

Lorain County Strategic Action Plan

[Future Summit - Future-iQ CEO, David Beurle](#)



[Lorain County Voices of the Community](#)



Lorain County Strategic Action Plan



LORAIN COUNTY STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

OHIO, USA

MARCH 2024



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1.2 | OBJECTIVES OF THE LORAIN COUNTY STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN PROCESS

As part of initiating the strategic planning process, a Strategic Engagement Committee consisting of 15 regional representatives was created in August 2023 to guide the Lorain County Strategic Action Plan project. Committee members felt it was important to establish an overarching orientation for the Lorain County Strategic Action Plan process. The Committee members attended monthly meetings and assisted with the guidance of the project. Dave Greenspan, Special Projects Coordinator/Manager within the Lorain County Commissioners, headed up the project working with Future IQ on a weekly basis regarding the organization, content, and direction of the project.

The Strategic Engagement Committee ensured that the planning approach reached out to all parts of Lorain County and sought their input and involvement. This was particularly evident in the 9 county-wide workshops that were held across the County.

The objectives of the Lorain County Strategic Action Plan process included:



CREATE A COMMON VISION

A common vision will energize and unite the region around the Strategic Action Plan and its implementation while acknowledging that implementation of the Plan may look different in various areas of the region.



FOCUS ON EXTENSIVE RESEARCH AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

This research and engagement identified the needs and wants of the region, as well as ways to raise awareness and provide clarification to the community on the scope of services provided by Lorain County Government.



EMBRACE, CELEBRATE, AND LEVERAGE THE VARIED AND DIVERSE STRENGTHS

It was important to include the Spanish speaking population of Lorain County via translated materials, reports, and invitations to engagement events. The Community Foundation of Lorain County and El Centro produced this outcome.



BE INCLUSIVE OF DIFFERENT VOICES AND PERSPECTIVES

The Community Foundation of Lorain County was contracted to provide outreach to the different voices, perspectives, and communities within Lorain County.



IDENTIFY AREAS FOR COLLABORATION ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

This included exploring ways that existing assets and institutions can be leveraged for greater success across the region.



For a complete list of Strategy Engagement Committee Members, please see the acknowledgments section at the end of this report. The Strategy Engagement Committee represented an excellent cross section of the County. In addition, there was a wide range of perspectives with specialty interest areas that spanned economic development, municipal government and community focused not-for-profits.

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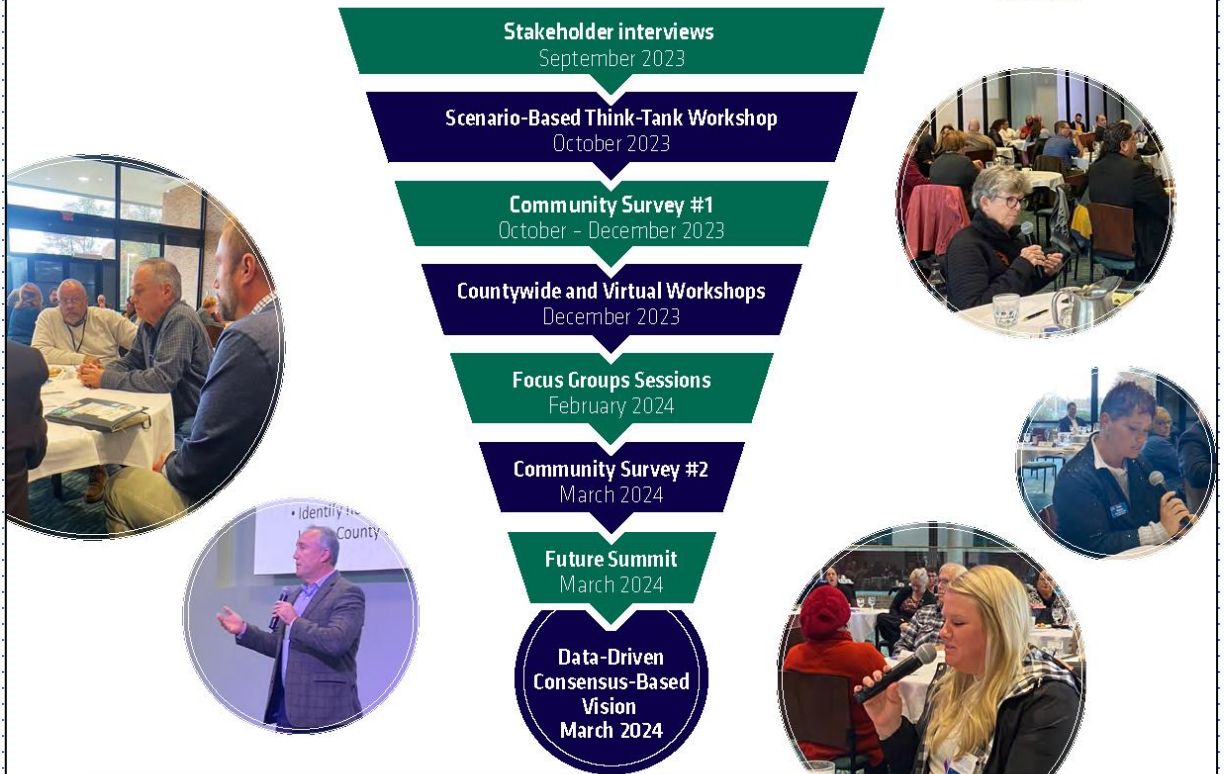
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3.2 | STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT STEPS

The Lorain County Strategic Action plan process included numerous opportunities for stakeholders to have input. This engagement process was intended to create a unified community vision which will serve as the foundational support for future planning efforts.

The stakeholder engagement steps allowed people to contribute via a variety of different ways, including surveys, workshops and focus groups.



DataInsight

- The seven-month engagement process allowed over 2,000 individuals to contribute to the development of the data-driven, consensus-based strategic action plan. This included a core group of several hundred people who participated in multiple sessions.
- The vision and set of actions have been developed in a consensus-based approach, with multiple validation steps. This ensures the plan and actions represent the collective desires of key stakeholders in the County.

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The Lorain County Strategic Action Plan involved a wide, deep, and transparent engagement process. Reports were published on the Lorain County Strategic Plan website, and the project was widely promoted across Lorain County by the Community Foundation of Lorain County.

3.0 | STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

3.1 | STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT METRICS

The Lorain County Strategic Action Plan has been built on extensive community and stakeholder input, which was the intention of the Lorain County Board of Commissioners at the project inception. This engagement was an integral and central design feature of the planning process. The engagement and data-driven methodology progressively focused the discussion on emerging key themes and stakeholder aspirations for the future. The purpose of the process was to arrive at a 'point of consensus' that represented the shared vision for the future, and a comprehensive strategic plan – with actions – that propels the region towards that preferred future.

A key feature of the engagement and planning process was the amount of and participation at many engagement sessions.



DataInsight

- The attendance and participation of Lorain County stakeholders and community members was exceptional regarding the quantity and especially the quality of input.
- The Community Foundation of Lorain County provided extensive community outreach, including outreach to the Spanish Speaking community with all materials translated into Spanish by El Centro.



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4.0 | FUTURE STRATEGIC DIRECTION

4.1 | IDENTIFYING THE PREFERRED FUTURE FOR LORAIN COUNTY

To identify the preferred future of Lorain County, looking out to 2035, regional stakeholders and community members participated in the scenario-planning Think-Tank. The six-hour Lorain County scenario-based Think-Tank event was conducted over two days on October 30th and October 31st, 2023. Approximately 100 people attended including key business, education, government, non-profit stakeholders, and community members. The Think-Tank was intended to build a vision for future planning for Lorain County that will guide the county looking out to 2035.

The scenario planning process provides a method to explore plausible futures and consider the implications of various future scenarios. The Think-Tank workshop aimed to:

- Deepen the understanding and examination of how external events and local conditions could shape decision-making
- Outline the results from the [Lorain County Strategic Action Plan Stakeholder Survey #1](#)
- Identify and understand the key influences, trends, and dynamics that will shape the region looking out to 2035
- Create and describe four plausible long-term scenarios for Lorain County
- Explore alignment around a shared future vision

The scenarios developed during the scenario planning process are important to provide a framework to discuss future possible outcomes and implications for strategies for Lorain County. In addition, the Think-Tank deliberations assisted in identifying key actions for the region and explored how various groups might collaborate to best contribute to future policy making. The process involved exploration of local trends and forces of change as well as the development of a scenario matrix defining four plausible scenario spaces for the future. The event concluded with discussion of the scenarios, selection of a preferred scenario, and the compilation of potential high-level strategic actions. For additional information and details on the Lorain County Strategic Action Plan Think-Tank, please read the [Lorain County Strategic Action Plan Think-Tank Report](#).

Scenario planning provides a way to explore various plausible futures. This adds a richness and depth to the discussions about the preferred future, and a consideration of the intended and unintended consequences.



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4.2 | SCENARIOS OF THE FUTURE FOR LORAIN COUNTY - FRAMEWORK FOR EXPLORATION

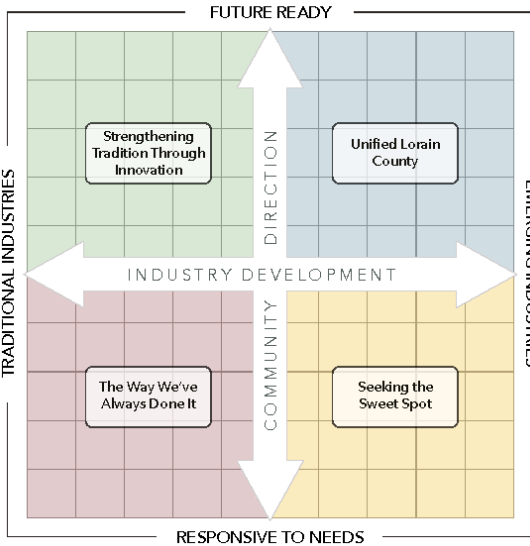
During the Lorain County Strategic Action Plan Think-Tank, four different future scenarios were created. The scenarios were created using the scenario matrix framework, which was built around the two macro themes of **Industry Development**, and **Community Direction**. An in-depth scenario planning process over two days enabled the development of four potential future scenarios. For more details on the Lorain County Strategic Action Think-Tank, please refer to the published in-depth [Think-Tank report](#).

The scenario development process at the Think-Tank allowed stakeholders to examine the implications and consequences of different and plausible future directions for Lorain County, looking out to 2035, against a backdrop of Macro Trends and the key drivers that are impacting Lorain County now and looking out to 2035.

There is intentional (and significant) investment in creating a 'future ready' community that focuses on youth, workforce and resident education. There is a focus on equity and community adaptability, with efforts to deliberately foster new ideas and innovation. There is a county-wide coordinated approach to partnerships and investment, that aims to elevate amenities such as transportation, safe and affordable housing, and education.



There is a focus on pursuing more tried and tested approaches to industry and economic development. Public Investment and policy is targeted towards more familiar industrial sectors, with each municipality and institution working on its own priorities. Community infrastructure focuses on 'suburban style growth model', and transit is predominately car oriented. Skills training is reactive to industry needs and direction.



There is a strong focus on emerging future-oriented industries. This builds on existing industries in creative ways; but also invests in emerging sectors such as technology, water and energy-based sectors, and food industries. There is a very collaborative and coordinated county-wide approach, with a focus on investment in creating a highly skilled workforce. There are high levels of institutional collaboration and policies that drive investment in critical infrastructure.



Community infrastructure, such as housing and transport, are market driven and respond to demands and needs. Land-use policy and community investment is driven by the priorities of individual communities. Approaches are institutionally driven; with a focus on existing services, and workplace-based training models. Communities are service driven, aiming to support traditional family structures.



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4.4 | THE PREFERRED FUTURE FOR LORAIN COUNTY IN 2035 - "UNIFIED LORAIN COUNTY"

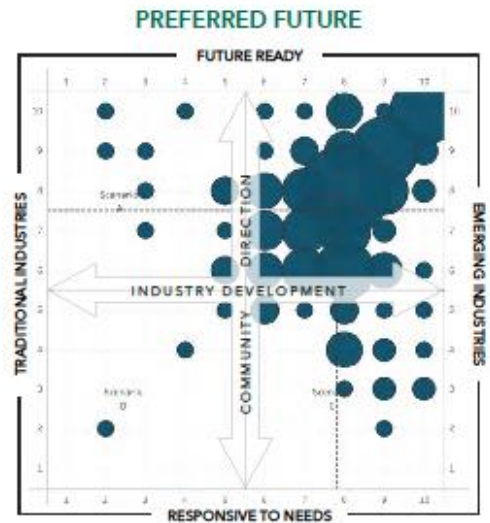
The preferred future generated from the work carried out in the Future Think-Tank was Scenario B - Unified Lorain County.

This scenario forecasts a future where Lorain County is focused on emerging and future-orientated industries and builds on existing industries in innovative ways. Critical infrastructure receives investment through high levels of institutional collaboration and forward-thinking policies. Lorain County adopts a regional and collaborative approach. While industry and economic development is vital and forward thinking, the community direction of Lorain County is also being intentionally created to be adaptive and 'future ready'. There is intentional focus on equity, inclusion, and elevating amenities such as transportation, safe and affordable housing, and education.



PREFERRED SCENARIO SNAPSHOT - FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

- Embracing emerging industries through building on to existing traditional industries
- Strong environmental focus
- Strong collaborative approach across the County
- Future ready community direction with intentional investment in youth, workforce, and resident education
- Diverse community with elevated amenities including transportation, safe and affordable housing, and education



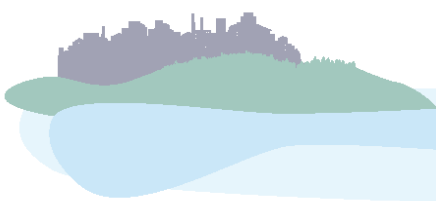
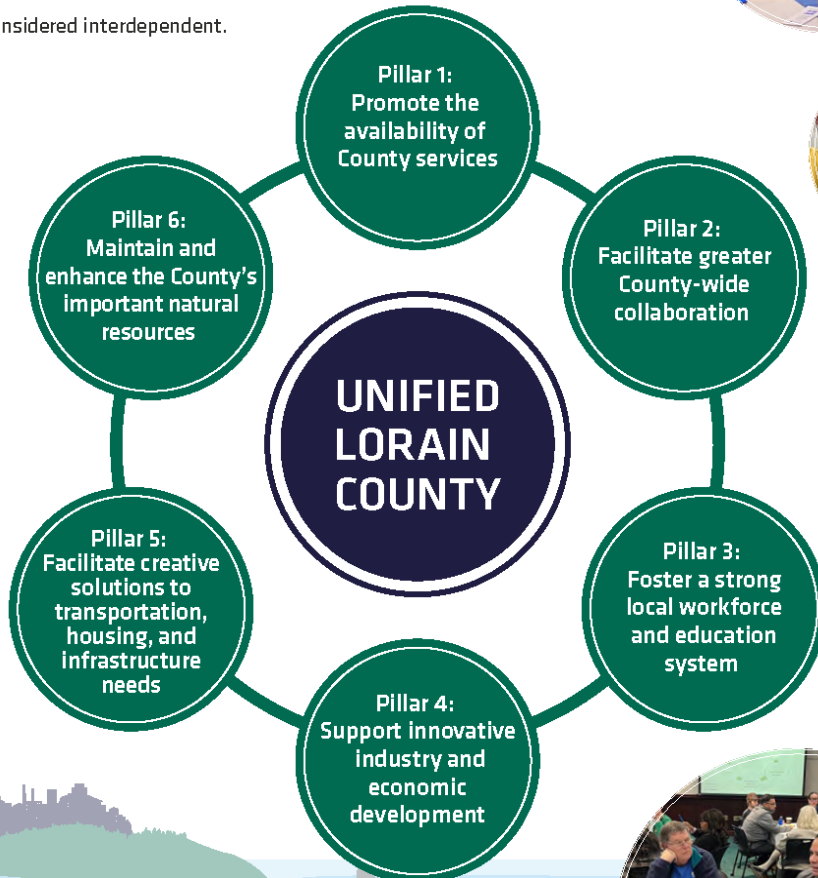
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5.0 | STRATEGIC ACTION PILLARS FRAMEWORK

The key organizing framework for the plan is the six Strategic Pillars. The pillars represent the major theme or topic areas that underpin the preferred future for Lorain County. The key actions are structured around these six key strategic pillars, which are the fundamental building blocks that support the vision for the region.

The Lorain County Strategic Action presents a series of strategic actions that can be achieved in the short to medium term that will produce long-term results. They are intended to produce systemic and catalytic shifts that will drive the future economic growth, agility, and vitality of the region and attract new people and investments. These actions are designed to build the future pathway to the preferred future.

Pillars are considered interdependent.



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5.1 | PILLAR 1: PROMOTE AVAILABILITY OF COUNTY GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Pillar 1:
Promote the
availability of
County services

Objective: To boost the residents' awareness of the range and scope of County services and improve the accessibility to these services.

5.1.1 | IMPORTANCE OF GOVERNMENT SERVICES

The desire for an enhanced ability to locate and access County Government Services has been highlighted throughout the Strategic Planning process. There is a great opportunity to make these services highly visible to residents and preferably consolidated so that people know where to access these services. Communication about these services is integral to ensure free flowing access to information and individuals related to each of these services. A County-wide Communications Strategy with a full time Communications staff member would assist with this as well as government staff being out on the road, meeting residents at organized monthly meetings across Lorain County.

Lorain County residents would like to have more knowledge of the (preferably consolidated) services that Lorain County offers, with ease of access to this information.



Resident Value

- Residents would have access to everything they need in relation to what local government offers.
- Communication methods would be overhauled so that residents would benefit from regular, scheduled communication from local government through a myriad of communication methods.
- Residents would feel that this ensures transparency, accountability and would feel more confident in how local government was operating in their best interests.

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Pillar 1:
Promote the
availability of
County services

5.1.2 | KEY ACTION AREAS

A key focus of the Strategic Action Plan process has been to engage a wide range of stakeholders. This has been done to ensure that the plan reflects the 'voice of the people'. This is part of the larger commitment to create meaningful collaboration and communication between the County organization and local residents.

Action 1: Create an inclusive County communications plan.

The County has not historically had a dedicated communications plan or function. With a population of over 300,000, it is important for the County to have a well-structured communication plan that allows residents to understand the services available and how to access these services. In addition, the County has an important role in thought-leadership and helping inform residents of emerging changes and how they are relevant to the residents. The proposed communication plan should be aimed at getting a range of relevant and useful information to residents in a timely and regular manner.



Action 2: Host regular community meetings across the County.

Throughout the engagement sessions, participants have expressed a desire to have greater connection with leadership in the County, including Commissioners, senior staff and directors. There have been suggestions of the County holding regular meetings in different locations across the County, to provide easier access and build profile. These could be designed as more informal listening sessions, to hear of local concerns, challenges and perspectives.



Action 3: Explore potential for County satellite offices and online services.

The County is unique in that it includes a range of geography, from very rural areas in the south, to more densely populated urban areas in the northeast. During the engagement sessions, there were suggestions made to provide satellite offices or annexes, that could help make the County services more accessible.



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5.2 | PILLAR 2: FACILITATE GREATER COUNTY-WIDE COLLABORATION

Pillar 2:
Facilitate greater
County-wide
collaboration

Objective: Improve co-ordination of government services across the County, helping improve efficiency and the quality of services to residents.

5.2.1 | IMPORTANCE OF COUNTYWIDE COLLABORATION

Countywide collaboration has been a key topic throughout the Strategic Planning engagement process. In some cases, this was expressed as concerns about duplication of services and municipalities working in silos across Lorain County. However, the bigger theme is that people are enthused by the idea of creating more collaborative approaches that will help spur innovation and creative ideas. The County is seen by many as having an important and natural role in convening and facilitating collaborative approaches. This is especially connected to the process of implementing the Strategic Action Plan, and the need to have collaborative taskforce groups. Many people recognized that today's world is one of co-operation and collaboration, rather than competition and silos. This approach has great promise in Lorain County, as there is such a genuine and authentic desire to work together.

Collaboration was a key theme running through all the engagement work. Stakeholders are keen to see the County take on a leadership role in helping convene groups to work together on the grand challenges.



- Greater County-wide collaboration will help provide better access to services and new efficiencies and quality in service delivery.
- Any of the biggest challenges in the County, such as housing and transportation, will require across government solutions, and public-private partnerships. Building these collaborative approaches will help spur new solutions and accelerate outcomes.

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Pillar 2:
Facilitate greater
County-wide
collaboration

5.2.2 | KEY ACTION AREAS

The overarching approach in the Strategic Action Plan is collaboration. The suggested key actions are drawn from the stakeholder engagement work and offer ways that collaborative frameworks and approaches can be developed.

Action 4: Convene and host taskforces groups for each of the Strategic Pillars.

The implementation of the Strategic Action Plan is based on the Strategic Pillars framework. This provides a way to focus efforts of the identified priorities and build on the engagement work in the Strategic Action Plan process. It is proposed to convene multiple taskforce groups that can come together and collaboratively problem solve actions needed to implement each pillar topic. This process will initially run for several months, and then longer-term partnerships can be created to implement medium term plans.



Action 5: Host regular cross-government collaboration meetings with key entities in the County.

One of the features of the engagement process was the number of institutions represented. These included government groups, not-for-profits, community based groups and business alliances. There was particular interest from the government groups in continuing the collaborative meetings. There is potential for the County to host such cross-government sessions, on a range of topics to help accelerate information flow and build greater collaboration.



Action 6: Identify opportunities to provide shared services between government entities.

Lorain County is a mixture of governments, including cities, townships and villages. They all have services to deliver and key roles to play, however people are looking for increased coordination and efficiency of service delivery. There are already great examples of shared service models, including emergency responses, waste water and public safety. The increased collaboration model offers a way to continue to explore ways to identify and deliver shared services, ultimately delivering better value to residents.



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5.3 | PILLAR 3: FOSTER A STRONG LOCAL WORKFORCE AND EDUCATION SYSTEM

Pillar 3:
Foster a strong local workforce and education system

Objective: Create a strong future-ready local workforce that has strong skills and can adapt to emerging trends and the changing needs of business.

5.3.1 | IMPORTANCE OF WORKFORCE / EDUCATION

Throughout the strategic planning process, there has been considerable discussion about the focus and orientation of workforce development in Lorain County. Workforce is an area of concern for many cities and counties in the US. The need to retain the current workforce is key but the attraction of a new workforce, with the necessary skills looking out to the workforce transformation by 2035, is critical. Lorain County is fortunate to have excellent educational establishments including the often-mentioned Lorain County Community College, among others. The connection between education and workforce is critical for the future of Lorain County in relation to retaining talented students and attracting new students to these excellent places of learning. This connects to marketing Lorain County as a destination/place to relocate to for new families. This in turn will assist with the workforce challenges that Lorain County is experiencing.

As a key portion of the workforce ages-out and retires over the next 10 years, it will be critical for Lorain County to continue to reskill its current workforce, as well as build and attract a new workforce.



Resident Value

- The connection between Education and Workforce has never been as critical as now, with the increasing adoption of Industry 4.0 technologies and with new patterns of workplaces since the pandemic. To be attractive for investment, Lorain County will need to have a strong workforce and education system.
- Lorain County is growing as people are attracted by the cost of living and amenities. To continue to build a strong future, the County must ensure that the educational systems are high-quality and provide relevant and future-orientated skill sets.

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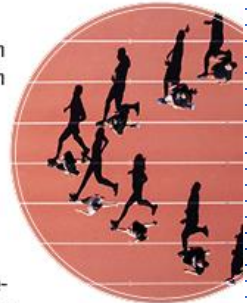
Pillar 3:
Foster a strong
local workforce
and education
system

5.3.2 | KEY ACTION AREAS

The engagement process has identified the need and desire for a future-ready approach, where the community and people of Lorain County understand emerging trends and the changing demands on the workforce. This is a system-wide approach, that includes the ability to forecast future needs, an understanding of the future, and high levels of collaboration.

Action 7: Work with the K-12 system, the Lorain County Community College (LCCC) and local businesses, to forecast and promote the future needs for skills and workforce in the County.

The workplace is changing rapidly, as new technologies and workplace models emerge. Being future-ready means knowing what the future might look like, and understanding the future skills needed to support the current and future local businesses. Working with partners to 'model the future' will help with this forecasting. Promoting these future needs will help telegraph to families and students what the likely future jobs will be in Lorain County.



Action 8: Develop a program to educate the community on key emerging trends and opportunities.

Lorain County will change a lot over the next decade, and having the community prepared is critical. This is especially important, as some future opportunities will likely require significant investment and support from the community. Having a proactive forward-looking community will help accelerate positive change in the County.



Action 9: Help facilitate close collaboration between businesses and the educational system.

To build the optimal local workforce and education system, there needs to be close collaboration between the business community and the educational system. This will help ensure future needs are being identified as quickly as possible, to allow time for the skills training and educational systems to adjust.



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Framework for the Pillar Discussions:

✓ Discuss the Current Services

- JobsOhio — Drew Cooper
- TeamNEO — Christine Nelson
- Lorain County Workforce Development — Mike Longo
- Lorain Community College — Tracy Green
- Educational Service Center of Lorain County — Franco Gallo
- North Ridgeville City Schools — Roxann Ramsey-Caserio

✓ Discuss Aspirations

✓ Discuss Challenges and Opportunities

✓ Manage Expectations

✓ Discuss Collaboration

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Industry Panel

Citizen Task Force

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Next Steps:

- ✓ Develop A Task Force Meeting Schedule
- ✓ Establish “Call to Action” Report

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Next Pillar Discussion:

May 13, 2024

Housing and Affordable Housing

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Thank you!!