

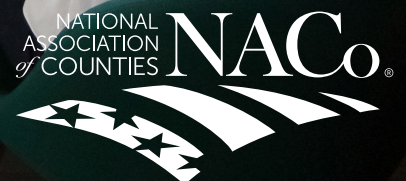
Counties at Work

Montgomery County, Ohio Case Study



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About NACo:

The [National Association of Counties](#) (NACo) **strengthens America's counties**, serving nearly 40,000 county elected officials and 3.6 million county employees. Founded in 1935, NACo unites county officials to:

- **Advocate county priorities** in federal policymaking;
- **Promote exemplary county policies** and practices;
- **Nurture leadership skills** and expand knowledge networks;
- **Optimize county and taxpayer resources** and cost savings; and
- **Enrich the public's understanding** of county government.

The National Association of Counties Research Foundation (NACoRF) is a non-profit organization recognized by the U.S. Department of the Treasury Internal Revenue Service as a 501c3 public charity providing education, technical assistance and research to counties. NACoRF's mission is to ascertain, develop and distribute knowledge about county governments and training of public officials, prospective public officials and other interested parties.

About NACo's Landscape Analysis:

In partnership with the [ECMC Foundation](#), NACo conducted a national landscape analysis on counties' role and decision-making authority in post-secondary education. This analysis identified impactful county efforts including directly allocating local funds, pursuing regional and intergovernmental partnerships to leverage federal resources and coordinating post-secondary education systems with county systems, such as health and human services, as well as with local private industry. Such efforts maximize educational and employment opportunities and increase access for residents. Recently, counties have led and supported their post-secondary education institutions in mitigating local challenges related to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Through an electronic survey and group and individual interviews, NACo examined how county leaders:

1. Make decisions affecting the post-secondary education sector;
2. Allocate public funding impacting higher education institutions;
3. Create partnerships with the post-secondary education sector to strengthen its connection with other systems; and
4. Work to slow the spread of COVID-19 in post-secondary education settings.

In conjunction with NACo's report ["Counties At Work: Counties Support Post-Secondary Education and Workforce Opportunities for Residents."](#) NACo published a set of case studies sharing county examples and best practices in creating cross-sector partnerships with higher education systems to improve economic resiliency and mobility, workforce preparedness, educational attainment and gainful employment for residents. County leaders representing local colleges and universities, workforce boards and human services agencies participated in a series of interviews with NACo to share their local efforts and best practices. For more information, please contact Rashida Brown, Associate Program Director for Children, Youth and Families at rbrown@naco.org or Arabella Pluta-Ehlers, Program Manager for Children, Youth and Families at aplutaehlers@naco.org.

Counties Support Post-Secondary Education and Workforce Opportunities for Residents

Montgomery County, Ohio

Interviewees: Kelly Geers, Director of Strategic Initiatives, Montgomery County; Deborah Lieberman, County Commissioner, Montgomery County; John Theobald, Commission Assistant, Montgomery County

County name, state: Montgomery County, Ohio

Rural, suburban, or urban: Urban

Population: 531,687

Poverty rate: 16.0%

Unemployment rate: 4.5%

Number of post-secondary education institutions in the county: 18

Student enrollment in the county's post-secondary education institutions: 49,218



About Montgomery County, Ohio

Located in the southwestern region of Ohio, Montgomery County spans over 460 square miles and maintains a labor force of more than 250,000 individuals. In 2018, the county's economic output was nearly \$26 billion with the top industries being education, health care and social assistance services, real estate, rental and leasing and manufacturing.¹ The county also has a booming automotive industry.

The county role in post-secondary education

Montgomery County's Board of Commissioners has three elected officials who vote on resolutions regarding county business covering a variety of local policy issues and budget and administrative matters.ⁱⁱ Montgomery County's largest post-secondary education institution, Sinclair Community College, is governed by an eleven-member board of trustees that are appointed for five-year terms and have governing authority over the entire operations of the college.ⁱⁱⁱ Montgomery County is a statutory county that operates under the Ohio Revised Code and has minimal decision-making authority affecting its post-secondary education institutions within the county. However, county board members have the authority to appoint six members to the community college board.^{iv}

Funding for post-secondary education institutions and programming

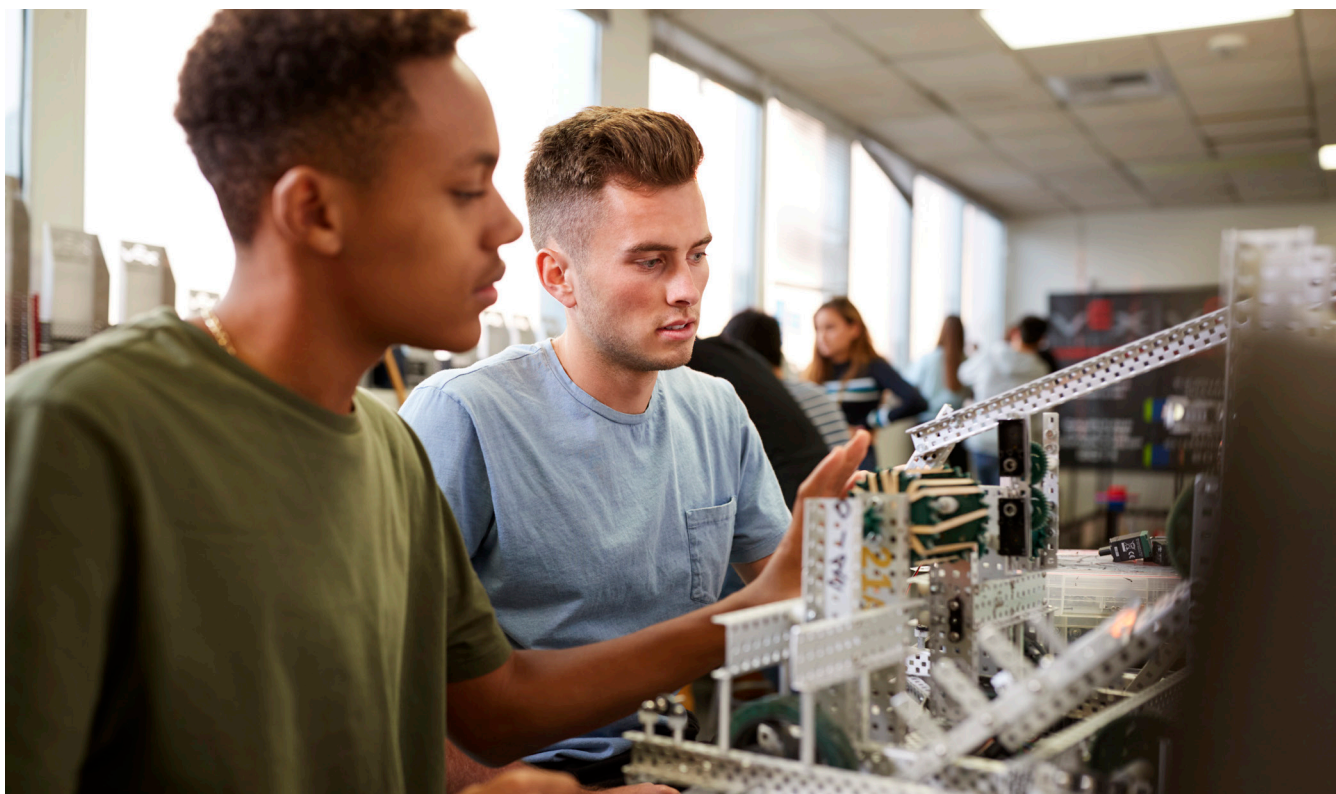
In addition to receiving state funding, Ohio's post-secondary education institutions also have the authority to leverage local dollars to manage operations, departmental functions and educational programs. For instance, Sinclair Community College leverages county tax levies which provide funds for daily operations and support for student

tuition, making the college one of the most affordable institutions in the region for residents.^v The county also approves the inclusion of the levies for local community colleges on the ballot and supports marketing efforts to help boost student enrollment. In addition to endorsing these levies, the county occasionally provides funding for specific programs and initiatives related to its local colleges.

Coordination and collaboration for improved workforce outcomes

Montgomery County fosters collaboration between its post-secondary education institutions, local workforce resource centers and human services mainly through its local workforce development board. The Greater Ohio Workforce Board (GOWB) creates workforce resources and employment opportunities for Ohio's businesses and job seekers across 44 counties.^{vi} Both the local workforce board and the GOWB manage programs that assist employers in meeting their hiring needs and connect workers to suitable jobs.^{vii}

The county leverages federal, state, regional and local partnerships to provide workforce training programs, post-



“Sinclair Community College has a tax levy, which makes it one of the most affordable [colleges] in the state. I’ve served as co-chair of the council [which oversees the levy]. [The levy] provides direct tuition support for county residents. Most community colleges in the state do not have this.”

– Commissioner Debbie Lieberman,
Montgomery County, Ohio

secondary education credentials and social services to its residents. Funded in part by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the Montgomery County Jobs Center, which houses over forty organizations, is considered to be the largest employment and training center in the United States. The Jobs Center brings together employers, educators, social service agencies and Sinclair Community College to jointly determine service needs and promote diverse programming for the center’s workforce development training.^{viii} This creates a local workforce development system that benefits both employers and job seekers.^{ix} Montgomery County’s OhioMeansJobs provides a central place for employers to access a pool of qualified, job-ready workers. In addition, job seekers can access job information, training programs and other services needed for employment and career development.

In collaboration with GOWB, Montgomery County is investing over \$2 million into a new Employment Opportunity Center that will provide equitable job search help and training



opportunities for residents. The center will house several workforce services including mentorship programs for young adults, a resource lab for resume and interview skill-building and the Miami Valley Career Technology Center’s (CTC) Aspire program, offering high school equivalency resources for service recipients. Miami Valley CTC is a public career technical school serving five southwestern Ohio counties. Miami Valley CTC provides adult learning in advanced manufacturing, such as avionics, precision machinery robotics and automation and welding, as well as agriculture, livestock production and natural resource management, diesel power technology, hospitality, early childhood education and culinary arts.^x Additionally, the center will house staff that will administer job training grants from the federal WIOA. These grants can fund up to \$15,000 for eligible individuals to obtain new skills by acquiring commercial driver’s licenses, nursing degrees and manufacturing and IT certifications.^{xi}

Montgomery County Development Services provides access to services that are targeted to meet the workforce-related needs of area employers, jobseekers and youth preparing to enter the world of work. Through Project Hire’s on-the-job training program, the county provides incumbent worker training, customized group training or individual training to promote an educated and well-prepared

workforce.^{xii} Montgomery County Development Services also offers a wealth of job seeker services, ranging from an online job search portal, special resources for laid off workers and networking opportunities. In Ohio, social service programs are state sponsored and county administered. Each county government has latitude to design programs, collect and allocate funds and target resources within the limits of state and federal regulations.^{xiii}

Montgomery County has a human services tax levy and in 2018, the local funding stream accounted for approximately \$135 million in property taxes for health and human services. Because human services are county-administered in Ohio, its counties rely on locally generated funds to support the delivery of health and social services to a greater degree than most other states. The purpose and amount of funding for health and social services that comes from the county levy determines the type and level of services that may be available for residents.^{xiv}

Montgomery County's human services levy supports the county's reentry initiative, which assists residents with a criminal record in gaining access to job seeking and employment services and workforce development training. The county reports high completion rates among men and women enrolled in the program. As a result of participating in this program, many participants are finding employment, even during the current economic crisis. In addition to workforce development services, the human services levy supports the county in providing substance abuse and mental health, housing and food access services.

Slowing the spread of COVID-19 in post-secondary education settings

Montgomery County's Health Department has worked tirelessly to collaborate with their post-secondary education institutions during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The county declared a state of emergency and established a team to lead a coordinated response. Post-secondary education institutions have been active participants on calls with the county's health commissioner in order to stay up to date on the developing situation. In response to COVID-19, the county allocated Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funds to its primary and secondary education institutions but did not have the authority to distribute funding to its colleges and universities. Although the state allocated CARES Act funding directly to post-secondary education institutions, county leaders were able to provide guidance and personal

protective equipment (PPE) to local post-secondary education institutions. Using the advice from the county health department, post-secondary education institutions determined the best strategies for slowing the spread of the virus on college campuses.

Conclusion

In Ohio, due to the state's authority in post-secondary education, higher education institutions tend to have a direct relationship with the state rather than local governments. However, Montgomery County's local tax levy and strong partnership with its post-secondary education institutions through its workforce development board and human services agency allow the county to support local efforts increasing educational attainment and career readiness opportunities for residents. In response to COVID-19, the county is addressing health disparities on college and university campuses by increasing student's access to health resources, PPE and other supports.



Endnotes

- ⁱ National Association of Counties. (2020). *County Economies 2020*. <https://www.naco.org/resources/featured/county-economies-2020>
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- ^{iv} Montgomery County. (n.d.). *Montgomery County Boards and Commissions*. https://www.mcoho.org/government/elected_officials/board_of_county_commissioners/boards_commissions_details.cfm?id=42
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- ^x Miami Valley Career Technical Center. (n.d.). *Career Technical Programs*. <http://www.mvctc.com/future-students/programs>
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- ^{xii} Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce. (n.d.). *Montgomery County Development Services-Workforce Development*. <http://daytonworkforce.com/montgomery-county-development-services-workforce-development/>
- ^{xiii} Campbell, E. (2019, November 25). *Haves Nots County Property Taxes Provided \$25 billion in Local Health and Social Services Funding Unevenly Distributed*. The Center for Community Solutions. <https://www.communitysolutions.com/research/haves-nots-county-property-taxes-provided-2-5-billion-local-health-social-service-funding-unevenly-distributed/>
- ^{xiv} Ibid.

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