

## JobsOhio chief: Region needs to promote assets for growth

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WEST CHESTER TWP. — Ohio is on the verge of an innovation renaissance and Southwest Ohio is the state’s “Silicon Valley,” said Mark Kvamme, the director of the state’s job creation efforts.

Ohio in the 1920s used to be the center of the manufacturing revolution, Kvamme told the audience of a regional economic development forum at The Savannah Center Thursday morning. Thirty of 50 U.S. millionaires were from Ohio back then, said Kvamme, interim chief investment officer and president of JobsOhio.

Manufacturers took the jobs to places where labor was less expensive since then. But the same reasons manufacturers picked Ohio in the first place — abundant natural resources, location and logistics — are the same reasons they’re coming back, he said.

“What we’re seeing here in the state of Ohio is very, very interesting,” Kvamme said. “I think you’re going to see a great renaissance in manufacturing here because logistics matter.”

He said he talked to an appliance manufacturer Wednesday who said it will bring manufacturing back from China and Mexico because its logistics costs have increased more than labor.

The Ohio Department of Development will contract economic development to JobsOhio, the nonprofit formed this year under the direction of Gov. John Kasich to focus on job creation. The strategy with JobsOhio is to build industry clusters around its assets.

High tech companies - such as Teradata and Stratacache of Dayton and GE Aviation of Evendale - have capabilities that need to be promoted, he said.

Kvamme said California, where he's from, is "really good at promoting itself." He joked people in Ohio "actually work," but we need to do something not so Midwestern.

"We need to tell people about it," he said.

Government doesn't create jobs, but needs to foster an environment that allows the state to compete on a world stage, he said.

Six agencies are designated to lead the economic development activities in their region under the JobsOhio framework.

Jeff Hoagland, president and CEO of Dayton Development Coalition, said at the forum it has been a change in philosophy for regions to work together instead of against each other. The coalition is the agency in charge of the Dayton metro area and Cincinnati USA Partnership is in charge of the Cincinnati metro area in JobsOhio. Butler County is actually split between the two regions with Ohio 63 serving as the border.

Leaders from the regional agencies are calling each other and meeting monthly, Hoagland said. The new philosophy is if it doesn't happen in Dayton, officials hope it happens in Cincinnati, he said.

Cincinnati USA Partnership is focusing on "growing its own," a strategy to help existing business grow, said David Dougherty, interim executive director of the Cincinnati Partnership.

Cincinnati recently landed a new Fortune 500 company with plans for Omnicare to move from Northern Kentucky. But Cincinnati is at risk of losing Chiquita Brands, something Dougherty said they're working closely on.

"I think it's fantastic," said Dr. Kevin Joseph, chief executive officer of West Chester Hospital, who also spoke at the forum. "There needs to be a dedicated effort."

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