

## Transcript

### *Fed Talk: Meeting the Workforce Needs of In-Demand Industries in Ohio*

Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland

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## *Presentation*

### **Speakers:**

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Abbi Failla, Vice President, Business Operations, EASE Logistics

Scott McLemore, Member, Executive Board, Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation  
and Executive in Residence, Columbus State Community College

### **Moderator:**

Khaz Finley, Outreach Manager, Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland

### **Khaz Finley:**

Good afternoon and thank you for joining us, and welcome to today's Fed Talk. My name is Khaz Finley, outreach manager of the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland, and I'd like to welcome you here today. It's my pleasure to kick off this Fed Talk session titled Meeting the Workforce Needs of In-Demand Industries in Ohio. Fed Talk is the Cleveland Fed Speaker Series in which we share research that is relevant to our community. Past events have covered such subjects as inflation, access to labor market, and financial literacy. All of our events can be found on our website at [clevelandfed.org](https://clevelandfed.org).

A few housekeeping rules before we begin. During this event, your microphone and camera will be disabled. Please type and submit your questions to our panelists in the chat box. In case the Zoom meeting drops, please use the dial-in info provided in the invitation to join the call.

I would also like to state that these views shared today by myself and our panelists are our own and do not necessarily represent the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland, nor do they represent the Federal Reserve system. It's exciting to gather to explore the critical topic shaping our region, today and in our future, the fast-evolving landscape of in-demand jobs and the impact that is taking place highlighting Central Ohio in particular. Let's begin with painting a clear picture.

According to Jobs Ohio, Central Ohio is projected to experience the highest employment growth among Ohio regions with an 8% increase in the total workforce between 2020 and 2030. If you do the math, that's approximately 93,000 jobs, which is incredible. Here's the challenge, or sometimes people look at it as an obstacle. We may soon have jobs available that people with the skills aren't available to fill. This workforce gap could affect industries from advanced manufacturing to healthcare, and it underscores why today's conversation is so important.

You asked the question, why is this region doing so well or why is this region leading the way? One, advanced manufacturing and defense innovation is taking a major leap with Anduril Industries constructing a 5 million square foot Arsenal-1 facility in Pickaway County. This advanced manufacturing hub is expected to bring 4,000 specialized jobs to the region. Next generation manufacturing powered by Jobs Ohio Central Ohio is solidifying its place as a national leader in future-focused manufacturing, supported by Jobs Ohio through workforce development, strategic guidance and innovation resources.

Since 2022, key projects demonstrate how Jobs Ohio continues to attract cutting-edge manufacturing investments and strategic economic growth. Fueled by mega projects, across 2024 Jobs Ohio delivered a record-breaking year, economic development in itself. Ohio is ranked number two for mega projects, number three for completed deals and capital investments, and number five in new job creation nationally. This surge only underscores the momentum behind high growth sectors like logistics, IT, healthcare, and particularly advanced manufacturing. What does this say for employers and educators? It's a clear call to action for all of us, aligning skills training, certifications and education programs with the advanced roles emerging in defense, high-tech manufacturing and logistics, which our speakers look to discuss today.

Let's highlight our speakers who we'll introduce. Lavea Brachman, our non-resident senior fellow with Brookings Metro Program, Abby Failla, executive vice President of business operations at EASE Logistics, and Scott McLemore, member of Governor DeWine's Executive Workforce Committee and executive director of the Office of Talent Strategy at Columbus State Community College. Thank you all for joining us today. We appreciate your time.

Let's start with you, Lavea. Would you please share a little bit of information about what you have learned about workforce innovation as regions across the United States try to meet the demand of semiconductor industries, including in Ohio?

**Lavea Brachman:**

Wonderful. Thank you, Khaz, and thank you to everyone at the Cleveland Fed for sponsoring this conversation. Really looking forward to it.

So I'm going to talk for just a couple of minutes about the high-level findings from a case study that we undertook with the foundation, the Lumina Foundation, looking at how workforce systems can and are responding to a surge of investments in one particular sector, the semiconductor sector. Just to set this up and set the stage, we conducted dozens of interviews in five regions across the country to document the impact on regional workforce training systems and how workforce and economic development leaders are enhancing the talent pipeline and increasing training, specifically focusing on technician jobs. That is those jobs requiring certificates or two-year degrees. The five regions, Central Ohio, Phoenix, Arizona, Austin, Texas, Portland, Oregon, and upstate New York, are home to the companies that were the largest recipients of CHIP's workforce funding.

Just some backdrop. These investments, which are a combination of the CHIPS and Science Act of 2022, 25 billion allocated to companies building in those regions. There were workforce investments as well as private capital coming to the market, which really was the largest part of that investment funding, and other incentives and investments from the state levels. So while federal investment with a capitalist expansion of the semiconductor sector is a part of a wave of larger advanced industry growth that has the potential to enhance or overwhelm our workforce systems, just to provide one data point, of the jobs that risk going unfilled as a result of these

large investments in the semiconductor sector, 40% are technician jobs that are at risk of going unfilled, and this doesn't include other jobs growing out of advanced manufacturing industries more broadly. Next slide please.

So what did the study show about the pressures being exerted on the workforce systems from the semiconductor sector in particular? So number one, it showed interestingly, increased collaborations across the workforce systems, multiple systems from K through 12 to career at tech ed to community colleges. It showed workforce intermediaries that were innovating, piloting new programs. It also demanded that regions expand their outreach to new populations to expand the talent pipeline. And fourth, it showed state and local entities aligning with a lot of this. Next slide please.

So just briefly, what were those increased collaborations? So first, it involved regional intermediaries taking on new backbone functions such as acting as a convening and coordinating hub, developing shared curricula, building collaborative guiding and strategies, and sharing measurements of success. There were new collaborations across a lot of these regions among employers, workforce trainers, and we are seeing cross-training synergies among advanced industries that would be across semiconductor, electric vehicles, all kinds of advanced industries, so not just focusing on training for the semiconductor sector.

Next slide please. And in particular, we were seeing places like Ohio building competency models to evaluate these synergies, and one model that the Ohio Manufacturing Association found was an 80% overlap in competencies among and between these different training for these different industries. So what were these new innovations that are coming through as a result of the semiconductor investments? There's a lot of new investment in pre-apprenticeship program, apprenticeship, and what we are calling earn and learn program pilots. So these are programs where workers are learning while on the job, taking time off from jobs at times that are paid for by companies and using that in their jobs when they're working. Community colleges are designing and piloting new credentialing programs that expedite and tailor the training to these new needs, and high schools are creating and expanding dual degree and CTE programs as well. Next slide please.

In addition, we found by necessity, there was a great deal of outreach going on to increase and enhance the talent pipeline. As I mentioned before, there's a real risk of not filling a lot of these new jobs across the country in these different regions that we saw, and this new outreach is being undertaken through city, state and local collaboration, and that means educating new workforce populations about these opportunities, making sure that people understand that these new advanced industries are not like the old kinds of manufacturing, and really informing at all levels, middle, high school and post-secondary about the opportunities, potential opportunities for higher wage jobs and hoping to increase the talent pipeline through those means.

However, next slide please, challenges do remain, both at the systemic level and in organizations. We have a legacy in many places of fragmentation in our workforce systems, so we're up against some challenges from the past. There has been chronic challenges in terms of recruitment and retention at all junctures in the pipeline, meaning as you go from graduation from high school to community college, there are gaps and need for new kinds of skill sets. And there are capacity issues at community colleges, although they are working very hard to overcome those, but those constraints are longstanding, from hiring new faculty to capital investments and so on. And then there are some historic barriers to entry for different kinds of populations.

Next slide please. But what are some of the high level lessons learned from these regions? Next slide please. So broadly speaking, we're seeing some really useful and innovative new kinds of collaborations that I mentioned, programs that are being designed for future jobs and career pathways, not just immediate placement, meaning that people are getting skills and training that while they may train them for a particular job at the end of their short-term training session, they're getting trained for longer term careers as well. Secondly, the importance of having multiple ways for people to get into job programs. There's no one gold standard, as someone told us, to generate these new on-ramps for new populations. Third, it's collaborating to recruit and train workers across a wide region like Central Ohio is doing across the whole region and even across the state of Ohio in some places.

Strengthening the networks to boost this connectivity, meaning how do we get more faculty in place and networking among training providers so there's a continuum of training from community colleges to high schools and beyond? And this all is good for increasing regional competitiveness. And finally, not focusing just on specific employers, but as I've mentioned, industry-wide training approaches that bring together industry roundtables and leverage all these synergies among and between the advanced manufacturing sector.

So I'll stop there. I know there'll be a lot of questions, but this sets the stage I think for some changes that are coming down the pike.

**Khaz Finley:**

Thank you, Lavea. I think this sets the stage pretty well for Abby to speak in her role as an industry partner. Abby, you want to take it away from here?

**Abby Failla:**

Sure. Thanks Khaz. Thanks for having me today. So I am Abby Failla, executive vice president at EASE Logistics, and I'll do a little brief intro of who EASE is and why we got invited to speak today, but EASE, located in Central Ohio. We are a supply chain and logistics provider operating in the United States, Canada, and Mexico. We are a brokerage, we have warehouses and we have transportation fleet assets. Workforce development is really important to us. Obviously with all of the new industry coming into Ohio, all of those have supply chain and logistics needs. Many of those companies who Khaz talked about in the very beginning, EASE does work with and we're looking forward to them. Expanding and knowing everyone new that comes into the industry, logistics and supply chain is going to be really important to making sure that all of those companies can operate efficiently. So workforce development for us, we are partnering with our K-12 schools, we're partnering with universities and community colleges to make sure that we are prepared to help support all of the new industry coming into Ohio.

On the next slide, we talk about why Ohio, also something Khaz brought up, and I love this slide because there's many reasons why these great companies are choosing Ohio. We have great universities. Our government is doing a great job recruiting some really cool new companies into the state, but from a logistics standpoint, what you may not realize is Ohio is within a one-day drive of 60% of all population in the US and Canada, so that makes us a really wonderful place to be located, meaning they can get their finished product out much quicker and they can get those unfinished goods in much quicker. Our population is growing, we are creating jobs, the logistics industry, we have access to international intermodal terminals, we have great highways, we have great railways, so when it comes to logistics, Ohio really is the heart of it all.

I also wanted to talk about something else that EASE is getting involved with on the next slide, which is OSCAN. So as part of workforce development, there is a new to Central Ohio group called OSCAN, the Ohio Supply Chain Academic Network. This is specifically an industry sector partnership. It's made up of not just EASE, but this is companies from across Central Ohio and even outside of Central Ohio. If any of you are interested in joining, I will have a little call to action to have you reach out to me to get involved, but we are focusing specifically on how do we create these pathways, how do we work in collaboration with these companies coming into town to understand what their workforce needs are going to be in the immediate term and in the future term?

So as we look at what's coming in Ohio, one of the big things we look at is apprenticeships and bringing apprenticeships forward for our students. We in OSCAN look at the rest of the world and what they are doing to prepare their students. You'll see at the bottom of this slide, we have specifically benchmarked Germany, just because they have great stats on this, but they start apprenticeships around the age of 18 years old, where in the United States, it's closer to 29 years old, so we're really losing about 11 years of workforce training and development here in the United States. So OSCAN and other ISPs are really looking at those apprenticeships, those internships, those career pathways to shorten this gap with the rest of the world and understand how do we bring these things to our students earlier, how do we get them engaged earlier?

In logistics, I always say we lose our target market around the ages of eight to 10 when kids get done playing with trucks and don't really understand what logistics is about or the importance of logistics, so how do we get to them earlier and really help them understand the importance of the supply chain, all of the amazing jobs from the warehouse through the analytics? I like to say we have GEDs to doctorate degrees. There's a place for everyone in logistics and supply chain, so this organization, OSCAN, is really addressing those critical needs and bringing all of us together in one room to talk about it.

We have several different numbers that we've talked about, that job gap. In the bottom right-hand corner, that 540,000, that was a recent number from Jobs Ohio saying by 2032, that's our demand for jobs. That's what it's going to look like for open jobs. The reality is about over 50% of college graduates in Ohio decide to leave the state, so one of the big things we need to talk about is how do we retain that talent? So this is really a holistic issue and opportunity for us all to talk about and work together. How do we attract, retain, train, up-skill our workforce here to make sure we're going to meet the demand of everything coming into Ohio?

#### **Khaz Finley:**

This is great, Abby. Appreciate the information and it's a perfect segue into what Scot is going to address as well. So Scot, I'll turn it over to you.

#### **Scott McLemore:**

Thanks, Khaz, and thank you to the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland for inviting me to the conversation. I'm sorry. I'd like to start with a little bit about myself. As was mentioned, I am the interim executive director of the Office of Talent Strategy here at Columbus State Community College. That's our non-credit side of the college. I'm a retired engineer and HR executive for Honda Manufacturing, 32 years, and a first generation college student, so I graduated from Purdue University with a bachelor's in computer integrated manufacturing technology.

I want to continue the conversation around, in the next slide, the state... Well, sorry. First off, I'll talk a little bit about Columbus State. Our main campus is located downtown Columbus, Ohio. We have two campus locations and two regional learning centers. We're the second-largest college in Ohio, which most don't know, and we're serving a total of 40,000 students in total. And the college is really focused on student success and our employer partnerships, and I think with the next slide, you'll understand why that's the case.

So to continue to lay the groundwork for what's happening currently in Ohio from a manufacturing perspective, it is the largest sector of the economic sectors, and we are fourth in the nation in GDP, only behind California, Texas, and Illinois. And if you think about those, a couple of those states with much larger populations, that's saying a lot for our manufacturers here in the state and the great job that they do. And as was mentioned, many hundreds of new investment projects between 2020 and 2022, so there were significant industry investment made in the last few years. Next slide please.

And so I guess for my focus, I really want to talk about technicians, technicians, technicians, and my friends in Jobs Ohio I know would be cheering me on and trying to describe this, but I want to talk a little bit about what these roles are in advanced manufacturing. So engineering technicians and industrial technicians as are sometimes titled lead the list of new in-demand careers here in Ohio, especially Central Ohio. Many of these roles are equipment or process focused within the facilities, and usually, these facilities require two technicians for every manufacturing engineering role, so you think about the demand that there is for technicians because of that. And then technician roles require either a technical certificate or an associate's degree to enter. Next slide please.

And like everything else in our lives, technology is changing how we do things, and for advanced manufacturing, it's changing how manufacturers make their products and what the skills are needed to do that. So you can see here, it's an array of different types of skillsets that build to a multi skillset competency. So everything from safety, which is always first in manufacturing, to electrical, mechanical and fluid power systems. You've got automation and robotics, the internet of things, so how systems are now wired and information is sent and taken from the cloud, both controlling and monitoring devices that manufacture products. And then the ability for an individual or a technician to capture that information but also do analysis on that information and then document it in a way that is necessary for success in those operations is also critical as well. Next slide please.

And so this gives a little picture of how those skill sets, on the left-hand side, how those skill sets are growing in Central Ohio. This was taken from some recent Lightcast data that was provided to us, and you can see of those areas I talked about, they're either growing or rapidly growing. And then on the right-hand side, you can see the engineering technology courses offered here at Columbus State Community College which lined up nicely with those skills. So one of the things that Columbus State has done well and will continue to do well is to evaluate, much as Lavea said in her opening remarks, about how community colleges are partnering with their industry and the companies that they serve and making sure that the content within our coursework is aligned with those in-demand skills and competencies. Next slide please.

I want to talk a little bit about salaries, and this is always surprising to many. So we've got an entry-level salary for technician at roughly around \$22 an hour, mid-level at about \$30 an hour, and when you get advanced, you get up to \$48 per hour for some of these roles, and so these manufacturing careers pay very well, entry to advanced. Next slide please.

And I want to highlight an example of a success story that I'm always happy to share. So the young man in this picture, his name is Anton Dela Fuente, I think he's a 2013 Thomas Worthington High School graduate, enrolled at Columbus State in our electromechanical engineering technology program and then opted into a flexible apprenticeship program that we call Modern Manufacturing Work Study where after his second semester at Columbus State, Anton worked for Honda three days a week while continuing his coursework two days a week and getting paid for that work that he was doing. He worked for us at Honda for a year and then became a full-time technician. Anton is now an engineer. He's in an engineering role leading the conversion at Honda's plants, converting them from an internal combustion engine and setting them up for success in EVs. So he's a great success story of how someone can move into these programs and then get connected into technician opportunities in manufacturing and grow within the company. Next slide please.

And the last thing I want to talk about before turning it back over to Khaz is something that Columbus State has developed in partnership with Intel and the funding that they provided, but back to what Lavea was saying about connecting with K-12, we're taking a long term approach and have developed career exploration modules targeted for fifth through seventh grade that provide career exploration in a gamified way for young people to learn about EVs, semiconductor, biotech and pharma manufacturing, as well as clean energy, and there's some information that's in the chat that's provided. This is hosted in partnership with the Ohio Manufacturers Association on their Making Ohio website, so I encourage you all to take a look at this as well as other assets that are out there. Thank you, Khaz.

**Khaz Finley:**

Thank you, Scott. I guess we can go into the question portion, and I'm actually going to start with building on the slides you just shared and probably open up the floor to all of you. Beginning with you, Scott, you mentioned K through 12. How can we engage K through 12 students more in the process of really engaging at such a young age when their minds go all over the place and you change your direction left and right? How can we support educators as they support young people on their career path?

**Scott McLemore:**

Yeah, it's definitely a challenge, but it's something that in every one of these conversations, everyone agrees that it's so important, and I think it needs to be a multi-pronged approach. I think one of the things is, and we're doing this at Columbus State, is to educate educators. So many times, teachers, like all of us, have taken a certain path and may only have knowledge in a particular area, and may not be aware of what's happening, for example, in advanced manufacturing. So we feel like it's our role at Columbus State to educate them about what these opportunities are. What does it look like? Maybe get them inside of a facility so that they can do a walkthrough and see what it's like to build solar panels. And the other thing is provide them with assets like this one I just mentioned where they can easily and at low or no cost provide these modules to their students and incorporate that into their other educational learning opportunities that they're providing through the day.

**Khaz Finley:**

Great. Abby, I'll pose you the same question.

**Abby Failla:**

Give me the question one more time, Khaz.

**Khaz Finley:**

How can we support K through 12 educators as they try to support their young people in their career path along the way?

**Abby Failla:**

Yeah, Scot brought up some good points about just staying close and understanding. That direct alignment with industry needs and partnerships is really important. So for us, it is being involved in those business advisory councils within our districts and then understanding what pathways are currently in place and what pathways the school systems are thinking about developing, and making sure that we have that direct alignment and that the school systems and the educators really understand what the industry needs are. Columbus State does a phenomenal job of that. I think most of our community colleges and technical schools do a really nice job of that and that's why they play such an important role in workforce development, is they really understand what those needs are and can help get that into the classroom at a real level. So I think those partnerships, and the closer we can stay as businesses to our educators, the better those pathways will be formed.

**Khaz Finley:**

I've seen that firsthand, a BAC and ESC in Central Ohio working hand in hand, it's a great partnership. And Lavea, I'll pose you the same question as well.

**Lavea Brachman:**

Excellent. Well, I appreciate everything that Scot and Abby have already said. I guess maybe I'd broadened the question a little to maybe what defines success as the K through 12 fits into the pipeline? And I would highlight a couple of things. One is that we train folks starting in the K through 12, up through community college and beyond with skills that are portable so that they can use them in different contexts, different careers, different kinds of jobs, portable credentials, increases worker mobility. I think that means that our institutions have to be more networked, so there are sometimes what people call warm handoffs so that there's that connectivity.

And one thing that we saw really interestingly emerging in the semiconductor sector, but really it applies broadly, is while there are short-term training programs being created for those jobs that are perhaps coming up very quickly, really stacking those credentials and those programs so that people can come back, up skill, re-skill for new kinds of jobs. So that means that these programs need to be customized a little bit more, and we also need to have the remedial training where necessary so that people can continue. We can really draw on all populations and people can continue to advance and take advantage of the higher wages that Scot mentioned, which is so essential for supporting families.

**Khaz Finley:**

You brought up some great points right there, Lavea. To add to that, I'll pose the question to you. What skills are becoming increasingly valuable in this evolving market? Especially when you



mentioned remedial or entry-level career paths where it's a lot of emphasis on the STEM and automation, but they don't mention a lot of the gaps that we have where it's the manual operation that individuals may need those skills as well.

**Lavea Brachman:**

Sure. Well, I think a lot of it is about increasing folks' ability to... I mean, even the job technician conveys that everyone needs to have some kind of tech training because you're not working on a factory floor that is only manual labor anymore. All the factories have some computer programming needs, and so we really need to train everybody to have that baseline of knowledge. So it's really I think starting there with more highly trained technical, but then you have to have a foundation, obviously the numeracy and literacy foundation that allows people to advance longer term in their careers. And I'd say this applies in all sectors, food industry, as mentioned, electric vehicles, so really across many kinds of sectors.

**Khaz Finley:**

Yeah, you see it a lot out here today, an emphasis on what you, quote unquote, call "soft skills," but I use those air quotes very softly because it is an emphasis on it because it's needed in our professional-

**Lavea Brachman:**

Interpersonal skills if you're talking about management skills. Absolutely, Khaz. Absolutely.

**Khaz Finley:**

A lot of titles going out there, but it's necessary to interact and it's probably more essential right now than ever. For Scot and Abby, in which industries or occupations do you see the greatest potential for career progression and advancement for workers who do not hold the traditional college degree? Scot, you first.

**Scott McLemore:**

Okay, sure. Well, I think there are many and they're growing all the time. So I think even the sectors that I mentioned, so, well, defense, any of the ones that we really mentioned, defense, automotive, EV, manufacturing. There are now companies that are offering opportunities in fabrication, whether that's machining or foraging, those types of things, and from traditional, what one would consider traditional to more advanced. So I think that as technology continues to evolve in all these sectors, semiconductor included, for example, Intel really advised and supported us with the development of a semiconductor certificate. So it's a two semester opportunity for individuals that don't have the background in semiconductor to learn and get prepared for those roles, but there are more and more companies that are offering those types of opportunities, and at the same time, offering an opportunity for their incumbent workforce to go back for training, whether that's a community college or at a career tech center and continue to up-skill, or they're going to train them on the job.

So I think it's multiple sectors really across the board. I don't know that I could just limit it to just a few because I think there's opportunities, entry level and then continuing up through most of advanced manufacturing companies that I'm aware of.

**Khaz Finley:**

And you, Abby? Do you have anything to add?

**Abby Failla:**

Yeah, I would just add onto what Scot said about credentialing. I think the layering of credentials and certifications is going to become increasingly important as the work landscape changes. Advanced manufacturing has great entry level positions that can grow into plant supervisors and managers, things like that if we are getting those right credentials. In supply chain and logistics, I saw someone earlier ask a question specifically about warehouse jobs, and you're right, there are needed jobs and it does have this stigma of not being the greatest. I would say if you haven't been in a warehouse in a while, they're different than they used to be. If you have a stereotype of what a warehouse looks like, feels like in your mind, I would encourage you reach out to me and let's get you into one of our warehouses to take a tour.

But even within EASE, our entry level positions always have that career growth of being able to become a logistics coordinator or a trucking dispatcher or a supply chain analyst. It really is making sure that our workforce stays curious and continues to up-skill themselves and reaches out for those credentials that we can layer on top of each other, even if they don't have a traditional education through a university.

**Scott McLemore:**

Khaz, sorry, if I could go back, I would like to highlight a sector. While I wouldn't limit it to a particular sector, I do want to highlight a sector that I think is doing what you're asking very well, and that's the biotech and the pharmaceutical manufacturing industry here in Central Ohio, meaning they're offering opportunities for people with no experience at all to complete a boot camp which Columbus State offers, a six to eight week boot camp where individuals learn about good manufacturing practices. And then in addition to that, if they want to go onto the pharmaceutical manufacturing side, they can learn about fundamentals of electronics, mechanical systems, electrical systems. And so companies like Amgen, Andelyn Biosciences, Forge, Stack, Hikma, those companies are really doing a nice job of offering qualified individuals with only the completion of that boot camp and with 21st century skills to apply and get hired into these roles, and then continue to be up-skilled. So I think the bioscience and pharmaceutical manufacturers in the area are really doing it well.

**Khaz Finley:**

That's great to hear.

**Lavea Brachman:**

If I could jump in on one other... Oh, go ahead Khaz.

**Khaz Finley:**

No, go ahead.

**Lavea Brachman:**

I was going to jump in, sort of I guess piggybacking on Scot's comments but also going back to our discussion about K through 12 and the rest of the training system. I think one thing that we probably are looking to improve is the opportunity costs of leaving a current job. So for instance, if someone is in a lower paying job but it's a little bit safer to have gone into that, whether it's retail or something that's a known quantity, it is very hard to leave that job which may be very much lower paying, but then to go back, get trained, that's a lot to ask. So thinking through how do we help folks with those opportunity costs of leaving a job, training for a future industry, and filling those gaps between some of these newer programs and what Columbus State and other places offer, I think that's a really important piece to the puzzle here.

**Khaz Finley:**

Yeah, I completely agree with that as well. And I know here at the Fed, the Occupational Mobility Explorer, it allows individuals to navigate, see what's out there, and to all of your points, see the transferable skills from starting at one job rack and just seeing how it... I say a tree branch, it just shows the branches that spawn out just from one root. So from that point, the transferable skills really work, and they really are providing individuals an opportunity, just really exposure where they really traditionally may not have had that opportunity in the past, just to see it. I'll start with you, Lavea, with this question. What strategies can individuals and organizations adopt to stay ahead in acquiring and maintaining the skills necessary to provide support for these in-demand jobs?

**Lavea Brachman:**

What strategies can individuals deploy?

**Khaz Finley:**

Well, first individuals, what strategies can individuals, but also the organizations to accommodate these individuals?

**Lavea Brachman:**

Well, I think a lot of it is staying ahead of what's coming down the pike, but I think that's partially on some of the institutions to help folks do that. And I know Scot has worked on this, but ways that people can come in and out of community college, get certificates, go back to work, so keeping on top of those needs. But I think from a bigger picture, there's the supply side, so the organizations that are training workers, and then there's the demand side, which are the corporations. And I mentioned at the top that there seems to be more collaboration going on between those two, whether it's between Columbus State and companies here in Central Ohio. And I am in Central Ohio, though I'm a non-resident senior fellow at Brookings, so I'm a proud Ohio Buckeye as well. So you need to see these systems I think, and encourage more collaboration.

And one thing I'll point out is in some of the work we did in the study, we saw some interesting things going on in Austin which I'll mention for a moment, which is the business community through one of their backbone organizations collaborating closely with Austin Community College on a new five-year strategy, and it's really pushing them to think about how they're collaborating for new classes, to your point, Khaz, for the future. So in some cases, the companies are supplying faculty to the community colleges, which is so important and so helpful

to the colleges, and then it redounds back to the benefit of the companies as well when these workers emerge with the on-demand skills that the faculty or their employers knew they needed. So there's a lot of, I think, synergies and cross discussions that are going on that are important.

**Khaz Finley:**

That's great, Lavea. Building on that, Abby, I want to ask, what's the best approach we can take? Having this knowledge of what's going on in you guys' region, really spreading the word throughout the rest of, selfishly, our district, but also throughout the country of how individuals can take advantage of these opportunities, both from the individuals trying to take a part of it but also for organizations looking for that future workforce and current workforce.

**Abby Failla:**

Yeah, that's where the tough work comes in, Khaz. It's really about us being able to promote our state and everything that is going on in our state to those outside of Ohio to make them aware of what is happening here, and attract really great talent into our state to help fill some of these positions that we know are coming. Inside our state, it is all of us partnering together. It seems like in my experience in the past, organizations, both educators and companies, have been working in silos with themselves and everyone wants to be working in the same direction, but we need to really see a more consolidated effort and partnership between our employers and our educators to make sure that we're hitting the mark, and when we say we're going to have jobs ready for these students, that we actually have them and we're giving them those clear pathways to make sure that they're getting there.

It's understanding that we need these transferable skills. I think it is instilling in our current workforce and our future workforce just that mindset of a commitment to lifelong learning. Things are changing so fast, right? Automation's coming, AI is here. It changes faster than we can learn it, so maintaining lifelong learning, staying curious, committing to maintaining tech savviness, and just doing one thing a day that gets you into the tech space, even if it's just asking ChatGPT a question, understanding how AI works, that will set you ahead. So I think it's on all of us to be marketers for our state and for these companies and for these jobs as we're talking to people and have opportunities like this to get the word out of the amazing opportunities that are in and are coming to Ohio. And then as educators and as employers, it's our job to work together to create those very clear pathways to make sure people know how to take advantage of them and who to reach out to in their community and take advantage of those community resources that we do have available.

**Khaz Finley:**

Thanks, Abby.

**Abby Failla:**

Sure.

**Khaz Finley:**

Now, I'm going to try to tackle this chat. It's a lot going on. You guys are sparking a great conversation, so here we go. Our first question is how are we addressing the job quality issues in the warehousing and logistics industry? So we touched on that a little bit, but it's in demand but

notoriously not the greatest for workers. So not a lot of advancement potential, physically demanding, low wages. Do you guys have anything from a knowledge perspective? Maybe I go to Abby.

**Abby Failla:**

Yeah, I saw that comment which is what made me make the comment before about if you haven't been in a warehouse in a while, they are much more advanced than they have been in the past, so I would love to learn a little bit more about this question and understanding whether or not the notoriously greatest for workers feels like maybe an older stereotype for me, but I'm sure that people think that. So I think that when you come in, there are those entry-level positions that we need, right? Your warehouse workers, your pickers, your packers. You can get your forklift certification to drive a forklift. When I talk about being more tech-savvy, we are seeing whether it is you are a forklift driver or you're going through some skilled training to innovate our forklifts to make them autonomously driven, and then you're operating it behind the scenes. So now you've learned that you can operate five forklifts at a time behind a computer. That's where we're going, right?

Or can you come in and give us some ideas to help innovate? And maybe we're doing things with drones inside our warehouses instead of with forklifts. So inside of those warehouse facilities, it's rapidly changing, but it is also, and I would believe this true everywhere, not just at EASE, when you come in and work as one of those entry-level positions, if you show up and you have those human skills and you think creatively and you have curiosity, there are all of these opportunities to become in a management position, to be a logistics supervisor, to be a dispatcher. So there's these natural career progressions and employees have to take advantage of those. We have to instill in our employees and in those entering the workforce that your career is also your responsibility, so making sure that you talk to your manager and talk about your growth aspirations and where you want to go and what you want to do is so important.

As an employer, we don't know where you want to go and where you want to grow unless we have those conversations, and we can only do so much as employers without our employees taking that step and reaching out. We offer here at EASE, we take advantage of the Ohio Tech Cred program, which is an amazing program open to everyone throughout the state. If you have not heard of it, you have to apply through your employer, but we love taking advantage of those programs that are at no cost to our employees to do, no out-of-pocket cost. It can go get them new trainings, they can get them skilled, it can get them credentials. So I would say talk to your employers. If you're in one of these warehouse positions and you feel like you're stuck and just on that hamster wheel every day, please talk to your employer and see what they offer if you're not aware to help start that career path.

So I love this question. It's also one of those, logistics and supply chain and warehousing is something that we need to do a better job of teaching people about the actual careers that exist there.

**Khaz Finley:**

Great answers. Very familiar with Tech Cred, and a great program.

**Abby Failla:**

Great program.

**Khaz Finley:**

Here's a question about displaced workers. Many of our regions are older demographically. How are we making the adjustments to utilize an older worker? I'll turn to you, Lavea. Can you provide us any insight on that?

**Lavea Brachman:**

Great question. Well, I think one thing that definitely came out of this work on the semiconductor sector, which is broadly applicable, is really that we have to draw on all of our populations to fill our jobs. We are having a talent crunch, and so it really is about drawing on the skill sets and all of our broader populations, whether it's in our rural areas, our urban areas, it's older workers, younger workers, veterans. I think that these are... And to the point we were discussing earlier about remaining open to gaining new skills, I think when you put all that together, you have a brighter picture for how we're going to advance all of our industries in this country.

**Khaz Finley:**

That's a great answer. Skipping down to another question for the sake of time. Are there gaps in advanced manufacturing workforce providers in Central Ohio outside of community colleges, and which certifications are most useful for entry level placement? I'll ask you that one, Scott.

**Scott McLemore:**

Khaz, can you ask the question again? The gaps, I wasn't clear about what they were asking about the gaps.

**Khaz Finley:**

They were asking if there were gaps in advanced manufacturing workers, workforce providers in Central Ohio?

**Scott McLemore:**

Workforce providers, gaps in workforce providers.

**Khaz Finley:**

Just outside of community college in particular.

**Scott McLemore:**

I don't know if I could speak to the gaps. I'm not sure I understand the question exactly. I think there's an opportunity for us to continue to collaborate in a more effective way, definitely. I think Abby's touched on it, Lavea's definitely touched on it. In terms of the ecosystem that is workforce development in Ohio, I think especially Central Ohio, I can speak to it. It's much more collaborative today than it was 10 years ago, and you have organizations, I see my friend Lisa Pat McDaniel from Aspire, the Central Ohio Workforce Development Board in the chat. That organization is an example of what I might call a hub for workforce development where they're bringing nonprofit organizations together and other workforce development entities to develop a network that's much more cohesive and aligned to the in-demand jobs, so that's one

example of how things I think are getting stronger. It's through more effective communication, through more effective offerings and aligned offerings.

And funding, what I've noticed too since I've been in this role for three years, funding is now being more aligned, whether it's from the federal government or from the state, where you have these collaborative networks that bring together their strengths so that they can do a better job of delivering workforce development at various levels or in various parts of a region. So I think whether it's Columbus State, working with other community colleges through the Ohio Association of Community Colleges and ODHE, to quickly ramp up a semiconductor certificate that stacks into an associate's degree as an example, and doing that within a year, which is no small feat, but I think there are opportunities like that in Central Ohio and organizations that are really focused on not so much, "This is my territory. Don't come in and I'm not going to play with you," but instead, it's much more collaborative and it's a sharing of best practice.

I love what Lavea was saying about Austin. I've got some colleagues down there. We're going to take what they're doing there and we're going to apply it here. That's how you do it. You're not going to start with a blank piece of paper and try to figure out on your own. It doesn't make any sense. So I think it's knowing and developing that network so that we can better serve our communities in that way.

**Khaz Finley:**

And to add to it too, when those businesses come in and tell you exactly what they want and even put their checks in the pot-

**Scott McLemore:**

Yeah. Yeah. No, it's a great point.

**Khaz Finley:**

[inaudible 00:54:29].

**Scott McLemore:**

It's developing these relationships and doing this in a quick way, and then being able to turn around and tell them the story effectively of how we do that together. That's how we're going to get more businesses to come in and that's how we're going to get businesses to expand. It's being effective, I think, at those two things.

**Khaz Finley:**

Yeah, this was great. I knew we weren't going to get close to time because this is a fantastic just conversation in general. I want to thank everyone for their questions that are in the chat. We're going to share them with all of our speakers and we will respond to your questions, whether it's in the chat or via email. We'll have those conversations, share with you hopefully in the chat soon, but for the sake of time, we're going to wrap up. I want to thank all of our speakers for this informative discussion. In the chat, you should see a link to a post-session survey. This survey will pop up in your browser after this Zoom session is closed. We invite you to take a moment to complete this survey to share your valuable feedback. Information about today's program will be sent in a follow-up email. A video and audio recording of the event will also be posted on

[clevelandfed.org/fedtalk](https://clevelandfed.org/fedtalk). You can also listen to this and previous Fed Talk programs by subscribing to the Fed Talk podcast, available wherever you listen to podcasts.

We invite you to join us in person at our Cleveland Fed location or virtually on September 22nd, 2025 from 12:00 to 12:45 for a Q&A with President Beth Hammack. Registration is required and a link will be placed in the chat, or you can visit [clevelandfed.org](https://clevelandfed.org) for more information.

I want to thank Scott McLemore, Abby Failla and Lavea Brachman for their participation, as well as our AV staff and everybody that has contributed. Thank you guys for attending. This was a riveting conversation. It'll go on, and thank you for contributing to the progress and actually what we're doing right now, increasing the awareness to this important topic. My name is Khaz Finley. Thank you again. Have a good day.