

ISSUE 1, VOL 1 | 2024 - 2025

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PROUD OF
THIS YEAR



**AI'S ROLE IN
SMARTER JOB
MATCHING**

 **GREATER
CLEVELAND
WORKS™**



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5 Things We're Proud of This Year

Our shift from a government entity to a nonprofit is what makes this all possible, and now we are poised to see the impact.

We did it. We made it through our first year as a nonprofit. And what a year it's been! In the span of 12 months, we developed a bold strategic plan to guide our work for the next three years (see pages 6-7), unveiled a new name and logo, executed new contracts to help us deliver our core services, brought on new team members, and expanded our offerings. Those are only the achievements that made headlines.

We also supported thousands of job seekers, connected with numerous employers, deepened existing partnerships and forged new ones, and made our presence more known in the community.

As the workforce development board for Cleveland and Cuyahoga County, we're federally designated to distribute public resources to support job seekers and employers. And we do so much more.

It might not be the kind of story that makes the news, but we've been working every day to deliver exceptional customer service, support business growth that improves our region's economic competitiveness, and expand the capacity and effectiveness of our workforce development system — all things we set out to do as a totally revamped organization.

Our shift from a government entity to a nonprofit is what

makes this all possible, and now we are poised to see the impact. This report is an opportunity for us to reflect on the hard work that's gone into our transformation and highlight what's working and where we're headed. It's also a chance to

The stories on the following pages exemplify who we are: an organization that makes good on its promises.

showcase some of what we're most proud of—efforts that distinguish us as a forward-looking and results-driven workforce board.

So while it's hard to pick just five things we're proud of this year, we hope the stories on the following pages exemplify who we are: an organization that makes good on its promises.



Ethan Karp, Ph.D.
President & CEO, MAGNET
Board Chairman



Michelle Rose
Chief Executive Officer





Strategic Pillars

OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Achieve operational excellence through expanded reach, effectiveness, and by addressing disparities in our community within the context of work delivered by our partners and by Greater Cleveland Works.

ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS

Ensure Greater Cleveland Works and the workforce ecosystem support economic competitiveness with small, medium, and large employers.

ECOSYSTEM CAPACITY & EFFECTIVENESS

Identify, develop, and lead efforts that result in increased funding opportunities and capacity to improve the workforce system.

2025-2029 Strategy Snapshot

MISSION

Greater Cleveland Works delivers impactful services for people and employers and drives the workforce ecosystem in Cleveland and Cuyahoga County.

VALUES

Equity

We recognize that a person's identity—such as race, gender, disability status, and class—shapes how they are treated, with systemic racial injustice disproportionately impacting some. We aim to close racial employment and wage gaps by promoting access to quality jobs and career opportunities for everyone in our community.

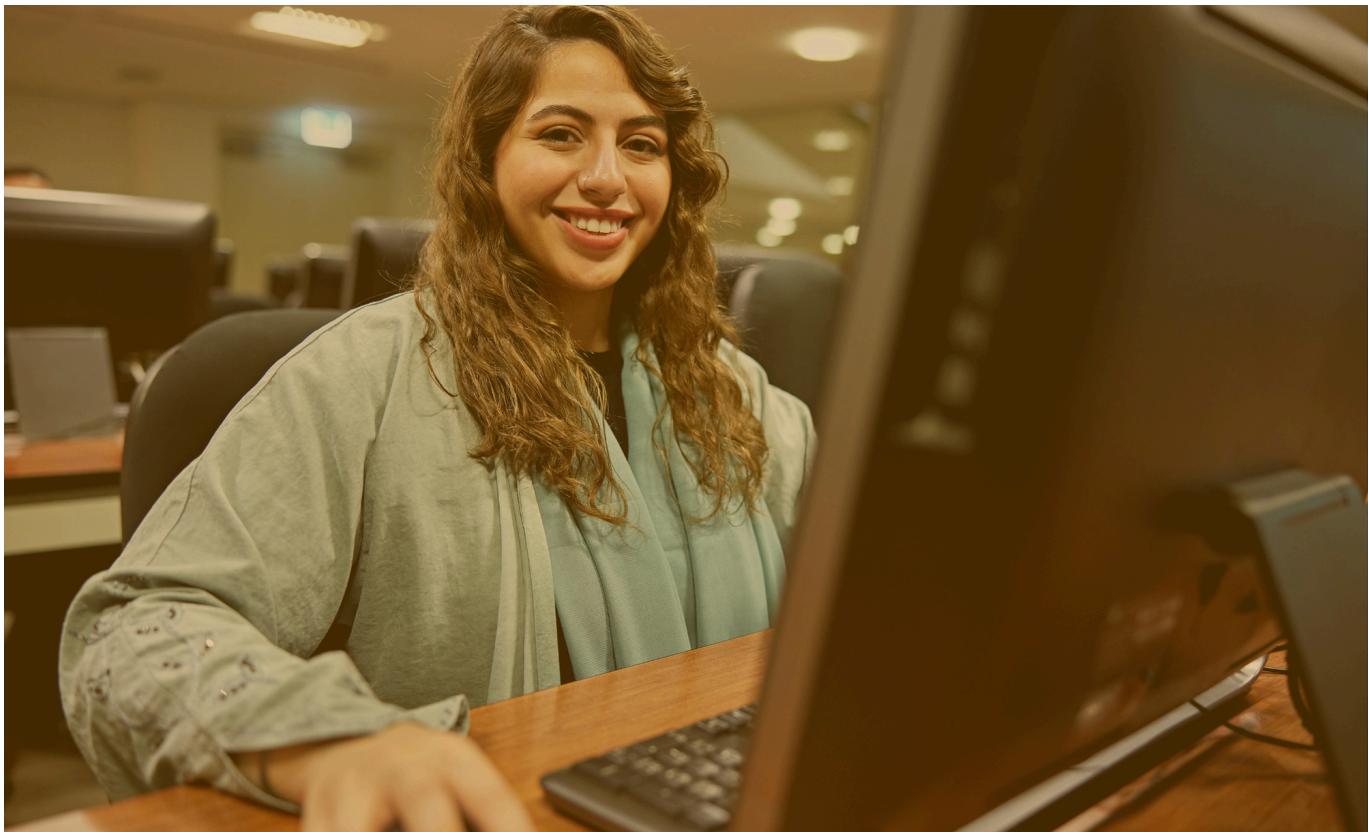
Integrity

We are committed to being trustworthy partners through holding ourselves accountable for our actions and their impact, treating all of our customers with dignity and respect, and striving to "earn the right" to drive the workforce ecosystem every day.

Adaptability

We continuously adapt to meet the needs of our customers and partners, wherever they are. We do this through a commitment to listening, learning, and innovation so that we can respond to changing economic and workforce conditions in Greater Cleveland.





Reinventing the Customer Experience

Things look different at the OhioMeansJobs Center on Carnegie Avenue

It's a warm summer day in July. The sun streams in through the windows at the OhioMeansJobs Center at 1910 Carnegie Avenue in Cleveland as job seekers come and go. Some attend ikigai sessions, inspired by the Japanese concept that explores the intersection of passion, talent, and purpose. Others are busy in the ADA-accessible computer lab, working on their resumes or searching for jobs. Still others are there getting one-on-one career coaching, connecting to training, accessing supportive services like transportation, or seeking support from one of Greater Cleveland Works' community partners.

It's been a year since Greater Cleveland Works became a nonprofit, giving it greater flexibility and expanding its scope. With that transition came a new strategic plan that called for improving delivery of its core services to job seekers and employers through the OhioMeansJobs Center.

While the organization's formal change in structure may not be known by those walking through the door, the expectation is their experience is different.

"We have made a concerted effort to raise the bar on the customer experience," said Chief Operating Officer Laura Chalker. "This has been our number one priority. The community told us we needed to do better, that we needed to make the process to find a job or advance in a career simpler and

more accessible. And we're doing that."

We have made a concerted effort to raise the bar on the customer experience.

Laura Chalker
Chief Operating Officer

The energy in the waiting area is palpable, with smiling staff ready to greet and assist. People of all ages and backgrounds are directed toward the best points of contact for finding their first job, their next job, or their best job.

The experience of visiting OhioMeansJobs is just one part of



the story, made possible by significant efforts to better understand and track performance.

New contracts with the United Labor Agency (ULA) and a consortium led by Youth Opportunities Unlimited (Y.O.U.) to provide tailored services for job seekers and employers include performance-based incentives.





These include placement in full-time jobs that pay more than \$20 an hour for adults and more than \$16.20 an hour for youth, in addition to job seeker and employer satisfaction.

“When we transitioned to a nonprofit last year, we took a hard look at what wasn’t working and knew we had to put in place measures to better serve our core customers—job seekers and employers,” said Ethan Karp, Ph.D., chair of Greater Cleveland Works and president and CEO of MAGNET, a nonprofit dedicated to growing manufacturing in Northeast Ohio. “These contracts are a meaningful step toward better performance and outcomes.”

Though the OhioMeansJobs Center is still early in its transformation, these changes are translating into real results. (See the following page.)

“The best part of my role is connecting people to opportunities,” said Cory Vojack, manager of the OhioMeansJobs Center. “I love helping people one-on-one, building strong relationships with our partners and community, and helping coordinate a responsive workforce system that empowers residents to grow, advance, and thrive in their careers.”

The OhioMeansJobs Center is for everyone, from young job seekers getting connected to their first job

through LAUNCH to seasoned workers learning new skills through programs like MAGNET and Towards Employment’s ACCESS to Manufacturing Careers or New Bridge’s Phlebotomy Technician Training. The OhioMeansJobs Center brings together a host of partners and resources that will only lead to increased opportunities for workers and employers as time goes on.

By the Numbers

2024-2025 PROGRAM YEAR

12,712

Individuals served

1,441

Job seekers placed
in a job

311

Individuals supported
with barrier removal

\$571,195

Amount of Barrier
Removal Fund deployed

\$21.24

Average hourly
wage of
individuals
placed in a job

477

Employers
engaged

474

Employer
job orders
matched
with
candidates



OhioMeansJobs.

Cuyahoga County

A proud partner of the
American Job Center network



**Built
Environment
Collaborative**

Partnering for Impact

Momentive Technologies and the Aerozone Alliance

When Christopher Myers joined Momentive Technologies as director of talent acquisition two years ago, he quickly realized that off-shift skilled trades positions were as challenging to fill as some of the advanced manufacturing company's most technical roles.

With a workforce composed mostly of those either near the end or at the start of their career, the "middle ground" of manufacturing workers, as Myers put it, is hard to find.

"Skilled trades lost a generation," Myers said. "We have to radically rethink how we go about filling those positions in the long term."

Momentive is working with Greater Cleveland Works to do just that. In addition to experienced skilled trade talent, Greater Cleveland Works is helping to source talent who may not have all the required training or experience but who are eager to learn and work their way up. Myers sees Greater Cleveland Works as a

partner who can extend the company's reach and increase exposure to the opportunities it offers.

"It's supremely important to get our name and brand in front of people who have never heard of us before," he said.

Based in Strongsville, Momentive is a multinational advanced materials supplier for the semiconductor and aerospace industries. It has nearly 1,000 employees spread across 10 facilities in North America, Asia, and Europe, with many types of positions employed, from

We have to radically rethink how we go about filling positions in the long term.

Christopher Myers
Director of Talent
Acquisition, Momentive
Technologies





physicists to manufacturing operations to administrative. At any one time, the company has roughly 70+ open positions to fill, with the majority of those being manufacturing operations positions based in Northeast Ohio.

"Momentive has a good understanding of what their talent looks like and where they need to be," said Ian Marks, manager of employer solutions at Greater Cleveland Works. "Once you have that real talk, you can start to find solutions."

Greater Cleveland Works is working to develop talent solutions on a wider scale to

support businesses like Momentive that are located in the Aerozone, a 50-square-mile hub of economic activity in Northeast Ohio that stretches across eight municipalities and employs roughly 100,000 people.

Aerospace is a rapidly growing industry in Ohio—the eighth largest in the state—and the Aerozone sits at the center of this momentum. Anchored by NASA Glenn Research Center, the Cleveland Hopkins International Airport, and companies like Momentive, the district boasts one of the highest concentrations of aerospace jobs in the state. Alongside this strength, the

Once you have that real talk, you can start to find solutions.

Ian Marks

Manager of Employer Solutions, Greater Cleveland Works

Aerozone is home to advanced manufacturing, logistics, hospitality, and retail businesses, creating a wide range of employment opportunities and skill-set needs.

The Aerozone Alliance, a nonprofit network of business, government, philanthropy, workforce, and community partners, has a goal of 400 jobs retained or expanded with existing companies; 400 new jobs attracted; and 200 placements of people in open jobs, over the next two years. Greater Cleveland Works is at the table, supporting the bigger vision of the Aerozone Alliance while also providing direct support to businesses located there.

"Employers are looking to shift from non-value-added transactions to deeper, more methodical strategic relationships," said Hrishue Mahalaha, executive director of the Aerozone Alliance. "Sometimes we can get you the talent you need in 24 hours, sometimes it takes 24 months. Either way, we are ready to partner to help businesses survive and thrive."



Clearing the Path to Trades Careers

A look at the Built Environment Collaborative's Barrier Removal Fund

Erica Wade was scrolling Facebook one day—in between working multiple gig jobs and caring for her school-age children—trying to figure out her next step. That's when she came across an ad for the Built Environment Collaborative. She was interested in a career in construction but couldn't pursue training unless she had child care and she couldn't afford child care if she abandoned her gig work to pursue training.

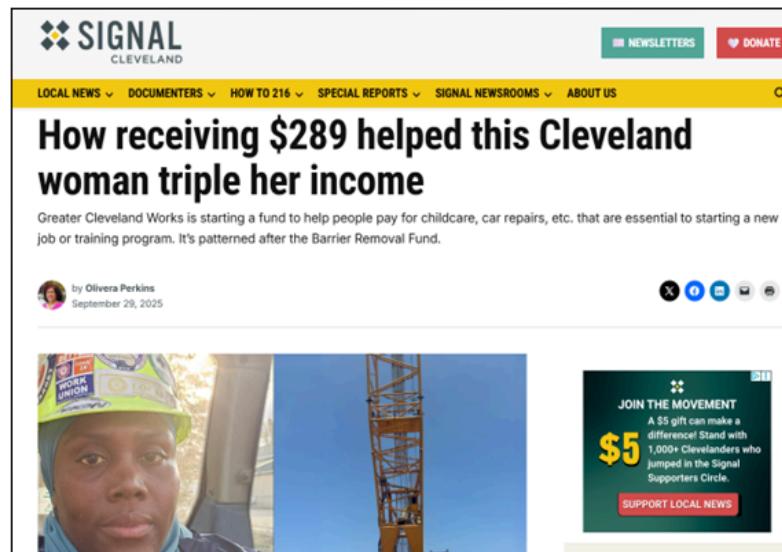
It was a true catch-22, until she learned about the Built Environment Collaborative's Barrier Removal Fund, which supports participants as they pursue training for higher earning-potential careers.

"Two hundred and eighty-nine dollars may not seem like a lot of money to some people, but when you don't have it, it is," Wade told Olivera Perkins for a recent *Signal Cleveland* article. That's how much she owed in child care back pay—and what stood in her way.

More than 1,750 Clevelanders have enrolled in training programs in the built environment since 2024.

Wade is now two years into a four-year apprenticeship with the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 18, working toward becoming a heavy equipment operator. The Barrier Removal Fund provided Wade with the back pay she owed to her children's aftercare program, three weeks of additional child care expenses, work boots, gloves, winter socks, work pants, safety glasses, and ear plugs.

The apprenticeship program has been life-changing, Wade shared. She's received raises and has been able to pay off bills. Wade's story is an illustration of the power of the



Signal Cleveland featured Erica Wade in a September 2025 article.

Built Environment Collaborative and its Barrier Removal Fund.

Made possible by a \$10 million investment from the City of Cleveland, the Built Environment Collaborative is a collection of partners from across Cleveland's workforce ecosystem united around the goal of expanding access to opportunities in the construction, infrastructure, and clean energy industries.

Through the Built Environment Collaborative's partners, individuals gain access to the services and expertise they need, including free or low-cost job training, career pathway guidance, support services, employment assistance, and small business resources. More Clevelanders are able to access in-demand skills and high-paying jobs in fast-growing industries because of the many partners around the table.

"Our priority is improving economic opportunities for

Cleveland residents, whether it's through a pre-apprenticeship program that leads to a union construction job or small business support that leads to increased capacity for bidding and taking on projects," said Built Environment Collaborative Director Renee Timberlake.

More than 1,750 Clevelanders have enrolled in training programs in the built environment since 2024. More than 300 individuals have been supported by the Barrier Removal Fund.

The impact the Barrier Removal Fund has had on individuals such as Wade inspired Greater Cleveland Works to start a similar fund for individuals using its general job seeker services, with the support of a grant from The Cleveland Foundation. The fund supports things that are critical to job seeker success but often not covered by federal workforce dollars.

Minding the Gap

Efforts to fill the youth mental health workforce shortage

Increased access to mental and behavioral healthcare for young people is paramount.

Crystal Reed

Director, Youth Mental & Behavioral Health SWOT Team

Born from an effort initiated by Cuyahoga County Executive Chris Ronayne and City of Cleveland Mayor Justin Bibb, the Youth Mental & Behavioral Health SWOT (Strengthening Workforce Opportunities Together) Team exists to address the growing gap between youth needing mental health support and the number of professionals trained and available to support them.

The group was tasked with developing and implementing a set of recommendations to attract, develop, support, and retain youth-serving mental

health professionals. The recommendations included education around career pathways, job training, and strategies for workforce retention and burnout prevention.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the impacts of technology on today's young people and the well-known struggles of being a teen and exposed a significant and growing need for accessible mental healthcare for young people in Cleveland and Cuyahoga County.

“Increased access to mental and behavioral healthcare for young



people is paramount for improving educational outcomes, economic mobility, and ultimately, the overall health and well-being of our region,” said Crystal Reed, director of the Youth Mental & Behavioral Health SWOT Team. “To fill this critical workforce gap, we must demystify the range of occupations that address mental health and amplify the skills, programs, and resources that support these careers.”

In coordination with partners like the Center for Community Solutions, Invest in Children, and New Growth Group, Greater Cleveland Works is developing a set of comprehensive career pathway planning guides that illustrate a range of entry-level to advanced practice opportunities in Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH), serving those five and under, and youth mental health services focused on K-12 school-age children.

These guides can be used by local middle and high school career counselors or adult career navigators and coaches to help expand career pathway awareness and increase interest in professions that focus on youth mental health needs.

The SWOT Team’s 2026 priorities include launching a certified youth peer support (CYPS) specialist training program and engaging more deeply with healthcare employers to offer supportive resources for youth mental healthcare professionals.



What's Coming

A new era in job quality and AI's use in smarter job matching

Greater Cleveland Works has made big strides toward operational excellence and ecosystem effectiveness. 2025 also saw efforts to lay the groundwork for future improvements. These include bringing greater focus to job quality and exploring how to leverage artificial intelligence (AI). Read on to learn more about what's to come!

A NEW ERA IN JOB QUALITY

People's experience at their job remains one of the most important factors when it comes to employee success and retention, and subsequently, the ability to achieve sustained, upward economic mobility.

Employment experience and job quality vary across industry, job

type, and employer—creating significant disparity around who has the most opportunity to advance in their career and grow their earnings.

Quality jobs are necessary for individuals, businesses, and the region to truly prosper. But what makes a quality job? The lack of a clear, shared definition makes it difficult to contribute to this vision.

An exploration of job quality is underway as part of Greater Cleveland Works' strategic goals to inform a broader conversation on quality jobs and engage more deeply with employers. This includes working with the City of Cleveland, Cuyahoga County, and dozens of community partners to listen, learn, and adapt a national job quality framework. The framework will define quality jobs and pathways and enable initiatives to align around that

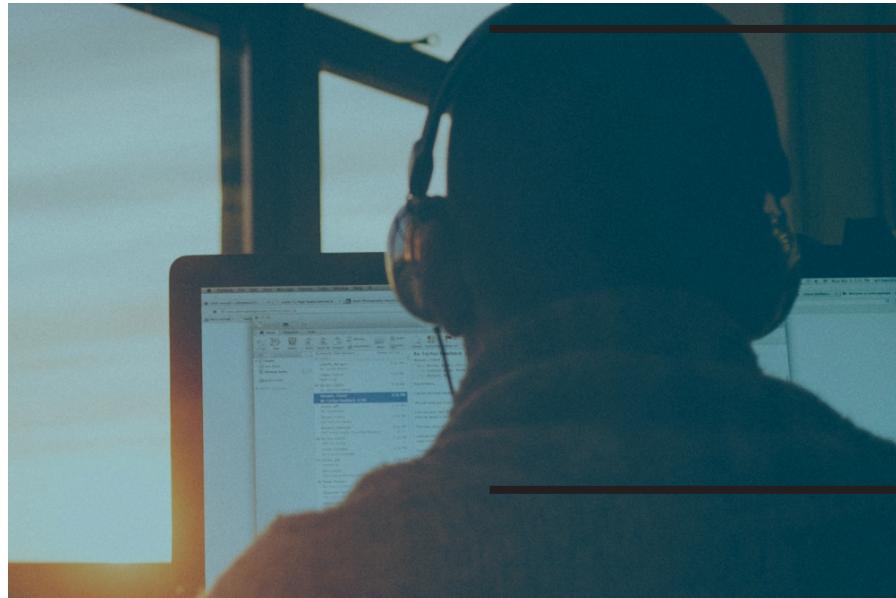
definition to drive business growth and improve the region's economic competitiveness.

Employers can use the framework as a way to assess their policies and practices, informing strategic investments in their workforce and reducing costly churn. Employers of all sizes in all industries across Cuyahoga County can then receive customized, low- or no-cost resources and support to consider improvements that will position them as highly desirable places to work and build a career.

AI IN JOB MATCHING

AI is often discussed in the context of being a threat or an unpredictable danger. Especially in workforce conversations, there is a great deal of anxiety around potential elimination of jobs that could become automated. In its

AI enables Greater Cleveland Works to both remain on the cutting edge and better serve customers.



role as an ecosystem leader, Greater Cleveland Works must be prepared to act quickly and nimbly in response to rapid technological advancements.

Enter Arena. An AI-enabled talent-matching platform, Arena functions in a few important ways:

- Uses predictive matching to suggest jobs to people based on an assessment that considers an individual's interests and aptitudes, in addition to quantifiable skills;
- Provides a window into what's possible, in terms of career pathways, that job seekers may not have otherwise considered; and
- Leverages the data it collects to learn and improve the algorithm to be more responsive to workforce needs.

Beyond this, Arena has a built-in mechanism for mitigating bias—conscious and unconscious—that is too often present in the hiring process.

Arena empowers career coaches by enhancing, not replacing, their capacity to perform the highly interpersonal work of engaging with and guiding job seekers into quality jobs. Its job-matching precision leads to improved employee retention, ultimately decreasing costs for employers associated with churn.

For example, in the case of a local long-term care provider, turnover of new hires after 180 days decreased by 22% and by 25% after one year of employment.

Greater Cleveland Works would be the first workforce board in the country to pilot a custom-built

Arena platform embedded within its existing infrastructure. AI will enable Greater Cleveland Works to both remain on the cutting edge and better serve customers with proven job-matching predictions.

STAY IN THE KNOW!

Scan to sign up for our monthly newsletter, The Skill Set.





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