ADVANCING NORTHEAST OHIO:

What WorkAdvance Taught Us About Building On Ramps to Opportunity

Presented by Towards Employment with support from the Fund for Our Economic Future and Deaconess Foundation

ABOUT THIS REPORT

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on **WorkAdvance** and its critical role in providing ***on ramps*** to career pathways. Additionally, it examines this workforce development program model's influence on reforms in Northeast Ohio and more broadly since the 2016 publication of the report, *Redefining Workforce Development in Northeast Ohio: How National WorkAdvance Demonstration Made Local Impact*.

Career pathways work, nationally and regionally, but it's critical to address the fact that they are too hard to get on and stay on for the time that's needed for many individuals to achieve economic mobility and for the workforce to gain new talent.

Towards Employment and other organizations like it have implemented the WorkAdvance model to make pathways work better for everyone. This emerging role is to take a holistic, long-term view of the work and coordinate across complex systems for greater efficiency and efficacy.

It is the goal of this report to show how lessons learned from the original demonstration project and the intervening years are more relevant than ever in a post-COVID world. This report focuses particularly on workforce issues related to equity and inclusion, concluding that only by implementing more inclusive economic development strategies will Northeast Ohio thrive. Thus, a significant portion of this report has been dedicated to providing detailed recommendations for directing funding, policy and other critical resources toward that end.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 6

WHAT IS WORKADVANCE? 10

WHAT ARE ITS IMPACTS? 11

WHAT DOES A LONGER-TERM ANALYSIS REVEAL? 12

LOCAL SPOTLIGHT: RICHARD JACKSON 14

OUR MOMENT IN TIME 16

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER 20

TIMELINE OF WORKADVANCE IN NEO 22

LOCAL SPOTLIGHT: TIARA COLBERT 24

ON RAMPS MAKE IT WORK 26

RECOMMENDATIONS 28

- BUILD UP ON RAMPS 30
- MAKE WORK BETTER, TOGETHER 32
- KEEP EYES ON EQUITY 34

LOCAL SPOTLIGHT: ALLISHEA ASBURY 36

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS & THANK YOUS 38

GLOSSARY & APPENDIX 42

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WorkAdvance offers industry specific, coordinated career pathways focused on advancement over time to achieve family-sustaining wages. Within one or more targeted industries, it aligns education and training with specific advancement opportunities in response to employer demand. Launched in 2011, WorkAdvance began as a national, randomized control study on sector-focused workforce development projects in New York, Oklahoma and Ohio.

In Northeast Ohio, WorkAdvance was coordinated by Towards Employment and supported by the Fund for Our Economic Future (the Fund) and other partners. The WorkAdvance demonstration project evaluated about 700 participants in Northeast Ohio and showed positive impact on earnings and advancement, and a positive return on investment for government, individuals, and society. These positive benefit-cost findings are not often seen in evaluations of employment and training programs.[1]

Since the conclusion of the demonstration project, Towards Employment has been applying

lessons learned to expand access to effective career pathway programming through the creation of supportive "on ramps," with a specific focus on racial equity. The primary focus was to:

- Build new ways to better support those "not yet ready" to meet even the starting point for in-demand career pathways that offer family-sustaining wages
- Continue that support post-hire, seeking new ways to coordinate with employers around continued advancement.

WorkAdvance worked, in several important ways.

The WorkAdvance program design is measurably more effective than traditional workforce training. After five years, compared to traditional program counterparts, Northeast Ohio program participants were more likely to:

- Work regular shifts, full time, in a permanent job and/or in a job with opportunities for advancement, and were 1.5-3 times as likely to work in a targeted sector
- Earn $5,000 more annually, representing a 14-22% increase in wages
- Complete technical training (four times more likely than their traditional program counterparts)

Overall, the strongest impacts were experienced by those semi-attached to the labor market and the long-term unemployed, representing hope for those workers left behind and displaced by COVID.

Critical to participants' success were advancement coaching, a focus on and resources to help with solving challenges in people's lives that may interfere with work or living requirements, all offered with a duration of support of more than a year.

Since 2016, at the conclusion of the demonstration project, WorkAdvance has become embedded in our community in many ways, influencing program design across many organizations as well as influencing system-level changes to the way our Northeast Ohio communities connect with employers.

WorkAdvance now refers not just to the demonstration project, but rather to a comprehensive, coordinated approach to workforce development.

WorkAdvance taught us both about what works at the workforce program level, as well as what's needed at the workforce system level to boost equitable access to and advancement in good jobs. Today, after five additional years of longitudinal research, innovations in service delivery, and increased presence of sector partnerships in Northeast Ohio — a

recommendation from the initial WorkAdvance project — we know a great deal more.

But challenges remain, and further comprehensive and coordinated work is required to address the following realities:

The jobs with the highest wage growth also have high entry-level requirements.

Workers who have not yet achieved math, literacy and digital literacy levels needed to enter in-demand pathways often require longer on ramps into (and sustained supports after) workforce training to reach and advance in living-wage careers. We now understand more about what is required — both programmatically and systemically — to effectively and equitably support workers so that they may overcome barriers to accessing good jobs and advancing in them.

Coaching post-employment remains key.

WorkAdvance taught us the importance of focusing on long-term goals and career advancement from Day One; this shapes all aspects of communication and service delivery. Ongoing and intensive, industry-informed coaching throughout the process is key to aligning the range of services workers need to attain economic mobility and helping individuals make informed and long-term choices about their careers. Yet a *Brookings study* found that "few workers" receive sustained support throughout their workforce development journey, with only 43% of sampled programs providing post-employment coaching and support to its participants beyond basic monitoring.[2]

Understanding employers' role in driving positive results was not a focus of the research and creates opportunity for more learning.

Better understanding of availability of internal career pathways and earn-and-learn opportunities, management culture, scheduling and other job quality indicators may help drive more employer practice changes that align with equity goals.

Even best-practice workforce programming and improved structures did not erase disparities in employment and earnings by race and gender.

We are not just facing a skills gap, we are also facing an opportunity gap and systemic biases. Training people and connecting them with jobs is one piece of building a successful workforce. Improving job quality, equity and inclusivity for these jobs is just as critical.

WorkAdvance provided insights on the need for an "on ramp" function as a key to driving equity.

On ramps are the solution to helping individuals with barriers bridge opportunity gaps into family-sustaining careers. An "on ramp" is an enhanced program design that evolved from WorkAdvance. On ramps build on the same core elements — industry-specific coaching, holistic support services, technical training, industry partnership — and integrate additional supports to effectively help individuals with significant barriers to educational and economic success gain agency and traction, enabling advancement and stability over time.[3] At a systems level, the on ramp function links employers and complex networks of service providers to coordinate systems of support, effectively navigating both the supply side and the demand side of the workforce system.

WorkAdvance worked in several important ways, but to maximize places where it fell short and meet our current moment, our ways of partnering, delivering services, and funding workforce development need further change.

We recommend the following key action steps:

Build Up On Ramps

Many workers need more and more intensive supports over a year or more to connect them with career pathways. Workforce programs can increase coaching, promote earn-and-learn opportunities that allow people to be paid while they upskill, and support access to flexible funds that help people address the social determinants of work beyond just the traditional transactional supports such as transportation and vouchers for childcare. Leveraging the on ramp function can continue these supports post-hire to maximize opportunities for career advancement for new hires and provide value to partner employers.

Keep Eyes on Equity

All ecosystem players, including employers, must make racial equity and job quality explicit goals in their workforce development work, committing to addressing the complex root causes of opportunity gaps.

Make Work Better, Together

Coordination across the workforce system can lead to the creation of new sector partnerships in high-growth industries with high numbers of workers of color, low pay, erratic schedules, limited benefits, etc., creating the opportunity to reimagine job design for improved job quality. A network of collaborating workforce system actors supporting the on ramp function would allow people to move through programming at a pace that addresses their needs.

For practitioners, policymakers, funders and employers, these learnings presents a path to advancing WorkAdvance and designing workforce programs that truly work for our community. Read on in this report to learn more, and scan the code for more context.

For workforce development practitioners, policymakers, philanthropic funders and employers in particular, we have the chance and indeed, the responsibility, to realign our work to the moment: Yes, we need jobs, but jobs are not enough; yes, we need reskilling and upskilling, but skills are not enough; yes, we need more diverse workplaces, but diversity is not enough. **We need to acknowledge the social determinants of work and address racial opportunity gaps to make meaningful change that benefits all.**

JILL RIZIKA | *President & CEO*
Towards Employment

Read more from Jill in her letter, which can be accessed by scanning the QR code:

Of course you want to advance.

You want to go further. You can advance, and in this program you have these people who are advocating for you, who help you out and who actually want to see you succeed. Ask yourself what WorkAdvance can do for your life, now and later. Short-term goals, long-term goals, what's best for you? And don't be afraid to talk to someone, utilize your coaches, and be honest. What's your fears? What's standing in the way of making the best decision for you, in the long run?

TIARA COLBERT

COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER
UH RAINBOW CENTER FOR WOMEN & CHILDREN

Two-time Towards Employment/University Hospitals Pathway Program (2016 and 2018)

READ MORE OF TIARA'S STORY ON PG. 24

WORKADVANCE

What is WorkAdvance?

Launched in 2011, WorkAdvance began as a national, randomized control trial on sector-focused workforce development projects in New York, Tulsa, Oklahoma, and Northeast Ohio. Coordinated locally by Towards Employment and supported by the Fund for Our Economic Future (the Fund) and other partners, the WorkAdvance demonstration project evaluated about 700 participants in Northeast Ohio, testing whether **a comprehensive provision of services, focusing on targeted employment sectors and emphasizing career advancement could lead to better outcomes for individuals and the regional economy.**

WorkAdvance services incuded: sector-specific job screening, career and readiness training, and career planning; in-demand occupational skills training; job placement; post-employment coaching for advancement; and supportive services.

Through WorkAdvance, Towards Employment modeled a mini ecosystem of partners across systems to create a participant-centered career pathway system with deep employer engagement through industry partnerships and individual employer relationships.

The demonstration project emphasized a "technical training first" approach to accelerate advancement opportunities, but this meant that those less ready to meet entry requirements had a harder time accessing the program. The regional follow-on activities introduced a more flexible approach to better meet these higher needs, creating industry-informed, supportive on ramps that connected foundational and soft skills-building activities to the technical training and then to the higher-wage career pathways.

Rigorous evaluation of the WorkAdvance demonstration project across all sites produced reports showing results between 2-4 years after enrollment and again 4-6 years after enrollment to understand the long-term effects of the intervention.

"In the best of all worlds you're building on the capacity of many organizations and you're building a system that should work well beyond the project. But getting there is difficult. Whether it's workforce or any other kind of collaborative, you have partners that bring different capacities, have different operating cultures, different missions, and different performance metrics and expectations. **Aligning the partners towards a common goal is a challenge, and that's the role that Towards Employment played for WorkAdvance.**

FRIEDA MOLINA | *Director, Economic Mobility, Housing, and Communities*
MDRC

> Job preparedness, attitude, conflict resolution — those important soft skills — as well as life-related issues like housing, transportation, childcare: We have a 300-hour program and a lot of technical material to get through. We do the best we can in the soft skills, but Towards Employment has been a vital partner in that area. I've always known that I had somebody I could lean on, because quite frankly it's not our area of expertise.
>
> **TIM DUFFY** | *President*
> **Cleveland Industrial Training Center**

What are its impacts?

These initial and longitudinal research findings show great promise from WorkAdvance that suggests it can be a more effective approach to workforce development than traditional models. A key learning is making sure that advancement-focused services are targeted and robust enough to help participants move up career pathways:

- **Upskilling Success:** In a world where upskilling and reskilling are essential, Northeast Ohio participants completed technical training at four times the rate as the control group.[4]
- **Job Quality:** Early results showed Northeast Ohio program participants were more likely to be working regular shift, full time, in a permanent job, and/or in a job with opportunities for advancement.[5]
- **Advancement, Not Just Placement:** Overall, WorkAdvance participants earned more than their research comparisons, even though the rate of employment is similar.[6] This suggests a focus on advancement implemented through robust career coaching as well as technical training can lead to higher earnings. The WorkAdvance evaluation found that training and placements in targeted-sector jobs — where demand for qualified workers translates into a significantly higher wage than the jobs low-income workers could secure without sector-specific training provide — helped drive earnings differentials. Unsurprisingly, this wage premium was greatest in industries such as IT where the entry point to training requires higher hurdles than lower-skilled jobs like nursing assistant or machine operator.
- **High Impact for High Barriers:** Overall, the strongest impacts came for those with long-term unemployment as well as those who were "semi-attached to the labor market," representing hope for those workers left behind and displaced by COVID.
- **Positive ROI:** These findings and the estimates of program operating costs imply that for every dollar of costs needed to operate WorkAdvance, society reaped $2 to $8 across all four sites. These net gain estimates are exceptional. Benefit-cost findings for employment and training programs for the disadvantaged seldom see this level of return, and finding net losses is not infrequent.[7]

ADVANCING UNDERSTANDING:

SKILLS GAP VS. OPPORTUNITY GAP

The outdated **skills gap** narrative "frames labor market problems through a deficit lens: Low-income and displaced workers 'lack' skills and motivation, contributing to the national skills gap."[9] An updated narrative recognizes that our economy is constrained by an **opportunity gap** in which systematic social exclusion of diverse talent — particularly Black and Brown workers — from access to education, economic security, quality jobs, and career mobility over a lifetime is the true cause of pay and advancement disparities.[9]

Closing the opportunity gap means embracing a more holistic and nuanced approach for connecting diverse talent to economic opportunity.

SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF WORK

Essential to closing opportunity gaps is a framework for organizing and aligning systems that addresses the social determinants of work, providing a continuum of support, meeting workers where they are and building on ramps to well-defined, in-demand career pathways.

Meaningful access to family-sustaining careers entails more than education, training, and equitable hiring practices. It also depends on an individual's ability to take advantage of a given job opportunity: living close enough to the worksite, having reliable and affordable transportation, being able to arrange dependable family care, and enjoying affordable health care and benefits like paid leave that support employment stability and worker well-being. **These essential supports and conditions are the connective tissues of workforce equity.**[8]

What does a longer-term analysis reveal?

In addition to the positive impacts seen in the initial research report, a longer-term analysis also reveals challenges and opportunities for scaling the WorkAdvance approach in Northeast Ohio — and in ensuring access to all those facing opportunity gaps. Key learnings include:

Critical Advancement Coaching: For workers, successfully reskilling and landing a better job is just the start of the journey. Guidance and support from career coaches helps low-wage workers stay focused and motivated, and connects them to resources that lead to advancement over time. In the Northeast Ohio WorkAdvance supplemental study, commissioned by Towards Employment, workers who accessed coaching services were more likely to advance. Yet coaching is high-touch, and increased capacity is essential to scale efforts and reach more workers. Technology may help bring down costs and make coaching more accessible, but personal interaction and trust-building requires significant investment regardless.

Higher Barriers Need Longer On Ramps: Credentialing programs that offer an immediate wage premium (initially a study requirement) often require higher levels of readiness than many workers in Greater Cleveland have to start. Moreover, employers with the best-defined advancement pathways over the long run don't necessarily offer the most dramatic earnings increase upfront. Recent economic forecasts indicate that by 2025, "65% of Ohio's workforce will need to have a 2- or 4-year degree, or certified marketable skill." Currently, only 34% of the region's population have attained this.[10] Many of the adaptations introduced after the study was concluded were designed to increase access to training and quality employment opportunities for those who have experienced large opportunity gaps, such as formerly incarcerated, front-line working parents, or residents of high-poverty neighborhoods — each of which are predominantly composed of Black workers. Focusing on technical training with a wage premium without considering the efforts required to prepare workers to meet entry requirements and address the social determinants of work will continue to leave people behind.

Earning and Learning: Workers with limited resources face significant challenges to making investments in traditional training programs. Thus an increased focus on employer-embedded upskilling efforts — such as on-the-job training, apprenticeships, publicly funded paid training and other "earn and learn models" — is needed as a way to decrease costs for individuals and ensure that training directly translates into increased wages and advancement opportunities. WorkAdvance provides employers with a needed supportive service component that helps workers succeed in training while continuing to work. New pathways designed to leverage transferable skills from a current job into an "opportunity occupation" that pays up to 10% more can offer another route to advancement. See the Fed's *Opportunity Mobility Explorer* for more information on this skills-based approach to advancement.[11]

Employers Have Work to Do: Though the employer role was not addressed in the research, it's clear that job quality — including not just pay rates but also benefits, flexible scheduling, culturally competent supervision and clearly defined opportunities for advancement — is critical to retention and advancement. Employers' willingness to partner with service providers and sector partnerships to help source and support the advancement of non-traditional candidates will win the talent game. Engaging employers around these opportunities and helping facilitate access to supports to build these programs is essential. The ROI to employers through "grow your own" strategies and stronger retention has been well documented.[12]

ADVANCING UNDERSTANDING:

HOW DATA CAN HIDE DISPARITY

As we enter a post-COVID world in which women and minorities' participation in the labor market has shifted dramatically, our best chance to ensure a return-to-work strategy that addresses challenges and accelerates advancement relies on a thorough understanding of equity dynamics. Here are some details from the WorkAdvance analysis:

Mother of a Challenge: In the long-term pooled analysis, women (not surprisingly) earned less than men overall, but they were more likely to be employed three years post enrollment. In the Towards Employment sample, women retained their earnings gains relative to the control group, whereas the gains experienced by men had faded by Year 3.[13] Northeast Ohio had the highest percentage of female participants of all WorkAdvance study sites — quadruple the rate of the next-highest site — a quarter of whom were single parents.[14] Most of these women entered the health care field in jobs at the region's large hospital systems, a sector that pays less to start but has robust advancement pathways. This analysis raises questions of the dynamic between a possible constraining factor of single parenthood in slower advancement progress, as well as the positive impact of employer-supported internal pathways. **One of the WorkAdvance follow-on activities specifically focused on parents (primarily women) in healthcare, adding additional family-related supports and coaching to support parents' advancement. Two hundred parents received advancement focused services with a 100% technical training completion rate and 82% one-year retention rate.[15]** This work has evolved into a full-blown *2Generation strategy* that brings a whole family approach to career pathway development — with greater emphasis on integrating family finances, quality childcare, family literacy and parenting skills into efforts to advance economic mobility.[16]

Racial Disparities Persist: Black program participants were employed at higher rates than whites. However, Black program participants earned just three-quarters as much.[17] This data mirrors findings from the Fund's *Two Tomorrows* report and other local, regional and national data that shows while it's possible to improve individual worker circumstances, individual supports are no match for systemic racial biases.

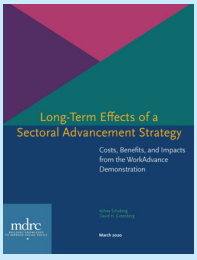
> "The tightening labor market is making employers really eager to work with partners in new and different ways, and I think that's really healthy for our efforts in opening their minds, partnering in the community and reaching into neighborhoods that maybe they've never reached out to before.

JESSICA BORZA | *Executive Director* **MVMC Mahoning Valley Manufacturers Coalition**

For More About WorkAdvance:

2016

Redefining Workforce Development in Northeast Ohio



2020

Long-Term Effects of a Sectoral Advancement Strategy

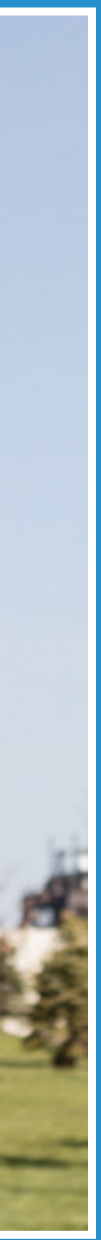
LOCAL SPOTLIGHT

A FIVE-YEAR JOURNEY

RICHARD JACKSON

PRESS OPERATOR/DIE SETTER
TALAN PRODUCTS

TOWARDS EMPLOYMENT RE-ENTRY PROGRAM & ACCESS TO MANUFACTURING CAREERS GRADUATE (2020)



“When I started, my short-term goal was to learn the press and the paperwork, and my long-term goal — which now I consider a short-term goal — is to be in a managerial position, a shift supervisor.”

In 2015, Richard was working at a junkyard when he was charged with aggravated theft and corrupt activity. Three years later, a conviction and a three-year prison sentence followed. Richard served two and a half years and was released to Harbor Light halfway house in February 2020.

“I knew coming home I had to get employment,” he says, explaining that his wife had carried all the financial burden of raising kids and maintaining a home in his absence. “I wasn’t really concerned about what type of job.”

During an employment readiness session at Harbor Light, Richard learned about Towards Employment — and the Access to Manufacturing Careers program than came with a $500 a week training stipend, an enormous leap from the $21 a month he earned laboring in prison. “After about a week, it wasn’t about the $500 anymore, it was about what I can get out of this class, and if I can make it to the end, then I’m gonna go to the next step.”

Richard found employment with a criminal background in the height of the pandemic. He credits his Towards Employment Career Coach for pushing him to think of the future and how today’s training could set him on a path to a career in manufacturing. He works closely with his career coach, whose guidance helped him build a close relationship with his shift supervisor. That supervisor’s encouragement helped him maintain a positive attitude — even while working second shift with a 4-month-old. And this hard work has paid off: Richard’s advancements have earned him a 58% increase in wages in just 15 months.

“I feel like without Towards Employment I would not be on the path that I’m on. I love my job.”

OUR MOMENT IN TIME

In 2021, for those earning Ohio's minimum wage of $8.80, affordable rent should hover around $452 per month. The problem is, fair market rent for a modest single-bedroom apartment in Greater Cleveland is $850.[18] Working full time, that leaves less than $700 for all other monthly expenses including food, child care, transportation and healthcare.

With a poverty rate of 30.8%, Cleveland is the poorest city of its size in the nation.[19] Despite progress on several fronts, we outline just a few of the Social Determinants of Work that workers in Northeast Ohio continue to face in advancing their careers to family-sustaining wages, including poverty, racial disparities in employment and earnings, lack of access to good jobs, the digital divide and the impact of incarceration. And as complex as these challenges are, the solutions in place to address them are just as complicated for both workers and employers to navigate.

> What would help programs like this are employers who are willing to invest in participants who may not be their typical employees, investing in those Second Chance programs, investing in youth. There are these looked-over employees, **simply because they don't have that well-developed resume or the educational experience that you're used to.**

JESSICA WILLIAMS | *Career Coach* **Towards Employment**

Low wages and unemployment are particularly stark for Black and Latino workers.

Compared to a national average of 4.6%,[22] Cuyahoga County's unemployment rate of 4.9% doesn't sound so bad. But when that rate is disaggregated by race, the numbers tell another story. After the spike in unemployment due to the pandemic subsided, stubborn disparities remain. While overall unemployment in Cuyahoga County dropped significantly in early 2021[20] — down from 10% in September 2020 — Black Ohioans were unemployed at a rate of 12%, compared to just 4% for whites.[21] And Team NEO's *Misaligned Opportunities report* found that Black households earn just 54% in Northeast Ohio compared to white households.[22]

> How do youth prioritize school when they're worried about where they're going to live? You can't expect someone who works two part-time jobs to put a roof over their head and food on their table to then attend school or a training program so they can move out of poverty.
>
> **PAMELA JANKOWSKI**
> *Deputy Director, Public Services*
> **Cuyahoga County Public Library**

Even with a job, poverty is difficult to escape...

The United Way's *Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed (ALICE) Analysis* found that 41% of Cuyahoga County's roughly 542,000 households struggle to make ends meet.[23] In fact, Cleveland's median household income is half of the U.S. median, and half of what's needed to afford the basic necessities, or a "survival budget."[24] The MIT Living Wage Calculator figures a living wage for a household comprised of one adult and one child in Cuyahoga County is $29.66 per hour[25] — 219% higher than the minimum wage. Yet workers transitioning off of public assistance can nearly double their wages — from $8.80 to $16.80 per hour — but take home less than 15% of the gain.[26] This is due to government policies in which a wage increase triggers a significant reduction or complete loss of essential public benefits that cost more to replace than the income gained. This creates a punishing disincentive for advancement commonly referred to as the *benefits cliff*.[27]

... and many jobs currently attainable without a degree are not family-sustaining.

Low wages, inflexible schedules, limited career advancement opportunities, no benefits or sick leave: many of the jobs we recognize as essential to the functioning of our society simply don't provide enough to get by, and not everyone can earn a degree or skilled credential.

OUR MOMENT IN TIME CONTINUED

Economic mobility and access to higher-paying jobs is tied to education...

Imagine earning near-poverty wages while trying to afford the time or financial investment required to continue education and training. It takes the average student 5.5 years to complete an associate degree balancing school, work, and life; and the more financial pressure people endure to finish, the less likely they are to actually complete a degree program.[28] In Cleveland, just over a third of all residents have earned at least a two-year degree. Yet "middle-skill jobs" (positions that require more than a diploma but less than a four-year degree) account for about half of the labor market statewide.[29] According to TeamNeo's 2020 report, *Aligning Opportunities in Northeast Ohio*, without all actors in the workforce ecosystem, including businesses, working together to address the Opportunity Gap and support more equitable access to skill-building opportunities, Northeast Ohio won't have enough workers with the required education or skills to meet predicted employer demands.[30]

... as well as geography...

It's not just where you are in life, then, it's also where you live. Beginning in the 1950s, but particularly over the last 20 years, job growth has mostly happened in the suburbs. Spatial mismatch (a lack of physical proximity to jobs) is especially acute in high-poverty neighborhoods — those that experienced historic practices of redlining. More than a quarter of jobs have vanished for residents in Cleveland's high-poverty neighborhoods.[31]

> Advancement is spoken about at orientation, so it is the expectation from day one… **If you can't see it, you can't be it.**
>
> **STACI WAMPLER**
> *Director, Industry Partnerships*
> **Towards Employment**

The Digital Divide shows good jobs aren't always available in certain regions even when those jobs are remote...

In addition to spatial mismatch, historically redlined neighborhoods suffer disproportionately from a lack of adequate broadband Internet access, resulting in a kind of "digital mismatch" that puts even remote work out of reach for residents. According to 2019 statistics from the *National Digital Inclusion Alliance*, Cleveland ranks 16th in the nation for worst access; 46% of homes have no wire line, and about 31% are completely cut off from broadband access, even when you include cellular devices.[32] Many of the jobs that transitioned to remote during the pandemic expect to continue work-from-home in some capacity even after public health restrictions are fully lifted. These roles pay a 17% premium over non-digital roles, according to a recent *Burning Glass* report.[33] Yet these jobs — as well as digital training opportunities and digital literacy skills themselves — are out of reach to those who live in neighborhoods that suffer from the Digital Divide, again, primarily Black and Latino workers.

...and there is a strong correlation between lack of opportunity and mass incarceration...

Each year since 2007, for example, more than 720,000 inmates have been released nationwide from state and federal prisons. Around 5,000 to 7,000 of them have likely returned to the poorest neighborhoods of Cuyahoga County.[34] Yet criminal records trigger collateral sanctions, a range of legal restrictions that diminish the rights and privileges of those who have already served their sentences. Ohio has some 850 laws and administrative rules which limit access to employment, occupational licensing, housing, voting, education and other opportunities necessary to fully reintegrate with society. Jobs that bar applicants with a criminal history pay $4,700 more on average,[35] while also constraining talent pipelines that could benefit employers. And again, they disproportionately impact these same historically redlined and predominantly Black neighborhoods. Read more about the economic impacts of collateral sanctions in Policy Matters' *Ohio's Wasted Assets* Report.

Yet, support systems are hard to navigate...

The network of actors addressing pieces and parts of these challenges is vast, which introduces its own set of challenges to be solved. Individual workers may navigate one system for public benefits, another for help completing a GED, another to access a scholarship for credentialed training, yet others for housing and utilities support, record expungement or driver's license reinstatement. Each interaction with a new system requires individuals to re-identify their "deficit" and re-share personal information. The workforce ecosystem has not been set up to address root causes of these opportunity gaps in an aligned and coordinated fashion. It doesn't take long for this process to undermine self-esteem and sap motivation. Meanwhile, businesses must interact with layers of bureaucratic systems: individual organizations, the public workforce system and government, the education system — from K12 to technical schools to community and private colleges. Each offers their own solution for talent development, but this siloed approach can seem adhoc and confusing to navigate. Even those that recognize tapping new pools of talent may require changes in their own practices often lack the partnerships and/or resources to implement them.

An expanded definition of the workforce ecosystem—one that is sensitive to the intersection of these challenges and builds cross-sector collaborative efforts—is essential to the design and implementation of strategies to advance workforce equity.

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

Calls to action revisited, with new ones to drive us forward

It's been four full years since the first report on the impact of WorkAdvance, *Redefining Workforce Development in Northeast Ohio*. In it, Shilpa Kedar, formerly the economic development program director at the Cleveland Foundation, expressed the hope that "in five years, it would be ideal if the principles of WorkAdvance are so embedded in everyday work that no one is talking about them, [because funders already] buy into those principles and use them."[36] In some respects, this is already true. The premise that effective workforce development requires conveners to manage complex partnerships providing access to on ramps which support economic mobility via a sector-based job retention and advancement strategy is the new baseline.

At the conclusion of the first WorkAdvance report, The Fund proceeded to outline a *Call to Action* that could make this vision for a more inclusive workforce development system a reality:

Recommendation 1: Spend money better.

Recommendation 2: Promote core elements of Northeast Ohio's WorkAdvance delivery: Encourage collaboration, promote sector partnerships, mandate a career pathway framework.

Recommendation 3: Build into policy and practice.

Much progress has been made on each of these efforts in Northeast Ohio. Since the completion of the demonstration program, Towards Employment and other workforce partners have continued to integrate and innovate WorkAdvance principles across the region.

Follow up to WorkAdvance took many forms to build on learnings—both of what worked and where the model needed strengthening.

More actors have recognized the importance of many key programmatic features of the WorkAdvance model. A primary focus was to better reach those "not yet ready" to meet even the starting point for career pathways identified by employers as immediate needs. The middle-skill jobs cited in *Team NEO's Aligning Opportunity Report* — the ones that "only" require a two-year degree or technical credential with 10th grade math proficiency — have been simply out of reach for too many. In addition, the importance of aligning and coordinating systems to more effectively serve both career seekers, current workers and employers has been a driving theme.

The timeline on the next page — meant to be illustrative and not comprehensive — shows the evolution of efforts to promote a more comprehensive, as well as a more aligned and coordinated approach to workforce development. We highlight some key *programmatic enhancements* to help address worker preparation as well as some *system-change developments* to help address the supply-demand alignment. These examples include Towards Employment's and other major community initiatives across the workforce system.

Program Enhancements

- **Industry Focus:** Expansion into sectors with lower barriers to entry; deepening engagement in existing sectors to support more advancement
- **Focused Audiences:** Individuals with specialized support needs to better tailor programming and services (e.g. parents, young adults, returning citizens), including targeted geography
- **New Relationships:** Growth of more comprehensive wrap-around services and referral sources

System Change Developments

- **Skills vs Credentials:** Piloting a skill-based (vs academic credential-based) hiring initiative to promote equitable access to in-demand jobs
- **Partners in Change:** Building a collaborative approach to the young adult workforce ecosystem
- **Coaching Focus:** Investing in system-wide career coaching capacity
- **Sector Strategy:** Launching three sector partnerships with a focus on building more equitable on ramps

ADVANCING UNDERSTANDING:

WORKFORCE CONNECT: SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS

A major shift in the region's approach to workforce occurred in 2019 with the convening of the Northeast Ohio Cuyahoga County Workforce Funders Group by the Cuyahoga County Executive's office, creating WorkforceConnect. WorkforceConnect committed to launching three initial industry-led sector partnerships targeting manufacturing, healthcare and information technology (IT). The result of a partnership of public and private leaders, the group includes the City of Cleveland, Cleveland Foundation, Cuyahoga County, Deaconess Foundation, Fund for our Economic Future, Greater Cleveland Partnership, The George Gund Foundation, Cleveland/ Cuyahoga County Workforce Development Board, TeamNEO and United Way of Greater Cleveland. This diverse coalition has the goal of connecting more workers to well-paying career paths and helping employers find the skilled talent they need, ultimately supporting a more inclusive and competitive economy in Cuyahoga County. For more information about Workforce Connect's sector partnership model, please see the Cuyahoga County Workforce Funders Group *Developing Sector Partnerships in Cuyahoga County* report.

In NEO, WorkAdvance has evolved into a holistic approach to workforce development that meets job seekers where they are, offering integrated, coordinated career pathway services, aligning education and training with specific advancement opportunities in response to employer demand. It deploys career coaching at every point along their journey, in recognition of the individual and systemic challenges along the way, sticking with them long beyond the traditional exit point (up to two years) and extending the period of time the individual can access resources with which to advance to a family-sustaining wage.

Importantly, implementing WorkAdvance in Northeast Ohio provided a blueprint for building on ramps to opportunity, specifically:

- How service providers and employers can collaborate to support advancement
- How to braid numerous strands of supports to more effectively help people get and stay on advancement pathways over longer periods of time

And provided evidence to inform community discussions around:

- Evolving Northeast Ohio's workforce system from ad hoc to a sustainable, institutionalized alignment among partners across a wide range of related systems
- Focusing on addressing racial equity

> Employers working in partnership with workforce training providers is critical — to build understanding across business needs and worker needs, and then transform workforce development efforts to better serve both. **You can't do that with one-off relationships that are transactional in nature.** Sector partnerships create a table to be able to reorient those conversations.

JANINE KAISER | *Director, Talent Initiative*
The Fund for Our Economic Future

AN OVERVIEW OF THE WORK

2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015

WorkAdvance emerges. The Fund matches a national grant with $3.3 million in local funding to evaluate a promising antipoverty program dedicated to economic mobility. Towards Employment is selected as one of four lead sites through a competitive application process and is supported by partnerships with Public Workforce (Ohio Means Jobs Cuyahoga County), Industry Partners (MAGNET, Manufacturing Works, Center for Health Affairs), Support Organizations (e.g. Literacy Cooperative, The Centers for Families & Children) and Education and Training Institutions (e.g. Cleveland Industrial Training Center, Cuyahoga Community College, and Cuyahoga Valley Career Center).

For five years, Towards Employment operates **WorkAdvance** as a rigorously evaluated research model, serving more than 700 participants roughly split between program and control cohorts. **Findings of the first report tracking two years post-enrollment showed participants were 1.5-3 times more likely to be employed in a targeted sector, with a 14-22% increase in wages.**[37]

WorkAdvance is adopted more broadly in the region (and in select areas nationally). **Over the past 7 years, Towards Employment has partnered with various stakeholders to implement the following initiatives using the WorkAdvance framework:**

PROMOTE CORE ELEMENTS OF NORTHEAST OHIO WORKADVANCE

> How do you ensure you're getting to people that typically can't make it through the traditional process and give them the right training, the right infrastructure and the right resources and support to make it through the process? Towards Employment was a great partner, and so together we created Step Up to UH. With that extra coaching up front and job readiness and coaching after hire, we have seen better retention from those individuals than the normal hires, and it has really made a difference in the number of people we can hire from [distressed] communities.
>
> **KIM SHELNICK** | *VP, Talent Acquisition* **University Hospitals**

KEY

Highlighting key elements of the timeline

- ALIGNMENT WITH FUND'S CALLS TO ACTION
- DEMOGRAPHIC FOCUS
- SECTOR FOCUS
- SYSTEMS FOCUS
- NATIONAL FUNDS

ADVANCE STORY AND IMPACT

2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021

SPEND MONEY BETTER

The Workforce Funders Group convenes. This coalition is comprised of top leadership from Cuyahoga County, the city of Cleveland, Ohio Means Jobs, Team NEO, the Greater Cleveland Partnership, the Cleveland, Gund and Deaconess foundations, United Way and the Fund.

BUILD POLICY INTO PRACTICE

Workforce Connect launches. The Workforce Funders Group announces $2.5 million in public, private and philanthropic funds committed to support workforce system realignment. Several new initiatives also kick off throughout Northeast Ohio.

Deaconness adopts dedicated workforce strategy

Ohio Means Jobs Cuyahoga County pilots sector partnerships with federal grants

The Fund's *Two Tomorrows* Report

Greater Cleveland Partnership creates Office of Workforce Engagement

See new work here

COACHING

Jobs Ohio, working through MAGNET, supports **Career Coaching Academy** for staff from several Cuyahoga County Workforce organizations.

Mahoning Valley Manufacturing Coalition invests in the development of **Career Counseling Network** with support from Towards Employment, R4Workforce and TCMGroup.

Towards Employment (TE) partners with University Hospitals (UH) on two core workforce development programs. **Step Up to UH** creates pathways into the hospital from surrounding neighborhoods into targeted entry-level jobs, and the **Pathways Program** moves entry-level incumbent workers into higher-paying jobs at the hospital. To date, over 350 neighborhood residents have been hired, and Step Up graduates have higher one-year retention rates compared to departmental averages.

HEALTHCARE

TE launches a Department of Labor (DOL) funded career pathways program for formerly incarcerated individuals, utilizing the same industry and educational partners as WorkAdvance for manufacturing, as well as new construction and culinary/ hospitality sector partners.

RE-ENTRY **CULINARY & CONSTRUCTION**

TE is one of seven organizations selected nationally to implement **Move Up**, funded by W.K. Kellogg, to promote minority parents' advancement in the workplace.

PARENTS

A skills-based hiring pilot, TalentNEO hypothesized the use of an objective skill score could open access to quality career paths; working with multiple partners, upskilled and tested 980 job seekers and matched to jobs with aligned skill scores.[38] Helped educate job seekers and employers about skills based hiring approaches.

SKILLS-BASED HIRING

Towards Employment delivers *Access to Manufacturing Careers* and the *Health Care On Ramp* as part of Workforce Connect's sector partnership programming.

GENERATION WORK

Cleveland is one of four sites selected by Annie E Casey Foundation, with Towards Employment as fiscal agent, to address systemic barriers to work faced by young adults, particularly young adults of color. Brought public and community based partners to a collaborative table focused on improving employment outcomes for young adults.

YOUNG ADULTS **COLLABORATION**

LOCAL SPOTLIGHT

BUILDING CONFIDENCE

TIARA COLBERT

COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER

UH RAINBOW CENTER FOR WOMEN & CHILDREN

PATHWAY TO PCA (2016) & PATHWAY TO COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER (2018)

Back in 2012 I started at University Hospitals in the kitchen as a tray passer. Now I'm a Community Health Worker. **I grew up on 84th between Cedar and Central, which is the same area where I work. I know a lot of the clients that come into the clinic, and I can relate.**

Tiara grew up practically across the street where she now works at UH Rainbow Center for Women and Children on Euclid and East 58th. As a child she attended afterschool programming at a local Centers for Families and Children, where she later worked as a cook. "I know a lot of the clients that come into the clinic, and I can relate," she says, referring to her current position as one of just a handful of Community Health Workers at the hospital. How she got there is less familiar.

After starting in an entry-level nutrition services job at University Hospitals in 2012, Tiara hoped to leverage that foot in the door toward a nursing career. So when her manager shared some career advancement information, she sprung at the chance to enroll in the Pathway to Patient Care Assistant program, developed with Towards Employment to help entry-level workers advance. Working with her Towards Employment career coach, Tiara progressed within UH for more than 5 years before a supervisor approached her about joining a second Towards Employment Pathway program last year, this one for Community Health Workers.

The new position was a perfect fit for Tiara, who in her patient care role had discovered a passion for social work and is now enrolled in a bachelor's degree program — while successfully juggling a full-time job, her 9-year-old son and community volunteer work.

"I've come a long way," she says. "I have things that have gotten me down, you know, but there's so many things to feel blessed for, I just try to be positive and ... manage everything."

Towards Employment helps to build confidence. They gave me the reassurance that I can go a little bit further, that I can challenge myself to finish. **They help remind people they're not alone, that this is a process.**

ON RAMPS MAKE IT WORK

On ramps are the solution to helping individuals with barriers bridge opportunity gaps into family-sustaining careers.

The increase of sector partnerships in our region has been an important development in building robust partnerships with employers. However, given that many target opportunities with "wage premiums" are still a reach for many in our community, creating "on ramps" to these family-sustaining careers is a key to addressing the opportunity gap.

An "on ramp" is an enhanced program design that evolved from WorkAdvance. Still focused on providing providing industry-specific supports tied to a targeted pathway, on ramps build on the same core elements of WorkAdvance — coaching, holistic supportive services, technical training, industry partnerships — and integrate additional supports. Designed to effectively help individuals with significant barriers to educational and economic success gain agency and traction, enabling advancement and stability over time, these include:

- Scaffolded supports for workers unable to meet screening criteria for technical training programs (such as foundational education, work readiness, supportive services to help with stabilization)
- Longer duration of coaching support following placement (more than a year)
- Increased integration across service providers to support more responsive, effective and efficient programs for workers and businesses
- Increased focus on continuous program improvement based on workers' own experiences
- Explicit focus on racial equity and job quality

The on ramp function links employers and complex networks of service providers to coordinate systems of support to overcome opportunity gaps, including ongoing coaching to help individuals advance along their career pathway. The end result creates opportunity for workers and reduces employer costs by establishing well-developed pipelines, improving job performance, and reducing turnover.

Scan the code to see more details about on ramps in the interactive digital report

> We've put resources and attention into getting people into training. But we aren't always able to match that at the scale needed with the coaching, removal of barriers to success (such as transportation and child care), and other services needed, and we know these additional supports help people thrive in their training and in the early days of their careers. **We need to identify new policies and approaches to scaling these other necessary supports.**

CATHY BELK | *President & CEO*
Deaconess Foundation

ADVANCING UNDERSTANDING:

ON RAMPS IN ACTION

ACCESS to Manufacturing Careers — a program of the Cuyahoga County Manufacturing Sector Partnership with technical curriculum provided by the Precision Metalforming Association and training delivered by Towards Employment — targets returning citizens and young adults to offer an entry-level credential. This employer-designed manufacturing training program assigns each student a coach, who provides support throughout training and post-placement, while employers provide curriculum support and are waiting to hire graduates upon completion.

Step Up to University Hospitals was created to build an on ramp to entry-level jobs at the hospital for residents of economically distressed neighborhoods surrounding the hospital's main campus. Towards Employment worked with staff supervisors, HR, and recruiters to design the curriculum and provided support services and post-employment coaching. Step Up graduates have higher retention rates than traditional hires.[39]

The value of on ramps doesn't stop at recruitment and hiring. On ramp programming can support employers' efforts to build internal pathways. On ramp supports available post-employment are still relatively unfamiliar to employers, yet they represent a critical piece of the success in achieving strong retention and advancement of workers from under represented talent pools. For example:

- Supporting retention by helping those earning entry-level wages to navigate community resources that help them ensure job focus and life stability.
- Supporting upskilling of entry-level workers at every step, from design of the internal pathway programs to individual coaching on how to manage school and work during enrollment, to analyzing and navigating the impact of the benefits cliff after placement.

ON RAMPS HELP WORKERS

1. **Navigate job supports tied to career pathways**
2. **Deepen industry understanding and networks**
3. **Succeed through longer-term advancement coaching**

ON RAMPS HELP EMPLOYERS

1. **Leverage workforce services**
2. **Access services customized to industry needs**
3. **Gain insights into how to reach, hire, retain and advance new talent pools**

A key competency for organizations working to support and scale on ramps is the ability to navigate both the supply side and the demand side of the workforce system. **This dual-customer approach, informed by these competencies, is the secret sauce to the on ramp function.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following core recommendations — whether your role in this system is practitioner, policymaker, funder or employer — should help continue to build, expand, and improve the workforce ecosystem for all participants.

KEY: AUDIENCES

PRACTITIONER

POLICY MAKER

FUNDER

EMPLOYER

While recommendations span multiple audiences, we have indicated with color bars which indicate particular relevance to key audiences.

"As we emerge from the current crisis the need to fill thousands of entry-level manufacturing jobs will return. This requires that we explore innovative approaches and involve often overlooked populations. We feel that working with returning citizens is especially important and yields benefits to those individuals and their families, and by extension, our neighborhoods and our region.

PETE ACCORTI | *President* **Talan Products**

1

BUILD UP ON RAMPS

Recommendations for Workforce Programs

2

MAKE WORK BETTER, TOGETHER

Recommendations for Workforce Systems

3

KEEP EYES ON EQUITY

Recommendations for Increasing Access for All

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WORKFORCE PROGRAMS

BUILD UP ON RAMPS

1 Double down on coaching.

PRACTITIONER FUNDER EMPLOYER

Coaching, which is distinct from case management, is the connective tissue that supports individuals to gain, retain, and advance in careers over lengthy timeframes. And yet it is still not widely embedded into workforce programming. While coaching must be a core competency of on ramp organizations, it is made up of a myriad of activities for which there is not a commonly recognized credential or standard academic preparation. Formalizing the way in which workforce programs think and talk about coaching can ensure quality and continuity of services for more workers

> One of the areas that has become even more obvious to us after WorkAdvance is how much coaching matters and how that kind of support helps folks in their career trajectory. Traditionally, coaching really hasn't gotten a lot of love from many funders, but it's something that is so critical, particularly as we start tapping into these diverse populations that may not have all the supports around them they need to be successful.

SHANA MARBURY

General Counsel and Senior VP, Talent
Greater Cleveland Partnership

2 Promote earn-and-learn opportunities.

PRACTITIONER FUNDER EMPLOYER

There is too much of a gap between the starting point of many in-demand trainings that offer significant wage premium and worker readiness in populations that need advancement most. In addition, low-wage workers who want to reskill face a host of economic challenges not typically encountered by middle- or high-wage workers, who are already better equipped to withstand periods without income while training. Paid training, apprenticeships, and other earn-and-learn models that incorporate contextualized literacy and foundational skills into technical training curriculum and embed strong coaching supports can alleviate many barriers by blending earning with skill acquisition.

3 Support workers to remove or reduce barriers.

PRACTITIONER POLICY MAKER FUNDER EMPLOYER

Support access to flexible funds that address the Social Determinants of Work, recognizing that there are many barriers that extend beyond the traditional definition of work supports (eg, uniforms, transportation, childcare), particularly for workers of color with limited means, and especially for women. For example, Towards Employment also offers legal services, financial coaching, and parenting skills, as well as navigation of the fees and fines associated with a regaining a driver's license, or a manageable payment plan for back child support that accumulated during a period of incarceration. Such flexibility is required for meaningful access to a social safety net that supports workers throughout the long-term pathway to a career with a living wage. Public workforce systems can expand their supportive service policies to raise the caps on the amount a person can access as well as broaden the types of supports that are eligible to be covered. Additionally, funders can embed flexible funds within workforce grants and contracts to be managed by individual agencies.

On ramps get people into quality jobs.

On ramps help individuals gain agency and traction, enabling advancement and stability on a career pathway over time. Continuing to expand on this work will drive progress forward for the entire ecosystem.

ADVANCING UNDERSTANDING

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES FOR ACTION: *COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE*

Networking and collaboration through establishing Communities of Practice can help build capacity and spread of best practices. Creating opportunities across the system for advancement coaching staff to convene regularly to share learnings, best practices, problem-solve can help. In addition to upskilling coaches, such efforts build the trust required for meaningful collaboration across workforce agencies. Communities of practice may explore and build consensus around other workforce strategies such as employer engagement and trends emerging around the Future of Work like automation and digital transformation. For example:

- **MAGNET**, with the support of JobsOhio's pandemic-driven "Ohio to Work" initiative, launched a working group in Cuyahoga County to expand and formalize coaching frameworks.
- **Generation Work,** a Cuyahoga County Young Adult Workforce Collaborative, has launched an *Employer Engagement Community of Practice*. Employer-facing staff from participating organizations meet quarterly to build competencies around introducing job quality, young adult-friendly work culture and racial equity in their job development efforts with employers.

> Workforce development generally gets funded based upon the number of people who go through your office and get placed somewhere. That's a service model that's good for some things, but that's not the best approach for advancement. **Making sure you can align the funding with the realities people are navigating helps to promote economic mobility.**

KYLE FEE | *Senior Policy Analyst, Community Development*
Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WORKFORCE SYSTEMS

MAKE WORK BETTER, TOGETHER

1 Create new sector partnerships in high-growth industries.

FUNDER EMPLOYER

Expand investment in sector partnerships to include additional industries with high numbers of workers of color, low pay, erratic schedules, limited benefits etc, creating the opportunity to reimagine job design for improved job quality. Consider investing in retail/ hospitality, construction, utilities, and public health workforces.

2 Expand systemwide timelines for achieving economic mobility.

POLICY MAKER FUNDER

Workforce metrics often focus on moving people through programming as quickly as possible, with the goal of maximizing the number who achieve employment within a given contract period, usually one year. Instead, we should:

- Create more multi-year funding opportunities that follow participants for 2-4 years;
- Introduce more intermediate indicators of progress that highlight continued engagement and achievement of milestones related to family stability, as well as skill building and employment.

3 Remove barriers to collaboration among workforce providers.

PRACTITIONER FUNDER

Many workforce programs (and their funding mechanisms) are organized around a target demographic — young adult, returning citizen, geographic location, etc. While this approach may help in organizing specific benefits to address common challenges, each individual comes with their own career goal and their own starting point. Recognizing that people start their employment pathway at different places, and have many routes to their goals, funders could better support these realities by:

- Promoting connections between general job preparation organizations and on ramps by supporting the “soft costs” of collaboration;
- Identifying funder-driven barriers to collaboration and working to resolve them. This may involve private funders filling gaps when public sources are restricted.

> “It’s important to consider the collective system and what changes are needed to balance solutions between the supply and demand sides.”
>
> **REBECCA KUSNER**
> *Principal,*
> **R4 Workforce**

Coordinated systems help workers advance through longer-term career pathways.

No single organization can change a system on its own. To create a robust workforce ecosystem capable of supporting nontraditional talent, workers must be able to enter and exit support services as needed. Individual organizations that act together as a highly coordinated system can help ensure workers do not fall through service gaps.

ADVANCING UNDERSTANDING

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES FOR ACTION: *EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT*

WorkAdvance has provided a solid foundation for understanding what worked for individuals and government, but it did not directly address return on investment for employers. Employer practices related to sourcing, onboarding, retention and advancement vary widely even within the same sector. Promoting practices that reduce opportunity gaps and create more equitable access to advancement is essential. Explicit employer commitment to equity focused practices is not only necessary to close the opportunity gap, it is good for business. Those that willingly and authentically engage in partnerships and work with on ramps to help source and support nontraditional candidates will win the talent game and reap both short- and long-term ROI.

To retain workers, employers must focus on improving job quality — offering family-sustaining wages, benefits, flexible scheduling, culturally competent supervision and clearly defined opportunities for advancement. For example, here are just a few equity-focused practices:

- Audit hiring policies and practices and make changes as necessary to support an expanded talent pipeline, such as shortening the time from offer to hire, revisiting criminal background policies, allowing coaches access to workers during work hours when feasible, providing tuition advances rather than reimbursements, flexing shift start times based on public transportation schedules, etc.
- Write job requirements to emphasize transferable skills, including both "soft" and "hard" skills, rather than requiring degrees or certifications not directly related to job competency.[40]
- Formally articulate advancement opportunities to retain entry-level and incumbent workers.
- Target untapped talent pools by geography (underserved neighborhoods) or demographics (returning citizens, disconnected young adults) as well as by race.
- Create and deliver cultural competency training to frontline supervisors to give them the tools they need to create more inclusive environments for a diverse workforce.

> The employers are at the table. That's what you need — employer commitment. They need to address diversity, equity and inclusion. If they're having shortages filling positions, why is that? Are our hiring requirements correct? What are they paying an hour? Where are they located? They have to be at the table. If they have a pain point identifying talent, then they have to look in the mirror and say, are they part of it? The ones who are at the table will be well-served.

FRANK BRICKNER | *Deputy Director*
Ohio Means Jobs Cleveland-Cuyahoga County

EYES ON EQUITY

1 Make racial equity and job quality explicit goals in workforce development work.

PRACTITIONER POLICY MAKER FUNDER EMPLOYER

It's beyond time to move beyond surface-level diversity hiring; rather, we must work together to raise the bar for expectations of corporate cultures that support equity and inclusion. Sector partnerships can provide a mechanism for increasing buy-in to collectively reduce bias. Investments in sector partnerships should include resources, technical assistance and policy guidance that supports advancing racial equity and inclusion in the companies with which they work.

2 Commit to addressing complex root causes of opportunity gaps.

PRACTITIONER POLICY MAKER FUNDER EMPLOYER

There is no silver bullet when it comes to addressing opportunity gaps quickly. These barriers stem from a history of systemic racism and the systems that grew around them. Thus, adequate employment, training, and supportive services must be multidimensional and stretch over an extended period of time. Recognize and support the role of on ramp organizations, which can provide coordination of such services and the longevity necessary to effectively navigate and implement them within underrepresented talent pools. Ensure that partners who understand the on ramp function and who can facilitate bringing worker voices to the table are part of the Sector Partnership strategy development and implementation.

> "As communities grapple with this labor market — deeply affected by the pandemic — on ramps are an excellent strategy to unlock opportunities to good-paying jobs in high-growth sectors. Especially for Black and LatinX individuals.

BISHARA ADDISON
Director, Job Preparation
The Fund for Our Economic Future

3 Promote job quality.

PRACTITIONER POLICY MAKER FUNDER EMPLOYER

Ultimately, career advancement requires quality jobs. The COVID-19 pandemic especially highlighted how job quality is particularly lacking in frontline or "essential worker" categories, where minority and marginalized populations are over-represented. Foster hiring and job redesign choices that increase access to quality jobs providing living wages, training and advancement support, cultures of respect and inclusivity, stable work schedules, sick and family leave, and other non-monetary benefits. The following are tools that can help:

- *NFWS Job Quality Framework*
- *Greater Cleveland Partnership Diversity and Inclusion Organizational Assessment*
- *Aspen Institute Job Quality Tools Library*

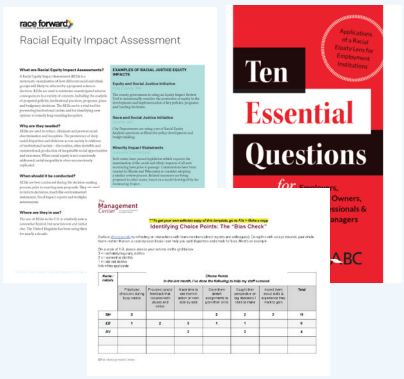
Embrace big bets.

It is not easy or fast to dislodge structural racism and enable economic mobility through career advancement. Funders and policy makers must embrace challenging solutions and policies that remove barriers and disincentives and can play an active role in promoting big bets.

ADVANCING UNDERSTANDING

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES FOR ACTION: *DESIGN TOOLS FOR EQUITY*

A key component of inclusive design is the inclusion of diverse perspectives to inform design, development, delivery and review processes. The use of explicit racial equity impact analysis and the inclusion of worker voice — particularly worker of color voice — as well as on-the-ground practitioners is a status quo-buster in workforce development programming. Valuing the voices and experiences of the constituents served is integral to more effective and efficient programs with better outcomes.



Many robust tools are available that can help guide organizations in all manner of equity work. For example:

- **Association of Black Charities:** *10 Essential Questions for Targeted Audiences*
- **Race Forward:** *Racial Equity Impact Toolkit*
- **The Management Center:** *Using Choice Points to Advance Racial Equity and Inclusion*

WorkAdvance and the study's rigorous analysis both validated and revealed opportunities to mitigate the impact of bias and long-term structural racial inequities among participants. Collecting and analyzing the right information is a key first step. On ramp organizations regularly collect data on worker demographics and career pathway services that are typically far beyond what individual employers or even sector intermediaries might. Partnering to use both standard and expanded data sets in tandem can contribute to the analysis of disaggregated data and tracking needed to measure progress on advancing racial equity. Disaggregated data, which provides transparency on race, gender, and place-based elements, is essential to understanding who really wins and loses.

> In the context of emerging from COVID better, let's focus on the skills, strengths and values of our residents and recognize that **we just have not resourced them appropriately.** If we really focus on a human centered design approach, we probably will cut through many barriers.

DAVE MERRIMAN | *Director*, **Department of Health and Human Services Cuyahoga County**

LOCAL SPOTLIGHT

MORE THAN A JOB

ALLISHEA ASBERRY

PROFESSIONAL DRIVER

HOGAN TRANSPORTATION

TOWARDS EMPLOYMENT'S REENTRY PROGRAM (2020)

I didn't want just a job, I wanted a career. And I needed to do something quickly. Now I'm a truck driver, and I love it.

- After a period of incarceration, Allishea Asberry was struggling. The low wages and temporary gigs open to job candidates with a criminal background — even for someone like herself with a business degree from Cuyahoga Community College —made it difficult for this wife and mother to help support her family. What work she could find on her own paid barely over minimum wage. She needed a change, and she couldn't wait around for it.

Once I got this criminal record, I had to start working at places making $8 an hour. I went to a temp agency and was working at a factory. I was sad and depressed with my life, and one day on my break I saw this lady driving a big old truck and I said, *I want to do that*.

- In 2018, Allishea entered the Towards Employment career readiness program and identified truck driving as a career goal. With a Towards Employment scholarship to a CDL training program and support from her career coach, she was on her way. It took two weeks from the time she submitted an application for her to start the program, another month and a half until she had her license, and a week after that she had a job.
- "I feel stability. It gave me a different mindset," Allishea says, describing her new lifestyle as an eye-opener to possibility. "Towards Employment helped me set goals… and then you have to make steps to achieve them. And when you actually do them, you can see the outcome that you want."

I want to own a fleet of trucks, and I want to pay people to drive my trucks. **It's not like it's gonna happen overnight. It's a process, and I understand that.** But that's my five-year goal.

SUPPORTING THIS REPORT

Systems work is hard and takes time. For the past decade, Towards Employment's efforts to leverage learnings from direct service delivery into systems learning, and to pilot and promote efforts to make the system work more equitably for all, have been supported with funding, technical assistance and thought leadership from many individuals and organizations. In particular, the Fund for Our Economic Future (the Fund) and the Deaconess Foundation have tirelessly committed to a shared vision to create a more equitable, prosperous future for Northeast Ohio and its citizens.

The Fund for Our Economic Future is a funding alliance of more than 40 organizations and individuals working toward the vision of a growing Northeast Ohio economy with good jobs and rising incomes for everyone, regardless of race or place. To achieve this vision, the Fund promotes and supports strategies to improve job creation, job preparation and job access.

More about the Fund can be found at thefundneo.org.

Deaconess Foundation is a private foundation in Cuyahoga County committed to helping people in need build careers that sustain them and their families. Deaconess partners with and makes grants to organizations in the workforce development ecosystem with the goal of building a community in which pathways to family-sustaining jobs and wages — our community's best solution to poverty — are visible and accessible to all.

Learn about Deaconess's work at deaconessfdn.org.

> As a community, we need to drive towards a shared vision of an inclusive and equitable economy. We need to prioritize closing economic disparities, measure our progress and hold ourselves accountable for change. **If we fail on our equity measures, then we fail as a region**.

BETHIA BURKE | *President*, **The Fund for Our Economic Future**

ABOUT TOWARDS EMPLOYMENT

Towards Employment empowers individuals to achieve and maintain self-sufficiency through employment. In 45 years of operations, its programs have supported more than 205,000 Greater Clevelanders in increasing their economic mobility. By providing industry-informed career readiness training, with robust wraparound services to assist with barrier removal; access to technical training and on-the-job training to build skills; deep employer connections for job placement and intensive post-employment coaching for strong retention and support for advancement; Towards Employment helps candidates find and maintain long-term employment with family-sustaining wages.

Towards Employment provides leadership on collaborative initiatives working to create a better aligned workforce system. These initiatives address racial employment and wage gap; work to develop targeted strategies to connect people of color to quality employment opportunities; and engage employers to commit to changes in employment practices and culture.

Towards Employment places approximately 400 people per year in full-time employment, with another 1,500 in entering or moving along a career pathway, helping to secure average starting wages that surpass Ohio's minimum by over $5 per hour, linking participants with thousands of supportive services including transportation, rental assistance, uniforms and mental health services, and opening nearly 1,200 legal cases to remove employment barriers. These supports help Towards Employment graduates achieve an 80% job retention rate.

Learn more about Towards Employment's efforts on their website:
towardsemployment.org

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to the many regional and national foundations that support Towards Employment and other workforce development organizations' efforts to integrate WorkAdvance learnings, including:

Annie E. Casey Foundation

Anthem, Inc.

Bank of America

Cleveland Browns

Deaconess Foundation

Eva L. and Joseph M. Bruening Foundation

Fred A. Lennon Charitable Trust

Fund for Our Economic Future

Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation

Higley Fund

JPMorgan Chase

Kelvin and Eleanor Smith Foundation

KeyBank Foundation

Lozick Family Foundation

Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City

Nord Family Foundation

Nordson Corporation

PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP

Raymond John Wean Foundation

Reinberger Foundation

Simon Family Foundation

St. Luke's Foundation

TCF Bank

The Cleveland Foundation

Thomas H. White Foundation

Truist Foundation

Union Home Foundation

United Way of Greater Cleveland

Verizon Foundation

Veterans Service Fund

W.K. Kellogg Foundation

Westfield Insurance Foundation

Widiger Estate

William J. and Dorothy K. O'Neill Foundation

& THANK YOUS

We are grateful to every individual who contributed to the content of this publication through interviews, insights, and expertise, including:

Bishara Addison
Alishea Asberry
Brani Baker
Cathy Belk
Jessica Borza
Frank Brickner
Bethia Burke
Ted Carter
Tiara Colbert
Craig Dorn
Tim Duffy
Kyle Fee
Beau Hill
Richard Jackson
Pamela Jankowski
Janine Kaiser
Rebecca Kusner
Shana Marbury
TJ McGowan
Dave Merriman
Chelsea Mills
Frieda Molina
Debbi Perkul
Amanda Petrak
Lissy Rand
Jill Rizka
Emma Schapp
Brianna Schultz
Kim Shelnick
Adaora Schmiedl
Chris Spence
Staci Wampler
Jessica Williams

A special thank you Christopher Spence and New Growth Group for serving as a discussion partner during the research and compilation of this report

A special thank you to photographer Amber Ford for her work on this publication | Photography © Amber Ford (May 2021)

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Advancement

Evidence of improved job quality and progress along an individual's career pathway. WorkAdvance advancements included: wage increases, temporary-to-permanent jobs, additional hours, and promotions with or without a wage increase.

Benefits Cliff

The cliff effect occurs for low-income families when small wage increases result in a reduction or a loss of essential public benefits that cost more to replace than the income increase, leaving the family worse off, thus creating a major stumbling block in the path to economic mobility. See the *Fed's Career Ladder Identifier and Financial Forecaster* for a tool to help coaches and individuals calculate the impact of wages on benefits.

Career Coach

Focuses on helping individuals explore and navigate a career pathway. A career coach should have industry expertise in the targeted career and be familiar with the education, credentials and experience needed to prepare for and advance along a targeted pathway. Works with individuals both pre- and post-employment to assist with work-related challenges, and helps them stay focused on career success.

Case Manager

Identifies and develops interventions to address life challenges that would hinder an individual's career success (i.e., finances, housing, transportation, parenting). A case manager should be familiar with local networks of community services and with good social work practice.

Employer Engagement

Efforts to build relationships with employers to address skill gaps in the workplace and adequately prepare jobseekers to address those skill gaps. This is done by gaining input on program design, crafting curriculum within a workforce program, assuring hiring of participants, and cultivating employer champions. Successful employer engagement strategies offer a diverse set of ways for employers to interface with the workforce program and provide business-oriented solutions beyond a job placement.

On Ramp

The function of an on ramp is to provide industry-specific supports tied to a targeted pathway or specific occupation within that pathway to help individuals with significant barriers to educational and economic success gain agency and traction, enabling advancement and stability over time. On ramp organizations also partner with employers individually or as part of a sector partnership, to provide industry-informed support for worker retention and advancement.

Opportunity Gap

Systemic social exclusion of diverse talent – particularly Black and Brown workers – from access to education, economic security, quality jobs, and career mobility over a life time is the true cause of pay and advancement disparities.

Opportunity Occupations

Occupations that pay above the national annual median wage (adjusted for regional price differences) and are generally accessible to those without a four-year college degree. See the Fed's Occupational Mobility Explorer and Investing in America's Workforce for more.

Sector Partnership

Sector partnerships convene multiple employers in an industry with education, training, labor, and communitybased organizations to close skill gaps. An organization with industry expertise, capacity, and credibility among partners is chosen to play a convener role. While employers do not typically convene partnerships, theirleadership and engagement is critical for developing strategies that respond to industry's workforce needs.

Supportive Services

A comprehensive array of supports to address the opportunity gap. This includes services that remove barriers to participation and promote successful completion of job-readiness, continuing education or other employment and career advancement related activities, including: direct supports (bus passes or gas cards; uniforms, tools, textbooks, laptop, identification, licensing fees, childcare assistance); referrals to address non-employment barriers (health, behavioral health, housing); and other supports based on individual need such as legal services; financial coaching; parenting and other family focused supports; networking to build social capital.

For more helpful terminology, please see WorkingNation's Words of the Workforce resource:

APPENDIX ENDNOTES

1 Schaberg & Greenberg, 2020, p. 44

2 Escobari, Seyal & Meaney, 2019, p. 69

3 Weise, Hanson, Salisbury & Qu, 2019

4 The Fund for Our Economic Future, 2016, p. 9

5 Ibid

6 Schaberg & Greenberg, 2020, p. iii

7 Ibid, p. 44

8 From a recorded interview with Angela Jackson, Partner, New Profit (Equus Workforce Solutions, 2021)

9 Goger & Jackson, 2020, para. 2

10 Team NEO, 2020, p. 3

11 Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia, 2020, section "Build Your Path"

12 CareerSTAT guide to investing in frontline health care workers, 2017

13 Schaberg K., personal communication, August 11, 2020

14 Schaberg & Greenberg, 2020, p. 5, Table 1.1

15 Kellogg foundation - 20 parents received advancement focused services with a 100% technical training completion rate and 82% one-year retention rate.

16 Towards Employment, Generation Work

17 Schaberg K., personal communication, August 11, 2020

18 Calculated from Housing cost estimate divided by 12 months. Glasmeier, 2021

19 Campbell, 2020, para. 1

20 Cleveland area economic summary, 2021, section "Unemployment rates for the nation and selected areas"

21 Moore, 2018

22 Calculated from data provided in Table: Median Household Income. Team NEO, 2021, p. 2

23 ALICE in Ohio, 2020, p. 4

24 U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts, median household income in 2019 dollars, based on the latest available census data (2015-2019)

25 Glasmeier, 2021

26 Calculated from Net Income Change Calculator, which uses 2016 tax laws and benefit rules, adjusted for one adult and one child, with average childcare and housing costs derived from MIT Living Wage calculator estimates for the state of Ohio

27 Fed's benefits cliff

28 Shapiro et al, 2016, p. 6

29 Team NEO, 2020, p. 3

30 Ibid, p. 6.

31 Pacetti, Murray & Hartman, 2015, p. 10.

32 Worst connected cities, 2020, table

33 Burning Glass, 2017, p. 3

34 Ergungor, 2013, section "The Problem"

35 Shields & Thurston, 2018, section "Key Findings

36 The Fund for Our Economic Future, 2016, p. 28

37 Ibid, 2016, p. 9

38 TalentNEO hypothesized the use of an objective skill score could open access to quality career paths; working with multiple partners, upskilled and tested 980 job seekers and matched to jobs with aligned skill scores.

39 Shelnick, K., personal communication, January 15, 2021

40 Opportunity@Work, 2020

APPENDIX REFERENCES

10 essential questions. (2017, April 20). Associated Black Charities. https://www.abc-md.org/new-page

ALICE in Ohio: A financial hardship study. (2020, September). United Ways of Ohio. https://liveunitedcentralohio.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/2020-OH-ALICE-Report.pdf

Burning Glass Technologies. (2017, September). The digital edge: Middle-skill workers and careers. https://www.burning-glass.com/research-project/digital-skills-gap/

Campbell, E. (2020, September 18). Cleveland is now the poorest big city in the country. The Center for Community Solutions. https://www.communitysolutions.com/cleveland-now-poorest-big-city-country/

CareerSTAT guide to investing in frontline health care workers. (2017, May). CareerSTAT. https://nationalfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/5_CareerSTAT-Resources-043017.pdf

Cleveland area economic summary. (2021, November). U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. https://www.bls.gov/regions/midwest/summary/blssummary_cleveland_oh.pdf

Cuyahoga County Community College. (2020, December 23). Workforce Connect healthcare sector partnership [Press release]. https://www.tri-c.edu/workforce-connect-healthcare-sector-partnership/index.html

Cuyahoga County Workforce Funders Group. (2018, January). Developing sector partnerships in Cuyahoga County: Findings and recommendations. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b968b98e2ccd190d7da8eb3/t/5b994911f950b779d5546e2a/1536772370507/DevelopingSectorPartnerships.pdf

Equity & inclusion organization assessment. (2019, November 13). Greater Cleveland Partnership. https://www.gcpartnership.com/en/Initiatives/EquityandInclusion/WorkforceDiversityEquityInclusion/DandIOrganizationAssessment

Equus Workforce Solutions. (2021, April 16). Workforce in action: E21: Race and the future of work: Advancing workforce equity [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/U-9voN31TcI

Ergungor, O. E. (2013, November). The employability of returning citizens is key to neighborhood revitalization. Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland. https://www.clevelandfed.org/newsroom-and-events/publications/economic-commentary/2013-economic-commentaries/ec-201317-the-employability-of-returning-citizens-is-key-to-neighborhood-revitalization.aspx

Escobari, M., Seyal, I., & Meaney, M. (2019, December). Realism About Reskilling: Upgrading the career prospects of America's low-wage workers. Brookings. https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Realism-About-Reskilling-Final-Report.pdf

Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia. (2020, December 14). Occupational mobility explorer. https://www.philadelphiafed.org/surveys-and-data/community-development-data/occupational-mobility-explorer

Glasmeier, A. K. (2020–2021). Living wage calculator: Living wage calculation for Cuyahoga County, Ohio [Dataset]. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology. https://livingwage.mit.edu/counties/39035

Goger, A., & Jackson, L. (2020, September). The labor market doesn't have a 'skills gap'—it has an opportunity gap. Brookings. https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2020/09/09/the-labor-market-doesnt-have-a-skills-gap-it-has-an-opportunity-gap/

Job quality resource center. (2018, February 17). National Fund for Workforce Solutions. https://nationalfund.org/our-solutions/activate-employers-to-make-jobs-better/job-quality-resource-center/

Job quality tools library. (2020, August 5). The Aspen Institute. https://www.aspeninstitute.org/longform/job-quality-tools-library/

Keleher, T. (2009). Racial equity impact assessment. Applied Research Center. https://act.colorlines.com/acton/attachment/1069/f-011e/1/-/-/-/-/Racial%20Equity%20Impact%20Assessment.pdf

Keleher, T. (2020, December 17). Using choice points to advance racial equity and inclusion. The Management Center. https://www.managementcenter.org/article/using-choice-points-to-advance-racial-equity-and-inclusion/

Langston, A., Scoggins, J., & Walsh, M. (2020, November). Race and the work of the future: Advancing workforce equity in the United States. PolicyLink and USC Equity Research Institute. https://nationalfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Race_and_the_Work_of_the_Future_United_States_FINAL.pdf

Moore, K. (2021, November). Economic indicators: State unemployment by race and ethnicity. Economic Policy Institute. https://www.epi.org/indicators/state-unemployment-race-ethnicity/

Net Income Change Calculator (NICC). (2019). Urban Institute. https://nicc.urban.org/netincomecalculator/

Opportunity@Work. (2020, November). Navigating with the STARs: Reimagining equitable pathways to mobility. https://opportunityatwork.org/our-solutions/stars-insights/navigating-stars-report/

Pacetti, E. G., Murray, C., & Hartman, S. (2015, September). The geography of jobs: The increasing distance between jobs and workers in Northeast Ohio and why it matters for future growth. The Fund for Our Economic Future. https://www.thefundneo.org/content/uploads/attachments/Geography%20of%20Jobs.pdf

Rizika, J. (2018, June 27). Connecting to a Career. Extraordinary. Towards Employment. https://www.towardsemployment.org/connecting-to-a-career-extraordinary/

Schaberg, K., & Greenberg, D. H. (2020, March). Long-Term Effects of a Sectoral Advancement Strategy: Costs, Benefits, and Impacts from the WorkAdvance Demonstration. MDRC. https://www.mdrc.org/sites/default/files/WorkAdvance_5-Year_Report-Final.pdf

Shapiro, D., Dundar, A., Wakhungu, P. K., Yuan, X., Nathan, A., & Hwang, Y. (2016, September). Time to degree: A national view of the time enrolled and elapsed for associate and bachelor's degree earners. National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. https://nscresearchcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/SignatureReport11.pdf

Shields, M., & Thurston, P. (2018, December). Wasted assets: The cost of excluding Ohioans with a record from work. Policy Matters Ohio. https://www.policymattersohio.org/research-policy/quality-ohio/justice-reform/wasted-assets-the-cost-of-excluding-ohioans-with-a-record-from-work

Team NEO. (2020, September). Aligning opportunities in Northeast Ohio. https://teamneo.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/aligning-opportunities-in-northeast-ohio-team-neo-2020-report.pdf

Team NEO. (2021, August). Misaligned opportunities: How racial inequities create skills gaps & COVID's impact on minority communities in the Northeast Ohio region. https://misalignedopportunities.teamneo.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/21160_TeamNEO_MO-Report_081121_w-link.pdf

The Fund for Our Economic Future. (2016, November). Redefining workforce development in Northeast Ohio: How national WorkAdvance demonstration made local impact. https://www.thefundneo.org/content/uploads/attachments/WorkAdvance_updated%20March%202017.pdf

Towards Employment. (n.d.). Generation Work. https://www.towardsemployment.org/generation-work/

The Two Tomorrows. (2018, February). The Fund for Our Economic Future. https://www.thefundneo.org/the-two-tomorrows/

U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Cleveland city, Ohio; United States. (2020, December 10). [Dataset]. U.S. Census Bureau. https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/clevelandcityohio,US/INC110219

Weise, PhD, M. R., Hanson, A. R., Salisbury, A., & Qu, K. (2019, March). On-ramps to good jobs: Fueling innovation for the learning ecosystem of the future. Strada Institute. https://stradaeducation.org/report/on-ramps-to-good-jobs/

WorkingNation Editorial Team. (2021, October 6). Let's talk about work: The words of the workforce. WorkingNation. https://workingnation.com/lets-talk-about-work/?utm_content=179465024&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter&hss_channel=tw-23592643

Worst connected cities (Version 2019). (2020, September 18). [Interactive maps]. National Digital Inclusion Alliance.

Towards Employment

WorkAdvance

Advancing Northeast Ohio: What WorkAdvance Taught us About Building On Ramps to Workforce Opportunity is presented by Towards Employment with support from the Fund for Our Economic Future and Deaconess Foundation.

FUND FOR OUR ECONOMIC FUTURE

DEACONESS FOUNDATION

Scan the QR code above to access the digital version, updates, and supplementary materials.