ETA Sector Strategies Technical Assistance Initiative:

BEST PRACTICES:
PARTNERS FOR A COMPETITIVE WORKFORCE, OHIO
Introduction

This case study was originally written as a part of the Workforce Systems Sector Strategies Guide, a document created through a partnership of Maher & Maher and the Ray Marshall Center for the Study of Human Resources, as a part of the USDOL Employment and Training Administration’s multi-year Sector Strategies Technical Assistance Initiative.

The Guide focused on innovation employed in the design and implementation of sector strategies within workforce development over the last two decades. The programs included in the case study portion of the guide demonstrated advanced thinking in one or more of the five elements of ETA’s Sector Strategies Framework: Data-Based Decision Making, Industry Engagement, Organizational Capacity and Alignment, Sector-Based Service Delivery, and Sustainability and Continuous Improvement.

Partners for a Competitive Workforce

Interview with Janice Urbanik

Sector Strategy Overview

The four workforce investment boards (WIBs) that serve the tri-state (Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana) region, along with the Northern Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, have worked together since 2001 to serve employers with coordinated services around major layoff or hiring events in the region. Collectively, the WIBs administer some $13.5M in federal funds and serve nearly 50,000 individuals and 1,200 businesses across the region.

The Greater Cincinnati Workforce Network (GCWN) was convened in 2008 as a regional public-private partnership aimed at growing the skills of its workforce to match the needs of employers in key industries. Launched by The Greater Cincinnati Foundation and led by United Way of Greater Cincinnati, the partnership was created when Cincinnati joined the National Fund for Workforce Solutions network of sector-focused intermediaries. GCWN was primarily focused on supporting career pathways in health care, construction, and advanced manufacturing to help
employers access skilled workers and help low-skill adults get the skills and preparation needed for in-demand careers.

In early 2011, leaders from the WIBs and GCWN launched a planning process to figure out how to more closely align their efforts and build on their successes. The result of this planning process was the creation of Partners for a Competitive Workforce as the umbrella that brings together all of the region’s workforce efforts under a common mission. Building on the history of Employers First and GCWN, Partners will be positioned as a tri-state regional partnership between businesses, workforce investment boards, chambers of commerce, secondary and post-secondary educational institutions, service providers and philanthropic funders. Partners will provide a common platform to communicate our region’s workforce priorities and progress, align and coordinate those efforts towards common goals, and continuously improve strategies.

DATA-INFORMED DECISION MAKING

The partnerships created a common, region-wide workforce data collection and reporting system to track results and improve performance, a system now being used by around 50 public and nonprofit agencies.

INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT

PCW’s priority objectives include:

- **Connecting Businesses with Qualified Workers**, by supporting the Employers First Regional Workforce Network.
- **Aligning Education with Employer Needs through Sector Strategies**, by 1) developing and/or supporting partnerships among employers, school districts, colleges, universities, and community organizations in 5-6 priority industries, and 2) building career pathways for these priority industries coordinated with existing K-12 and postsecondary partnerships.
- **Improving Work Readiness Services to Help Individuals Obtain and Retain Gainful Employment**, by convening a Work Readiness Collaborative of service providers to improve/coordinate work readiness and placement efforts for disadvantaged jobseekers.

SECTOR-BASED SERVICE DELIVERY

Results for PCW to date include the following:

- **Creation of the Employers First Regional Workforce Network**. In 2011, the four workforce boards that serve the tri-state region formalized a 10-year-old partnership by launching the Employers First Regional
Workforce Network to coordinate workforce services for employers. Employers First provides a streamlined approach to deliver workforce solutions to meet employer needs without their having to navigate the bureaucracies of dozens of programs. Employers First created a Training Portal to assist regional employers in locating training providers and local college and university graduates quickly and easily. To date, Employers First has reached more than 300 employers, with more than 50 accessing One Stop business services.

**Creation of Employer-Driven Career Pathways in Priority Industries.** The Health Careers Collaborative of Greater Cincinnati, led by four hospital systems, has been developing skilled healthcare workers for over ten years through career pathway training for frontline workers and jobseekers. Based on this success, sector partnerships in advanced manufacturing and construction, both led by employers, are now addressing the workforce needs of employers in those industries.

**Leveraging Funds.** Since 2008, the partnerships have leveraged more than $40M in public and private funds from local, state, and national sources, including $6M in philanthropic funds, $9M in state and federal grants, $12M in aligned training funds from the region’s public workforce system, and $2M from employers.

**Achieving Outcomes.** Since 2008, the partnerships have enrolled more than 7,800 individuals across three career pathways, serving over 5,000 jobseekers with more than 87% completing training and earning over 4,600 credentials, and 80% obtaining and 73% retaining employment after 12 months. PCW also helped more than 1,000 incumbent workers develop their skills and earn over 950 credentials.

**Building Partnerships.** More than 150 partner organizations are engaged in partnership initiatives from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors across the region (adapted from www.competitiveworkforce.com)