



**Center for
Employment
Opportunities**

CEO'S POLICY AGENDA

Remove barriers to workforce training programs.

Despite recognition that a key purpose of the workforce system is to help people reconnect to the labor market. In 2018, only 10% of people exiting WIOA programming were justice-involved.

These jobseekers are disproportionately people of color, face significant barriers to employment and are likely experiencing poverty, yet underserved by the workforce system.

Policy changes can address the primary barriers that keep individuals from accessing these training programs, which facilitate access to high quality jobs.

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Use performance metrics as incentives to work with individuals with records.

State and local governments, nonprofits, and state and local workforce boards need incentives to prioritize individuals with a criminal record across formula-based and other grant-funded government programs. For example, WIOA prioritizes “ex-offenders” (a derogatory term) but the 6 core WIOA performance metrics do not capture improved workforce outcomes for individuals who are starting training with no work history.

Add WIOA formula funds for workforce programs designed for justice impacted people.

A portion of WIOA formula funds must be spent on transitional jobs, pre-apprenticeship and training opportunities to bridge participants to more advanced training. Trainings must offer an entry point for lower-skilled individuals and provide financial support, strong employer partners, and instruction and credentialing targeted to the needs of the individuals coming home from incarceration.

Increase funding for “earn and learn” stipends and supportive services to support people while they are in training programs.

Support service activities should specifically include financial planning that supports savings programs and addresses reimbursement for obtaining state identification, licenses, and other employment documents.

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Ease the selective service exemption process for individuals who have a history of incarceration.

Individuals who have been incarcerated, particularly in their young adulthood, need exemptions under the **Selective Service [requirement](#) for federal workforce training programs**, or this requirement must be eliminated all together. Many individuals who experienced incarceration from ages 18-26 are ineligible for federal workforce programs due to this requirement.

Provide clarification in “dislocated worker” eligibility to include all individuals who have been incarcerated.

The definition of “long-term unemployed” must include those who have recently experienced incarceration and been unemployed as a result. This should not be optional for states. See [“dislocated worker” eligibility](#).

Expand eligibility criteria for union apprenticeship programs, and fund pre-apprenticeship that facilitates training access to ensure equitable access to opportunities.

There are a number of barriers to union membership for individuals with conviction histories, including the lack of support services, instructors who can understand an individual’s lived experience, the number of hours on-the-job training before you can access a union job, the ability to obtain a driver’s license, the high school diploma or GED requirement for apprenticeship programs, and refusal to hire people without on-the-job experience. Additionally, outright discrimination in policy and practice in accessing union, pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs disproportionately impact people of color and especially individuals with a conviction history.

End in-prison labor programs that do not pay minimum wage and/or offer meaningful vocational training.

Programs that require individuals to do work while they are incarcerated should pay people minimum wage at least. Vocational training programs should also offer other financial support to allow individuals to earn money while they are incarcerated, and enable credentials earned while incarcerated to extend directly into employment upon release.



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