



Voices
& Choices

REPORT
On The Public's
Priorities For
Northeast
Ohio's Future

The Fund for Our Economic Future

The Fund is an unprecedented collaboration among over 80 philanthropic organizations from across Northeast Ohio. Its goal is to encourage and advance an agenda for regional economic transformation. In its first three years, the initiative raised more than \$35 million to further its objectives. (www.futurefundneo.org)

AmericaSpeaks

AmericaSpeaks is a nonprofit organization that engages citizens in the most important public decisions that impact their lives. Since 1997, *AmericaSpeaks* has conducted 21st Century Town Meetings across the country and around the world on such subjects as the redevelopment of the World Trade Center after 9/11, the creation of Washington D.C.'s municipal budget, and the development of global priorities at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. (www.americaspeaks.org)

The Universities Collaborative

The Universities Collaborative is a coalition of local institutions of higher learning that has served as a key partner in the implementation of Voices & Choices and the Dashboard of Regional Economic Indicators. The Collaborative seeks to play a significant role in strengthening the region's civic infrastructure and capacity through Voices & Choices.



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To enliven our Regional Town Meetings, Voices & Choices invited local artists and poets to observe the forums and produce works based on what they saw and heard. The poems and paintings were then presented to Town Meeting participants at the end of the day.



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Executive Summary

Voices & Choices was created by the Fund for Our Economic Future to develop a public mandate for change that will produce a stronger region with more jobs and better opportunities for everyone.

Over the past year and a half, Voices & Choices has engaged 21,000 people from across our 16-country region and educated hundreds of thousands more. The result has been a greater awareness of the challenges that face Northeast Ohio as a region and a shared set of priorities to overcome those challenges.

Our Assets

Three thousand Northeast Ohioans took part in one-on-one interviews during the fall of 2005 to identify the things that make Northeast Ohio special and must be preserved and built upon as we look to the future. Twelve regional assets emerged from these interviews – twelve vital elements of our region that make Northeast Ohio unique and a great place to live.

Among the aspects of the region that people said make it special are its people, its arts and culture, and its history as a place where people can find a career to support a family. People value the region's diversity, its natural resources and its affordable cost of living.

Our Challenges

Fifteen thousand Northeast Ohioans participated in 11 Leadership Workshops, our first Regional Town Meeting, and hundreds of Community Conversations to identify the most pressing challenges facing Northeast Ohio. Across these many different forums, citizens from every walk of life and every corner of the region identified six challenges that must be overcome.

- Training workers for current and future jobs
- Improving racial inclusion and income equality
- Attracting and growing businesses
- Reducing government fragmentation and inefficiency
- Ensuring equitable school funding and accountability
- Reducing sprawl and improving regional connectivity

Tough Choices

In early 2006, Voices & Choices convened a diverse group of experts to identify a broad set of options for addressing the region's most pressing challenges based on input from the public and the public's priorities. In addition to defining the potential solutions that the region might choose to pursue, the experts were tasked with describing the pros and cons of each solution to ensure that citizens could make informed decisions between them.

In June, 200 regional leaders reviewed and gave input on the options, after which they were finalized and presented to the public. For each challenge, three to four goals were identified as well as a set of specific solutions under each goal (for a total of 20 goals and 49 solutions across the six challenges.)

Our Goals and Solutions

Nine hundred citizens took part in the second Regional Town Meeting on September 16 to make tough choices about the most important goals and solutions the region must adopt to overcome its challenges. They were joined by 1,700 citizens who evaluated the goals and solutions by completing Online Choicebooks.

Ten goals were identified at the Regional Town Meeting as the most critical for addressing each regional challenge (see list to the right.) These priority goals, which were largely echoed by online participants, were then evaluated based on which goals would do the most to create a more competitive regional economy. The three goals that rose to the top were:

- 1) Plan for the future development and growth of the region
- 2) Ensure that students have the financial resources they need to succeed
- 3) Improve workforce training programs

Participants were then each given five NEO Bucks to invest in the solutions that they believed would be most effective at strengthening the region. Top solutions receiving the most NEO Bucks at the Regional Town Meeting included shifting how the state funds public schools, investing in internship and mentoring programs, and increasing

funding for higher education. Participants supported reducing the burden of health care costs on businesses, investing in a region-wide association of planning agencies, creating a regional land-use plan, helping high school students take college courses, and supporting incubators for small businesses.

Evaluating Voices & Choices

Voices & Choices participants overwhelmingly rated their experience with the program positively:

- 90% of Leadership Workshop participants described them as excellent (38%) or good (52%)
- 90% of Regional Town Meeting I participants described it as excellent (50%) or good (40%)
- 90% of Community Conversation participants described them as excellent (53%) or good (37%)
- 80% said they strongly enjoyed (26%) or enjoyed (54%) the Online Choicebooks
- 88% of Regional Town Meeting II participants said it was excellent (45%) or good (43%)

Regional Goals

Participants at Regional Town Meeting II prioritized the following goals for the region:

- Make a post-secondary education in the region more affordable, accessible and achievable
- Improve workforce training programs and ensure they match the need of both workers and employers
- Increase the availability of quality education and training for low-income resident and people of color
- Increase public and private investment and support for businesses and local entrepreneurs
- Reduce the cost of doing business in the region and increase business productivity
- Encourage local governments to work together or combine services to reduce duplication
- Ensure that schools and students have the financial resources they need to succeed
- Create a more innovative education system to support the needs of students
- Increase parental and community involvement in students' education
- Plan for the future development and growth of the region



Our Path

Where Have We Been?



June 2005

August 2005

Leadership Teams

June 2005 – Ongoing

Multi-sector committees of leaders in ten areas of the region formed to support developing regional priorities to revitalize Northeast Ohio's economy.

Citizen Interviews

August – December 2005

3,000 citizens participated in one-on-one interviews to identify the region's greatest strengths.

Leadership Workshops

August – September 2005

1,000 leaders representing governments, businesses and non-profits participated in 11 four-hour workshops to develop a preliminary list of challenges facing the region.

Regional Town Meeting I

November 2005

750 citizens and leaders participated in a 21st Century Town Meeting to begin to prioritize regional challenges.

Educating Hundreds of Thousands about the Regional Economy

Over the past year and a half, **Voices & Choices** has:

- Distributed more than 53,000 discussion guides and reports
- Received more than 70,000 visits and 1 million hits on its web site
- Sent more than 100,000 email messages to its network of citizens and leaders
- Logged more than 450 stories in newspapers and on television for a total exposure of more than 39 million viewings



“In creating a process of public engagement that draws on the broad community, the [Fund for Our Economic Future] has set an impressive example for all of us, encouraging fresh approaches to reinventing Northeast Ohio.”

- The Akron Beacon Journal



February 2006

July 2006

September 2006

Community Conversations

February – June 2006

13,500 Northeast Ohioans participated in discussions in homes, schools, businesses and community centers to prioritize challenges and brainstorm solutions.

Leadership Summit

June 2006

200 leaders came together to provide input on the creation of a set of options for addressing the region's six greatest challenges.

Online Choicebooks

July – September 2006

1,700 people completed interactive online surveys to prioritize solutions for addressing each of the region's six greatest challenges.

Make Your Choice

September 2006

Ten of the region's public and private television stations joined together to broadcast a series of joint reports on the regional economy that were viewed by hundreds of thousands of people across the region.

Regional Town Meeting II

September 2006

900 citizens and leaders participated in a 21st Century Town Meeting to identify priorities for overcoming the region's greatest challenges.

“Change will also require some new beliefs – new to Northeast Ohio at least: That the fates of people from Cleveland to rural Carroll County are intertwined. That if a region of 4 million people cooperates to leverage its many assets, it can be greater than the sum of those parts. Regionalism remains a mushy concept, but thanks to efforts like Voices and Choices and the Fund for Our Economic Future, it's gaining focus.”

- The Plain Dealer

“Voices & Choices appears to be more than just another regional push for Northeast Ohio. It actually seems to have a strong chance for success. That would be good news for those who wish to continue living and – hopefully – prospering here.”

- The News-Herald

Our Voices

Who Has Participated?

21,000 participants in interviews, workshops, town meetings, community conversations and online choicebooks helped to define our regional priorities for Northeast Ohio. Who were these people?

Gender

	NEO Actual	Citizen Interviews ¹	Leadership Workshops ²	Town Meeting I ³	Community Conversations ⁴	Online Choice-books ⁵	Town Meeting II ⁶
Female	52%	60%	42%	51%	58%	53%	53%
Male	48%	40%	58%	49%	42%	47%	47%

Age

	NEO Actual	Citizen Interviews	Leadership Workshops	Town Meeting I	Community Conversations	Online Choice-books	Town Meeting II
15-34	35%	40%	10%	27%	39%	23%	29%
35-44	22%	15%	14%	16%	15%	22%	11%
45-54	18%	23%	30%	21%	21%	28%	25%
55-64	11%	15%	24%	21%	14%	21%	20%
Over 65	20%	7%	21%	14%	10%	7%	16%

Geography

	NEO Actual	Citizen Interviews	Leadership Workshops	Town Meeting I	Community Conversations	Online Choice-books	Town Meeting II
Ashland/Wayne/Richland**	7%	2%	14%	3%	19%	6%	10%
Ashtabula/Lake/Geauga	10%	16%	14%	9%	20%	9%	6%
Cuyahoga	33%	27%	25%	39%	21%	42%	34%
Lorain	7%	14%	9%	7%	8%	7%	6%
Medina/Portage/Summit	20%	27%	17%	33%	18%	20%	29%
Stark/Carroll	10%	7%	8%	7%	10%	5%	9%
Trumbull/Mahoning/Columbiana	14%	7%	14%	2%	11%	7%	5%

**Richland County was added mid-way through the process and is only represented in the Choicebooks and Town Meeting II.

Race/Ethnicity

	NEO Actual	Citizen Interviews	Leadership Workshops	Town Meeting I	Community Conversations	Online Choice-books	Town Meeting II
African American	14%	29%	12%	26%	15%	8%	30%
Asian American	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%
Caucasian	82%	65%	88%	68%	78%	87%	61%
Hispanic/Latino	2%	2%	1%	>1%	3%	1%	3%
Native American	1%	>1%	1%	1%	1%	>1%	1%
Multi-Racial/Other	1%	2%	1%	5%	2%	3%	7%

Household Income

	NEO Actual	Citizen Interviews	Leadership Workshops	Town Meeting I	Community Conversations	Online Choice-books	Town Meeting II
<\$20,000	23%	NA	NA	11%	NA	7%	12%
\$20 - \$39K	25%	NA	NA	16%	NA	12%	14%
\$40K - \$74K	32%	NA	NA	28%	NA	29%	27%
>\$75,000	20%	NA	NA	37%	NA	40%	33%
Not Sure/Prefer Not to Answer	NA	NA	NA	8%	NA	12%	14%

1 Based on a sample of 997 Citizen Interviews that were analyzed out of the total pool of interviews (demographic information was not collected from some Interviewees.)

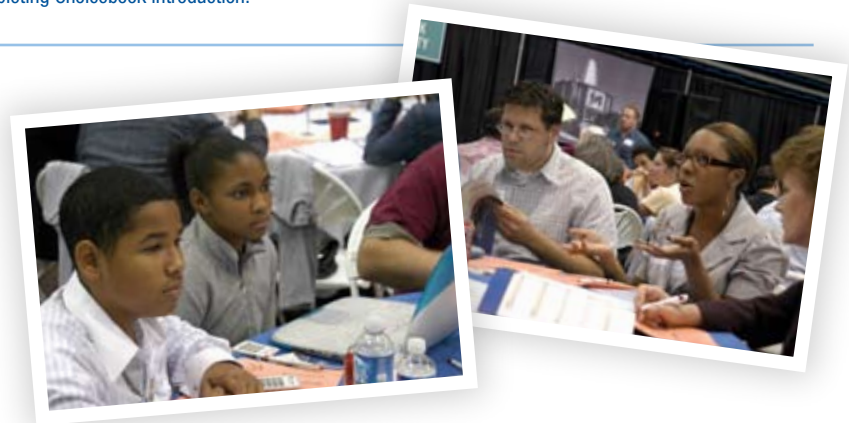
2 Based on keypad polling results from 11 Leadership Workshops.

3 Based on keypad polling results from Regional Town Meeting I.

4 Based on demographic data submitted by 7,300 Community Conversation participants (demographic information was not collected from some Community Conversation participants.)

5 Based on data submitted by all Choicebook participants when completing Choicebook introduction.

6 Based on keypad polling results from Regional Town Meeting II.



Our Assets

What Makes Northeast Ohio Special?



What do we love about our region that must be preserved and built upon as we look to the future? Last Fall, more than 3,000 citizens participated in one-on-one interviews to talk about Northeast Ohio's strengths and assets.

Twelve assets emerged from the interviews in response to the question: "What makes Northeast Ohio special?"

Family and Roots Make Northeast Ohio Home

Nearly half of interviewees referred to their family, friends and deep roots in the region when talking about what makes Northeast Ohio special to them. People know they belong here and know how their family is tied into the community.

Arts and Culture Put Us on the World Stage

Northeast Ohioans value the arts and cultural amenities that make the region a livable and exciting place. Comments from citizens were infused with a sense of pride in the world-class qualities of the organizations and institutions of the region. The most often cited organizations were in downtown Cleveland and University Circle, but also included others such as the Youngstown Symphony, Akron Natatorium and Blossom Music Center.

I Have a Job Here

Over a quarter of interviewees talked about the work they do as something that keeps them here and makes the region special. Many talked about the region's history as a place where someone can find a career and support his or her family.

Diversity of People and Cultures

The fourth most frequent theme from interviewees was the diversity of people and culture in Northeast Ohio. People value the region's tolerance, its history and heritage, its variety, and its diversity of points of view.

Lake Erie: A Public Treasure

Citizens envision great things for Lake Erie, one of Northeast Ohio's public treasures. People said they enjoyed the lake and shore for the beauty, activities and opportunities they bring. But an equal number of people hoped that it can be more – to excite those who live in Northeast Ohio and to attract new people to the area.

An Affordable, High Quality Lifestyle You Can't Find Anywhere Else

Cost of living in Northeast Ohio for basic necessities and housing were seen as a strong advantage of living in the region. People saw the region as supporting a high quality of life with excellent amenities for much less cost than other parts of the country.

Sense of Community

Northeast Ohioans consistently talked about the sense of community here that makes this region special to them. They described a sense of familiarity and getting along even while enjoying a diverse mix of people, places and activities.

Strong Educational Resources

Interviews were peppered with comments about the quality, strength and variety of educational opportunities and choices in institutions and school systems throughout the region. Residents said that many schools in the region, especially colleges and universities, are first class.

Midwest Values

People spoke frequently about a set of attitudes and values that make Northeast Ohio a great place to raise a family, often described as "Midwest values." Northeast Ohioans are "real," friendly, and have a strong work ethic.

Rural-Urban Options: Something for Everyone

Many interviewees appreciated being able to 'retreat' to the country or to a small town, but still have the conveniences of the city nearby. They described the region as a wonderful mix of intimate community and big city, of farmland and skyscrapers.

The Value of Nature and the Natural Environment

Whether they live in rural areas, or in the center city, residents described the abundant natural resources of Northeast Ohio with pride, recognizing that our productive agricultural land, abundant fresh water supply, wineries, and forests contribute to the regional economy as well as our quality of life.

Beauty of Place

Across the interviews, references to the beauty of Northeast Ohio were ubiquitous. People talked about the region's waterways, about its parks and tree-lined streets, about its changing seasons, and about the architecture of its built structures.



Our Challenges

What Obstacles Must We Overcome?

Six challenges emerged as the greatest obstacles to revitalizing Northeast Ohio from the 15,000 citizens and leaders who participated in 11 Leadership Workshops, our first Regional Town Meeting, and hundreds of Community Conversations last year.

These challenges represent the shared views of thousands of leaders and citizens, and closely align with many of the findings of economists working with Voices & Choices and the Fund for Our Economic Future.



a. All young people should go to school until
b. All schools should have air conditioned
c. People should recycle their garbage
d. All schools should have French through

Training Workers for Current and Future Jobs

Northeast Ohio must create a highly skilled workforce that is prepared for current and future jobs. Regions with highly educated workers tend to have more jobs with better pay. A strong workforce attracts companies to a region and creates an environment that supports innovation.

Improving Racial Inclusion and Income Equality

Northeast Ohio must reduce the segregation of African American and Latino communities and close the region's income gap. Regions with strong economies are more likely to have a smaller income gap and less isolation of communities of color.

Attracting and Growing Businesses

Northeast Ohio must attract companies to the region and develop new businesses. This means lowering the cost of doing business here and investing in new and existing companies that are in the region or may move here.





Reducing Government Fragmentation and Inefficiency

Northeast Ohio must increase the efficiency of our many local governments and improve their ability to work together to improve the region. When regions have too many governments, it becomes difficult for them to work together and pursue regional goals. All too often, our many communities compete against each other rather than cooperating to improve the region as a whole.

Ensuring Equitable School Funding and Accountability

Northeast Ohio must ensure that all students have the resources and support they need to succeed in school and become productive members of the community. While Northeast Ohio is blessed with a number of excellent, nationally recognized school districts, large numbers of the region's children go to schools with low academic success, poor graduation rates and wide achievement gaps.

Reducing Sprawl and Improving Regional Connectivity

Northeast Ohio must reduce the negative impacts of sprawl and better connect the region's communities. Many aspects of what people love about Northeast Ohio is threatened by the movement of people and businesses out of the region's cities and the rapid development of its rural areas. As our population spreads out across the region, our core cities and their neighboring suburbs face continued disinvestment, while rural communities face the pressures of rapid development.

Our Priorities

What Are Our Goals and Solutions?

Criteria for Evaluating Goals and Solutions

Town Meeting participants were asked to generate a list of criteria for evaluating the region's goals and solutions. The following six criteria rose to the top when asked to prioritize them using keypad polling.

- 1) Will it benefit the entire Northeast Ohio region (inclusive of all people across all geographies and income levels)?
- 2) Will it be achievable and cost effective?
- 3) Will it provide a long-term (sustainable) foundation for economic growth?
- 4) Will it be embraced by leadership – public and private?
- 5) Will it have measurable outcomes that we can track over time?
- 6) Will it build on and leverage current strengths and assets?

Nearly 2,500 citizens prioritized regional goals and solutions for overcoming Northeast Ohio's top challenges by attending the second Regional Town Meeting on September 16 and completing interactive Online Choicebooks.

Within each of the six top challenges described on pages 10-11, citizens evaluated a set of three to four goals for addressing each challenge as well as a set of specific solutions under each goal (for a total of 20 goals and 49 solutions across the six challenges.)

These goals and solutions were developed by a diverse group of local experts based on public priorities in order to present the tough choices that the region needs to make in deciding where to invest its resources.

REGIONAL TOWN MEETING II

Who Participated in the Second Regional Town Meeting?

Nine hundred citizens from across Northeast Ohio came together at the University of Akron on September 16, 2006, to make tough choices about how the region should invest its resources to create a more competitive economy. Participants in the day-long meeting sat at round tables of 10 with trained facilitators and used keypad polling and groupware computers to identify collective priorities.

Regional Town Meeting II was highly representative of the diversity of the Northeast Ohio region by gender, geography, race, income and employment status. Residents from the Mahoning Valley, Caucasians and people with an income below \$40,000 per year were somewhat under-represented at Regional Town Meeting II (see pages 6-7 for more detail). This should be considered in evaluating the priorities that emerged from the process.



Priority Goals from Regional Town Meeting II

Early in the day, participants were asked to go through the six top regional challenges and evaluate the 3-4 goals that had been developed as possible approaches for addressing each challenge. In addition to evaluating the goals, participants were asked to provide feedback on whether the wording of any goal should be shifted and whether any new goals should be added. Participants were then asked to use their polling keypads to identify the most important goals in each challenge area.

Challenge	Priority Goals	Percent Voting for Goal as Most Important
Training Workers for Current & Future Jobs	Make a post-secondary education in the region more affordable, accessible and achievable ⁷	47%
	Improve workforce training programs and ensure they match the needs of both workers and employers	39%
Improving Racial Inclusion & Income Equity	Increase the availability of quality education and training for low-income residents and people of color ⁸	46%
Attracting & Growing Businesses	Increase public and private investment and support for businesses and local entrepreneurs	42%
	Reduce the cost of doing business in the region and increase business productivity	36%
Reducing Government Fragmentation & Inefficiency	Encourage local governments to work together or combine services to reduce duplication	55%
Ensuring Equitable School Funding & Accountability	Ensure that schools and students have the financial resources they need to succeed	37%
	Create a more innovative education system to support the needs of students	33%
	Increase parental and community involvement in students' education	30%
Reducing Sprawl & Increasing Regional Connectivity	Plan for the future development and growth of the region	38%

⁷ Wording of this goal was modified based on table input from Town Meeting participants.

⁸ Wording of this goal was modified based on table input from Town Meeting participants.

Of the top ten goals that emerged from this process, participants were then asked to identify the goals that would do the most to create a more competitive regional economy. The three goals that rose to the top were:

- 1) Plan for the future development and growth of the region
- 2) Ensure that students have the financial resources they need to succeed
- 3) Improve workforce training programs

Our Priorities: What Are Our Goals and Solutions?

Priority Solutions from Regional Town Meeting II

After identifying the most important goals for addressing each of the region's most pressing challenges, Town Meeting participants were then asked to consider specific solutions under each of the top ten goals. Each participant was given five NEO Bucks, each of which represented a vote for investing the region's resources, energy and time in a solution.

The following solutions received the most NEO Bucks from participants after an extensive exercise to consider and evaluate 27 different options:

Top Solutions	Percent of Total NEO Bucks
Advocate for the state of Ohio to shift how it funds public schools to ensure that all schools have adequate resources.	13%
Invest in internship and mentoring programs to provide students with work experience that is founded on the needs of businesses.	9%
Advocate for the state of Ohio to increase funding for higher education, so that tuitions can be lowered and scholarships made available for those with the greatest needs.	7%
Advocate for the state of Ohio to develop a health care system that provides healthcare coverage for all to reduce burden on businesses.	6%
Invest in establishing a region-wide association of local and regional planning agencies to coordinate regional planning, collaborate on the creation of a common U.S. Census definition of the Northeast Ohio region, and enhance our capacity to understand and influence our collective future.	5%
Invest in creating a region-wide land use and development plan to address patterns of growth and decline at a regional level and to provide a framework for long-term development of the region.	5%
Invest in programs that enable high school students to take college-level courses at no cost to the student and with a special emphasis on potential first-generation college students.	5%
Expand and create organizations (called incubators) that support the growth of small businesses in the region through advice from experts, networking opportunities and other support programs.	5%
Provide incentives for school districts to expand parental involvement programs and stimulate local businesses, community groups and volunteers to become more engaged in students' lives.	4%
Expand organizations that encourage local government to share or consolidate services by consulting with local governments, facilitating agreements to cooperate together, and helping to form special districts for them.	4%
Create a regional fund to provide early financial investments in new entrepreneurial businesses and minority businesses.	4%

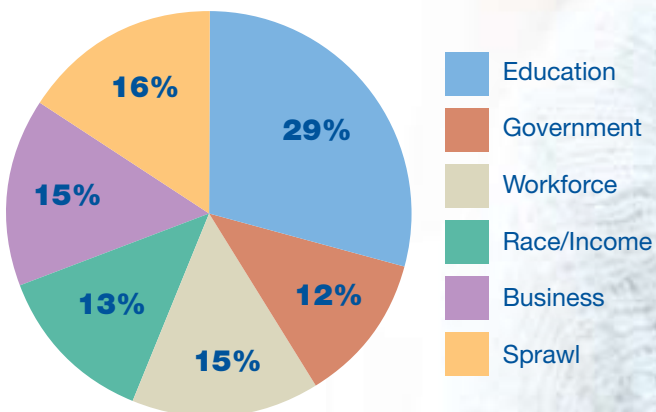
Only two percent of NEO Bucks were invested in an "other" solution not provided among the initial list developed by Voices & Choices.

ONLINE CHOICEBOOKS¹

Who Completed Choicebooks?

Approximately 1,700 people completed more than 3,500 Online Choicebooks with some people completing one Choicebook on a single topic and others completing Choicebooks on all six topics. Each Choicebook took about 15-20 minutes to complete. They helped participants learn basic facts about the challenges facing the region and walked them through an interactive exercise to think about how they would prioritize possible solutions to address the region's challenges.

More than 1,000 people completed the School Funding and Accountability Choicebook, followed by 578 completing the Sprawl Choicebook. 550 completed the Workforce Training Choicebook, 527 completed the Business Environment Choicebook, 467 completed the Racial Inclusion and Income Equity Choicebook, and 440 completed the Government Fragmentation & Inefficiency Choicebook.



Choicebook participation was highly diverse by gender, age, geography and income. However, some groups were underrepresented, which should be taken into account in evaluating the priorities that emerged from the process. Specifically, underrepresented populations included: African Americans, the youngest and oldest residents of the region, residents of Stark and Carroll Counties and the Mahoning Valley, and low-income residents. See pages 6-7 for more specific demographic information.

¹ The Online Choicebooks were designed and managed by Ascentum (www.dialoguecircles.com)

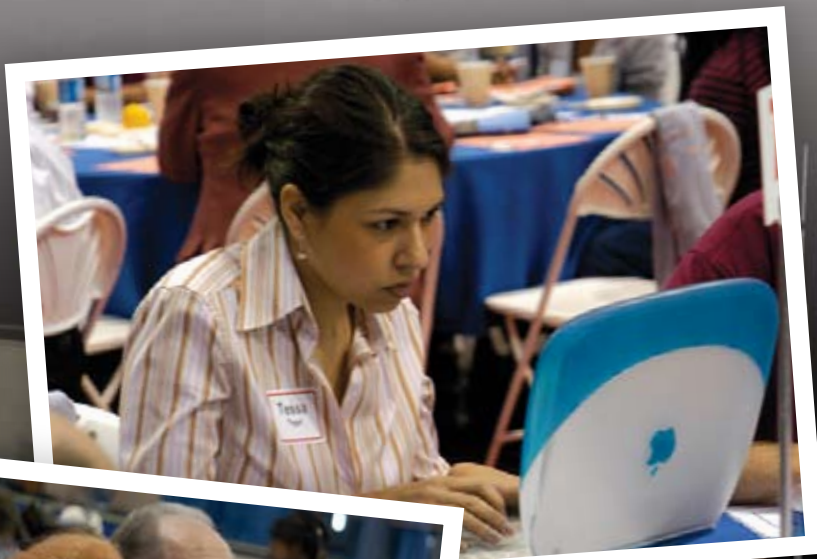
Our Priorities: What Are Our Goals and Solutions?

Priority Goals from Online Choicebooks

After learning about a regional challenge and walking through the different goals and solutions that could address the challenge, online participants were asked to identify the most important goals to be established for the region.

The chart below reflects the top goal in each of the six areas:

Challenge	Top Goal	% Who Said Top Goal
Training Workers for Current & Future Jobs	Make a college education in the region more affordable and achievable	55%
Improving Racial Inclusion & Income Equality	Increase the availability of quality education and training for low-income individuals and people of color	56%
Attracting & Growing Businesses	Increase investment and support for businesses and local entrepreneurs	57%
Reducing Government Fragmentation & Inefficiency	Combine services provided by local governments to reduce duplication	57%
Ensuring Equitable School Funding & Accountability	Ensure that students have the financial resources they need	56%
Reducing Sprawl & Increasing Regional Connectivity	Preserve and enhance the region's existing cities & suburbs	45%



Priority Solutions from Online Choicebooks

Online participants were asked to consider which solutions would have the greatest impact on addressing the challenge and which solutions would have the greatest impact on creating a more competitive economy for Northeast Ohio. They were then each given five NEO Bucks to invest in the solutions from each challenge area that they believed the region should support.

The table below reflects the top two solutions in each challenge area:

Challenge	Top Solutions	% of NEO Bucks
Training Workers for Current & Future Jobs	Create a regional advocacy initiative to encourage the state of Ohio to increase funding for higher education, so that tuitions can be lowered and scholarships made available for those students who have the greatest needs.	23%
	Invest in internship and mentoring programs to provide high school and college students with work experience that is focused on the real needs of businesses.	17%
Improving Racial Inclusion & Income Equity	Create economic revitalization zones in distressed areas of the region that encourage economic growth and investment by offering tax advantages and incentives for businesses that open in those communities.	22%
	Create a regional fund for college scholarships among students from low-performing school districts.	17%
Attracting & Growing Businesses	Expand and create organizations (called incubators) that support the growth of small businesses in the region through consulting, knowledge sharing and development assistance.	20%
	Create a regional fund to provide early financial investments for new entrepreneurial businesses and minority businesses.	16%
Reducing Government Fragmentation & Inefficiency	Expand and support organizations that help local governments to share or consolidate services by consulting with local governments, facilitating agreements, and helping to form special districts for them.	30%
	Create a regional organization that will research the best opportunities for consolidating or reorganizing local governments in Northeast Ohio, and mobilize support for its recommendations.	16%
Ensuring Equitable School Funding & Accountability	Create a regional advocacy effort to shift how the state funds public schools to ensure that all schools have adequate resources.	36%
	Create a multi-sector, regional coalition to focus the resources of the region behind a common plan that will support the needs of students from pre-school to college, advocate for changes in the state's education system and foster stronger parent and community involvement in schools.	17%
Reducing Sprawl & Increasing Regional Connectivity	Create a regional fund to assemble and prepare abandoned urban land for new development in the region's cities and older suburbs.	20%
	Invest public money in the maintenance of the region's existing infrastructure and eliminate public subsidies for new roads, water, and sewer lines to serve new, low-density suburban development.	19%

Our Process

How Have Participants Evaluated Voices & Choices?

Across the Voices & Choices process, citizens and leaders have expressed strong praise for the quality of discussions that have taken place. Not only have they told us that they have learned something by participating, they have told us that they are committed to remaining involved with the process.

When asked to evaluate the quality of the forum in which they participated:

- 90% of Leadership Workshop participants described them as excellent (38%) or good (52%)
- 90% of Regional Town Meeting I participants described it as excellent (50%) or good (40%)
- 90% of Community Conversation participants described them as excellent (53%) or good (37%)
- 80% said they strongly enjoyed (26%) or enjoyed (54%) the Online Choicebooks
- 88% of Regional Town Meeting II participants said it was excellent (45%) or good (43%)

When asked whether they learned something through their participation, 94% or more of participants in Leadership Workshops, Regional Town Meeting I, Community Conversations and Regional Town Meeting II said that they did learn something.

When asked whether they were committed to staying involved with the process, 74% or more of participants in the Leadership Workshops, Regional Town Meeting I, Community Conversations, and Online Choicebooks said they were committed or very committed. (The question was not asked at Regional Town Meeting II.)



- *Share your name & where you are from*
- *What has happened in the region that gives you the greatest hope for the future?*

(Submit Each Person's Reason for Hope)



**NORTHEAST OHIO REGIONAL
TOWN MEETING**

**Voices
& Choices**

Our Thanks

Who Made Voices & Choices Possible?

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Participants at Regional Town Meeting II discuss issues concerning Northeast Ohio

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