Redefining Workforce Development *in* Northeast Ohio:

How National WorkAdvance Demonstration Made Local Impact

Presented by the Fund for Our Economic Future with support from Deaconess Foundation and The Raymond John Wean Foundation

WorkAdvance

"As the research reflects, the impact of this work is significant. When powerful work such as this aligns with our mission, it is our responsibility to leverage resources—human and capital—to support organizations so that all who seek access are included. We look forward to the day when WorkAdvance can deliver services that empower residents to create a healthy, vibrant and economically stable Northeast Ohio."

–Jennifer Roller, President, The Raymond John Wean Foundation

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“The purpose of this report is to understand how the national WorkAdvance model worked in Northeast Ohio and to move our region closer to a workforce system that works for all.”

About WorkAdvance

WorkAdvance was a national, five-year workforce development demonstration in New York, Tulsa, Oklahoma, and Northeast Ohio, coordinated locally by Towards Employment and supported by the Fund for Our Economic Future and others. Pulling in successful elements of other workforce programs, WorkAdvance tested whether a comprehensive provision of services, focusing on targeted sectors and emphasizing advancement, could lead to better outcomes for individuals and employers.

About the Data

The national WorkAdvance demonstration evaluated outcomes for 2,564 individuals across four sites (two in New York, and one in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and Northeast Ohio). This report focuses on the impacts of WorkAdvance on the Northeast Ohio sample of the national study (698 individuals), as well as additional analysis of the group of local participants, plus individuals who received the same services but were not included in the research sample. (See Page 9 for more details.)

Foreword: A WORKFORCE SYSTEM THAT WORKS FOR ALL

A workforce system that works—works for individuals, works for employers, works for the community, works for the regional economy—was the goal of the Fund for Our Economic Future when we committed support for WorkAdvance, a national workforce demonstration, in Northeast Ohio more than five years ago.

Even though there are rich service offerings within our communities, we know some residents are not consistently receiving the comprehensive set of services they need in order to get, keep and advance in jobs. At the same time, employers continue to cite finding prepared, reliable talent as one of their biggest challenges. We also know our region's aging workforce is projected to leave hundreds of thousands of jobs to fill over the next decade—640,000 openings, or a third of our labor force.[1] In short, our workforce needs are immense and meeting them is critical to our region's economic competitiveness.

WorkAdvance, which had sites in New York and Tulsa, Oklahoma, in addition to Northeast Ohio, tested whether a comprehensive provision of services, focusing on targeted sectors and emphasizing advancement, could lead to better outcomes for disadvantaged jobseekers and employers.

WorkAdvance offered Northeast Ohio the opportunity to participate in something meaningful, with the potential to show real impact on a national level. And, if successful, it would provide our region with a blueprint for how to build and sustain a more effective model right here at home.

Five years later, where are we?

WorkAdvance is a clear winner. The program demonstrated nationally that workforce services can be delivered more effectively. Employers can be connected to talent they need, while individuals can enjoy better earnings and increased potential for career advancement. At the heart of the change was a comprehensive provision of sector-focused services, with an emphasis on career advancement.

In Northeast Ohio, the success of WorkAdvance hinged on collaboration across multiple systems, including social services, workforce readiness, education and training, and economic development, through partnerships tailored to the industries served. Building on WorkAdvance and its lessons will take time, resources, coordination, and collaboration.

So what do we do now?

Ultimately, we aspire to translate WorkAdvance programmatic successes into systems, policy and practice changes at the regional, state and federal levels. Achieving this requires broad communication of the results to stakeholders throughout the workforce system. The purpose of this report is to understand how the national WorkAdvance model worked in Northeast Ohio and to move our region closer to a workforce system that works for all.

We look forward to sharing these lessons with you, and engaging in dialogue that will help us realize that vision.

Brad Whitehead
President
Fund for Our Economic Future

Deborah Vesy
President and CEO
Deaconess Foundation

Jennifer Roller
President
The Raymond John Wean Foundation

Introduction:

WorkAdvance Works

David got connected to WorkAdvance through a Google search on his phone. He was working third shift at what he refers to as "a dead-end job," earning $9 an hour. He knew there had to be something better for him. The Google search led David to Towards Employment, a Cleveland-based nonprofit focused on helping individuals get, keep and advance in jobs, and a WorkAdvance orientation, where he learned about opportunities in the manufacturing industry. Despite a decade-old criminal conviction and no prior experience in manufacturing, David was able to enroll in the Cleveland Industrial Training Center's machining course, offered through WorkAdvance.

After he completed his technical skills training, David applied for a machinist job at a manufacturer in Mentor, Ohio, and was offered a position that paid $15.40 an hour. Two years later, he advanced to a second shift computer numerical control (CNC) operator. "I am totally more stable now," David said. "Before I was pretty much paycheck to paycheck. I am able to take trips and go out of state. I bought a new car. This has changed my life for the better.

"I can testify that WorkAdvance works," he added.

David is one of more than 700 individuals to receive WorkAdvance services in Northeast Ohio. And, while his story is unique, it's illustrative of the impact WorkAdvance had on many individuals struggling to get, keep or advance in a job.

WorkAdvance was a national, five-year workforce development demonstration designed by MDRC, a social policy research firm, in partnership with the Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO) in New York City, and supported by the White House Social Innovation Fund and local partners, with four test sites: two in New York, one in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and one in Northeast Ohio. WorkAdvance tested whether a comprehensive provision of services, focusing on targeted sectors and emphasizing **advancement**, could lead to better outcomes for individuals and employers. WorkAdvance services included: sector-specific screening, sector-specific career readiness training and career planning, in-demand occupational skills training, job placement, post-employment coaching for advancement, and **supportive services**. Though presented as a linear sequence, services provided were tailored to individual circumstances. For example, some participants went straight to occupational skills training, others were placed in employment and later enrolled in training, while others took advantage of opportunities for on-the-job training.

We've highlighted terms in orange that are defined in the Glossary of Terms on page 31.

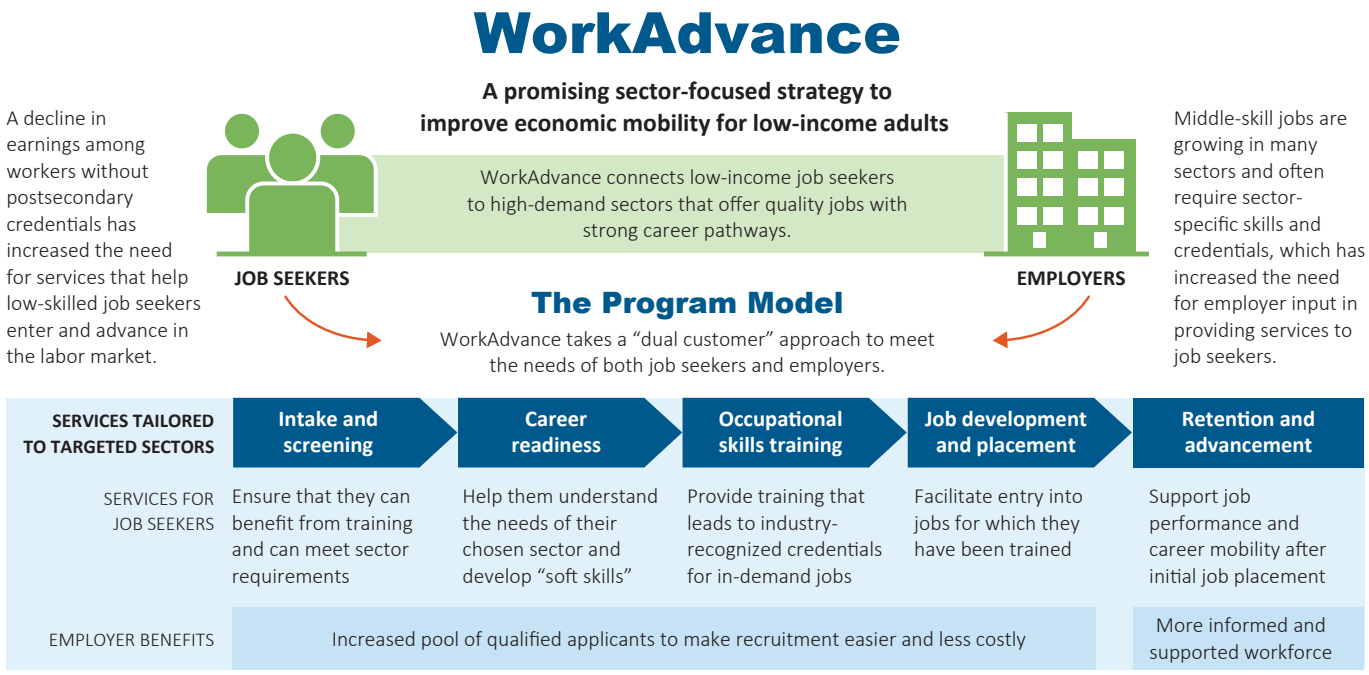
All individuals served through WorkAdvance had earnings equivalent to 200 percent or less of the poverty level and, if employed, made less than $15 an hour at the point of enrollment.

"I can testify that WorkAdvance works."

—David, WorkAdvance Participant

The WorkAdvance Model

Figure 1 (Adapted from "WorkAdvance: A Promising Sector-Focused Strategy," an infographic created by MDRC)



WorkAdvance was an important evolution from past workforce development models because it combined key elements of a few **sector-based strategies** with promising results and lessons learned from retention and advancement programs.[2] Variations of sector-based programs have been around for many years, but recent results from the Public/Private Ventures Sectoral Employment Impact Study, and a study of sector centers led by the New York Center for Economic Opportunity, sparked interest in providing a much more rigorous evaluation of these approaches to test whether the combination of learnings from these smaller studies could produce larger and longer lasting effects on employment, earnings and career paths for low-skilled workers.[3]

The evaluation of WorkAdvance used a **randomized control trial**, meaning some individuals received WorkAdvance services and others did not, allowing independent evaluators to go beyond anecdotes and measure impact by comparing the difference in performance between the two groups.

MDRC, a nationally renowned nonprofit, nonpartisan education and social policy research organization dedicated to learning what works to improve programs and policies that affect the poor, handled the evaluation and, in August 2016, released findings gleaned from across all four national WorkAdvance sites. In aggregate, and in three of the four individual sites, the evaluation demonstrated WorkAdvance improved earnings for participants when compared to the control group. The aggregate results were strong despite variations across sites, including different local economies and a focus on different sectors with different earning potential. In other words, WorkAdvance appeared to be robust across geographies and industry sectors.

Highlights of the national evaluation include:

- Program group participants accessed services (pre-placement services, enrollment in and completion of occupational skills training, job search assistance, and post-employment coaching) nearly one and a half to six times as often as control group participants.
- Program group participants were approximately one and a half to three times as likely to be employed in a targeted sector than control group participants.
- Together, the four WorkAdvance sites helped participants earn 14 percent (or nearly $2,000 in annual income) more than the control group two years after they entered the program. For the long-term unemployed, WorkAdvance increased their earnings by more than $2,300 two years after entering the study. WorkAdvance also increased both employment and earnings for African American and Latino participants.
- The cost to deliver WorkAdvance services ranged from $5,200 to $6,700 per participant.

The bottom line? WorkAdvance demonstrated an ability to deliver workforce services more effectively to low-income individuals at a comparable cost to what is spent currently. And the impact grew over time, as capacity to deliver the model improved, offering potential to make an even greater impact on individuals going forward.

National Lesson: Be Persistent

An important lesson for funders, practitioners and policymakers alike: Impacts took time to emerge! WorkAdvance had a two-year service window and impacts materialized only in the second year. The impacts were greater for those who enrolled in a later cohort and experienced stronger, more mature program delivery—a 22 percent increase in earnings for later enrolling participants verses 14 percent for the full sample.

Impacts took time to emerge for two reasons:

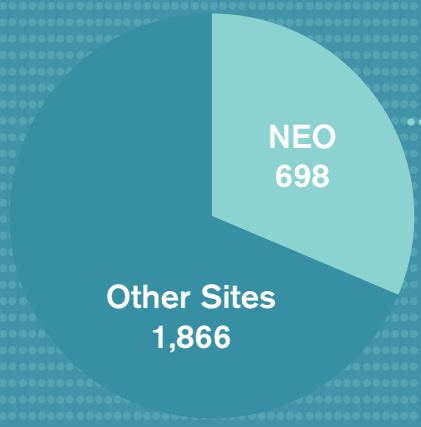
- First, for participants, it took time for training and advancement services to be completed, and for the services to translate into job placements and advancement.
- Second, providers needed time to integrate the new elements of WorkAdvance into their service model. Relationship building with employers and partners, and development of specialized staff for a new way of doing business, had to be established to enable integrated program delivery.

Nationally, MDRC is interested in continued research to understand whether the WorkAdvance combination of supports, skill-building activities and time on the job has put WorkAdvance graduates on a career pathway that continues to show advancements three and five years out.

Locally, as the WorkAdvance model spreads and scales, timelines for impact must account for both providers' and participants' starting points and desired outcomes. For providers, the networks of support across systems and the relationships to deliver demand-driven programming need to be in place. For participants, education and experience levels factor into the timeline. For those starting with lower education levels, it may take even longer than two years to realize the positive impacts demonstrated through WorkAdvance.

Results: WorkAdvance by the Numbers

National Study: Pooled Results Across Four Sites



Participation

- Program group participants accessed services (pre-placement services, enrollment in and completion of occupational skills training, job search assistance, and post-employment coaching) nearly 1.5 to 6 times as often as control group participants

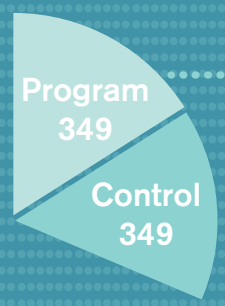
Employment

- Participants were approximately 1.5 to 3 times as likely to be employed in a targeted sector

Earnings

- Annual earnings increased significantly at three of four sites
- Earnings and employment rates increased for long-term unemployed
- Impacts on earnings were evident across all ethnic groups (African American, White, Latino/Hispanic)

National Study: Northeast Ohio Cohort



Participation

Compared to the control group, the Northeast Ohio program group was:

- 1.5 times as likely to receive career readiness services
- Nearly 4 times as likely to receive occupational skills training, and more than 4 times as likely to complete
- 2 times as likely to receive job search assistance
- Nearly 3 times as likely to receive post-employment coaching

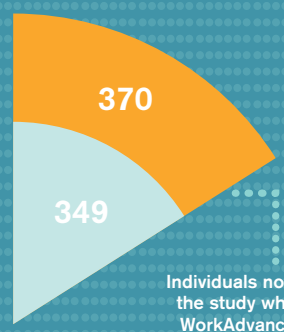
Employment

- 49 percent as likely to work in the targeted sectors of health care and manufacturing
- More likely to be working regular shift, fulltime, in a permanent job, and in a job with opportunities for career advancement

Earnings

- Saw 14 percent increase in earnings (later enrollees saw a 22 percent, or $3,000 a year, increase), which primarily came from more time in the workforce and working more regular hours

Northeast Ohio: Additional Analysis



Individuals not enrolled in the study who received WorkAdvance services

Employment

- 450 individuals placed
- 500+ employers hired participants

Advancement

- Of those placed, 220 advanced to date
- Individuals 10 times more likely to have advanced if post-employment coaching was accessed
- Individuals with criminal backgrounds got jobs and advanced at the same rate as those without

Earnings

- 25 percent average wage increase among those who advanced

Face of WorkAdvance in NEO:

- Participants earned less than 200 percent of poverty level at enrollment
- 55 percent women; 45 percent men
- 27 percent with criminal background
- 74 percent African American
- 90 percent with High School Diploma/GED
- High percentage food stamp recipients

"The results of WorkAdvance in Northeast Ohio prove that a system built on collaboration works across sectors and existing organizations. There are many lessons to learn from Towards Employment's work that can be applied to workforce efforts across the country."

–Fred Dedrick, Executive Director, National Fund for Workforce Solutions

How WorkAdvance Worked: The Northeast Ohio Story

Seeing Opportunity in Northeast Ohio

WorkAdvance came to Northeast Ohio somewhat serendipitously. In 2010, the White House Office on Social Innovation issued a request for proposals to support workforce transformation. The Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City and CEO, part of the New York City Mayor's office, pursued and received one of the Social Innovation Fund grants to replicate and evaluate five of its promising anti-poverty programs, one of which was WorkAdvance. Previous national workforce development studies demonstrated traction for jobseekers in both sector-specific and career advancement strategies. The Social Innovation funding offered CEO an opportunity to test the combination of these practices (the WorkAdvance model) using a large sample across a range of providers and in different economies.

Around the same time, the Fund for Our Economic Future (the Fund), a philanthropic collaborative in Northeast Ohio that works to advance economic growth and improve access to opportunity through job creation, job preparation and job access efforts, was exploring how best to bring systemic change to the region's multi-layered workforce system, and saw an opportunity to partner with CEO to test the value of a new approach to workforce development. It was a compelling prospect: If WorkAdvance outcomes were positive, Northeast Ohio would benefit from being part of a model that works nationally, and would have access to rich data to understand how the model works locally. The Fund served as a local philanthropic partner in the CEO-led national application, and thereby created the opportunity for Northeast Ohio to be one of four WorkAdvance test sites.

Over five years, the Fund provided $3.3 million in local match funding to support WorkAdvance service delivery, research and evaluation in Northeast Ohio. Local match funding was also provided by Surdna Foundation, The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, The Joyce Foundation, and JPMorgan Chase Foundation. Together, these dollars leveraged additional funding of more than $4 million from other national sources.

Towards Employment, selected through a nationally competitive application process, served as the lead partner to implement WorkAdvance in Cuyahoga County and the Mahoning Valley. Northeast Ohio WorkAdvance partners were organizations that leveraged their unique expertise and relationships for strategy and implementation. Partners included Compass Family & Community Services, the lead provider in the Mahoning Valley, employer **intermediaries**, regional training providers, and community-based service providers working together to deliver the comprehensive model. (See page 16 for a full list of partners.)

Implementation

WorkAdvance targeted employment sectors with high labor needs and, within those sectors, occupations with strong advancement potential. In Northeast Ohio, sector targets included manufacturing and health care. Through WorkAdvance, individuals received an array of services that included career readiness training, career planning, occupational skills training, job development and placement assistance, retention and advancement support, and **supportive services**, to achieve long-term success in the targeted field (Figure 1, page 7).

Through an intensive screening process, Towards Employment verified eligible adults' interest in one of the targeted sectors, as well as aptitude for developing the required skills for entry-level or middle-skill positions. Towards Employment also administered drug screens and criminal background checks. Individuals who tested positive for drug use were directed to treatment and invited to reapply. Many individuals with a criminal history were not eligible for health care positions, but were eligible for placement in other sectors. Individuals were then randomly assigned to receive WorkAdvance services (program group) or not (control group).

WorkAdvance program group participants gained access to a comprehensive set of services and assistance from a career coach to access the right services at the right time to prepare for targeted in-demand jobs. Members of the control group were free to access other available workforce supports on their own.

WorkAdvance program group participants received services for a two-year period. MDRC tracked key information throughout that two-year period and compared results of the program group to the control group. Because of this research design, statistically significant differences between the performance of the program and control groups can be attributed to program services. A key measure of success was aggregate annual earnings of both groups. Increases in annual earnings were attributable to one or more factors, including more people working, higher wages, more hours worked, and/or more weeks in the workforce.

Northeast Ohio Findings from National Study

As noted earlier, the national results are significant and promising. Perhaps even more importantly for local implementation, isolation of the Northeast Ohio findings also demonstrates encouraging results.

Compared to their control group counterparts, the Northeast Ohio WorkAdvance program group participants:

- **Accessed More Services:** WorkAdvance program group participants were one and a half times as likely to have received career readiness services; nearly four times as likely to have received occupational skills training, and more than four times as likely to have completed it; two times as likely to have received job search assistance; and nearly three times as likely to have received post-employment coaching.
- **Had Positive Employment Results:** WorkAdvance program group participants were 49 percent more likely to work in the targeted sectors of health care and manufacturing and were more likely to be working regular shift, fulltime, in a permanent job, and in a job with opportunities for career advancement.
- **Increased Earnings**: WorkAdvance program group participants averaged a 14 percent increase in earnings. Later enrollees achieved an average of a 22 percent increase in earnings, or close to $3,000 a year. Notably, there was a limited wage impact. Most of increased earnings came from more time in the workforce and working regular hours.

But what factors are associated with success for those who advanced? Is there a way to know what aspects of the WorkAdvance model are correlated with a particularly strong effect on participants? And how can we integrate these learnings and bring this model to scale?

Analysis of an unusually rich data set demonstrated the importance of a comprehensive, aligned set of services, a **sector-based strategy**, and a focus on **advancement**—key elements of the national WorkAdvance program. Locally, Towards Employment and its partners learned the importance of **collaborating** to deliver an effective model, targeting **in-demand jobs**, and **career coaching** for ultimate advancement.

How WorkAdvance Worked:
COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH

The core set of services offered through WorkAdvance included career readiness training, career planning, occupational skills training, job development and placement assistance, retention and advancement support and **supportive services**. These services were connected to a career plan and were flexibly delivered as appropriate, depending on individual circumstances.

Many of the core WorkAdvance components are familiar to funders, policymakers and workforce practitioners, so it may be hard to see WorkAdvance as a new idea. What set this model apart was the comprehensive, aligned set of services. The Northeast Ohio randomized control data demonstrated this difference. Compared to the control group, the Northeast Ohio program group was:

- One and a half times as likely to have received career readiness services
- Nearly four times as likely to have received occupational skills training, and more than four times as likely to have completed it,
- Two times as likely to have received job search assistance, and;
- Three times as likely to have received post-employment coaching

If the finding that program group participants were more likely to receive the WorkAdvance set of services than the control group seems intuitive, consider this: All study enrollees (program and control) were a highly motivated group of individuals who agreed to screening for drug use, criminal history, literacy and numeracy levels, and overall "fit" for manufacturing or health care professions. Members of the control group were free to access other community services, and yet were much less likely to receive needed workforce services. Given the data, we can conclude that the services offered through WorkAdvance were either not available at the level needed through other providers or, if available, were difficult to access in the combination available to WorkAdvance participants. Accessing the full set of services is key to the model.

While not explicitly tracked, the aligned approach better positioned program participants to receive a set of services tailored to their individualized capabilities, barriers and ultimate career goals. For example, it's likely the supportive services strongly contributed to the significant increase in occupational skills training completion for WorkAdvance participants over and above the control group. Further, the services themselves were delivered in collaboration with more than 10 partner organizations, through a single entry point, and a connection to a career coach through Towards Employment in Cuyahoga County or Compass Family & Community Services in the Mahoning Valley. The career coach streamlined an otherwise complicated process for jobseekers.

Take, for instance, the experience of Chris, a manufacturing participant. He followed a career plan that included career readiness services (a criminal record was expunged and career coaching included communications training to improve his relationships at work); occupational skills training (resulted in a CNC machining credential); supportive services (included advice on buying his first home); and advancement coaching (during which he learned how to ask for a raise). All of this added up to success in the workplace. "I've had trouble getting along with supervisors or coworkers in the past, but my career coach helped me to see the value in staying on the job and taking advantage of opportunities for growth," he said. "The benefits are worth it. I took a vacation this year, I'm able to take care of my newborn son and I'm learning new skills at work. It isn't always easy, but when it gets hard, I can call my coach for resources and advice."

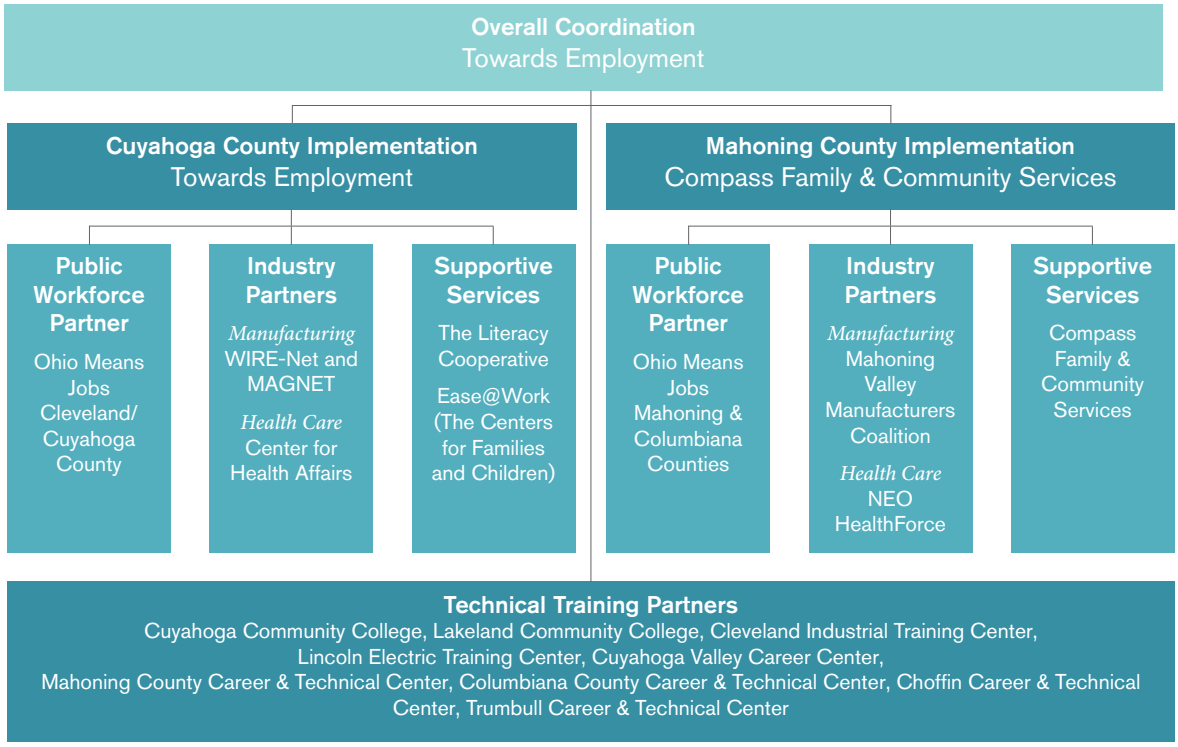
WORKADVANCE FACT

Northeast Ohio WorkAdvance program group participants accessed one and a half to four times more workforce services than the control group.

"The combination of soft skills training, training programs, and career coaching is the difference between WorkAdvance and other job placement services." *—Tom Schumann, President, E.C. Kitzel & Sons Inc.*

Northeast Ohio Partners

Figure 2



Comprehensive, aligned services provided value not only to individuals looking for work, but also to employer partners. "The combination of soft skills training, training programs and career coaching is the difference between WorkAdvance and other job placement services," said Tom Schumann, president, E.C. Kitzel & Sons Inc., a Cleveland-based tooling company that hired from WorkAdvance.

"Comprehensive" might sound expensive. But the cost per participant in Northeast Ohio was approximately $5,200. That's comparable to the cost of traditional job placement services, which, notably, do not typically include advancement services like career coaching.

Future Priority

The sector-specific career pathways targeted in WorkAdvance required baseline literacy and numeracy levels of at least 8th grade, and often 12th grade, for entry. These literacy levels were prerequisites for success in occupational skills training or in targeted occupations, but 44 percent of adults in Cuyahoga County lack the literacy skills needed to advance out of low-wage jobs.[4] As WorkAdvance lessons are incorporated into workforce strategies serving a broader population, these strategies should identify how to differentiate career pathway programming to reflect the range of individual needs. Individuals with lower literacy levels may require more training, more time in pre-placement activities, and enhanced post-placement support. The time frame for achieving advancement must reflect an individual's starting point.

Local Lesson: Don't Go it Alone

As the lead organization delivering WorkAdvance in Northeast Ohio, Towards Employment faced a choice: Beef up its own organizational capacity and directly deliver the model, or form partnerships in Cuyahoga County and the Mahoning Valley to leverage existing services. While going it alone would have made for a simpler start, Towards Employment focused on a long-term strategy and partnered with employer **intermediaries**, service providers and technical training groups to deliver a comprehensive set of services. This allowed Towards Employment to build sustainability and scalability from the beginning of the WorkAdvance implementation.

In the formative years of WorkAdvance, leadership from core partner organizations met quarterly to discuss strategy, define programmatic services, react to changes in employer demand, identify additional partners, connect with other local programs, and monitor progress. WorkAdvance Program Director Rebecca Kusner led the collaborative working group, which included participation from Jill Rizika (Towards Employment), Joseph Caruso and Diane DeJulio (Compass Family & Community Services), Bert Cene and Mary Ann Kochalko (Mahoning and Columbiana Training Association), Jessica Borza (Mahoning Valley Manufacturers Coalition), Judith Crocker (MAGNET), John Colm and Mike Hoag (WIRE-Net), Anthony Fluellen (Employment Connection, now OhioMeansJobs|Cleveland-Cuyahoga County), Alesha Washington (then with The Centers for Families and Children), Robert Paponetti (The Literacy Cooperative) and Bethia Burke (Fund for Our Economic Future).

Coordinating a group of partners is, as MDRC observed in its national report, "complex to set up and manage." Towards Employment nurtured relationships, maintained connections between partners and had to understand perspectives in two counties to make WorkAdvance work. The collaborative setup helped Towards Employment build sector relationships more quickly and establish a structure with the potential for long-term sustainability. "The leadership committee was committed to the early development and ongoing improvement of WorkAdvance. Executive leadership from major organizations came together to innovate, problem solve, leverage their teams, and align services to the benefit of both communities," said Kusner.

"Towards Employment's coordination of WorkAdvance included a complex arrangement of partners and training providers that leveraged existing industry relationships and education curriculum. That required Towards Employment to be a strong provider with special attention toward convening and monitoring the partners' performances to ensure they were in line with the approach and goals of the WorkAdvance program."

—Patrick Hart, Social Innovation Fund Senior Advisor, Center for Economic Opportunity

How WorkAdvance Worked:
SECTOR ALIGNMENT

Over the next decade, health care and manufacturing are among the sectors expected to have the most available jobs in Northeast Ohio, with 85,000 health care job openings and nearly 50,000 manufacturing job openings anticipated through 2025.[5] The challenge: How to ensure there are enough skilled workers to fill open positions.

"Finding and attracting talent is a top-five issue all the time for our companies," said John Colm, president and excutive director of WIRE-Net. Schumann of E.C. Kitzel reinforced this: "I know a lot of similar manufacturers that have the same issue we have. It's hard to find a steady stream of qualified people."

Nationally, workforce experts have long supported the idea of **sector-based strategies** to address identified gaps between available jobs and individuals looking for work.[6] Sector-based strategies start with an understanding of labor market needs of key regional industries, and often rely on intermediaries to engage employers and other key stakeholders; to develop expertise in the industry of focus; and to coordinate information and resources to develop and implement effective, coordinated responses.[7] The particular design and implementation of sector-based strategies is a function of the characteristics of the targeted sectors and the local environment.

The WorkAdvance sector-based strategy in Northeast Ohio targeted manufacturing and health care. The strategy focused on occupations in those two sectors with high demand, low barriers to entry, and opportunities for individuals to advance into positions that provided family-sustaining wages. Advancement along the targeted career pathways typically required some post-secondary training, but less than a college degree (for more on career pathways, see the following section titled How WorkAdvance Worked: Advancement Focus).

In manufacturing, the sector-based strategy meant leveraging industry groups MAGNET, WIRE-Net and the Mahoning Valley Manufacturers Coalition (MVMC) to aggregate demand across an industry dominated by small to mid-sized firms. MAGNET is a nonprofit dedicated to helping Northeast Ohio manufacturers compete and grow; WIRE-Net and MVMC, also nonprofits, are membership-based organizations serving manufacturers. WIRE-Net prioritizes the city of Cleveland, and MVMC prioritizes the Mahoning Valley.

These industry groups knew what manufacturing companies needed for retention and growth, and provided insight into talent needs, training requirements, and job leads for specific companies. They also served as a critical bridge between service providers and businesses. For example, MVMC identified a need for entry-level workers through extensive strategic planning analysis. MVMC then connected the identified employer needs to Compass Family & Community Services. Manufacturers informed the training and career planning, and provided mock interviews. MVMC also informed companies of the benefits of WorkAdvance. "Towards Employment brought evidence-based practices from WorkAdvance to the coalition and explained how others had been addressing work readiness," said Jessica Borza, executive director of MVMC. "We spent a lot of time working with the manufacturers to educate them that WorkAdvance is the way to find qualified workers and increase their success."

WORKADVANCE FACT

Northeast Ohio WorkAdvance program group participants were 49 percent more likely to work in the targeted sectors of health care and manufacturing than the control group.

In health care, The Center for Health Affairs provided industry insights that informed program development, while Towards Employment and Compass Family & Community Services had direct relationships with the large hospital systems in Cuyahoga County and Mahoning Valley for hiring. For example, Towards Employment staff worked closely with University Hospitals' recruitment office to match participants with careers at the hospital, from dialysis techs and patient access specialists to telephone operators and patient care assistants. A partnership with University Hospitals' recruitment staff made these placements possible.

In total, more than 500 employers hired from WorkAdvance in Northeast Ohio. The sector-based model enabled WorkAdvance to aggregate demand across growing industry sectors and fill gaps as needed. The outcome was a network of partners with the same goal: To address the skill needs of in-demand jobs and train jobseekers for occupations that offer career advancement potential.

Common Positions & Wages

Figure 3

Sector	Common Entry-level Positions & Wages	Common Advanced Positions & Wages
Health Care	**Patient Care**: Sitter, State-tested Nursing Assistant, Patient Care Assistant, $8.10 - $10/hour **Allied Health**: Phlebotomist (lab or clinic), $10 - $12.50/hour **Administrative**: Unit Secretary, Medical Records Clerk, Referral Office Liaison, $8.10 - $12/hour	**Patient Care**: Operating Room Assistant, Medical Assistant, Patient Access Specialist, $9 - $14.50/hour **Allied Health:** Phlebotomist (inpatient), Radiology Coordinator, $15.50 - $19/hour **Administrative:** Medical Coder, Medical Biller, Health Unit Coordinator, $14 - $15/hour
Manufacturing	**Assembly**: $10 - $11/hour **Manual Machine Operators**: Grinders, Polishers, Punch Press, $11 - $12/hour **Entry Welders**: $12 - $13/hour	**CNC Operators**: CNC Mill, Lathe Operators, Lathe Setup Operators, $13 - $16/hour **Robotic Welder,** $14 - $16/hour

As a result, Northeast Ohio WorkAdvance participants in the national study were 49 percent more likely to work in the targeted sectors of health care and manufacturing than the control group. And, more WorkAdvance participants were still working in the targeted sectors after two years compared to the control group. Why does this matter? Northeast Ohio additional data analysis shows across all WorkAdvance participants, individuals placed in a targeted-sector job were almost two and a half times more likely to advance than individuals placed out of sector.

Future Priority

Sector-based strategies can only be successful when employers actively participate in workforce transformation. Northeast Ohio employers provided valuable information on high-demand occupations, served as mock interviewers, and reviewed training guides and curriculum—all critically important functions. A few employers went beyond the demand-side perspective and co-developed flexible solutions to chronic challenges.

For example, Hose Master LLC, a 250-person Cleveland-based manufacturing company, identified a need for advanced welders, a middle-skill position requiring on-the-job experience. While WorkAdvance participants could not immediately fill these openings, WorkAdvance Director Rebecca Kusner connected Hose Master's production manager, John Baker, to Lakeland Community College and Towards Employment's in-house training team to develop a strategy that **advanced incumbent workers** with on-the-job training (a learn-and-earn strategy) and filled newly vacant entry-level positions with WorkAdvance candidates. This strategy solved a business need, provided opportunities for existing workers, and opened positions for individuals looking for work, demonstrating that stronger strategic partnerships that go beyond job placement can improve outcomes for both individuals and businesses. More active partnerships where employers problem solve with provider partners will lead to improved outcomes for individuals and businesses.

"Finding and attracting talent is a top-five issue all the time for our companies." *—John Colm, President and Executive Director, WIRE-Net*

Local Lesson: Learn to Build Bridges

Sector-based strategies are heralded for connecting workforce development to the needs of employers. This function is critical—jobseekers must develop skills that align with available positions. Occupations targeted in WorkAdvance were high demand (see Figure 3), including patient care technicians in health care and CNC machinists in manufacturing, and the training curriculum delivered to individuals to meet the identified demand was either co-developed with or vetted by employer partners.

A sector-based strategy, however, can become divorced from the needs of individuals, and so an effective sector-based strategy must also build bridges between jobseekers and employers. Training delivered through WorkAdvance accounted for the needs of jobseekers and employers in several ways.

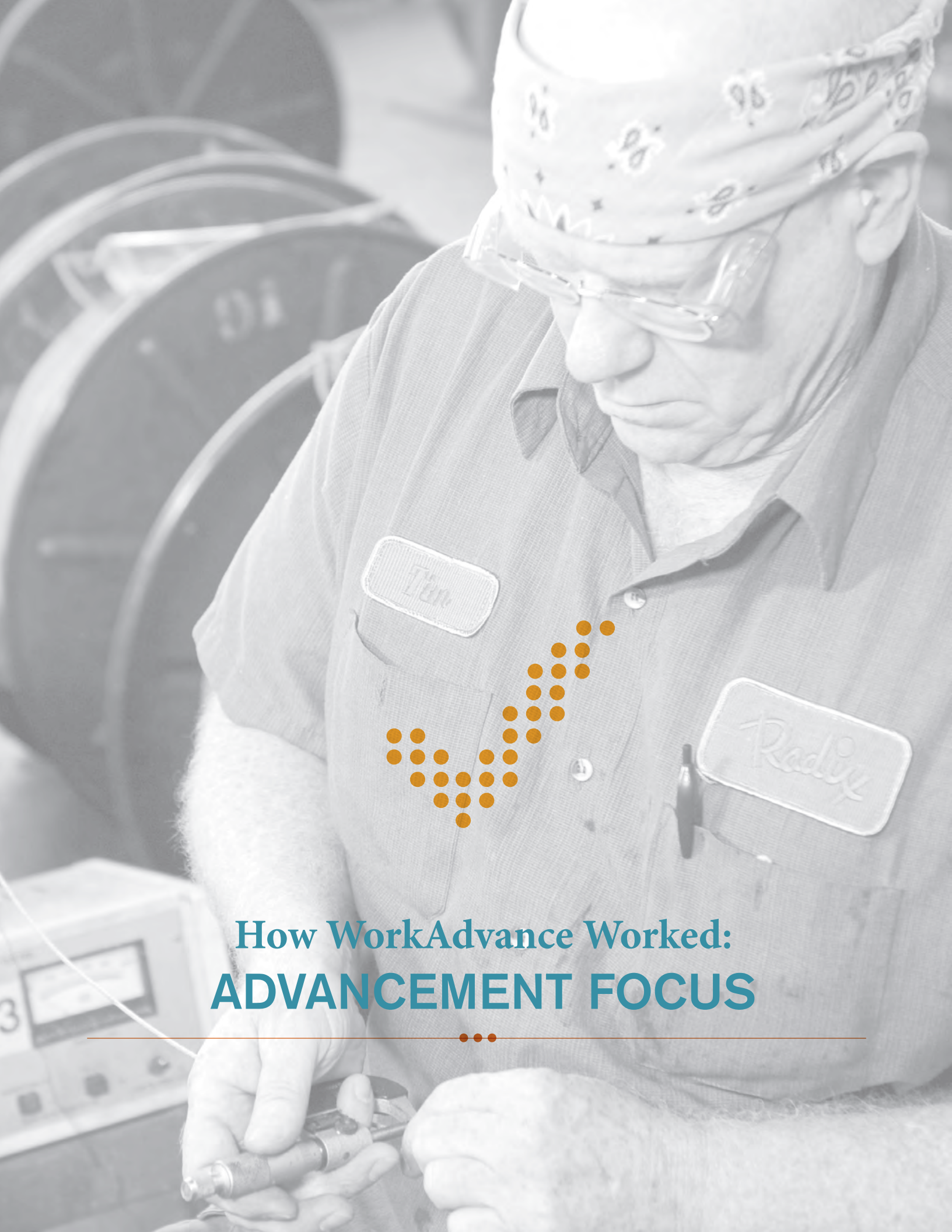
First, schedules of training partners were adjusted to include part-time and evening hours, often with condensed or accelerated curriculum. Adjusted schedules enabled some WorkAdvance participants to better balance training with work or family commitments.

Second, when possible, "earn-and-learn" opportunities were designed directly with employer partners. University Hospitals, for example, hired and paid patient care assistants who participated fulltime in a five-week WorkAdvance-sponsored training. "We get experienced, quality performance and job retention from these hires," said Debbi Perkul, senior workforce development professional at University Hospitals.

Third, WorkAdvance's comprehensive model increased the effectiveness of occupational skills training. Additional Northeast Ohio data analysis indicated that supportive services—particularly coaching—were critical to successful training completion, connection to employment, and advancement. A sector-based strategy developed only from the perspective of employers might miss the importance of tying occupational skills training to supportive services.

Access to this kind of training, with the associated supports of the WorkAdvance model, transforms lives. Take for instance, the experience of David C., a father of three. David lost his job and his home, and was living in a homeless shelter in Youngstown when he got connected to WorkAdvance. He enrolled in a welding program that was 35 minutes away, and WorkAdvance assisted him with gas money during training. David got a job at the Pipe Fitters Union in Youngstown, and today, David and his family are living in a duplex and are about a year away from purchasing a home.

Attention to the needs of jobseekers in addition to the demands of the targeted sectors paid off: Northeast Ohio program group participants who entered occupational skills training were more than four times as likely as control group participants to complete the training. This yielded a more effective use of funding, provided individuals with relevant skills, and delivered qualified applicants to an employer. A win-win-win!



How WorkAdvance Worked:
ADVANCEMENT FOCUS

From late last century until recently, most workforce funding streams prioritized job placements. While theoretically a worthy goal, these policies resulted in many individuals cycling through low-wage jobs without needed supports to advance. The **advancement** focus of WorkAdvance was different, and drove two key programmatic characteristics: A **career pathways framework** and a two-year service window.

Advancement is evidence of improved job quality and progress along an individual's career pathway (See page 31).

"A career pathways framework includes common elements, such as screening, occupational skills training, and job readiness services, but recognizes the path is individualized and the length of time required to advance along the pathway is a function of foundational skills and life circumstances," said Chelsea Mills, director of business services for Towards Employment. An early orientation to career goals through WorkAdvance created an expectation of advancement and provided an aspirational framework for participants. A strength-based assessment helped participants understand their challenges, see opportunities and establish goals. A career map, developed jointly by career coach and participant, was used to navigate services and career opportunities. Figure 4 (page 24) illustrates the career pathways of three different WorkAdvance participants described below.

Paul, 29 months to $16.19 an hour.

There are many routes to advancement—and the path isn't necessarily linear. Paul came to WorkAdvance unemployed but with some entry-level manufacturing experience. After a fast-track CNC machining course, he was placed as a grinder earning $12 an hour. His career plan, developed with his career coach, targeted progression into a position as a primary operator and, to gain the needed experience, Paul took a pay cut and a temporary position as a primary operator level 1 at an employer with good benefits and advancement opportunities. He quickly demonstrated his aptitude and was hired into a permanent position as a primary operator level 2, at $13.70 an hour, and then advanced to become a primary operator level 3, now earning $16.19 an hour. Without a career plan, Paul would have viewed the transition to the lower paying job as a step backwards and would have missed the advancement opportunity.

Kathryn, 12 months to $13 an hour.

Kathryn came to WorkAdvance with experience in a nursing home where she was stuck earning $9.50 an hour with no prospects for advancement. Through coaching and WorkAdvance connections, she was placed at University Hospitals as a sitter, an entry-level position that paid $10.50 an hour. With continued coaching support, Kathryn performed well and navigated career opportunities within University Hospitals, and accessed on-the-job training, which led to an advancement into an operating room assistant position that paid an additional $2 an hour. With good performance, she received another raise and is now earning $13 an hour. She is studying to be a registered nurse, and aspires to continue advancing.

James, 12 months to $14.50 an hour.

James came to WorkAdvance with no previous manufacturing experience. He was initially placed as a shipping clerk, a job outside of the manufacturing sector, as a way to earn income until he completed CNC training. Upon completion of the training, he was hired almost immediately through a staffing agency as a machine operator with a $2-an-hour increase over his last position. After performing well, he transitioned to a full-time employee, receiving both a promotion and a wage gain of another $2.50 an hour, for a total hourly wage of $14.50.

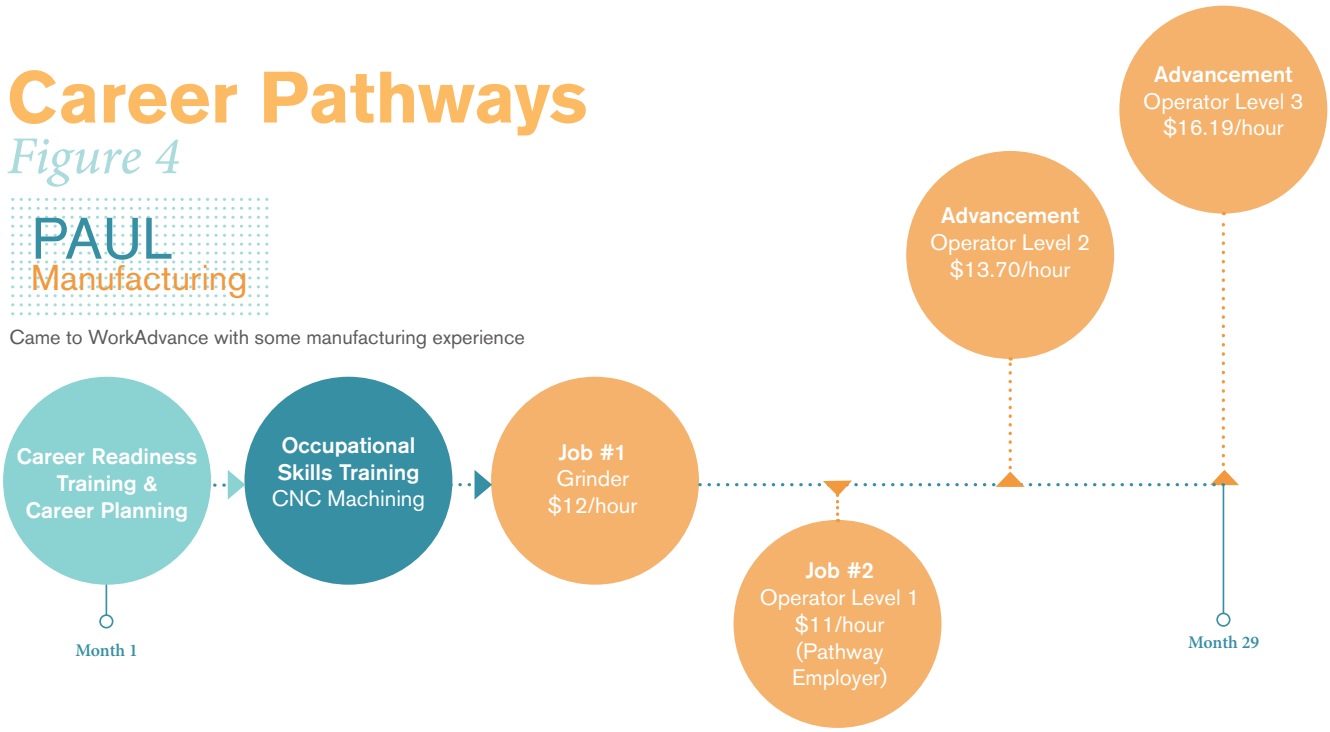
Notably, Paul, Kathryn and James advanced over a period of a year or more. On average, Northeast Ohio participants who advanced first did so six months after placement, but multiple advancements were needed to achieve meaningful wage increases. The two-year WorkAdvance service window accounted for time needed to train, place and advance participants. Traditional workforce services limit individual follow-up to 30, 90 or 180 days following a job placement.[8] "What's special about WorkAdvance is a participant's long-term access to services," said Chelsea Mills. WorkAdvance's two-year participant engagement allowed for career planning, foundational skills development and multiple employment experiences, all critical to realizing longer-term earning potential.

Career Pathways

Figure 4

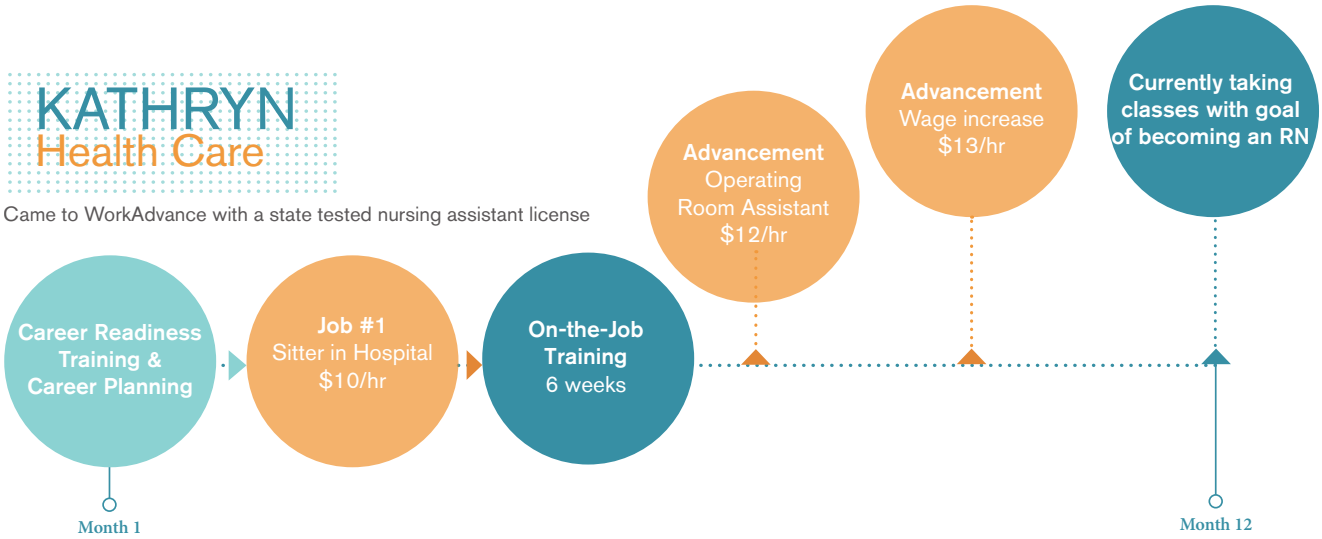
PAUL
Manufacturing

Came to WorkAdvance with some manufacturing experience



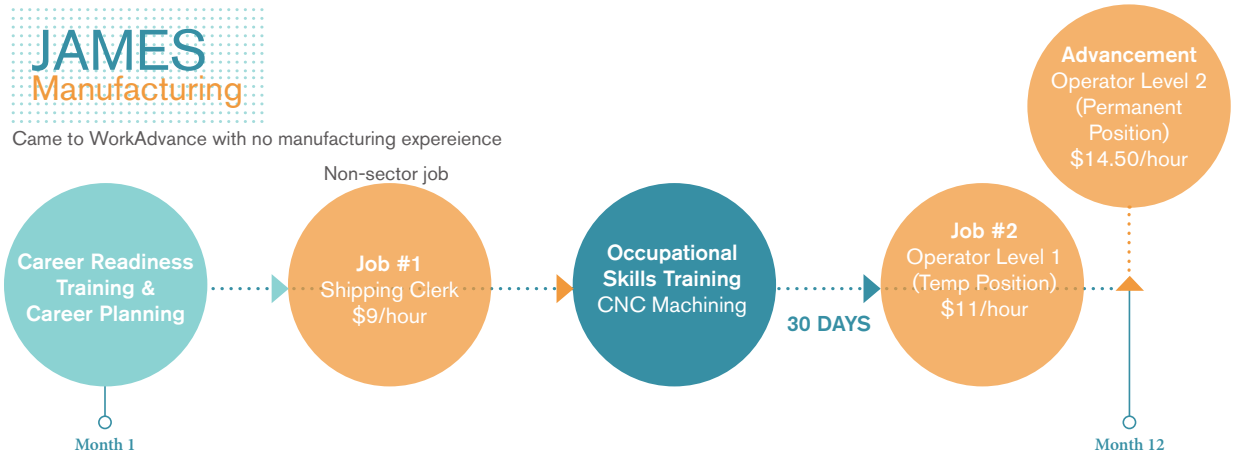
KATHRYN
Health Care

Came to WorkAdvance with a state tested nursing assistant license



JAMES
Manufacturing

Came to WorkAdvance with no manufacturing expereience



The impact? The Northeast Ohio program group earnings were 14 percent higher than the control group after two years. In addition, advancement manifested in a number of ways beyond earnings. According to the MDRC data gained through participant surveys, those in the Northeast Ohio program group were more likely to be working a regular shift, fulltime, or in a permanent job, and more likely to report that in their current job, their scope of work increased and offered many opportunities for career advancement.

Future Priority

Despite statistically significant increases in employment and **earnings**, the average hourly **wage** differential of the Northeast Ohio program group compared to the control group was small. Most of the earnings gains realized by local participants came from more time in the workforce and working more regular hours. While increasing overall earnings is the critical change we want to see, skilled workers working fulltime should not be struggling. We must build on the learnings of WorkAdvance to encourage long-term investments from philanthropy, government and the private sector to support ways to further accelerate advancement opportunities. We must also work to understand perverse incentives that may undermine the benefits of near-term advancement, thereby limiting long-term opportunities.

WORKADVANCE FACT

Those in the Northeast Ohio program group were more likely to be working a regular shift, fulltime, or in a permanent job, and more likely to report that in their current job, their scope of work increased and offered many opportunities for career advancement.

"What's special about WorkAdvance is a participant's long-term access to services."

—Chelsea Mills, Director of Business Services, Towards Employment

Local Lesson: Make Coaching Matter

Valorey came to WorkAdvance without health care experience, but with a love of caring for others, including her 21-year-old son and aging mother. Working with her WorkAdvance career coach, Valorey enrolled in training and earned her nursing assistant license, a first rung credential in the health care field. WorkAdvance helped cover the cost of her uniform and helped her find a job at a local clinic. After a year, Valorey was excelling in her position. It was time to take that next step toward advancement. Her career coach suggested she receive additional training to become a patient care assistant. With that additional training, Valorey was hired by University Hospitals for a position that paid $12.48 an hour—$2.48 an hour more than her previous job.

"I love my job. I love what I do. I am able to help my children, pay bills and now have a home," she said. "My career coach has been wonderful. She has helped me from the beginning, and helped me step by step to get where I am today. WorkAdvance provided the tools I needed to be in the workforce. ... I really believe this is what I am supposed to do."

Valorey credits her career coach as critical to her success, and the local data analysis backs up her experience. Of Northeast Ohio WorkAdvance participants placed in a job, approximately 50 percent advanced; of those who advanced, more than 90 percent received post-employment coaching. The addition of a career coach is a significant difference from traditional workforce services. WorkAdvance career coaches, housed at Towards Employment in Cuyahoga County and at Compass Family & Community Services in the Mahoning Valley, had expertise in the targeted employment sectors and helped individuals develop a career map with a training goal, an employment goal, and a personal goal that was revisited every three months to build consistency and keep the focus on career advancement. (Like a traditional workforce program, participants also had access to case managers who helped resolve life barriers and other issues not related to employment.)

"Career coaching is critical," said William Gary, executive vice president of workforce and economic development at Cuyahoga Community College. "The independent, focused relationship of the career coach allows a jobseeker to navigate the employment process. It is much easier when you have experienced career coaches who address and provide skills counseling and wraparound services that help individuals transition from unemployment to employment, earning wages they've never had before."

"I love my job. I love what I do. I am able to help my children, pay bills and now have a home."

—Valorey, WorkAdvance Participant

The Promise of WorkAdvance

"We depend on evidence-based practices to communicate results so that we can influence policy and move the needle on workforce development in this country. WorkAdvance is a great example of a strong program with meaningful data that we can share with public officials to broaden the understanding of what it takes to make impacts in this work."

–Kermit Kaleba, Federal Policy Director, National Skills Coalition

With promising evidence-based results, WorkAdvance demonstrated impressive potential to contribute to long-term workforce solutions that give more individuals the opportunity to advance along a career pathway, and into jobs that provides family-sustaining wages and that connect employers to the talent they need for their businesses to prosper. "Nothing has been tested and vetted like this model," said Deborah Vesy, president of the Deaconess Foundation.

Ultimately, WorkAdvance demonstrated an ability to deliver workforce services more effectively. How? Through a comprehensive set of services, tied to in-demand jobs in growing sectors with a focus on advancement, delivered by and coordinated through an aligned network of industry partners and service providers.

Northeast Ohio practitioners, policymakers, philanthropic funders, and private-sector businesses can leverage WorkAdvance to improve on past workforce development strategies and bring this successful model to scale. While each plays a different role in the system, collectively, the entire community can take actions to drive adoption of WorkAdvance principles. The ideal outcome? "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. It means that all funders—government, philanthropy, chambers—buy into those principles and use them," said Shilpa Kedar, program director for economic development at The Cleveland Foundation.

The Fund's Call to Action:

1. **Spend money better**. Existing resources can be spent more effectively, particularly if pre- and post-employment coaching services are emphasized. Spending money better requires understanding existing constraints of the funding system and advocating with the local philanthropic community to deliver the model to more people through expanded collaboration to scale it. Funders, particularly philanthropic funders that have more flexible dollars, have an opportunity to leverage current investments to provide flexible funding to "fill gaps" in larger government funding streams, through which supportive services and longer-term coaching are often not available.

2. **Promote core elements of Northeast Ohio WorkAdvance delivery.**
   - **Encourage collaboration**. WorkAdvance helped bridge social services and business needs in Northeast Ohio. Opportunity for greater collaboration is possible if there is a shared agenda among partners and across systems. Effective delivery of the model requires leveraging the strengths of different entities to ensure all components of the model are available, accessed and delivered with high quality. To do this effectively, resources must be devoted to building capacity to collaborate.
   - **Promote sector-based strategies through sector partnerships**. Sector partnerships work to aggregate demand across groups of employers with similar needs, and continuously upgrade curricula, training and credential attainment programs to reflect local market conditions. Sector partnerships collaborate with educational institutions, service providers, philanthropy, and local government to develop workforce development strategies and mobilize resources.
   - **Mandate a career pathways framework.** A career pathways framework aligns education and training with specific advancement opportunities for a broad range of jobseekers. This approach includes a focus on career advancement instead of job placement, and includes sector-focused bridge programs, skills training, job-relevant curricula, and work-based learning to create opportunities at all levels. Alignment of advancement services with in-demand occupations increases opportunities for individuals while meeting business needs and enables career coaches to connect individuals to the right services at the right time.

3. **Build into policy and practice.** To ensure the long-term sustainability of the model, state- and federal-level decision makers must know of its success. This will require advocacy and effort. Encouragingly, several government and nonprofit entities are taking actions to incorporate the lessons of WorkAdvance into developing strategies and improving systems performance in Cuyahoga County, the Mahoning Valley and Summit County (see page 30 for more on these efforts). Our communities can support efforts of policymakers to incorporate these proven WorkAdvance practices into local delivery systems.

WorkAdvance presents immense promise. To realize this promise, the Fund commits to:

- Present to any Northeast Ohio community or group interested in going deep on the data, and to discuss concrete ways to proceed with local integration.
- Build and share practical tools for community partners, including a diagnostic to assess what's already available, what's working, and where there are gaps in service, as well as a handbook on collaboration.
- Engage with practitioners, funders, businesses, policymakers, and others as advocates for the WorkAdvance model and its core principles.

"As the research reflects, the impact of this work is significant," said Jennifer Roller, president of The Raymond John Wean Foundation. "When powerful work such as this aligns with our mission, it is our responsibility to leverage resources—human and capital—to support organizations so that all who seek access are included. We look forward to the day when WorkAdvance can deliver services that empower residents to create a healthy, vibrant and economically stable Northeast Ohio."

We hope the findings in this report compel you to take action. Ultimately, we hope WorkAdvance contributes to improving the lives of individuals in our region, while strengthening the talent pipeline for local businesses to grow and thrive.

"Nothing has been tested and vetted like this model."

—Deborah Vesy, President, Deaconess Foundation

"WorkAdvance is consistent with our approach of being demand driven, and shows the value of flexible supportive services, and post-employment coaching, particularly to low-income job seekers. The new federal workforce legislation (WIOA) embraces a career pathways framework and we look forward to building on lessons learned."

—Grace Kilbane, Executive Director, Cleveland/Cuyahoga County Workforce Development Board and OhioMeansJobs|Cleveland-Cuyahoga County

Afterword

In communities across Northeast Ohio, practitioners, policymakers, philanthropic funders, and private sector businesses are well positioned to integrate the lessons of WorkAdvance into local workforce development strategies. Encouragingly, change is already starting to take root, as WorkAdvance partners have worked to bring the model to more people across more places. Over the last five years:

1. Money has been better spent. A $6 million Department of Labor Workforce Innovation Grant to the OH-Penn Interstate Region in 2012 provided funding for job training and job matching services, but the funding couldn't be used for other core WorkAdvance services like career coaching and follow up. MVMC, an OH-Penn partner on the effort, spent money better when it used WorkAdvance funding to fill those gaps.

2. Core elements of WorkAdvance have been promoted, including collaboration, a career pathways framework and sector-based strategies. Towards Employment has integrated the WorkAdvance model into other programs, like the $2 million Pathways 2 Work program (funded by the Department of Labor) and MOVE UP ($850,000 award, funded by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation). Through Pathways 2 Work, Towards Employment brought WorkAdvance services to a new population: individuals returning home from incarceration via work release or halfway house programs. In the MOVE UP pilot, Towards Employment leads a collaboration that includes two major hospital systems and four community-based providers, and seeks to increase worker mobility and economic security. Towards Employment has also integrated three occupational pathways into its core reentry work: the WorkAdvance manufacturing pathway, construction, and culinary arts.

3. The lessons of WorkAdvance have been built into policy and practice. Locally, cross-sector strategies are in development in many places across the region, notably, in both Summit and Cuyahoga counties, where the offices of the county executive—informed by business and philanthropic leadership—have advanced county-wide workforce strategies. The findings from WorkAdvance are embedded in these strategies, and will inform future investment priorities.

   The Ohio Workforce Coalition, an organization that brings together leaders from education and training institutions, economic and workforce development organizations, business and industry, labor unions, and human service providers to promote public policies that build the skills of Ohio's adult workers, included the WorkAdvance model in its 2013 recommendations to state policymakers seeking input on a statewide workforce strategy. The Coalition's recommendations were reflected in the State's Industry Workforce Alliance (IWA) Pilot Initiative, designed to support sector-driven, career pathway programming. MVMC successfully applied for the IWA funding, with an application was grounded in the WorkAdvance model.

   Nationally, the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City's Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO) worked with MDRC to bring the WorkAdvance model to national discussions informing policy makers who designed the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the first legislative reform in 15 years of the public workforce system. While it does not fully integrate WorkAdvance, notable improvements in WIOA include eliminating a required service sequence, increasing the likelihood that an individual will be able to access the right services at the right time, and a focus on sectors and career pathways.

These early adoptions are encouraging and demonstrate how the proven practices of WorkAdvance can begin to improve workforce service delivery, and ultimately improve outcomes for people and businesses.

"Through collaboration and blended funding streams, we can grow this model."

—Jill Rizika, Executive Director, Towards Employment

Glossary of Terms

Workforce Definitions:

- **Career Pathways Framework**: According to the U.S. Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, and Labor, a career pathways framework is "a series of connected education and training strategies and support services that enable individuals to secure industry relevant certification(s), obtain employment within an occupation and advance to higher levels of future education and employment in that area." A career pathways framework includes the alignment of preparation, education and training with specific career opportunities for a broad range of jobseekers within a community.
- **Earnings**: The total amount grossed through wages—overtime and bonuses, benefits and other income amassed over a defined period. The WorkAdvance national evaluation compared earnings of the entire program group against earnings of the control group. Higher aggregate earnings can come from more people working, working more hours, working more weeks, as well as from higher wages.
- **In-Demand Job**: Jobs or occupations that are growing or expected to increase in the number of total job openings in the next few years as a result of changes in the industry, more demand for services, or projected retirements.
- **Sector-based Strategy**: A workforce intervention that focuses on a defined set of occupations within an industry and customizes training and supports to prepare workers for those occupations. A sector-based strategy can be broadened to work across multiple industries, workforce training organizations, and community providers.
- **Wages**: The hourly rates paid for a particular job.

System Definitions:

- **Collaboration**: A process through which independent stakeholders assume shared responsibility for achieving a mutually beneficial, common goal.
- **Intermediary**: Intermediaries take many forms. Business associations organize employers to help them communicate about demand, share labor market trends, and review technical curriculum. Workforce intermediaries broker relationships between businesses and business associations, and the training providers and community organizations serving them. Community intermediaries leverage the relationships among community-based organizations, often in the job readiness arena.
- **Systems Change**: Workforce development services are delivered through many systems, including higher education, public assistance, philanthropy, business, and community-based organizations. Systems change refers to changes to policies and practices within and across these systems, with the aim of improving outcomes for jobseekers and employers.

Glossary of Terms

Operational Definitions:

- **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.
- **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.
- **Incumbent Worker Advancement**: When an employed individual gains an hourly wage increase, receiving an improved shift or schedule, increases the number of hours worked, receives more responsibility, or a promotion, and/or moves from part-time to full-time employment.
- **Randomized Control Trial (RCT)**: A type of research study where individuals are assigned at random to either receive a set of services (program group) or not (control group), and where both groups of individuals are tracked to see if the program group has a different outcome than the control group as a result of receiving services.
- **Supportive Services**: Services that help enable individuals to participate in job-readiness, continuing education or employment-related activities. These services include, but are not limited to, transportation assistance (bus passes, subsidized parking), preparation assistance (uniforms, tools, textbooks), and childcare assistance.

Notes

MDRC's "Encouraging Evidence on a Sector-Focused Advancement Strategy," published in August 2016 (http://www.mdrc.org/sites/default/files/2016_Workadvance_Final_Web.pdf); Towards Employment program knowledge; and additional analysis of Northeast Ohio WorkAdvance participant results conducted by Broadview Analytics served as the foundation of this report.

For additional background on WorkAdvance, please refer to:

- Towards Employment Case Studies, 2015 (http://towardsemployment.org/strategic-initiatives/workadvance/)
- "Working Toward Growth & Opportunity," a video from the Fund for Our Economic Future, 2015 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t3E7kEY2qzk&t=1s)
- "WorkAdvance: A Promising Sector-Focused Strategy" Infographic from MDRC, October 2016 (http://www.mdrc.org/publication/workadvance-promising-sector-focused-strategy)
- "Implementing the WorkAdvance Model: Lessons for Practitioners," an MDRC Policy Brief, October 2016(http://www.mdrc.org/sites/default/files/WorkAdvance_2016_PolicyBrief.pdf)

Other resources referenced in this report include:

1. Team NEO projections. See November 2015 Quarterly Economic Review Assessment: Occupations by the Numbers, http://www.clevelandplus.com/teamneo/news-category/quarterly-economic-reviews/.
2. Tessler, Betsy. "WorkAdvance: Testing a New Approach to Increase Employment Advancement for Low-Skilled Adults." MDRC June 2013 Policy Brief. http://www.mdrc.org/sites/default/files/WorkAdvance_Brief.pdf.
3. ibid.
4. See The Literacy Cooperative's Top 10, http://www.literacycooperative.org/top10/top10.htm.
5. Team NEO projections. See November 2015 Quarterly Economic Review Assessment: Occupations by the Numbers, http://www.clevelandplus.com/teamneo/news-category/quarterly-economic-reviews/.
6. Wilson, Bryan. "Closing Skill Gaps." The Book of the States 2015. http://knowledgecenter.csg.org/kc/system/files/Wilson%202015.pdf.
7. See sectorstrategies.org Toolkit, http://www.sectorstrategies.org/toolkit/introduction.
8. See memo on Ohio Works Incentive Program, page 1 of 8, on incentivizing 90- and 180-day retention, http://jfs.ohio.gov/owd/Initiatives/Docs/OWIP-Overview.stm.

Acknowledgements

WorkAdvance would not have come to Northeast Ohio, nor would it have been successful, without the efforts of numerous leaders and organizations that believed in its potential.

The Fund for Our Economic Future would like to thank Towards Employment Executive Director Jill Rizika, Director of Business Services Chelsea Mills, and staff; Rebecca Kusner, who was the director of WorkAdvance at Towards Employment for the first four years of the demonstration and is now at the New Growth Group, a consulting firm focused on workforce development; Compass Family & Community Services, for serving as operational lead in the Mahoning Valley; and program partners The Centers for Families and Children, OhioMeansJobs|Cleveland-Cuyahoga County, OhioMeansJobs|Mahoning-Columbiana County, WIRE-Net, MAGNET, The Center for Health Affairs, The Literacy Cooperative, and the Mahoning Valley Manufacturers Coalition. We also want to thank the multiple community colleges and training organizations that participated, including Cuyahoga Community College, Lorain County Community College, Lakeland Community College, Cleveland Industrial Training Center, Lincoln Electric Training Center, and Cuyahoga Valley Career Center. The Fund for Our Economic Future would also like to thank Strategy Design Partners and Broadview Analytics for their work on this report.

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Jessica Borza, Mahoning Valley Manufacturers Coalition

Bethia Burke, Fund for Our Economic Future

David Cleckner, WorkAdvance participant

William Cline, Towards Employment

Valory Cohen, WorkAdvance participant

John Colm, WIRE-Net

Jera Daye, Pennex Aluminum

Diane DeJulio, Compass Family & Community Services

Tim Duffy, Cleveland Industrial Training Center

Haidee Garcia, Towards Employment

William Gary, Cuyahoga Community College

Patrick Hart, Center for Economic Opportunity

Michael Hoag, WIRE-Net

Betty Holnapy, Towards Employment

David Jolly, WorkAdvance participant

Shilpa Kedar, The Cleveland Foundation

Grace Kilbane, Cleveland/Cuyahoga County Workforce Development Board

Rebecca Kusner, The New Growth Group

Chelsea Mills, Towards Employment

Debbi Perkul, University Hospitals

Lissy Rand, Deaconess Foundation

Jill Rizika, Towards Employment

Jennifer Roller, The Raymond John Wean Foundation

Tom Schumann, E.C. Kitzel & Sons Inc.

Deborah Vesy, Deaconess Foundation

About the Fund for Our Economic Future

The Fund for Our Economic Future is an alliance of funders—foundations, corporations, universities, health care systems, business and civic associations, government entities, and individuals—that pool their resources and collective know-how to advance economic growth and increase access to opportunity for the people of Northeast Ohio through improved job creation, job preparation and job access, an approach called Growth & Opportunity. The Fund does this by building shared community commitment, supporting high-impact collaborations and marshalling strategic funding. Since its founding in 2004, the Fund has raised more than $100 million for its efforts, which have helped retain or create more than 21,500 jobs, add $930 million in payroll, and attract $5.3 billion in capital to Northeast Ohio.

About Towards Employment

Towards Employment empowers individuals to achieve and maintain self-sufficiency through employment. A community-based workforce organization formed in 1976, it has assisted more than 124,000 disadvantaged adults in Greater Cleveland to successfully move from poverty to a paycheck. By actively engaging workforce partners, and translating employer needs into effective programming, Towards Employment efficiently moves individuals through the career pathway of preparing for a job, getting a job, keeping a job, and advancing in a career. Every year, more than 2,000 people engage with Towards Employment to build or advance their career pathway. To grow the impact achieved through direct services to both individuals and businesses, Towards Employment leads several collaborative initiatives to promote a better aligned workforce system as part of an inclusive economic growth strategy for Northeast Ohio.

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