

**ACE OHIO**

# Comprehensive Education Savings Account Program and Marketplace Administration

Educational Savings Account

ESA

Grants

Scholarships

## CHALLENGE

When the Ohio State Legislature created the \$125M 2-year Afterschool Child Enrichment (ACE) educational savings account program, the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) needed to inform parents, guardians, and businesses about the new opportunity and eligibility requirements. The Department had to verify student grant economic eligibility and ensure businesses seeking to join the Education Marketplace delivered approved services. The Department was also tasked with developing administrative and support systems, including reimbursing enrichment providers and gathering comprehensive data for the state legislature.

## WITHOUT MERIT

Government agencies often use paper-based or siloed mixed-technology systems for program administration. These are time-consuming, cannot accurately capture real-time data, and require valuable staff hours to create reports. Incomplete data or approval of ineligible service providers or claims may lead to misappropriated funds and termination of potentially beneficial initiatives.

## MERIT'S SOLUTIONS

Merit developed and delivered support systems, workflows, and digital assets for the ACE program. ODE issued digital credentials to parents and guardians certifying student eligibility, enabling them to use the grants with service providers listed in the education marketplace, and the Ohio ACE app is a single destination to view account balances and submit claims.

Tens of thousands of Ohio students were adversely affected when their education was disrupted in 2020 by the COVID-19 pandemic. The state legislature sought to remedy this by establishing and investing \$125M into a new initiative, the Afterschool Child Enrichment (ACE) educational savings account program. Qualifying students would receive \$500 grants to offset the expense of qualifying extracurricular education enhancement activities.

Merit developed and delivered Ohio ACE educational savings account program administration and support, including public outreach campaigns, credential management, an education marketplace listing qualified service providers, and the Ohio ACE app to view balances and submit claims for reimbursement.

### About Merit

Merit's verified identity platform brings visibility, liquidity, and trust to people-data, giving organizations the clarity to make better-informed decisions, engage with individuals effectively, and pursue their mission efficiently. Merit works with trusted private, state, and municipal organizations to solve critical real-world problems in sectors such as workforce development, emergency services, licensing, education, and defense readiness.

