

**NORTHEAST OHIO CONSORTIUM (“NOC”)
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, February 18, 2026
11:00 a.m.**

Geauga County Offices, Meeting Room A334
12611 Ravenwood Drive,
Chardon, Ohio 44024

MEMBERS PRESENT: Commissioner Casey Kozlowski
 Commissioner Jim Dvorak
 Commissioner Sabrina Christian-Bennett

MEMBERS ABSENT:

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE: Matthew Blevens (OMJ-Geauga), Lisa Milgate (GCJFS),
 Carly Spencer (OMJ-Portage), Alissa Drees (ACJFS),
 Hattie Grubke (OMJ-Ashtabula), John Kravetz (GCJFS),
 Alyssa Steinhoff (GCJFS), Craig Sernik (Area 19 Director),
 Denise Gehring (Area 19).

Mr. Kozlowski called the meeting to order at 11:04 a.m.

Approval of Past Business

Approval of the Minutes from December 17, 2025.

Ms. Bennett moved to approve the minutes from December 17, 2025. Mr. Dvorak seconded the motion which was approved by all members present.

Reports

Administrative Report. Mr. Sernik stated legislation that was passed will only cut WIOA by \$10 million which means it is being flat funded, and we expect a TEGE regarding this in the next 30 to 60 days. WIOA workforce recertification discussion is still stalled and WIOA as a program will most likely not be reauthorized until after the midterms. ODJFS keeps applying for the Fresh Start workforce opioid grant and DOD keeps rejecting and telling them to reapply. Workforce Areas are still waiting for guidance from ODJFS regarding the Work Ohio Connector Hub grant which is being administered differently around the state. Some economic development areas the workforce development boards or OMJ Centers were cut in on the grant and are actually receiving some of the funding to do some of the work. That was not offered to us by the Mahoney Manufacturers Coalition and not being offered to us by MAGNET. Any of the work under this grant that we would do would have to use WIOA funding. We are assuming until ODJFS gives us guidance that any referral that comes to us will be treated like any other person who comes through under the WIOA services. Another question posed to ODJFS is the issue of data sharing that we are strictly held by confidentiality with individual’s information and can we share this information

with another third party entity. As it currently is, we can treat these people as WIOA customers only since we are receiving no money for this grant program. GCJFS has elected to assume all of the CCMEP TANF services effective April 1, 2026, except the employer of record. The joint procurements for both Portage and Ashtabula have been completed and in process of creating a timeline for both. Received an additional \$100,000 in RESEA so \$10,000 to admin, \$20,000 to Ashtabula, and \$20,000 to Portage. Originally was to split these funds 50/50 between Portage and Ashtabula, but the issue is Ashtabula is spending faster than Portage. Recommend \$50,000 in reserve to hand out to the three counties as they need it until it runs out. Career Pathway Network is another grant given out Lake to River administered by YSU is working with the career technical educators, ESC, and universities to come up with programming ideas primarily to extend career pathway planning and career technical education into 7th to 10th grades. Met with Berkshire High School in Geauga County to discuss three new programs they have which are a lab they have with Preston for automobile technicians, Great Lakes Cheese for agricultural to industrial pathway, and Oman nursing home getting students their CNA to then work at Oman. Took a meeting with Chardon Fire Department Chief who encouraged us to build a special Incumbent Worker Training program for the fire departments.

Fiscal Report. Mr. Sernik reported Ashtabula is almost through all of its PY24 youth money, funding in both Geauga and Ashtabula both programs are semi-closed as far as new individuals coming in for WIOA youth only and do not have enough money to serve all people looking for services. ODJFS does not have any extra money, and no workforce areas have offered up any money so there looks to be no redistribution this year. Geauga County has spent all PY23 funds and working on spending the PY24 still halfway through grant. Portage's PY24 youth money is almost gone. Ashtabula's PY25 RESEA is almost gone and will need more money in 30 days or less, adult has \$35,000 left to expend on FY25, and dislocated worker has \$23,000 to expend. Geauga will not need any RESEA funds soon, has not spent all of its adult PY24 still has \$7,740 in expenses to hit and another \$90,000 in FY25 adult and only a little money that will carry over into the next program year. Portage County has \$70,000 in reserve for RESEA and will be fine for next 90 days and is good with expending funds for adult and dislocated worker. The area has \$30,000 in RESEA funds to spend, adult has \$15,000 available to draw on FY25, dislocated worker \$2,892.23 left to expend on FY25, and \$32,763.66 left to expend in youth. Administratively, we will be through all of our money before the program year ends.

Reports of County OMJ Centers

OMJ Portage County. Ms. Spencer reported adult and dislocated worker has 5 active ITAs, RESEA had an increase due to the ending of the pilot program, CCMEP had a slight increase in homeless youth, planning a summer youth employment program, in December held a holiday party for 18 youth, and business services had five incumbent worker trainings.

OMJ Ashtabula County. Ms. Grubke reported that 61 individuals came through OMJ Center for hiring events held for Core Civic, PA Corrections, Jersey Mikes, and Rural King. Flagger Force recently obtained contracts in Ashtabula County and using the OMJ Center facilities to train individuals. A total of 191 individuals were in the Resource Room in January with 131 needed unemployment assistance. There have been changes in the SNAP criteria for work activities and for March expect to add 696 new individuals because of the changes in exemptions and age limits.

RESEA program had 19 individuals last week and only 3 individuals this week and afraid these individuals were routed to the Geneva in Fairfield County instead of Geneva in Ashtabula County. RESEA in January had 52 scheduled appointments of which 2 were no shows. The CCMEP youth program had a total of 626 youth with 244 in follow-up.

OMJ Geauga County. Mr. Blevens reported the OMJ Center is working with the Chardon Fire Department with IWT, noticed there were some active IWT applications last year and we are working with ODJFS to make sure all data is entered into ARIES and following up with the trainees who are going through the training programs. The career center had in January a total of 178 clients come through which is a 35 percent increase from the previous month. CCMEP for the month of January we did take control of the eligibility block and did not have any new applications for the month but did have one redetermination CCMEP participant. RESEA had 63 selections. The OMJ will be participating in the Auburn Career Center Reverse Job Fair and spoke with COSI who is looking to hold an event in Geauga County on March 16th this will be a career exploration event.

Old Business

Certification of OMJ Centers. All three counties will need to put together a plan and Ashtabula County will need to handle handicapped signs. Portage County will need to get a couple partners updated to their mou agreement.

New Business

Division of Additional RESEA Funds of \$100,000.00 received by Area 19. Of the \$100,000.00 Ashtabula and Portage Counties have already received each \$20,000.00 which leaves \$50,000.00 in held in reserve.

Ms. Christian-Bennett moved to allow the NOC COG Executive Director to award the final \$50,000 of grant based upon need of the three counties. Mr. Dvorak seconded the motion which was approved by all members present.

Public Comment

None.

Adjourn the Meeting

Ms. Christian-Bennett moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Dvorak seconded the motion which was approved by all members present.

Meeting Adjourned at 12:14 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Denise Gehring

