Shaping the Future of the IT Workforce

RITE 2.0

Strategic Plan 2018 - 2020

Adopted by the board of Directors on December 14, 2017



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The Regional Information Technology Engagement Board (RITE) - the only employer-led workforce alliance in Northeast Ohio - is at forefront of the region's efforts to address the shortage of qualified tech talent. As the organization continues to evolve, a number of factors such as challenges in attracting talent, ineffective methods to close the skills gap, and the need for employers to play a key role will inform mission delivery. Industry-driven and regionally-focused, RITE's strategic plan will help steer the organization over the next three years into a more transformational and sustainable organization.

VISION and MISSION

RITE's vision – shared with its ecosystem partners - aims to build a highly-skilled, industry-responsive IT workforce in Northeast Ohio. Achieving this vision is an economic imperative. To that end, RITE's mission is to attract, prepare, and place IT talent through industry leadership, dynamic and responsive programs and regional, cross-sector collaboration.

STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

Factors that may impact RITE's efforts to achieve its strategic goals include the following themes, characteristics and opportunities developed from stakeholder input:

Strategic Themes:

- Respond to industry need now and in future.
- Promote innovative employer practices.
- Improve workforce diversity.
- Improve awareness of IT careers and resources.
- Advance career pathway development.
- Build capacity and capabilities in K-12.
- Collaborate and coordinate across the ecosystem.
- Adopt innovative educational methodologies in higher education.
- Expand experiential learning to enhance skills.
- Market Northeast Ohio as the location for IT careers and opportunities.
- Improve technology access.

RITE Assets:

- RITE is a mature industry workforce alliance with a strong foundation. RITE has strength in industry leadership and organized engagement
- RITE is skilled in generating labor market intelligence.
- RITE has a track record of building sustainable collaborations.
- RITE has a solid organizational framework to deliver next gen programs.
- RITE educators value the engagement with regional employers through RITE's organizational structure.
- RITE's high school programs were built for sustainability and impact.

Opportunities:

- Balancing RITE's long-term initiatives with the need to generate near-term benefits
- Increasing the awareness of RITE is key to attracting more participants
- Demonstrating RITE's impact is critical to earned / contributed revenue.

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• RITE strategic alliances will build regional capacity, create momentum, and deepen impact.

- Expanding / diversifying RITE's revenue base enhances its ability to conduct effective programming
- Building RITE to optimize the assets and efforts of the ecosystem would create a powerful organizational framework that leverages investments and deepens impact.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

#1: Accelerate Access to a Quality Talent Pipeline

- Understands current and future employer needs
- Expands its program portfolio breadth, depth and impact
- Engages more diverse audiences
- Strengthens industry-educator engagement
- Channels and leverage company sponsored initiatives
- Increases student connections.
- Expands and streamlines one-stop resources for teachers

#2: Strengthen RITE as a Premier IT Workforce Alliance

- Optimize regional employer engagement structures
- Deepen engagement with Higher Education
- Develop Strategic Alliances
- Provide a "clearinghouse" for IT workforce information and insights
- Foster inter-organizational communications and collaboration
- Publish actionable program impact statements and dashboards
- Advocate for beneficial policies and legislation

#3: Establish a Next Generation RITE Organization

- Improve and institutionalize industry-led governance model
- Design and implement organization, operating and infrastructure model
- Expand funding and asset resource base
- Deliver communications and brand-building strategy
- Leverage technology to increase impact and capabilities
- Implement a data process innovation strategy to support centralized intelligence and performance tracking

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT / IMPLEMENTATION

While some metrics have been in place since RITE's inception, the organization has identified, and will continue to identify, new metrics that it will measure and report. These include success measures driven by RITE (engagement, value to constituents, and funding) and those driven by the IT talent ecosystem (pipeline development and ecosystem coordination / optimization.)

Phase I of a two-phase implementation is underway and will conclude June 30th 2018 in accordance with RITE's fiscal year. Detailed operational planning and budgeting for Phase II is underway and will conclude in First Quarter 2018. Simultaneously, RITE will launch a formal funding campaign in late spring 2018.

BACKGROUND

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Over the last decade, several organizations in the region have been working in earnest to address the IT skills gap. At the forefront of these efforts is the Regional Information Technology Engagement (RITE) Board. Organized in 2009, RITE is the only employer-led entity in Northeast Ohio that links and leverages a fast-growing network of industry partners with educators and other professionals from a range of IT education, youth development and economic and workforce development organizations. It is one of few IT-focused examples of a sector partnership in the country, defined by the State of Ohio as an Industry Workforce Alliance.

Since its inception, RITE recognized that in order to achieve a highly skilled industry-responsive workforce in the region, interventions are needed along the entire pipeline of the talent-development process. In 2012, RITE crystallized its focus around three major drivers in the IT talent development process including the need to:

- Drive the career choice of students and job seekers through promotion of the availability, advantages, and requirements of information technology careers (attract)
- Enhance and inform IT educational and experiential programs at all levels to ensure that graduates have the skills and competencies required by current and future IT roles (prepare).
- Link qualified candidates to regional employment opportunities (place).

This holistic and three-pronged approach – attract, prepare, and place - and corresponding set of strategies informed RITE's programs, employer engagement endeavors, partnerships, fund development activities and regional work for the past four years.

RITE's systems-level focus necessarily required a broad set of actors and thus the attract-prepare-place approach also provided the broader ecosystem of employers, educators, economic and workforce development leaders, and community stakeholders with a strategic framework and taxonomy for collective action and investment. For eight years, RITE has provided a powerful platform for regional engagement, collaboration and creativity, across three primary geographic areas – Lorain County, Greater Cleveland, and Akron/Summit County.

Taking RITE to the next level - The RITE 2.0 Process

As engagement with the region's employers broadened and deepened and RITE programs grew, RITE as an organization was becoming increasingly challenged in terms of managing this growth. In 2015, RITE leadership determined that there was a need to review RITE's current priorities and funding model. At the organizational level, RITE had been fueled by generous financial support and significant in-kind investment by RITE Board Members and Higher Education partners and in particular Lorain County Community College (LCCC) which has functioned as RITE's host and fiscal sponsor. While this support enabled growth and organizational maturation, the need to design a more transformational and sustainable organization also surfaced.

In addition, there was also a need to assess RITE's place in the IT and tech ecosystem in Northeast Ohio. RITE's growth during these years occurred against a backdrop of an increasingly dynamic time for the region's many economic development, education and workforce institutions. RITE's industry board members in particular were being tapped by a

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growing number and range of entities and organizations to engage in various efforts. A shared desire to focus RITE's efforts, leverage and build RITE's capabilities in the context of a deeper understanding of the region's assets and capabilities formed the basis of a process that became known as "2.0."

The 2.0 process aimed to 1) strengthen RITE's potential to drive employer-led transformation of the region's IT talent development system and to 2) help galvanize a cross-sector set of stakeholders around a more unified vision. In so doing, these efforts would serve to clarify RITE's role and unique value.

Consistent with RITE's historic engagement-oriented approach, RITE 2.0 was led by employers and ultimately became a broad ecosystem effort. It was conducted over a period of more than a year and included both an intensive internal due-diligence phase with RITE Board and key partners as well as an external strategic planning process that involved a broader "Solving Team" and set of contributors. The internal process included still active discussions about options for a more sustainable organizational structure for the RITE "operation."

The external and more conventional strategic planning or Creative Problem Solving process utilized was supported by The Cleveland Foundation. This process generated input and insights from Northeast Ohio ClO's, IT recruiters, educators, youth development professionals, current students, recent IT Grads, government officials, foundation program officers, and parents that were incorporated into the development of the strategic plan. Of note, employer participants included industry leaders from RITE's Board as well as from LCCC's RITE Council, companies engaging in RITE's high school and workforce initiatives, and those engaging through RITE's HR IT Roundtable. A complete list of contributors is provided at the end,

PURPOSE

RITE will use its strategic plan to guide the direction and alignment of investments, programs, initiatives and organizational and governance structures. It will provide important focus to RITE's unique and collaborative resource development and capacity building endeavors over the next three years (2018 through 2020). The strategic plan will help RITE refine annual programs and events as well as execute priority initiatives. RITE's executive committee in conjunction with its funders will review progress annually and publish revisions when appropriate.

In closing, the plan also serves as the basis of RITE's pioneering engagement model. This includes building upon the strength of its collaboration Northeast Ohio's educators - particularly its higher education partners, which have engaged since RITE's inception in 2009. The plan also serves as a foundation for a new set of strategic alliances RITE is forming with a specific group of organizations with which it has collaborated in deep and varied ways. Lastly, it becomes an important anchor to its engagement with the broader ecosystem of players in IT talent development in NEO and across the state.

THE REGION'S IT WORKFORCE ENVIRONMENT

The new workplace requires a diverse and growing talent pool with skills, knowledge and perspectives that will drive the innovation economy. However, employers are struggling to find

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skilled workers who can contribute to their companies' growth and success. To compound the problem, building the IT talent pipeline is complex. Today, there are five key environmental factors that influenced the strategic plan:

1. Employers' resource needs are complex.

Employers of all sizes are experiencing challenges attracting, preparing, and retaining highly qualified IT staff putting their organizations in undue risk. As defined in a recent study "Understanding the IT Skills Gap in Northeast Ohio," regional companies face some daunting realities:

- There is only one graduate for every 6 entry level IT jobs which require bachelor's degree attainment and up to two years of experience;
- For jobs requiring the same level of experience (0-2) but where Certificates or Associates degrees will suffice, there are four times as many job ads for IT occupations to every one potential applicant.
- o In several occupations, where demand exceeds supply, the numerical gaps are too large to breech in a few years.
- Job postings and employer feedback reveal a significant pain point at the mid-level with employers looking beyond the local talent pool to solve for this problem.
 Current demand for experienced workers is being met through hiring from the IT pool from within and outside the region, outsourcing, and offshoring.
- There are key gaps existing in software development (one graduate for every 30 job ads!)), cybersecurity, advanced networking, and the skills required for the technologies that will shape tomorrow's opportunities (IoT, Big Data, AI, and more...)

2. Northeast Ohio faces challenges in developing its IT workforce.

Northeast Ohio IT talent pool is not attracting a viable pipeline of students and citizens to IT careers. A number of regional demographics and trends point to the undeniable fact that the pipeline of traditional students entering the workforce is currently inadequate - and is likely to keep declining:

- The region is experiencing net out migration (3% in the last five years).
- Demographic trends project that the number of graduating high school seniors will decline by 11% through 2031.
- o College enrollments have been declining nationally since 2011.

When taken in combination with the existing and transitioning adult workforce, the problems deepen.

- The regional tech workforce does not represent the diversity of the local population.
- Incumbent workers lack/ need upskilling in newer skill sets due to technology innovation and advancement
- Untapped populations with potential are hard to reach and often face a steep learning curve to meet minimum threshold of skills and requirements for entrylevel opportunities in IT

As a consequence of these factors, most employers report they have significant difficulty attracting, hiring, and retaining qualified tech talent and are becoming increasingly engaged in the efforts to solve the problem

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3. Employer engagement is growing.

Forward thinking industry leaders and employers are involved with RITE and various other organizations to address the need to build a skilled workforce. They are engaged specifically with RITE today for a multitude of reasons. Some are providing institutional leadership and overall guidance to the organization as it has matured through various stages as a model of collective impact. Others are engaging directly in RITE's high school programming. Many are receiving direct value through these efforts by networking with their peers and providing community engagement experiences for their IT professionals. Still other companies, some of which have self-sufficient recruiting and training programs acknowledge the need for a focused and sustainable investment in the region's talent development system. As such, they are drawn to RITE not because they need to see a short-term ROI to their bottom line (e.g. decreased recruiting costs) but rather out of a desire to give back to the community and in the process increase their brand as a top-tier IT employer.

In recent years, a new set of employers engaging with RITE have come through a different door, participating in training and recruiting initiatives. Some of these employers welcome the opportunity to help excite the next generation but others have a limited appetite for initiatives that show little prospect for positively impacting them in the short-run.

There is one area where all emloyers can agree. All employers want to see more coordination among partners in the region, more optimization of the system's assets and capabilities and more focused action generating results.

4. Methods for filling the IT talent gap are inefficient and ineffective.

Northeast Ohio's aspirations for economic vitality hinge on vibrant health, manufacturing, and technology sectors – all reliant on the availability of a quality IT workforce in the coming. However, traditional approaches to education are no longer capable of meeting the needs of a rapidly changing business environment. Larger employers in the region are currently addressing the talent gap through outsourcing, recruiting talent from other employers, training internal resources, and competing for foreign workers under the H1B visa program. These less-than-ideal approaches fail to satisfy the wide ranging technology needs of companies now and into the future, and do not provide a sustainable solution for the region. Similarly, smaller employers with fewer available resources are unable to compete.

Many approaches to filling the talent gap (such as engaging young people earlier in their school career) make intuitive sense however, measuring tangible success is difficult. And while educators in the region are actively working to align program outcomes to market demand and still others are delivering more innovative, skills and competency-based models, the near term skills needs are a moving target. Employers and educators alike are frustrated by the inability to align long-term academic programs with technology and skill demands that change annually. Short-term fast track training and other educational innovations while increasing in numbers, are producing mixed results. Together with the resource limitations faced by learning institutions due to declining

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enrollments, these challenges have hindered sustainable pipeline development in the region.

5. Funders believe employers must play a key role and that the ecosystem of players need to be more organized

As active funders and participants in regional economic development, local foundations in Northeast Ohio have become increasingly engaged in efforts to transform the region's workforce system. Several have been integral to RITE's impact in recent years. These funders feel that employers play an essential role in talent development and must exert substantial influence over education, training and workforce efforts in order to build a highly skilled, industry responsive workforce. They believe employers need to strengthen their collective efforts, communicate with a unified voice and encourage the various cast of characters to better align and coordinate their efforts through proven models such as the adoption of a sector partnership approach in Cuyahoga County. Otherwise, supply side providers will continue to fall behind in terms of meeting the demand for skilled workers now and in the future.

STRATEGIC THEMES

How DO we build a highly skilled, industry responsive workforce? In response to this question, a set of themes emerged that informed the strategic plan and will provide important guidance to the actual work to be undertaken by RITE and others over the next three years. These themes – like the original attract, prepare, and place framework - provide the broader ecosystem of employers, educators, economic and workforce development leaders, community stakeholders, and funders with a strategic framework for collective action and investment. They serve the region as strategic differentiators that can help to energize and inform the efforts of the broader talent development ecosystem offering context for decision-making:

- Respond to industry need_- now and in future.
- Promote innovative employer practices.
- Improve workforce diversity.
- Improve awareness of IT careers and resources.
- Advance career pathway development.
- Build capacity and capabilities in K-12.
- Collaborate and coordinate across the ecosystem.
- Accelerate innovation in IT postsecondary education.
- Expand experiential learning to enhance skills.
- Market Northeast Ohio as a highly desirable location for IT careers and opportunities.
- · Improve technology access.

FOUNDATION FOR SUCCESS

For RITE, in particular, the aforementioned themes not only informed what programs and services we deliver, but also helped to crystallize RITE's role in the ecosystem. Another set of insights generated through the 2.0 process provide specificity in terms of the requisite capabilities of a RITE "next gen" organization. As a mature industry workforce alliance,

participants in the 2.0 process identified key assets and opportunities that will be integrated into a more detailed operational plan.

RITE assets to leverage:

- RITE has strength in industry leadership and organized employer engagement capabilities.
- RITE has a track record of building sustainable collaborations by orchestrating relationships among employers, educators and other organizations in the region's talent development ecosystem.
- RITE is skilled in generating labor market intelligence and IT education and career content to inform programming and the development of resources for students and jobseekers.
- RITE educators value the regularly occurring and high touch engagement with regional employers through RITE's organizational structure.
- RITE's signature high school programs, which are unique, scalable and extendable, were built for sustainability and impact.

In addition, the following also represent opportunities to strengthen RITE's model and collaborative efforts:

- Deepening capabilities to quantify impact and publish progress. Although far ranging and not always easy to measure, demonstrating impact is critical to engaging employers and securing earned and contributed revenue.
- Improving the balance between RITE's long-term pipeline development and systems change initiatives and its efforts to provide near-term benefits to employers will help to deliver more qualified candidates in the near term.
- Increasing the awareness and understanding of what RITE does, how its business model functions, and what impact it is having is key to attracting more employers, donors, funders, and other willing program participants.
- Combining RITE's assets and capabilities in a synergistic way with other complementary
 organizations into formal strategic alliances will build regional capacity, help create
 momentum, and create a powerful organizational framework that leverages investments
 and deepens impact.
- Expanding RITE's capabilities build and maintain robust data collection systems that help assess program-level effectiveness will enable the tracking of progress at a systems-level across some key measures.

• Expanding and diversifying RITE's revenue base enhances its ability to conduct effective programming, which will generate revenues (through paid attendance and sponsorships) and build the RITE brand.

REGIONAL VISION AND RITE MISSION

Participants in the 2.0 strategic planning process agreed that a vision for the region's IT workforce is integral to Northeast Ohio's over-arching economic development efforts to grow businesses, attract new companies, help businesses innovate, and create pathways to prosperity. Thus, in declaring RITE's aspirations for the next three years, participants likewise affirmed that realizing vision for a talented and growing IT workforce in Northeast Ohio was an economic imperative.



RITE MISSION: To attract, prepare, and place IT talent through:

- Industry leadership
- Dynamic and responsive programs
- Regional, cross-sector collaboration

OUTCOMES AND MEASURES OF SUCCESS

DESIRED OUTCOMES

Deliver More Qualified Candidates Sooner

NEO Employers Satisfy the Demand for IT Workers from a Growing and Talented Regional Workforce

Collaborative and Effective IT Workforce Ecosystem

KEY MEASURES OF SUCCESS

Leading Indicators (RITE)

Lagging Indicators

ENGAGEMENT

- ☐ Employer participation at all levels (company, IT leaders, IT employees)
- Students completing RITE
- Programs ☐ Girls and
- underrepresented minorities

 □ Educators participation
- CONSTITUENT
- OUTCOMES

 ☐ Employer return on investment
- ☐ Student success
- ☐ Educator return on investment

FUNDING

- ☐ Industry support (dues, sponsorships, grants and multi-year investments
- □ Program revenue
- ☐ Philanthropic grants
- ☐ Public funding

ECOSYSTEM COORDINATION AND OPTIMIZATION

- Evidence of collaboration and partnerships
- ☐ Increased joint funding and Asset Base
- ☐ Alliance and partner satisfaction

TALENT DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

- ☐ Student participants reported increased interest in major IT programs
- Students enroll in IT education and programs
- Student completion in IT education programs
- ☐ Student completion in IT workforce programs
- ☐ Diversity in IT programs
- ☐ Hires/Placements (learn and earn and permanent employment)
- ☐ Diversity in IT hires/placements
- ☐ Reduced time and cost to fill open positions
 - Reduced turnover
- ☐ Reduced gaps between demand and supply



Shared Performance Dashboard

GOAL #1: RITE Accelerates Access to a Quality Talent Pipeline (6th - Bachelor's Degree)

To build a skilled and industry responsive IT workforce for the foreseeable future, it is imperative that RITE continues to focus its programming early in the supply chain process to attract an increasingly diverse student body into educational and career pathways in IT that will prepare them to be successful. It is also imperative that RITE continues to place emphasis on postsecondary education and training programs and systems. These actions require that RITE understands the skills and work-based experiences needed today and as far out on the horizon as possible. RITE must deliver high impact programming and resources that are targeted to key stakeholders and leverage historic levels of engagement from employers and educators.

To help employers access ready talent and thus reduce costs of acquiring and retaining that IT workforce, RITE will:

- Deepen knowledge of current and future employer needs
- Expand its program portfolio breadth, depth and impact
- Engage more diverse audiences
- Strengthen industry-educator engagement
- Channel and leverage company sponsored initiatives
- Increase student connections.
- Expand and streamline one-stop resources for teachers

GOAL #2: Strengthen RITE as a Premier IT Workforce Alliance.

RITE serves as an intermediary or nexus in an ecosystem focused on assuring programs and initiatives aligned to industry demand. This includes assuring that not only current programs as well as program development efforts are designed to building talent to the specifications of the region's employers and value additive to the system. RITE seeks to accelerate progress by improving existing and creating new services, insights, tools and other capabilities that support ecosystem constituents ability to take meaningful action and position RITE as a go-to, high value intermediary.

To accelerate progress and enable a successful ecosystem, RITE will:

- Optimize regional employer engagement structures
- Deepen engagement with Higher Education
- Develop Strategic Alliances
- Provide a "clearinghouse" for IT workforce information and insights
- Foster inter-organizational communications and collaboration
- Publish actionable program impact statements and dashboards
- Advocate for beneficial policies and legislation

GOAL #3: Establish a Next Generation RITE Organization.

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RITE has been building traction and delivering increasing value for nearly 10 years. RITE leadership recognizes, however, that its internal operating platform, which includes internal systems and procedures; organization and staffing; externally facing services and information assets; and governance and funding methods, needs to evolve to allow RITE to sustainably operate efficiently and effectively for the next several years.

To continue the evolutionary development of RITE's operating platform, RITE will:

- Improve and institutionalize an industry-led governance model
- Design and implement a new organizational structure
- Expand funding and asset resource base
- Deliver communications and brand-building strategy
- · Leverage technology to increase impact and capabilities
- Implement a data process innovation strategy and infrastructure for centralized intelligence and performance tracking

PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD

As part of its Strategic Plan for the period ending FY 2020, RITE is emphasizing the creation, maintenance and publishing of a RITE Performance Dashboard to measure results against goals. The performance dashboard will demonstrate the impact of RITE's work in service to its Northeast Ohio's economic aspirations.

While some metrics have been in place since RITE's inception, the organization has identified, and will continue to identify in collaboration with its key partners, new metrics, baselines and targets that will be measured and reported. The metrics RITE is currently capturing and others it is evaluating for its future dashboard include:

- Success measures driven by RITE, which focus on engagement, value to constituents, and funding
- Success measures which focus on ecosystem coordination / optimization

At the system level, RITE and its partners will build on metrics established through the attract-prepare-place framework which were refined during the 2.0 process. These "lagging indicators" are described above.

RITE'S newly formed Governance and Finance Committee defined the implementation process. This 2020 plan will be implemented in two phases. The first phase is underway and corresponds to RITE's fiscal year which ends June 30, 2018. During the first phase, RITE will continue to implement its signature high school programs and employer engagement initiatives through the new lens provided by the plan and in alignment with resources available.

Detailed operational planning and budgeting for Phase II - July 1 2018 - June 30 2020 - is underway and will conclude in First Quarter 2018.

FUNDING AND INVITATION

In fiscal years 2019 and 2020, it is expected that RITE's budget will grow in accordance with the level of ambition as described in this plan. RITE will be funded through a sustainable mix of contributed and earned income with the majority of revenue coming from industry participants through dues, sponsorships or program fees. In-kind contributions will continue to be leveraged to the fullest extent possible. RITE is currently implementing a targeted outreach campaign to regional companies for annual sponsorships and to set the stage for more significant requests for multi-year support for Phase II implementation.

The importance of industry leadership, engagement and investment cannot be understated. To leverage grants and other public and philanthropic support, leadership level investments by industry will be required. New levels of funding will ensure that RITE has the dedicated staffing and necessary resources to fully realize the outcomes set forth in this plan.

Shaping the future of the region's IT workforce is a big, harry audacious goal. If RITE and its partners are to increase the IT talent pool in terms of diversity, qualifications, experience and availability - bold action and investment are needed.

PARTICIPANTS

RITE would like to thank all the following individuals and organizations for their participation in the 2.0 process.

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RITE sincerely regrest any ommissions.