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The Work Ahead for Workforce

New Report Highlights Progress and Future Possibilities of Workforce Programming in Northeast Ohio

December 3, 2021 – Workers who participated in WorkAdvance programming earned \$5,000 more a year than those completing more traditional workforce training, just one positive outcome highlighted in a report released today by Towards Employment.

Advancing Northeast Ohio: What WorkAdvance Taught Us About Building On Ramps to Opportunity summarizes five years of longitudinal research on WorkAdvance, a model of coordinated workforce training originally developed through a five-year demonstration project executed by Towards Employment and supported by the Fund for Our Economic Future and Deaconess Foundation from 2011-2016. Since that time, Towards Employment adopted WorkAdvance as its primary workforce approach, developing supportive “on ramps” to in-demand career pathways with a specific focus on racial equity. Today’s report highlights several remarkable outcomes surrounding the work and necessary steps to make greater progress in the future.

What Works: WorkAdvance drives higher completion, placement and wages

The WorkAdvance program design is measurably more effective than traditional workforce training. After five years, compared to traditional program counterparts, Northeast Ohio program participants had significantly better placements (in terms of shifts, hours, and sector), higher wages, and higher technical training completion rates. Advanced coaching, wraparound supports and long-term (more than a year) engagement with these resources drove these outcomes.

These effects were most significant for participants who engaged with WorkAdvance following long-term unemployment or sporadic, part-time employment. This trend bodes well as we continue to grapple with interventions for workers left behind and displaced by COVID.

The Path Ahead: Work remains for employers, policymakers, practitioners and funders

Barriers remain in connecting workers to in-demand career pathways, and the *Advancing Northeast Ohio* report outlines three key steps in reducing those barriers: building more on-ramps, focusing further on equity and improving coordination across the workforce system.

“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,” said Jill Rizika, president

and CEO of Towards Employment. “We need to acknowledge the social determinants of work and address racial opportunity gaps to make meaningful change that benefits all.”

To read the full report and explore its findings, visit <http://advancingneo.towardsemployment.org/>

About Towards Employment

Towards Employment is a workforce development organization that builds career pathways to successful, long-term employment, while creating a talent pipeline for local businesses.