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County/Akron Selected by the White House
to be part of TechHire Communities Initiative

The White House is announcing today that Akron/Summit County will be part of the second cohort of TechHire Communities. TechHire is an innovative multi-sector initiative and call to action that empowers Americans by providing them with the tech skills they need, through universities and community colleges, non-traditional training and high-quality online courses. Jobseekers can be trained rapidly, often in just a few short months, for a well-paying job. President Barack Obama is hosting the first-ever Demo Day today and Summit Workforce Solutions President, Sue Lacy, will be on hand to represent Akron at the White House event to coincide with the announcement.

This spring, President Barack Obama announced the start of the multi-sector initiative designed to empower people with the skills they need to transition into well-paying tech jobs. To accomplish this, the TechHire initiative is designed to “fast track” education, training and hiring for these high-demand jobs.

A group of local partners led by the Akron Global Business Accelerator and Summit Workforce
Solutions submitted a letter of commitment about a month ago, articulating how training, community college, higher education, government and businesses are prepared to work together to train and place hundreds of people in good-paying tech jobs. The initiative will focus on innovative approaches to moving lower skilled workers with barriers to training and employment to well-paying information technology and high growth jobs in industries like healthcare, advanced manufacturing, financial services and other in-demand sectors.

“Many of the critical roles that need to be filled do not require traditional four-year computer science degrees,” said Sue Lacy, President of Summit Workforce Solutions. “Using non-traditional approaches to training can often prepare workers in months, rather than years.”

TechHire is all about the creation of successful partnerships:

- Using data and innovative hiring practices to expand openness to non-traditional hiring
- Expansion of training models that accelerates the preparation of students
- Active local leadership to connect people to jobs with hiring on-ramp programs

“The County is ready to take on this new initiative, and to be successful,” said Executive Russ Pry. “Our Summit Workforce Solutions already works with a cross sector of businesses, educators, government and organizations that are crucial to the success of this initiative.”

As part of the program, communities will commit to work with employers to build robust data on where they have the greatest needs and what skills they are looking for. There will be a focus on building a willingness among employers to hire from both non-traditional and traditional training programs.

Expanded and accelerated tech learning programs – such as coding boot camps and online training - will create a broader gateway to reach people who may not have considered a tech career in the past. The programs can be run independently or embedded as part of a local community college or university.

More than 20 communities nationwide are already involved in the first phase of the TechHire
initiative. Programs and processes already in place in these communities will aid in the creation of local collaborations and partnerships to foster success.

As part of TechHire Communities, Summit County/Akron will be asked to submit a grant request to the Department of Labor that could result in a $2 - $6 million grant for the TechHire initiative, designed to train and place 400 people into internships and jobs in the tech industry by the end of 2016. Summit Workforce Solutions coordinated the initial application and will serve as the lead organization for the initiative as it moves forward. The application for this competitive grant will be submitted this fall with the anticipated announcement of the award to be made in early 2016.

“Akron has already taken bold steps to position itself as a TechHire community,” said Akron Mayor Jeff Fusco. “The Akron Global Business Accelerator (Akron Accelerator) has been a co-initiator of the project with Summit Workforce Solutions, and will be charged with implementing much of the grant that we hope to receive in 2016.”

“We’ve already had great success at the Akron Accelerator through our client/partner Software Craftsmanship Guild,” says Anthony Margida Ph.D., CEO of Akron Accelerator. “In just a little over a year, more than one hundred people have been trained to become sufficiently proficient in writing code that the employment rate for graduates is better than 95%.” Margida says in 2013, the Akron Accelerator partnered with the start-up Software Craftsmanship Guild, to provide a 12-week training course in-house. In April, the company was acquired by The Learning House, Inc., a leading cloud-based technology provider and one of the nation’s top coding boot camps for training the next generation of software developers.

Margida states that the TechHire initiative builds upon a platform that has been underway for more than a year to build the “Bits and Atoms Innovation Center” (BAIC) as part of the Akron Accelerator portfolio of programs. The BAIC will offer a multitude of programs to ‘enable anyone to make anything,’ and build a business around it. If Akron receives funding as a TechHire Community, the Akron Accelerator plans to offer free classes in coding online, with the Akron-Summit County Public Library and the BAIC offering facilities free to enrollees.

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“Akron has been a leader among cities to close the gap on training for tech jobs of the future,” says Mayor Fusco. “The White House estimates that the tech boom will need 1.5 million new hires by the year 2020, but the nation is prepared to staff only one third of that amount, unless these new initiatives are realized.”

**Key TechHire Local Partners:**

- Akron Global Business Accelerator (City of Akron)
- County of Summit
- Hyland Software, creators of OnBase
- MCPc
- National Interstate Insurance
- OEConnection
- OhTec
- Progressive Insurance
- Stark State College
- Summa Health System
- Summit Workforce Solutions
- The Regional IT Engagement Board (RITE Board & Higher Education Partners)
- The Software Guild (Akron’s coding bootcamp)
- University of Akron
- Virtual Hold Technology

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