

Fair Chance to Advance State Action Networks:

Aligning Systems and Building Clear Pathways From Incarceration to Careers

State Readiness Framework

Jobs for the Future's Fair Chance to Advance initiative is designed to align and transform state systems to eliminate barriers to economic success for people with histories of incarceration, ensuring that they have a fair chance to advance.

During a yearlong design period, JFF's Center for Justice & Economic Advancement partnered with stakeholders nationwide to identify the conditions that are needed for states to be ready to make meaningful, systemic change and build statewide fair chance ecosystems that expand opportunity for people with histories of incarceration.

The resulting framework outlines these state-level conditions, as well as readiness criteria for key stakeholder groups, and reflects the combined expertise and lived experiences of our partners. JFF will use these criteria to identify states that are ready to pursue and implement systems change and to support states working to establish the necessary conditions for that change.

We are sincerely grateful to the many contributors who shaped this framework, including corrections, postsecondary education, workforce development, and reentry professionals, and those who have lived experience of arrest, incarceration, or other interactions with the criminal justice system.

Their leadership and insights were essential to ensuring that Fair Chance to Advance is rooted in what it truly takes to build fair chance ecosystems that endure and evolve.

- Center for Justice & Economic Advancement



Enabling Conditions in States

Existing Cross-Sector Collaboration and Relationships

✓ Evidence of existing working relationships and commitments to collaboration between corrections, postsecondary education and training providers, the state higher education system, community-based organizations, policymakers, and/or employer-oriented actors in the state.

Engagement of People with Lived Experience:

✓ Evidence of past commitments to working with leaders and advisors who have lived experience of arrest, incarceration, or other interactions with the criminal justice system.

Commitment to All Learners

✓ Evidence of commitment to ensuring that all people who are or have been incarcerated have access to opportunities no matter what charges they faced or how much time they served and regardless of their demographic identity or socioeconomic status.

Commitment to Learner Choice

✓ Evidence of commitment to aligning academic and career pathways offered in carceral facilities and in community settings to the interests and aspirations of students.

Reentry Partnerships

✓ Evidence of existing coordination and partnerships between corrections agencies, institutions of higher education, providers of services to people returning to their communities, housing providers, and/or community-based organizations to adequately support learners as they continue their academic and career pathways after release.

Capacity for Research & Evaluation

✓ A willingness and ability to track short-term impact and outcomes over the life of the FC2A initiative, as well as the capacity (or evidence of progress toward the capacity) to integrate statewide data systems that track educational and employment outcomes.

Mitigating Career Barriers

✓ Evidence within the state of shared commitment to advocating for the removal of policy barriers that automatically disqualify people from jobs or professions based on their records, without considering the degree to which the charges individuals were convicted of are relevant to the roles or professions they're pursuing.



Enabling Conditions in States



Understanding of State-Specific Barriers

Past efforts to identify state-specific education and employment barriers for learners and workers with records of incarceration.



Aligned State Investments

Recent investments to expand access to education and training inside carceral facilities and in the community.



Gubernatorial/Policy maker Priority Population

Clear public commitment from state leaders to prioritize individuals with records of incarceration in education and workforce initiatives.



Data Systems Integration

Progress toward integrating statewide data systems.



Field Engagement

Past involvement in peer learning, national convenings, or technical assistance communities.



Impact and Innovation

Previous records of success or innovation in efforts to improve education and employment outcomes for people with records of incarceration.



Complementary Funding Sources

Existing funding that supports alignment of state education systems and reentry programs for people returning to their communities following incarceration.

Stakeholder Readiness: Corrections Partners

DOC Infrastructure

Evidence that sufficient infrastructure (space, staffing capacity, technology, learning resources) is available through the state department of corrections (DOC) or other statewide correctional agency to support evidence-based practices for student success in both virtual and in-person education and training programs (in addition to a stated commitment from corrections leaders to expanding and improving student access to secure internet and education technology).

IRB Approvals

Evidence of leadership willingness to fast-track DOC institutional review board (IRB) approval processes to support the gathering and analysis of required data.

Accessibility and Student Support Services

Evidence of a willingness and the ability to make accessibility and other student support services readily available.

Academic and Career Advising Services

A statement of DOC commitment to establishing robust career coaching and academic advising services and providing access to other information, tools, and resources that help learners match their talents and aspirations with career fields and navigate the job search and hiring processes.

Work-Based Learning

A statement of DOC commitment to incorporating work-based learning (WBL) opportunities and creating pre-apprenticeship or apprenticeship pathways for learners who are incarcerated.

Compensation for Work-Based Learning

A statement of DOC commitment to compensating participants in work-based learning programs at fair wage levels.

Continuing Access and Incentives

A statement of DOC commitment to ensuring access to and providing incentives for participation in education and training opportunities during incarceration, as well as during parole or probation.

Employers in Facilities

A statement of DOC commitment to creating opportunities for employers to connect, both virtually and in-person, with learners and workers who are incarcerated prior to their release.



Stakeholder Readiness: Postsecondary Partners

Existing Collaboration



Evidence of collaboration and engagement among multiple postsecondary education providers in the state, with particular emphasis on engagement of public institutions (i.e., state higher education system, community or technical college system, two-year and four-year public institutions).

Pathways Diversity



Evidence of commitment to diversity of higher education pathways curricula across the state—pathways in the trades, liberal arts, business and entrepreneurship, etc.

Pathways Quality

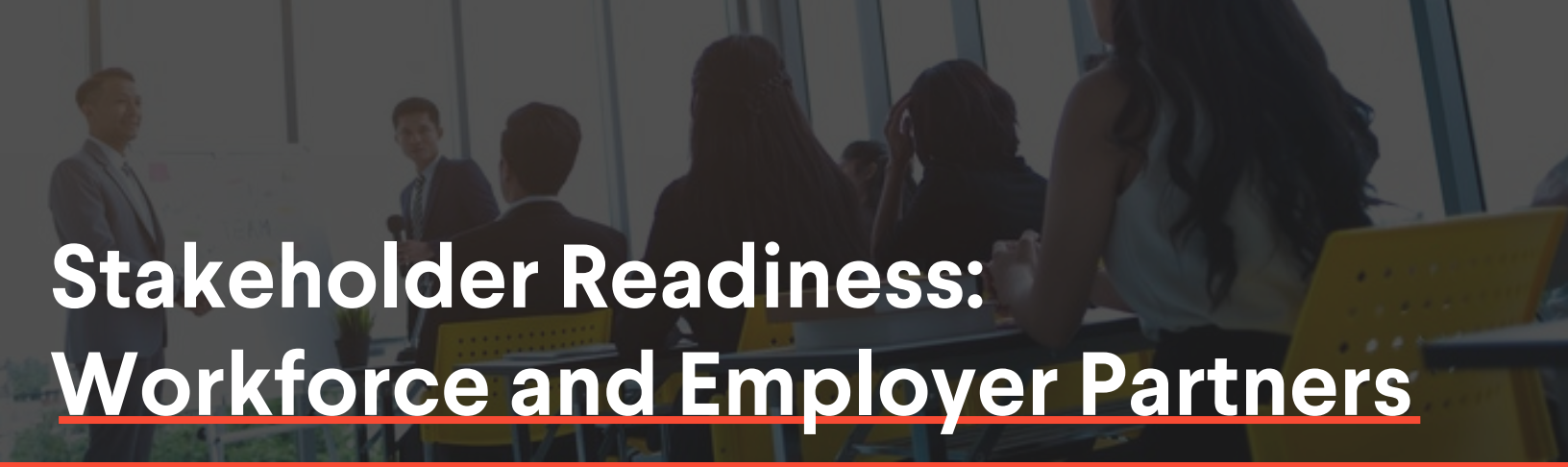


Evidence of commitment to the quality of educational pathways offered in correctional facilities and a strategic approach to selecting postsecondary partners, offering recognized degrees and credentials, and improving transferability of credits.

Alignment to Quality Jobs



Evidence of commitment to aligning postsecondary pathways offered in carceral facilities and community programs to quality jobs, fair chance employers, and labor market demand.



Stakeholder Readiness: Workforce and Employer Partners

Fair Chance Hiring



Evidence of openness among local employers to becoming fair chance employers, adopting inclusive hiring and talent development practices for people with records of incarceration, and including corrections as partners in sourcing talent.

Fair Chance Promotion



Evidence of a commitment among local workforce entities to promoting the adoption and scaling of fair chance hiring practices within the employer community and encouraging public employers to model these hiring practices.

Past Workforce Board Engagement



Evidence of past efforts by local workforce agencies or boards to collaborate with corrections agencies or specifically support learners and workers with records of incarceration.