



Knox County Workforce Development Alliance: 2025 - 2026 Action Plan

Mission Statement: A data-driven collaboration of professionals working to enhance career pathways and worker skill alignment for in-demand industry employers in Knox County.

WorkDev 2025-2026 Focus Areas:

The following focus areas were identified through the 2024 Workforce Demand Study results and the strategy survey of WorkDev members in 2024. They will be used to accomplish the WorkDev mission in 2025 & 2026. The two-year plan is to accommodate WorkDev programming that is influenced by school district schedules.

1. Young Talent Recruitment/Retention
2. Schools/Employer Alignment
3. In-Demand Skill Alignment
4. In-Demand Careers Awareness
5. WorkDev Member Development

***The focus areas are in order of priority based on the demand study and WorkDev surveys.

***Each focus area has a description and projects that can be used to achieve these goals.

Section 1: Young Talent Recruitment/Retention

Description: WorkDev seeks to attract and retain young talent in Knox County by connecting them to in-demand jobs and career pathways. Through targeted outreach, education, and partnerships with local employers, we aim to showcase opportunities for meaningful careers and professional growth.

● Current Programming:

- College Internship & Job Fair: Partnering with the local colleges to host a job fair for Knox County employers to promote internships and jobs that require college experience with the hopes that students will find employment and choose to stay in Knox County after graduation while filling in-demand jobs.
 - This program acts as a minor income source for other WorkDev programming.
- Knox Healthcare Expo: The Healthcare Expo series provides Knox County students with valuable insights into diverse healthcare careers and connects them with local job and educational opportunities to guide informed career decisions. Featuring over 20 healthcare professionals, the expos are organized

into four employment pathway stations: Nursing, Technicians, Office & Emergency Services, and Support Services.

- Knox ASPECT: A coalition of Knox County manufacturers and WorkDev operate a program called Knox ASPECT, which is designed to prepare interested candidates for careers in manufacturing by teaching necessary skills for the industry. The payoff for the participants is that any candidate who completes the program will have a guaranteed job interview with 13 participating Knox County-based manufacturers, all of whom are seeking to hire for open positions.
- **Opportunities:**
 - Internship Opportunities (High school): Investigating & promoting internship programming at local high schools.
 - Knox ASPECT: Increase capacity by adding an additional cohort. The current cohort can only accommodate 25 students. It is expected to have a full cohort in 2025, which allows for the potential to add a new cohort, possibly in the fall.

Section 2: Schools & Employer Alignment:

Description: WorkDev seeks to strengthen connections between school districts and the evolving needs of employers in the local workforce.

- **Current Programming:**
 - Knox ASPECT Program: As described in Section 1.
 - Educational Representation at Meetings: Representatives from various school districts regularly attend WorkDev meetings.
 - Knox Business Advisory Council: The Knox Educational Service Center (ESC) previously commissioned WorkDev to serve informally as the county's Business Advisory Council (BAC) to the school districts, fostering general connections between schools and businesses. Beginning in 2025, the Area Development Foundation (ADF) will establish a formal BAC that complies with state mandates, meeting quarterly to strengthen collaboration. This group will include representatives from ADF, county school district career advisors, Ohio Means Jobs, industry leaders from manufacturing, healthcare, and construction, and the county superintendents, focusing on sharing WorkDev reports and cultivating stronger ties between school leadership and employers.
- **Opportunities:**
 - Ohio Teacher Bootcamp: OTB immerses educators in local industries, providing hands-on experiences and insights into current workforce trends and skill requirements. WorkDev could implement this program to connect Knox County teachers with local employers, helping them understand industry needs and

- translate these insights into classroom instruction that prepares students for in-demand careers. With potential funding opportunities available, this initiative could be a cost-effective way to bridge the gap between education and industry while fostering stronger partnerships between schools and employers.
- Educator Programming: It was highlighted in WorkDev meetings that WorkDev could create business tour opportunities for various educators, like school district principals, superintendents, and others. WorkDev should prioritize total alignment between local educators and business opportunities.

Section 3: In-Demand Skill Alignment

Description: WorkDev seeks to offer trainings, data, and resources that promote employee skills that align with employer needs while encouraging businesses to invest in workforce development that enhances workplace desirability.

- **Current Programming:**
 - Job Quality Committee: Hosted two training sessions in 2024, one about managing multi-generational teams and another about leadership using the Strengths Assessment method. This committee can and should continue hosting trainings that improve the quality of local jobs by enhancing the skills of local managers and company leaders.
 - Suggested name change to “Skill Alignment Committee” to better reflect the current and future activities of the committee
- **Opportunities:**
 - Present the Knowledge, Skills, & Abilities (from the 2024 Workforce Demand Study, as outlined below) to local school districts to ensure they know of the soft skills employers require.
 - Having the Job Quality Committee plan a training that offers employers the ability to send their current employees to learn specific KSA's (as outlined below).
 - One specific program that multiple healthcare employers requested was a customer service training program for their current employees.
 - Providing trainings for current employees can/should be consider as a potential income source for WorkDev when possible.
 - **Knowledge, Skills, & Abilities - Overview:**
 - The Workforce Demand Study relayed that education and training are only part of a worker's ability to succeed. Success also depends on knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA). The following definitions for these three attributes are:
 - Knowledge is the body of a worker's information needed to help perform a specific job successfully.

- Skills build on knowledge. These consider the ability to manipulate things, data, people, and ideas to accomplish a task. Skills can be developed with practice or training.
- Abilities build on both knowledge and skills and allow the individual to apply his or her knowledge and skills to accomplish the tasks required in the job.
- While technical skills are necessary, an important component of skills is “soft skills” – or what some prefer to call “work-ready skills.” These are personality traits and personal attributes that help an individual relate to others and function effectively in the workplace. These include traits such as integrity, punctuality, empathy, oral and written communication, creativity, problem-solving and critical thinking, and leadership. In conversations with business leaders over the years, the author has found that most leaders consider these skills at least as important as technical skills.
- The most needed knowledge, skills, and abilities between both manufacturing and healthcare careers are:
 - Knowledge: Customer Service, English Language, and Mental Processing.
 - Skills: Problem Solving, Speaking, and Critical Thinking.
 - Abilities: Oral Comprehension & Expression, Problem Sensitivity, and Good Vision.

Section 4: In-Demand Careers Awareness

Description: WorkDev seeks to build awareness about high-quality companies and career opportunities within the manufacturing industry in Knox County to increase current and future interest in manufacturing positions.

- **Current Projects:**

- Knox ASPECT: As described in Section 1.
- Knox Healthcare Expo: As described in Section 1.
- Manufacturing Matters: WorkDev partners with a local school district to host manufacturing companies at an information fair during a sporting event. Each company has a booth where they share information about their facilities, products, mission, and career opportunities. This event reaches students, parents, and all demographics of the community. This event can be changed to accommodate a non-sporting event structure.

- **Opportunities:**

- Teacher Bootcamp: As mentioned in section 2.

- Awareness Events: Create a plan for WorkDev to investigate and promote community events to build awareness about manufacturing & healthcare. Either creating new events or partnering with current organizations to incorporate career awareness into community events.
- Social Media Campaign: Promote local companies and career opportunities on social media. WorkDev could use ADF's social media or support campaigns on other local social media pages. WorkDev can engage with Ohio State Manufacturing Month (October) and In-Demand Job Month (May) on social media.

Section 5: WorkDev Member Development

Description: WorkDev aims to prioritize the professional development of its members by fostering the exchange of industry best practices and innovative workforce strategies. By sharing insights and engaging with the local community, WorkDev seeks to enhance its collective understanding of employer needs and strengthen its impact on workforce development.

● Opportunities:

- Diverse Meeting Spaces: WorkDev is planning to host half of its annual meetings at an industry-relevant location in 2025. This will help members learn more about various educational institutions and local employers, which will broaden the group's understanding of Knox County's workforce climate. These visits can/will include a presentation from the host and a tour of the premises.
- Resource Education: Having presentations at the monthly meetings to increase awareness of the resources available for employers that can improve workforce situations.
- Specific Training: If there is a specific topic that requires more time than can be allocated during a regular meeting, WorkDev can host training sessions outside of regular meeting times.
- Membership Audit: Conduct a membership audit to ensure proper representation of in-demand industry sectors. Determine if new members need to be invited to the group.

Opportunity Timeline Projections:

According to input from WorkDev members and administration, the following timeline has been set as a goal to accomplish specific programming opportunities. Each timeline is accompanied by the WorkDev committee that will gather to accomplish the objective.

- Knox ASPECT - ASPECT Planning Committee:
 - April 2025

- April 2026 - Considering a second cohort.
- Knox Healthcare Expo - Healthcare Expo Planning Committee:
 - May 2025 Danville High School
 - October 2025 - Centerburg High School
 - November 2025 - Knox County Career Center
 - March 2026 - Fredericktown High School
 - October 2026 - East Knox High School
 - November 2026 - Knox County Career Center
- Knox College Internship & Job Fair - Internship & Job Fair Planning Committee:
 - March 2025
 - March 2026
- KSA Trainings - Job Quality Committee:
 - March 2025 - Gather committee for discussion/brainstorming.
 - June 2025-September 2025 - Host a KSA training for either job seekers or current employees (up to committee discretion based on employer needs).
 - March 2026 - Gather committee for discussion/brainstorming.
 - June 2026-September 2026 - Host a KSA training for either job seekers or current employees (up to committee discretion based on employer needs).
- Ohio Teacher Bootcamp or Other Alignment Event - Career Advisory Committee:
 - February 2025 - Gather committee to discuss educator boot camp opportunities.
 - March 2025 - Present boot camp opportunities to local superintendents at the Knox BAC meeting.
 - May 2025-December 2025: Host an Educator Bootcamp for at least one Knox County school district.
 - January 2026-December 2026: Host at least 2 Educator Bootcamps for at least two Knox County school districts.
 - ***These goals are based on the discretion of the planning committee and local demand/involvement.
- Awareness Initiatives - Career Advisory Committee & WorkDev Admin:
 - May 2025 - Social Media Campaign for In-demand Jobs Month in Ohio.
 - August 2025-October 2025 - Sporting Event awareness event, possibly Manufacturing Matters.
 - May 2026 - Social Media Campaign for In-demand Jobs Month in Ohio.
 - August 2026-October 2026 - Sporting Event awareness event, possibly Manufacturing Matters.
 - ***These goals are based on the discretion of the planning committee and local demand/involvement.

Conclusion:

The strategic objectives outlined in the WorkDev 2025-2026 Action Plan aim to strengthen Knox County's workforce by addressing key areas of young talent recruitment, school-employer alignment, manufacturing awareness, workplace quality, and member development. Through targeted initiatives such as internships, training programs, and industry

partnerships, WorkDev will connect local employers with a skilled and ready labor force. By fostering collaboration and supporting continuous growth, these efforts will create a thriving workforce that meets the evolving needs of the county's industries. Ultimately, the strategic plan will empower Knox County to become a model for workforce development and economic success.

The WorkDev 2025-2026 Action Plan was reviewed and approved by the WorkDev group on January 22nd, 2025.