



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

February 11, 2026
Fairfield County Workforce Center

Board Members: Joshua Bruce, Renee Conley (virtual), Carrie Fife (virtual), Jennifer Friel, Sally Galecki, Richard Games, Nathan Hale (virtual), Rick Henson, Chelsie Huffman, Kimberly Jeffers, Michael Linton, Theresa Ragosta (virtual), Josh Renison, Ben Smith, Jessica Stroh (virtual)

Partners: Corey Clark, Melissa Mahaffey, Rick Reynolds, Jodi Smith, Bryn Stepp, Cristy Stewart, Nick Tatman, Jody Walker

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

Guests: Medea Loibl (virtual)

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 October 22, 2025, Minutes

Richard Games motioned to approve the October 22, 2025, minutes and Kim Jeffers seconded. The motion passed.

Board Roster Update

Bayley Fields provided the board roster update, introducing Joshua Bruce (Claypool Electric) as a new board member as a result of Matt Claypool stepping down. Bayley shared there is still an open position in Pickaway County and that Michael Linton is in conversations with a manufacturer there to potentially join the board. The board remains in compliance despite the open position due to having the required number of members and a majority of members being businesses. The Area 20 Workforce Development Board's goal is to cultivate an engaged board comprised of businesses in fields such as manufacturing, healthcare, and construction that paint a comprehensive picture of the workforce region.

Financial Report

Rick Szabrak presented the financial report. In looking at funds which expire in June 2026, Rick shared that the Area is already spending the next year's funds in some categories; he explained this is acceptable spending as the Area has two years to spend its funds and historically, the Area struggled to spend funds before they expired in the second year. Now, the Area is spending some of those funds more and earlier than they expire. This summer, the Area will receive another allocation of funds. Rick added that the Area is good shape for its 2026 funds and will likely spend all of them—with youth funds being the hardest to spend due to restrictions, that spending may come in lower. He explained this is a trend across the state. Bayley Fields commended the OhioMeansJobs (OMJ) Centers in the Area as they have been doing an improved job at spending youth funds. Rick concluded the report by sharing the Area's 2027 funds are down from the previous year. Ben Smith motioned to approve the financial report and Sally Galecki seconded. The motion passed.

Upcoming RFPs

Bayley Fields shared that each year, the Area puts out a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for yearly program monitoring. The request will go out in the spring, and the reports will likely be ready in June. She also shared that every couple of years, the Area must go out to bid for OMJ operation and career services. The Request for Proposal (RFP) for this is out; the intent to propose is due February 19 and proposals are due March 26. Once the proposals are submitted, a committee of board members will be needed to review submissions. Bayley elaborated on what this process is like, and Rick Szabrak added that five members are needed to form the committee; then, in April, recommendations will be presented to the board and voted on. Michael Linton volunteered to be on the committee as did Jennifer Friel, Kim Jeffers, and Ben Smith. Bayley said that she will send out an email to the group to garner another volunteer and looping in anyone who could not attend the day's meeting.

WorkOhio Grant

Rick Szabrak explained that WorkOhio is an initiative by Lt. Governor Tressel to remarket how people interact with the workforce system. It serves as a way to feed the OMJ Centers leads. Area 20, Area 7, Area 11 partnered to apply for the grant and received it. The grant includes a position that the Area would hire to help with job coaching in both Fairfield and



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Pickaway County; the goal of this is to give more support to Pickaway OMJ with the development of Anduril in that particular area. Rick explained that people can go online, share basic contact information, and get connected to their local OMJ—and that the service is a benefit which simplifies the workforce process to those who might find OhioMeansJobs.com overwhelming. He also shared that a kickoff event happened a few weeks ago to launch WorkOhio, and by then, 50 people had already gone through the portal in the central Ohio workforce region. Cristy Stewart of Pickaway OMJ and Jodi Smith of Fairfield OMJ mentioned that they both had received five referrals each so far.

OMJ Certifications

Bayley explained that every three years, the board is required to do a walkthrough and interview of each of the OMJ Centers and ensure everything is up-to-code via a checklist provided by the state. A small committee was assembled to conduct these walkthroughs and a certification letter for each OMJ Center is included in the packet for review to be voted on by the board members. Some key takeaways from the walkthroughs that are universal to each OMJ include: the Area must develop a formal employer services plan, a formal participant outreach plan, and publish program performance publicly. These takeaways are to be remedied by July's board meeting. Fairfield OMJ scored 48/51; Jennifer Friel motioned to approve the certification and Josh Renison seconded. The motion passed. Pickaway OMJ scored 48/51; Ben Smith motioned to approve the certification and Carrie Fife seconded. The motion passed. Hocking OMJ scored 45/51; Richard Games motioned to approve the certification and Jennifer Friel seconded. The motion passed. Vinton OMJ scored 43/51; Richard Games motioned to approve the certification and Theresa Ragosta seconded. The motion passed. Ross OMJ scored 46/51; Kim Jeffers motioned to approve the certification and Jennifer Friel seconded. The motion passed.

Michael Linton proposed the formation of an ad hoc committee to address the need for an employer services plan and to incentivize businesses to work with the OMJs; Rick Szabrak stated that there is an existing business services committee that could fill that need, and Michael agreed to use the existing group with a meeting to be planned within the next 30 days.

Pixelle and Smead Rapid Response

Rick Reynolds shared that South Central OMJ has mostly wrapped up operations with Pixelle; the rapid response center closed at the end of September, but the OMJ is still working closely with individuals as they navigate their unemployment. The OMJ is also seeing an increase in training requests as unemployment benefits come to a close for those laid off in August. 39 former Pixelle employees are currently enrolled into the grant issued by the Department of Labor, and 10 are waiting.

Rick also shared that, in November, a job fair was hosted at Smead Manufacturing in Logan. 39 employers were present and 101 employees attended. Another, smaller job fair was hosted in January as 40 more employees were being laid off. The OMJ is assisting many former Smead employees with unemployment claims and training opportunities.

Employer Services

Bayley Fields shared an update prepared by Raeh Ledford. Raeh worked on two virtual hiring events for Stewart Glass that were both deemed successful, and she has been recruiting employers for job fairs in the Area, including the upcoming Pickaway OMJ job fair. Bayley mentioned an increase in employer interest in training dollars; she added that a few companies have reached out in regard to incumbent worker training (IWT). This is a shift from the past few years when the demand for employer services was not as high. With the increased demand, the Area is seeing an increase in spending.

Youth Council Update

Bayley Fields provided the Youth Council update. Youth Council is a quarterly meeting of the Area's youth providers utilized for group training. At the most recent meeting, Amy Guda with South Central Ohio Jobs and Family Services (SCOJFS) presented on using AI for resume creation as well as understanding the AI mechanisms that review resumes.

OhioMeansJobs Social Media

Tia Arnold 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.



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Apprenticeship Update

Jo Miller provided the apprenticeship update. Jo shared that the Area was approved by the state's apprenticeship committee for a manufacturing maintenance technician apprenticeship that is open to any manufacturer in Area 20. She added that a plastics processing technician apprenticeship is in the works with EPC as well as an intervention specialist apprenticeship with Teays Valley and Pickaway County ESC. Jo also shared highlights from 2025 including almost 90 employer partner engagements, three approved apprenticeships (sheet metal worker, pipefitter, manufacturing maintenance), and a partnership with Shawnee State University who will be providing the curriculum for the intervention specialist apprenticeship. Jo is working on developing a five-part workshop series with topics ranging from what an apprenticeship is to how to build one out. In addition to these updates, Jo stated she has applied to a project by Jobs for the Future that aims to create skills-first ecosystems; Area 20 was selected as one of 12 organizations across the country that will be participating. The Area was awarded funding to create a data collection model to figure out how to create a skills-based ecosystem for employers and employees (turning skills into credentials).

OhioMeansJobs Center Updates

Jodi Smith provided updates for Fairfield County OMJ. Jodi shared that, in 2025, the Resource Room saw about 5,500 visits. The OMJ completed two incumbent worker trainings with two different employers as well as two on-the-job trainings—one of which is completed and the other pending completion. Jodi also stated that Fairfield OMJ is partnering with Ohio University Lancaster on a community job fair on April 14.

Cristy Stewart provided updates for Pickaway County OMJ. Cristy reported about 2,500 Resource Room visits in 2025 with a majority being people who need assistance with unemployment. Cristy shared that the OMJ started hosting youth-targeted workshops which have been well attended and cover topics such as financial literacy and life skills. The OMJ is also preparing for its annual spring job fair with 75 employers signed up at the time of the board meeting.

Rick Reynolds from South Central Ohio OMJ discussed the combined numbers of Ross, Vinton, and Hocking counties. Combined, South Central OMJ saw 6,519 Resource Room visits in 2025. Rick reported 79 active individual training accounts (ITAs) and many on hold or in process. He also shared that South Central OMJ is in the beginning stages of planning its annual job fair; the job fair will be hosted in early May.

Open Discussion

Bryn Stepp discussed the Upward Mobility Act (UMA) by Senator Jon Husted that aims to address the benefits cliff—a situation in which an employee is trapped in poverty due to not being able to earn a raise or work overtime as their benefits will drop off. The UMA will be piloted in five states; the federal government will waive the regulations for 10 anti-poverty programs so that states can work creatively to eliminate the benefits cliff.

The next board meeting will be April 22, 2026, at the Pickaway County OhioMeansJobs Center. Michael Linton adjourned the meeting.

Area 20/21

Rick Reynolds

Representative _____

Area 20/21 Board

Chair *Michael Linton* *5/20/2026*