

Facilitating Reentry of Justice-Involved Individuals into the Green Workforce

Case studies and best practices

In partnership with Dream Corps, researchers interviewed key organizations and individuals involved in assisting reentry populations integrate into the green job sector. A suite of best practices emerged.



The green job sector is expanding due to advancements in technology, reduced costs, and heightened interest in sustainability. As more and more states, jurisdictions, and utilities themselves target 100% clean energy goals, the transition to clean energy is promoting job growth across the nation. Green jobs offer “gainful employment necessary to escape a cycle of poverty, crime and recidivism,” rendering them especially good fits to support, sustain, and enable reentry populations.

As society transitions to a sustainable future, we cannot replicate the structural and racial inequalities that permeate traditional labor markets. It is possible for the green sector to rectify these existing social inequities and environmental injustices by promoting inclusivity through low-barrier access to paid employment and accommodating the needs of justice-involved individuals.

Some key ways to facilitate this include:

- In reentry programming and in-prison vocational training, provide broad academic skills and subject matter education on the environment and on the role of green jobs as a central part of a healthy ecosystem to empower individuals in changing their communities for the better and enhancing their career potential.
- Offer “wrap around services” to support a holistic approach to reentry which considers not only employment, but also housing, community integration, and mental health, by providing essential resources to succeed.
- Increase funding and expand the scope of and opportunities for anti-recidivism programming, such as the educational, vocational, and mentoring programs.
- Expand union partnerships with local correctional facilities to host apprenticeship programs before release to facilitate the transition and allow returning individuals into trade training programs immediately upon release.
- Stop unnecessary correctional oversight mechanisms, most notably the diversion of the costs of the criminal justice system to returning individuals, which limits their opportunities and often results in recidivism.
- Adopt fair chance hiring policies to remove barriers to employment for justice-involved individuals both within the public and private sectors.
- For employers, train hiring managers and staff on implicit and explicit bias and promote panelists with diverse backgrounds in their job forums, including employees who were formerly incarcerated.

A more expansive list of practices along with important developments in criminal justice reform are outlined in the report. These are supported by 13 case studies and personal profiles of organizations and individuals leading the way. Special thanks for their participation.

