

**For Immediate Release**

**Media Contact:** Adaora Schmiedl, 216-696-7310, [aschmiedl@towardsemployment.org](mailto:aschmiedl@towardsemployment.org)

**NEO WORKFORCE COALITION PARTNERS WITH STATE COALITION TO  
BRING WORKFORCE LEADERSHIP ACADEMY TO CLEVELAND**

**December 8, 2022 - CLEVELAND** – After a national competitive process, the Aspen Institute selected eight organizations, including the Ohio Workforce Coalition (OWC), as partners to deliver local Workforce Leadership Academies. Cleveland, in collaboration with the OWC affiliate in northeast Ohio, will be the first city in Ohio to launch this innovative initiative designed to invest in local workforce development leaders’ knowledge, skills, and relationships to spark local workforce ecosystem success.

Workforce Leadership Academies bring workforce leaders – recognized as Fellows of the Academy – together for a year-long series of retreats, workshops, and action learning projects. Fellows in Cleveland will work with leaders throughout the country to deepen networks; strengthen leadership skills; apply race, equity, and systems change frameworks to their work; and increase understanding of effective workforce strategies and programs. Alumni of the Academy become part of the Aspen Institute’s Economic Opportunity Fellows Network, joining Fellows from fourteen previous Academies in eleven cities in the US and Canada.

This spring, Cleveland Fellows will be selected through a competitive application process led by a local advisory council. Applications will be accepted from senior-level managers from nonprofit organizations, business associations, union-based training efforts, adult literacy, public agencies, and post-secondary education and training who have the authority to implement changes.

Northeast Ohio Workforce Coalition (NEOWC) is an affiliate of Ohio Workforce Coalition. NEOWC is staffed by Towards Employment and convenes workforce stakeholders to align programming across systems, identify shared issues, and grow local capacity. Other Cleveland early supporters of the WLA include The Literacy Cooperative, Cleveland Neighborhood Progress, MAGNET, New Bridge, and Youth Opportunities Unlimited.

Jill Rizika, President and CEO of Towards Employment says “we are excited that the statewide Ohio Workforce Coalition and our local NEO Workforce Coalition can collaborate to bring a national best practice in workforce leadership development to Cleveland. Workforce providers talk about continued professional development; but there isn’t an industry-recognized

credential for understanding and navigating the workforce ecosystem. The Workforce Leadership Academy is a step in addressing this gap and will contribute to a common framework that strengthens our complex workforce system, so it works better for everyone.”

For more information on the Academy or application updates visit

[https://www.towardsemployment.org/policy\\_advocacy/#neowc](https://www.towardsemployment.org/policy_advocacy/#neowc)

###

About Towards Employment: Our mission is to empower individuals to achieve and maintain self-sufficiency through employment. Towards Employment is a proven leader in workforce development that connects people to careers, which changes people’s lives, advances businesses, and strengthens community in Northeast Ohio. Learn more about our work at [www.towardsemployment.org](http://www.towardsemployment.org).

Ohio Workforce Coalition (<https://www.ohioworkforcecoalition.org/>) brings together Ohio workforce ecosystem stakeholders to engage in professional development and promote public policies that build the skills of adult workers, meet the workforce needs of employers, and strengthen workforce systems. We represent members from education and training, economic and workforce development, business and industry, community-based workforce organizations, labor, human services, and the public workforce system.