



**Summit and Medina  
Workforce Area**  
Council of Governments

# **ADDENDUM TO THE NORTHEAST OHIO REGIONAL WORKFORCE PLAN**

## **AREA 2 LOCAL WORKFORCE PLAN**

**Effective June 2021 – January 2025**



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## Area 2 Local Workforce Plan

### Introduction

This document, Area 2 Local Plan (local plan), is presented as an addendum to the Northeast Regional Plan (regional plan) as required in Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) Policy Letter 16-03. As stipulated in 16-03, this local plan will remain in effect until January 31, 2025, when a new local plan will be required.

Under WIOA, states may establish local plan contents pursuant to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 and its applicable final rules. This document adheres to the local plan contents described in 16-03, Attachment D, relative to the authority established in WIOA.

The ODJFS has certified Area 2, comprised of Medina and Summit Counties, as a local workforce region eligible for WIOA funding pursuant to a sub-grant agreement.

### Part I - Local Plan Descriptions as Required by ODJFS WIOA Policy Letter 16-03, Attachment D

#### 1. Description of the Workforce Development System

##### A. Identification of the programs that are included in the system

#### *Description of Local Workforce Area*

Summit and Medina Counties are located in northeast Ohio and are included in the Northeast Region as defined by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services – Office of Workforce Development.

In 2019, the combined population for the Area was 720,759 residents. The county seats for the two counties are the City of Akron in Summit, ranked as the fifth largest city in Ohio with 198,051 residents; and the City of Medina, ranked as the 58<sup>th</sup> largest city in Ohio with 26,095 residents. The City of Cuyahoga Falls located in Summit is ranked in the top 20 cities in Ohio at number 17 with 49,192 residents. The most populous city in Medina, is Brunswick ranked as the 40<sup>th</sup> largest city in Ohio with 34,781 residents. Summit tends to be more densely populated, and Medina a more sparsely populated county. Medina is a “bedroom community” with its workforce serving both Summit and Cuyahoga Counties.

The Area’s postsecondary educational resources include: The University of Akron located in Summit County with a branch campus in Medina; Summit has branch campuses of both Kent State University and Stark State College. Cuyahoga Community College has a branch in Medina County. Both counties have career centers: Portage Lakes Career Center in Summit and the Medina County Career Center. Also available is the Four Cities Compact including Barberton, Norton, Wadsworth, and Copley.



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## ***Area 2 Workforce Development Board***

The local area is served by a Council of Governments (COG), a political subdivision recognized under Chapter 167 of the Ohio Revised Code (ORC). The COG was officially approved by the State of Ohio in November 2016 and is established under the name *The Summit and Medina Workforce Area Council of Governments*. The member representatives of the COG consist of one commissioner, appointed by his or her peers, from Medina County and the Summit County Executive. Please find attached to this plan an exhibit containing a table of organization to better illustrate Area 2's organizational structure.

In compliance with WIOA, the COG members as the Chief Local Elected Officials (CLEO) appoints the Workforce Development Board (WDB) members to assume and execute the roles and responsibilities enumerated in WIOA and its final rules and other binding regulations. The COG members retain the responsibilities assigned to Chief Local Elected Officials (CLEOs) under WIOA. The day-to day WDB responsibilities, per WIOA, are assigned to the board's Executive Director and staff. For responsibilities not specifically assigned by WIOA or its final rules, the Executive Director assumes responsibility as directed by WDB and COG bylaws. The Area 2 WDB maintains a membership of 19 of which at least 51% are from the business community.

The WDB for Area 2 is responsible for the oversight of the following services, but not limited to:

- The location and operation of a federally mandated one-stop employment center in Ohio known as OhioMeansJobs (OMJ) centers in each county;
- The negotiation of the MOU and budget with the OMJ center partner organizations;
- WIOA Youth services, in conjunction with Ohio's Comprehensive Case Management and Employment Program (CCMEP) model;
- Business Services to employers in Area 2 or employers hiring residents in Area 2;
- Career Services for Adults and Dislocated Workers; and
- Training Services for Area 2 residents.

### **B. Location of OMJ Centers in the local workforce development area**

Area 2 operates one OMJ center in each county. At the time of this writing, the following OMJ centers are operational in Area 2:

OhioMeansJobs | Summit County  
1040 East Tallmadge Avenue  
Akron, OH 44310  
330-633-1050

OhioMeansJobs | Medina County  
72 Public Square, First Floor  
Medina, OH 44256  
330-723-9675



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## 2. The OhioMeansJobs delivery system within Area 2

### **A. How will the local board ensure continuous improvement of service providers utilized by the Area and also ensure such providers meet the needs of local businesses and job seekers?**

The board and/or its designated representatives will ensure quality services through a combination of the following:

- Monitoring of provider performance measures against established performance standards as negotiated between the Board, CLEOs and ODJFS;
- Monitoring of provider performance against additional performance metrics included in the provider contract or contract amendments; and
- Requiring the one-stop operators to meet established standards to obtain and retain certification.

### **B. How will the local board facilitate access to services provided through the OhioMeansJobs.com service delivery system through the use of technology or other means?**

Area 2 OMJ centers are mandated, per WIOA Policy Letter 17-01, to register job seekers and businesses on the OhioMeansJobs.com website to facilitate their activities. The activities include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Job seekers visiting the centers for onsite services, or accessing virtual services, create and post their resume on OhioMeansJobs.com as standard procedure;
- Adult and youth job seekers are taught how to use the OhioMeansJobs.com system to find a job, prepare for a career, and develop skills; and
- Business Services staff post all incoming job order requests on OhioMeansJobs.com as standard procedure.

### **C. How will OMJ Centers in the Area comply with Section 188 of WIOA, if applicable, and applicable sections of the ADA regarding the programmatic and physical accessibility of facilities and programs?**

Area 2 centers are dedicated to providing access, as directed by WIOA and the ADA, to all members of the public seeking service. As such, our centers provide access via:

- Computer devices for those with visual impairments;
- Handicap accessible doors, including powered doors;
- Sorenson Video Relay Service (VRS) for hearing impaired customers;
- Handicapped-designated parking spaces with ADAAG compliant signage;
- All offices on accessible 1<sup>st</sup> floor;
- Signs posted to identify areas of available services/goods with raised letters, Grade II Braille; and
- Doors adjusted to 5 lbs. or less to comply with ADAAG.



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Area 2 received written approval from ODJFS, Bureau of Civil Rights, dated July 11, 2016 for Phase 1 of the One-Stop Certification process. The Area 2 WDB accepted and ratified this on July 13, 2016. Therefore, the Area 2 Comprehensive Center located in Summit County is compliant with ADA requirements.

**D. How will the local board coordinate with the respective JobsOhio entity, Team NEO?**

The Board values its relationship with Team NEO and local economic development organizations.

Previously, Area 2 has partnered with Team NEO on presentations to relocation prospects about business services provided by OMJ Centers. Further, the local area has worked with Team NEO partners, such as local chambers, on presentations to member businesses, as grant seeking collaborators, and data gathering and dissemination.

These activities are welcome and reinforce the value of workforce system partnerships with economic development entities.

**E. Describe the roles and resource contributions of the OMJ Center partners.**

The roles and resource contribution of OMJ center partners in the two centers are informed by:

- The negotiated terms of the MOU governing partnerships in each center;
- The unique set of services that each partner organization provides;
- The integration of services including partner staff rotation in the resource room, presenting workshops, and making referrals;
- Cost sharing throughout the system including facility, management, resource room, equipment and supplies and outreach; and
- Other legal and regulatory factors governing required center partners, including WIOA statute and regulations, and ODJFS guidance in the form of the Ohio Combined Plan and policy letters.

The board's staff will determine if partner entities are meeting statutory and contractual obligations as outlined in the above guiding documents through the contracts with the One-Stop Operators. Where corrective action is determined necessary, the staff shall request the entity responsible to take appropriate corrective action. Preference is given to mutual resolution through dispute mechanisms detailed in the MOU.

Having a partner structure, the OMJ centers benefit from a shared service model. Each partner brings a unique set of services which enhances the resources available to job seekers and employers. All partners contribute to the day-to-day operations of the One-Stop.

**3. Description and assessment of Adult and Dislocated Work services in the Area.**

**A. Career Services**

Area 2 procures Adult and Dislocated Worker Services through a competitive bidding or award process. The outline of routine services located below describes current services. Services will include:





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- Orientation processes that provide job seekers with information about services within the public workforce system;
- Determination of WIOA eligibility for Adult or Dislocated Worker services;
- Comprehensive or specialized skills assessments, including WorkKeys, and in-depth interviewing to determine employment barriers and strategies for overcoming those barriers;
- Job search and placement assistance;
- Local labor market information, including in-demand industry sectors and occupations, and related information including expected job openings and typical wages;
- Program cost and success measurements, if available, for eligible training providers;
- Supportive services based on a job seeker's individual needs;
- Group workshops for job searching, resume writing, interviewing, and other career-related topics. Available workshops are reviewed quarterly;
- Individual Employment Plans (IEP) to coordinate and delineate multiple services, including training, for a single individual;
- Referrals to individual or group counseling;
- Workforce preparation activities including career planning and internships or work experiences that are linked to in-demand occupations; and
- Workplace success training including development of learning skills; communication skills; and professional conduct.

## **B. Training Services**

Area 2 training services are provided under the guidance of State and local policies. Training will be utilized for job seekers who are unable to otherwise attain or maintain consistent and self-sustaining employment. Training may take one or more of the following forms:

- Occupational skills training, in the form of an Individual Training Account, which may include upskilling or retraining;
- On-the-Job training, which may include classroom training;
- Transitional Jobs to establish work history for job seekers with specific barriers;
- Incumbent working training, which may include classroom training;
- Adult basic and literacy education (ABLE); and/or
- Customized training in consultation with an area employer.

## **4. Comprehensive Case Management & Employment Program (CCMEP)**

Medina and Summit Counties have each submitted and received approval from ODJFS for a CCMEP plan as directed by Ohio Administrative Code 5101:14-1-03. Currently, each county's Department of Job and Family Services are the lead agencies for the implementation of the CCMEP. The board has the oversight responsibility to ensure the WIOA negotiated youth performance is monitored within the confines of each of the local CCMEP plans.



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## 5. Local board and OMJ center operator coordination to improve service delivery

The Area 2 WDB will seek to avoid service duplication, maximize service coordination, and provide superior overall service delivery with its partners through the following means:

- Issuing RFPs for center operations for each of the two local centers;
- Execution of a Memorandum of Understanding that addresses service delivery expectations, minimizes duplicative services, and identifies avenues for coordination;
- Engaging in continuous operational improvements in accordance with local policies and OMJ certification, and;
- Oversight by the One-Stop Operations Committee of the WDB.

## 6. Describe the executed cooperative agreements defining service provider requirements

The Area 2 WDB is a party to the following agreements that determine the conditions requiring service integration and access to the suite of services available at each county's OMJ center and provider sites, if applicable:

- Career services;
- Services determining WIOA adult and dislocated worker eligibility and the provision of case management services for eligible individuals; and
- Services determining WIOA youth eligibility and the provision of case management services for eligible individuals.

## 7. Identification of the Area's Fiscal Agent

The WDB has identified the Area's COG members as its subrecipient for WIOA funding. The County of Summit's Office of Finance and Budget, under the direction of the County Executive, provide fiscal services for the COG. The Summit County Department of Job and Family Services is delegated as a sub-fiscal agent for the County of Summit.

## 8. Describe the competitive process procuring services provisioned by WIOA Title I

The Area WDB staff design procurement solicitations adhering to all applicable WIOA and federal regulations, as set forth within the Area's procurement policy established in 2018. The procurement process will include the following:

- Dissemination of an RFP or other document detailing items a bidder must address in order to be considered for selection. This document will also detail the WDB's criteria for selecting a service provider;
- A review process that considers all bids received in a timely manner that minimally address the qualifications stipulated in the RFP or related document and which scores each proposal based upon a set of consistent and fair evaluation criteria;
- The review committee may consist of individuals from the following:
  - WDB members;



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- WDB staff;
- Fiscal agent or designated staff;
- CCMEP staff; and
- Invitees of allied organizations as nominated by WDB or COG board members.
- Timely notification of selections to bidders; and
- Negotiation of a service contract.

### **9. Board actions taken to become or remain a high performing board**

Area 2 used the passage of WIOA to focus on becoming and remaining a high functioning board. The resulting actions included:

- The creation of a COG serving the area as one unit rather than two counties;
- Adoption of bylaws governing COG activities;
- A defined permanent committee structure;
- Identification of the Area Fiscal Agent;
- Hiring board staff that falls directly under the supervision of board leadership and who oversees service delivery in both counties;
- Refocusing board membership upon required members, business leaders, nonprofit leaders, and economic development representatives who represent in-demand industries, provide business knowledge, and display aptitude toward excellent and sustained board service; and
- Adoption of WDB bylaws and Area policy letters.

The Board will review their activities, policies, and other governing activities on an ongoing basis to ensure excellent performance and address deficiencies.

### **10. OMJ center commitment to technology-enhanced systems under WIOA**

During the effective period of this local plan, the OMJ centers located within Area 2 will continue to use the intake, case management, and financial tracking systems provided by ODJFS. These systems include the Ohio Workforce Case Management System (OWCMS) and the County Financial Information System (CFIS). Area 2's newly updated in 2021, local OMJ websites are user-friendly and utilize a Virtual Assistant feature for individuals, enhancing the user experience through technology.



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## Part II - Assurances

Area 2, through its Officers and designated Agents, makes the following assurances:

1. The Area has established and will continue to employ fiscal control and fund accounting procedures to ensure proper disbursement of and accounting for all funds received under WIOA.
2. The Area shall keep records sufficient to prepare reports required by the Act and shall maintain all records, including standard records for all individual participants, and submit such reports as the State may require.
3. The will collect and maintain data necessary to show compliance with the nondiscriminatory provisions of the Act.
4. The Area will expend funds in accordance with WIOA, regulations, Department of Labor guidance, written Ohio Department of Job and Family Services guidance, and all other applicable Federal and State laws.
5. The Area will assure veterans will be afforded employment and training activities authorized by the Jobs for Veterans Act and 20 CFR Part 1010.
6. The Area assures it will comply with any grant procedures for the use of WIOA funds, but not limited to the following:
7. General Administrative Requirements – Uniform Guidance at 2 CFR Part 200 and 2 CFR Part 2900.
8. Assurances and Certifications – SF 424B – Assurances for Non-Construction Programs; 29 CFR Part 31, 32 – Nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunity Assurance (and Regulation); 29 CFR Part 93 – Certification Regarding Lobbying (and Regulation); 29 CFR Parts 94 and 95 – Drug Free Workplace and Debarment and Suspension; Certifications (and Regulations).



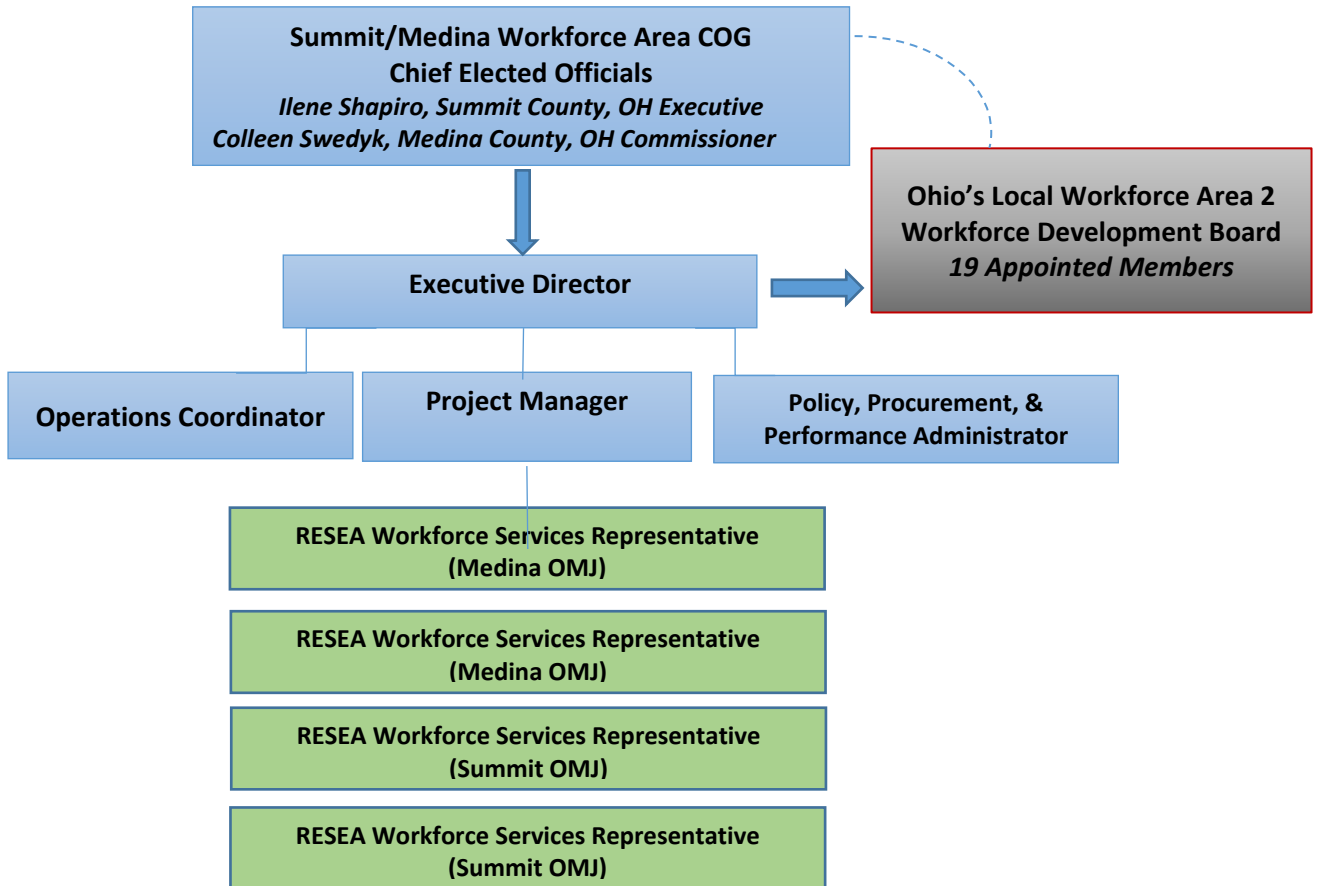
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**Exhibit**

**TABLE of ORGANIZATION**  
**March 2021**



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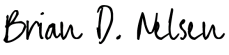
Area 2 – Signatures


By signing my name below, I hereby attest each of the following for the NOW Regional Plan and the Area 2 Local Plan Addendum, effective from July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2025:

- All of the Assurances indicated in the NOW Regional Plan and of the Area 2 Local Plan Addendum have been met and that this plan represents the Local Area WDB’s efforts to maximize resources available under Title I of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and to coordinate these resources with other state and local programs within the planning region.
- The Area 2 WDB will operate the WIOA program in accordance with the regional plan and applicable federal and state laws, regulations, policies, and rules.

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 Jessica Heid, Chair  
 Area 2 Workforce Development Board  
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 Christine Marshall, Executive Director  
 Area 2 Workforce Development Board  
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 County of Summit  
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 Colleen Swedyk, Commissioner  
 Medina County  
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YEAR TWO REVIEW NOW PLAN ADDENDUM

Area 2 Special Projects Grant 2022

In the Fall of 2021, members of the ConxusNEO board (“board”) in Summit County (one of Area 2’s two counties), began to explore the disconnect between employers and workers, which became evident as the world reopened post the COVID-19 pandemic. The largest question posed to various members of the board was from concerned employers who were asking the community leaders “*where are the workers?*.” Using several funding channels, the board was determined to uncover answers through a research project that would interview employers and ask working age adults how they were feeling about work. The research had an initial footprint which mirrored the Greater Akron Chamber, consisting of Medina, Portage, and Summit Counties. For the purposes of the NOW Plan, Medina and Summit Counties are local workforce Area 2 and Portage County is one county in local workforce Area 19. The project commenced with a set of surveys to obtain insights from employers about their challenges in hiring talent and to determine the average working adult’s commitment to work. The next phase of the project invited responses from workers. Spoiler alert: the research showed the direct impact from the COVID-19 pandemic changed everything about work as we know it. We knew it would be important to understand where employers and workers were coming from to find solutions to fill job openings, retain workers, and address the skills gap. The impact of this research extends beyond our own organizations and into the region’s economic, education, and workforce development systems.

### *Methodology*

The employer research began in the late Fall of 2021, funded by the board and TeamNEO (the northeast portion of JobsOhio with an 18-county footprint) with a distribution of surveys to employers across the three counties and follow-up focus groups for a deeper dive into the survey responses. With 254 survey responses received, TeamNEO determined it wanted to expand the research to additional northeast Ohio counties and recovered an additional 512 employer responses across an 11-county footprint. The 766 surveys revealed 80% of employers were facing a talent shortage, 65% experiencing higher turnover, 95% did not have a sufficient pool of qualified candidates, 18-30 years old were the hardest to recruit and retain, and finding workers interested in full-time positions were the hardest to locate. Finally, employers reported that raising wages and providing bonuses aren’t enough of an incentive to attract or retain workers. Workers were reportedly looking for more emphasis on company culture and creation of flexible policies which include hybrid work. Bottomline is employers continue to struggle to find motivated employees.

The second portion of the research began with a survey for the working age adults made possible by U.S. Department of Labor funds through a grant to the Summit/Medina Workforce Area Council of Governments (Area 2) from the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. The survey's content was collected from various community partners across the three counties. The research firm, Center for Marketing and Opinion Research, LLC (CMOR) was selected to develop the final tool, transmit the surveys, collect the data, conduct focus groups, and produce reports based upon the findings. A total of 2,400 surveys (800 from each county) were collected between mid-February and the end of the first week in May of 2022. The working age adults research project was expanded by the *Fund for Our Economic Future (FFEF)* a think tank organization based in Cleveland and serving northeast Ohio communities, who also consulted with CMOR to replicate the tool to gather more information across eight additional northeast Ohio counties: Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain, Mahoning, Stark, Trumbull and Wayne resulting in an additional 2,587 survey responses. Four of the eight additional counties are part of the NOW Plan: Cuyahoga (Area 3), Geauga (Area 19), Lake (Area 5) and Lorain (Area 4).

### *Results*

Of those who responded as employed and/or looking for work, the findings showed:

- 98% say a wage is somewhat or very important;
- 92% say meaningful work is somewhat or very important;
- 91% say flexibility in the workplace is somewhat or very important;
- 55% are looking for part-time work; and
- 24% desire more training.

Additionally, we learned most respondents quitting their jobs did not have a new job lined up and many planned to quit in the next year. The number one reason expressed for quitting was a “toxic” work environment. 43% of the respondents' declared work is less of a priority after the pandemic. 18-30-year-olds were the number one age group involved in the “Gig” economy with 69% starting this type of work during the pandemic and 84% of respondents in that age group enjoyed the freedom of working for themselves. Both Gen Z and unemployed respondents expressed a desire for employers to provide access to mental health benefits.

Themes emerged from the working age adults' responses include:

1. Wage matters
2. "Flexibility" is desired
3. Want "meaningful work" (i.e. to feel a part of something/contributing)

4. Gig work is a large part of the current employment landscape
5. Access to mental health services as a benefit is desired
6. Half of the respondent looking for work desire part-time work
7. High interest in job related training and education
8. COVID has had a significant impact on defining what work means

The responses were analyzed during May 2022. The findings determined what topics would drive five focus groups. The data has been sliced into various demographic categories including but not limited to gender, race, age, household income, educational attainment, generation, geographic (major cities and by county), and employment status.

#### *Call to action*

It is our desire to share our research findings with employers and workers to foster equitable, community-based solutions to this massive shift in the way our workplaces and economy perform. The current phase of the research project has shifted to collecting and sharing solutions. We invite you to visit [www.conxusneo.jobs/watw](http://www.conxusneo.jobs/watw) for a slide presentation specific to the three-county research project. Finally, FFEF is leading our post-survey work for the region and has created a virtual tool kit for employers and an interactive website. For more information visit the FFEF website at [www.thefundneo.org/watw](http://www.thefundneo.org/watw).