

Outcomes from NIFI Deliberative Discussion Groups --- Improving Workforce Development -- Think Regional – April 28, 2017

Overview of the Skilled Workforce Development Issue in Southwest Ohio

1. There exists a large gap between the number of unfilled higher-paying jobs that could support a middle-class lifestyle and the number of unemployed or underemployed workers who have been displaced from traditional manufacturing jobs.

- On the **Ohio Means Job** website, data as of April 9, 2017 showed a total of 146,600 unfilled jobs across Ohio, with an estimated 95,000 of these being in technical manufacturing, service and trade industries.
- But at the same time, the **Bureau of Labor Statistics** website reported that in February, 2017 there were tens of thousands of unemployed or underemployed workers in Ohio (294,000 in Ohio; 51,700 in Cincinnati-Middletown, and 20,100 in Dayton), many of whom have been displaced from traditional manufacturing or mining jobs.
- According to the **Ohio.gov** website (updated 10/27/2016), “During the last program year, Ohio served **4,995** dislocated workers including veterans, individuals with disabilities, older workers, and displaced homemakers.” We need to significantly increase the number of displaced workers that are aware of and have access to these types of retraining programs.

2. We also have thousands of high school students who would prefer and/or have higher aptitudes for technically skilled manufacturing or trade careers that offer middle class incomes and lifestyles without the need for or expense of a 4-year college education. Today, however, our communities do little to help students in high school become aware of and prepare for these roles, nor provide the recognition at our schools for students who might choose to pursue and to excel in these roles.

We need to do more in our region to address these needs and to close the gaps between unfilled skilled job opportunities and displaced workers and unprepared students. Our ability to attract new investments in economic opportunities and to encourage growing businesses to expand in our region, depends in large part on the availability of a skilled workforce to fulfill the skilled employee needs this growth requires.

There is also the real issue of how do these displaced workers, who could be living in low income areas in one part of our region and do not have their own transportation, get to the location where training is provided? Public transportation in our region is not region-wide, it is generally isolated in the cities. It is difficult enough for low income folks to get from one part of Cincinnati to another for work or training ... but what about people in Middletown getting to Cincinnati or Dayton, or people in Cincinnati or Dayton getting to Middletown, Hamilton or West Chester? Each of the suggested options below to closing this gap and fully realizing the potential in our displaced worker community would need to take the transportation issue into account as well as the other elements of the option discussed below.

Option 1

Area colleges and universities, technical colleges and institutions, and job training organizations should develop and promote a broader scope of programs to help retrain displaced workers and student apprentices to address the specific skill needs of both employers and prospective employees in seeking to fulfill these higher paying jobs.

Option 2

Area High Schools should begin to make students and parents aware of the multiple paths to a middle-class lifestyle available via skilled technical careers in our area, as an additional option to careers requiring

a 4-year college degree. They should develop the capability to assess students' preferences and aptitudes for technically skilled careers and to develop the programs to prepare them to succeed and excel in these roles, and add their success in these areas to their student recognition programs and to their performance ratings processes.

Option 3

Area Businesses should develop and operate training programs for their unfilled technically skilled jobs. They should promote the availability of jobs and the training programs leading to a hiring opportunity within the community and both the organizations supporting displaced workers in finding new roles, and the High Schools working to prepare students for these roles. Businesses should further commit to putting displaced workers and prepared students into their programs, and to hire these workers at completion of the programs.

Overview of Results

1. Half the groups preferred Option 2 as the Best Approach, focusing on the need for communities to enable changes at the High School level in helping prepare students for other middle class career options. → Greatest use of resources and greatest impact on the problem long term.
2. Half the groups preferred some of the elements in multiple options. → Generally integrating either Options 1 and 3, or integrating all 3 options.
3. 7 of the 12 groups called for the schools to prepare students for multiple paths to a successful middle class career, not just those with a college degree in the path. 4 of 7 mentioned the need to convince parents, especially Moms, to support this approach and to value those other path options for their children → Especially key in suburban schools with a high population of parents in professional careers.
4. 5 of the 12 groups called for the teaching of soft or life skills in the public schools. 3 of the 5 groups believed this should begin as early as Pre-K and continue through High School.
5. Two groups mentioned the need for businesses about to downsize to prepare the employees who will be displaced for the transition → Collaborating with training schools to help employees explore options, and take preparation training before losing employment.
6. One group put much of the sentiment into words → Stating there is a major economic and social disruption taking place in the nature of work, which requires the skill of adjusting to frequent and on-going changes by workers. This is a “new game” that requires a totally new and different approach to preparing students and displaced workers for success to address it.

Short Term Actions for Think Regional

The Think Regional Issue Action Group that meets on supporting improvements in Skilled and Educated Workforce Development will meet on June 27 to review these findings and develop a set of short term actions. It is expected that the groups will discuss how to support the following possible actions:

1. Develop information to share with Public Schools → Administrators, School Boards and PTA Groups:
 - Encourage them to discuss and decide if this insight is something that all 3 groups agree is important to their students and communities.
 - Encourage them collaborate with community resources on how they would approach the issues of “Career Tree” preparation and Soft/Life skills → Define resource needs, funding approaches, schedule impacts, expected outcomes and success measures, etc., and explore options to achieve.
 - Provide facilitation support if asked.

2. Develop information to share with Businesses and Training Schools → Certification and Degree Schools:
 - Encourage them to develop collaborative relationships with each other to identify business needs and training program options and program approaches.
 - Encourage them to collaborate on funding and success measurement approaches, so that businesses will be confident they will see a Return on Investment in supporting training programs with a training school partner or partners.
3. Review plans to approach schools and community groups with Phil DeVol and JD Vance and ask for their input and ideas on specific steps, expected outcomes, success measures, etc.
4. Publish and Share success stories and models within the region and the State of Ohio more broadly.

Detailed Summary of Group Reports

Group 1: Believe Option 2 is Best Value

- Need businesses to provide more training in advance of downsizing for workers to be displaced, collaborating with Jobs Ohio and to identify opportunities and with Training Groups to design targeted programs.
- Training in soft skills should be part of public school curriculums starting in pre-K through High School.
- We need to change the focus in High School from college only to a balance of potential middle class lifestyle career options.
- Option 3 is next best – seeing businesses and training organizations collaborate regularly.

Group 2: Believe Option 2 is Best Approach

- Need to teach life skills and tech business skills in our public schools beginning in Pre-K through High School.
- Need to change the focus in High School from college only → there are multiple paths (career branches) to a middle-class lifestyle.

Group 3: Believe Options 1 and 3 are Best Options

- Option 2 is too standardized and not specific/relevant to a business's needs who may be hiring.
- Option 1 should encourage collaboration between technical training schools and businesses with a specific need → Businesses would support the costs of programs because of the return they would get from effective employees.
- New economy is a totally new game → Requires a new approach in terms of preparing kids and displaced workers for new roles.
- NOTE: For future event, suggest rewriting language of each options relevant to the audience. Also, would like more data on the benefits and tradeoffs of each option.

Group 4: Option 2 Favored Approach

- Funding issues need to change → subsidizing college programs is flawed.
- Need to change the image and desirability of the future life possible in skilled careers versus college with Parents overall, Moms especially.
- Need to incentivize businesses and schools to collaborate on offering more internship programs.

Group 5: Preferred Option 2

- Need to get information to students early on all career options and how to prepare for those options.

- Our High School counselors need to be better trained and equipped to do assessments of student interests and skills, and help them explore best options where these intersect.

Group 6: Prefer a Fourth Option with elements of all 3

- Option 1 would be better with improved communication between business and training schools.
- Option 2 is important, in exposing a “career tree” of different pathways to middle class income careers, how to prepare students for success in entry level roles:
 - Need to make Parents real advocates for this approach, so they support it at home and will vote for the funding/school levies needed to support it.
 - Schools need to fill the need of students in the life skills area – understanding basic personal finance, creative thinking, hard work, problem solving.
- Option 3 would be more effective if businesses communicate and collaborate with applicants and training schools.

NOTE: Supporting transportation needs of employees is key to long term success and retention.

Group 7: Like some parts of Options 1 and 3

- Option 1 → Trade schools are a valuable asset in the community and should be supported and recognized as such.
- Option 2 → Did not like this option.
- Option 3 → This is key to retraining workers being displaced BEFORE downsizing happens.

Group 8: Likes key elements of all 3 Options

- Need to remove the stigma in our communities, our Parents, of technical school careers versus college careers → Belief in superiority of college paths is misguided and not helpful.

Group 9: Like Option 2

- Want to see soft skills training in public schools as important as hard, tested skills.

Group 10: Like some of the elements of all 3 Options

- Option 1 → Should have the best long term impact on the problem.
- Option 2 → Need to utilize after school period for soft skills and technical skills development, including community service activities.
- Option 3 → Would provide the greatest short term impact on the problem.

Group 11: Believe Option 2 Would Have the Greatest Impact

- Option 3 would be the best use of community resources.
- Option 3 would also have the greatest impact on Economic Development.
- Option 2 should include the capability for public schools to prepare students for multiple successful career paths, not just college -dependent career paths → Standardized tests don’t prepare students for success in jobs, but in the area of knowledge and college program readiness → Need an expanded sense of purpose today.

Group 12: Also favor integration of elements from all 3 Options

- Need Parent, School, Student and Business Collaborations.

