

# Cleveland Plain Dealer

## High-tech jobs go begging in Northeast Ohio

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It was bound to happen.

Northeast Ohio and the state have invested some \$800 million in the last five years to develop the region's high-technology sectors.

Now, some of the region's employers have developed shortages of high-tech workers.

An analysis of help-wanted postings in Northeast Ohio by development organizations BioEnterprise and NorTech points to about 5,000 health care and information technology jobs that are unfilled.

Not a bad problem for a region to have.

But continued growth of high technology in Northeast Ohio will be "constrained" unless solutions are found, said Baiju Shah, president of BioEnterprise, the health care business developer in Cleveland.

"From the numbers we've seen, finding talent may be our growth-limiting step," said Dorothy Baunach, president and chief executive of NorTech, the technology development organization.

The [Fund for Our Economic Future](#) is expected to propose some short- and long-term solutions Friday in Akron as it unveils an economic action plan for Northeast Ohio. The fund is a collaboration of philanthropic organizations formed three years ago to frame economic development priorities for the region.

Originally intended to disband after those priorities were identified, the fund now plans another three-year phase to monitor and report on the region's economic development progress, said Chris Thompson, marketing, communications and civic outreach director for the fund.

One of the fund's workforce preparation and educational excellence initiatives planned for this year is a high-tech jobs portal, which BioEnterprise and NorTech are developing.

The portal -- a Web site that eventually would offer a broad array of resources -- initially will focus on posting health care and information technology jobs that are available in the region.

The portal is expected to open by April 15, said Baunach, whose organization initially will host the site at [www.nortech.org](http://www.nortech.org).

[EmployOn LLC](#), the Beachwood company that creates real-time search and match technologies for human resources clients, is supplying the information and the technology for the portal.

EmployOn uses a "Google-esque" Web crawler that aggregates job openings from major job posting sites, such as [www.monster.com](http://www.monster.com) and [www.careerboard.com](http://www.careerboard.com), Shah said.

In its initial foray in the Northeast Ohio high-tech jobs market, EmployOn found 8,105 job openings, 3,689 of which -- nearly half -- could be viewed as high-tech jobs, he said. These open job totals don't yet include the ones from individual company Web sites. When those jobs are included, the total could reach 5,000.

University Hospitals Health System, which is building a cancer hospital and a suburban hospital, is always in recruitment mode, said Tom Snowberger, senior vice president of human resources for the regional system.

"Yes, it's challenging finding the employees we need," Snowberger said.

Fewer people are choosing health care careers, he said. And local hospitals compete fiercely for workers who have the right skills, he said.

Nurses, radiation technologists, pharmacists and physical therapists top the list of unfilled jobs at the health system that employs 21,000 people in the region, Snowberger said.

The Cleveland Clinic has developed unique ways to attract nurses, who use a lot of high-tech medical devices and equipment to do their jobs, said Claire Young, the Clinic's chief nursing officer.

For instance, the Clinic has a program for nurses who return after being out of the industry. The nurses ease their way back in, doing two- to six-hour shifts that can be scheduled around child care. "It's working fabulously," Young said.

The region's information technology sector also is challenged to find the right workers, having bounced back from the dot-com bust early in the decade. Often, skills of job seekers don't match with those sought by employers, Shah said.

"It was hard, five years ago, as a database programmer to find a job in Cleveland," said Brad Nellis, executive director of NEOSA, the IT association that is part of the Council of Smaller Enterprises in Cleveland. "It's completely at the opposite end of the spectrum right now."

Demand for IT workers, specifically mid-range and highly skilled computer programmers, is strong among small and large businesses in Northeast Ohio, Nellis said. Lack of skilled workers "is the Number One brake on growth in the high-tech sector right now," he said.

That's true for Brulant Inc., the interactive marketing and Web design company in Beachwood. Brulant has opened offices in Boston and Chicago in the last year just so it could recruit the workers it needs to grow, said Len Pagon Jr., the company's president and chief executive.

"Recruiting talent -- the right talent for the right job at the right time -- is a critical factor in the growth of our portfolio companies," said Thom Ruhe, chief marketing officer for JumpStart Inc., the region's venture development organization, whose portfolio companies range from software to medical device developers.

Valtronic USA Inc., the Solon maker of miniature electronics for medical, communications and industrial devices, has recruited workers to run its high-tech machines from outside Ohio, said Jim Ohneck, the company's director of sales and marketing.

Shah hopes the high-tech jobs portal can help local employers quickly find some of the workers they need.

"Step two is coming up with strategies for many people in the community to direct traffic to the Web site," he said. Those people include educators and managers of ethnic networks and trade associations.

Eventually, the portal could recruit high-tech workers for Northeast Ohio, said Shah, who hopes the state gets involved in supporting long-term worker recruitment.

The portal might even become a marketing tool for the region. "We've done a terrible job of marketing ourselves as a booming tech region," Shah said.