



Linking to Employment Activities Pre-Release (LEAP) Program Evaluation

SUMMARY

In 2015, the Chief Evaluation Office (CEO) partnered with the [Employment and Training Administration \(ETA\)](#) and funded contractors Mathematica Policy Research and Social Policy Research Associates to conduct the *Linking to Employment Activities Pre-Release (LEAP) Program Evaluation*. The evaluation aims to examine program implementation at each of the 20 LEAP pilot locations through site visits at each location, phone interviews, focus groups, and analysis of grantees' quarterly performance reports.

The LEAP initiative was created in 2015 to help individuals successfully reenter society after incarceration by offering pre- and post-release services. The program awarded \$10 million in grant funding to 20 local workforce development boards and created jail-based American Job Centers (AJCs) with direct linkages to community-based AJCs. The overarching goals were to increase participants' work readiness at the time of release, increase employment after release, and reduce recidivism. Additional goals for the pilot initiative included demonstrating that corrections and workforce agencies could effectively collaborate to provide pre-release services, and generating lessons learned around promising strategies and common challenges that could inform future efforts.

This Department of Labor-funded study was a result of the annual process to determine the Department's research priorities for the upcoming year. It contributes to the labor evidence-base to inform [employment and training](#) programs and policies and addresses Departmental strategic goals and priorities.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- This evaluation demonstrated the feasibility of the LEAP program and noted that 11 of the 20 sites planned to maintain jail-based AJCs after the end of the grant.
- Close collaboration and early communication between workforce and jail administrators were crucial for successful implementation, including establishing the jail-based AJCs, recruiting participants, delivering pre-release services, and planning for participants' transition as they approached release.
- Fourteen of the 20 jail sites in this evaluation successfully collaborated with AJCs to ensure limited internet access for pre-release services, and all 20 sites were able to establish jail-based AJC spaces.
- LEAP pilot sites had enrolled 3,805 individuals as of March 2018, exceeding their enrollment target for pre-release participants despite challenges identifying eligible participants due to large unsentenced populations and limited access to corrections data.
- The evaluation finds that jail-based AJC staff emphasized the need for flexibility to adapt to changing jail conditions, which resulted from unexpected releases of participants, security risks, and absences.



Linking to Employment Activities Pre-Release (LEAP) Program Evaluation

- Of those LEAP participants who had been released for at least one year, 20% were rearrested for a new crime or reincarcerated for parole/probation violations within one year of release.

[SEE FULL STUDY](#)

TIMEFRAME: 2015-2018

SUBMITTED BY: Mathematica Policy Research

DATE PREPARED: November 2021

PARTNER AGENCY: Employment and Training Administration (ETA)

SPONSOR: Chief Evaluation Office

CEO CONTACT: Yancey.Christina.L@dol.gov

The Department of Labor's (DOL) Chief Evaluation Office (CEO) sponsors independent evaluations and research, primarily conducted by external, third-party contractors in accordance with the [Department of Labor Evaluation Policy](#). CEO's research development process includes extensive technical review at the design, data collection and analysis stage, including: external contractor review and OMB review and approval of data collection methods and instruments per the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA), Institutional Review Board (IRB) review to ensure studies adhere to the highest ethical standards, review by academic peers (e.g., Technical Working Groups), and inputs from relevant DOL agency and program officials and CEO technical staff. Final reports undergo an additional independent expert technical review and a review for Section 508 compliance prior to publication. The resulting reports represent findings from this independent research and do not represent DOL positions or policies.