



Employment Programs to Support Reentry: Findings from the Reentry Project Grants Evaluation

SUMMARY

In 2017, the Chief Evaluation Office (CEO) partnered with [Employment and Training Administration \(ETA\)](#) and funded contractor Mathematica along with Social Policy Research Associates to conduct the *Reentry Projects Grant Program Evaluation*. The impact evaluation aims to evaluate the impact of Reentry Project programs on the criminal justice involvement, earnings, and employments of participants.

Building on DOL's prior reentry efforts, the Reentry Project grant program encouraged organizations to implement comprehensive reentry programs to support justice-involved adults and young adults to successfully engage in their communities and avoid committing future criminal acts. Grantees offered an array of services, including career preparedness, employment-focused services, and case management. DOL encouraged grantees to draw on evidence-informed or promising practices around employment-focused services. These practices included building programs within major industries open to hiring justice-involved individuals, such as manufacturing, culinary, and hospitality programs. The Reentry Project program, funded by the DOL, Employment and Training Administration, awarded 36- to 39-month grants to 116 grantees between 2017 and 2019. These grants totaled almost \$243 million.

This Department of Labor-funded study was a result of Section 169 of the [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act \(WIOA\)](#) as well as the annual process to determine the Department's research priorities for the upcoming year. The evaluation contributes to the labor evidence-base to inform [reentry](#), [data, methods, and tools](#), [employment and training](#), and [program access](#) programs and policies and addresses Departmental strategic goals and priorities.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Grantees struggled to enroll and retain participants, especially young adults, and to provide intensive services as intended. Many programs intended to offer work-based learning experiences, but few participants received those services: while 72 percent of participants received education or training services, and 43 percent received occupational skills training, only 2.3 percent received on-the-job training.
- Compared to Wagner-Peyser participants with similar demographics and criminal justice backgrounds, Reentry Project participants were 5.1 percentage points more likely to have a new criminal conviction in the 10 quarters after program entry
- Reentry Projects participants were also 4.1 percentage points less likely to be employed than comparison group members in the 9th and 10th quarters after enrollment and earned \$693 less on average during that period.



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- Estimated impacts differed based on the severity of individuals' pre-program criminal justice involvement, with RP participants who had more serious prior justice involvement showing no statistically significant differences in outcomes compared to similar matched Wagner-Peyser participants. These patterns in impacts based on pre-program criminal justice involvement may reflect unobserved differences between RP participants and matched comparison group members in pre-program sentencing associated with recidivism.

[SEE FULL STUDY](#)

TIMEFRAME: 2017-2024

SUBMITTED BY: Mathematica

DATE PREPARED: December 2024

PARTNER AGENCY: Employment and Training Administration

SPONSOR: Chief Evaluation Office

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