.

This issue of finding the right talent with the right skills is most typically addressed through training, both internal (“grow your own”) and external partnerships (career tech schools, community colleges, apprenticeship providers), and by offering aggressive wage premiums that attract workers from other companies. While this tactic is considered predatory by some, it is an accepted fact of life in manufacturing that workers jump to other employers for a couple of bucks more per hour.

The WIBBCW can help resolve this workforce issue by proactively nurturing the relationships between the high schools with career tech programs, career tech schools and 2-year colleges and the employers who are looking for talent with specific skill sets.

Specific recommendations are provided in the Recommendations section of this report.

Issue Ranking #4

The #4 ranked issue – “*Need young talent to replace an aging workforce*” – is directly related to the #3 issue, with a spotlight on the skills and tribal knowledge that will be lost as the Baby Boomers retire.

This situation presents a business with a complex set of issues that are not likely to be solved simply by looking harder for a young talent who is willing to come on board for entry-level wages to be mentored by the senior staffer who is looking to retire. Solutions may include financial incentives, like substantial signing bonus, re-engineering processes so they depend on technology more and the senior staffer’s knowledge less, reorganizing the operation to fit with current staffing, or outsourcing processes that are currently internal.

Specific recommendations are provided in the Recommendations section of this report.

Issue Ranking #5

The #5 ranked issue – “*Local talent is unaware of local opportunities*” – is the easiest of the workforce issues to address, although it may be the most expensive and time consuming. If local talent doesn’t know what’s available in its own neighborhood, this is **a marketing problem**. The fix is to, quite simply, do marketing, and a lot of it. This marketing should include outreach programs and advertising campaigns. The more that partner organizations are brought into the process and agree to share the responsibility for marketing the local opportunities to the local talent pool, the quicker and more extensively the awareness of the target audience can be changed.

Specific recommendations are provided in the Recommendations section of this report.

Issues Ranking #6 through 10

As learned in the discussions with the employers as they prepared to rank the presented issues, the top ranked issues carried a lot of importance to them. As such, the inclusion of other issues on the list served as much as a benchmark for those items less important than the top five. In some cases, an employer had specific issues or situations to relate that were triggered by the listed issue. In other cases, the additional listed issues were referenced as “Not applicable” or “Not a concern.”

Certain issues evoked a very specific positive comment from one or more employers, such as “the region has a negative reputation making it difficult to attract talent” or “K-12 is not doing its job” or “social service agencies are not adding value.” In those cases, the employer response was quickly in defense of the region and its attributes as assets.

With regard to the perception of local towns and municipalities and how that affects business, some communities have a more favorable outlook than others.

Findings and Conclusions

As a result of the investigative encounters performed over the last several months, the following findings and conclusions are offered:

- The consensus among WIB stakeholders/members and employers from all three counties is that “**barrier removal**” and “**soft skills cultivation**” are the top workforce issues they would like to see addressed by OhioMeansJobs. Other issues are worthy of attention, but only after the top ranked issues with the most impact on their businesses are addressed.
- The employers invited to participate in the workforce ranking exercise are more concerned about the issues presented by entry-level and low-skilled employees than in mid-to-upper professional employees.

- Based on lack of attendance by employers at the workforce analysis sessions conducted, engagement of employers with both their respective OhioMeansJobs Business Services Representatives and with the WIBBCW can be significantly increased and improved.
- Employers in all three counties are generally not as aware of the service offerings, financial support, and training programs available to them from the WIBBCW as they need to be.
- A lack of awareness about the “skills gap” between what employers need and what the region’s talent has available (Issue Ranking #3) needs more proactive communication, especially between the employers and the training institutions, but also from the WIB and OMJ.
- With all the truly first-rate manufacturing, healthcare, and service companies that inhabit Butler, Clermont, and Warren, there is no reason why the 34,000 students in the 42 high schools in BCW cannot be intimately familiar with what their counties have to offer, particularly with regard to manufacturing companies (Issue Ranking #4)
- While there is a good starting foundation for employer engagement in each of the counties, there are many opportunities for even more employment involvement and engagement. This is key to moving to a new level of effectiveness for the OhioMeansJobs offices, with the goal of each OMJ office being seen as a partner of the businesses, not simply a service provider.
- In 2016, 410 clients across all three counties were served by six case workers. This workload represents an average of 68 clients per case worker. If the scope of services is going to increase to include “soft skills” coaching, this 68 client average is acceptable. Unfortunately, however, clients are not evenly distributed. Butler County bears the brunt of the clients, with 307 clients handled by 2 case worker, or 153 clients per case worker. This client load will probably not serve a successful “soft skills” coaching program.
- The three-county WIB framework has the potential of effectively serving all three counties, so long as there is a well-defined, solid collaborative structure with regular, eager participation from each OMJ Business Service Representative.

Recommendations

1. To address the top ranked workforce issue, an “**employment barrier removal**” program should be designed and initiated at all three of the WIBBCW’s OhioMeansJobs Centers. The program should adequately screen incoming job seekers for drug abuse, prior police record, child care needs, transportation issues, housing issues, literacy, mental health and physical disability issues. Any barrier will cause the job seeker to be referred to an appropriate support agency who will work with the job seekers until the barrier has been resolved.

Under no circumstances should a job seeker be referred or sent to an employer while the job seeker has an unresolved employment barrier. This preventing of job seekers from being prematurely presented to an employer if they have an unresolved employment barrier is essential to the success of this strategy. It is the foundation for establishing a renewed level of credibility between the WIB, OMJ, and the employer.

If referrals are required for barrier mitigation, OMJ needs to serve as quarterback of the referrals. Preliminary drug screening can be instituted inexpensively at OMJ for a few dollars. Substance abuse counseling is readily available locally. Police record support can be received in partnership with Legal Aid. Subsidized child care and transportation voucher options may already be available within OMJ or JFS. Physical disabilities can be addressed through BVR.

The net impact of this type of program is significantly increased trust between employers and OMJ. As OMJ delivers services like employment barrier removal that are of undeniably high value to employers, the relationship between OMJ and employer transforms from service provider to partner. This enhanced relationship will extend to all facets of the public/private partnership.

2. If the WIBBCW is committed to addressing the “**cultivation of soft skills**” in its job seekers, the mitigating program needs to encompass far more than a single training class or program. An understanding of the root causes of soft skills deficits tells us that the habits and skills needing improvement often run very deep. Progress with these attitudes and habits will require ongoing mentoring and coaching, especially in real time when life issues cause the soft skills deficits to flair.

OMJ can make significant contributions to improving a client’s soft skills by implementing a “**job coach**” role for each client with one of the case managers. The job coach would be part of the facilitating team offering the “soft skills” training to the client. The job coach would then have a pre-determined contact schedule with the client throughout Year 1 of employment, maybe as frequently as once or more per week, if needed.

Other features of the support program, such as a 1-800 help line, would be established so the client has a place to call any time day or night when an issue arises. A special assessment can be used to determine where the soft skills deficits are most pronounced.

Improvement of a client's soft skills deficit over the first year of employment is, in many cases, reasonable and achievable.

3. "We don't have the right talent with the right skills to fill local jobs." The WIBBCW can best serve this workforce challenge by cultivating its relationships with local employers. By truly understanding the employers' needs, making the employer the "customer" and WIBBCW/OMJ its partner, the WIB can add real, substantive value by **building a bridge between the employer and the training institutions that can fill that skills gap.** When the WIBBCW can go a step further and offer OJTs and other subsidies to help pay for the initial cost of employment or training, the partnership between the WIB and the employer gets even stronger.

This bridge between the employers and the training institutions will be appreciated by all, is certainly in the WIB/OMJ's wheelhouse, and is a sorely needed role. The connection between the school and the employer is complex, and will only be enhanced by an informed, motivated go-between.

4. "***Need young talent to replace an aging workforce***" is similar to bridging the gap between employers and schools, with a twist. For the most part, the problem is that the young talent has declared that it has no interest in the jobs being dangled in front of them. The classic misinformation is the "dirty factory floor" stigma. Students really do have bad information when it comes to career pathways in fields like advanced manufacturing. These "very cool" high tech environments, driven by robots, computers, and automation, are much more intriguing than the students are aware. And a great example of a gender-switch that brings lots of smiles is **female welders**. The general consensus is that young ladies are better welders than young men; they are faster, more precise, and have a better attention span.

The best way to entice a group of young ladies to consider a career in welding is to show them welding, up close. Let them try a welding simulator. Let them meet and talk to a group of female welders. Many of them will be hooked!

The same holds true for advanced manufacturing. A field trip to FESTO will light a fire in a bunch of young people. Give them an internship at FESTO and they are hooked.

WIBBCW and OMJ can organize site visits, field trips, hands-on experiential programs, much like the Career Zones at SkillsCon'17, and leverage its newly enhanced relationships with employers to make the companies looking for young talent come alive for that talent.

5. **“Local talent is unaware of local opportunities”**. The WIBBCW/OMJ can close this gap as quickly as it is willing to invest resources in the solution. This is a marketing problem, plain and simple. The WIBBCW can begin to change the awareness of local opportunities by making noise.

Billboards are particularly effective. A conspicuously placed billboard that is updated with specific job openings at specific employers or lists the total number of open jobs in the region will become part of the local culture very quickly.

Social media can cause significant attention these days. Job posting flyers placed where job seekers hang out get significant attention. TV ads and radio ads using free Public Service Announcement (PSA) allotments can change the expectations about opportunities in the region. Articles in the local newspapers about business expansions and job openings looking for talent are noticed by the job seeking public.

If the WIBBCW takes it upon itself to be the source of a recurring stream of stories about job opportunities in the region, a changed perception among local talent can be caused in relatively short order.

Phase 2 Implementation Plan Strategy

If the WIBBCW elects to implement all of the recommended mitigation strategies, a Phase 2 Master Implementation Plan would need to be developed. Each of the five strategies identified would require its own implementation plan, with budget, deliverables, milestones, success measures, a staffing plan, and risk mitigation plan. The five initiatives recommended for a Phase 2 implementation include:

1. Employment Barrier Removal Initiative
2. Soft Skills Cultivation Initiative
3. Employer/Training Institution Skills Bridge Initiative
4. Targeted Talent Recruiting Initiative
5. Local Opportunities Marketing Initiative

While all five initiatives can be planned and implemented at once, it is also feasible for the WIBBCW to select and implement only one, two, or more of the recommended initiatives at a time. Because of the far-reaching nature of each of the initiatives, it is reasonable to expect each of them to continue for several years, if not ongoing. If successful, an employment barrier removal process would be expected to continue as long as value is being realized. The same would be true of a Soft Skills program, an employer/training institution collaboration, a talent recruitment machine, and a job openings marketing program.

Whichever initiatives are selected by the WIBBCW for Phase 2, the opportunity to combine them in a Phase 2 Master Implementation Plan is expected to provide significant cost savings due to economies of scale, shared management functions, and shared resources.

Transform Consulting is available to provide management services for as many of the recommended initiatives as the WIBBCW elects to include in Phase 2.