



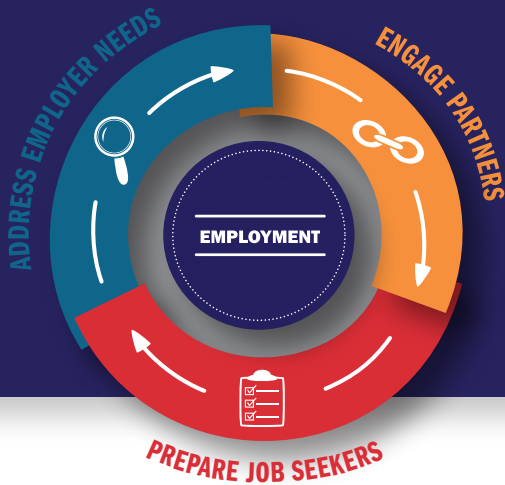
Use Labor Market Information to Target High-Growth Occupations

## The Employer-Driven Model and Toolkit

Strategies for Developing Employment Opportunities  
for Justice-Involved Individuals

### ADDRESS EMPLOYERS' NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS

▪ May 2014 ▪



Many employers are apprehensive about hiring persons with criminal convictions, but employment specialists who develop working relationships with employers can lend credibility to these applicants. Employers will tolerate some failed hires only if they have had some successful job placements and found community-based corrections employment specialists to be responsive to their concerns.

It is important to remember that these relationships are mutually beneficial. The employment specialist who works with justice-involved individuals can help employers meet critical staffing needs at little or no cost, and employers can provide these job seekers with an opportunity to earn a sustainable wage, which research shows can reduce recidivism, thus improving public safety. It can be a win-win situation for everyone involved.

The foundation for these relationships must focus on benefits provided to the employer. Long-term success of partnerships with employers depends on good communication, excellent customer service, and employee retention.



“ Long-term success of partnerships with employers depends on good communication, excellent customer service, and employee retention. ”

# EMPLOYER-DRIVEN MODEL



*Use Labor Market Information to Target High-Growth Occupations*

## ADDRESS EMPLOYER NEEDS



- Target specific businesses in the community
- Develop relationships with community businesses
- Partner with business to develop training/skill building
- Market job seekers to meet employers' needs
- Recruitment
- Retention

## PREPARE JOB SEEKERS



- Assessment - Skills, Interests, Aptitude, Readiness, Assess Barriers, Reduce Risk
- Job Readiness
- Competencies
- Certifications
- Placement
- Retention

## ENGAGE PARTNERS



- Division of Workforce Development, Workforce Investment Boards
- DOL Apprenticeships
- Community-Based Organizations
- Criminal Justice Agencies
- Educational Institutions
- Employers



## KEY QUESTIONS

### How do employment specialists initiate relationships with business owners/employers?

Most employers want to hire applicants who are qualified, motivated, and a good fit for their organization. Beyond that, employment specialists must identify the specific needs of each employer to ensure good job matches and successful placement.

#### Here is where you can begin:

- Discuss the qualifications that employers are seeking for each position.
- Ask about problems employers are experiencing with workers hired for various positions.
- Say, “Tell me about the best employee you ever hired.” Use the response as a reference point for identifying potential applicants.
- Make an appointment for a site visit to observe the workplace and work culture. Gather general information about the company, including customers, core products, and services as well as requirements for employment.
- Invite employers to visit the correctional facility to see first-hand the employment training and other job readiness programs provided to reentering job seekers.
- Seek out opportunities to meet business owners and get to know employers.



Discuss Qualifications



Ask About Problems



Ask About Best Employee



Observe the Workplace



Invite Employers to Visit



Seek Out Opportunities

“  
When approaching employers, it is necessary to describe the benefits that your program or service provides to them.  
”



**How can employment specialists most effectively communicate with employers about the benefits of hiring job seekers with criminal records?**

When approaching employers, it is necessary to describe the benefits that your program or service provides to them. These benefits typically include no cost screening and job match, tax incentives, surety bonding, and post-placement support.

**Ensure Qualified Applicants and Job Match**

Pre-screening qualified applicants and referring only those who possess the training and soft skills employers are seeking is one of the most valuable benefits that employment specialists can offer employers.

**Provide Information on Tax Incentives**

Tax incentives are available to employers for hiring applicants with barriers to employment, including criminal offense histories. The Work Opportunity Tax Credit and the Welfare to Work Tax Credits are two examples.

[www.doleta.gov/programs/factsht/pdf/taxcredits.pdf](http://www.doleta.gov/programs/factsht/pdf/taxcredits.pdf)

**Familiarize Employers with the Federal Bonding Program**

The Federal Bonding Program is a risk management tool that provides insurance coverage to businesses that hire job seekers with criminal backgrounds. The bonds are offered for the first six months of employment at no cost to the employer or the job applicant. [www.bonds4jobs.com/](http://www.bonds4jobs.com/)

**Offer Pre-Screened, Trained Applicants**

Applicants with industry-validated credentials, training in safe work practices, and academic training are valuable to the employers because they save them time and money in post-hire training.



## Interview Comments from Janet Ludden, Chief Executive Officer, Employer Solutions, Inc.

In this series of brief videos, business consultant Janet Ludden discusses the need to ensure that workforce development services are demand-driven and provide value to employers and the business community.

Developing demand-driven policy, programs and training that meets employers' needs  
[NICIC.gov/Go/OEM\\_FactSheet\\_Video1](http://NICIC.gov/Go/OEM_FactSheet_Video1)

Using labor market information to determine business and industry trends  
[NICIC.gov/Go/OEM\\_FactSheet\\_Video2](http://NICIC.gov/Go/OEM_FactSheet_Video2)

Asking employers to identify their emerging employment needs  
[NICIC.gov/Go/OEM\\_FactSheet\\_Video3](http://NICIC.gov/Go/OEM_FactSheet_Video3)

Gathering information about businesses that could potentially hire people with criminal histories and marketing with a focus on what's in it for employers  
[NICIC.gov/Go/OEM\\_FactSheet\\_Video4](http://NICIC.gov/Go/OEM_FactSheet_Video4)



## EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

### Assign and Train Staff to Develop Business Relationships

Agencies should assign and train staff to develop business connections with employers. The involvement of correctional administrators is important in the early stages of the business relationship. When legally and statutorily feasible, developing working relationships with business executives and company CEOs creates a favorable environment for employing job seekers in the future. Developing both formal and informal relationships with members of the business community furthers the professional partnership.

### Develop Training Programs Based on Local Employers' Needs for Skilled Labor

Here is a brief case study of how one jurisdiction in the State of New York handled developing a training program for their clients:

In response to a shortage of qualified welding applicants for a local sheet metal fabricator—Blackstone Enterprises, Inc.—the Chautauqua County Sheriff's Office developed an industry-standard welding training program.

#### Local partners include:

- Erie 2 Chautauqua
- Cattaraugus Board of Cooperative Educational Services
- Chautauqua Alcohol and Substance Abuse Council
- The Resource Center
- Chautauqua County Reentry Task Force

Qualified candidates in the program receive 50 hours of vocational training, transitional services, and mentorship.

### Invite Employers To Serve on Advisory Committees

Agencies that invite employers to serve on advisory committees often report closer working relationships with the business community.



### **Network! Network! Network!**

Use access to professional partners, policymakers, stakeholders, vendors, and current employers of justice-involved individuals to link others to targeted employers and industries. Make opportunistic networking part of your job development efforts; promote the hiring of justice-involved individuals in your personal connections with leaders in churches, social networks, and various community organizations. Prepare a brief verbal presentation to share with employers or other members of the community who might assist in employment efforts.

### **Develop Marketing Materials that Focus on the Benefits of Hiring Justice-Involved Individuals**

**The following case study highlights marketing materials developed in Missouri:**

The United States Probation Office, Eastern District of Missouri has developed a Defendant/Offender Workforce Development (DOWD) brochure that highlights tax incentives for hiring justice-involved individuals, training provided to applicants, as well as the support services that employment specialists provide to ensure successful job match and retention.

The U.S. Probation Office, Eastern District of Missouri also produced a Mayor's Public Service Announcement promoting the hiring of justice-involved individuals. [www.moed.uscourts.gov/videosmultimedia](http://www.moed.uscourts.gov/videosmultimedia)

### **Deliver Presentations**

Give presentations on your employment program to community groups and organizations whose membership includes business owners. Hold forums with employers and Chambers of Commerce.

“ Use access to professional partners, policymakers, stakeholders, vendors, and current employers of justice-involved individuals to link others to targeted employers and industries. ”





## TIPS

### **Prepare Job Seekers for Critical Interview Questions**

Prepare job seekers for job interviews and ensure that they are able to discuss and answer questions about their criminal past. In addition to promoting honest responses to tough questions, direct them to discuss what has changed in their behavior and thinking that will support a productive, law-abiding future.

### **Network with Professional Associations**

Professional associations offer networking opportunities across diverse industries. Develop relationships with association staff to gain access to membership.

### **Become Familiar with Special Employer Incentives**

Explore additional employer incentives for hiring justice-involved individuals, including benefits for hiring veterans or people with low income.

### **Identify Local High-Growth Occupations**

Identify high-growth occupations and employment opportunities in the local community. Contact the local Department of Labor for assistance.

### **Ensure Job Match**

Prepare job seekers for work that matches employers' needs as well as their own skills, interests, and abilities.

### **Design Employer-Focused Marketing Materials**

Design marketing materials geared toward employers. Each one should be tailored to address the needs of a specific industry.

### **Develop a Business Plan**

Develop a long-range business plan based on local labor market information that targets local employers' needs, provides soft skills and industry-standard training and certifications, and engages key stakeholders in business, corrections, and community agencies. The goal is to provide support services to job seekers and benefits for employers.

### **Anticipate and Respond to Employer Objections**

Be prepared to respond to employers' objections to hiring people with criminal histories based on their personal beliefs, lack of knowledge, or personal experiences. Use accurate information, referrals to other successful business partnerships, and a commitment to community safety as support for employment of justice-involved individuals.





## RESOURCES

### Myth Busters Document on Employment of Justice-Involved Individuals

A publication of the Federal Interagency Reentry Council dispels commonly held misunderstandings about federal policies that affect individuals and their reentry into society.

[csgjusticecenter.org/documents/0000/1090/REENTRY\\_MYTHBUSTERS.pdf](http://csgjusticecenter.org/documents/0000/1090/REENTRY_MYTHBUSTERS.pdf)

### U.S. Chamber of Commerce

[www.uschamber.com/](http://www.uschamber.com/)

### Work Opportunity Tax Credit

- [www.doleta.gov/business/incentives/opptax/](http://www.doleta.gov/business/incentives/opptax/)
- [www.irs.gov/Businesses/Small-Businesses-&Self-Employed/Expanded-Work-Opportunity-Tax-Credit-Available-for-Hiring-Qualified-Veterans](http://www.irs.gov/Businesses/Small-Businesses-&Self-Employed/Expanded-Work-Opportunity-Tax-Credit-Available-for-Hiring-Qualified-Veterans)
- [www.irs.gov/Businesses/Small-Businesses-&Self-Employed/Work-Opportunity-Tax-Credit-1](http://www.irs.gov/Businesses/Small-Businesses-&Self-Employed/Work-Opportunity-Tax-Credit-1)

### Federal Bonding Program

[www.bonds4jobs.com/program-background.html](http://www.bonds4jobs.com/program-background.html)

### Job Development Essentials

[www.nationalserviceresources.org/files/m3956-job-development-essentials.pdf](http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/files/m3956-job-development-essentials.pdf)

### National Association of Workforce Development Professionals

[www.nawdp.org](http://www.nawdp.org)

### U.S. Government Housing and Urban Development – Section 3

[www.hud.gov](http://www.hud.gov)

### Veterans Tax Credit

[www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov)



**U.S. Department of Justice**  
**National Institute of Corrections**  
320 First Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20534  
[www.nicic.gov](http://www.nicic.gov)

**Robert Brown**  
Acting Director

**Jim Cosby**  
Chief, Community Services Division

**Francina Carter**  
Program Manager

#### Disclaimer:

This document was funded by cooperative agreement number 12CS08GKJ2 from the National Institute of Corrections, U.S. Department of Justice. Points of view or opinions stated in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice. The National Institute of Corrections reserves the right to reproduce, publish, translate, or otherwise use and to authorize others to publish and use all or any part of the copyrighted material contained in this publication.

#### Feedback Survey Statement:

The National Institute of Corrections values your feedback. Please follow the link below to complete a user feedback survey about this publication. Your responses will be used to assist us in continuing to provide you with high-quality learning and information materials.

<http://nicic.gov/go/userfeedback>

NIC Accession Number: 028097

NIC's mission is to provide training, information, and technical assistance to the nation's jails, prisons, and community corrections facilities. More information about NIC can be found at [www.nicic.gov](http://www.nicic.gov).