



Regional Town Meeting II *Participant Guide*

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Voices & Choices
One Region. One Future.

Voices & Choices

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Voices & Choices

Speak Your Voice. Make Your Choice.

Voices & Choices is your opportunity to help shape the future of Northeast Ohio. You are joining thousands of residents from across the region who are working together to decide what we should do to create more jobs and better opportunities, and to improve quality of life for all.

Six regional challenges have emerged from hundreds of public forums that Voices & Choices has conducted over the past year. To overcome these challenges, a series of options have been developed based on the priorities and ideas generated by the public, as well as the views of experts and leaders.

Your job is to evaluate these options and make choices about where our region should dedicate its resources.

challenges
goals
solutions
options
options

The Fund for Our Economic Future

The Fund is an unprecedented collaboration among over 80 philanthropic organizations from across Northeast Ohio. Its goal is to encourage and advance an agenda for regional economic transformation. The initiative has raised more than \$35 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.



Where Have We Been?

A Pathway to Transforming Our Region



Leadership Teams

June 2005 – Ongoing

Multi-sector committees of leaders in nine areas of the region form to support developing regional priorities to revitalize Northeast Ohio.

Citizen Interviews

August – December 2005

3,000 citizens participate in one-on-one interviews about Northeast Ohio's greatest strengths and assets.

Leadership Workshops

August – September 2005

1,000 leaders representing governments, businesses, and non-profits discuss the greatest challenges and opportunities facing Northeast Ohio at 11 four-hour workshops.

Regional Town Meeting I

November 2005

750 citizens and leaders prioritize the challenges facing the region at the largest Town Meeting ever held in the region.

Community Conversations

February – June 2006

13,500 Northeast Ohioans prioritize challenges and brainstorm potential solutions at forums held in homes, schools, businesses and community centers.

Leadership Summit

June 2006

200 leaders come together to provide input into a set of potential solutions for addressing the region's greatest challenges based on public priorities.

Online Choicebooks

July – September 2006

Six online workbooks give users a chance to express their preferences among potential solutions aimed at overcoming the region's greatest challenges.



Make Your Choice

September 2006

The region's public and private television stations join together to produce a series of joint reports on the regional economy and educate viewer about regional challenges.

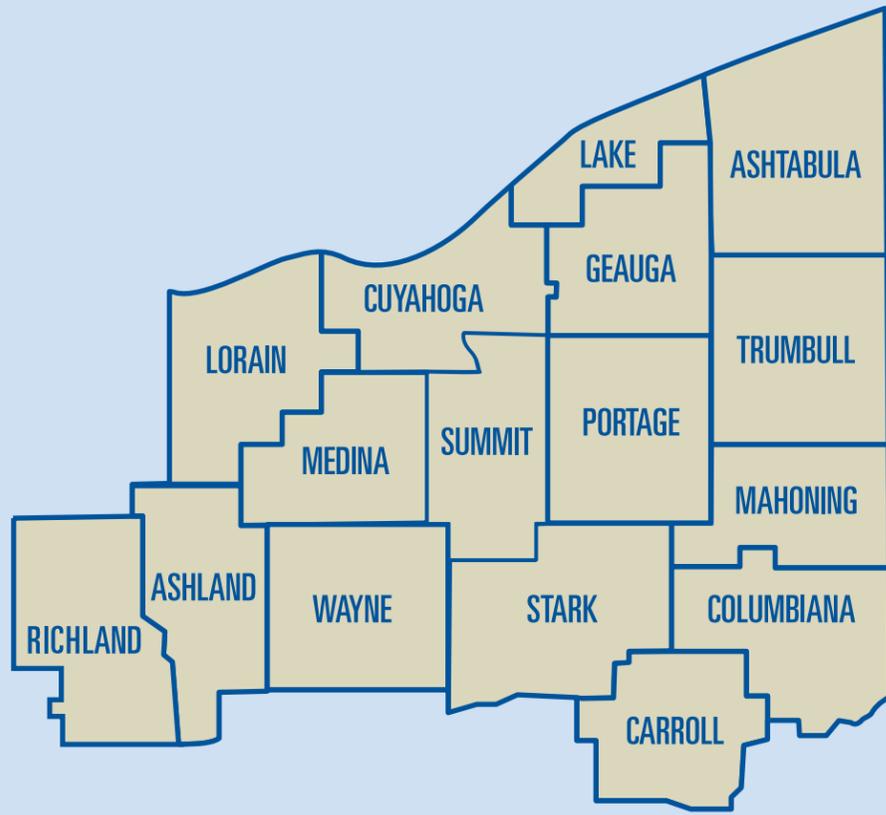
Regional Town Meeting II

September 2006

Hundreds of citizens representing the diversity of the region come together to prioritize solutions.

A Quick Glance

at Northeast Ohio



TOTAL AREA:

7,621 sq. miles

POPULATION:

4.2 million people

TOTAL EMPLOYMENT:

2 million

ANNUAL AVERAGE WAGE:

\$35,700 (2000)

MAJOR INDUSTRIES:

Metalworking, plastic products and chemicals, motor vehicles and equipment, insurance, biomedical, instrumentation, controls and electronics

LARGEST CITIES:

Cleveland (478,403)
Akron (217,074)
Parma (85,655)
Youngstown (82,026)
Canton (80,806)
Lorain (68,652)

What Makes Us a Region?

We share a common history and industrial past

We share a common workforce that travels across the 15 counties for work; 23% of our workforce lives in one county and works in another

We share common assets, like our universities, our natural resources, our health care system, and our cultural institutions

We share a growing transportation system and infrastructure that links us together

We depend on each other for our future prosperity

Together, we are competing against other regions around the world for jobs and opportunities

One Region. One Future.

Competing as a Regional Economy



Global Competition

The world is changing. The communities of Northeast Ohio are competing against other regions across the country and around the globe for better jobs and opportunities. Individually, our communities are not large enough to succeed in this global competition. We need to pool our resources and work together as a team if we are going to win.

Regional Strength

The 15 counties of Northeast Ohio are home to more than 4 million people, making the region larger in population than 23 states. Our regional economy is greater than many small countries and employs one-third of all workers in the state of Ohio. Together, thinking and acting as a region, Northeast Ohio can be a collective force to be reckoned with in the global economy.

Team Northeast Ohio

One way to think about why the region must work together to compete is to consider a favorite sports team. Each player on a team has a certain set of skills; he or she may be fast or tall or strong. But alone, individual strengths are not enough to succeed. In order to win, a player, even a superstar, must combine his or her strengths with those of his or her teammates.

The same is true for a region. A city may have a number of assets: like a strong university or a pool of skilled workers. But these strengths are not enough to compete with regions around the world. Alone, our major cities – Akron, Canton, Cleveland, Lorain, and Youngstown cannot attract new industries, spur innovation, or prepare a workforce on the scale we need to compete globally.

In Northeast Ohio, we have two options. We can continue to operate independently and continue to compete against our own regional teammates. Or, we can take a hard look at the strengths and challenges of our team and create a game plan so we can compete at the highest possible level in a world where the playing field is evolving and new competitors join the game every day.

Make Your Choice

Introduction To Tough Choices



Voices & Choices engaged nearly 20,000 citizens and leaders in identifying the greatest challenges facing the region between August and June. The six top challenges that emerged from these discussions were:

- 1 Training Workers for Current and Future Jobs
- 2 Improving Racial Inclusion and Income Equality
- 3 Attracting and Growing Businesses
- 4 Reducing Government Fragmentation and Inefficiency
- 5 Ensuring Equitable School Funding and Accountability
- 6 Reducing Sprawl and Improving Regional Connectivity

Based on the ideas and priorities expressed by the public, Voices & Choices convened committees of experts and leaders to identify potential solutions for addressing these challenges. For each solution, pro's and con's were described as well as a rough sense of the degree of difficulty involved with implementation.

Many of the solutions you'll read about in the following pages are not mutually exclusive. However, our region has a limited amount of resources, time and energy, so we need to make choices about the best solutions that we wish to dedicate ourselves to pursuing.

Solution 4: Ensure that the programs that allocate state funds for workforce training are coordinated on a regional basis and set consistent training standards across the region.

- **Pros:** The local workforce boards that fund training are divided across the region and don't have the opportunity to coordinate with one another. This option fosters stronger cooperation between these agencies and creates new standards for training, so that all working adults have the basic skills they need to be valuable to employers.
- **Cons:** Education and training programs can be too narrowly focused on preparing students with skill bases in jobs that too quickly become scarce due to technological and economic change.
- **Degree of Difficulty to Implement:** Medium

GOAL B: Develop a High-Tech Workforce for Northeast Ohio.

Many of the industries that are expected to have the most growth and to create the most jobs need highly skilled workers to succeed. By increasing the number of workers in our region with these skills (through education or recruitment), we can strengthen our economy and create more jobs.

▶ **Solution 5: Create a regional plan to develop the workforce needed for high-growth industries, such as biotechnology and information technology.**

- **Pros:** This option will ensure that the region's current high-tech companies have the workers they need to thrive and will attract new high-growth industries to the region. A similar plan was created in Northeast Ohio around manufacturing, which led to the creation of the Manufacturing Advocacy and Growth Network.
- **Cons:** It is difficult to predict which industries will be the highest-growth industries of the future. Pursuing this option does not prepare those who will not be able to work in high-tech industries.
- **Degree of Difficulty to Implement:** Medium

▶ **Solution 6: Focus the educational programs of each of the region's universities on their distinct strengths in order to create centers of excellence that can help students to specialize in high-growth fields.**

- **Pros:** By identifying and focusing on the core strengths of each major research institution, this option improves each school's strengths and provides the region's students with unique opportunities to learn specialized skills. This option may produce new innovations and prepare students for high-tech jobs.
- **Cons:** Universities may resist efforts to specialize in relation to other universities.
- **Degree of Difficulty to Implement:** High

Solution 7: Launch a national campaign to recruit highly skilled people to move to Northeast Ohio, especially students who moved away from the region for college.

- **Pros:** Our region needs a workforce of highly educated workers to attract companies to Northeast Ohio and ensure the success of those that are already here. Compared with other high-growth regions, Northeast Ohio attracts far fewer highly skilled people from elsewhere.
- **Cons:** Marketing campaigns of this type must be highly targeted in order to produce any measurable results.
- **Degree of Difficulty to Implement:** High

GOAL C: Make a College Education in the Region More Affordable and Achievable.

A college education can be the key to better jobs and higher salaries for many students. Increasing the accessibility and affordability of a college education may expand opportunities for students of all ages and create a better prepared workforce for the region.

▶ **Solution 8: Invest in programs that enable high school students to take college-level courses at no cost to the student and with a special emphasis on potential first-generation college students.**

- **Pros:** Early college courses can help high school students prepare for college and can show them that they can succeed in a college environment. Students who earn college credits may be more likely to consider pursuing a college degree. Completing college credits can reduce the cost of going to college by reducing the number of courses students need to graduate.
- **Cons:** Students attending high school on a college campus must be open to a different high school experience from that of their traditional high school.
- **Degree of Difficulty to Implement:** Medium

▶ **Solution 9: Advocate for the state of Ohio to increase funding for higher education so that tuitions can be lowered and scholarships made available for those students who have the greatest needs.**

- **Pros:** Students of Ohio universities pay a larger portion of the cost of their education than students in most other states. Increased funding to high education could make it easier for Northeast Ohio students to afford to go to college.
- **Cons:** By increasing funding to higher education, less funding may be available for other programs.
- **Degree of Difficulty to Implement:** High













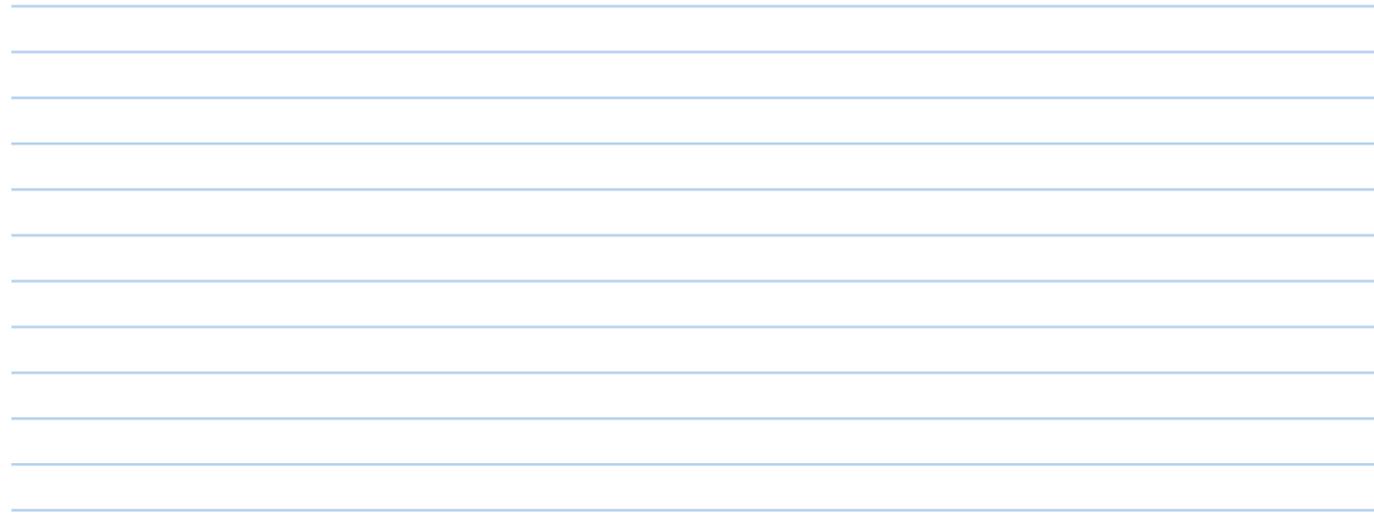








Thanks to Our Sponsors



Endnotes

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- 3 Ohio Board of Regents, Fall Survey of Student Charges; Academic Year 2005-2006, Tables 4 and 9. National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education
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- 8 Randy Eberts, George Erickcek, and Jack Kelihsenz, Dashboard Indicators for the Northeast Ohio Economy, Draft Report for the Fund for Our Economic Future, January 2006
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