

# Ohio Roadmap US Language Policy



## Good Practice Executive Summary



Ohio lies in the north-eastern part of the Mid-West of the United States of America. Its name is derived from the Seneca Indian word ‘ohi-yo,’ meaning ‘beautiful river’. It is approx 320km across and the same from north to south. It borders Canada to the north. The State capital is Columbus, located in the centre of the State. Other main cities include Cleveland, Cincinnati,

Dayton & Toledo. Its population is just under 12 million. The map on the left can be enlarged.

The State is predominantly agricultural, with some representation from the service and industry sectors. The service sector has been growing whilst manufacturing has seen a decline. Although the majority of its businesses are SMEs, headquartered in Ohio are also several well-known larger corporations representing a wide range of industries. It boasts the largest university in the USA, the Ohio State University.

The Ohio Language Roadmap for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century was published in 2007 to respond to the growing recognition of the importance of language & culture for national security and international trade. The strategy aims to achieve for every citizen a functional level of proficiency in at least one other language than English and more advanced language skills tied to specific career fields for an increasing number of Ohioans.

It was highlighted by the National Foreign Language Center and the Interagency Languages Roundtable as eligible for consideration as best practice for the Lilama project. The contents of this dossier file are based both

on information provided by the Ohio State Department of Education and discussions with the Department and the Ohio State University during a visit by RLN East to Columbus (Ohio) on 16 July 2009.

The Roadmap has both the support of and direct involvement of the Ohioan business community, mostly represented by growing medium-sized companies. They concluded that greater foreign language capacity was critical to increased business and better understanding of communities of foreign language speakers resident in Ohio.

The impact of the strategy is measured by skills outputs (numbers of learners at identified levels of proficiency) and routes into employment. A recent survey of Ohio citizens found that 84% of those surveyed considered the ability to speak another language would make a person more employable.

Ohio businesses recognise that foreign markets are their best opportunities for growth because most of the world's economic growth is happening outside US borders. There is recognition also that it is no longer realistic to expect those outside the USA to speak English and accept goods & services developed for US tastes.

The languages targetted are Chinese, Spanish, Arabic, French, German, Russian & Japanese. The strategy aims to provide a continuous learning pathway from elementary school to employment and avoid the practice of repeat instruction when passing from one level of education to another (such as elementary to K-8).

The approach taken by Ohio State is that to achieve a level of proficiency required to conduct effective communications in another language requires instruction of that language across the education-employment range. The availability in the medium-to-long term of a pool of foreign language speakers emerging from the mainstream education system will relieve the need for business to engage in ongoing language training for key target markets.

Efforts are therefore made to ensure that the languages taught reflect those needed by the employer.

A second feature of the strategy is that its primary funding source is the Department of Defence and the NSA. The languages targetted are therefore also those required for national security interests. Ohio State has balanced this against the instruction of traditional languages, and has therefore a combination of the two.

Proficiency is measured through the ILR and ACTFL scales, which have been matched in this file to the CEFR scale. It encourages building on the skills of the heritage communities, which are defined as those resident communities without English as the first language.

Key published sources consulted include the 'Ohio Language Roadmap for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century' (2007) and 'Passport to the Future: Ohio's Plan for World Languages' (Dec 2007).

The five recommendations from the Ohio Plan are combined with five actions.

The recommendations are (1) to provide access to a continuous learning pathway from PreK-16 to build capacity in languages at an early age(2) to retain a capacity in the commonly taught languages whilst building capacity in those critical for economic & strategic importance (3) to link to programmes with a track record (4) to use multiple means to deliver language instruction (5) to grant credits based on proficiency (6) to increase numbers of and develop capacity of language instructors.

The actions are (1) establish a Language & Culture Service Center (2) establish Language Partnering for Life (3) develop extended sequences of study (4) train, license & employ more teachers (5) create performance-based tools for assessment.

## 1. Reflects current EU and regional policy on multilingualism

The dossier file needs to confirm how the policy addresses lifelong learning relating to contextualised employment needs. Some policies may limit the breadth of the training foresees on one language or sector, and therefore all limitations need to be clearly defined, with justification for their inclusion outlined.

The strategy promotes the following objectives:

- √ promotes lifelong learning and learner mobility
- √ seeks to improve the quality and efficiency of provisions and outcomes
- √ ensures the provision of the necessary skills and qualifications for the world of work

The economic priorities driving the Roadmap are national security and trade, working off the federal Languages Framework as developed by the National Foreign Language Center and the Statement by the Research and Policy Committee of the Committee for Economic Development (CED).

The organisations targetted for implementation are a combination of the Departments of Education and Development and the Ohio State University. The Ohio State Senate Bill 311 mandated the State Board of Education to establish a statewide foreign language implementation plan.

The strategy builds on the report of the Foreign Language Advisory Council of the Department of Education entitled 'Passport to the Future: Ohio's Plan for World Languages'. Their Vision states that "Ohio is no longer competing for jobs with neighboring states. It is competing with other countries. In this 21<sup>st</sup>

century economy, Ohio businesses need a competitive edge to attract and retain foreign investment from across the globe. Proficiency in languages other than English and knowledge of other cultures are key to Ohio's ability to succeed in the global economy; to collaborate on scientific research; and to solve security, environmental and health problems."

The strategy aims to achieve for every citizen a functional level of proficiency in at least one other language than English and more advanced language skills tied to specific career fields for an increasing number of Ohioans.

The Roadmap has both the support of and direct involvement of the Ohioan business community, mostly represented by growing medium-sized companies. More than 60 businesses, government and education leaders met in Columbus on 28 June 2007 to outline the state's foreign language needs. They concluded that greater foreign language capacity was critical to increased business opportunities and better understanding of communities of foreign language speakers resident in Ohio.

The impact of the strategy is measured by skills outputs (numbers of learners at identified levels of proficiency) and routes into employment. A recent survey of Ohio citizens found that 84% of those surveyed considered the ability to speak another language would make a person more employable.

## **2. Includes incentives to enhance and sustain language learner motivation and employment benefits**

The Department of Education has worked in partnership with ‘Sesame Street’ (a well-known children’s TV programme which includes the ‘Muppet’ characters) to introduce Mandarin Chinese language & Chinese culture in early childhood education. It is the longest running children’s programme on American TV.

Through the STARTALK programme middle high school students acquire basic skills in critical languages (such as Chinese, Spanish & Arabic) during the summer period. The programme also provides technical support & training to teachers. In this way it is envisaged that students gain an interest in these languages. STARTALK is funded by the National Security Agency (NSA) and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence.

A public relations campaign is being planned which addresses issues surrounding the promotion of language learning in early years of education, the maintenance of heritage languages, the importance of languages to the economy and the recruitment of business professionals to engage in teaching.

Consortia are being created to ensure implementation of 5 core areas: school-community partnerships, technological initiatives, proficiency-based programs, teacher professional development and model programs.

Samples of Ohio’s model curriculum can be found on <http://ims.ode.state.oh.us/ODE/IMS/Lessons/default.asp>.

The group Language Partnering for Life (see below) is to develop a series of case studies of businesses benefitting from language & culture skills. It shall collect both anecdotal and statistical evidence.

The popular press in Ohio has linked the knowledge of another language to neuroscience reports and similar news stories, leading to a positive perception of language in the media. This has been supplemented with news coverage of the economic rise of China.

### 3. Reflects regional strategy for employability and intercultural benefits

The majority of businesses supporting the strategy are medium-sized growing businesses. These were members of 2 Roadmap Design Teams, one with a domestic and one with a global focus, which had a direct input to the development and implementation of the strategy.

Most of the students completing the Higher Education-based Flagship programme find employment in these businesses. Companies can have access to the profiles of those students about to graduate so that business need and available skills are matched appropriately and in a timely fashion. Employers have access to the Advanced Language Reference Portfolio System (ALRPS) which contains learner profiles.

The proposed Language & Culture Service Center will, amongst other offerings, provide a consultancy and advisory service to state businesses. It will also develop a database of individuals with certified language proficiency, a bank of language & culture resources and an interpreting service.

Given the current (July 2009) budget restraints and the economic climate the implementation of the strategy needs to have the engagement of a combination of government, business and education players. Support, however, is available at Federal level through the Foreign Language Assistance Program (FLAP) which match funds (50%) collaborative approaches to programme development. Deadlines for proposals are June each year.

There are 5 recommendations to be implemented.

- 1) Provide access to a continuous learning pathway from PreK-16 to build capacity in languages at an early age.

- 2) Retain a capacity in the commonly taught languages whilst building capacity in those critical for economic & strategic importance.
- 3) Link to programmes with a track record.
- 4) Use multiple means to deliver language instruction.
- 5) Grant credits based on proficiency.
- 6) Increase numbers of and develop capacity of language instructors.

The use of career-embedded language experiences is encouraged. Languages to be taught in extended sequences include Chinese, Spanish, Arabic, French, German & Japanese. Chinese and Spanish are particularly popular.

The strategy has the support of the International Trade Division of the Ohio Department of Development. Countries which the department has targeted through on-the-ground local office representation are China, Japan, Canada, Belgium, Israel, Mexico, Brazil, Chile, Argentina & South Africa.

Inward investment in Ohio comes in particular from businesses based in Japan (60), Germany (37), Canada (12), the Netherlands (12) & France (11). The numbers in brackets reflect the number in thousands of Ohioans employed. A further 21,000 employees work for companies whose mother country does not have English as a first language.

Dual immersion programmes have been established, whereby school students learn their subject in both another language and their mother tongue. This is stated at elementary school, and is being piloted in Cleveland. 50 minutes per day of instruction in the foreign language is given.

The use of technology such as online instruction and video-conferencing is being implemented to reinforce traditional classroom learning.

#### **4. Addresses local language minority and migrant community language resources**

The United States is fortunate to have 'heritage' communities of speakers of other languages. Many of these have some knowledge of their parents' mother tongue(s) but do not always use it or are not proficient in its use.

The strategy aims to take advantage of the informal learning environment to which these heritage speakers are exposed at home. In language learning sessions a split of 50/50 heritage/non-heritage learners is targeted. For those heritage learners with a basic level of proficiency, immersion programmes are offered that include 'real-world' experiences.

A group tentatively designated 'Language Partnering for Life' consists of public and private agents and aims to link learners with native speakers of the language and activities based on media sources. The group should work with the Service Center (see above) to support communications with overseas business visitors to Ohio. They shall also develop and organise language & culture training for organisations wishing to attract foreign direct investment.

Some heritage speakers can understand their first language when it is spoken but cannot respond in it. Some can speak it fluently but have no reading or writing skills. The strategy recognises that these are not well-served by traditional beginner language training courses. It also recognises the use of dialects and mixed feelings about their language based on negative societal reactions.

Heritage groups are also encouraged at Higher Education level to combine a knowledge of their language with a specialist field (such as biotechnology in Chinese or engineering in French). The level of language proficiency (measured on the ILR & ACTFL scales) is balanced with a tutor & mentor assessment of the ability to perform their specialist role in the target country. Currently only 4% of those learners registered on these Flagship courses are

heritage speakers. Learners first undertake a rigorous 9-week intensive training programme in a country of the target language designed to get them to level B1.

ACTFL – American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages.

ILR – Interagency Languages Roundtable

Both of these are standard-setting bodies widely recognised in the USA.

## 5. Provides for international networking and/or mobility

Periods of time spent overseas are a key component of the Flagship programme delivered by Ohio State University. As the programme is funded as part of the National Security Education Programme the target countries are those which align to America's national security & trade interests. The programme is a Federal programme and is therefore also delivered in other US states.

The receiving institutions are based in Nanjing & Qingdao (China), Cairo (Egypt), Damascus (Syria), Jaipur (India), Seoul (S. Korea), and St Petersburg (Russia).

For their induction prior to course start, learners first undertake a rigorous 9-week intensive training programme in a country of the target language designed to get them to level B1. This is followed by one year of study in the USA and one year in the target country.

Whilst overseas learners work in host organisations and are expected to use their language knowledge in a wide variety of contexts. They are expected to conduct research, write reports and engage in social discourse in the office. They also attend courses in their specialist field in the target language.

Funding for the programme comes from these sources: 33% Federal Department of Defence, 33% student fees, 20% programme support and 17% from the Ohio State University.

## 6. Incorporates the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) with transparent validation/ credits

The strategy uses the ACTFL and ILR standards to gauge levels of proficiency. To achieve level C2 for the world of employment, a scale of proficiency is targeted, starting at the earliest levels of learning.

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The scales equate as follows, although there is not a clear-cut correlation with the ACTFL scales, as there are a total of 10 grades in total within ACTFL. Most research into correlations with CEFR has been conducted with the ILR scales.

CEFR	ILR	ACTFL
	5	
C2	4	Superior
C1	3	Advanced – High
B2	2	Advanced – Low
B1	1	Intermediate – High
A2	0	Intermediate
A1	0	Novice

A guide to the number of recommended learner hours is provided in the ‘Standard Guide for Use-Oriented Foreign Language Instruction’ designation F1562 re-approved in 2005.

To acquire a level 1 ILR approx 150hrs of traditional language or 350hrs of 'hard' language is required. To reach level 2 ILR it would be 400hrs/1100hrs. to achieve a level 3 would require 650/2200hrs.

The Roadmap recommends the creation of performance-based tools for assessment. The task of the Service Center (see above) is to develop instruments using the latest technology to do this.

## 7. Can be readily & usefully implemented

The strategy is currently being implemented and has the buy-in from a wide range of organisations from government, business and education (see previous sections).

Although the current (July 2009) economic climate is having an impact on state budgets, there remains the committed Federal budgets to support programmes such as Flagship. The costs of such programmes are, however, deemed to be high, therefore economies of scales are sought by increasing the number of graduating students on such programmes.

Clear actions for implementation of the strategy have been defined. These have been agreed with the key stakeholders in the strategy and disseminated across a wide range of governmental organisations.