Engaging Employers: A Sector-Based Approach to Employment for People with Criminal Records

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Brought to you by the National Reentry Resource Center and the U.S. Department of Justice’s Bureau of Justice Assistance
Speakers

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Towards Employment
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The National Reentry Resource Center

Deliver training and technical assistance

Advance knowledge base of reentry field

Promote what works in reentry

Facilitate peer networks and information exchange

Provide information for people returning to communities and their families

nationalreentryresourcecenter.org
The scope of reentry is too big to ignore

10 million adults in the U.S. are returning from incarceration each year*

70 million adults nationwide have an arrest or conviction record

* 600,000 people released from state and federal prisons, plus 9 million people released from jails

Impact of incarceration on people and communities

2.7 million children (1 in 28) have a parent behind bars. Family income is reduced 22 percent while a father is incarcerated.

Local and state fair chance hiring policies (known as “ban the box” policies)

28 states and more than 150 cities and counties have adopted fair chance hiring policies

“Ban the box” policies provide guidance on the consideration of a criminal record in hiring decisions, including:

- Prohibiting certain criminal record information from consideration;
- Considering only specific job-related offenses; and
- Providing job applicants an opportunity to explain their criminal record.

The CSG Justice Center has helped convene 35 public-private dialogues across 23 states.
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National Network of Sector Partners
Sector-based partnership definition

Industry-specific, regional partnership that addresses employers’ human resource needs and workers’ needs for good jobs, as well as pathways to them
What is the National Network of Sector Partners (NNSP)?

- Created as an initiative of the Insight Center for Community Economic Development in 1999
- National association for sector-based partnerships and their supporters
- Advocates for and works with sector-based partnerships to:
  1. Increase economic security, focusing on low-income individuals, their families, and their communities;
  2. Meet the workforce-related needs of industry sectors that are important to regional labor markets;
  3. Strengthen employment equity; and
  4. Improve regional economic vitality.
What results do sector-based partnerships achieve for people who have been incarcerated?

- Programmatic results and systemic changes attained
- Workforce development, economic development, education, human services, etc. connected and aligned
- Public resources targeted effectively
Participants experience increased earnings by participating in sector-based partnerships

- Sector-based partnership participants earned $4,011—almost 30%—more than members of the control group in the second year (after the end of training).

- 15% of sector-based partnership participants were formerly incarcerated. They earned $4,769 more than formerly incarcerated control group members.

- 38% of WRTP-BIG STEP participants were formerly incarcerated. They earned $4,780 more than formerly incarcerated control group members.

Random assignment evaluation of 1,014 individuals. 529 in three sector partnerships; 485 in the control group.
Sector-based partnerships provide great return on investment for employers

**ManufacturingWorks, Chicago:**
1.87:1 candidate to hire ratio, saving time and money for 44 employers, while bringing about 187 diverse hires

**JOIN, Philadelphia:**
ROI for businesses was 407-469%

The results: what does it take?

Sector-Based Partnership Model

1. Intensive focus on an industry within a regional labor market, and multiple employers in the industry, over a sustained period of time
2. Leadership by a workforce intermediary with credibility in the industry
3. Creates new pathways into the industry for low-wage workers, and pathways up to good jobs and careers
4. Achievement of systemic changes that are “win-wins” for employers, workers, and the community

Characteristics of Sector-Based Partnerships
Why employers in one industry?

- Trying to know about every industry ensures that you’ll be a mile wide and an inch deep.
- Businesses in an industry sector have similar workforce needs.
- Business leaders in an industry sector know each other and often work together.
- Each industry sector in your area is different: quality of jobs, number of openings, skill development needs, etc.
Which employers in the industry?

Set criteria for which employers you work with

- Work as much as possible with Employers of Choice and employers that want to become Employers of Choice
- Don’t work with employers that have low-pay and/or high turnover

What is an “Employer of Choice?”

- Offers high-quality jobs, provides career paths, is committed to inclusion and diversity, has a great reputation among potential employees, and has the potential to grow/create jobs
Types of employer engagement

As a customer

Planning, governing, and oversight

Involvement in programmatic service delivery

Involvement in systemic change

Supporting the sector–based partnership

Examples:
- Hold mock interviews at the program site
- Provide paid work-based learning (e.g., apprenticeships, internships)

Examples:
- Push for support services and coaching that workers need to keep jobs
- Change hiring policies/practices
- Advocate for policy changes to increase access to employment
Policy support

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires support for sector-based partnerships.
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Review of year 1 and goals for year 2
About the Jail Collaborative

• Formed in 2000, it aims to improve public safety, restrain jail costs, and prevent the disintegration of communities and families impacted by crime and incarceration.

• Led by a cabinet composed of leaders: County Executive, Court of Common Pleas, Allegheny County Jail, Allegheny County Department of Human Services, and the Allegheny County Department of Health.

• Engages an operations committee, civic advisory committee, and other workgroups as needed.
Goal: reduce recidivism

Reducing recidivism will:

- Improve public safety
- Reduce costs to communities
- Recapture potential of thousands of men and women
- Reduce harm to children and families
Jail Collaborative’s 3 strategies

- Reentry
- Systems change
- Alternatives
Jail Collaborative Reentry Program

Target population:

• Inmates serving an Allegheny County Court sentence or detained in the jail with no open charges

• Medium or high risk to recidivate

• Have an Allegheny County term of parole or probation following their sentence
Phase one

Includes an assessment, the development of a service plan, and referral for reentry services

Eligible participants will participate in services offered by a variety of providers

- Education: including adult basic education/literacy/GED and computer literacy
- Employment training and pre-apprenticeship
- Creative writing
- Family relations, parenting, and family reunification
- Cognitive Behavioral Intervention (Thinking for a Change)
- Drug and alcohol treatment
- Batterers’ Intervention (BIP)
The Reentry Center
Focus on employment and training

- **New Century Careers (machining program):** Located in our newly built machine shop inside the jail. Upon release, participants complete their certification requirements at the NCC training facility.

- **Pittsburgh Community Kitchens:** A culinary arts training program available only in the community.

- **Pittsburgh Trade Institute:** A masonry training program available only in the community.

- **A. Phillip Randolph Institute:** A program offering life skills and technical training for the trades.
NCC in-jail machine shop
Phase two

Wraparound services are provided by community support specialists and reentry probation officers for up to six months after release. These services include:

• Housing location assistance
• Rent, food, and clothing assistance
• Probation incentives
• Photo ID
• Linkage to Medicaid and public assistance
• Transportation
• Referral to community services including aftercare
• Job training and job placement services
History and Overview

**Mission:** empowering individuals to achieve and maintain self sufficiency through employment

- Since 1976, Towards Employment (TE) has assisted more than 124,000 disadvantaged adults to transition off of welfare, out of prison, or off of the streets and into employment. In 2016, TE placed 560 people with an average wage of $10.40.

- Implemented a Sector-Based Career Pathway Approach that helps participants:
  - Prepare for a job – job-readiness training for job seekers
  - Get a job – job search and placement services put people to work
  - Keep a job – coaching and support are crucial to long term success
  - Advance in a career – ongoing coaching and credentialed training prepares workers for career growth
Background

- Participated in a national, five-year workforce development demonstration designed by MDRC, in partnership with the NYC Center for Economic Opportunity and supported by the White House Social Innovation Fund, The Fund For Our Economic Future, and other local funders.

- Four test sites: NYC (two sites); Tulsa, OK; and Northeast OH.

- Tested whether a career pathways approach—offering a comprehensive provision of services and focused on targeted sectors and emphasizing advancement—could lead to better outcomes for individuals and employers.

- Eligible participants had earnings under 200% percent of the poverty level and, if employed, made less than $15/hour at the point of enrollment.
## Key Components of the Model

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<th>Component</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<td><strong>Intake and Screening</strong></td>
<td>• Ensure participants can benefit from training and meet sector requirements</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Pre-Employment and Career-Readiness Services</strong></td>
<td>• Sector-appropriate career planning and soft skills; connection with career coach; WorkKeys assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Occupational Skills Training</strong></td>
<td>• Sector specific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Job Development and Placement Services</strong></td>
<td>• Sector specific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Retention and Advancement Services</strong></td>
<td>• Post-employment, career coaching and wraparound supports continue</td>
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Career Pathway Model

**Model Developed**
- Sector
- Employer
- Geographical Population

**Targeted Outreach & Recruitment**

**Orientation, Assessment & Screening** (pathway specific)

**Supports for Success**
- Transportation
- Stable Housing
- Professional Networks
- Child Care
- Financial Literacy
- Legal
- Health Care

**Skill Building**
- Technical Skill Training
- Work Experience
- Literacy/GED
- Job Readiness
- Career Planning
- Job Search
- Soft Skills

**Career Coaching Throughout**

**Employment $**

**Advancement $$$$**
The results

Accessed more services

- 1.5x more career readiness
- ~4x more skills training and >4x likely to complete
- 2x more job search support
- ~3x more post employment coaching

Positive employment results

- 450 people placed to date
- 220 people advanced to date
- 25% average wage Increase, among those who advanced

Increased earnings

- 14% increase overall; Later enrollees achieved 22% increase or $3,000/year

The results

**Job quality**
- 49% more likely to work in the targeted sectors of health care and manufacturing
- More likely to work regular shifts, full-time, and permanent jobs with opportunities for career advancement

**Coaching impact**
- 10x more likely to advanced if received post employment coaching

**Leveled the playing field**
- Individuals with criminal backgrounds got jobs and advanced at the same rate as those without

### Lessons learned

<table>
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<th>Cross-systems collaboration is key</th>
<th>Coaching matters</th>
<th>Sector-based programming delivers</th>
<th>Be patient</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Led a 10+ member collaborative (social service agencies, industry associations, and training providers)</td>
<td>• 90% of participants who advanced received post-employment coaching</td>
<td>• Contextualized curriculum, soft skills and career coaching by industry</td>
<td>• Takes time to complete training and advancement services and for services to translate into job placements and advancements</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Successful implementation hinged on ability to set up and manage multiagency partnership and leverage partner expertise</td>
<td>• Addition of a career coach is significant difference from traditional workforce services</td>
<td>• Employers engaged in multiple ways (identified in-demand occupations, reviewed curricula, conducted mock interviews, and partnered for learn and earn opportunities for advancement and mentoring)</td>
<td>• On average, first advancement was at six months after placement, but a living wage required multiple advancements</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Sector-based programming delivers</td>
<td>• WA project had a two-year service window</td>
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Sector-based paths for returning citizens

- About 3,500 people return to Cuyahoga County from state prisons each year (not including those who are serving time in county jail or on probation).
- Serving time can reduce earnings by up to 52% through age 48.
- Since 2004, TE has placed more than 2,500 people with criminal records in full-time employment with strong job retention and less than 5% recidivism of our graduates.
- In 2016, using a sector-based approach, TE placed 320 reentry individuals into fulltime employment; 107 participated in skills training (Construction, Manufacturing, Culinary); avg. starting wage of $10.04 and advancement wage of $12.60/hour.

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Thank You

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