



Towards Employment

PRESS RELEASE

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KEY BANK INVESTS \$1M IN TOWARDS EMPLOYMENT'S WORK TO CONNECT MORE PEOPLE TO CAREERS

Towards Employment will graduate 1700 people from full career pathway model over three years

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Cleveland – The KeyBank Foundation has pledged \$1 million dollars to grow Towards Employment's work in connecting people to careers. Over three years, KeyBank's support of **Key To Careers** will provide the foundation for Towards Employment to serve over 1700 individuals with a comprehensive workforce programming that has been proven to successfully connect individuals with jobs and good careers.

The **Two Tomorrows** report, released early this year by the Fund for Our Economic Future, states "the vitality of a region's economy depends on its ability to connect people to good jobs with the appropriate skill set. Yet, regional reports find a persistent disconnect between the expressed demand for workers and preparation levels of job seekers. As a result, businesses report workforce shortages as a limiting factor for growth, people earn less than they otherwise might, and our region loses out when we are unable to demonstrate how our workforce can meet the needs of potential new businesses. **Key To Careers** adds to our city's capacity to connect people to good jobs and careers.

"We are grateful for the opportunity to grow our impact through this catalytic investment from Key Bank," says Jill Rizika, Executive Director of Towards Employment. "We have proven results that our programming connects people to careers, changes their lives, and has an economic impact. With Key Bank's investment, not only will we connect more people to the full career model, but we will deepen our existing partnerships in the community, and build our career coaching team. By doing so, Towards Employment will have greater impact and create inclusive pathways to prosperity."

Based on the success of a five-year workforce demonstration project, WorkAdvance, **Key to Careers** will serve 1700 low income greater Clevelanders by launching their personal career pathway with connection to a proven successful model that includes job readiness training, continued wrap around services to support job retention and training; with ongoing career coaching to help advancement into a career. **Keys To Careers** will target the manufacturing, construction, culinary, and healthcare sectors.

Many programs seeking to help un- and under-employed individuals take a case management approach disconnected from business need. The WorkAdvance model is differentiated by deep employer engagement, comprehensive wraparound supports, and long-term advancement focused coaching. Leveraging this work, **Key To Careers** will work backward from skills needed to fill high-demand occupations in targeted industries, and help participants access an array of supports to remove barriers, build skills, and gain appropriate credentials to meet entry requirements into these occupations. This will include sector specific screening, job readiness training, career planning, intensive job coaching, technical training, job matching/placement, and supportive and legal services. It's a workforce service menu - providing right support at the right time to help people advance along and into a career.

"Towards Employment is a proven workforce leader in our region and we are thrilled to deepen their reach in our community," says Kate Terrell, KeyBank's Chief Administrative Officer who also serves as Vice President of Towards Employment's Board. "**Key To Careers** will give individuals the chance to change their lives through good employment and Towards Employment will provide the support necessary to keep and advance in a career. It's our hope that this program will begin to address the skills gap in our region by bridging the "work readiness" gap and bring an untapped potential into the labor market."

Key to Careers will begin in January 2019 with this first investment by Key Bank. Towards Employment will continue to seek community support to build, implement and bring to scale the proven success of the WorkAdvance model which can result in a 20% increase in earnings over 2 years.

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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.