

February 13, 2009, Akron, Ohio

Partners in the Regional Talent Network (RTN) announced today their plans to transform the way Northeast Ohio helps employers fill high-demand jobs and how residents are prepared to fill those jobs.

The RTN will work with education, workforce development, economic development and business organizations to develop and implement programs that meet the changing needs of employers and provide employees with the training and skills they need for a lifetime of employment.

The RTN is being organized by a collaboration of chambers of commerce and business development organizations, the State of Ohio, and the Fund for Our Economic Future, and it will be overseen by a steering committee comprised of:

- Phil Alexander, President and CEO, BrandMuscle, Beachwood
- Alan Bleyer, President and CEO, Akron General Health System, Akron, Co-Chair
- Jon Elsasser, Senior Vice President and Chief Information Officer, the Timken Company, Canton
- Eric Fingerhut, Chancellor, the Ohio Board of Regents
- Lee Fisher, Lieutenant Governor of the State of Ohio, and Director of the Ohio Department of Development
- Denny French, President, Commercial Metal Forming, Youngstown, Co-Chair
- James Hambrick, Chairman, President, and CEO, the Lubrizol Corporation, Wickliffe, Co-Chair
- Cynthia Moore-Hardy, President and CEO, Lake Hospital System, Willoughby
- Bill O'Neill, Founder, former CEO, and Trustee, the William J. and Dorothy K. O'Neill Foundation, on behalf of the Funder's Committee of the Fund for Our Economic Future, Hunting Valley
- Jack Schron, President, Jergens, Cleveland

Additional leading employers are being recruited.

The RTN will be working with the state to implement its Ohio Skills Bank Initiative in Northeast Ohio. The Skills Bank is a joint initiative of the Department of Development and the Board of Regents to position the state's collection of adult education, training and workforce assets to build pipelines of talented graduates and certificate holders to meet targeted regional economic needs.

Chancellor Fingerhut said "The Ohio Skills Bank will help link industry demand to workforce supply throughout the State. But in Northeast Ohio, we have a special collaboration in the Regional Talent Network, which we expect to generate exceptional results."

In addition to helping the state implement Ohio Skills Bank, the RTN will work with private and public sector entities to identify and meet the talent development needs of employers.

“The formation of the RTN is a first step in improving our talent development system and taking the actions needed to connect it to employers who need talent for their current and future open jobs,” said French. “I have been personally frustrated by this lack of connection, and our Committee agrees that the system isn't working as it should. The Committee is working together to make the system more effective for both employers who have the demand for talent, and the supply system that develops the talent employers need.”

“The State of Ohio is pleased to be a full partner in helping the communities of Northeast Ohio create a workforce system that succeeds for both employers and our residents,” said Lt. Governor Fisher, who also serves as Director of the Ohio Department of Development. “A key to turning around our state’s economy is making sure that we have the most educated, flexible, highly skilled workforce possible. Employers know their needs better than anyone and that’s why the Regional Talent Network will be employer-driven.”

Greater Akron Chamber President Dan Colantone said the RTN represents the first time that employers, higher education institutions and workforce development organizations from across the region have united to address the issue of talent development.

“We know that the market for talent in Northeast Ohio is a regional market, with workers crossing county lines – sometimes multiple county lines – in their daily commutes, so it is appropriate that we all work together to address the critical issue of talent development,” he said. Other business organizations that are currently part of the collaboration are the Canton Regional Chamber, the Greater Cleveland Partnership, the Youngstown-Warren Regional Chamber of Commerce, and the Stark Development Corporation.

The RTN will target specific sectors that have high demand for employees and the first sectors it will work on are health care, manufacturing and information technology.

Alan Bleyer said the quality of care provided by his hospital and the health care providers throughout the region is dependent on the quality of the region’s workforce. “Akron General and other area hospitals are eager to attract more people to careers in the health field and I believe that the RTN will be able to identify and implement more effective ways for all of us to secure the talent we need.”

James Hambrick acknowledged that “It can be difficult to find solutions to long-standing systemic problems in the midst of a potentially deep recession, but the need for a highly-skilled workforce never goes away. Improving the region’s ability to meet this need will help both employers and employees prosper when the national economy recovers.”

Fund President Brad Whitehead said that the RTN emerged from Advance Northeast Ohio, the region's economic action plan. "The partners in Advance Northeast Ohio recognize that talent development is vital to the long-term economic health of our region and the issue needs to be addressed at the local, regional and state level. The RTN, working with our partners at the state, will help our companies attract better talent, which will strengthen their performance and ultimately help them grow and create more jobs."

ABOUT THE REGIONAL TALENT NETWORK

The Regional Talent Network is an emerging collaboration among employers, the State of Ohio, and the Fund for Our Economic Future whose purpose is to promote systemic change that improves employer's satisfaction with the talent system and ability to fill high-demand positions, and that helps people build their employability and find jobs. For more information, contact:

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