

Jill Rizika

Jill Rizika is Executive Director of Towards Employment, responsible for the overall operations of \$5.4 million non-profit agency with 55 staff which delivers quality employment services for low-income Greater Clevelanders, and helps local businesses fill their staffing needs. The agency helps over 2000 individuals every year prepare for a job, find a job, keep a job or advance in a career. She transformed an innovative job retention program into a revenue-generating stream for the agency; and strengthened programming to meet the employment needs of individuals with a criminal background, doubling the number of people placed in jobs on an annual basis. She has overseen implementation of an employer driven job training model that successfully connects residents of economically distressed neighborhoods to anchor employer jobs; as well as a national demonstration grant, WorkAdvance, that resulted in higher earnings for low-income participants relative to a control group. In 2015, Towards Employment launched a social enterprise, Bloom Artisan Bakery & Café, creating jobs and training opportunities for Towards Employment graduates.

In 2014, Ms. Rizika was recognized as a White House “Champion of Change” for her work on creating employment opportunities for individuals involved in the criminal justice system and received the Pillar Award for non-profit Executive Director of the year. She has been named a Northeast Ohio “Smart 50” executive by Smart Business magazine (2016) and a Crain’s Business Magazine Woman of Note (2019). She is a member of Leadership Cleveland, class of 2012. Prior to moving to Cleveland, Ms. Rizika spent 15 years working in international development for several international organizations, including the United Nations Development Program. She has a B.A. from Dartmouth College and a Masters in Public and International Affairs from the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton University.