



Business Advisory Councils



March 1, 2026 Annual Report/ Joint Statement - NwOESC Business Advisory Council

Name of Business Advisory Council: Northwest Ohio ESC Business Advisory Council

Primary Contact: Kerri Weir – NwOESC Superintendent and BAC Co-Chair

Secondary Contact: Mike Remer – NwOESC Business Education Liaison and BAC Co-Chair

Additional Contact: Andy Hunter – NwOESC Director and BAC Co-Chair

1. Are there any changes to your Business Advisory Councils' structure or leadership since you submitted your plan for this academic year?

There have been no changes in structure or leadership since our previous submission. The following District Boards of Education and the Northwest Ohio ESC agree that the NwOESC's Business Advisory Council shall represent the business of the school districts consistent with the authority granted by the Ohio General Assembly. This agreement is in effect until the Board(s) or ESC terminates the same by formal resolution.

Archbold-Area Local	Fulton
Ayersville Local	Defiance
Bryan City	Williams
Central Local	Defiance
Defiance City	Defiance
Edgerton Local	Williams
Edon Northwest Local	Williams
Evergreen Local	Fulton
Fayette Local	Fulton
Hicksville Exempted Village	Defiance
Holgate Local	Henry
Liberty Center Local	Henry
Millcreek-West Unity Local	Williams
Montpelier Exempted Village	Williams
Napoleon Area City	Henry
North Central Local	Williams
Northeastern Local	Defiance
Patrick Henry Local	Henry
Pettisville Local	Fulton
Pike-Delta-York Local	Fulton
Stryker Local	Williams
Swanton Local	Fulton
Wauseon Exempted Village	Fulton

- Membership:

- o The Superintendent of the NwOESC;
- o The Economic Development Directors from each of Defiance, Fulton, Henry, and Williams Counties;
- o The Superintendent of School for each School District passing a resolution indicating that it has elected to have the NwOESC BAC serve as its BAC;
- o The Superintendent from Four County Career Center;
- o A Representative from Northwest State Community College, as selected by the President or Dean of Academic Affairs.
- o Up to three (3) Representatives from the NwOESC/NWCOA STEAM panel, as selected by the NwOESC Superintendent.
- o Up to two (2) Representatives for the Advanced Manufacturing Consortium (AMC), as selected by the NwOESC Superintendent.
- o Members of the Ohio Legislature Representative of our Northwest Ohio area will be encouraged

- BAC Mission, Vision, and Structure:

- o NwOESC BAC Vision: A well-prepared workforce that contributes to economic growth and development and improved quality of life throughout the Northwest Ohio region.
- o NwOESC BAC Mission: The mission of the Northwest Ohio BAC is to bring together on a regional level the leaders in business, education, and government to advise, support and enhance awareness, instruction and experiences students are provided in striving to gain relevant, in-demand job skills as part of their preparation for future career success.
- o Structure:
 - Economic Development Director updates at each meeting – an opportunity for each county director or designee to provide information and updates to connect business and education stakeholders. A key focus is on communicating local economy and job information.
 - Jim Wyse – Fulton County
 - Erika Willitzer – Defiance County
 - Ashley Epling – Williams County
 - Jennifer Arps – Henry County
 - NwOESC BAC Liaison – Investment in personnel to support regional endeavors and further education/business linkages. Growth and expansion continue with the goal of building capacity across all four counties.
 - Mike Remer serves part-time as liaison
 - An email distribution list makes it convenient for BAC members to pass along information about events and offerings that would be beneficial for the group.
- o BAC meetings were held at NwOESC on the following dates:
 - March 11, 2025
 - May 6, 2025
 - September 16, 2025
 - December 16, 2025

2. Of goals submitted in your 2025 Business Advisory Council Plan, on a scale of 1-10 with 10

being goal accomplished. What goals were you able to accomplish?

**a. Goal: Fostering collaboration, beyond the Council, among business, labor, and education personnel;
Score: 10**

- Business and Education Spotlights at each BAC quarterly meeting continue to be an integral part of our BAC. Business spotlights provide opportunities for area businesses and to share information related to operations, challenges, and successes as partnerships are strengthened with education. Education spotlights provide opportunities for education entities to share practices and initiatives designed to bring awareness, experiences, and instruction to students as they prepare for future career success.

- **Spotlight; March 11, 2025: Site Visitation Experience at Montpelier Schools**

Students are supported through the E3 program to ensure they graduate with a plan - enlisted, employed, or enrolled - and they learn about these options before they even start high school. Advisors build readiness through college and workplace tours, skilled trades days, and Air National Guard tours, along with firsthand activities like a real-world budgeting simulation, mock basic training, and mock interviews. The program wraps up with an E3 Signing Day that celebrates each student's chosen path. During the visit, Jim Lee highlighted the STEAM Lab's focus and shared scholarship opportunities for trades students through mikerowe.org. Tours also showcased spaces where students build practical skills, including sports performance training, trade skills like carpentry and small engine repair, STEM creation using 3D printers and laser cutters, and robotics design and competition.

- **Spotlight; May 6, 2025: Pettisville Local Schools**

John MP opened the Pettisville Schools spotlight with a brief overview of the STEAM Lab and kits made available through the NwOESC/NWOCA partnership. He then introduced Mr. Greg Waidelich from Pettisville Schools and noted that this was the district's first year participating in a robotics competition. Students shared and demonstrated several of the robots they had created, explaining both their design process and what each robot had been programmed to do. The presentation highlighted student innovation, problem-solving, and the firsthand learning opportunities made possible through the district's robotics and additive manufacturing efforts.

- **Spotlight; May 6, 2025: Fulton County Economic Development**

Mike Remer introduced Mr. Jim Wyse, the new Fulton County Economic Development Director, who recently assumed the role following Matt Gilroy. Mr. Wyse shared his professional background and experience with the group, along with his enthusiasm for stepping into the leadership role in Fulton County. He spoke about the importance of continued growth in the county and emphasized that job growth is closely tied to the ability to align housing availability with workforce development efforts. He also noted that Fulton County Economic Development is still seeking teachers to participate in the educator bootcamp, which gives educators the opportunity to visit local employers and gain firsthand insight into the skills and experiences businesses are seeking in today's workforce.

- **Spotlight; May 6, 2025: Bryan City High School**

Bryan City Schools provided a spotlight on CEO Day, a senior interview experience designed to prepare students for life after high school, whether they plan to attend college, enter a trade school, or move directly into the workforce. Presented by Karyn Cox, Mark Rairigh, Steve Alspaugh, and student representatives, the overview explained that the day includes motivational speakers, workshops, and direct activities aimed at building students' confidence and career readiness. A central part of the experience is the interview component, in which seniors participate in practice interviews focused on their post-graduation plans and personal strengths. This allows students to strengthen their communication skills, receive constructive feedback, and approach their futures with greater confidence and preparation. Several students also demonstrated their skills for those in attendance.

- **Spotlight; September 16, 2025 – Future of Fulton County**

Chris Lake, Troy Armstrong, Angie Belcher, Eric Smola and Cara Leininger discussed how they have a partnership with the home district(s), training center, Ohio Means Jobs, and local businesses where the businesses receive a tax credit for hosting internships.

- **Spotlight: September 16, 2025 - Advanced Rehabilitation Technologies on site visit**

Advanced Rehabilitation Technology hosted the BAC meeting and provided an excellent setting for industry and education leaders to connect, exchange ideas, and explore opportunities for future collaboration. The meeting highlighted the importance of strong partnerships between business and education as a way to strengthen workforce preparation and address the skills gaps facing the region.

During the opening comments, Dustin Schlachter shared insights into what he looks for in employees. He noted that students who have participated in sports often seem better prepared for the workplace, and he also emphasized the strong earning potential in the field, explaining that starting pay can range from \$90,000 to \$100,000 without a college degree being required.

Participants then rotated through three stations to learn more about different areas of the industry. At the construction station with S&S Directional Boring, attendees learned about construction work, participated in an excavator competition, and discussed the qualities that make a strong construction employee. At the Municipal Rehab station with Advanced Rehabilitation Technology, the group learned about manhole rehabilitation, how this work helps save communities money, and the traits that contribute to success as an ART rehabilitation employee. At the coatings station with OBIC, attendees observed a spray lining demonstration and heard about why a company like OBIC is positioned for international growth, as well as what is needed to support continued expansion.

- **Spotlight; December 16, 2026 – North Star BlueScope Steel on site visit**

North Star BlueScope Steel hosted the BAC meeting and generously provided breakfast and lunch for all attendees. The visit offered a valuable opportunity for education and industry

representatives to learn more about the company's operations, workforce needs, and interest in strengthening partnerships with area schools. Mr. Cam Thoroughman, Vice President of Human Resources, welcomed the group and began the meeting with a safety overview.

Participants then divided into two groups for the day's activities. During the information session and team-building activity, Conrad Winkler, CEO, shared an overview of North Star BlueScope Steel, including its history, focus, and company culture. He explained that BlueScope is an Australian-based company that produces hot rolled coil steel at its Delta location on a 700-acre campus, with additional sites across Ohio and throughout the country. He noted that Delta's location in the industrial heartland makes it an ideal place for the company's operations.

Mr. Winkler emphasized that the company's culture is centered on safety, teamwork, customer service, and a strong commitment to the community. He described the scale of production at NSBSS, sharing that the company processes approximately the equivalent of 10,000 cars' worth of scrap each day in order to meet demand. He explained that the scrap-sorting process is complex and that the company uses artificial intelligence to improve material identification and quality. AI is also being used in other areas such as accounts payable, customer order entry, and process refinement.

He also shared that co-op students, often from the University of Toledo and Bowling Green State University, contribute ideas to improve systems and processes. In addition, NSBSS is exploring a new satellite program with Northwest State Community College to help strengthen workforce development. A major focus for the company is building a well-trained, qualified workforce that can achieve upper-middle-class earnings through strong compensation. Mr. Winkler outlined the company's multi-step hiring process, which may include a phone interview, video interview, and an on-site assessment involving group teamwork. He noted that the company values problem-solving ability, a strong safety mindset, attention to detail, work ethic, ethics, and a positive attitude.

To reinforce the importance of teamwork, participants took part in a timed challenge in which teams used a deck of cards and scissors to build the tallest freestanding structure possible in ten minutes.

The second part of the visit included a facility tour led by NSBSS staff. Participants were required personal protective equipment, including hard hats, safety glasses, vests, and gloves, as they observed the full steel coil production process. The tour provided an informative and close-up look at the company's operations.

At the conclusion of the visit, the NSBSS team thanked participants for learning more about their work. Cam Thoroughman shared that the company is interested in building stronger relationships with area K-12 districts through opportunities such as modified tours and mini career fairs. The visit reflected promising potential for continued partnership and collaboration moving forward.

b. Goal: Educator Boot Camp – Enhancing our Future Workforce by Inspiring Educators; Score: 10

- In June 2025, the NwOESC hosted its fourth annual Educator Bootcamp in collaboration with the economic development directors of Henry, Fulton, and Williams Counties. This weeklong event offered area educators the opportunity to tour select

local businesses in the region to better understand the opportunities and needs present in our own backyard. Participants then returned to present some of their takeaways and ideas on how they might incorporate what they learned into their curriculum. Through Ashland University and with support from the Lieutenant Governor's office, educators were able to earn college credit. The event was a resounding success, with our students emerging as the real winners as they will now have increased exposure to opportunities as relationships between area businesses and educators continue to flourish. Another Bootcamp is being planned for the Summer of 2026. We plan to continue this effort and expand to increase the number of participating businesses, and the number of educators who take advantage of the program. *Defiance County provides a different option for Educators to connect with and learn from regional businesses.

c. Goal: Advanced Manufacturing Consortium - Expansion of Collaboration - Building Partnerships, Coordinating Activities; Score: 8

- Collaboration between the NwOESC BAC and the Advanced Manufacturing Consortium (AMC) got off the ground in 2023. Throughout this current year, the BAC prioritized involvement in Advanced Manufacturing Consortium initiatives that directly impacted students, with a particular focus on expanding work-based learning opportunities, addressing both short- and long-term skills gap challenges, and strengthening the regional talent pipeline through improved and emerging career pathways. The BAC also helped promote AMC membership and worked collaboratively to build awareness and engagement across the region. In partnership with AMC, the BAC supported expanded educator training opportunities and learning series designed to increase awareness of local businesses, highlight opportunities available to students, and strengthen both curricular connections and professional skill development for educators. In addition, the BAC promoted pre-apprenticeship initiatives as important strategies for helping students better understand career opportunities and workforce pathways available within the region. The BAC is also partnering with AMC in support of the annual luncheon meeting, further reinforcing collaboration between education and industry leaders and helping strengthen shared efforts around workforce development.

3. What challenges have you experienced implementing your goals?

- The spotlights have been a tremendous success, thanks to our members who have brought ideas, helping make connections, and volunteering to share the great work happening across our region. The primary challenges are time and funding. It would be extremely beneficial to have a dedicated Career Navigator/Connector in each county to help facilitate and sustain these connections.
- With regard to the Bootcamp, one barrier is a lack of understanding that not all educators need college credit for this type of professional learning. In addition, current state funding for Bootcamps is directed only to colleges. It would be more effective for funding to go directly to the BAC, allowing the council to design a program in collaboration with its members that better reflects local needs and priorities.
- In terms of collaboration with the AMC, it is challenging to commit the necessary time and personnel, particularly without funding support. The NwOESC BAC strongly

supports the work of the AMC, but as a council, it does not have the capacity, staffing, or resources to take on a hands-on role in AMC initiatives. Individual members contribute and participate as they are able. More broadly, BACs across Ohio do not receive dedicated funding to support coordination or implementation efforts. Without targeted support, challenges remain in areas such as direct student activities, staffing, and overall capacity.

4. What new partnerships have your Business Advisory Council formed for the 2025-26 School Year?

- The NwOESC BAC has been a catalyst for each county and school district therein to develop more community specific connections, inclusive of local businesses and education, with the support of the Economic Development leaders in each respective county.

5. Have you added or removed any goals submitted in your SY25 Business Advisory Council Plans? If so, please provide details.

- No

6. Have you received any media coverage or participated in any case studies as a Business Advisory Council? If so, please share.

- The Educator Bootcamp had excellent social media coverage. A video of the week's events was created and used for further promotion.
- Social media, including Facebook, X, and Instagram, are used widely with spotlights.
- North Star BlueScope is producing a 30-year celebration video, and are reaching out to community partners, including the NwOESC/BAC, to be part of this production, highlighting the collaboration that has been built along the way.

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