

One
Region.

One
Future.



NORTHEAST OHIO SPEAKS!

Results of 11 Leadership Workshops
and the Regional Town Meeting.

January, 2006



Voices
& Choices

www.voiceschoices.org

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I. Executive Summary

Voices & Choices, an initiative of the Fund for Our Economic Future, has completed the initial stage of its large-scale public engagement process. Through this process, tens of thousands of people will have the opportunity to help create a regional agenda to revitalize the economy of Northeast Ohio. To date, nearly 3,000 citizens have taken part in one-on-one interviews to identify the region's greatest strengths and assets. More than 1,000 business, government, and nonprofit leaders participated in a series of 11 Leadership Workshops to envision a desirable future for Northeast Ohio and to identify the region's most pressing challenges. And, more than 750 citizens from 15 counties met for a Saturday in November 2005 to begin prioritizing regional challenges and brainstorming potential solutions at a Regional Town Meeting. This report summarizes the results of the Leadership Workshops and the Regional Town Meeting. A separate report will highlight results of the Citizen Interviews which were conducted through December 2005.

While 5,000 citizens and leaders have participated in the Voices & Choices process thus far, there is opportunity for thousands more citizens to make their voice heard. Phase II will continue throughout the winter and into spring 2006 with a series of community conversations. Individuals can host a community conversation with as few as 6 people or as many as 200 people or more. An easy-to-use discussion kit is available to help guide these conversations. People will have the opportunity to prioritize challenges and brainstorm solutions through the community conversations.

Phase III will run through the summer and into the fall of 2006 using a combination of web and online interface, another Regional Town Meeting, and a second set of Leadership Workshops. During phase III, citizens and leaders will have the opportunity to prioritize solutions for the region. The choices that citizens and leaders make about regional priorities and solutions will be used to form a regional action plan to transform the economy of Northeast Ohio.

The following provides a summary of key themes that have surfaced about our past and its impact on the region's overall economic competitiveness, the aspirations people have for a more promising future, the opportunities people believe should be leveraged to reach the desirable future, and key challenges the region must overcome in order to compete more successfully on a global scale.

I. Executive Summary

Considering Northeast Ohio's Past

Regional Town Meeting participants were asked to consider the past and how it has affected our region's ability to compete in the global economy. Specifically, participants identified the most important aspects of Northeast Ohio's history, culture, and attitudes that have both helped and inhibited the region's ability to compete. Among the strongest room-wide themes gathered from table conversations (in rank-order) were:

Most Common Table Conversations (In order of frequency)	
Working FOR Us	Working AGAINST Us
Influx of ethnic populations (immigrants, new workers, underground railroad)	Attitudes that hurt us (holding onto the past, resistance to change, not open to new ideas, down on ourselves)
History of innovation, inventiveness, entrepreneurial spirit, and family owned businesses	Racial exclusivity, segregation, isolation, and discrimination
Strong work ethic	Traditional industry has not transitioned and is no longer competitive
Highly productive manufacturing sector	Industrial past created expectation for work without a high school diploma
Caring, helping, friendly people with strong sense of community	Union culture created perception of high labor costs and an inflexible workforce
Strong network of colleges and universities	Loss of business and industry has resulted in income differences or a growing gap between the rich and poor
Strong commercial transportation systems (air, rail, highway, canal, ports)	History of public school funding has resulted in poor school performance
History of productive farming and agriculture	Government fragmentation has resulted in competition among cities, duplicate and costly public services
Can-do attitudes, perseverance, and resilience of people in the region	Industrial past is perceived as creating a culture with greater value for physical labor than for knowledge or mind-based work
Generations of people and families with strong ties, loyalty, and commitment to the region	Citizens have become more apathetic and neighbors are no longer helping neighbors

Envisioning A Promising Future For Northeast Ohio

In addition to thinking about the past, Leadership Workshop participants were asked to envision the kind of place they would like Northeast Ohio to be in the future. The strongest themes from this discussion across the 11 workshops were:

- A region that meets the basic needs of all people: affordable health care, equal access to education, a good regional public transportation system, quality public services, and quality employment opportunities
- A place that celebrates traditions but also embraces change
- A region known for strong arts, cultural, and recreational amenities
- A place with strong infrastructure: transportation (via highways, water, rail), communications infrastructure, power infrastructure, and housing stock
- A region that emphasizes preservation of the environment, natural resources, and green space

Citizens of the Regional Town Meeting were asked to discuss what they would like Northeast Ohio to be known for around the world. Among the most frequent themes from the discussion (in rank-order) were:

- World renowned hospitals and health care
- Inventiveness, creativity, and entrepreneurship
- Accepting, welcoming place for ethnic groups
- Technology research and application: (biotechnology, polymers, alternative fuel and energy sources, fuel cells, liquid crystals and advanced manufacturing)
- Lake Erie, natural resource preservation and green space
- Arts and cultural center of the world
- Excellent colleges and universities
- Commitment to education at all levels
- Diverse and prosperous business environment
- Superb park systems

Leveraging Opportunities For Northeast Ohio

Building on their vision for the future, Leadership Workshop participants discussed opportunities the region could take advantage of in order to reach the desirable future for Northeast Ohio. Opportunities were discussed within the five content areas: economic growth and employment, education and skills, quality of life and place, equity and fairness, and cooperation and governance. Among the strongest themes across the 11 Leadership Workshops were:

Economic Growth and Employment Opportunities

- Potential to create an attractive business environment: Ability to leverage assets like excellent educational facilities, strong natural resources, geographic proximity to other major U.S. markets, and the array of economic development initiatives under way like Team NEO, GLIDE, and JumpStart Inc.
- Opportunity to build a 21st century workforce: Ability to capitalize on many excellent institutions of higher education, a large entrepreneurial population, and strong work ethic
- Ability to capitalize on technological strengths including: advanced manufacturing, the polymer industry, liquid crystals, alternative energy sources, fuel cells, the region 's service sector - especially tourism, and the health care sector
- Potential to establish an infrastructure that links everything together: Opportunity to leverage Northeast Ohio's excellent highway, air, rail, canal, and port infrastructure, maintain the relatively low traffic congestion compared to other regions, and leverage the large broadband infrastructure within the region

I. Executive Summary

Education and Skills Opportunities

- Ability to leverage high-quality institutions of higher education
- Ability to build strong business and education partnerships
- Opportunity to raise educational standards throughout the region
- Potential to establish stronger parental involvement and support for schools
- Great potential for adult continuing education that is tied to business needs through a strong network of community colleges
- Possibility of finding additional and more equitable sources of public school funding if we work together as a region

Equity and Fairness Opportunities

- Opportunity to provide better access to quality education and workforce preparation to meet 21st century needs
- Ability to capitalize on ethnic diversity and history of providing opportunities to minorities and immigrants
- Possibility of creating greater access to quality healthcare and health insurance
- Potential to overcome issues of race and class

Quality of Life and Place Opportunities

- Opportunity to promote natural resources (water, green space, rural areas, farmland)
- Opportunity to be known as an arts and cultural center
- Potential to build on excellent transportation system infrastructure (highway, air, rail, canal, ports)
- Ability to create accessible, affordable, and quality housing for all
- Ability to work together as a region to minimize sprawl from our inner cities
- Ability to become a more highly competitive region while maintaining a low cost of living for people who live here

Cooperation and Governance Opportunities

- Possibility of promoting government cooperation and public service consolidation
- Opportunity to research and share best practices for better regional cooperation
- Ability to promote public-private cooperation across the region

Overcoming Northeast Ohio's Most Pressing Challenges

When asked to discuss challenges facing Northeast Ohio, conversations at both the Leadership Workshops and the Regional Town Meeting were organized around the same five content areas: economic growth and employment, education and skills, equity and fairness, quality of life and place, and cooperation and governance. Participants had the opportunity to discuss the challenges facing our region in each of these areas and then rated the importance of key challenges using keypad polling. Consensus on six overall themes emerged from these forums:

- Inequitable public school funding
- Government fragmentation and inefficiency
- Creating a 21st century workforce
- Racial isolation and income inequalities
- Uncompetitive business environment
- Sustainable land development

The following represents a more detailed summary of priority challenges identified by citizens and leaders at the Leadership Workshops and Regional Town Meeting:

Economic Growth and Employment Challenges

- Education and training are not linked to the current and future needs of businesses
- People and businesses are leaving our core cities while other communities are struggling to keep pace with population growth
- There is not enough investment and overall support for local entrepreneurs and new small businesses
- The local business environment is not competitive because of high energy costs, poor labor management conditions and other factors that deter businesses from moving here

- Too many local industries are no longer competitive and need to be replaced with high growth, high-tech industries that can prosper into the future
- There are not enough job opportunities paying good wages or offering good employee benefits
- The core cities of Northeast Ohio have not been able to attract new immigrants like they once did in the past
- Public attitudes in Northeast Ohio are resistant to change, new ideas, and new ways of working together
- Many people do not have adequate access to jobs because the region lacks a regional public transportation system
- Funding for public schools is inequitable across the region

Education and Skills Challenges

- Funding for public schools is inequitable across the region
- Education and training are not linked to the current and future needs of businesses
- College education is not affordable or accessible enough
- Parents are not adequately involved at school and at home
- Student performance, achievement, and completion at the K-12 level is low
- Public schools are not held to high enough standards of accountability
- Too many public schools in inner cities do not provide enough students with high quality education
- Public schools teach students to take tests instead of preparing them to think creatively and independently
- The people of Northeast Ohio don't place enough value on education

I. Executive Summary

Equity and Fairness Challenges

- There are not enough job opportunities paying good wages or offering good employee benefits
- Northeast Ohio has growing income inequalities resulting in an increasing gap between the rich and poor and a greater concentration of poverty in core cities
- Funding for public schools is inequitable across the region
- Too many people do not have access to quality health care
- Too many people do not have access to affordable and integrated housing
- The region needs to acknowledge and address issues of racial segregation and discrimination
- College education is not accessible or affordable enough
- Many people do not have adequate access to jobs, education, health care, and housing because the region lacks a regional public transportation system

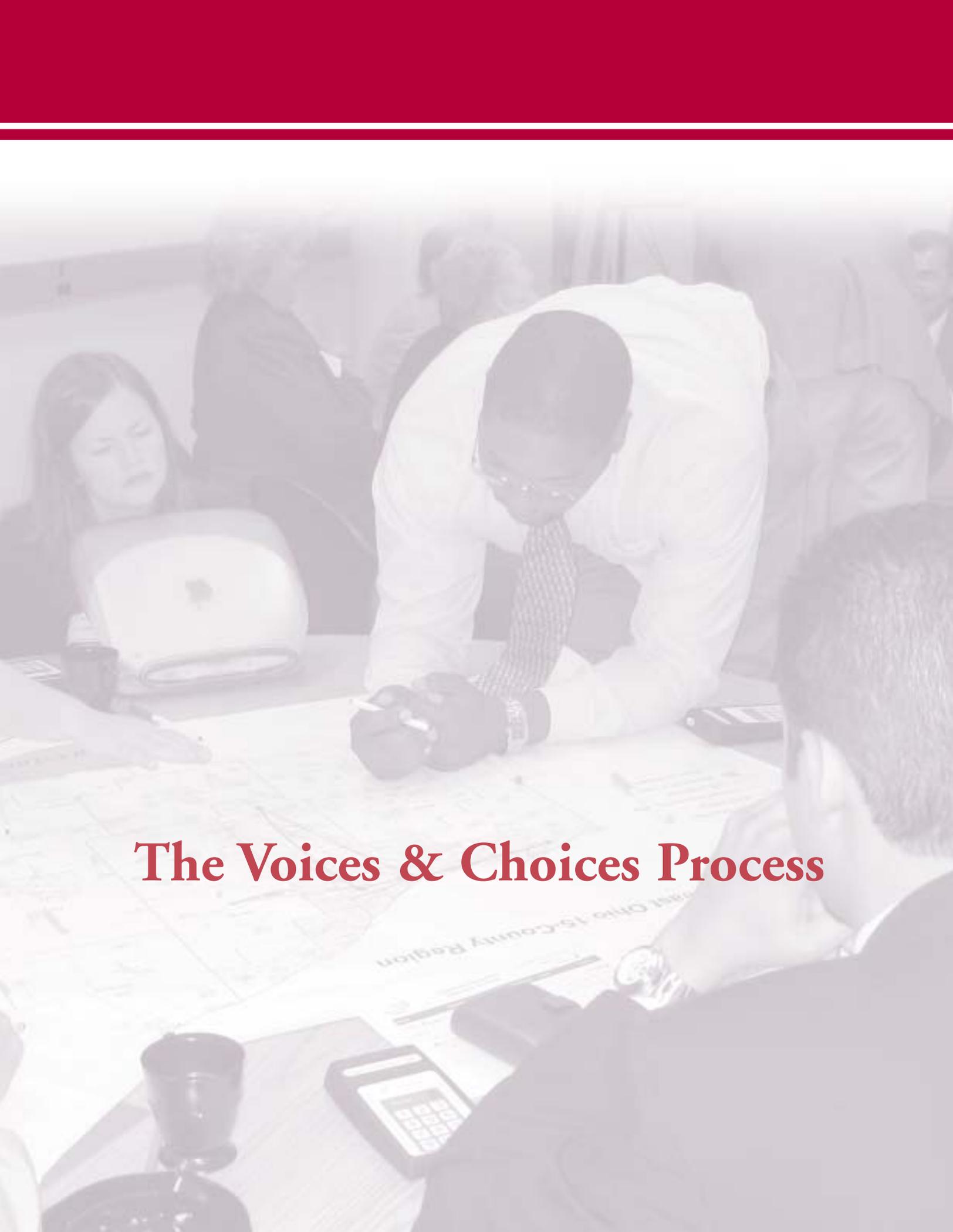
Quality of Life and Place Challenges

- People and businesses are leaving our core cities while other communities are struggling to keep pace with population growth
- The region needs to balance economic development with environmental and natural resource preservation
- There are not enough job opportunities paying good wages or offering good employee benefits
- Northeast Ohio has growing income inequalities resulting in an increasing gap between the rich and poor and a great concentration of poverty in core cities
- The region needs to acknowledge and address issues of racial segregation and discrimination
- Northeast Ohio has a poor image outside the region
- The local media creates negative impressions of Northeast Ohio by focusing its reporting on negative news about the region

- Many people do not have access to recreational, arts, and cultural amenities across the region because they need better public transportation
- There is not enough cooperation between communities within the region

Cooperation and Governance Challenges

- Our region has too many local governments which leads to duplicated public services and higher taxes
- Some political leaders resist change because it threatens their power base
- Some communities resist change because they fear they will lose their local identity
- Some communities that are doing well fear that cooperation with other communities will bring down their quality of life or quality of services
- Public attitudes in Northeast Ohio are resistant to change, new ideas, and new ways of working together
- People and businesses are leaving our core cities while other communities are struggling to keep pace with population growth
- Not enough people get involved in the community to address public problems
- The region needs a regional public transportation system
- Too few people support efforts for greater regional cooperation because they lack information about its benefits
- Too many local communities within Northeast Ohio compete against each other for the same businesses and jobs rather than cooperating



The Voices & Choices Process

II. The Voices & Choices Process

About Voices & Choices

Voices & Choices is a large-scale public engagement process to involve tens of thousands of people across Northeast Ohio. The Voices & Choices process will create a shared economic development agenda that will produce more jobs and create greater opportunity for our families and businesses. The initiative will educate hundreds of thousands about the importance of regional economies and some of the challenges facing Northeast Ohio's economy. Through a series of public discussions, people from every walk of life will come together to decide what must be done to create a brighter economic future for the region. Voices & Choices is designed to challenge people to think differently about the regional economy and to act in ways that may be different from the past in order to affect positive change for the future. The public engagement process provides an unprecedented opportunity for people to help shape a course of action for the region.

Steps Involved in the Voices and Choices Process

The Voices & Choices process began in the summer of 2005 and will continue through the Fall of 2006. During the first phase of the process, citizens and leaders identified the region's strengths and challenges through thousands of one-on-one interviews and a series of 11 Leadership Workshops. The second phase of the process will prioritize key challenges for the region. This work began with about 750 people representing the region's diversity who took part in a Regional Town Meeting held on November 12, 2005. Phase II will continue throughout the winter and into spring 2006 with thousands of people participating in community conversations using a discussion kit to help guide their conversations. The final phase of public deliberation will present citizens and leaders with a series of choices or options for addressing the most pressing challenges facing the region. Through a combination of web and online interface, a second Regional Town Meeting, and another series of Leadership Workshops, participants will develop the region's economic agenda.

Discussion Topics

To help frame table conversations at both the Leadership Workshops and the Regional Town Meeting, Voices & Choices divided issues facing Northeast Ohio into the following five content areas:

- Economic Growth and Employment
- Education and Skills
- Quality of Life and Place
- Equity and Fairness
- Cooperation and Governance

These categories were not meant to be exhaustive. Rather, they were intended to encourage people to think about a broad diversity of issues that should be considered in setting an economic agenda for the future of the region. Basic information about where Northeast Ohio currently stands in each of these areas were provided to workshop and Town Meeting participants in the form of a discussion guide. Participants used this information to stimulate their thinking about the challenges we face as a region in each of the five areas.

Leadership Workshops

More than 1,000 area leaders from business, government, non-profits, faith-based organizations and education participated in Leadership Workshops in August and September 2005. During each workshop, participants created a vision for the future of Northeast Ohio, identified the region's greatest assets, and identified the region's most important challenges. A total of 11 workshops were held across the 15 counties to ensure broad participation by leaders. Each workshop was about four and half hours in length and participants spent most of their time in small round-table conversation of no more than 10 leaders at each table.

Each workshop began with a brief overview of the Voices & Choices objectives and an outline of the public engagement process. This was followed by keypad polling to determine who was in the room on the basis of demographic characteristic (like gender, age, race, etc) and sector representation (like education, business, faith-based, etc.). The intent was to make the Leadership Workshop process as transparent as possible. The first participant exercise

involved use of a table-size map for leaders to see the 15 county region in its entirety and to begin thinking about how people interact and depend on others across Northeast Ohio for purposes of work and recreation. During the second exercise, leaders were asked to envision their desired future for Northeast Ohio.

Leaders spent the remainder of their time discussing opportunities and challenges in the five content areas related to economic development. The ideas resulting from small roundtable discussions were submitted to a central area where a team compiled the results. These results were then shared back with the audience so people could see and hear room-wide themes. Leaders then ranked the most important challenges using the keypad polling. Finally, leaders brainstormed short-term actions they could begin to take to strengthen the region.

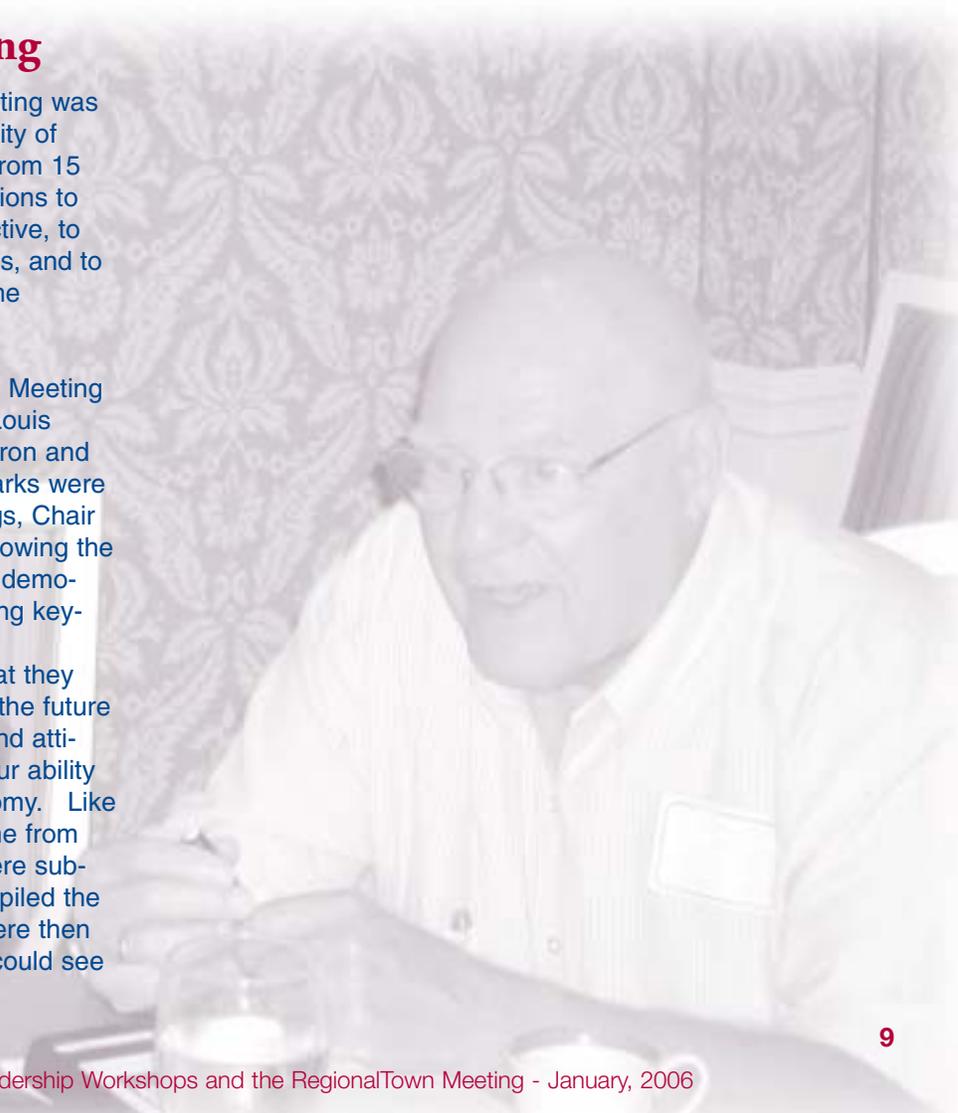
The afternoon session was spent discussing challenges and solutions in each of the five content areas. Participants talked about the most pressing challenges facing the region and then had the opportunity to rate the importance of key themes using keypad polling. Once the two most important challenges had been identified through the polling, participants brainstormed possible solutions for the top two priority challenges.

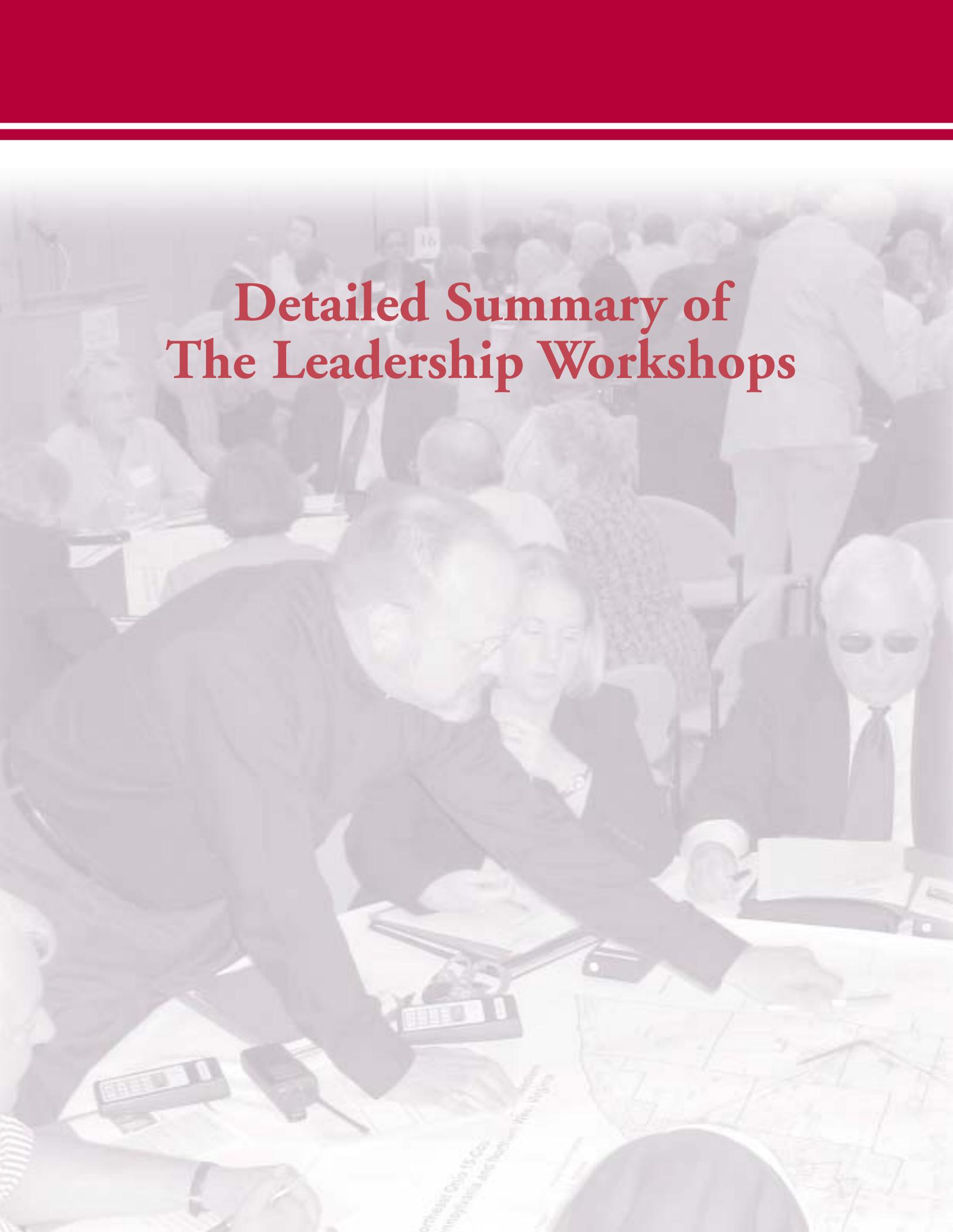
Regional Town Meeting

The Voices & Choices Regional Town Meeting was held on November 12, 2005 at the University of Akron, Rhodes Arena. About 750 people from 15 counties participated in roundtable discussions to identify what makes Northeast Ohio distinctive, to think about our greatest regional challenges, and to suggest possible solutions for addressing the region's priority challenges.

The opening session of the Regional Town Meeting consisted of welcoming remarks from Dr. Louis Proenza, President of The University of Akron and Akron Mayor Don Plusquellic. These remarks were followed by an address from Mr. Rob Briggs, Chair of the Fund for Our Economic Future. Following the opening address, participants shared their demographic and geographic characteristics using keypad polling.

Early in the day participants discussed what they wanted Northeast Ohio to be known for in the future and identified aspects of history, culture, and attitude that have both helped and inhibited our ability as a region to compete in the global economy. Like the Leadership Workshops, ideas that came from almost 90 small roundtable discussions were submitted to a central area where a team compiled the results of the discussion. These results were then shared back with the audience so people could see and hear room-wide themes.





Detailed Summary of The Leadership Workshops

III. Leadership Workshop Results

Leadership Workshop Participant Profiles

A total of 1,058 leaders from across Northeast Ohio participated in a series of Leadership Workshops between August and September 2005. The following represents demographic, geographic, and industry-sector characteristics of participants:

Gender

Forty-two percent of leaders participating in the Voices & Choices workshops were female and 58% were male.

Age

One in every 10 leaders participating in Leadership Workshops were under the age of 34, 7% were between 35 and 44 years old, another 14% were between the ages of 45 and 54, 24% were between 55 and 64 years old, and 21% of all participants were over the age of 65.

Geography

Geography	Participants
Ashland/Wayne	14%
Ashtabula	7%
Lake/Geauga	7%
Cuyahoga	25%
Lorain	9%
Summit/Portage	10%
Medina	7%
Stark/Carroll	8%
Trumbull/Mahoning/ Columbiana	14%

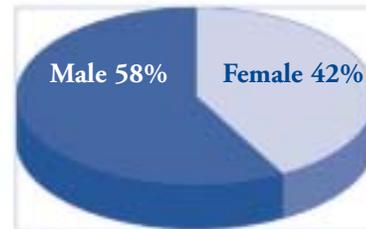
Race and Ethnicity

White leaders were over-represented at Leadership Workshops and the African American population was under-represented, particularly in Cuyahoga County.

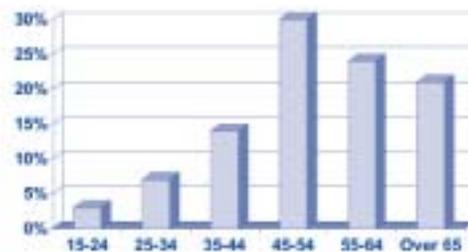
Sector Analysis

Sector Analysis	Participants
Agriculture	1%
Business/Private Sector	24%
Education	14%
Faith-Based	4%
Labor	1%
Media	1.5%
Not-for-Profit/Civic	26%
Philanthropy	7%
Other	4%

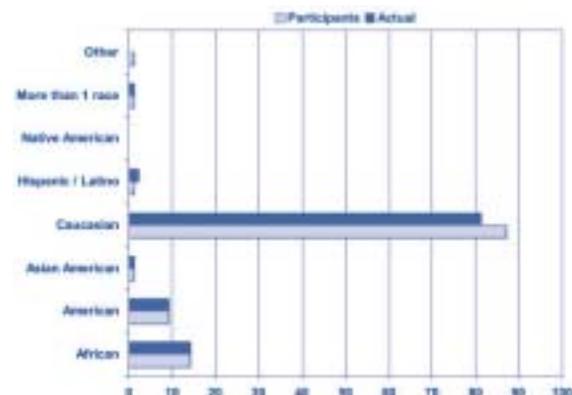
Participant Gender



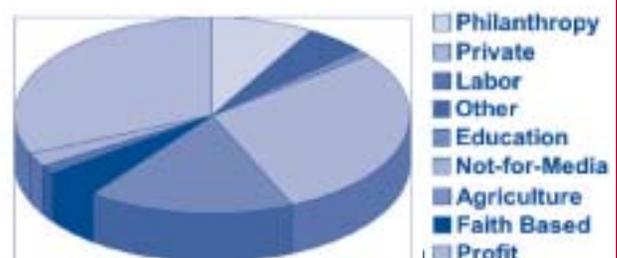
Participant Age



Participant Race / Ethnicity Compared to Actual Population



Participant by Industry Sector



III. Leadership Workshop Results

Envisioning A Promising Future For Northeast Ohio

Leadership Workshop participants were asked to envision what they want Northeast Ohio to look like in the future. Themes from the visioning exercise were then entered into laptop computers stationed at each round table. In addition to a strong, vibrant economy with employment opportunities for all, leaders frequently discussed equal access to education, health care, and public services or a region with strong ability to meet the basic needs of all people. There was much discussion about year-round recreation, arts, and cultural amenities which leaders envisioned would be preserved and leveraged into the future. Leaders also envisioned a region that wisely uses its natural resources in areas like conservation, preservation, and green businesses. In the promising future, leaders saw better land use planning and controlled urban sprawl. They envisioned Northeast Ohio as a national leader in development and use of alternative energy sources.

In addition to equal access to jobs, a strong arts and cultural center, and a region that is nationally known for natural resource preservation, leaders envisioned a place where people and communities are connected through strong infrastructure. This infrastructure included transportation networks, strong communications infrastructure, and a more affordable power infrastructure for Northeast Ohio. Many leaders also envisioned a high-speed commuter rail system in the region's future.

Overall, leaders of Northeast Ohio envisioned a region that:

- Meets the basic needs of all people: affordable health care, equal access to education, a regional public transportation system, and quality employment opportunities
- Celebrates traditions but also embraces change
- Is a strong arts, cultural, and recreational center
- Has a strong infrastructure: transportation, communications infrastructure, power infrastructure, and housing stock
- Emphasizes preservation of the environment, natural resources, and green space

“Northeast Ohio has been one of the most innovative regions in the country. We need to leverage this asset. This has been ignored when we talk about regional branding.”



“We need to become champions for entrepreneurship and start supporting innovation and new companies started by younger people.”

“With a collective effort, this region could become a center for forward-thinking technological development.”

“The region should take its rightful place as the mecca of healthcare and bioscience; these can serve as engines for job creation”

“We need to grow tourism and become a get-away destination around the four seasons.”

Leveraging Opportunities for Northeast Ohio

Building on the visioning exercise, Leadership Workshop participants discussed potential opportunities to create the desired future for Northeast Ohio. Leaders were asked to discuss opportunities for the region within each of the five content areas.

Within **economic growth and employment**, leaders saw current technological advancements within Northeast Ohio as critical opportunities for creating a more dynamic economy for the region. Technological opportunities included advanced manufacturing, the polymer industry, liquid crystal technology, fuel cell technology, and alternative energy sources. The ability to capitalize on the region's strong health care sector was also discussed as was the opportunity to strengthen Northeast Ohio's tourism industry.

In addition to current economic strengths, leaders discussed at length the need to strengthen the region's workforce. In fact, creating a 21st century workforce was a recurring theme that cut across the five content areas. Key economic growth and employment opportunities were as follows:

- Opportunity to establish an attractive business environment: The region has excellent educational facilities, strong natural resources, geographic proximity to other major US markets, and an array of economic development initiatives to build upon like Team NEO, GLIDE, JumpStart Inc., and others within the region.
- Potential to build a 21st century workforce: Capitalizing on many excellent institutions of higher education, a large entrepreneurial population, and strong work ethic.
- Ability to capitalize on technological strengths: The region has many strengths to build upon including advanced manufacturing, polymers industry, liquid crystals, alternative energy sources, fuel cells, the region's service sector (especially tourism) and the health care sector.
- Ability to link everything together through infrastructure: Northeast Ohio has excellent highway and airport accessibility, a large broadband infrastructure, and at the same time has relatively low traffic congestion compared to other regions.

“Northeast Ohio is capable of quality education where graduates are willing and capable participants in civic activity and have basic business and personal skills. Education will result in entrepreneurialism and critical thinking and will enhance emotional intelligence in our students”



“We see collaboration between universities, a model for the country around technology development that builds upon key strengths of the region. This system is of such high quality that it attracts students and faculty, and creates new industry and jobs.”

“We would like to see a strong, well funded educational system for all children throughout the region with equitable access, where 95% of students graduate from high school. We should have quality early childhood education available to everyone. An excellent public school system and state support of higher education are an essential part of the infrastructure.”

III. Leadership Workshop Results

When asked to discuss the most important regional opportunities around **education and skills** that should be leveraged to reach the desired future, many leaders identified capitalizing on a strong network of colleges and universities in Northeast Ohio. The potential to strengthen business and education partnerships at all levels was another strong theme of these conversations. Key opportunities identified around education and skills were as follows:

- Ability to leverage high-quality institutions of higher education
- Ability to build strong business and education partnerships
- Opportunity to establish and raise regional educational standards
- Opportunity to establish stronger parental involvement and support for schools
- Great potential for adult continuing education that is tied to business needs through a strong network of community colleges
- Possibility of finding additional and more equitable sources of public school funding if we work together as a region

When discussing opportunities to strengthen **equity and fairness**, leaders talked most frequently again about the strength and quality of schools including the region's strong network of colleges and universities. While affordability and access to education was viewed as an avenue for greater job access, there was also much conversation about capitalizing on the rich ethnic diversity and history of providing opportunities to minorities and immigrants in Northeast Ohio. Building on historical value and tolerance for diversity was considered a strong opportunity to reach the desired vision for the future. Leaders from the urban areas discussed the potential to overcome issues of race within the region. Equity and fairness related opportunities included:

- Opportunity to create a 21st century workforce
- Ability to capitalize on ethnic diversity and history of providing opportunities to minorities and immigrants
- Possibility of creating greater access to quality healthcare
- Potential to overcome issues of race and class

“We want a regional public education system that is not based on the financial divide. We have to influence leadership at the state level to get it. We need a vision for education and the students. Every student should have the same opportunities in terms of basic education, after school opportunities, etc. And the local communities should have a voice.”



“We will have high quality jobs that allow our residents to meet their basic needs. We can create career opportunities, not just jobs”.

“Our region can provide true opportunities for interaction between cultural and racial groups. We can work on diversity issues to break down fears and security concerns.”

“The white middle class takes responsibility for people who have been left behind and have been isolated from educational and economic opportunity. We're no longer fleeing from a sink-hole in the urban centers! We recognize that we're all in the same boat. We embrace cultural diversity.”

Similar to the visioning exercise, leaders see strong potential and opportunity to both leverage and promote the region's natural resources, arts and cultural amenities, and low cost of living as a means for attracting new businesses and people to Northeast Ohio. Leaders also believe there is opportunity to reverse sprawl from inner cities through strong, coordinated land use policies. Among key opportunities relating to **quality of life and place** were:

- Opportunity to promote natural resources (water, green space, rural areas, farmland)
- Opportunity to be known as an arts and cultural center
- Potential to build on excellent transportation infrastructure (highway, air, rail, canal, ports)
- Ability to create accessible and affordable quality housing for all
- Ability to work together as a region to minimize sprawl from our inner cities
- Possibility of becoming a highly competitive region while maintaining a low cost of living for people

While fragmented government structures at the regional level were viewed more frequently as a challenge than an opportunity, leaders did discuss the opportunity to improve government fragmentation and inefficiency through public service consolidation and joint purchasing agreements. Leaders also feel there is a keen opportunity to research and share best practices that promote greater regional cooperation. Among the opportunities relating to **cooperation and governance** were:

- Possibility of promoting government cooperation and public service consolidation
- Opportunity to research and share best practices for better regional cooperation
- Ability to promote public-private partnerships across the region

“We want a sustainable region - comprehensive green space, limits to sprawl, transportation that allows people to get out of their cars and affords people to get jobs outside their neighborhood. We pull people together rather than isolating people.”



“Farms are preserved and functional. The beauty of the area is one of our biggest assets and we can sell it”

“Cultural activities drive the strength of the place.”

“Go on the offensive with quality of life issues: clean, safe, alive environment with many things to do. We need distinctive environments for shopping, restaurants, and other unique community assets.”

“We have the ability to create a place where all of our children have moved back to the region to live and build their careers because it is a vibrant, diverse, international, happening place with cool cities”

“Through education about interdependencies we can get everyone to act in their enlightened self interest for regional cooperation.”

“Changes in governance may have the greatest potential for impacting fairness”

III. Leadership Workshop Results

Overcoming Northeast Ohio's Most Pressing Challenges

Similar to conversations surrounding assets and opportunities, roundtable discussions about Northeast Ohio's most pressing challenges were framed around the five content areas. Results of these conversations reveal considerable overlap among priority challenges across all five areas.

Economic Growth and Employment Challenges

During roundtable discussions at the Leadership Workshops, participants frequently discussed the need to diversify the economic base of Northeast Ohio by leveraging our technological assets like biotechnology. Leaders also encouraged growth in tourism and health care delivery. At the same time, they recognized that the region will continue to have tough competition from overseas as well as challenges of high energy costs and training a world-class workforce.

Overall, four themes emerged as the greatest challenges to economic growth and employment for Northeast Ohio at the Leadership Workshops:

- Unfavorable business climate
- Ineffective education and training
- Parochial attitudes of leaders
- Government impediments to economic growth

Stark/Carroll, Ashtabula, Ashland/Wayne, and Mahoning Valley leaders rated an unfavorable business climate in Northeast Ohio as the number one challenge to economic growth. They identified high energy costs, tax policies, and labor-management relations as factors they saw contributing to this environment and negatively impacting the region's ability to attract new business and industry.

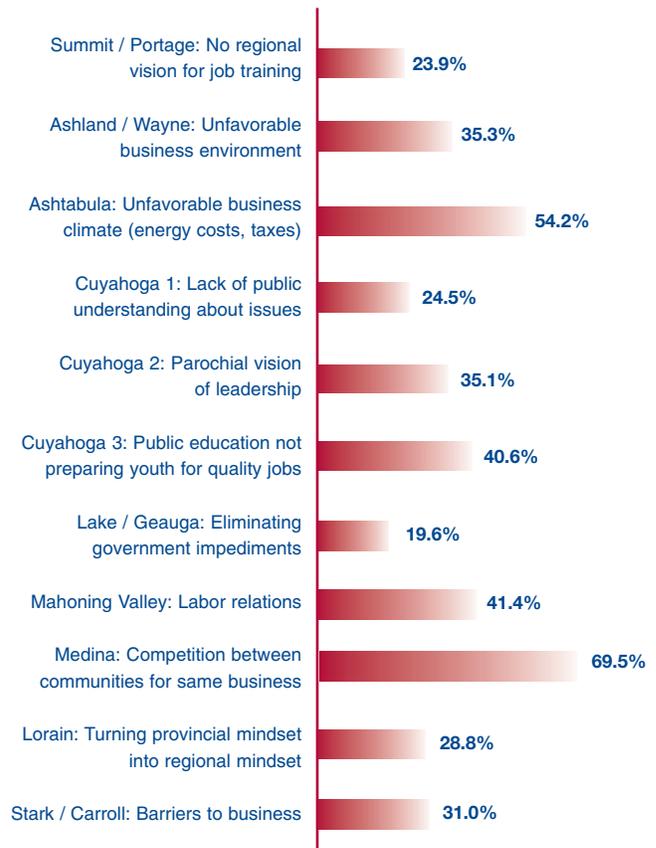
Education and training was the number one concern for Cuyahoga and Summit/Portage leaders. Cuyahoga leaders zeroed in on public education not adequately preparing youth for the workforce while Summit/Portage leaders felt the problem was more related to "under-investment" in education and training at all levels across the region.

Attitudes were the primary area of concern Lorain and Cuyahoga County leaders. Both ranked

"parochial vision" and "provincial mindset" as the number one economic growth challenges facing Northeast Ohio.

Medina and Lake/Geauga County leaders had a slightly different perspective. These leaders identified elimination of government impediments to economic growth or unnecessary competition for the same business among communities as the number one economic growth challenge for the region.

% of Leaders Rating Each As The #1 Economic Growth & Employment Challenge for Northeast Ohio



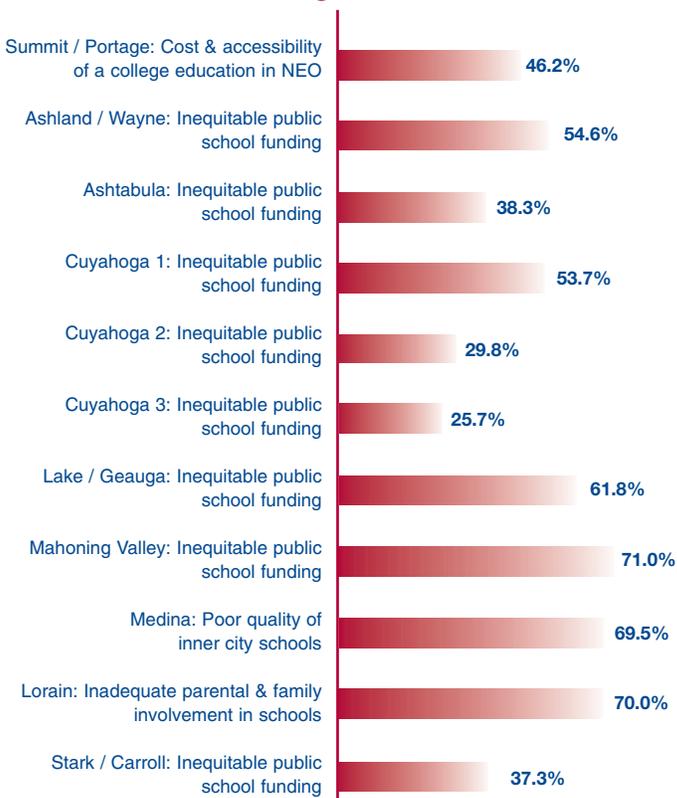
Education and Skill Challenges

There was dramatic consistency across Leadership Workshops around Northeast Ohio's most pressing education and skill challenges. Most leaders identified inequitable public school funding as the most important challenge facing the region today.

Other recurring themes included lack of parental involvement in schools, cost and accessibility of higher education, and poor quality of inner city schools across the region. Many discussed the poor quality of inner city schools as contributing to blight from urban areas within the region - also a priority economic growth and employment challenge identified for the region.

There was much concern about the external educational environment as well. For example, there was concern about the lack of business and education partnerships across the region and the need to better connect education and training with current and future business needs. There was also conversation about strengthening collaboration among school districts and colleges/universities across the region.

% of Leaders Rating Each As The #1 Education and Skill Challenge for Northeast Ohio



Quality of Life and Place Challenges

When asked to discuss threats to quality of life and place, a variety of themes emerged from the perspective of leaders. For a couple of sub-regions (Ashland/Wayne and Lake/Geauga), education resurfaced as the number one quality of life challenge. Inequitable public school funding and poor quality of inner city schools were rated number one within these two areas of the region.

Mahoning Valley leaders, on the other hand, rated blight from inner cities and the resulting concentration of poverty within urban areas as the number one quality of life and place challenge. Cuyahoga County leaders rated issues of race and class as the most important quality of life challenge, which was another recurring theme across the five content areas.

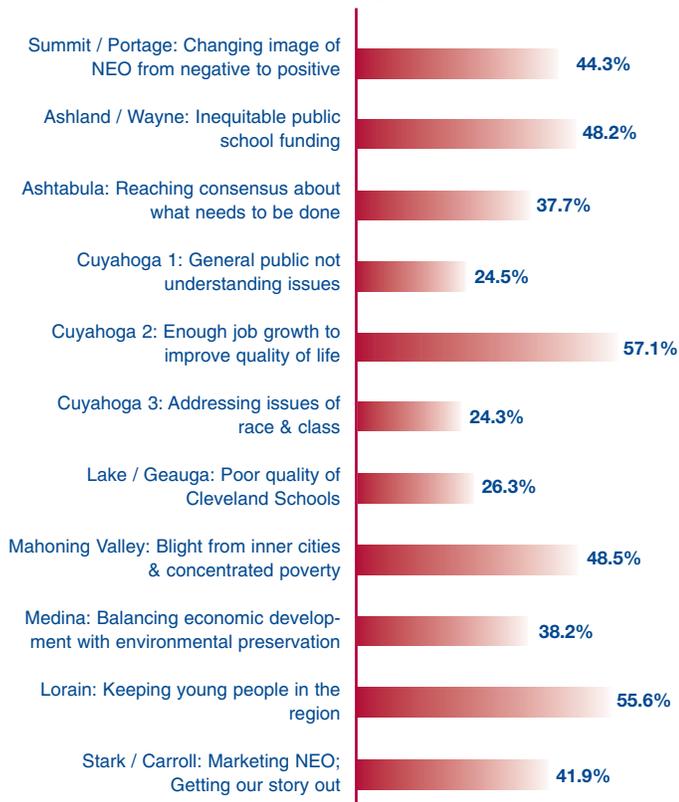
While many economic growth and educational challenges were comparable to quality of life and place challenges, a couple of new themes did surface. Summit/Portage and Stark/Carroll leaders rated the image of Northeast Ohio as the most important threat to quality of life while Medina County leaders rated the difficulty of balancing economic development with environmental preservation. In addition, Lorain County residents rated the inability to keep young people in Northeast Ohio as the most important quality of life challenge facing the region.

These represent three sets of challenges that had not been rated as most important when discussing economic growth and education related challenges.

There were many other challenges discussed at the Leadership Workshops that were not among the top ranking quality of life and place responses. The importance of safety and security was emphasized as was the necessity of attitudinal and behavioral shifts from previously entrenched mindsets. Other concerns included lack of affordable housing, the need for a regional system of public transportation, and the need for comprehensive land use planning. Challenges related to land use planning included restoration of an aging urban core, reversal of urban sprawl, and the balance between urban and rural development that suits the region and preserves the best of what exists.

III. Leadership Workshop Results

% of Leaders Rating Each As The #1 Quality of Life & Place Challenge for Northeast Ohio



Equity and Fairness Challenges

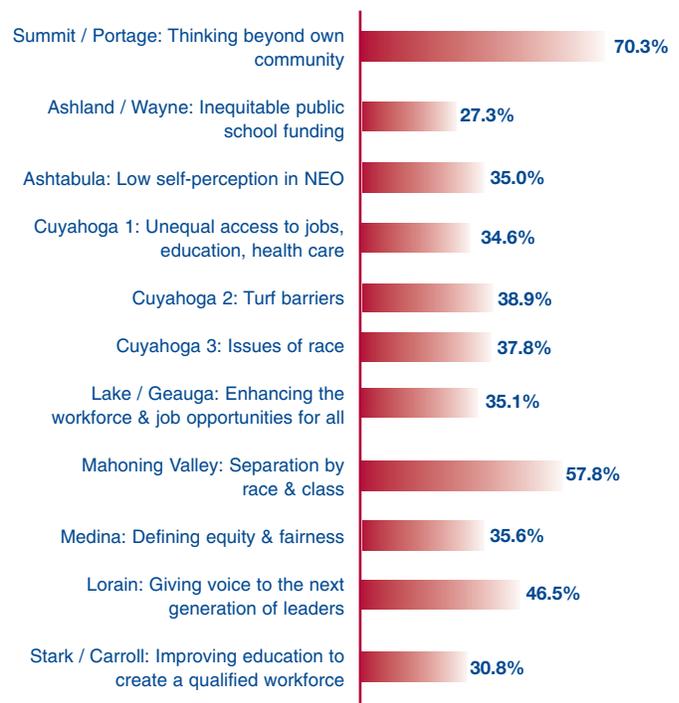
Like many of the other challenge areas discussed at the Leadership Workshops, education was among some of the most important equity and fairness challenges identified for Northeast Ohio. Improving overall quality of the workforce, unequal access to education, and inequitable public school funding all ranked as the number one equity and fairness challenges in three separate areas of the region.

In addition to education, acknowledging and addressing issues of race and class were considered most important to Cuyahoga County and Mahoning Valley leaders. While rated as the number one challenge for these two sub-regions, leaders across all 15 counties discussed the need to build acceptance across cultures while allowing cultures to maintain their unique identities within the region. There were specific conversations about addressing racial attitudes and prejudices while others talked about the structural dimensions of race. This included racial isolation and segregation within

poorer neighborhoods and the unequal access to jobs, education, housing, and health care this structure creates. Some leaders called for a safe venue to discuss issues of race and the need to bring together people who would not normally talk openly about this topic.

In addition to issues of race, some areas rated overall attitudes and behaviors as the most important threats to equity and fairness for Northeast Ohio. Specifically, Summit/Portage leaders rated inability of people to think beyond their own community as the number one challenge. Ashtabula leaders identified low perception of Northeast Ohio as the most important challenge while Cuyahoga leaders rated turf barriers among leaders and communities as the most pressing equity and fairness challenge facing the region.

% of Leaders Rating Each As The #1 Equity & Fairness Challenge for Northeast Ohio



In addition to the highest ranking equity and fairness challenges cited above, the issue of healthcare access was among concerns related to equity and fairness. Some leaders said healthcare focuses too much on sickness and not enough on wellness and prevention, the latter of which would improve the region's health and save costs. Leaders also felt healthcare providers need to be united and harnessed to address national policies and the disparity in care, whether it is the high number of uninsured or inadequate healthcare delivered to the poor. There was also a sense that mounting health costs hinder employers and entrepreneurs across the region.

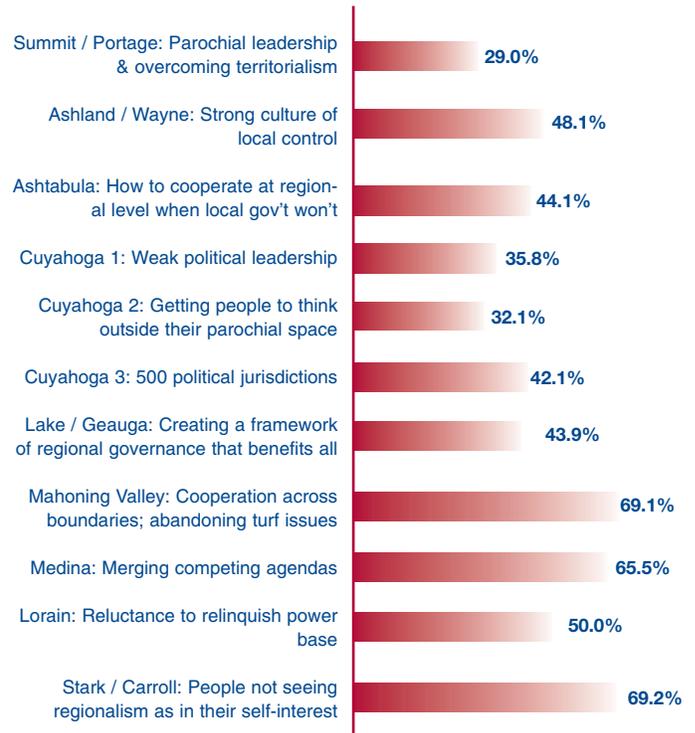
Cooperation and Governance Challenges

Like education and skills, there was much comparability across the 15 county region in what leaders rated as the most important cooperation and governance challenges facing Northeast Ohio. Most common was overcoming “territorialism”, “turfism”, a “strong culture of local control”, and getting people “to think outside their parochial space” or “relinquish their power base”. In addition, the difficulty associated with educating people about the benefits of regional cooperation was another problem considered most important for Northeast Ohio to address.

In addition to attitudes, or the “mentality” that exists within Northeast Ohio, many leaders identified government fragmentation as the most pressing challenge for the region. Of greatest concern was competition for the same business among communities within the region. There was also some conversation about government inefficiency and the need to consolidate public services for overall cost savings to tax payers.

While leaders overwhelmingly recognized the need for regional cooperation among political jurisdictions, many were concerned about “getting lost in regionalism” or loss of individual community identity.

% of Leaders Rating Each As The #1 Cooperation & Governance Challenge for Northeastern Ohio



III. Leadership Workshop Results

Evaluation of Leadership Workshops

Participants in the 11 workshops used keypad polling to evaluate the sessions. The following represents a summary of these findings:

Quality of Leadership Workshops

- 90% rated the overall quality of the Leadership Workshops as excellent (38%) or good (52%)
- Another 9% said the meeting was “OK” while 1% rated overall quality as poor

How well technology contributed to the Leadership Workshops

- 96% rated use of technology as excellent (74%) or good (22%)
- 3% rated technology as “OK” and 1% as poor

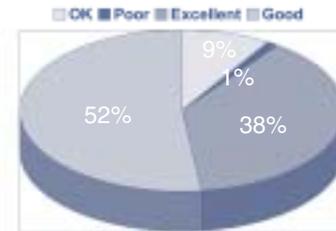
Extent to which participants learned something at the Leadership Workshops

- 96% indicated they did learn something at the Leadership Workshops while 4% did not

How committed leaders are to staying involved in Voices & Choices

- 74% of participants indicated they are very committed (27%) or committed (47%) to staying involved with Voices & Choices
- 25% of leaders are somewhat committed and only 1% are not committed to the process

Quality of Leadership Workshops



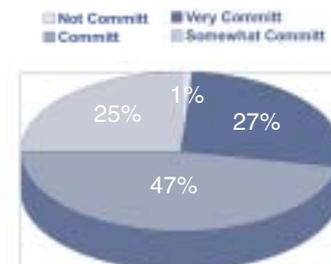
How well technology contributed to the Leadership Workshops

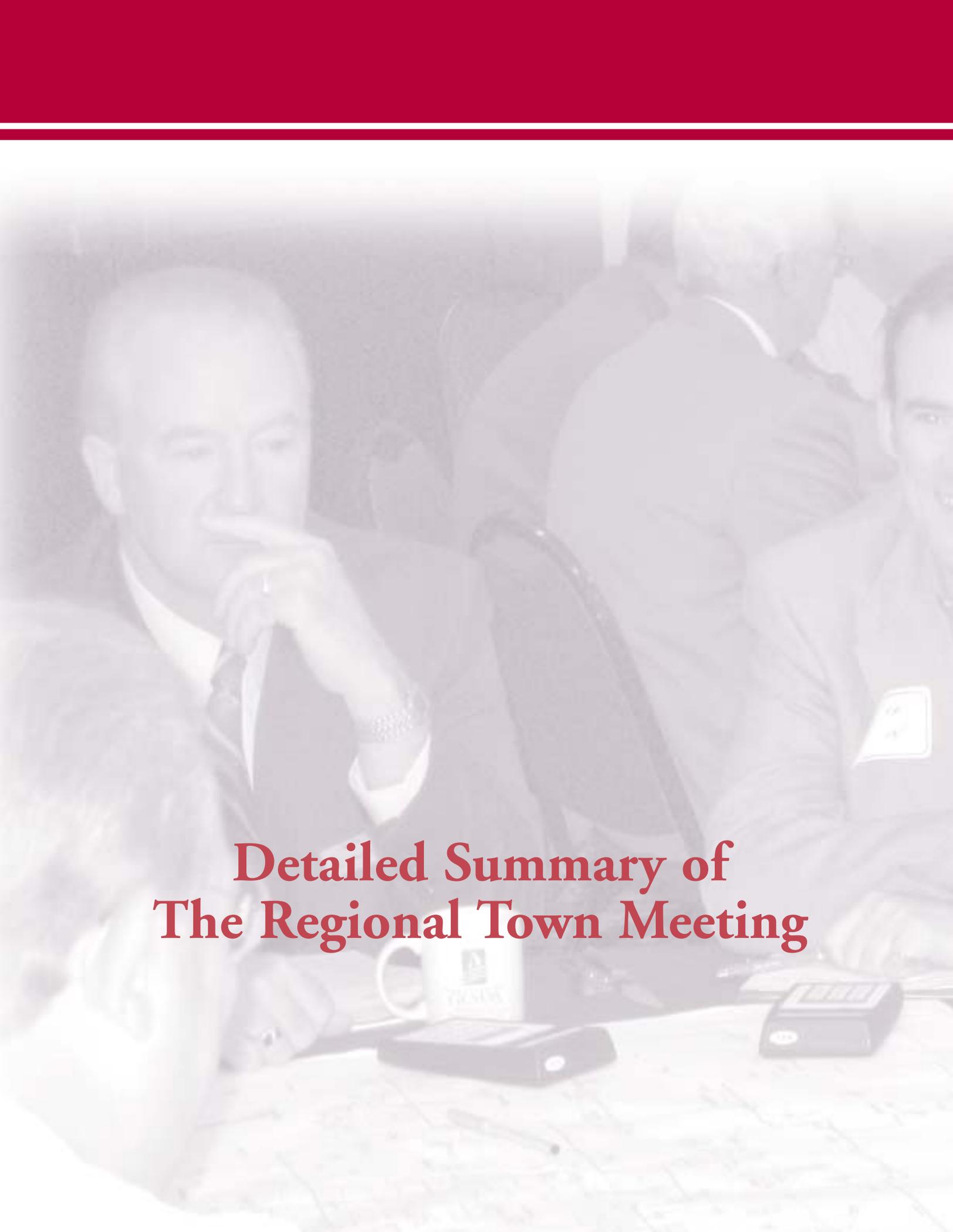


Extent to which participants learned something at the Leadership Workshops



How committed leaders are to staying involved in Voices & Choices





**Detailed Summary of
The Regional Town Meeting**

IV. Regional Town Meeting Results

Town Meeting Participant Profiles

Approximately 750 people from across Northeast Ohio participated in the Regional Town Meeting held on November 12, 2005 at the University of Akron. Participants traveled from all 15 counties of the region to take part in the event. The following describes who was in the room based on keypad polling used at the start of the day:

Gender

- About half of all Town Meeting participants were male and half were female very comparable to the actual 15 county population at 47% male and 53% female.

Age

- Age distribution of participants was very comparable to the actual population. The 55-64 year old population was over-represented at the Town Meeting and the 65 plus population slightly under-represented

Geography

	Participants	Actual
Ashland/Wayne	3%	5%
Ashtabula/Lake/Geauga	9%	10%
Cuyahoga	39%	33%
Lorain	7%	7%
Summit/Portage/Medina	29%	21%
Stark/Carroll	5%	10%
Trumbull/Mahoning/ Columbiana	7%	15%
Outside NEO	2%	

Race and Ethnicity

- A higher proportion of Town Meeting participants were African American compared to actual population percentages.

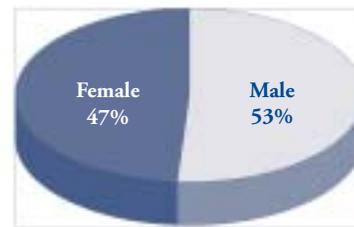
Employment Status

	Participants	Actual
Employed, working full-time	59%	64%
Employed working part-time	9%	31%
Not employed, homemaker, student, retired, etc.	20%	5%
Other	11%	

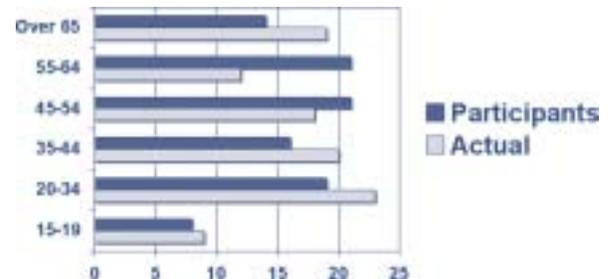
Household Income

	Participants	Actual
<\$19K	11%	22%
20K-29K	8%	14%
30K-39K	8%	13%
40K-49K	9%	11%
50K-59K	8%	10%
60K-74K	11%	11%
>75K	37%	20%
Don't Know/Refused	8%	11%

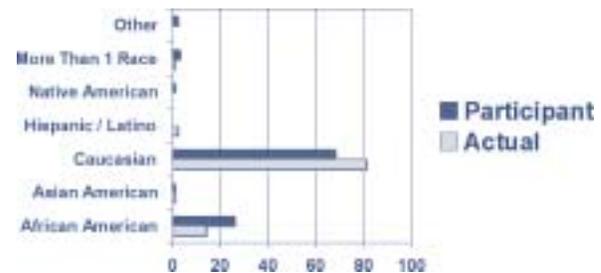
Participant Gender



Participant Age

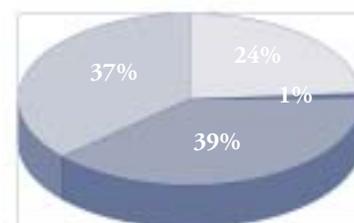


Participant Race / Ethnicity Compared to Actual 15 County Region



Type of Community (Actual figures not available through the Census)

Legend: Rural Small Town, Other, Urban, Suburban



What Northeast Ohio Should Be Known For

Early in the day, participants at the Regional Town Meeting were asked to discuss what they want Northeast Ohio to be known for around the world. The number one response was world renowned quality health care. The second most frequent response was arts and cultural center for the world while the third thing people want the region to be known for is entrepreneurship and thriving small businesses.

An accepting and welcoming place for ethnic and immigrant populations was the fourth most common response while technology research and application ranked fifth. Specific technological strengths mentioned were biotechnology, advanced manufacturing, polymers, alternative fuel/energy sources, fuel cells, and liquid crystals. It is these key assets for Northeast Ohio that people would like to see both preserved and leveraged into the future.

Most Frequent Themes:

1. World renowned hospitals and health care -	"We need to capitalize on our world renowned hospitals and health care" "The Cleveland Clinic, University Hospitals, and Metro Health have the best burn units"
2. Arts and cultural center of the world -	"NEO is known as the arts and cultural hub" "We are the mecca of cultural resources" "The wineries" "The museums" "Playhouse Square" "The Rock n Roll Hall of Fame" "The Cleveland Orchestra" "Educating youth about the arts and music"
3. Entrepreneurship, small business - development	"The cradle of invention" "Northeast Ohio is known as a friendly place for small businesses" "We should be known for small companies" "The region is known for venture capital investments" "An area known for entrepreneurship"
4. Accepting, welcoming place for ethnic, - religious, and immigrant groups	"To become an immigration center as the world" "Northeast Ohio should be known as an accepting, embracing place for cultural diversity" "Known as an ethnic enclave" "Known for our accessibility to immigrant populations"
5. Technology Research and Application -	"A region known for combining education, information, technology and commercial application" "Biotechnology" "Our educational technologies like fuel cells, liquid crystals, and the polymer industry" "We are distinctive for alternative and renewable energy sources" "Using our lake front for things like windmill powered energy"
6. Lake Erie, natural resource preservation - and green space	"A green city on a blue lake" "Land availability outside of urban areas" "We should be known for our ecosystem" "Distinctive for building of green-buildings" "A leader in green technology and sustainability, leading toward full employment"
7. Excellent colleges and universities -	"A unique collection of universities educating our young people, doing world class research creating jobs and opportunities, and generating a new spirit of innovation"
8. Commitment to education at all levels -	"Strong commitment to education at all levels" "Known for caliber of students and graduates"
9. Diversified economic base and prospering - business environment	"High employment, low unemployment" "Diversity of business" "Region that works together to make Northeast Ohio attractive to employers" "Valuing and revitalizing business within our urban cores and first ring suburbs"
10. Superb park systems (Emerald Necklace) -	"Wonderful nature features like Lake Erie, the Emerald Ring, tow paths, national and state parks systems" "Ohio and Erie canals and a continuous network of park-land and bike paths that are interconnected"

IV. Regional Town Meeting Results

Other frequently discussed topics:

Celebrating, preserving, and building on our unique history and past (historical pride); Gateway to the east, west, and other major cities via accessible highways, rail, canal, and ports; Recreational and leisure opportunities; Low cost of living; Urban and rural mix; Tourism; A regional model for collaboration among all sectors; Best place to raise a family; Strong values and a spirit of helping (respect, dignity, honor); Lakefront development and “best use of the great lakes”; Strong spiritual and religious region; Model K-12 public school system; A qualified, skilled, flexible workforce; An environmental leader (clean air, water, soil); Professional sports teams; Turn-around region

Topics mentioned but discussed less often:

Highly educated population with advanced degrees; Known for affordable housing; Farming and agriculture; Professional services (legal, accounting, engineering, banking, insurance); Vibrant cities and downtowns; Large business and corporate headquarters; Vocational skill development; passing of the trades; Helping displaced workers; Preschool and early childhood education; Small town atmosphere and appeal; Changing of the seasons; Commuter rail/regional public transportation system; Preservation of landmarks and architecture; Affordable health care coverage; Affordable arts, cultural, and recreational amenities; Opportunistic place for low income people; Regional planning and coordination; Involved and empowered citizenry; Successful consolidation of government; Building new leaders; Maintaining our own identity and uniqueness; Place for young people to stay

Aspects of History, Culture, and Attitudes That Have Worked FOR Us As A Region

Participants at the Regional Town Meeting were asked to identify the most important aspects of the region's history, culture, and attitudes which have both helped and inhibited the region's ability to compete in the global economy. The historical attraction of new and diverse ethnic populations into Northeast Ohio was discussed most frequently in relation to aspects of our culture that have helped the region compete successfully throughout history. People talked about immigrants and new workers coming to Northeast Ohio to work on railroads, in the shipyards, and in manufacturing plants as well as the influx of African Americans through a strong historical underground railroad in the region. The influx of immigrants is something people feel helped shape the economy of Northeast Ohio in the past and would like to see Northeast Ohio build on into the future.

A history of “innovation”, “inventions”, and “family owned businesses” was the second most frequent theme around aspects of history that have worked for us as a region to compete. This history of “entrepreneurial spirit” is something that people feel helped build a vibrant economy in the past and has potential to make Northeast Ohio more competitive in the future.



Most Frequent Themes:

1. Influx of ethnic populations - (immigrants, new workers, underground railroad)	“Historical accessibility for immigrant populations” “ We value our ethnic diversity”, “Our entrepreneurial spirit stems from our immigrant roots and is something that continues to be fostered”
2. History of inventions, entrepreneurial - spirit, and family owned businesses	“We should build on historical strengths in innovation, creativity - a well-spring of new ideas that not only improve the state of the business sector, but also the quality of life” “We are a region that has been engaged in inventiveness that leads to implementation”
3. Strong work ethic -	“Work ethic that is superior” “We have had an attractive labor market”
4. Highly productive manufacturing sector -	“Northeast Ohio has been known as an intersection between manufacturing and technology” “We should be known for high tech manufacturing rather than smokestack-type manufacturing”
5. Caring, helping, friendly people with a - strong sense of neighborhood	“Northeast Ohio has had a long standing spirit of helping”
6. Establishment of colleges and - universities	“Well established educational opportunities through a strong university system”
7. Strong commercial transportation - systems (air, rail, highway, canals, ports)	“Excellent infrastructure - we should continue to develop an outstanding transportation infrastructure that can better connect us as a region”
8. History of farming and agriculture -	“Northeast Ohio has been known for agricultural wealth”
9. Can-do attitudes, perseverance, - and resilience of people	“Northeast Ohio can be a role model for a region that is troubled but recognizes it and is taking steps toward positive change” “We have persevered before”
10. Generations of families creating - strong loyalty and commitment to the region	“We have a resilient land and people. There is a sense of commitment to the place”, “Northeast Ohio gets into your bones - no matter how far away you go - you can't ever really leave home”

Topics mentioned but discussed less often:

Respect and ties to natural resources; Economic security among people for many years; Strong culture of unionization; Strong base in health care; History of financial institutions maintained, Preservation of both urban and rural cultures/landscapes; Historical leaders creating wealth and foundations.

IV. Regional Town Meeting Results

Aspects of History, Culture, And Attitudes That Have Worked AGAINST Us As A Region

The attitudes among people who live and work in Northeast Ohio was the most frequent theme relating to aspects of the past that have worked against us as a region to compete in the global economy. People discussed a tendency to “hold on too tightly to the past,” “resistance to change,” “complacency,” and “not being open to new ideas,” as the type of attitudes that are damaging our region.

In addition, while historical influx of people from various backgrounds into the region is perceived as benefiting the region's past competitiveness, people feel that today's ethnic diversity has turned into “exclusivity”, “segregation”, “isolation”, and “discrimination”. This was the second most frequent room-wide theme and another area perceived by participants as something that will inhibit the regions' ability to compete in the future.

Town Meeting participants recognized that a highly productive manufacturing sector was an aspect of history that had worked for us as a region to compete. However, participants also talked frequently about the inability of traditional industry to remain competitive in today's economy and the job loss that has resulted for the region. They discussed the unrealistic expectations that traditional industry has set for the region like the expectation for good paying jobs without a high school diploma and a culture which has strong value for physical labor with less value for a knowledge or mind-based work.

Most Frequent Themes:

1. Attitudes that hurt us -	“Holding onto the past” “Closed minded” “Resistant to change” “Complacent” “Unable to see the big picture” “Not open to new ideas” “Inability to adapt” “Down on ourselves” “Parochial in nature”
2. Ethnic diversity turned into exclusivity, - segregation, isolation, discrimination	“Racism is an attitude that has become more prevalent in our region” “We have cultural issues about race that we really don't talk about”
3. Traditional industry has not transitioned, - is not competitive resulting in job loss	“The history of industrialization has hurt us” “With the recent losses of both steel and automobile industries the region has suffered”
4. Industrial past has created expectation - for work without an education	“The steel mills that helped us compete as a region for many years, are now closing down and working against us”, “Our assets have become liabilities”, “People can't step out of high school into the plants and earn a good living”
5. Union culture is perceived to have - created high labor costs	“Challenge to transition union strengths as productive advantages to the region” “Unions should consider the regional and global economy”
6. Growing income inequalities -	“Is greater poverty in the cities while the suburbs get richer” “There are more 'haves' and 'have nots' “We are getting richer and poorer at the same time”
7. History of public school funding has hurt - us and resulted in poor performance of public schools	“Ohio's system of funding public education is not effective and it does not allow for the majority of Ohio's citizens to access the public education system in an equal way” “There is too much reliance on property tax to fund education”
8. Government fragmentation has resulted in - competition among cities, and duplicate / costly public services	“Cities and suburbs have divided governments even though they are both dealing with the same area and the same issues” “Competition among ourselves like Cleveland versus Akron” “Little kingdoms”
9. Industrial past created a culture with - strong value for physical labor and less value for knowledge or mind-based work	“We only want your hands and your backs, not your minds” “Assembly mentality is no longer what we need to progress the region”
10. Apathetic citizenry and neighbors no - longer helping neighbors	“The average people are paying more attention to feeding their families and are unable to work on changing policies”

Overcoming Northeast Ohio's Most Pressing Challenges

Economic Growth and Employment Challenges

Detailed Table Conversation Analysis:

The following represents a detailed analysis of entries submitted via laptop computers when participants were asked to discuss challenges to economic growth and employment at the Regional Town Meeting. The information is presented in rank order. Consistent with room-wide themes from the morning discussion, lack of support and capital for small business development was the most frequent economic growth and employment challenge discussed.

The second most frequent theme was “under-investment” in education and training and a perceived skills mismatch between what employers need and the skills workers currently possess. Like the Leadership Workshops, there was also much conversation about an “unfriendly” business environment. People believe that high energy costs, taxes, and other realities make it difficult for existing business to prosper in Northeast Ohio and make it equally difficult to attract new business and industry to the region.

Most Frequent Themes:

1. Lack of support and capital for small - business development	“Lack of strategies and support to retain and grow new companies that start here” “Lack of an overall support system for entrepreneurs”
2. “Under-investment” in education and - training; skills mismatch	“Under investment in education and coordination of job skills training and focus” “Poor perception and value of a diverse workforce”
3. High cost business environment - (taxes, energy costs, etc.)	“The high cost of keeping business in the area” “Businesses can't afford to stay here because of our taxes and energy costs”
4. Government fragmentation: Large - number of governments and competition among them	“Our tax policy promotes competition between communities” “We need to look at regional tax policy” “Protecting your own turf prevents innovation, growth, and progress”
5. Inequitable public school funding -	“Adapting educational systems to face the reality of over-burdened parents” “Challenge government at all levels to fund education “
6. Replacing jobs with sustainable - high-tech business and industry	“Attract high-tech and high-demand business to the region”
7. Brain drain -	“Advertise job opportunities, cultural attractions and the cost of living to young people to keep them here”
8. Lack of regional approaches - and solutions	“Challenge of regionalizing services” “Share services while maintaining local identity and some control”
9. Inability to attract new immigrants -	“Create a more tolerant atmosphere for diversity” “Make the region more attractive as a place to locate and work among ethnic populations”
10. Overcoming attitudes that hurt us -	“Pessimism” “Conservative” “Resistance to change” “Old-fashioned mind-set: “Desire to hold onto the past“
11. Inability to transition from non-competitive - manufacturing to “economies of the future”	Holding onto something that is dying like manufacturing” “Losing infrastructure like scientists and engineers” “Not looking for the next big thing”
12. Shortage of high paying jobs -	“Be willing to pay a living wage to the skilled workforce” “We must find another economic base that offers higher paying jobs”

IV. Regional Town Meeting Results

Topics mentioned but discussed less often:

Brownfield clean up; Outsourcing to other countries; People not buying local; Overemphasis on retail “super stores”; Lack of minority business development and support; Poor labor-management relations; Not engaging youth in the community and decision making; Disconnect between business-education; Lack of value for education; High cost of higher education; Intolerance for diversity/overcoming racism; Inability to grow and nurture new leadership; No regional public transportation system; Maintaining local identity with regionalization; Overcoming negative image within NEO; Negative media; Apathetic public; Lack of affordable housing; Unregulated sprawl; Understanding how to transform NEO; Inability to harness alternative forms of energy; Affordability of health care; Lack of support for the arts.

Keypad Voting on Most Important Challenges:

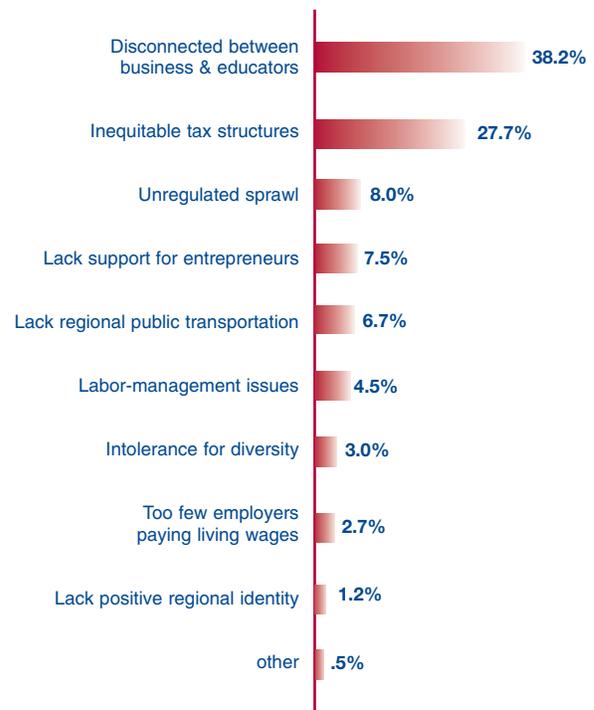
After discussing a range of challenges relating to economic growth and employment, participants at the Regional Town Meeting had the opportunity to vote using keypad polling on what they felt were the most important challenges. While lack of support for business start-up was the most frequent table conversation, participants ranked it as the third most important economic challenge for Northeast Ohio.

Disconnect between business and educators and inequitable tax structures were identified as the two most important economic growth challenges facing Northeast Ohio. Disconnect between business and educators was discussed in many ways. Workforce development not linked to jobs, education/training curriculums not tied to the real world, business leaders not adequately conveying workforce needs to educators, lack of work-based learning programs like co-ops, internships, mentoring, shadowing programs, and lack of investment or “sponsorship” of schools by businesses were discussed.

Burdensome tax structures were discussed in three different ways. One was in the context of public school funding and another was in the context of a high cost business environment for Northeast Ohio. Many also talked about current tax structures contributing to competition among governments for business revenues.

While uncontrolled sprawl and lack of a regional public transportation system were discussed less frequently during table conversations, people rated these two areas as third and fifth in importance respectively. Both concepts were discussed in the context of job access. Participants were concerned

MOST Important Economic Growth & Employment Challenges Per Keypad Polling



about people and jobs spreading out leaving many individuals in inner cities without access to jobs. Lack of regional public transportation was described as a necessity for getting people to good jobs.

There were some challenges that were among the top ten most frequently discussed that were not voted on through the use of keypad polling. These included brain drain, inability to attract new immigrants, and replacing jobs with sustainable high tech business and industry.

Education and Skills Challenges

Detailed Table Analysis:

The following represents a detailed analysis of key themes in order of frequency (i.e., from most frequent table entries to less frequent). This information is intended to provide a detailed summary of the conversations prior to keypad polling. Among the most frequent themes pertaining to education and skills was inequitable school funding and lack of parental involvement in schools. Also frequently discussed was the high cost of higher education. Lack of business involvement and support for education at all levels was the fifth most frequent table conversation.

Most Frequent Themes:

1. Inequitable, public school funding -	"School model is seriously flawed" "We have to be creative in increasing community knowledge of school funding" "Finding new innovative ways to finance our educational system"
2. Lack of parental involvement in schools -	"Realizing that education cannot replace good parenting" "Parents who put value on education will show their children where to invest their time"
3. Inefficiency in public schools and need - for consolidation	"Regionalize the entire curriculum" "Consolidate school administrations to improve efficiencies" "Combining school districts would lessen the tax burden"
4. High cost of higher education -	"Colleges and universities need to make higher education more feasible for every student" "Inefficiencies associated with too many universities"
5. Lack of business involvement and support - for education at all levels	"Lack of tuition reimbursement by employers" "Need more programs like internships and coops supported by business" "Business should help fund school programs, extracurricular programs and equipment"
6. Lack of accountability standards for - schools, teachers, administrators	"Challenge is to set and commit to expectations for our educational systems" "There are no incentives for teachers to turn out prepared students"
7. Poor student achievement and performance -	"Eliminate practice of passing students to higher grade without requisite performance" "Increase graduation rates from high school"
8. Lack of value and investments in education - by people	"Our challenge is to get parents, kids, community, teachers more involved in supporting our children and schools" "Lack of recognition that quality education is the singly most important step in economic development"
9. Lack of quality teachers -	"We need better teachers", "Teachers have to be trained and need support to deal with challenging student behaviors", "Attracting and retaining talented teachers and giving them the tools to do their jobs"
10. Curriculums not tied to the real world -	"Teach marketable job skills" "Our educational institutions need to focus soft skills and job readiness including work ethic, communication, and social skills"
11. Lack of creativity in schools; need to teach - entrepreneurial skills	"We need to put more value on innovation, creativity, inventiveness - supporting idea generators so that people - even at the K-12 range - can learn to think independently"

IV. Regional Town Meeting Results

Topics mentioned but discussed less often:

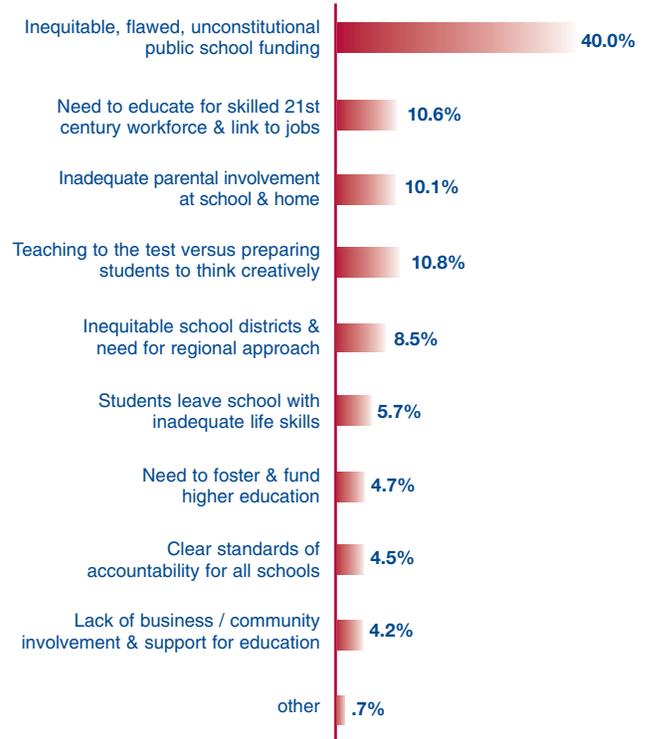
Lack of emphasis/funding of early childhood education; Age of public school facilities; Large size of public schools/need for small schools and smaller pupil-teacher ratios; Outdated teaching materials/equipment; Low pay for teachers; Unionization within schools; High cost of extracurricular activities; Stigma associated with vocational/trade schools; Higher education bureaucracy not responsive to changing economic needs; Low literacy; Availability of jobs post-graduation and brain drain; Lack of emphasis on arts in schools; Educators expected to do too much in the classroom/play too many roles; Lack of adult mentoring programs for youth; Lack of emphasis on cross-cultural education; Not enough before-school, after-school, and summer programs for kids; Lack of emphasis on health and physical education.

Keypad Voting on Most Important Challenges:

After discussing a range of challenges relating to education and skills, participants at the Regional Town Meeting had the opportunity to vote using keypad polling on what they viewed as the most important challenges for the region. Inequitable public school funding and the need to create a skilled 21st century workforce with strong linkages to business needs were among the top two challenges identified as most important by Northeast Ohio citizens.

Inadequate parental involvement, a perceived tendency to teach students to pass tests instead preparing them to think creatively, and inability of schools to teach students “life skills” were also among themes of the discussion that participants ranked among the ten most important challenges for the region. Higher education access and funding ranked seventh overall.

MOST Important Education & Skills Challenges Per Keypad



Equity and Fairness Challenges

Detailed Table Analysis:

Income disparities, or the growing gap between the rich and poor, was the most common threat to equity and fairness discussed at the Regional Town Meeting. Inequitable public school funding was the second most frequent conversation while racial “segregation”, and “discrimination” was the third most frequent table discussion. The following represents a detailed analysis of all entries submitted via laptop computers during the roundtable discussions on equity and fairness. The information is present-

ed in order of frequency (i.e., from most frequent table entries to less frequent).

Many of the equity and fairness challenges discussed were comparable to economic growth and educational challenges. For example, inequitable school funding, high cost of higher education, racial isolation and discrimination, lack of regional collaboration, intolerance for ethnic diversity/discouraging environment for immigrant populations, and lack of a regional public transportation system had been talked about as important economic, employment, and educational challenges that also surfaced frequently as threats to equity and fairness.

Most Frequent Themes:

1. Income inequalities and a growing gap - between the rich and poor	“Focus on economic integration” “To eliminate class distinctions across neighborhoods”
2. Inequitable public school funding -	“Inequalities in school funding is a big component of the problem” “System of funding schools primarily through property taxes makes it difficult to help people in poverty”
3. Racial “segregation”, “isolation”, - “discrimination”, and “profiling”	“Unemployment for African Americans” “Lack of support for inclusiveness and elimination of racial segregation and other issues”
4. Lack of regional collaboration and fierce - competition between communities	“Lack of county and region wide linkages” “Lack of collaboration” “No sharing of resources” “Change things on a local level -don't rely on state and federal policy makers”
5. Unequal access to education at all levels -	“Our education system doesn't fit our needs” “Equal opportunity for children in education”
6. Lack of affordable, integrated housing - and home ownership	“Work to increase home ownership” “Maintain and create affordable housing throughout the community in an integrated fashion”
7. Unequal access to jobs -	“How to provide geographic access to higher income jobs for rural and inner city people”
8. Lack of appreciation and tolerance for - ethnic diversity	“Create a culture where diversity is valued and immigration is encouraged” “Eliminate barriers and segregation, especially for new immigrants”
9. High cost of higher education -	“Two year college programs are grossly under funded and inhibit access” “Cost of higher education has become out of reach for many across our region”
10. Lack of regional public transportation system -	“Not having a regional public transportation system is a barrier to employment, schools, and housing choices due to isolation”
11. Getting people to give up for betterment of the region; collective responsibility for the whole	“Lack of responsibility - no one wants to take ownership of problems or issues”
12. Poor quality of education -	“Lack of computer training and internet access-education related”, “Revamping the school curriculum as we see it - new educational concepts for today”

IV. Regional Town Meeting Results

Topics mentioned but discussed less often:

Low minimum wage; Criminal justice system reinforces inequalities; Lack of opportunities for at-risk youth; Unequal access to jobs for persons with disabilities; Sprawl causing inequities and loss of tax base in inner cities and inner ring suburbs; Sense of hopelessness/low expectations; Dependency on welfare system/social services; How to strengthen urban cores; Brain drain; Lack of open/honest civic discussions about fairness and equity; Political system that doesn't promote citizen participation; No way to create fairness

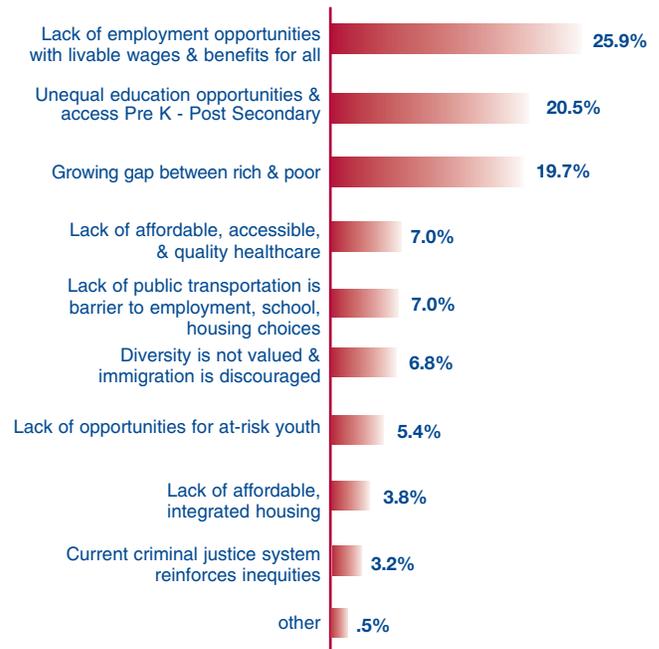
Keypad Voting on Most Important Challenges:

After discussing a range of challenges relating to equity and fairness, participants at the Regional Town Meeting had the opportunity to vote on the most important challenges using keypad polling. While income disparities were the most frequent table entry, participants rated this as the third most important equity and fairness challenge. Lack of employment opportunities with livable wages and benefits and unequal educational opportunities/access for pre-K through post secondary education were identified as the two most important challenges.

Health care access, lack of a regional public transportation system, lack of affordable and integrated housing, and lack of value for diversity, ranked among the top ten responses.

Racial isolation and discrimination, unequal access to jobs, inequitable public school funding, and access and affordability of college were among the most frequent table conversations that were not voted on using keypad polling.

MOST Important Equity & Fairness Challenges Per Keypad Polling



Quality of Life and Place Challenges

Detailed Table Analysis:

Sprawl from inner cities was the most frequently discussed quality of life and place challenge while balancing environmental and natural resource preservation with economic development was the second most common quality of life and place challenge discussed at the Regional Town Meeting. In addition, participants at the Town Meeting discussed the lack of good paying jobs as an impediment to overall quality of life. Making the regions amenities more

affordable and attractive (particularly to young people) was the fourth most frequently discussed challenge while addressing issues of race and class was fifth.

The following represents a detailed analysis of all entries submitted via laptop computers during the roundtable discussions. The information is presented in order of frequency (i.e., from most frequent table entries to less frequent). There was more discussion about the poor external image of Northeast Ohio and “negative” media than had occurred in conversations about challenges to economic growth, employment, education, and equity.

Most Frequent Themes:

1. Sprawl and blight from inner cities -	“Urban areas have stereotypes of being depressed - we need to show the positive places of beauty and culture around all of urban areas so people stop leaving”
2. Balancing a clean environment, natural resource preservation, and green space with economic development	“We need to control environmental hazards, create more recycling programs, control air quality near factories” “Economic development needs to be balanced with natural resource preservation and green space”
3. Lack of quality jobs and employment - opportunities	“Job growth and further employment opportunities are a quality of life challenge” “The neediest areas in the region are not getting new businesses contributing to lower quality of life”
4. Making the regions amenities (recreation, - arts, cultural opportunities) more affordable	“We need to help people know and access the great regional amenities through affordable programs” “Accessibility for more quality of life activities is an issue”
5. Addressing issues of race and class -	“We need to overcome segregation in our region, both economic and racial”
6. Enhancing the quality of education and - creating a more educated workforce	“We need more qualified teachers in our region” “Adequate pay for teachers is a challenge” “The region is focused on globalized curriculum to better prepare workers”
7. Getting people to help one another; - greater sense of community	“Neighbors helping neighbors is a very important quality of life consideration” “Helping our friends and neighbors realize what is available to them”
8. Poor image of NEO outside the region - and lack of region-wide marketing / promotion	“Perception is reality” “Marketing Northeast Ohio as a place to live, accenting its strengths to combat the poor image of the area”
9. Negative media coverage of NEO -	“Media needs to be more positive in promoting the region” “Medias negative portrayal of most things is an issue”
10. Inequitable funding of public schools -	“Inequitable tax structures that benefit the suburbs to the detriment of central cities when it comes to things like school funding” “Regionalization of our educational system”
11. Lack of regional public transportation - system	“People need access to the regions arts, cultural, and recreational amenities through a regional public transportation system”
12. Lack of affordable housing -	“Lack of adequate, affordable housing” “Ensuring that the cost of adequate housing stays relatively low as the city and region grow”
13. Addressing public safety issues and - crime in inner cities	“Public departments need to be responsive regardless of the quality of the neighborhood”

IV. Regional Town Meeting Results

Topics mentioned but discussed less often:

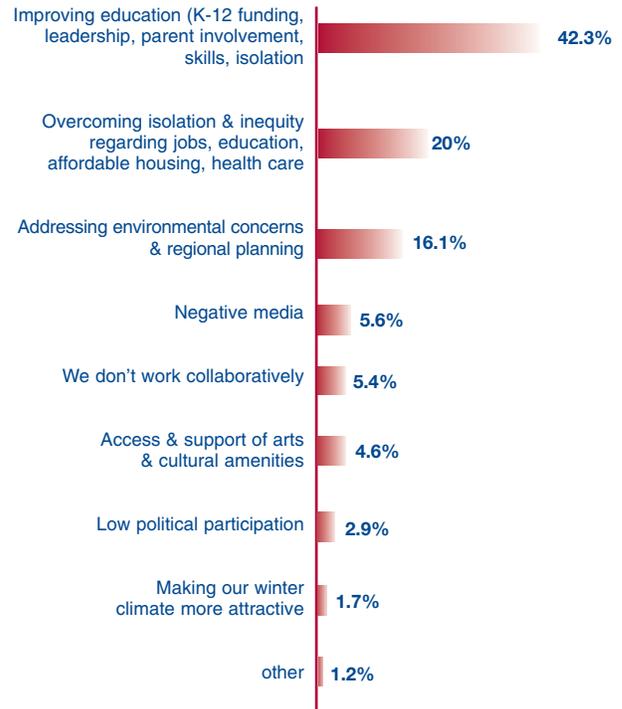
Making the winter climate attractive; High cost and unequal access to higher education; Brain drain and brain gain; Lack of acceptance for cultural diversity; Maintaining lower cost of living and pace of life as the economy is transformed; Addressing high cost of health care; Lack of emphasis on tourism to bring people and money into NEO; Sense of hopelessness, low self esteem within NEO; Need for more urban-rural connections, communications, cooperation; Addressing high energy costs

Keypad Voting on Most Important Challenges:

After discussing a range of challenges relating to quality of life, participants at the Regional Town Meeting had the opportunity to vote using keypad polling on the most important challenges they had discussed. Improving education (i.e., K-12 funding, leadership, parent involvement, skill development and isolation) was the challenge rated as most important. The second most important challenge identified was overcoming isolation and inequity regarding jobs, education, affordable housing, and health care.

There were many challenges discussed that people did not have the opportunity to vote on. These included unregulated sprawl, lack of quality jobs and employment opportunities, poor external image of Northeast Ohio, inequitable public school funding, and lack of a regional public transportation system. In this case, public transportation was discussed in the context of access to arts/cultural amenities.

MOST Important Quality of Life Challenges Per Keypad Polling



Cooperation and Governance Challenges

Detailed Table Analysis:

Duplication of government services was discussed most frequently at the Regional Town Meeting when participants were asked to think about challenges related to cooperation and governance. People believe inefficiency of government and duplication of services negatively impacts costs to tax payers and many discussed the need for service consolidation and joint purchasing to address this problem. The second most frequent challenge discussed was the

“belief by some political leaders that change to the political structure threatens their power base”.

The difficulty of educating people about the benefits of regional cooperation and lack of civic engagement or the difficulty associated with engaging people to affect change were also among the most frequent cooperation and governance challenges discussed. The following represents a detailed analysis of entries submitted via laptop computers during the roundtable discussions. The information is presented in order of frequency (i.e., from most frequent table entries to less frequent).

Most Frequent Themes:

1. Inefficiency of government and duplication of service affecting cost to tax payers	“Perceived inefficiency in government and too much bureaucracy” “Joint management of natural resources - especially water” “Governments should operate as efficient business”
2. Belief by some political leaders that change to the political structure threatens their powerbase	“Challenges include lack of cooperation across boundaries and turf issues” “People perceive that they are ceding power”
3. Difficulty educating people about benefits of regional cooperation	“How do we show people that there's something in it for them if we regionalize” “Need to find ways to educate people about the problems and opportunities for improvement and change”
4. Lack of civic engagement and difficulty engaging people to affect change	“Challenge to engage citizens, involve citizens in the process and empowering people”
5. Attitudes that hurt us given our ties to the past, resistance to change, and parochial nature	“We don't think like a region even though the world treats us as one economic region” “Our thinking is divided into little fragments of communities, cities, races, ages, sectors”
6. Lack of information about alternative approaches to improve governance issues	“There should be a central clearing house” “Lack of information about alternatives and simple steps that can be taken to save money and resources”, “Lack of a model or legal framework describing how local governments should work together as a region”
7. Fragmentation because of too many governments (general comments)	“Restructure current governments internally in the region”
8. Loss of community identity through regional cooperation	“Fear of getting lost in region-wide planning issues” “Retain unique identity while moving to regional collaboration and cooperation”
9. Knowing where to begin and how to start to change governance structures	“How would you decide who governs or keep county structure?” “Finding common ground that local governments can work on together to improve efficiency will be tough”
10. Competition for business within the region	“A quilt system of incentives and tax breaks that just moves businesses around the region without adding to the growth of the economy overall”
11. Lack of community dialogue on regional cooperation	“Lack of settings in which Northeast citizens come together to discuss what's important”, “Lack of dialog with the public, no transparency, no active education”, “More meetings like Voices & Choices in the community”, “Increase the routes of communication”
12. State action required to improve regional governance	“Build a coalition between cities and suburbs for state change”

IV. Regional Town Meeting Results

Topics mentioned but discussed less often:

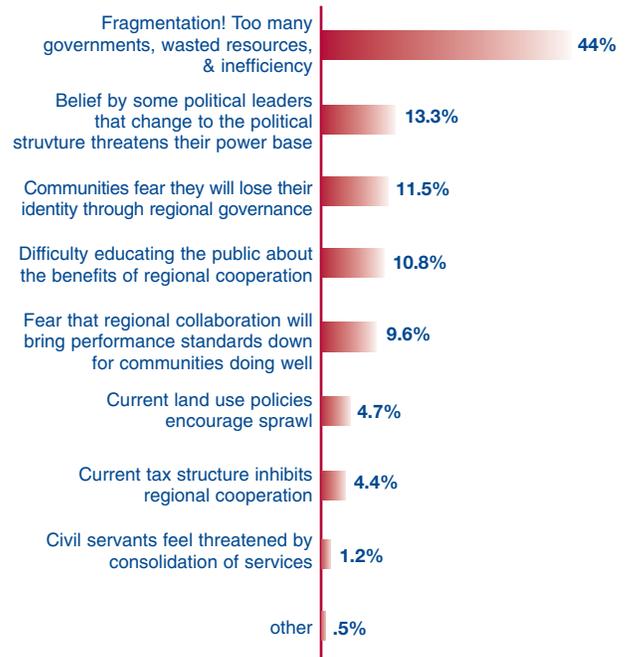
How to ensure fair, equitable representation if government is restructured; Lack of willingness to take risk to fix governance issues; Racial separation and segregation; Issues of class/concentrations of wealth; Need to take action now instead of 10 years from now; Lack of urban-rural collaboration

Keypad Voting on Most Important Challenges:

After discussing a range of challenges relating to cooperation and governance, participants at the Regional Town Meeting had the opportunity to rate the most important challenges. Comparable with the most frequent table conversations, government fragmentation resulting in wasted resources and inefficiency was the challenge voted most important. The second most important challenge identified was the belief by some political leaders that change to the political structure threatens their power base.

Similar to conversations at the Leadership Workshops, Town Meeting participants discussed fear that regional cooperation will result in identity loss for individual communities. This was rated as the third most important challenge for Northeast Ohio to consider.

MOST Important Cooperation & Governance Challenges Per Keypad Polling



Considering Solutions For Northeast Ohio's Priority Challenges

Economic Growth and Employment Solutions

A so-called “disconnect between business and educators” and “inequitable and burdensome tax structures” were the two economic growth and employment challenges that participants of the Regional Town Meeting rated as most important for Northeast Ohio to address. Once these two challenges were identified, participants had the opportunity to brainstorm potential solutions for each these challenges. The following is a summary of solutions people recommended:

Solutions For Disconnect Between Business and Educators (Most Frequent Themes)

1. More work-based learning programs -	“Co-op between schools and local businesses”, “Strong mentoring program at the high school and college level”, “Create high school internship programs”, “Business shadowing opportunities”, “Ease transitions from school to work through programs beginning well before graduation”
2. More information and vehicles for - business leaders to convey workforce needs to educators	“Taskforce giving business people opportunity to talk about their needs”, “Dialogue with the business community about industry standards and meeting future needs”, “Encourage cooperative meetings between business leaders and educators”,
3. More sponsorship of schools - by businesses	“Collaboration between school boards and businesses - encouraging businesses to play an integral part of curriculum at trade schools and colleges”
4. Emphasize math, technology, science - skill development at all levels	“Focus on math and science technology skills necessary to compete globally” “Create a teen job squad, a teen workforce to enable kids to use their technical skills”
5. Use business leaders as classroom - speakers	“Create incentives for business to participate in local schools as classroom speakers”
6. Establish better education standards and - find ways to evaluate progress	“Reform education system employment standards (wages, tenure, etc.) to encourage teachers to get better professional development and greater connection to the community”
7. Create new incentives for business and - educators to work together	“Create opportunities for collaboration - provide incentives for business and education to work together and create regional industry specific advisory boards that provide direction, identify priorities, etc”
8. Emphasize career orientation and - exploration programs	“More instruction on what jobs are available and what skills are needed to be successful in the business community” “Programs to education children on available career paths”
9. More business leaders serve as adjunct - professors at colleges and universities	“The higher education world needs experienced practitioners as part of the process for educating a skilled workforce”

Topics mentioned but discussed less often:

Emphasize basics (3 R's); Colleges play greater role in K12 education; More corporate colleges; Work-swap for business leaders and teachers; Better/more job matching via technology programs (e.g., career boards); Secure business commitments to hire locally; Colleges encourage liberal arts for more well-rounded education; Business leaders encourage college completion (i.e., not leaving college early for jobs)

IV. Regional Town Meeting Results

Solutions For Inequitable and Burdensome Tax Structures & Policies (Most Frequent Themes)

1. Consolidate political and educational - districts for more efficient and centralized implementation	"Create modified incentives that don't impact the schools negatively", "Need for creating fewer jurisdictions", "Creative Tax- sharing",
2. Develop regional tax structure for public - schools that promotes equity	"People are taxed in too many places", "Support schools through diverse taxes"
3. Establish regional tax agreements for - businesses so communities aren't competing against one another; Create tax incentives for businesses that hire locally and invest in schools	"Fix both the business taxes and income taxes so that people are free to move around regionally", "Businesses that get government tax breaks must create supportive partnerships with a public school(s)"
4. Study tax model codes and policies -	"Scrap the current tax structure that is so dependent on inventory and tax on machines", "Need to replicate best practices like SEI throughout the region"
5. More tax breaks/incentives for new businesses coming into the region; Simplify - tax codes, educate people on tax policy	"Tax code is too complicated; simplify, simplify, simplify!" "Bring more corporations into the region"
6. Create tax incentives for businesses that - clean up brown fields.	"Ensure that 'left space' is taxed the amount of money it takes to clean up the space, "Create a tax incentive for brown fields to be remediated and a penalty for brown fields to be abandoned", "Develop realistic clean up standards based upon risk vs. analytical detection"
7. Get people thinking regionally -	"Better communication between regional areas and communities", "Get people thinking regionally"

Topics mentioned but discussed less often:

Finding ways to shift tax burdens; Putting less burden on the middle class; Not giving tax breaks for foreign companies; Fewer tax breaks for businesses; Flat and fixed tax structures; Reduced deductions - corporate and individual, and Need to create a regional public transportation system were also discussed.

Education and Skills Solutions

Flawed, inequitable, unconstitutional public school funding” and “creating a 21st century workforce with linkages to jobs” were the two education and skills challenges rated as most important for Northeast Ohio to address at the Regional Town Meeting. When asked to think about potential solutions to these two issues, most participants discussed taking legal steps to make state legislators accountable for real change in public school funding. They also recommended creating better bridges between business leaders and educators to address current work-force development issues.

Solutions To Flawed, Inequitable, Unconstitutional Public School Funding (Most Frequent Themes)

1. Take legal steps to make state legislators accountable for real change in school funding (class action suit)	“Enforce the unconstitutional decisions of the Ohio Supreme Court” “Creating bi-partisan statewide commission to implement strong leadership for change in the legislature”
2. Create new revenue for education by - combining property, sales, sin taxes, commercial taxes	“Get rid of property tax funding” “Increase/allocate more sales tax for the public schools, state sales for all Ohio schools” “Raise alcohol, tobacco and fossil fuel prices to an amount over market price to go to the schools”
3. Regionalize public education by consolidating districts and administrative functions	“Regions should be defined by the same number of students in each region” “Regionalize school funding”
4. Find ways to make public school funding - more equitable (general comments)	“Equal distribution funding based upon needs assessment” “Pool resources regionally to ensure that each community’s school system is equitably funded”
5. Elect new politicians and leaders who will - change the way public schools are funded	“People have to vote for officials who will support real change”
6. Update school curriculums -	“Curriculum needs to change and there needs to be more guidance for the future in areas like technology”
7. Secure outside or independent funding for - schools	“Look for outside funding to identify/create best practices for regional education system like the Gates Foundation and Knowledge Works”

Topics mentioned but discussed less often:

Joint purchasing among schools to lower costs and improve efficiency; Use technology to link schools/create partnerships/share resources; Study model regional education systems and educate people on best practices; Reduce administrative and overhead costs within schools; Make administrators more accountable for spending; More open enrollment for students/school choice; Discontinue tuition credits for private schools and funding for charter schools; Educate people on current public school funding system

IV. Regional Town Meeting Results

Solutions For Creating A Skilled 21st Century Workforce and Linkages to Jobs (Most Frequent Themes)

1. Create bridges between schools and - the business community	"Involve the private sector in curriculum development" "Develop a coalition of businesses and educators that will look ahead to the future"
2. Mandate computer literacy and technology in education, in every school building	"Free wireless network across the 15 county region for schools" "More computers and better technology in public schools"
3. Don't specialize for a job. Teach 21st - Century skills	"Educate for flexibility and change - not a specific job" "A more educated workforce to create more entrepreneurs and be more competitive", "Develop an educational system that emphasizes problem solving"
4. Improve work-based learning programs - (i.e., internships, mentoring programs)	"More internships and apprenticeship programs", "Vocational training, internships will help", "Start students earlier in their career choices by providing more opportunities - introduce them to 21st century jobs through internships"
5. Identify workforce training needs using - reliable sources of job projections	"Look to the future - identify what skills are needed for future high growth jobs versus simply training for today" "There should be more career based instruction"
6. Focus on vocational skill development / - trades (i.e., construction trades, automotive classes, woodshop, etc)	"More vocational training opportunities, particularly in high schools" "Be more demanding of students to learn a skill trade in addition to a broad education"
7. Emphasize liberal arts education -	"A liberal education that doesn't ignore sciences and mathematics" "Teach creativity and tolerance for ambiguity"
8. Create greater value for education and - lifelong learning among people	"Provide tuition credit so individuals want to be trained" "Encourage and demand lifelong learning from unions and employers"

Topics mentioned but discussed less often:

Recognize early childhood education as the key to success; More job matching/create regional monster.com; Engage students in more community service/community based education; Pay teachers better; View summer schooling as a privilege and opportunity not a punishment; More career orientation/exposure; More study abroad programs; Promote Post Secondary Enrollment Options and early college programs

Equity and Fairness Solutions

“Employment opportunities with livable wages” and “unequal education opportunities and access” were the two equity and fairness challenges rated as most important for Northeast Ohio to address if it is to compete more successfully in the global economy. More support for small business start-up and stronger efforts to attract high-demand business and industry to Northeast Ohio were among the most common solutions offered to create greater employment opportunities with higher wages for people who work in the region. Finding ways to make public school funding more equitable and higher education more affordable through increased state funding were among the solutions offered to address unequal education opportunity and access.

Solutions For Employment Opportunities With Livable Wages (Most Frequent Themes)

1. Support entrepreneurs, small business - development	“Develop more services to support entrepreneurs with starting and sustaining small businesses”
2. Attract high-demand business and - industry	“Create jobs and industries with high demand and profit margins so that workers can benefits and be ahead of the curve”
3. Create a more educated and qualified - work force to attract employers	“Improve educational systems in Northeast Ohio as an incentive to attract business”
4. Raise the minimum wage -	“Minimally, it should be possible for workers to support themselves on minimum wage” “Minimum wage is low and needs to be raised”
5. Provide incentives to employers paying - livable wages, offering good benefits; penalize those not doing so	“Fix high cost of benefits for employers and employees” “Earned income tax credits for those businesses that create jobs.”
6. Concentrate on support and retention of - existing productive businesses	“Prevent too much outsourcing to international firms, provide incentives to keep jobs here.”
7. Expand work-based learning programs -	“Expand or create mentorship and apprenticeship programs. Balance skilled craftsmanship with service sector and information/ technology based careers.”
8. Better connect business and educators -	“Administrators and teachers need to go out into the community and learn about business”
9. Enhance vocational and trade programs -	“Retain the untrained for a new skill set” “Innovative vocational and trade programs are needed”
10. Reform health care coverage so is more - accessible	“Healthcare reform to provide benefits or all.”

Topics mentioned but discussed less often:

More equitable sharing in success of company with workers; Provide incentives for businesses that recruit under-represented populations based on race, ethnicity, gender, and disabilities; Improve regional public transportation for better access to jobs among low income; Study and learn from successful models in other regions; Strengthen the tourism industry to bring money into NEO; Take personal responsibility to help selves and others be productive; More childcare assistance/increase ceiling for childcare benefits

IV. Regional Town Meeting Results

Solutions For Unequal Education Opportunities and Access (Most Frequent Themes)

1. Find ways to make public schools more - equitable in terms of funding	"Iron out inequities while responding to broad educational needs of a diverse population" "Even access to resources among districts."
2. Encourage corporate sponsorship of schools - (adopt a school, support math / science, donate technology equipment to schools)	"Provide more funds for struggling schools from professional sports" "Adopt a school program, we can adopt highways"
3. Regionalize public education by consolidating districts and administrative functions	"Regionalize administration and funding for the schools in the region" "Explore at the county level, funding and control of public schools"
4. Strengthen curriculum to produce 21st - century leaders (more emphasis on math, science, life skills, experiential learning, arts)	"Expand experiential learning opportunities for all children" "Must be teaching skills that are useful to the community"
5. Identify and apply best practices in - education	"Best practices standards should be applied throughout the region."
6. Encourage more parental involvement in - the schools	"Early intervention with parents, it starts in the home"
7. Increase state funding for higher - education	"Increase state funding to universities in order to increase access to all regional students. Increase funding of community colleges"

Topics mentioned but discussed less often:

Create innovation in education by thinking outside the box and trying new things; Take legal steps to make state legislators accountable for real change in school funding; Enhance respect/value for education at an early age; Create more youth mentoring programs; Expand tutoring programs; Make grants, scholarships, stipends more readily available for young adults and parents; Increase standards for public schooling with greater accountability among school administrators

Quality of Life and Place Solutions

Similar to the education and equity challenges, participants of the Regional Town Meeting rated “improving education funding and quality” as the most important quality of life and place challenge to overcome in Northeast Ohio. The second highest ranking quality of life and place challenge according to citizens was “overcoming isolation and unequal access to jobs, affordable housing, and health care”. Participants discussed solutions to each of these priority challenges for the region. Encouraging school districts and businesses to create incentives for involving parents in education (like work flexibility for parents to visit schools during work hours) was among the most common solutions discussed relative to education quality. Taking legal steps to make state legislators more accountable for change in school funding was another key theme. Creation of affordable regional health care coverage was among the most common solutions offered to overcome unequal access within the region.

Solutions For Improving Education Funding and Quality (Most Frequent Themes)

1. Encourage both school districts and businesses to create incentives for involving parents in education	“More flexibility from employers for parents to participate in school activities” “Increase communication between schools and parents, offer parenting classes, and emphasize importance to parents of their involvement in their children's life”
2. Take legal steps to make state legislators accountable for real change in school funding	“Build regional movement to force legislators to obey the law in developing a new funding plan for public schools.” “Hold state legislature accountable”
3. Elect new politicians who will change the way public schools are funded	“Propose a fundamental review of education funding with specific recommendations as to future funding options”
4. Regionalize public school education by consolidating districts and administrative functions	“Support board of education candidates that support regionalism-board of education elects should be voted into office and not appointed.”
5. Study model regional education systems and educate people on best practices; replicate models	“Create a state wide task force to do a nationwide search of constitutional/effective/equitable school systems and model our school system after successes”
6. Improve school curriculums with emphasis on technology, college preparation, life skills, science, history/culture of NEO, cultural awareness	“Include life skills education in schools.” “Develop a curriculum on the history and culture of our area that would teach the value of staying in the region and contributing”

Topics mentioned but discussed less often:

Create new tax base/revenues/alternative funding for schools; Create exchange between rural and urban schools to promote understanding of issues; Address and support vocational education; More discipline in the schools; Educate the public on the importance of education; Reduce administrative costs and overhead within public schools; Make administrators more accountable for school spending

IV. Regional Town Meeting Results

Solutions For Overcoming Isolation and Unequal Access To Jobs, Affordable Housing, and Health Care (Most Frequent Themes)

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Create affordable, regional health care - plans and provide businesses incentives for offering affordable coverage for workers | “Give businesses an incentive to offer health care, sliding scale co-pay for medical services.” “Limit pain and suffering damages in medical malpractice suits” “Universal healthcare” |
| 2. Create regional funding for affordable - housing; give developers incentives for building and integrating affordable homes | “Incentives for more communities to receive certain funds only if they accept and develop affordable housing options” |
| 3. Develop a regional public transportation - system | “Establish regional and affordable transportation” |
| 4. Find better ways to let people know what - programs and services are available for job access, affordable housing, and health care | “Create a regional web page that is updated daily on issues of availability and progress in these areas and promote it.” |
| 5. Bring people together in more regional - meetings to inform, discuss, and plan | “Have regional meetings to inform, discuss and plan with residents about jobs, education, housing” |

Topics mentioned but discussed less often:

Study other regions to determine what will work; Change attitudes; Recycle resources (e.g., give used computers to children in schools); Create technology hot lines/help desks at the community level; Let students pay off student loans through community service; Create exchange programs for jobs and education; Create free wireless internet system for the region; Focus on ways to bring businesses, educators, and students together; Create some form of regional tax sharing; Get improved and positive media coverage on regional issues; Create a database of educated employees that employers can tap.

Cooperation and Governance Solutions

“Fragmentation, too many government wasted resources, and inefficiency” and “belief by some political leaders that change to the political structure threatens their power base” were among the two cooperation and governance challenges rated most important by Town Meeting participants for the region to address. To reduce government inefficiency, many people recommended collaborative buying programs and resource sharing among governments and school districts like is currently being done through the work of NEOSO (Northeast Ohio Sourcing Office). Citizens also recommended that Northeast Ohio launch a grass roots effort to put political pressure on elected officials to cooperate. Other participants felt the region should seek change regardless of whether or not political leaders feel threatened.

Solutions For Fragmentation! Too Many Government Wasted Resources and Inefficiency (Most Frequent Themes)

1. Encourage collaborative buying programs and resource sharing among governments and school districts; build on NEOSO	“Educate people about the impact on them and their families of this fragmented system” “Government financial incentive structures to collaborate like they do with certain federal grants”
2. Create fewer political jurisdictions; - consolidate governments	“Trim down the bureaucracy in our system-too many levels- and nobody does anything”
3. Study different models for regional - governance and taxation	“Explore best practices used in other areas to regionalize” “Find a good model and regionalize by functional areas”
4. Launch a grass roots/public campaign - effort to let people know regional approaches are beneficial	“Build support for change through a grassroots process that works its way up to larger units.” “Create a public education campaign to let politicians and constituents know that regionalization will actually benefit us”
5. Document, report and educate the public - on hidden costs of fragmentation and cost savings gained through consolidation	“Research, and report to the public the hidden costs of fragmentation, and costs savings for consolidation” “Each government department needs to make clear, detailed expenditure and budget reports for every six months”
6. Structure and convene a region-wide - conversation on government fragmentation	“Local governments need to sit down and talk with one another, to build relationships” “Structure a region-wide conversation that takes place in scores of places at the same time on the same topic”
7. Tackle “easier”, less controversial - consolidation efforts first (fire services, waste management) to build momentum for more difficult areas	“Begin by consolidating systems that are not as controversial like police and fire departments, sanitation, etc.”
8. Make elected officials accountable for - spending	“Checks and balances on political spending (lunch, travel, ect)” “Develop regional governance structures for special purposes”

Topics mentioned but discussed less often:

Involve the media in public education efforts; Create tax sharing; Establish a referendum to move to regional form of government; Use hospital systems as a model for regional cooperation

IV. Regional Town Meeting Results

Solutions To Belief By Some Political Leaders That Change To The Political Structure Threatens Their Power Base (Most Frequent Themes)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Launch a grass roots effort to work - towards regional cooperation (petitions, emails, voice mail, letter writing) | “Take the issue of regional government/ consolidation to the ballot” “More community forums...” |
| 2. Educate and re-assure leaders and - politicians on the benefits of change so they aren't as threatened | “Show leaders these changes are desired and will not jeopardize their power” “Educate leaders” |
| 3. So What! It should threaten political - leaders. Make change anyways | “De-politicize the regionalist discourse, find a messenger to further agenda to governments” |
| 4. Support and elect candidates who are - qualified and willing to cooperate regionally | “Vote in different people.” |
| 5. Start with less threatening changes in - areas like fire/police services, park district services or joint planning | “Make some less threatening incremental changes in things like fire, police and park districts” |
| 6. Educate and keep regional cooperation at - the top of the public conversations so candidates have to voice their position | “Educate people to the negative impact on their lives of our fragmented system so that they will demand change from elected officials.” |
| 7. Create a new efficient regional government structure that ensures representation for all | “Place government consolidation issues on the ballot before the voters” |
| 8. Study effective models of governance in - other regions and countries | “Examine a regional system of government” “Model the best practices of existing regional governments” |

Topics mentioned but discussed less often:

No other suggestions made

Personal Commitments Regional Town Meeting Participants Are Willing To Make

At the close of the Regional Town Meeting, participants were asked to think about commitments they could make over the course of 6 months to strengthen the region. Most people discussed their willingness to assist with the Voices & Choices process. Participants agreed to spread the word about Voices & Choices, pressure politicians to get involved, host a community conversation, and make concerted effort to better understand issues facing the region. Others discussed ways in which they could help with the economic transformation of Northeast Ohio like encouraging vacationing in the region among extended family and friends who live outside the area, buying local products and services, volunteering in their own community, or positively promoting Northeast Ohio to combat negative images and impressions.

Most Frequent Themes:

1. Spread the word about V&C to friends, - colleagues, civic/service organizations	"Talk to people who we interact with"
2. Contact, pressure, write letters to politicians - to get involved in V&C, consider regional cooperation, and engage in service consolidation	"Speak to other elected officials and community leaders about regionalism"
3. Host a V&C community conversation -	"Commit to hold a small forum about regionalism within our sphere of influence" "Help others organize community discussion groups."
4. Make concerted effort to better understand - regional issues facing NEO	"Educating ourselves on what is available in the region" "Document the solution of others."
5. Encourage vacations and visits to NEO among extended family and visit more - parts of NEO ourselves	"Encourage people to vacation in Ohio"
6. Positively promote NEO; combat negative - messages	"Refuse to accept negative comments about the region, city, community" "Praise the good things we are doing, highlight cooperation that's already happening"
7. Buy local -	"Support local business" "Shop regionally"
8. Share information about necessity of - regional cooperation with others	"I will spur discussions on regionalism with colleagues and associates" "Bring regionalist ideas to civic organizations..."
9. Volunteer in our own community -	"Volunteer as a tutor for schools" "Donate time, talent and financial resources to assist in the accomplishment of improving the region in which we work, live and raise our families"
10. Participate in a V&C email chain -	"Consider the use of email chains to help spread the word"

Topics mentioned but discussed less often:

Conduct a citizen interview, Host a V&C party, Make a V&C film, Pressure union leaders to join the dialogue, Mentor a child/young person, Vote, Visit/spend money in our cities and downtown areas, Use a V&C bumper sticker ("Ask me about V&C), Send NEO gift boxes to others, Make financial contributions within the community

IV. Regional Town Meeting Results

Regional Town Meeting Evaluation

Participants of the Town Meeting used keypad polling to evaluate the event. The following represents a summary of these findings:

Quality of Town Meeting

- 90% rated the overall quality of the Town Meeting as excellent (50%) or good (40%)
- Another 8% said the meeting was “OK” while only 2% rated overall quality as poor

How well technology contributed to the Town Meeting

- 95% rated use of technology as excellent (78%) or good (17%)
- 4% rated technology as “OK” and 1% as poor

Extent to which participants learned something at the Town Meeting:

- 96% indicated they learned something at the Town Meeting while 4% did not

Optimism among participants that our work will help revitalize NEO

- Pre-test (start of Town Meeting) revealed that 69% are very optimistic or optimistic that our work will help revitalize the region. Post-test figures (end of Town Meeting) increased to 74%
- Only 12% of participants came into to the Town Meeting pessimistic about this work helping to revitalize NEO which was reduced to 9% at the close of the meeting

Attitudes toward regional cooperation

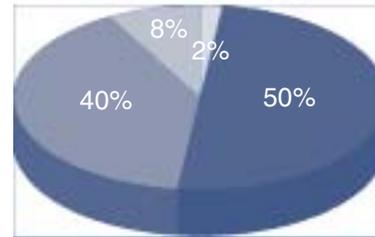
- When asked how important it is for our region to work together to revitalize the economy, 97% indicated it was very important (79%) or important (18%)
- 2% were neutral on this subject and only 1% said working together as a region was not important

How committed people are to staying involved in Voices and Choices

- 76% of participants indicated they are very committed (35%) or committed (41%) to staying involved
- 22% of participants are somewhat committed and only 2% are not committed to the process

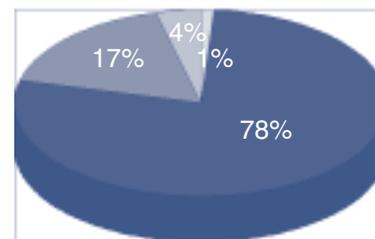
Overall Quality of Town Meeting

■ Poor ■ Excellent ■ Good ■ OK

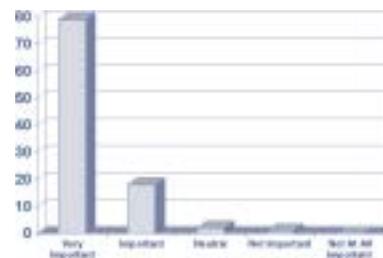


Technology at Town Meeting

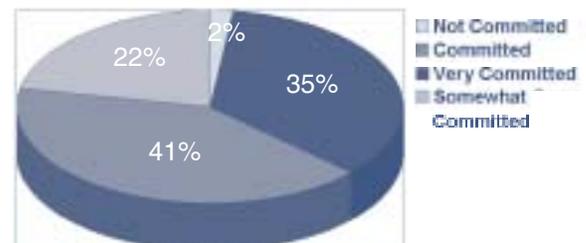
■ Poor ■ Excellent ■ Good ■ OK



How Important is it for Our Region to Work Together To Revitalize The Economy



Commitment to Staying Involved





THANKS TO OUR HOST FACILITIES AND SPONSORS

Ashland University

Blair Center, Westfield Group

Case Western Reserve University

Cleveland State University

Cuyahoga Community College

Kent State University

Lakeland Community College

Lorain County Community College

Nordson Corporation Foundation

**The Arden Shisler Center for Education & Economic Development,
The Ohio State University**

The College of Wooster

The Lodge & Conference Center at Geneva State Park

The University of Akron

Youngstown State University

The Fund for Our Economic Future

The Fund is an unprecedented collaboration among over 70 philanthropic organizations from across Northeast Ohio. Its goal is to encourage and advance an agenda for regional economic transformation. The three-year initiative has raised nearly \$30 million to further its objectives.

(www.futurefundneo.org)

AmericaSpeaks

AmericaSpeaks is a nonprofit organization that engages citizens in the most important public decisions that impact their lives. Since 1997, *AmericaSpeaks* has conducted 21st Century Town Meetings across the country and around the world on such subjects as the redevelopment of the World Trade Center after 9/11, the creation of Washington, D.C.'s municipal budget, and the development of global priorities at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. (www.americaspeaks.org)

The Universities Collaborative

The Universities Collaborative is a coalition of local institutions of higher learning that is serving as a key partner in the implementation of Voices & Choices and the Dashboard of Regional Economic Indicators. The Collaborative will play a significant role in strengthening the region's civic infrastructure and capacity through Voices & Choices.