

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration released the [Career Pathways Toolkit: An Enhanced Guide and Workbook for System Development](#). This enhanced [Toolkit](#) provides resources to help state and local stakeholders implement career pathways within the expanded vision and goals of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

Within the expanded vision, WIOA encourages workforce partners to serve "ex-offenders." (In the recommendations provided in this compendium, "ex-offenders" are referred to as justice-involved individuals (JIIs), and the term includes incarcerated individuals, those returning from incarceration, and people in the community with a criminal history that does not include incarceration.) While this target population is a WIOA focus, JIIs are not a focus for outreach for most career pathway programs. Yet, many JIIs find their way to career pathway programs, so it is important for traditional career pathway partners to build their capacity to serve this population.

This series of recommendations is intended to supplement the [Toolkit](#) with information and resources to help stakeholders **build cross-agency partnerships between traditional career pathway partners and the corrections community of partners; identify a target sector or industry and engage employers; and design education and training programs** for JIIs.



Building Cross-Agency Partnerships Between Traditional Career Pathways Partners and the Corrections Community

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Labor’s Employment and Training Administration released the [Career Pathways Toolkit: An Enhanced Guide and Workbook for System Development](#) provides resources to help state and local stakeholders identify and engage the diverse range of partners needed to develop and sustain career pathways. As explained in the “Build Cross-Agency Partnerships and Clarify Roles” chapter of the [Toolkit](#), a career pathway system cannot be developed without strong, cross-agency partnerships at the local and state levels and well-defined roles and responsibilities for all partners.

The recommendations provided here are intended to supplement the [Toolkit](#), with information and resources to help stakeholders build cross-agency partnerships between traditional career pathway partners (i.e., local employment training providers or community colleges) and the corrections community of partners like the state and prison systems, county jails, and community-based organizations who regularly work with JIIs.¹

Engage Cross-Agency Partners

When career pathways are intentionally designed to serve JIIs, it is critical that the community of corrections partners be part of the partnership table. Just as is the case with the traditional partners, it is also important to include the corrections and reentry partners at the state and local levels. For example:

- State corrections leadership (e.g., the secretary or commissioner level)
- State disability agencies and agencies serving special populations (e.g., Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Supplementary Security Income (SSI), Veterans Affairs)
- State prison wardens
- Leadership of local and county jails
- Local and regional reentry councils
- Legal support organizations
- Community-based and nonprofit social service agencies and support organizations (e.g., housing, Vocational Rehabilitation, SSI, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF))

¹ These recommendations are adapted to the career pathways for the JII population from the *Building Career Pathways from Prison Issue Brief: Identify Industry Employer Engagement*, which was developed on behalf of the U.S. Department of Education by Social Policy Research Associates.

- Employers who regularly hire people with criminal backgrounds

While they may not currently be partners in formal career pathway programs, these agencies and institutions, at both the state and local levels, have experience and expertise designing, implementing, and operating education and training programs for JIIs. Their contribution to career pathways for JIIs will be invaluable.

There are different roles for state and local corrections team members. For example, state team members support the local team and assist in the development of an administrative and regulatory environment that aids local implementation and statewide growth or replication. Having clear support from the highest levels of leadership in the corrections system can support efforts at the local level to create buy-in.

The local team members are responsible for designing, piloting, launching, and growing local or regional career pathway programs. It is important for local education and training career pathway partners to have the local representatives from the corrections systems, like the prison or county jail wardens, at the table when developing career pathway programming. Other valuable local partners, like community-based organizations who provide legal services, housing, health care, case management, or other supports and resources for JIIs, can bring expertise and resources to existing career pathway efforts that are intentionally seeking to serve JIIs.

Joint leadership at the state and regional level can drive alignment between corrections, higher education, and workforce systems; align the education and training that occurs within the corrections facilities with the career pathway programming and policies in the state's higher education and workforce systems; and drive attention and resources from education and workforce together with corrections toward the shared goal of reducing recidivism and lowering crime rates.

Defining Roles and Responsibilities of All Partners

Corrections partners often provide many parallel services to traditional career pathway partners. For instance, during periods of incarceration many individuals have access to services such as case management, life-skills courses, high school equivalency prep courses and testing, postsecondary education and training, and employment opportunities akin to transition employment. Probation and parole functions may also include elements of these services. The corrections partners can bring this expertise to bear in the design of career pathways for JIIs. The following chart outlines some of the roles and responsibilities that corrections partners could play in developing a career pathway system.

Reasons that communities coalesce around reentry as a shared goal and responsibility

- Community safety
- Efficient use of public resources
- Using resources to serve those in need
- Untapped source of labor
- WIOA charged to serve reentry

<p>Corrections Prerelease</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide education assessments - Provide remedial education / high school equivalency / literacy and numeracy instruction - Provide postsecondary education independently or in partnership with higher education institutions or online vendors - Offer work programs and career training - Provide mental health services, substance abuse treatment - Life-skills coaching (parenting, financial literacy, anger management, etc.) 	<p>Corrections Post-Release</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coordinate services and case management to help JIIs access resources (e.g., TANF, SNAP, SSI, health care/Medicaid enrollment, Veterans benefits) - Facilitate placement in education and training pathways - Provide assisted/transitional housing (e.g., “halfway houses”) - Facilitate support services like health care/Medicaid enrollment, substance abuse treatment programs, and parenting or anger management classes
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When partners work together to align post-release services, it is important to be clear about any requirements on the corrections post-release services that would impact participation in the career pathway program or vice versa. For example, there may be prohibitions about technology use in the halfway house that would make it challenging for justice involved participants in a career pathway program to complete assignments or access course materials outside of class. Identifying any such requirements for the career pathway program or the post-release services and probation/parole requirements will be an important step for the career pathway partners to take to ensure that the JIIs are not compromised by conflicts between the systems.

 **Tool Box**

The Federal Interagency Reentry Council has developed several resources to support cross-agency partnership development with a JII focus:

- “MythBusters” to address concerns that traditional career pathway partners may have about working with JIIs <https://csgjusticecenter.org/nrrc/projects/mythbusters/>
- A broad overview of critical reentry issues to help educate non-correction partners about the challenges faced in their particular sectors, such as education, health care, or employment, can be found at <https://csgjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/FIRC-Reentry-Report.pdf>

There are resources for building partnerships to support education in corrections facilities:

- https://storage.googleapis.com/vera-web-assets/downloads/Publications/making-the-grade-postsecondary-education-programs-in-prison/legacy_downloads/partnerships-for-postsecondary-education-in-correctional-facilities.pdf
- <https://lincs.ed.gov/reentryed/partnerships>

There are some established tools that partners can use to onboard partners and orient to their particular needs:

- Community and faith-based organizations: http://ojp.gov/fbnp/pdfs/R4W_toolkit.pdf
- Corrections: <http://www.urban.org/research/publication/release-planning-successful-reentry>
- Elected officials: http://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/elected-officials-toolkit-for-jail-reentry_final_0.pdf
- Courts: http://www.courtinnovation.org/sites/default/files/documents/reentry_toolkit.pdf
- Law enforcement: https://www.bja.gov/publications/reentry_le.pdf
- Jail administrators: <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/bja/222041.pdf>



Identify Sector or Industry and Engage Employers

INTRODUCTION

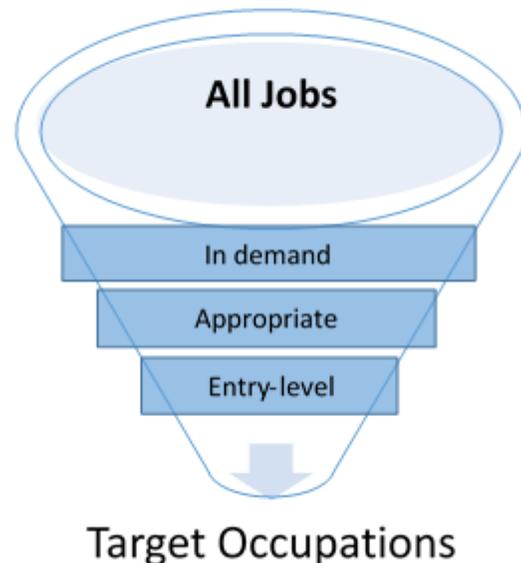
The U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration released the [Career Pathways Toolkit: An Enhanced Guide and Workbook for System Development](#), which provides tools and resources to help stakeholders **identify a target sector or industry and engage employers** as pivotal career pathway partners. Often, employers are hesitant to hire justice-involved individuals (JIIs) because of liability or safety concerns, so the history of incarceration becomes a near-permanent bar to employment. The recommendations provided here are intended to supplement the [Toolkit](#) with information and resources to help identify a target sector or industry where JIIs can find meaningful employment opportunities and also engage employers as career pathway partners.² The recommendations provided in this brief focus on two critical areas:

- Conducting labor market analysis to target high-demand and growing industries
- Surveying and engaging key industry leaders from targeted industries and/or sector partnerships

RECOMMENDATION

Conduct Labor Market Analysis to Target High-Demand and Growing Industries

- Career pathways must satisfy the dual demands of employers for skilled workers and the potential workers' need for life- and family-supporting wages. In order to satisfy both constituencies, the skills and credentials provided by the career pathway programs must align with the needs of the industries and employers with the greatest current and future demand for workers. Finding the occupations or clusters of occupations that will provide opportunities for JIIs and support regional employers' need for workers is like using a funnel—beginning with all occupations and eventually narrowing to the occupations and industries that present the best opportunity for JIIs.



² These recommendations are adapted to the career pathways for the JII population from the *Building Career Pathways from Prison Issue Brief: Identify Industry Employer Engagement*, which was developed on behalf of the U.S. Department of Education by Social Policy Research Associates.

The following recommendations can help partners target appropriate, high-demand occupations for JIIs:

- 1. Use labor market information (LMI) to identify industries and occupations that are in high demand at the state and/or regional levels.** It is important to make sure the education or training provided by the career pathway programs connects people with actual employment opportunities. LMI can direct this search. There are two types of LMI that can guide this process. The “traditional” LMI, drawn from the Bureau of Labor Statistics’ listing of over 840 different occupations across 23 industries, provides a starting point.³ Often, local or regional workforce boards will publish this type of information on their websites. There is also “real-time” LMI that analyzes online job postings to reveal current local hiring trends to understand future hiring trends. This information is produced by private vendors, but some state labor departments provide similar information. In combination, these two sources can help providers and potential workers gain a better understanding of the landscape of employment options.
- 2. Determine which high-demand industries and occupations are potential opportunities for JIIs.** Not all jobs are open to individuals with a criminal background, but a criminal background should not be seen as an automatic or complete bar to employment in any industry. Even within the health care industry, which is often perceived as an industry that JIIs cannot pursue, there are occupations available for this target population. Also, some prohibitions may be open to waivers or mitigating factors, may not apply to all infractions, and could be subject to expiration. The recommendation here is for providers and JIIs to do research before eliminating a particular industry or occupation from consideration. Advisors can use real-time LMI to identify employers that require criminal background checks in order to help JII clients understand when their history may be an issue and the extent to which it may be an employment barrier. Providers should also connect JIIs with legal partners to help them research the possibility of expunging criminal records. Finally, it is also useful to follow up with employers to learn more about their hiring practices. There may be advocacy opportunities for particular candidates.
- 3. Identify entry-level positions with opportunities for advancement.** The recent [Program for International Assessment of Adult Competencies Survey of Incarcerated Adults](#) confirmed that the education and skill levels of incarcerated adults would suggest that entry-level employment will be a first step after incarceration. However, not all entry-level jobs are the same. To help individuals create financial stability, it is important to help JIIs develop plans for translating entry-level work into a career pathway. Some entry-level positions may have clear advancement pathways with the same employer or within the industry. In other cases, providers should help JIIs determine what skills they need to acquire in a transitional job and how to communicate those competencies to employers in order to position themselves for subsequent, more advanced positions.

RECOMMENDATION

Survey and Engage Key Industry Leaders from Targeted Industries and/or Sector Partnerships

While public perception is shifting toward support for “second chances,” employers still have concerns about hiring people who have been incarcerated. There may be concerns about safety

³ <http://www.bls.gov/soc/#materials> – 2010 Alphabetical list of SOC codes

risks, liability for hiring people with criminal backgrounds, and uneasiness about the perceptions of their workers and customers about hiring JIIs. These concerns may be especially acute when potential employees have felonies. Special consideration needs to be given to employer engagement strategies when engaging employer partners for JII career pathway programs in order to address these concerns.

Here are some recommendations for employer engagement in this context.

- 1. Look for champions among your existing pool of employer partners.** Are there specific companies or individuals that have been outspoken advocates for hiring of JIIs? Are there “success stories” that can be shared with other employers? If so, work with these employers to develop an employer marketing and outreach strategy: a “pitch” that communicates to key employers the value and benefits of participating as active partners with the JII career pathway program. Employer partners can be part of the design and implementation of the career pathways, serve as advisors, and (most commonly) hire graduates from the career pathway program. To raise awareness of these opportunities for employers to partner with JII-focused career pathways, the career pathway partners can create forums like employer breakfasts, presentations to chambers of commerce, or industry association meetings, through which employer champions can speak to other employers about the challenges and rewards of hiring returning citizens.
- 2. Support employers who provide “transitional jobs.”** Another way in which a specific advocate-employer can be engaged in the work is to provide transitional jobs—a place for JIIs to work immediately post-release to begin to accrue real work experience, build a resume, and prove him or herself in the workplace. This could lessen the perceived risks of hiring JIIs to successive employers. To be effective, these transitional jobs should build employability skills so that JIIs leave the job with valuable employability skills. [The U.S. Department of Education has distilled prominent research and literature on this topic into an Employability Skills Framework that provides resources for developing 21st-century skills.](#)
- 3. Identify and respond to employers’ concerns about hiring JIIs.** Often employers are concerned about hiring JIIs because, as a whole, they are not believed to be good employees because of their past histories and the fear that hiring JIIs may expose the employer to liability. There is evidence to address the first concern. Large employers like Butterball Farms and Walmart have a history of hiring returning citizens; these [employers](#) publicly attest to the talent and loyalty that JIIs bring to their companies. Consider the experience of the military as an employer: a recent [study](#) of JIIs in the military found that enlistees with a criminal background were no more likely than others to be terminated for negative behaviors; and recruits with felony backgrounds were promoted faster than those without a criminal history.

To address concerns about liability, educate potential employer partners about the federal government programs meant to incentivize employers to hire JIIs by providing financial benefits or otherwise mitigating real and perceived risks of hiring employees with a criminal background.

- The [Work Opportunity Tax Credit](#) provides a federal tax credit available to employers for hiring individuals from certain target groups, including returning citizens. The credit covers up to 40 percent of the employee’s wages in the first year. To receive the benefit, employers must fill out paperwork to file with the state employment office. Workforce partners can also

leverage **On-the-Job Training Funds** to subsidize the initial employment of JIIs.

- In addition to offering financial benefits for hiring JIIs, the U.S. Department of Labor offers a **Federal Bonding Program** to provide fidelity bonds that guarantee honesty for “at-risk,” hard-to-place jobseekers. These bonds, which come at no cost to the individual or employer, cover the first six months of employment. Fidelity bonding protects employers against any loss of money or property sustained due to dishonest acts of their employees (e.g., theft, forgery, larceny, and embezzlement). Most employers have this insurance, but it doesn’t cover any employees with a criminal background. Through the Federal Bonding Program, employers are covered during the employee’s early employment, giving employers a risk-free opportunity to evaluate employee performance.



Additional Information on the Work Opportunity Tax Credit

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=eM80SjqR4Dk
- <https://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/work-opportunity-tax-credit-1>

Additional Information on Federal Bonding

- <http://www.bonds4jobs.com/program-background.html>
- https://csgjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Reentry_Council_Mythbuster_Federal_Bonding.pdf

Business Perspectives on Hiring Returning Citizens

- https://www.doleta.gov/PRI/PDF/R4W_Business_Perspectives_Ex_offender_reentry.pdf
- https://csgjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Reentry_Council_Mythbuster_Employment.pdf

MythBusters Useful for Addressing Employer’s Concerns About Hiring JIIs

- https://csgjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Reentry_Council_Mythbuster_FCRA_Employment.pdf
- https://csgjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Reentry_Council_Mythbuster_Employment.pdf

Clarity about Barriers and Opportunities Related to Hiring and Employment in the Health Care Sector:

- <http://www.abacollateralconsequences.org/>
- <http://www.nelp.org/content/uploads/NELP-Safer-Toolkit-Healthcare-Employer-Guide-Hiring-People-with-Arrest-Conviction-Records.pdf>
- <http://transitionsclinic.org/whychws/>



Design Education and Training Programs

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration (ETA) released the [Career Pathways Toolkit: An Enhanced Guide and Workbook for System Development](#) provides a chapter on the design of the education and training programs. The objective of this chapter in the [Toolkit](#) is to help stakeholders develop career pathway programs that provide a clear sequence of education courses and credentials that meet the skill needs of high-demand industries with the necessary social and academic supports to promote retention and completion.

While many career pathway providers often serve justice-involved individuals, the programs are rarely designed to address the distinct needs and circumstances of JIIs. These individuals often face distinct, significant barriers to training and employment and have lower academic skills than the general population. Traditional providers often lack the experience or expertise to address these barriers. The recommendations provided here⁴ are intended to supplement the strategies for career pathway designs that are currently included in the [Toolkit](#), with a specific focus on the following:

- Designing education and training for the corrections context
- Enhancing existing prison education and training experiences
- Connecting pre- and post-release services and training
- Providing case management specific to JIIs

RECOMMENDATION

Design Education and Training for the Corrections Context

Since the career pathway models are designed to be sequential, there is a great advantage to beginning the pathway sequence—especially the first rung of Adult Basic Education and high school credential completion—in the corrections setting. There are some benefits to beginning education and training in the corrections context: participants are motivated to make change, have well-supported attendance, have access to support programs like drug treatment, and have guaranteed housing.

There are also some important considerations for providing education and training in the corrections context that providers may not have encountered in a community college, job center, or community-based organization training context. Some of these considerations are highlighted below with recommendations for addressing these issues.

- **Safety protocols and policies:** Safety, not credential attainment, is the primary concern in the corrections setting, and the safety protocols and policies may compromise or complicate the education and training delivery. For example, Internet access is considered a safety

⁴ These recommendations are adapted to the career pathways for the JII population from the *Building Career Pathways from Prison Issue Brief: Identify Industry Employer Engagement*, which was developed on behalf of the U.S. Department of Education by Social Policy Research Associates.

concern, so protocols in corrections facilities may preclude or place significant constraints on Internet access. As a result, the use of technology for instruction, email communication between the students and instructors or students and peers, or accessing education/training resources for independent study or to supplement class instruction can be constrained or completely prohibited in the corrections facility. Safety protocols may also limit the types of equipment and materials that can be used in training programs, or create additional steps for dispensing and collecting tools at the beginning and end of each class.

Recommendation: The corrections and education/training partners should discuss the safety protocols and policies early and often in order to ensure that all partners are aware of the policies and can develop a plan to deliver meaningful instruction and training within the security constraints. Even with limited or no Internet access, there are options for using technology, such as the use of secure apps, developing an approved list of websites, or developing a secure platform with security firewalls. Technology teams can likely develop a list of creative strategies, but this will definitely be an area that will require ongoing negotiation and monitoring between partners.

- **Lack of appropriate space:** Depending on when the facility was built and what purposes the original architect had in mind, there may or may not be adequate space for classrooms or training facilities. In addition, security concerns and/or a lack of resources may preclude incarcerated individuals from taking materials to their quarters to supplement instruction.

Recommendation: Again, with early and ongoing planning, the corrections and education/training partners can make adjustments in the short term to provide learning spaces. In some cases, education and training partners have worked with the corrections facilities to erect temporary learning spaces or bring mobile trailers or shelters into the corrections campus. Also, partners have worked together to include instructional space as part of the long-term facilities planning for the corrections institution.

- **Prisoner movement and scheduling:** In corrections institutions, education and training providers need to be aware that the instructional schedule is subject to the established movement/scheduling needs of the facility. Education can often be interrupted by facility lockdown or individuals being scheduled for other services or activities during instructional time, such as prison work programs, behavior modification courses, and other programming like parenting classes, yoga, and Bible study. The process of moving incarcerated individuals throughout the facility may also be delayed if the requisite number of security personnel are not available to escort them. Instructors need to be prepared to adjust training schedules to accommodate this time for movement and frequent interruptions to training delivery, and they need to have a strategy for working with the facility leadership and security staff to minimize these interruptions.

Recommendation: Recognizing that there are multiple scheduling demands within the corrections facility, education and training partners should be proactive in working with the facility leadership to develop a calendar of education and training activities and work to integrate it into the established calendar for the facility. In addition, it is important to build strong relationships with the frontline security personnel. When the frontline staff understand and respect the providers and their instructional goals, they may be more likely to minimize disruptions and better align movement to the instructional schedule, and are more likely to be responsive to direction from the leadership of the corrections facility about supporting instructional time.

- **Short and unpredictable lengths of stay:** The most common perception of incarceration is long lengths of stay in state-run prison facilities. For many, though, incarceration occurs in county or local facilities with very short and somewhat unpredictable lengths of stay. Many career pathway providers are in close proximity to these types of facilities, but it can be challenging to shape education and training programs to fit such unpredictable timeframes.

Recommendation: Even a short length of stay can provide time to cultivate relationships with each JII in the time prior to their release so they have a particular point of contact (or multiple contacts) to help navigate education and training programs when the JII is released from incarceration. For example, as part of the U.S. Department of Labor's [Linking to Employment Activities Pre-Release \(LEAP\) Specialized American Job Centers, Job Centers begin to deliver services to individuals while they are incarcerated, which enables Center staff to build relationships with IIIs prior to release.](#) This strategy helps build strong institutional connections between the corrections facility and the community college or job center so staff can build effective transition plans and IIIs can more seamlessly transition into community-based career pathway programs without having to repeat what they accomplished while incarcerated.

- **Limited connections to the career pathways in the release communities:** The lengths of incarceration in state prison facilities may provide the necessary length of time IIIs need to earn a credential or make meaningful progress in an education or training program, but often the state prison facility is disconnected from the regional labor market to which the individual will return.

Recommendation: Partners can play a critical role in making connections between the facility where the individual is incarcerated and the community where most IIIs will be living after they are released. Education and workforce partners at the state and local levels can work with corrections partners to (1) identify the education programs and Job Centers in the most commonly occurring home communities, (2) facilitate connections to networks of local career pathway providers with a point of contact who works between the facility and local programming, and (3) develop strategies for the relevant local points of contact to connect, virtually or in person, with the IIIs that would be released to their communities.

The ETA just released briefs providing early lessons from their LEAP initiative that cut across the education and training design considerations covered in this brief. Stakeholders in communities with a LEAP grantee should leverage these resources and learnings for serving IIIs. For others, these lessons can inform efforts to:

- Bridge workforce development and corrections cultures
https://www.dol.gov/asp/evaluation/completed-studies/IB_MPR_SPR_LEAP_Culture.pdf
- Secure Internet access for prerelease job-search training
https://www.dol.gov/asp/evaluation/completed-studies/IB_MPR_SPR_LEAP_Internet%20Access.pdf
- Structure employment-based services within jail spaces and schedules
https://www.dol.gov/asp/evaluation/completed-studies/IB_MPR_SPR_LEAP_JailSpace.pdf

Enhance Existing Prison Education and Training Experiences

Corrections facilities may have existing education and employment opportunities for JII to pursue while they are incarcerated. The extent to which such programming exists in prison systems may vary, and there is also a broad range of programming available. Education and training partners can work with corrections partners on strategies for aligning prison education and work programs with a career pathway concept that is sequential and stackable toward a credential with labor market value.

There are also some important considerations when revising the programming in the corrections context. Some recommendations are provided here to help providers adapt to these circumstances.

- Lack of coherent or sequential education programming: Education programming in prison facilities has seen disinvestment over the years. As a result, existing education programming may be offered more as a diversion or entertainment strategy than to build skills and credentials that JIIs need to move them toward a viable credential.

Recommendation: Where education is being provided, career pathway partners can work closely with corrections partners to inventory existing education programming and begin to map or develop a sequence of programming that could lead JIIs toward a high school equivalency and/or postsecondary credential. Gaps in the existing education sequence can be filled by community college partners or community-based organizations that can provide instructors, curriculum, and other resources like tutoring, to support education attainment. If the system provides all of the education services “in house,” then partners can still provide useful resources. For example, a community college partner could provide professional development on curriculum development or pedagogy for the instructors employed by the corrections systems.

- Work programs that do not build employability skills: Participation in prison work programs can be a highly coveted opportunity for incarcerated individuals. These opportunities provide an opportunity to earn money and have some measure of freedom within the prison. However, highlights from the [Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies Survey of Incarcerated Adults show that these positions do not do much to build critical employment competencies like literacy, numeracy, or technology skills.](#)

Recommendation: Provider and communications partners should work together to introduce employability skills, both cognitive skills like literacy and numeracy and noncognitive communication and critical-thinking skills, into the work activities available in the prison work programs. Something as simple as writing summaries of the daily work activities or calculating and tracking wages and expenses each pay period could start to build literacy and numeracy skills. There are a number of resources available that discuss components of cognitive and noncognitive employability skills that are necessary for individuals to secure and, more importantly, advance in employment. [The U.S. Department of Education has distilled prominent research and literature on this topic into an Employability Skills Framework that would be a very helpful resource for partners.](#)

Introducing entrepreneurship training, in pre- and post-release settings, can also build important work competencies for JIIs. Increasingly, entrepreneurship is a pathway to employment (or supplemental income) for many individuals. This should also be a pathway

open to those who have a history of incarceration, as barriers to existing employers can still be a challenge. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [review of literature](#) has identified a framework for entrepreneurial skills which may be useful to partners.

Connect Pre- and Post-Release Education and Training Services

Adults and nontraditional, working learners often struggle to complete education and training programs that provide the necessary credentials for the 21st Century economy. This is especially true for JII, who struggle with lower academic and employability skills than the general population, and often any gains from education and training while in prison does not transfer to the JII's local education and training program when they are released.

Recommendation: With support from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, RTI International developed the [Reentry Education Toolkit](#) that provides a comprehensive set of tools and resources for connecting pre- and post-release education services. The [Reentry Education Toolkit](#) highlights five components: program infrastructure, strategic partnerships, education services, transition processes, and sustainability. With tools in each component, career pathway partners will find guidance for building comprehensive education and training services at both ends of the continuum, as well as intensive supports to help JIIs in the transition from corrections to the community.

Provide Case Management Specific to Justice-involved Individuals

For many, incarceration is a result of underlying conditions such as mental illness, substance abuse, disabilities, and domestic violence. Upon release, they face a pressing need for resources to help address those underlying conditions as well as basic resources like housing, transportation, medical care, and child care. Finding the necessary supports to meet this myriad of needs and challenges can be overwhelming, and partners working to develop career pathways for JIIs should include case management services as part of their pre- and post-release programming.

Recommendation: A case management approach, which includes assessment and input from the JII pre- and post-release, will be critical to helping stabilize the individual and helping him or her maximize their time while incarcerated. The JII's transition planning process should ensure that services and resources provided during incarceration will be available (as needed) upon release, and the JII has support to navigate the systems and organizations that provide the needed services. In the prerelease context, case management support could include identifying and helping JIIs access the support services in the facility that meet an identified need (rather than participate in programs to fill the time) like anger management, cognitive behavioral therapy, and parenting. Post-release case management could include assisting JIIs with transitional and permanent housing needs or enrollment in other publicly funded services (SNAP, Medicaid, SSI, and disability services, etc.). For a community college partner, case management could look like providing a dedicated counselor on campus for career pathway students, who will:

- Coordinate all of the support services
- Interface with the traditional student service staff on campus to meet needs
- Collaborate with other college staff members on academic advising
- Monitor and support students in selecting classes

- Regularly check in on student performance and attendance so that a student who is struggling can be quickly identified and assisted



Tool Box

Education and Training

- With support from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, RTI International developed resources to support education in corrections facilities and reentry education connecting pre- and post-release education services
<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/reentry-model.pdf>
http://lincs.ed.gov/reentryed/files/tools_pdf/Reentry-Ed-Framework-Report.pdf
- Building postsecondary education programs in prisons
https://storage.googleapis.com/vera-web-assets/downloads/Publications/making-the-grade-postsecondary-education-programs-in-prison/legacy_downloads/making-the-grade-postsecondary-education-programs-in-prison.pdf
- Federal Student Aid, including an obligation to repay student aid while incarcerated
https://csgjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Reentry_Council_Mythbuster_Student_Financial_Aid.pdf,
<https://csgjusticecenter.org/nrrc/publications/reentry-mythbuster-on-repaying-federal-student-loans-while-incarcerated/>
- A U.S. Department of Education release provides strategies and recommendations for using technology in corrections facilities
<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/policybriefedtech.pdf>
- Early Lessons from LEAP provide strategies for Internet access for prerelease job search training https://www.dol.gov/asp/evaluation/completed-studies/IB_MPR_SPR_LEAP_Internet%20Access.pdf

Employment

- Tips for the Ex-Offender, Wisconsin Job Center
http://wisconsinjobcenter.org/exo/eo_criminal_background.pdf
- Information to help workforce providers understand Ban the Box
<http://www.nelp.org/publication/ban-the-box-fair-chance-hiring-state-and-local-guide/>
- Reentry Employment Opportunities, U.S. Department of Labor, WorkforceGPS
<https://reo.workforcegps.org/>
- The U.S. Department of Labor has taken the step of investing in American Job Centers to provide workforce development activities to JIIs while incarcerated
<https://www.dol.gov/newsroom/releases/eta/eta20151117>
<http://www.workforcealliance.biz/index.php/ex-offenders>

Supportive Services

- “SSI/SSDI and Medicaid: Powerful Tools for Reentry Success,” the Council of State Governments
<https://soarworks.prainc.com/article/ssissdi-and-medicaid-powerful-tools-reentry-success>
- Services for incarcerated individuals
<http://www.urban.org/research/publication/using-jail-enroll-low-income-men-medicaid>
- Mentoring Former Prisoners: A Guide for Reentry Programs, Public/Private Ventures
<http://www.reentrycoalition.ohio.gov/docs/Mentoring%20Former%20Prisoners%20-%20A%20Guide%20for%20Reentry%20Programs%20-%202009.pdf>
- White House Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable Toolkit (includes expungement information)
<https://www.justice.gov/lair/toolkit>
- Federal Interagency Reentry Council information on accessing federal benefits
<https://csgjusticecenter.org/nrrc/projects/mythbusters/>
- Reducing Statewide Recidivism checklists for key stakeholders provide recommendations that partners can implement through education, training, and supportive services
<https://csgjusticecenter.org/documents/0000/1669/executive-legislative-policymakers-checklist.pdf> (for legislative and executive policymakers)
<https://csgjusticecenter.org/documents/0000/1670/state-corrections-administrators-checklist.pdf> (for state corrections administrators)
https://csgjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Checklist_Reentry_mbedit.pdf (for state reentry coordinators)
- Examples of strong case management programs and those providing focused supports
<https://whatworks.csgjusticecenter.org/focus-area/case-management-and-comprehensive-programs> (case management and comprehensive programs)
<https://whatworks.csgjusticecenter.org/focus-area/mental-health> (mental and physical health)
- <https://whatworks.csgjusticecenter.org/focus-area/substance-abuse> (substance abuse)

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