

**Ohio Valley Educational Service Center
Business Advisory Joint Statement
December, 2020**

The following information is a summative and anecdotal account of the 2019 - 2020 work by the Ohio Valley ESC Business Advisory Council and its partner school districts that include Switzerland of Ohio Local School District. Because of the current pandemic, the Guernsey County Manufacturing Council has not met since March, 2020.

The makeup of the BAC has changed since three of the four districts aligned with the Ohio Valley ESC have elected to move to neighboring ESCs. This move leaves Switzerland of Ohio as the sole partner in the OVESC BAC.

The Ohio Valley Educational Service Center's Business Advisory Council Mission has not changed. It is to provide connections between its education partner and business and manufacturing partners within, and around the Ohio Valley Educational Service Center region that will inform current and future workforce needs in order to position our region for dynamic, global economic growth.

Connecting business and industry partners with education will provide a sustainable, trained workforce meeting the needs of the changing region. We will train and retain our local talent to positively impact the climate and culture of our communities. Prior to the pandemic the group worked collaboratively to address the needs facing manufacturing and other local businesses. The plan includes initiatives to include: preparing and providing a better workforce through partnerships with area school districts, career centers and skill partners; providing industry specific information on grants and other available funding; providing program opportunities and connections that benefit local businesses; foster open discussions on issues and concerns facing regional manufacturing and business; provide opportunities for networking and the sharing of industry best practices; and present information about industry specific local training and educational opportunities.

Goal #1 of the plan is to increase the percentage of students who are “skill ready” for college and/or careers. This will be accomplished by establishing awareness and interest in workplace opportunities with students, parents, unemployed, underemployed and those looking to relocate to our region to live and work. Business and industry partners along with education partners will work together to connect learning (relevance) to workforce/career readiness. A program implemented by education that is collaboratively created and supported by business and industry to improve the professional skills required for workforce and career success will be developed. Authentic workplace experiences, expectations, information, internships, externships, pre-apprenticeships, and apprenticeships will be provided to allow individuals to thoroughly and

thoughtfully plan and explore career opportunities to inform career path choices.

Goal #2 of the plan is to create an area-wide Electronic Career Opportunities Portfolio that is supported by local business partners and skill partners. Business and industry partners, along with Pre-K through 20 education partners will work together to connect learning to workforce and career pathways. With input from all partners, a plan and design to create the electronic tool to support the thorough and thoughtful plan to explore local career opportunities will be developed. *This goal has been abandoned and the Careers in My Careers website has been terminated.* Prior to the pandemic, the Electronic Career Opportunities Portfolio was highly regarded as a method for connecting learning to workforce and career pathways. The challenge for the first two years has been gaining financial support from our partners to sustain the online presence. The pandemic created such concern for local businesses and industry, the OVESC leadership determined this move was necessary.

Goal #3 of the plan is to secure the necessary funding to place a Career Pathways Specialist in each partner school district for three (3) years. By establishing an Education/Workforce Foundation, communicating its existence and structure to all stakeholders, appropriate funding and grant opportunities can be submitted to support and sustain current plan goals.

The Ohio Valley Business Advisory Council has gathered information on economic trends and opportunities in the region from a number of sources. Monroe County generally has some of the highest unemployment in the State of Ohio. At its highest point during the current pandemic, Monroe County experienced an unemployment rate of 16.3%. This rate was 11.8% in the previous month then it dropped down to 11.9% in August. October's unemployment rate is 6.5%. The oil and gas industry has seen a number of companies pull out of Monroe County over the past 9 months with the largest oil and gas company filing for bankruptcy. The pandemic, low gas costs, and low oil costs among other contributing factors have caused a noticeable slowdown from this employment sector. The number of new construction pipelines has diminished drastically over the county. While this information may be somewhat distressing, there is much optimism of this industry rebounding especially as Shell Oil Company's Beaver County, PA plant comes online in the next twelve to eighteen months. Local leaders believe this will generate a big increase in gas volume needed to feed this plant. When the plant comes online, the hope is that it will energize the oil and gas industry again with drilling to continue at the earlier levels while creating a playing field for additional businesses associated with the oil and gas industry. The demand for Chemical Operators and Machinists are still projected to be in high demand within the region, and the Data company at Long Ridge is anticipating approximately 300 jobs in the information technology area.

The 2019 - 2020 activities associated with the OVESC BAC to meet plan goals to support "skill readiness" and reflect implementation progress in the region include:

A greater partnership with Building Bridges to Careers (BB2C) has been developed over the last

12 months. This partnership is supporting the efforts to maintain the current Career Pathways Specialist through a Gates Foundation Grant. A Regional Expansion Coordinator has been added to the team through the Gates Foundation Grant and an OMEGA Grant. The Ohio Valley ESC partners with BB2C to employ a Placement Coordinator, Lead Regional Expansion Coordinator, and a Maker Space Coordinator. These positions are actively engaged in Switzerland of Ohio as well as other districts associated with BB2C.

Career Pathways Specialist has at this time completed the following during this reporting period:

- 41 Job Shadowing experiences involving students.
- 233 students have taken advantage of Business Tours.
- 559 students have been impacted by speakers presenting either face-to-face or virtually.
- 515 backpacks were completed face-to-face while 102 backpacks were completed virtually with OhioMeansJobs
- 67 students have been assisted with Student Success Plans

The Ohio Valley BAC will continue to monitor progress, look for expansion and improvement opportunities and the development of additional goals, objectives, strategies and actions as the needs of the region change.