



WorkAdvance, a national pilot tested in Northeast Ohio over the last five years, demonstrated that there is ability in our workforce system to deliver services more effectively at a very high return. Indeed, most of the gains require no incremental dollars. Employers are connected to talent they need, while individuals enjoy better earnings and increased potential for career advancement. At the heart of the change is a holistic provision of sector-focused services, and pre- and post-employment coaching. Complete national and local report at <http://towardsemployment.org/workadvance-local-results>.

What is the need?

- **Pain point for employers.** We know anecdotally from employers that finding prepared, reliable talent is one of their biggest, if not THE biggest, challenges.
- **Significant projected openings.** In Northeast Ohio, 640,000 job openings (or about 1/3 of the labor market) are expected over the next decade. More than 30,000 of those openings are expected in the health care support field; and about 45,000 are expected in production.
- **Limiting factor.** In short, our workforce needs are immense and meeting them is critical to our economic competitiveness.

What was WorkAdvance and what did it do?

- **National demonstration.** WorkAdvance was a national, five-year workforce development demonstration tested in Northeast Ohio, New York City, and Tulsa, Oklahoma, locally coordinated by Towards Employment and supported by the Fund for Our Economic Future. Towards Employment partnered with 8 organizations across Cuyahoga County and Mahoning Valley, including Wirenet, Magnet, The Centers, The Literacy Cooperative, Center for Health Affairs, Compass, OMJ-MV, and MVMC.
- **Tested better approach to support job seekers with multiple barriers.** Pulling in successful elements of other workforce programs, WorkAdvance tested whether a comprehensive provision of services, focusing on in-demand sectors and emphasizing advancement, could lead to better outcomes for job seekers and employers.
- **Was rigorously evaluated using randomized control trial.** This means some participants received WorkAdvance services and others did not. National social policy research firm MDRC handled the evaluation and compared outcomes for the two groups. Towards Employment worked with partners locally to develop an additional report that dives deeper on the Northeast Ohio data and impact.

How is the WorkAdvance model different?

- **It is comprehensive.** It holistically addresses individuals' needs to enable them to get, keep and advance in a job. Our current workforce system includes many successful service providers that are providing service to individuals at different points along the spectrum, from screening, to job readiness and training, to placement, to case management, without being able to see the entire spectrum of what that individual might get from other partners or needs to advance in a career.
- **It focuses on advancement,** not just placement, with an emphasis on post-employment coaching services.
- And in Northeast Ohio, **it relies on a coordinated network of sector-oriented partners** to deliver services.

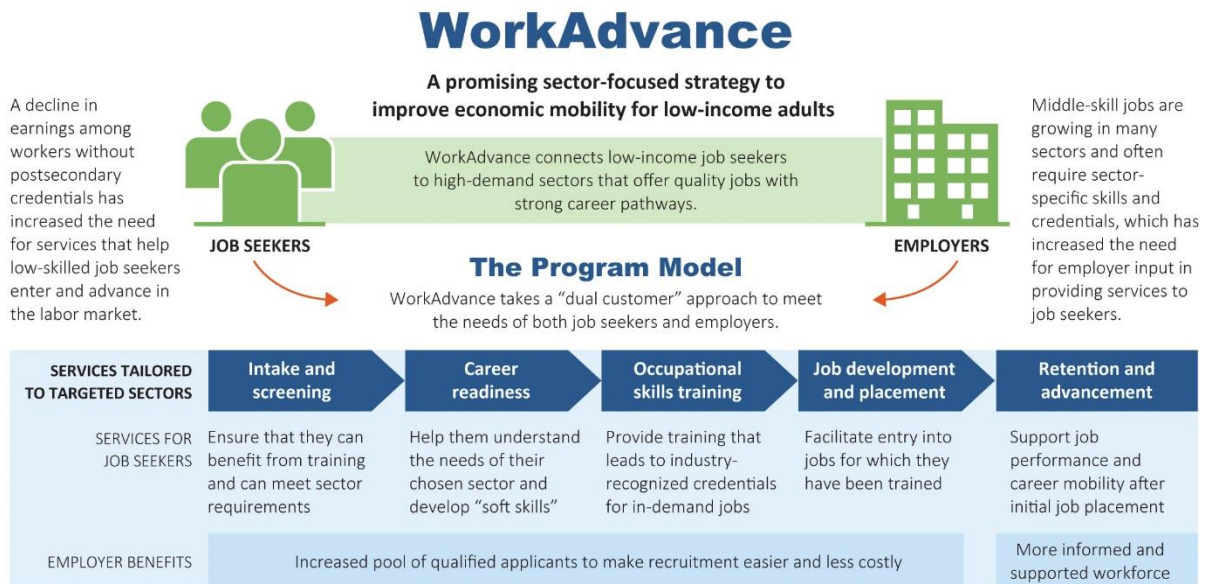
What happened nationally?

- Program group participants accessed services (pre-placement services, enrollment in and completion of occupational skills training, job search assistance, and post-employment coaching) nearly 1.5-6x times as often as control group participants.
- Program group participants were approximately 1.5 – 3x as likely to be employed in a targeted sector as 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.
- Cost to deliver WorkAdvance services ranged from \$5,200 to \$6,700 per participant.

What happened locally?

- WorkAdvance program group participants were
 - 1.5x as likely to have received career readiness services;
 - nearly 4x as likely to have received occupational skills training, and > 4x as likely to have completed it;
 - 2x as likely to have received job search assistance; and 3x as likely to have received post-employment coaching.
- 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.
- 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.

What did WorkAdvance tell us?



A successful model:

- **Emphasizes advancement, not just placement.** An early orientation to career goals, not just placement, is necessary to create an expectation for advancement. Helping participants identify longer-term career goals was important for creating greater resilience when confronting challenges, particularly in the early stages of the model.
- **Includes coaching as major component.** Among program group participants (based on the local findings), those receiving post-employment coaching were 10x as likely to advance in their jobs as those who did not receive these services.
- **Is sector-focused.** 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 in their respective sectors.

How much does it cost?

- The per-individual cost to implement WorkAdvance is approximately \$5,200, a price that’s comparable to the cost of traditional job-placement services—services that notably do not typically include advancement services.
- Cost analysis indicates that coaching service is a relatively inexpensive add-on to the investment in technical training and other pre-employment supports to achieve much greater long-term impact.

What do we do next?

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.**
 - a. 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.
 - b. 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.
 - c. 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. Our communities can support efforts of policymakers to incorporate these proven WorkAdvance practices into local delivery systems.

FAQ's

What do you mean by advancement?

Advancements include wage increases, temporary-to-permanent jobs, additional hours, promotions without a wage increase

What do you mean by coaching? How is that different from case management?

Case management supports are distinct from career coaching. Career coaches should understand the target industries and the education and experience requirements to help participants navigate a career, while case managers help navigate access to community resources to remove barriers.

Who were the largest employers?

In total, more than 400 employers hired from WorkAdvance. The top seven employers were University Hospitals, Hosemaster, Swagelok, Erico, Wiseco, Anchor, Cleveland Clinic.

What were the average starting wages?

In health care: \$10.70; in manufacturing: \$11.05.

What was the average ending wage?

In health care: \$13.38; in manufacturing: \$13.81.

This model seems like common sense. Why don't we serve people this way already?

Our current workforce system includes many successful service providers that are providing service to individuals at different points along the spectrum, from screening, to job readiness and training, to placement, to case management, without being able to see the entire spectrum of what that individual might get from other partners or needs to advance in a career. The way funding is funneled through the system in many ways prevents taking a holistic approach.

At the same time, post-employment career coaching for advancement and a flexible pool of funding to offer wraparound supports to participants throughout their advancement program, are key programmatic components that are not widely available. Local, state, and federal elected officials should assure these components are included as allowable expenses in public funding streams. Public policy should allow for and encourage programming that offers new way of doing workforce.

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