



# CRAWFORD COUNTY BUSINESS ADVISORY COUNCIL JOINT STATEMENT 2021

## BACKGROUND AND REQUIREMENTS PER THE OHIO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

According to state law, the advisory council and its district board or ESC governing board should issue a joint statement by March 1 each year. This statement should report progress on work outlined in the council's plan for that year, summarize actions taken and actions pending, and specify how the council and board have fulfilled their respective responsibilities under the law.

## KEY FOCUSES

### 1. Delineation of Employment Skills

*Explain the process that business advisory council will use to research (either formally or informally) in-demand employment skills and how the council will provide recommendations on those employment skills to the governing board.*

The Crawford County Business/Education Advisory Council, being made up of representatives from Crawford County school districts, area businesses, and the economic development office, share quarterly the employment climate within their respective sectors.

### 2. Development of a Curriculum to Instill Employment Skills

*Identify goals and develop a comprehensive plan for how employability skills will be taught and reinforced in kindergarten and through grade 12. Provide recommendations on how the employment skills identified above will be integrated into and taught through existing curricula or the creation of new curricula. This plan should include both classroom instruction, as well as activities, events, and programs; address how existing programs will be sustained, and new, innovative programs will be initiated and supported.*

*Example activities, events and programs may include; Speaker Series, Job Shadowing, OhioMeansJobs, WIOA CCMEP, Business Training Centers, Career Exploration Courses, Work-based learning, Mentoring Programs, Career Expos, Site Visits, Internships, Career Pathways.*



The Crawford County Business Advisory Committee, along with the Bucyrus Area Chamber of Commerce, and the Galion-Crestline Area Chamber of Commerce, and the Crawford Partnership, will host the WAGE tours in the fall of 2021 for each of the 6 school districts (Bucyrus, Galion, Colonel Crawford, Buckeye Central, Galion, Crestline, and Wynford.) *COVID-19 dependent, based on state and local health guidelines.*

The primary goals of the program are as follows:

- To increase students' awareness and interest in local career paths
- To improve educators' understanding of employment needs and opportunities for students
- To improve communication about general career readiness and local workforce readiness
- To include all schools in Crawford County

The WAGE Tours will directly correlate with the information provided about businesses and career opportunities in Crawford County via the Community Opportunity website.

In the Fall of 2019, all six school districts were hosted throughout the county. Over 250 students were exposed to 17 businesses throughout Crawford County. *2020 WAGE Tours were postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.*



The Crawford Partnership's consistent focus on workforce development has led to a multitude of projects and initiatives to address countywide challenges in strategic and actionable ways. Community Opportunity is the Crawford Partnership's flagship effort to counter these workforce development challenges, based on the following issues:

Like many rural Ohio communities, Crawford County has experienced steady population decline in recent years. Since the 1980s, Crawford County's population has decreased by 20 percent. The "brain drain" has had a significant impact on our local workforce.



The Crawford Partnership and other community leaders in Crawford County are working to reverse this trend, turning the “brain drain” into a “brain gain.” Through a multi-faceted approach, we are working to build, attract, and retain a qualified workforce.

In surveying local school administrators and business leaders, we found that the common narrative around careers and opportunities in Crawford County does not align with actual circumstances – it’s a matter of awareness and perception. We often hear students and job seekers say, “there are just no jobs here.” When questioned, most local high school students indicated that they believed fast food and manufacturing were the primary industries in which they could work if they chose to stay in Crawford County. A priority of our Community Opportunity effort is to change this narrative and build awareness about the diverse, fulfilling career options that exist here – and to support local businesses while doing so.

In 2017, the Crawford Partnership partnered with leaders in Wyandot County to initiate Community Opportunity. Simply put, Community Opportunity is a resource. It is a comprehensive website for students, job seekers, and area businesses alike to connect, network, and find/share employment opportunities within our communities. Community Opportunity is a free resource for job seekers and local businesses alike. What sets Community Opportunity apart from other job posting websites is that it is hyper-local. Businesses that have a physical presence in Crawford County or Wyandot County can post jobs and browse profiles and resumes of job seekers, which helps connect businesses with the right talent.

Our goal is to register every local high school student with a student profile that will eventually turn into a job seeker profile upon graduation. Whether they choose to enter the workforce or pursue higher education, Community Opportunity offers our community an opportunity to stay connected and share relevant jobs in their chosen career field(s). Community Opportunity helps tell the story of our community. It contains information about the local quality of life, educational opportunities, and resources to attract workers to the area. By simply browsing available job postings, it helps us combat negative perceptions about the economic success of our area. Local students have been surprised to see advanced career opportunities in education, healthcare, agriculture, financial services, marketing, and more – all here in their own “backyard.”

### **Making Community Opportunity a Reality**

Motivated by the workforce development challenges facing Crawford County, the Crawford Partnership initiated conversations with COMSTOR in 2017 to develop the Community Opportunity website. Before Community Opportunity could become a reality, we needed to develop a professional brand, an implementation strategy, and most critically – we needed funding. The first phase of Community Opportunity included meetings with local governments, the Community



Foundation for Crawford County, and with the school boards of all area school districts (there are six in Crawford County alone). After building the community vision for this effort, we were ready for the next step: building the site – and buy-in – from ground-up. With \$5,000 commitments from area schools and \$40,000 from the Community Foundation, we made a total investment of \$80,000 to implement, introduce, and integrate Community Opportunity in Crawford and Wyandot Counties. In fall of 2020 Richland County joined and invested in Community Opportunity expanding the website’s reach and impact.

Community Opportunity has been embraced by our local schools and we continue to build strategies to integrate it into career and college readiness development. The site continues to grow, with new jobs and business profiles added on a weekly basis. At the time of submission, Community Opportunity also had a total of 260 registered job seekers on the site. These profiles can be viewed by local businesses seeking individuals with specific skills or areas of expertise. There is also a Community Opportunity app for Apple and Android users, which allows job seekers to browse local career opportunities on-the-go. By taking a multi-faceted approach to collaborate with local leaders, community members, school districts, and job seekers, we believe that Community Opportunity is one of the most impactful tools that we can leverage to enhance the workforce for years to come in Crawford, Richland, and Wyandot Counties.

### **CONTINUED VISION & PROJECT GROWTH FOR 2021**

- Integrate Community Opportunity into Freshmen orientation for all area high schools.
- Host Community Opportunity Workshop for area guidance counselors and career coaches.
- Connect with career services offices at area colleges and universities to share local career opportunities for recent graduates or students seeking internship opportunities.

### **3. Changes in the Economy, Job Market, and Future Job Availability**

***Explain how the business advisory council will identify essential data elements to study historical and future changes to the economy and job market. The plan should include recommendations to the governing board on how districts will address these changing needs and what future jobs are likely to be available. Identify resources and partners, both regionally and/or nationally, that will inform the review process.***

Data from the Community Opportunity website, along with relevant data from the Crawford Partnership (Economic and Community Development offices), OhioMeansJobs, and local business climate will be discussed at each quarterly CCBEAC meeting. The CCBEAC will also ensure that they stay informed of trends and innovations by having quarterly presentations from representatives from either a regional or state level.



#### 4. Developing Relationships

*Describe the process of how the business advisory council will develop and sustain relationships among the business community, labor organizations and education personnel in the area it represents. Preparation of our students cannot be accomplished without partnerships between these key stakeholders.*

The Crawford County Business/Education Advisory Council's educational partners include five local school districts (Bucyrus, Galion, Colonel Crawford, Crestline, and Wynford), Pioneer Career and Technology Center, Crawford County Board of Developmental Disabilities, as well as the Crawford Success Center- a satellite branch of North Central State College. Representatives from the Crawford Partnership, Crawford County's economic and community development office, local businesses (including business sectors such as agriculture, finance, banking, insurance, and manufacturing), Chambers of Commerce, and local law enforcement, the CCBEAC is committed to crosscutting partnerships throughout the county to ensure both our students and our business community are represented and that collaboration is fostered.