



The Center to Advance Manufacturing Monthly News

June 2025

Talent development doesn't happen in a vacuum—it begins with listening. And that was the driving force behind our Regional Workforce Collaboration Roundtable held earlier this month.

Hosted in partnership with BGSU's Center for Regional Development (CRD), the session brought together voices from across the region—manufacturers, educators, workforce practitioners, and economic development leaders—to share ideas, review new data, and surface pressing challenges impacting the manufacturing talent pipeline in Northwest Ohio.

The discussions reinforced what many of us already know: building a resilient workforce requires more than just technical training. While skills gaps remain a concern, so do the everyday barriers that keep individuals from entering or advancing in manufacturing careers—barriers like access to childcare, reliable transportation, and affordable housing.

Two key presentations helped frame the conversation. The first, based on findings from the Center's Northwest Ohio Automotive Workforce Study, revealed critical workforce trends and industry feedback—including a shrinking labor pool, heightened competition for talent, and the growing need for upskilling due to automation and retirements. The second, led by CRD (*pictured right*), shared insights from recent regional listening sessions, highlighting challenges such as persistent gaps in skilled trades and the need for stronger connections between employers and education providers. The data also emphasized the importance of creating flexible learning pathways for adult learners and non-traditional students.



In addition to the presentations, attendees heard from three Industry Sector Partnership (ISP) organizations and a Business Advisory Council (BAC) representative, each of whom shared real-world strategies and successes from their respective regions. From innovative employer engagement efforts to student-focused outreach and training, their stories provided valuable examples of what's working—and what's possible—when business, education, and community partners come together around a shared workforce mission.

These insights were reinforced by examples already showing progress across the region—strong co-op and internship programs are connecting students to real-world experience, job coaching through local workforce agencies is helping match people to the right opportunities, and partnerships between industry and education are making real progress in rethinking how training is delivered. It's clear: the future of workforce development lies in collaboration. The ability to align efforts across sectors—to listen, respond, and innovate together—is what will move our region forward.

We're grateful to all who joined us for the roundtable and contributed their perspectives. Your input is not only shaping our strategies at the Center—it's helping inform how we continue to connect manufacturers with the resources and partnerships they need to thrive.

As always, we're here to support your workforce initiatives. Please don't hesitate to reach out to continue the conversation.

Regional Visit Highlights Innovation and Industry Engagement in Northeast Ohio

Center staff recently traveled to Cleveland to visit MAGNET: The Manufacturing Advocacy and Growth Network—a leading resource for manufacturers in Northeast Ohio.

The visit provided an opportunity to tour MAGNET’s state-of-the-art facility, observe their team in action, and gain a deeper understanding of the strategies they’re using to support and grow the manufacturing sector. CTAM staff explored hands-on equipment including metal bending and die cutting machinery and had the chance to watch a robot being programmed to complete a task—one of many tools MAGNET uses to demonstrate real-world applications of smart manufacturing.



Beyond the equipment, the team learned about MAGNET’s broad range of workforce and innovation initiatives, which span everything from K–12 engagement and career awareness to operational excellence and talent pipeline development. Their integrated approach to workforce and industry support provided valuable insights that may inform future efforts here in Northwest Ohio.



We’re grateful to the MAGNET team for their time and hospitality—and for sharing their experience as a regional leader in manufacturing support and engagement.

Pictured: Kassie Cooper, Center Marketing Projects Manager; Jeri Steinbrook, Center Workforce Training Coordinator; Jennie Becker, MAGNET Manager of Experiential Learning; Danielle Sidebottom, Center Assistant to the Director

Workforce Insights

This article continues our Workforce Insights series, spotlighting the 2024 Northwest Ohio Automotive Manufacturing Sector Study—led by the Center, funded by the Ohio Department of Higher Education, and produced with the Center for Automotive Research and all 17 county economic-development partners. View the Executive Summary [here](#).

The study combined labor market data with insights gathered through surveys, interviews, and discussions with regional manufacturers and economic developers. One key outcome: a clear need for talent that spans both technical job-specific skills (e.g., machinery operation, skilled trades) and broader cross-cutting skills like leadership, process improvement, and communication. These needs are unfolding amid a global workforce demographic crisis (see [Lightcast’s The Rising Storm](#)). The study offers actionable recommendations for manufacturers, educators, and community leaders to address these long-term talent challenges.

What Can Employers Do?

- 1. Plan for retirements:** Identify roles with upcoming retirements, inventory the required skills, and begin training internal candidates to step into those positions.
- 2. Invest in employee development:** Create personal development plans to equip employees with the skills needed to advance—whether to replace retirees or take on new responsibilities involving advanced technologies like automation and machine learning.
- 3. Streamline through automation:** Improve process efficiency using Lean principles to free up staff for higher-value tasks and create opportunities for internal advancement.

How can Employers and Educators Partner?

- 1. Strengthen pipelines for experiential learning:** Expand access to apprenticeships, internships, and co-ops to build hands-on skills and early exposure to the field.
- 2. Activate Business Advisory Councils:** Use BACs as a tool to align industry needs with educational programs and outcomes more effectively.
- 3. Inspire the next generation:** Encourage students to explore careers in manufacturing and related fields (like construction, logistics, and skilled trades) through MFG Day events, robotics clubs, facility tours, and classroom visits.

The Center and our educational partners are actively supporting these efforts by helping companies access training funds, connect with workforce and education resources, promote apprenticeships, co-ops, and internships, and build meaningful connections between students of all ages and local employers. View our contact info on page 5 or visit our website to learn how we can help you develop the talent your business needs to thrive.



LUNCH & LEARN WEBINAR YOUSCIENCE & MANUFACTURING: TURNING STUDENT TALENT INTO SKILLED CAREERS

Featuring:

MATT BAUMGARTNER
DIRECTOR OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT



Wednesday, August 6
12:00 PM

[REGISTER HERE](#)



Curious how many students in your area have the natural talent for manufacturing — but aren't considering it? Join us for an insightful session with Matt Baumgartner of YouScience, where you'll learn about:

- What YouScience is and how it's helping students across NW Ohio explore careers that align with their strengths
- How many students in our region have aptitudes aligned with manufacturing career clusters
- Where the "interest gap" lies for manufacturing and what that means for your future workforce
- How you can use YouScience (a free tool!), to help strengthen your talent pipeline

Register today [here!](#)

Powering Ohio's Manufacturing Future — A Panel on Innovation, Talent, and Technology

Don't miss this thought-provoking panel discussion celebrating a first-of-its-kind partnership between Kata Solution LLC, IoTco, and Bowling Green State University — an innovative collaboration that's redefining how industry and education come together to drive Ohio's manufacturing sector forward.

This groundbreaking public-private initiative stands out as one of the first in Ohio to integrate university engineering students directly into real-world manufacturing pilot programs, working under the mentorship of experienced manufacturing and digital transformation professionals. The result? A hands-on talent pipeline prepared to solve the challenges of Industry 4.0, while delivering immediate value to local companies.

During this interactive panel, attendees will gain insights into how this partnership is:

- Empowering Ohio manufacturers to compete and innovate through smart technology and operational excellence
- Creating experiential learning opportunities that connect BGSU engineering students to real industry challenges
- Retaining top talent in Ohio by embedding students in high-impact work early in their careers
- Building a new model of workforce and economic development through collaboration, education, and digital transformation

Panelists include Bryan Little, President, Kata Solution, Dr. Wael Mokhtar, Dean, BGSU College of Engineering and Innovation, and Dr. Mo Abuali, CEO, IoTco. This is more than a panel—it's a showcase of what's possible when higher education and industry leaders align around innovation, talent development, and community impact. Full event details will be shared on our social media channels in the coming weeks—stay tuned!



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KATA SOLUTION LLC
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Findlay: Hancock County
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

June is National Safety Month – A Time to Prioritize Safety in Manufacturing

In the manufacturing industry, safety is more than a compliance requirement—it’s a cornerstone of operational excellence. From heavy machinery and electrical systems to repetitive tasks and high-heat environments, workers regularly face a wide range of risks. That’s why fostering a strong culture of safety is essential—not just in June, but every single day.

Why Safety Matters:

- Manufacturing accounts for over 15% of all private industry nonfatal injuries, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.
- The average cost of a workplace injury exceeds \$42,000, not including indirect costs like lost productivity and training replacement workers.
- Companies with strong safety programs experience up to 40% fewer workplace injuries, according to the National Safety Council.

Key Safety Practices:

- Always wear proper PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) such as gloves, goggles, and hearing protection.
- Follow lockout/tagout procedures to ensure machines are properly shut off before maintenance.
- Maintain a clean, organized workplace to prevent slips, trips, and falls.
- Report hazards immediately—early intervention can prevent serious incidents.
- Stay trained and informed—regular safety training keeps everyone alert and prepared.

Why Proactive Safety Pays Off:

Prioritizing safety doesn’t just protect people—it also drives performance. Companies that emphasize safety see:

- Fewer disruptions due to incidents or injuries
- Higher employee morale and retention—workers feel valued when their safety is prioritized.
- Improved productivity from more efficient, stable operation
- Reduced insurance premiums and regulatory risk

By investing in proactive safety strategies, manufacturers build more resilient operations—and send a strong message to employees that their wellbeing matters. Let’s use National Safety Month as a reminder to stay vigilant, stay informed, and stay safe.

Want to Learn More?

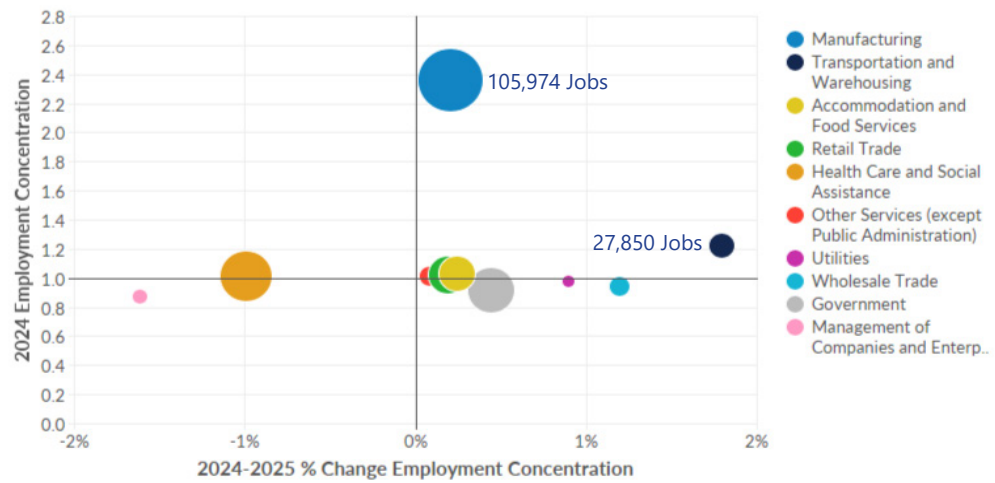
This month’s Knowledge Hub feature was developed in collaboration with the All Hazards Training Center at the University of Findlay—recognized nationwide for their leadership in environmental, health, and safety training.



For more than 30 years, All Hazards has helped manufacturers and other organizations develop and implement effective safety programs. Their courses cover a wide range of topics, including OSHA compliance, hazardous materials, emergency response, crisis management, and workplace violence prevention. Known for their hands-on, scenario-based approach, they work closely with employers to deliver practical, customized solutions.

The Center also hosted a webinar featuring safety experts from All Hazards to explore best practices and emerging trends in manufacturing safety. If you missed it, you can view the recording [here](#). If you’re exploring safety improvements for your team or would like to learn more about available training, reach out to the Center and we’ll connect you with the All Hazards team.

Highest Industry Employment Concentration



The graph demonstrates the importance of manufacturing, transportation, and logistics in Northwest Ohio. Manufacturing in 2025 remains the largest segment of the economy representing 105,974 jobs. Transportation and Warehousing employs 27,850 people. Each segment has seen growth year after year while other segments of the economy such as healthcare, have seen a decline in the employment concentration.

Ohio TechCred

We are excited to share that two companies, with the assistance of our Workforce Training Coordinator, Jeri Steinbrook, during the May TechCred application period, were awarded funding for training. These companies will conduct their training with Owens Community College to upskill their employees in Blueprint Reading and Microsoft Excel.

Ohio's TechCred Program gives employers the opportunity to upskill current and future employees in today's tech-infused economy. The Center hosted a webinar featuring presenters from the Ohio Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation, providing an overview of TechCred and a question-and-answer session. To view a recording of the webinar, click [here](#).

The next application round for TechCred will run from July 1 through July 31. Need assistance applying? Contact our Workforce Training Coordinator, Jeri Steinbrook!

For full program details, visit techcred.ohio.gov.



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