

GREATER CINCINNATI **WORKFORCE NETWORK**

Despite our region's strong economic assets, we are currently facing a dual workforce challenge: our employers are struggling to meet their need for a skilled workforce, and far too many of our residents have insufficient skills and preparation to enter, advance and succeed in the labor market. The Greater Cincinnati Workforce Network is a three-year, \$3 million initiative to help employers meet their need for a skilled workforce while expanding career and educational opportunities for low-skill workers. Launched in 2008, the Workforce Network is a regional public-private partnership between philanthropic funders, local and state government agencies, employers, chambers of commerce, educational institutions, service providers, and workforce investment boards. The Greater Cincinnati Foundation leads the partnership.

VISION & MISSION

The Workforce Network envisions a regional workforce development system that meets the dual needs of employers and employees to foster economic growth and opportunity in the Tri-state region. Our mission is to grow the skills of our workforce by improving and aligning the policies, strategies and resources of the region's workforce development system.

GOALS

- Prepare at least 1,500 low-skilled adults for better jobs and long-term careers in priority industries.
- Improve at least 30 employers' abilities to recruit, train, retain and advance employees to mid-level skilled jobs to fill critical occupational shortages in priority industries.
- Create and sustain a durable coordinating mechanism to improve and align the policies, strategies and resources of the Tri-state region's workforce development system.

OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES

1. **Align workforce resources and strategies across the system:** Create a public/private Funder's Collaborative to expand, pool and align resources for workforce development. Create and sustain a Workforce Network and Leadership Council to serve as a regional workforce development intermediary that aligns strategies and programs among key players.
2. **Close skill gaps in priority industries:** Make targeted investments and provide technical assistance to support the expansion of an existing healthcare career pathway, and launch two new career pathways in priority industries important to the regional economy to benefit low skill/low wage workers.
3. **Build the capacity of the regional workforce system:** Improve and coordinate support services that help unemployed, low-skill, and hard-to-employ workers prepare for, enter, advance, and succeed in the labor market. Develop a common data collection and management system to track results and evaluate our strategies.
4. **Advance policy change:** Advance critical policy interventions to improve the workforce system and outcomes.

PRIORITY INDUSTRY SECTORS

The Workforce Network is using a career pathways strategy. Career pathways are a series of connected education and training programs and support services which targets specific industries that are important to the regional economy and have a shortage of skilled workers. Together, our three priority sectors represent nearly **1-in-3 jobs** in our region and the majority of the middle-skill jobs that offer strong wages and advancement opportunities.

- **Health Care:** The health care industry is the region's largest source of private sector employment and generates an economic impact of almost \$14 billion per year. Health care is also one of the fastest growing industries in our region, though health care employers struggle to find qualified employees to fill skilled positions.
- **Advanced Manufacturing:** Manufacturing is a dominant industry in our region and provides the largest source of private-sector employment after health care. While older manufacturing is certainly declining, high-tech manufacturing will remain a dominant source of employment and key economic driver in our region for years to come, requiring a skilled workforce. Emerging and growth sub-sectors of the industry—such as Aerospace, Biotechnology, Alternative Energy, and Chemical Manufacturing—all offer in-demand jobs for skilled workers.
- **Construction:** Construction offers a significant source of employment, strong advancement opportunities, strong wages, and high projected future growth. Our region has multiple major construction projects currently underway, with more expected in the future due to the federal stimulus package. Emerging areas of Green Construction and Energy Efficiency Retrofitting also require new training programs.

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CAREER PATHWAYS: Building Pathways of Educational and Career Advancement

“Career pathways” is a strategy that has demonstrated success both locally and nationally in closing skills gaps in targeted industries. Career pathways connect education and training programs and support services that enable individuals to secure employment within a specific industry, and to advance over time to successively higher levels of education and employment in that industry. **The dual goal of career pathways is to create both: 1) avenues of advancement for current workers, jobseekers and future labor market entrants; and 2) a supply of qualified workers for local employers.**

KEY FEATURES

Broad Partnership

Career pathways are organized by partnerships between multiple employers across a sector, educational institutions, community based organizations, workforce investment boards, and funders.

Target Priority Sectors and Occupations

Career pathways target industries that are important to the regional economy, projected to grow and add jobs in the near future, provide opportunities for advancement, and have significant shortages in key skilled occupations.

Led by Employers

Employers provide the formal leadership to meet their projected demand for qualified workers.

Reduce Barriers to Employment and Advancement

Career pathways integrate “wrap-around” support services, including career coaching, case management, child care, transportation, financial aid, soft skills training, and job placement.

Seamless Educational Pathways

Career pathways develop clear linkages between developmental education, certificate and training programs, and academic degree programs, and easy articulation of credits across institutions to enable students to progress seamlessly from one level to the next.

Focus on Institutional and Systemic Change

The career pathways process aims to transform institutions involved in education, workforce preparation and social services in ways that improve their capacity individually and collectively to respond to the needs of local residents and employers.

BENEFITS

For Employers: Access to qualified workers; improved retention; reduced turnover; increased productivity; increased diversity; and streamlined access to workforce and training resources.

For Workers: Access to job opportunities; assistance with career advancement; increased wages and educational attainment.

For Educational Institutions: Increased enrollment; improved retention and completion rates; increased academic performance and job placement outcomes; and curriculum that responds to employer needs.

For Community Based Organizations: Help clients access education and career opportunities.

For the Community: Increased educational attainment; increased socio-economic self-sufficiency; increased employment rates; improved ability to attract and retain employers.

