

Building Warren's Future

Impact Report

Community Energy Innovation Prize

Contents

Building Warren’s Future	1
Community Engagement & Partnerships	3
Relationship Building	4
Ecosystem Needs & Challenges	5
Lessons Learned	7
Fostering a Clean Energy Manufacturing Ecosystem	7
Project Implementation and Results	9
Projected Impacts and Sustainability Plan	11

Community Engagement & Partnerships

Over the course of the Community Energy Innovation Prize, CEIP Warren's outreach and engagement efforts led to impactful partnerships and community-centered initiatives shaping Warren's economic landscape with clean energy manufacturing at the forefront. The team's commitment to a steady cadence of meetings, and the willingness of CEIP Warren partners to continuously bring challenges and opportunities to the table strengthened the relationship between partner organizations. Further, the follow through from members of the team to carry forward the work of CEIP Warren instilled a sense of trust between individuals, the organizations they work for, and the community at large.

Through the Community Energy Innovation Prize, CEIP Warren strengthened partnerships with the leaders of the local manufacturing ecosystem. Engaging prominent industry leaders with the goal of understanding their short- and long-term needs gave the team a valuable perspective from which to build a strong roadmap. CEIP Warren engaged Ultium Cells, Foxconn, Tata Steel, Novelis, Jet Stream International, Alcon Mechanical, and Hynes Industries, in addition to the 70 local manufacturers that make up the Mahoning Valley Manufacturers Coalition, a CEIP Warren team member. The team also engaged MAGNET, the Manufacturing Extension Partnership for Northeast Ohio. These conversations were intended to more deeply understand the barriers these companies face when seeking employees, working with community groups, communicating with educational institutions, and engaging regional policymakers. Holding these conversations as a neutral third-party allowed for clarity of communication and built trust between members of the prize team and regional manufacturing companies.

In addition to working directly with leaders from the key manufacturing companies above, CEIP Warren actively engaged community groups, regional policymakers, and educational institutions to create a supportive ecosystem for clean energy manufacturing. The team worked with the following organizations to advance these conversations: Small Business Development Center, Valley Partners, Youngstown Business Incubator, OH Wow Center for Science and Technology, Home for Good, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Kent State University, Youngstown State University, Eastern Gateway Community College, Inspiring Minds, Warren City Schools 21st Century Program, Mahoning County Career and Technical Center, Trumbull County Career and Technical Center, Columbiana Career and Technical Center, Ohio Environmental Council, Climate Fresk, AST2, Salem Area Sustainable Opportunity Development (SOD) Training Center, and through our partners engaged with grassroots community organizations that represent the neighborhoods in and around Warren. Again, bridging the gap as a neutral party between

community organizations, educational institutions, and regional policymakers helped streamline efforts and increase communication between groups.

Together, these partnerships and alliances were pivotal in developing a unified vision for Warren's manufacturing future, integrating clean energy principles into the core of the region's economic strategy. The CEIP team has been instrumental in mobilizing a community-wide commitment to developing a strategic economic plan focused on advancing clean energy manufacturing in the region. This plan, crafted with key stakeholders, includes a targeted talent attraction strategy aimed at drawing new professionals to Warren and inspiring local interest in manufacturing careers. By facilitating open dialogue among these diverse stakeholders, the prize team helped lay the groundwork needed for Warren to transition into a robust, sustainable manufacturing hub.

Relationship Building

Consistent and visible outreach has cemented BRITE's role as a trusted partner in clean energy advocacy within Warren's underserved communities. The CEIP Warren team made continuous effort to engage and build relationships with the local community, specifically ensuring that disadvantaged communities were represented across all phases of the prize. Specifically, working with local organizations and initiatives like Warren Forward, the MVMC WorkAdvance Trumbull County initiative, OH Wow Children's Center for Science and Technology, Second Baptist Church of Warren, and Warren City Schools, all organizations that work directly with and in underserved communities, allowed the group to ensure the community was wholly represented. BRITE hosted three Climate Fresk workshops during the summer and fall of 2024 to engage a dozen community leaders, invite them into the building, and work together to learn the concepts of climate change and how these changes impact our lives and communities. The workshops, facilitated by BRITE Member company Climate in Your Hands, were an eye-opening experience for participants as the reality and weight of the climate crisis was connected to the impacts that they can have as leaders in their communities. BRITE participated in several speaking engagements, television interviews, and local television programs both during the survey phase of the project, and as an overall educational resource to connect with the local community. While these efforts help to build credibility and name recognition, the real strength in the prize team are the partners who provide one-on-one engagement with the local disadvantaged community. The work that Warren Forward does to engage young men and women in STEM in clean energy education programs at BRITE helps to not only build a future workforce but builds trust with the parents and guardians of students that reaches back to the broader community.

Prior to this prize initiative, there was a perception in the community that places like BRITE are not accessible to all members of our regional population. This work has been critical in working through the reasons and feelings behind why the perception exists and how we can collectively alter the perception in the community. Increased opportunities for the community to be invited inside, to participate, and to have a real seat at the table proved to be the most fruitful way to alleviate some of those negative perceptions. Additionally, partnering with organizations like THRIVE Mahoning Valley and Oak Hill Collaborative, two well-known and trusted organizations who have been serving disadvantaged communities for many years, lends some borrowed trust to BRITE and the project team.

Between the continued effort from the team at BRITE to serve as a local expert and educational resource in clean energy, and the “boots on the ground” work undertaken by Warren Forward, THRIVE Mahoning Valley, and Oak Hill Collaborative, the team continues to increase visibility and foster trust across the region. The bridges built today will be crucial as manufacturing needs increase and clean energy opportunities become more plentiful. The groundwork laid by this team will shorten the timeline compared to other communities during the ongoing energy transition, allowing Warren to quickly adapt and grow as new economic development opportunities arise.

Ecosystem Needs & Challenges

As an historically industrial region, workforce development and access to skilled labor remain critical obstacles to revitalizing Warren’s manufacturing ecosystem. The region has seen significant loss in both jobs and population, exacerbated by the wind-down and eventual closure of the GM Lordstown plant from 2016 – 2019. This major employer in the region eliminated over 4,000 jobs over the three-year timespan, and the ripple effect of its closure in 2019 impacted supply chains and smaller manufacturing companies throughout the region. Cleveland State University’s Center for Economic Development estimated the total negative economic impact of this loss to be nearly \$8 billion in the region, with indirect job losses reaching nearly 1,000 additional individuals. Although the former GM plant is now owned by Foxconn Hon Hai, and Ultium Cells made a significant investment in its battery manufacturing plant across the street from the former GM plant, the community is distrustful of these new entities, and fearful of repeating the mistakes of the past.

From conversations with more than 30 leaders and members of disadvantaged communities in the region, the team learned that in many cases the parents or guardians of middle- and high-school aged students are no longer recommending their children seek out these types of manufacturing jobs. Instead, parents and guardians often play an active role in discouraging young people from seeking employment in manufacturing. The work is

seen as unstable, with the wounds of the past disinvestment playing out with this younger generation. Their perception of the manufacturing workforce is starkly different than their parents' perceptions just a generation ago. Through these conversations, the team underscored the need for an additional pre-step in the process of preparing the workforce for manufacturing jobs: building trust. This critical component allowed the team to engage industry leaders in deeper conversation around how to best engage the community, the parents, teachers, mentors, faith leaders, and students to build trust that these jobs are real and not fleeting, before attempting to train and educate students on the opportunities that exist for workforce development.

Additionally, disengagement from traditional educational pathways, paired with a shortage of industry-specific training opportunities, has left the area's workforce underprepared for the demands of modern manufacturing jobs. Through direct engagement with community organizations and disadvantaged populations, it is evident that limited access to technical education and career-readiness programs has impeded the local talent pipeline, making it difficult for manufacturers to find adequately trained candidates.

As the manufacturing industry shifts toward clean energy and advanced technologies, the need for a skilled workforce in Warren has only intensified. Community feedback has highlighted that while there is interest in emerging clean energy careers, there is a disconnect between this interest and the opportunities for training that would make these careers attainable for underserved individuals. An additional challenge is the disconnect that often exists between workforce training programs and individuals actually seeking jobs. The work that MVMC, a member of the CEIP Warren prize team, has done through their WorkAdvance program addresses these gaps by more directly focusing on first building relationships with employers who will commit to hiring graduates of the program. To date, WorkAdvance Warren has graduated 40 participants from the program, placing 22 in good manufacturing jobs. To help build bridges between employers and potential employees, WorkAdvance partnered with Home for Good, a local organization that helps justice impacted individuals re-enter the workforce by earning a Certificate of Qualification for Employment, or CQE. To ease the transition, both organizations identified a group of 20 committed employers who meet regularly to learn about the program, receive education on topics affecting underserved populations, and share feedback on the program. This is just one example of the community partnerships made possible by the work of this team with support from the CEIP.

Addressing these gaps through targeted workforce development initiatives—especially those that build trust while bringing skills training to disadvantaged communities—would

empower residents to participate more fully in the local manufacturing economy, driving economic growth and fostering greater resilience within Warren's clean energy sector.

Lessons Learned

With these challenges in mind, our engagement highlighted the need for a robust, well-communicated business proposition aimed specifically at manufacturers as an essential tool for gaining community buy-in and aligning partners. However, our experience reveals that local policies, such as utility-scale solar energy bans in neighboring Mahoning and Stark counties, can significantly hinder progress. These restrictions have not only limited clean energy options for local manufacturers but have also obstructed opportunities to attract businesses seeking sustainable, low-emission production.

The limitations imposed by these policy constraints have reinforced the importance of engaging with policymakers early and advocating for regulatory frameworks that support clean energy growth in manufacturing. This lesson has informed our project's focus on enhancing local advocacy efforts, emphasizing the role of accessible renewable energy in attracting business investment, and supporting the community's transition toward a sustainable manufacturing ecosystem. By understanding these barriers, we have adapted our approach to include broader community and policy engagement, aiming to foster a regulatory environment that better aligns with our clean energy and workforce development objectives.

BRITE continues to play a pivotal role in addressing the local manufacturing ecosystem's needs by acting as a connector and resource for local manufacturers, guiding them to critical federal funding opportunities. By raising awareness and facilitating access to these resources, we've empowered multiple companies to pursue funding opportunities, build strong relationships with organizations like the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), and identify pathways to advance the local clean energy economy while developing strong workforce expansion initiatives.

Fostering a Clean Energy Manufacturing Ecosystem

A key member of the CEIP Warren team, the Mahoning Valley Manufacturers Coalition (MVMC), plays a central role in developing a cohesive manufacturing innovation ecosystem in Warren and the surrounding area by connecting manufacturers with education, workforce, and community resources. Through MVMC, over 70 local companies and regional partners align efforts to address workforce shortages and promote manufacturing careers. MVMC's collaboration model enables shared resources, training programs, and initiatives like "Earn-&-Learn" programs, which support career

pathways and build a skilled talent pipeline essential for sustained economic growth and community-centered innovation.

However, in building connections between stakeholders, resources, and activities, barriers include political dynamics and a prevailing scarcity mindset within the region.

In a region that has seen such stark disinvestment across sectors, there remain significant barriers and challenges for the CEIP Warren group to continue working toward overcoming. Political factors, such as inconsistent policy support and local opposition to specific clean energy initiatives, often challenge the team's efforts to establish

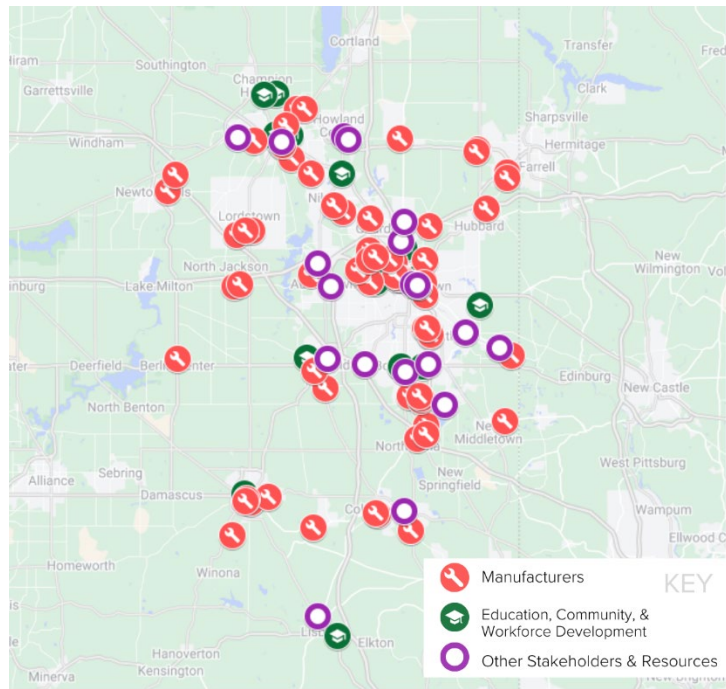


Figure 1: CEIP Warren's Manufacturing Ecosystem

cohesive, long-term partnerships. Additionally, the region holistically suffers from a scarcity mindset that has long been perpetuated and reinforced by decades of disinvestment. The belief that if one group, organization, or business has a big success, wins a large grant, or is otherwise doing well, that the other players in the region lose out drives competition among groups that should instead be collaborating. This scarcity mindset among some stakeholders creates hesitancy around resource-sharing and collaborative ventures, as many are focused on preserving limited assets rather than pooling resources for collective impact. These challenges necessitate ongoing relationship-building efforts and trust-building activities to help stakeholders see the potential benefits of a unified, community-based approach to clean energy and economic development.

The team's next steps focus on deepening relationships with Warren's disadvantaged communities, fostering an inclusive clean energy transition. To maintain and build trust, we will prioritize intimate, community-centered events that create meaningful two-way dialogue, allowing us to tailor future initiatives to the community's most pressing clean energy and manufacturing needs. Meeting people "where they are" will be central to this approach, recognizing and addressing political, social, economic, and educational barriers with empathy and inclusivity.

Representation in decision-making is also crucial, as the trusted leaders the team works with need to have a strong voice and presence at the larger table. BRITE is fortunate to have a trusted individual like Pastor Todd Johnson both as part of the CEIP Warren team and as a member of BRITE's Board of Directors. The team will continue to collaborate with partner organizations that are working directly in the local communities building trust within the community. Additionally, to ensure city and county leaders are engaged, the team will continue dialogue with organizations such as Power a Clean Future Ohio (PCFO), ensuring regular gatherings that bridge the gap between community members and decision-makers. By amplifying the voices of underserved residents and maintaining transparent communication, BRITE is positioned to lead a community-based clean energy transition that promotes both economic opportunity and energy equity for Warren.

Project Implementation and Results

Our activities over the first two phases of the Community Energy Innovation Prize were focused on workforce development, regional collaboration, and clean energy advocacy to drive community-centered clean energy manufacturing. Some of the most notable initiatives include supporting our regional manufacturing partner Tata Steel's 48C tax credit application, we offered guidance on DOE expectations, reviewed key metrics, and linked Tata with local community partners to promote workforce training, environmental justice, and neighborhood stewardship. Additionally, through workforce discussions at the Warren YWCA, we facilitated access to critical resources—such as financial literacy, childcare, and housing—that help residents overcome barriers to participating in manufacturing roles. Collaborating with key industry partners like Ultium Cells and Foxconn, we helped facilitate hiring events that directly connected local talent with manufacturing opportunities. These events have successfully engaged disadvantaged communities, providing immediate job prospects and strengthening the foundation for long-term workforce development.

Overall, the team utilized the Progress Phase from April – July 2024 to engage more than 1,000 community members and 103 organizations in surveys and conversations to better understand the needs of the community to build a strong clean energy workforce. From there, the team utilized the Impact Phase to create a programming playbook and BRITE incorporated lessons learned and the programming into its real estate strategy. The team has engaged hundreds of community members, although the actual number was difficult to obtain based on the grassroots efforts partner organizations used to reach out to individuals and families in the field.

Our participation in local, regional, and national initiatives has expanded BRITE's impact across multiple spheres. We actively served on the workforce development board to align training and apprenticeship programs with industry needs, presented at notable events like the Future of Manufacturing, Good Morning Trumbull, and Valley Vision, and supported manufacturing growth at BRITE's inaugural Cleantech NEO convening of more than 125 regional manufacturers and partners. Additionally, we engaged with regional entities, such as Team NEO and Lake to River Economic Development entities, to attract new manufacturers and further economic development in the Mahoning Valley. Our role in these initiatives, combined with our participation in strategic events like the White House Climate Capital Convening and Welcoming Foxconn Day, reinforces our position as a trusted partner in the clean energy space, committed to advancing sustainable manufacturing opportunities for Warren and beyond.

To promote a stronger, more resilient manufacturing ecosystem, BRITE facilitated access to key resources, funding opportunities, and connections for local manufacturers. By guiding companies like Hynes Industries in accessing federal funding, we've empowered them to invest in sustainable practices, growth, and workforce development. Our partnerships with the Mahoning Valley Manufacturers Coalition (MVMC) and Warren Forward have helped address the unique workforce challenges within the region, utilizing our facility as a collaborative space to identify local workforce needs and advance solutions. Additionally, BRITE's work with Power a Clean Future Ohio (PCFO) has been instrumental in securing Warren's commitment to the PCFO coalition, which helps cities navigate and obtain funding to support clean energy and manufacturing goals.

BRITE has made equity a core priority in our efforts to strengthen Warren's manufacturing and clean energy sectors, addressing regional challenges such as low educational attainment. Recognizing that equitable job access is crucial for long-term community advancement, we have partnered with local companies like Ultium and Foxconn to connect residents to quality job opportunities and integrate the community into the hiring process. Additionally, we've collaborated with significant local institutions, including the historic Second Baptist Church—Trumbull County's oldest African American church—and the Oh Wow Children's Science Center, to provide educational programs that inspire young students. By promoting STEM and clean energy learning opportunities, these initiatives aim to increase early interest in technical careers, support future workforce development, and contribute to a more inclusive, accessible pathway to success in Warren's growing manufacturing ecosystem.

The key takeaways that BRITE has gained from participating in peer learning activities indicate that there is still much work to do before this community has a robust clean

energy workforce. The team also gained perspective on appropriate timelines and partners to help facilitate the goals of the prize and connected with other organizations implementing similar initiatives across the country. There is broad recognition that the political forces at play at the federal, state, and local level have a significant impact on the progress of clean energy projects, and that will continue to be a challenge for all organizations working in this space. However, a localized focus, such as the one CEIP Warren has been working on during this prize, yields the strongest results for mobilizing the community. When small communities are successful, they provide upward pressure to regions and states, particularly when the outcomes are increased workforce readiness, job growth, and economic development that drives money into the region and state. As the team continues this work, we will prioritize collaborating and continue learning from partners identified during peer learning activities.

Projected Impacts and Sustainability Plan

With ongoing funding, the CEIP Warren team can continue moving the needle with existing programs that are yielding results in workforce training, community building, and education about the opportunities that exist for a just, community-based clean energy economy in disadvantaged communities like Warren, OH. Sustained support would allow us to deepen alignment around economic development, focusing on expanding business development services that empower local companies to access new markets, secure funding, and scale their operations. We see immense potential in creating and operationalizing comprehensive community benefits plans, establishing frameworks for the companies we support to engage more meaningfully with residents. By bridging connections between businesses and the community, we could foster a collaborative ecosystem where economic growth, community well-being, and clean energy goals mutually reinforce each other, advancing a more equitable and sustainable regional economy.

One initiative BRITE will utilize to secure ongoing funding and ensure the sustainability of our project is leveraging our growing BRITENetwork, a powerful coalition of businesses dedicated to promoting clean energy technology and pro-business policies. This initiative has seen success in metropolitan markets with closer-knit ecosystems that are farther along the clean energy transition than in Warren. However, utilizing the community and relationship building this team has done over the prize period, we are confident BRITENetwork can serve as a powerful voice to unify regional businesses around a shared vision, amplifying a coherent, impactful voice that advocates for supportive policies and investment in clean energy initiatives. As BRITENetwork gains a foothold in the region, we can utilize its influence to establish funding partnerships, attract public and private

investments, and demonstrate the value of our work in driving economic growth and sustainability. By showcasing the mutual benefits of pro-business and clean energy advancements, we aim to secure the resources needed to sustain and expand our community-centered initiatives long-term.

Following our post-prize efforts, the CEIP Warren team anticipates transformative outcomes that will accelerate a just and equitable clean energy transition in Warren. With enhanced access to resources, local businesses will have the support needed to grow sustainably and invest back into the community, fostering a cycle of prosperity. The region's clean energy manufacturing capabilities will expand, attracting new companies and positioning Warren as a hub for innovative, sustainable manufacturing. Workforce development initiatives will also enhance local quality of life by equipping residents with high-demand skills, creating well-paying jobs, and making Warren an attractive place to live and work. These outcomes will collectively contribute to a resilient, inclusive economy that empowers Warren's communities through clean energy advancement.