

TAKING ACTION: Planning a Local Employer Engagement Event

U.S. business leaders and government officials gathered at the White House in June 2014 to discuss ways to improve employment outcomes for people with criminal records and to explore how private-public partnerships can promote better outcomes. Since then, the National Reentry Resource Center (NRRC) has provided support to more than 50 jurisdictions across the country to plan similar dialogues. While there is demonstrated national, bipartisan support to address reentry and employment outcomes, conversations need to happen locally to effect change.

The purpose of this document is to help you start planning an employer engagement event that meets your local needs.

1. Convene a Planning Team

Inviting diverse stakeholders to join the planning team will increase their commitment to the event. The planning team will determine the goals of the event, the invitation list, and share responsibility for planning and executing the event. The planning team can also leverage business contacts to ensure a successful event. Stakeholders that can bring unique perspectives to the planning team include:

- Business associations, such as chambers of commerce;
- Industry and human resources associations;
- Corporate leaders;
- Local business owners and/or human resources managers;
- Local and/or regional government leaders;
- Workforce boards and staff;
- Corrections and reentry representatives; and
- Reentry service providers.

2. Clarify Your Goals

It is important for everyone on the planning team to understand and embrace the goals of the event. Potential goals that may be considered to help structure your event include:

- Educate business leaders on the benefits and legal requirements around hiring people with criminal records;
- Share success stories from employers who have hired people with criminal records;
- Discuss how to account for federal, state, and local hiring laws in human resource policies and the challenges these laws can create for businesses;
- Identify ways government policies help and/or hinder efforts to improve employment outcomes for people with criminal records and develop a plan for mitigating barriers to employment; and
- Discuss how reentry, corrections, and workforce development providers can partner and coordinate with businesses to design and implement programs that build the skills of people with criminal records and reduce recidivism.

3. Plan Your Event

Planning an employer engagement event can be complex, but it is important that time and thought be put into each aspect. The steps below can help guide your planning efforts.

- Develop a messaging plan:
 - Why are you holding this event?
 - What is the goal of the event?
 - Why should businesses want to be involved?
- Identify champions/sponsors for your event:
 - Do you have a champion from the business community?
 - Do you have a policymaker championing this issue?

- Are the workforce development and corrections fields represented?
- Are there other influential organizations that can co-sponsor?
- Are there local foundations that might support the event?
- Identify speakers/panelists for your event based on the goals identified above:
 - Who will represent the business community? What is their angle?
 - Who will represent policymakers? What is their angle?
 - What other entities do you want represented?
- Decide who should be in the audience:
 - How can you generate more interest among the business community?
 - Are there particular types of employers or business organizations that you are hoping to educate?
- Determine what follow-up actions you want to take as a result of the convening:
 - Will you release a written summary of the event?
 - Who can take professional-quality photographs/videos to use on social media, in reports about the event, and in future trainings?
 - Will there be follow-up meetings among stakeholders to promote action?
- Identify other steps involved in planning the event and delegate responsibilities among the planning team members:
 - Where will the event be held?
 - Who will send out invitations, on which organization's letterhead, and with what endorsements?
 - Who will set up the event space?
 - Who will manage registration?

**To access technical assistance resources from the NRRC, please contact
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