

Summary of Recommended Policy Priorities for the 2022-2023 Biennium

Since 2007, the Ohio Workforce Coalition (OWC) has been bringing together workforce leaders and stakeholders from across Ohio to promote public policies that **BUILD THE SKILLS OF ADULT WORKERS, MEET THE WORKFORCE NEEDS OF EMPLOYERS, and STRENGTHEN WORKFORCE SYSTEMS**. As Ohio's oldest, workforce focused, multi-stakeholder coalition, OWC represents members from education and training, economic and workforce development, business and industry, community-based workforce organizations, labor, human services, and the public workforce system.

The OWC envisions a future for Ohio when: Ohioans have equitable access to the supports needed to advance into and along career pathways and racial disparities in employment and earnings are overcome; Ohio's premier employers are recognized for their quality jobs and receive special consideration when replying to state RFPs, state training applications, and other supports; and Ohio's state workforce programs and investments are guided by data, informed by local stakeholders, and accountable for equitable results.

The work of the OWC is organized our three dominant stakeholder groups: Ohio's individual students, jobseekers, and incumbent workers; Ohio's businesses; and Ohio's workforce and talent system actors. OWC's priorities in each of these areas is guided by a framework that considers which priorities OWC is well positioned to lead and but for OWC efforts, the priority would not be elevated. In addition to this work, OWC will partner and support advocates from post-secondary, economic development, human services, business, and the public workforce system.

BUILD SKILLS: In the last biennium, \$5 million in General Revenue funds was allocated to the launch and/or growth of sector partnerships across Ohio. This investment is a critical step towards building a skilled workforce by generating connections between business and local partners. It is critical that we offer the same type of flexible support to Ohioans—data shows flexible supports increase training completions by four times. To help ensure the success of this and future investments in sector partnership, the 2022-2023 Biennium budget should:

Continue to allocate General Revenue Funds to sector partnerships and reserve 10% of the allocation to build a flexible training, employment, and job-retention fund available to Ohioans who are under 300% of federal poverty level and pursuing employment, training at community colleges, non-profit training partners, and career-technical schools, or working towards employer focused credentials for career advancement. Access to the fund should be available regardless of sector, employment status, national origin, criminal history, or other factors. The fund should be allocated through the public workforce system, encourage local match, and require that administration of the fund include local community-based organizations.

SUPPORT EMPLOYERS: Across Ohio there are premier employers that invest in their workforce, value racial equity and inclusion, and strive to build strong workplace culture. These employers exist across sectors and sizes but share a commitment to high quality career opportunities that offer more than livable wages—such as predictable hours and scheduling, Covid-19 and other workplace safety protocols, health coverage, and tuition reimbursement. To support such employers and recognize the importance of their efforts, Ohio should:

Create an Ohio Premier Employer designation and award it to employers that opt-in to demonstrate quality opportunities through the objective assessment of job and workplace characteristics. Current and prospective Ohio employers who earn this designation should be given a) additional points in the state contract procurement process and b) priority access to state managed workforce funds and initiatives. Employers that opt in and do not earn the designation should be provided with information and access to resources to improve the quality of their jobs and workplace.

STRENGTHEN SYSTEMS: Established by legislation in 2011 and Executive Order in 2012, JobsOhio and Ohio’s Office of Workforce Transformation turn ten this year and next! During the past decade, both have worked across state agencies, partnered with local areas, and documented everything from demand occupations to promising partnerships. Despite annual reports, JO and OWT’s impact and influence are not well captured through programmatic measures and scale of their work is not well known or understood. To address this, Ohio leadership should:

Identify key workforce-related initiatives launched by or through JobsOhio and the Ohio Office of Workforce Transformation. Issue a report that documents their impact on Ohio’s agencies, jobseekers, and businesses. Promote data transparency, accountability, and stakeholder engagement by presenting the report—with successes and lessons learned—at stakeholder sessions across the state.

CONCLUSION

To be sure, there is a lot to be done to **BUILD THE SKILLS OF ADULT WORKERS, MEET THE WORKFORCE NEEDS OF EMPLOYERS, and STRENGTHEN WORKFORCE SYSTEMS**. This agenda does not try to do it all. The OWC believes that these three specific actions can fundamentally change our collective approach to workforce and talent while outlining a roadmap for a more equitable future. Ohio’s executive leaders and general assembly have long been proponents of job-creation and economic development—as they should be. These priorities support that goal by ensuring that Ohio has a diverse workforce that has equitable access to opportunities at quality employers and that the systems and programs charged with making that happen are engaged with stakeholders and accountable for impact. The OWC stands ready to offer legislative language, statewide supportive service fund models, best practice examples, and a multitude of other resources to support public servants.

Organizations and initiatives mentioned in this document should not be assumed to have endorsed the policy priorities listed or been party to their development. The Ohio Workforce Coalition values partnership and hopes to continue building a broad base of stakeholders, many of whom we hope to work with on these priorities. For more information about the Ohio Workforce Coalition, please visit www.ohioworkforcecoalition.org, or call/email Rebecca Kusner at 614-404-3882; rkusner@r4workforce.com.