



Area 20 Workforce Development Region
Fairfield – Hocking – Pickaway – Ross – Vinton

October 22, 2025
OhioMeansJobs Ross County

Board Members: Stephen Carson, Renee Conley, Carrie Fife, Jennifer Friel (virtual), Sally Galecki (virtual), Richard Games, Rick Henson (virtual), Todd Hoffman, Chelsie Huffman (virtual), Katie Karwatske, Kimberly Jeffers (virtual), Michael Linton, James Martin, Theresa Ragosta (virtual), Josh Renison, Ben Smith, Jessica Stroh (virtual), Mike Throne, Tom White

Partners: Corey Clark, Raeh Ledford, Rick Reynolds, Jodi Smith, Bryn Stepp (virtual), Cristy Stewart, Nick Tatman, Jody Walker

Staff to the Board: Angel Conrad, Tia Dauterman, Bayley Fields, Jo Miller, Rick Szabrak

Welcome and Introductions

Chairman Linton called the meeting to order and brief introductions took place among the attendees.

Approval of Agenda

No additions or deletions.

Approval of April 23, 2025, Minutes

Mike Throne motioned to approve the July 23, 2025, minutes and Ben Smith seconded. The motion passed.

Board Roster Update

Bayley Fields provided the update, stating there is an open position for a Pickaway County business. She shared that she is working with Chuck Reisinger to secure a manufacturer for the position and that suggestions from the board are welcome.

Financial Report

Rick Szabrak reviewed the financial report. In looking at funds which expired in June 2025, Rick shared that the OMJ Centers have successfully spent their WIOA funds and that they are continuing to successfully spend 2026 funds. Bayley explained the difference in adult funding and dislocated worker funding; she additionally shared that there is a waiver to convert dislocated workers funds into adult funds—and she anticipates it will be harder to convert those funds, and will impact spending, as the area has experienced mass layoffs recently. Rick Reynolds corroborated this by discussing the increase in OMJ foot traffic and training opportunities in the OhioMeansJobs South Central Ohio region.

Approval of Budget

Rick Szabrak reviewed the area's budget, which experienced a 7% decrease. Rick explained that these funds come from the Department of Labor and are given to the state, which the state then uses a formula to allocate funds to each workforce area and its counties based on factors such as unemployment, population, labor force, and more. He shared that this is not a unique experience as other workforce areas in the state have seen a decrease in their budgets too. A vote to approve the budget was held. Carrie Fife motioned, and Todd Hoffman seconded. The motion passed and the budget was approved.

Apprenticeship Update

Jo Miller provided an apprenticeship update to the board including that the area now has two registered apprenticeships in sheet metal and pipefitting with Accurate Mechanical, as well as three in progress. Jo has developed operating plans for these and is waiting to hear back from the companies. Jo expressed feeling excited about her progress so far and the number of conversations she has been having with businesses in the area—most of these conversations have been based in Fairfield County and Pickaway County, so she shared that she would like to do more outreach in the other three counties within the workforce area. The next apprenticeship committee meeting is scheduled for December and there are plans to discuss how the committee can assist Jo with outreach in those communities.

Ohio to Work Grant

Rick Szabrak explained that the lieutenant governor's office has a new program called *Ohio to Work* that is an effort to connect job seekers and employers. A grant is going out to all economic development regions. The area, as well as Area



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11, and some Area 7 counties, are applying for the grant. Rick discussed the potential to hire a job coach that could assist OhioMeansJobs Pickaway County staff with the work related to Anduril.

Pixelle and Smead Rapid Response

Rick Szabrak discussed the fantastic partnership between several organizations to help employees impacted by recent Pixelle plant closure. Rick Reynolds commended state and local staff for their help and support during the closure of Pixelle and with the opening of the Workforce Hub that opened within the Chillicothe library—it opened in June and saw 1,287 visits in total (~360 which were unique visitors) with traffic increasing in August around the time of the layoff. Rick Reynolds also shared that there are currently 19 individual training accounts (ITAs) in progress; many people are now moving on from training and beginning to work. Mike Throne discussed the creation of Scioto Valley Forward, a digital conduit for the Workforce Hub. Traffic on the website was steady until it ramped up to ~5,000 visitors per month and ~10,000 page views per month. With this amount of success, the Ross County Chamber of Commerce intends to keep up with the website and utilize it for workforce development. Rick Reynolds continued to share about the 21 rapid response sessions which took place at Pixelle; Jody Walker then commended Pixelle's HR team for being helpful to work with and for helping spread information to employees. Rick Szabrak also praised Raeh Ledford and Tia Dauterman for their work in organizing job fairs for impacted employees.

Rick Reynolds shared that Smead, a manufacturer in Hocking County, will be laying off 215 employees with 100 being laid off on December 1. Rick also shared that a rapid response session was conducted inside the plant; the entire plant was shut down to give employees an opportunity to attend. He added that a Smead-focused job fair is being planned for mid-November.

Employer Services

Raeh Ledford provided an update on employer services, stating that she has seen an influx of job posting requests from outside the area including in Franklin County and Perry County. Raeh discussed the July and September job fairs in Ross County; she shared that during the events, she speaks with businesses regarding employer services. In a three-month span, she spoke to 105 businesses. Raeh also shared that three counties in the workforce area have employers who are utilizing TechCred.

Childcare Cred Programs

Bayley Fields shared that the Department of Children and Youth has created two new programs to promote employer investment in childcare—those plans are the ECE Business Partnerships 2.0 and the Child Care Cred Program. Recognizing that childcare is sometimes a barrier to employment, Bayley discussed exploring these programs as options for the businesses and organizations on the board; she stated that she would share a link with the board after the meeting in case members are interested in learning more.

Youth Council Update

Bayley Fields announced that the next Area 20 Youth Council meeting will be held in Pickaway County next week. The meeting will be focused on worksite agreements and making paid work experiences a more uniform process across the workforce area.

OhioMeansJobs Social Media

Tia Dauterman shared a social media report with the board and reviewed analytics for the Fairfield, Pickaway, and South Central Ohio OMJ pages. She also presented some examples of posts that performed well in the last quarter.

OMJ Center Updates

Jodi Smith provided updates for Fairfield County OMJ. Jodi stated that Resource Room visits were down last month. The OMJ Center recently hosted CDL classes and plans to host welding classes in November. In addition to these events, the annual Fairfield County OMJ job fair hosted at the Fairfield County Workforce Center took place last week and saw 43 participating employers and 126 job seekers.

Cristy Stewart provided updates for Pickaway County OMJ. Cristy reported Resource Room visits are remaining steady month-over-month (most visits pertaining to unemployment) and WIOA case numbers are growing. Cristy also shared that



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her staff recently attended a workforce conference and came away from that with some great ideas; the staff is currently planning a financial literacy workshop in partnership with Pickaway-Ross staff.

Rick Reynolds from South Central Ohio OMJ discussed the combined numbers of Ross, Vinton, and Hocking counties. Combined, South Central OMJ saw 1,501 Resource Room visits in the last quarter—most of those visits happened in Ross County. Rick also discussed three job fairs that happened over the course of the summer, stating that the job fairs were successful both from an employer and job seeker perspective. Enrollments and requests for training continue to increase.

Area Economic Development Updates

Rick Szabrak shared some economic updates around the region, including U.S. Medical Glove moving into the former Pixelle plant, Centrus Energy expanding its operations and beginning to hire, and a data center in Fairfield County that is being finalized. Michael Linton added that Stewart Glass, a manufacturer in Hocking County, is posting jobs and hiring hundreds.

Fairfield County Economic Update Save the Date

Rick Szabrak invited the board to the upcoming annual economic update in Fairfield County. Brian Anderson, from the Cleveland Federal Reserve Bank, will be speaking.

Open Discussion

Todd Hoffman discussed an upcoming ribbon cutting at Eastland-Fairfield on November 4. The ribbon cutting will celebrate the opening of a new training center that will offer welding, lineman training, and more. Rick Szabrak added that construction at the Workforce Center is nearly finished and is expected to be complete in one month.

The next board meeting will be January 28, 2026, at the Fairfield County Workforce Center. Michael Linton adjourned the meeting.

Area 20/21

Representative  2-18-26
Date

Area 20/21 Board

Chair  2/12/2026
Date

