

Greater Akron's Case for Regional Workforce Intelligence



JUNE 2025 Cohort Launch

THE REGIONAL CHALLENGE:

From Outcomes to Ecosystem Understanding

In recent years, Northeast Ohio has attracted significant federal investment in workforce development and innovation, including the [U.S. Economic Development Administration's Advanced Polymer and Manufacturing Excellence \(APEX\) initiative](#) and the Sustainable Polymers Tech Hub. These efforts, together with employer-led Industry Sector Partnerships and [other workforce initiatives](#), engage employers, education providers, workforce organizations, economic development agencies, and community partners around shared goals for talent development, advanced manufacturing, sustainable polymers innovation, and regional competitiveness.

As workforce, education, economic development, and innovation initiatives continue to evolve across Northeast Ohio, there is value in understanding how organizations, programs, data assets, and partnerships connect across the broader workforce ecosystem.

Through [ConxusNEO](#), the Greater Akron Chamber serves as a workforce intermediary convening partners to strengthen talent pipelines and align workforce development efforts with industry needs. The original project sought to better understand workforce outcomes across several regional initiatives, including the Good Jobs Challenge APEX initiative, the Sustainable Polymers Tech Hub, Industry Sector Partnership activities, and related workforce development efforts.

AT A GLANCE



Organization

The Greater Akron Chamber / ConxusNEO

Organization Type

Regional Chamber of Commerce & Workforce Intermediary

Key Sector(s)

Polymers & Advanced Manufacturing

Geographic Context

Urban/ Suburban/ Regional Metro

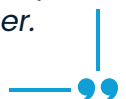
Key Partner Organizations

Team NEO (North Eastern Ohio)



We entered the cohort focused on improving data collection. We left with a broader vision of building a connected regional workforce intelligence ecosystem that helps employers, educators, and workforce partners make better decisions together.

-ConxusNEO/Greater Akron Chamber



THE DATA-DRIVEN APPROACH:

Mapping the Workforce Ecosystem

While the original ConxusNEO project scope focused on strengthening workforce data infrastructure and improving the ability to understand workforce outcomes across regional initiatives, participation in the cohort broadened the conversation beyond reporting and measurement. Exposure to peer regions, technical assistance, workforce intelligence frameworks, and examples of regional data collaboration highlighted the importance of understanding the relationships, initiatives, and information flows that support workforce development.

At the same time, the Good Jobs Challenge APEX initiative was implementing AGS Prime, a participant tracking and case management system, to support program administration and outcome measurement. **While implementation outcomes were not yet available, the effort reinforced interest in workforce pathways, employer engagement, participant success measures, and the systems used to understand workforce development activities across multiple initiatives.** This prompted broader questions about how workforce-related information is generated, shared, and used across the workforce ecosystem.

Initiative	Funder	Purpose	Local Partners
Good Jobs Challenge (APEX)	U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), Good Jobs Challenge	Expand career pathways and workforce training in polymers and advanced manufacturing	Greater Akron Chamber, ConxusNEO, MAGNET, Polymer Sector Partnership employers, colleges and career-technical institutions, labor, and community organizations
Sustainable Polymers Tech Hub	U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) Tech Hubs Program	Advance innovation, commercialization, and ecosystem development in sustainable polymers	Polymer Industry Cluster, Greater Akron Chamber, University of Akron, Case Western Reserve University, regional manufacturers, research institutions, and ecosystem partners
Industry Sector Partnership (ISP)	Ohio Office of Workforce Transformation	Convene employers to address workforce needs and strengthen sector based talent strategies	ConxusNEO, Greater Akron Chamber, Polymer Sector Partnership employers, workforce organizations, labor, education, and community partners

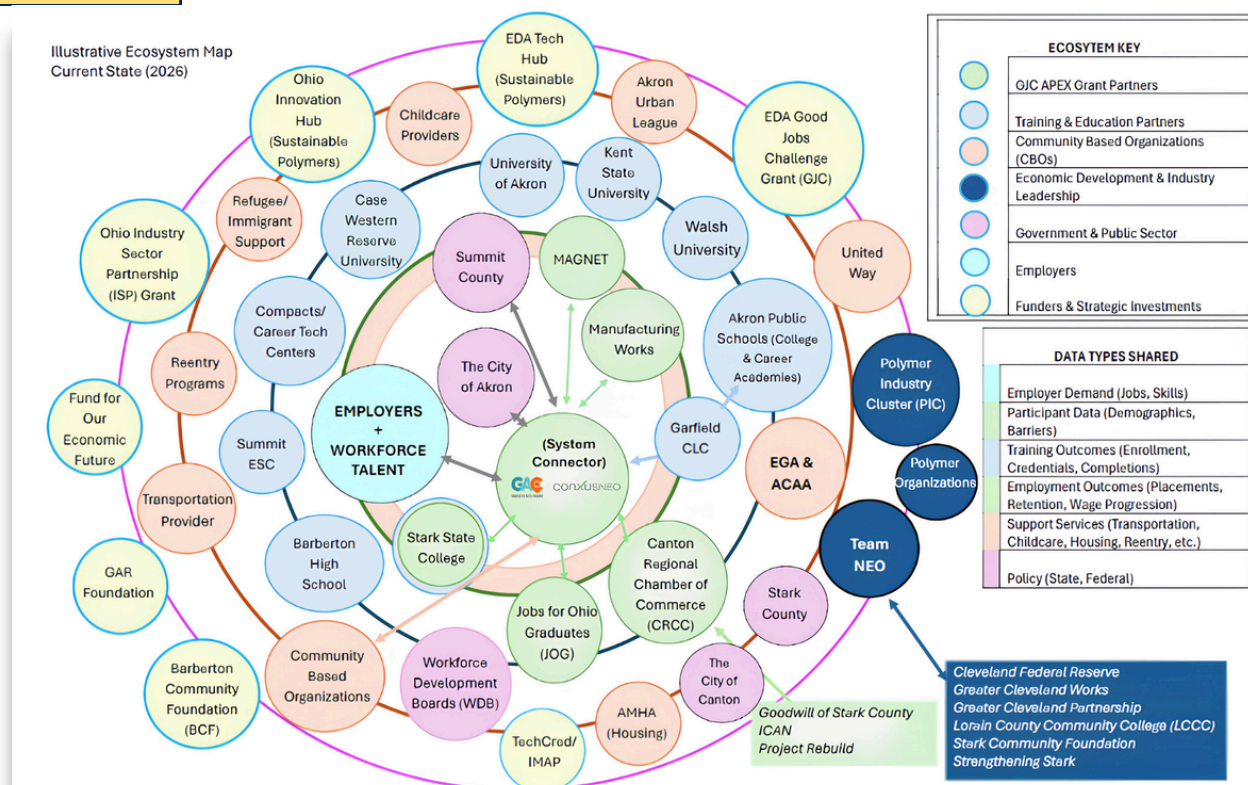
This shift ultimately led to the development of a regional workforce ecosystem map designed to visualize the network of employers, education providers, workforce organizations, economic development agencies, community partners, and supporting ConxusNEO initiatives that contribute to talent development across the region. The map provided a framework for understanding how partnerships, workforce-related information, and strategic investments connect across the ecosystem.

EARLY RESULTS & MILESTONES:

Collaborating as a Region

The ecosystem map was developed in context of the initiatives that ConxusNEO supports or convenes across Northeast Ohio. While each initiative has distinct goals, they share many of the same partners and contribute to the region's broader workforce development and talent ecosystem.

Rather than providing definitive answers, the ecosystem map generated new questions for consideration. Beyond organizational relationships, the mapping process prompted discussion about the workforce related information that supports workforce development activities across the region. Through the Good Jobs Challenge APEX program, AGS Prime was implemented to support participant tracking and case management, while workforce boards, education providers, employers, economic development organizations, community-based organizations, and public-sector partners each contribute different forms of workforce information to the ecosystem. These include employer demand, training and credential outcomes, participant engagement, support services, labor market information, wage records, business, and workforce performance indicators.

Figure 1.

ConxusNEO Ecosystem Map

The ConxusNEO Ecosystem Map (2026) illustrates the organizations, initiatives, and partnerships connected to ConxusNEO's workforce strategy and convening role within the Greater Akron Chamber. From the outer ring to the center:

- Funders & Strategic Investments (outer ring)
- Economic Development & Industry Leadership
- Community Based Organizations (CBOs)
- Education & Training Partners
- Government & Public Sector
- Employers & Workforce Talent
- GJC APEX Grant Partners (Service Delivery)
- ConxusNEO/GAC (Center)

JUNE 2026 — Co-hosted Regional Convening with Team NEO

LESSONS LEARNED & WHAT'S NEXT:

Relationship Building in Real-Time

The project identified several opportunities for future exploration, including continued refinement of the ecosystem map and validation of organizational roles within the broader workforce ecosystem. **Additional opportunities include better understanding of workforce-related data assets, stewardship, and information flows across organizations, as well as exploring shared metrics, common standards, and approaches to regional collaboration.** While these concepts remain exploratory, the cohort experience, ecosystem mapping process, and stakeholder discussions established a foundation for future conversations about workforce intelligence and regional coordination.

The ecosystem mapping process reinforced workforce intelligence from data systems and reporting. **Before exploring shared metrics, governance structures, or technology solutions, it can be valuable to understand the organizations, initiatives, relationships, and investments that shape a regional workforce ecosystem.** The project also highlighted the importance of relationships in workforce intelligence efforts. While data provides valuable insights, employers, workforce organizations, education providers, economic development agencies, and community partners all contribute perspectives that help create a more complete understanding of workforce needs and opportunities. Finally, **the mapping exercise demonstrated the value of visualizing an ecosystem before pursuing formal data-sharing arrangements or regional measurement strategies.** The map served as a tool for reflection, discussion, and identifying areas for future exploration.

The exercise also highlighted opportunities to better understand how these data assets relate to one another, who owns or stewards them, and how information is shared across organizations. Questions emerged about where workforce, education, employer, and economic development data intersect; what role systems such as AGS Prime may play within the broader ecosystem; and how partners might align around shared metrics and common measures of success. These questions extended beyond the scope of the ecosystem map itself but became an important focus of the subsequent regional convening and continue to inform discussions about workforce intelligence and regional coordination.

Learn more about the Greater Akron Chamber [here](#).