

Overview

Returning Citizens Stimulus (RCS) program connects individuals recently released from incarceration to the County's workforce services while providing financial support to improve employment outcomes.

Challenge

State and local governments are accelerating release from incarceration and detainment due to the COVID-19 pandemic without proper resources available upon return to the community. Most returning citizens are not eligible for the federal stimulus and are released into the community with limited resources to obtain employment. Moreover, individuals with justice involvement often face greater rates of unemployment when compared to the general population of the United States. Paired with an unfamiliarity of the public workforce system, many individuals released from incarceration may not connect to available employment resources.

Solution

The RCS program is a public-private partnership between the Los Angeles County Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services (WDACS) and the Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) which provides financial assistance to citizens that have been released from incarceration during the COVID-19 pandemic. This monetary support aims to connect individuals released from incarceration to the County's public workforce system and establish long-term engagements to services to support successful reentry and employment outcomes.

Innovation

With over 18,000 Californians receiving accelerated release from incarceration due to the pandemic, WDACS partnered with CEO, one of the nation's largest reentry employment provider, to provide financial support to LA County residents returning to the community. Facing an unprecedented economic downturn, the program provides temporary financial stability as participants gain essential workforce skills, including resume workshops, financial literacy, job clubs, and more. Participants of the

program receive their payment via direct deposit to pay cards to quickly distribute payments and allowing participants access funds immediately. Funds are disbursed at 30-day intervals upon completion of pre-determined milestones to promote continuous engagement. By applying evidence-based best practices and including incentives that reward engagement, this effort applies behavioral science techniques to nudge participants along their journey back to community reintegration and self-sufficiency.

Results

Within the first month of implementation, 470 participants have been enrolled into the program and have received over \$308,000 in financial support. Many participants have received financial literacy training, resume writing workshops, and other services and will receive up to \$2,750 in financial support for participating in the program. More significantly, participants of the program have connected to the County's workforce system to access the wide range of services available, including temporary subsidized employment opportunities, barrier removal services, on-the-job training, pre-apprenticeship, and training opportunities within high growth sectors.

Replicability

The public-private partnership is fundamental to the success of this effort. Through this collaboration, philanthropic funds provided a financial investment in our most vulnerable. In doing so, formerly incarcerated individuals have gained temporary financial stability as they engage the County's workforce system and navigate successful reentry. The effort includes a research study by MDRC to test the results and add to growing literature on how public-private partnerships can leverage opportunities and resources to yield better and more sustainable results.

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