

## **Knox Business Advisory Council Meeting Minutes November 20th, 2025**

Chair Julia Suggs called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

### **Attendance:**

- East Knox Local Schools - Superintendent, Rich Baird
- Danville Local Schools - Superintendent, Jason Snively
- Mount Vernon City Schools - Superintendent, Bill Sedar
- Centerburg Local Schools - Superintendent, Ryan Gallwitz
- Fredericktown Local Schools - Superintendent, Gary Chapman
- Knox County Career Center - Superintendent, Kathy Greenwich
- Area Development Foundation (Chair) - Vice President, Julia Suggs
- Knox County OhioMeansJobs Office - Administrative Director, Brandy Booth
- Regional OhioMeansJobs Office - Kelly Carey
- Manufacturing Industry Representative - Mauser Packaging, Holley Wiford
- Construction Industry Representative - Kokosing Inc., Andy Fox
- Healthcare Industry Representative: Absent
- ESC Career Navigator - Sean McCutcheon
- Knox County Career Center (KCCC) Career Connections Advisor - Shelly Laslo
- Mount Vernon City Schools: Career Connection Advisor - Chris Keaton
- Public Attendees: None

### **Opening Remarks**

Ms. Suggs welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending. She reviewed the agenda and invited each attendee to introduce themselves.

### **BAC Business & Operations**

#### **Review/Approval of August Meeting Minutes**

- Mr. Fox motioned to approve the August meeting minutes. Ms. Wiford seconded the motion, and all in attendance approved.
- Ms. Suggs noted that the healthcare representative from WorkDev, Hanna Ford, has had to step down from her role as she has taken a position elsewhere. Ms. Suggs will be searching for a new Healthcare Representative from WorkDev in the new year.

#### **2026 Meeting Schedule**

- Ms. Suggs presented three possible meeting schedules to be discussed.
- The board seemed to agree that the best meeting schedule is to have two meetings during the spring semester and two during the fall semester, to avoid summer break.
- Mr. Sedar motioned to approve the 2026 calendar. Ms. Greenwich seconded, and all in attendance approved.

#### **2025-26 BAC Plan**

- Ms. Suggs shared that the state requires a plan to be submitted each year. She wrote the plan and distributed it to everyone prior to the meeting. The Knox ESC submitted this plan to the state on September 30th.
- If this board would like to pursue awards for the BAC in the future, they will need to provide additional data from their school district in the fall. Student success planning data is not required for the plan, but it is required for the award submission.

#### **WorkDev Awards:**

- WorkDev was given the Ohio Excellence in Workforce Development award at the Ohio Economic Development Association annual summit in October.

#### **WorkDev Programming:**

- WorkDev Annual Report:
  - Ms. Suggs shared the WorkDev annual report with the board.
  - She offered that if anyone would like this information presented to their school board, she would be happy to do that.
- Educator Workforce Experience Overview
  - Ms. Suggs shared the results of the EWEs that were held during the fall semester. Teachers were very responsive about the soft skills and ecosystem information. They have sent requests for employers to come speak to students and for career information for their classroom activities.
  - Due to teacher feedback, Ms. Suggs has created multiple tools for them to use when pursuing soft skill conversations in their classrooms.
  - She shared some of the tools created and asked how the board would prefer the information to be available to their teachers/staff.
    - The board shared that they would prefer the information to be available through live links, so that the link never changes, but the documents can be updated.
    - Mr. Gallwitz said they could distribute the links through their “Smore” newsletter system. The other superintendents have methods to distribute the links to their staff.
    - Ms. Greenwich shared that it has been encouraging to hear the soft skills conversation happening all over the county and thanked everyone for their work. It is most productive when everyone is speaking the same language.

#### **Industry Updates and Discussion**

- **OhioMeansJobs – Knox County**
  - She asked if the districts were still interested in her pursuing an educational career fair event in the spring. MVNU does a teacher job fair for college students in March, but it was mentioned at the last meeting that having something to hire still open teaching positions in June could be helpful. Some superintendents said they know it would be helpful/necessary, but others expressed that they would not know until closer to the event.

- It was mentioned that there may not be any teaching positions open in June, and that it is impossible to know, but most districts were sure they would have other (non-teaching) positions available during that time.
- School districts struggle to market their positions outside of OMJ and their websites. The superintendents submitted a request for how OMJ formats their job listings on their website. Ms. Booth committed to working on that.
  - It was recommended that schools should have in their OMJ listing for bus drivers whether they receive benefits or not. Some of the local school districts provide full-time benefits for bus drivers, which could be used as a powerful marketing tool to help fill positions.
- Ms. Booth requested that each school district email her the contact that she should be working with to plan a hiring event.
- **Manufacturing – Mauser Packaging**
  - Mauser and other manufacturing companies participated in Manufacturing Matters at Mount Vernon High School, and another was held for Fredericktown manufacturing at Fredericktown. These were held during home football games. Ms. Wiford expressed that it was good exposure for Mauser and for manufacturing, but additional planning will be necessary to keep it impactful in future years.
  - Ms. Wiford shared that most manufacturing companies have very few openings but are still working to hire for expected retirements.
  - Mr. McCutcheon said he is seeing an increase in students being interested in manufacturing. He shared that Ariel had over 80 applicants for their internship program this year. They usually only have 30-40.
  - Ms. Wiford commented that financial literacy and perception of money continue to be a problem. Mauser has transitioned to weekly pay with a daily pay option, but some employees are having a more difficult time budgeting with this method.
  - Ms. Greenwich shared that she heard at a conference recently that young people are having a harder time perceiving money due to operating in an (almost) cashless society.
- **Construction – Kokosing Inc.**
  - Mr. Fox shared that there is an uptick in the quality of young people applying for positions. This is making positions more competitive. There is still a strong need for skilled trades. They have a summer internship program that they normally hire for in the spring, but the current pace will have all positions filled by the end of January. They are almost full now in November.
  - The increase of applications and of quality is allowing construction companies like Kokosing to select better candidates.
  - Mr. Fox extended the invitation that any school wishing to visit Kokosing is always welcome.

### **Attendance Discussion**

At the previous meeting, the BAC initiated a discussion on the importance of attendance at school and work, and how school districts can encourage better attendance as a lifelong skill.

- Ms. Suggs shared two attendance tools created to assist educators when having attendance conversations with students. One is an Attendance Habits Overview, and the other is a local Attendance Matrix with local employer attendance policies listed. After presenting the tools, the group was asked how attendance issues are still impacting their sphere of influence and how we could be more productive moving forward with attendance-related initiatives.
  - Mr. Fox shared that they hear from young people that they don't think attendance is important because their parents have poor attendance and get away with it frequently.
  - Mr. Gallwitz shared that Centerburg pulls the first 45 days of attendance and creates intervention plans for students based on the Ohio Attendance Guide.
- It was shared by a few sources that they have recently heard data that parents are using more and more vacation days for their students during the school year. This means students are not only missing days themselves, but also because parents are pulling their students out during school days, instead of waiting for breaks. The superintendents shared that they are seeing this trend in their schools.
- It was expressed that the school districts struggle with attendance as employers. They see a shift in perception regarding personal days, PTO, and breaks. It is creating difficult scenarios to talk about attendance in the district because they are balancing employee and student attendance conversations. Superintendents are working to be empathetic employers, but school districts operate on very strict contracts that they must adhere to for days off.
- Ms. Greenwich asked if the group would be interested in an attendance-related marketing campaign across the county. Everyone seemed interested.
- The group discussed the following ideas:
  - Sharing the video the career center made of companies talking about why attendance is important.
  - Making short content videos of specific employers talking about attendance.
  - Having shared messaging on social media across school districts and community pages.
  - Supporting both student and worker initiatives.
  - Picking a month or two to be "Attendance month."
  - Talking about how companies check transcripts when hiring.
  - Talk about how it affects employers and other staff members when someone is absent.
  - Schools could have "Staff vs Student" attendance competitions. Or competitions against other school districts where everyone is competing to have "the best" attendance for the year.
- The group decided to continue the attendance initiative in 2026 and explore the marketing campaign idea further.

The meeting adjourned at 9:34 am.

Respectfully submitted by Julia Suggs, Area Development Foundation, Vice President