



Partners for Reentry Opportunities
in Workforce Development

PROWD Partnership Development Guidelines

Overview

Effective partnerships are essential among organizations that serve individuals who are returning to the workforce. No single institution can address all the needs of this population. Therefore, prisons, state workforce development agencies, and community-based organizations need to work together. Strong partnerships, such as those represented by the Federal Interagency Reentry Council (FIRC), can foster policy changes and systematic improvements in reentry programming and improve the outcomes for returning individuals, their families, and their communities.

Objectives

This resource has been designed to help PROWD grantees develop effective partnerships with prisons, state agencies, and educational and community-based organizations and to support reentry efforts in the grantees' states.

Getting Started

Identify Potential PROWD Partner Agencies and Stakeholders

Identifying the right agencies and community leaders for partnerships is key to the success of PROWD. While some may be state agencies and educational institutions, the majority will likely be agencies providing services at the grassroots level. Stakeholders must be included as early in the process as possible. To effect changes in the community, everyone who might be involved in these changes must be at the table from the outset.

To ensure the adequate representation of all organizations that provide valuable services to the reentry community, complete a stakeholder analysis. The following steps outline the process for conducting a stakeholder analysis:

1. Identify a full set of reentry services ideally available to all returning residents.
2. Conduct a gap analysis by mapping services provided by current PROWD partners to those identified in step 1.
3. Identify stakeholders that can fill the gaps.
4. For each identified stakeholder, determine a possible representative.
5. Contact the identified stakeholder about partnering with PROWD.

The spectrum of potential collaborators is wide:



*Faith-based organizations, rehabilitation centers, dress-for-success organizations, reentry programs, food banks, public housing authorities

** See also Benefits of Working with Other Agencies on page 4.

Lessons Learned from FIRC

The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) identified the following practices that can help enhance and sustain collaboration.

- **Define and articulate a common outcome:**
PROWD grantees should develop a mission statement that reflects the values of program partners and the interests of the community(ies) they serve.
- **Establish mutually reinforcing or joint strategies:**
Develop strategies for moving forward, such as scheduling regular meetings, conducting a resource analysis, and developing a communication plan.
- **Identify and address needs by leveraging resources:**

Grantees should conduct a resource analysis, documenting the available resources of each partner to identify resource gaps as well as potential partners to fill those gaps. Then, contact those individuals or organizations to discuss partnering with the PROWD program.

➤ **Agree on roles and responsibilities:**

PROWD partners should identify the roles and responsibilities of each partner or partner committee. Use this information and the resource analysis to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or agreement.

➤ **Establish compatible policies, procedures, and other means to operate across [partner organizations]:**

The PROWD partnership should develop a method to communicate information, including policies and procedures, across partners/organizations. Grantees may want to consider establishing an organization or individual to receive and disseminate information from partners. In some instances, an information or data sharing agreement may be required. For example, the federal prison partner may require a data sharing agreement be in place prior to sharing any participant information with the PROWD grantee.

➤ **Develop mechanisms to monitor, evaluate, and report on results:**

PROWD grantees must monitor and evaluate the activities of the program on an ongoing basis and report this information to DOL in their quarterly reports. Grantees should use this information to foster improvements in their programs.

➤ **Reinforce accountability for collaborative efforts through [partner] plans and reports:**

PROWD grantee should develop an implementation plan for each stage of the grant and assign partners responsible for ensuring the success of each activity or task. Establish a mechanism for regular partner reporting and a method of sharing information across all partners.

Partnering with state agencies can help reentry programs and participants gain access to supportive services and other beneficial programs in a timely manner. Based on federal level partnerships developed through the FIRC, the table below provides examples of potential results of PROWD programs partnering with state or local agencies.

State Agency	Potential Program and Participant Benefits
Dept. of Agriculture	SNAP, food banks
Dept. of Health and Human Services	Medicaid, day care vouchers, mental health facilities, substance abuse treatment centers, family unification
Dept. of Housing and Urban Development	Public housing and low-income housing
Dept. of Transportation	State identification, transportation vouchers
Social Security Administration	Social Security cards
Small Business Administration	Block grants to start businesses—open to previously incarcerated individuals
Corporation for National and Community Service	Volunteer program staff
Dept. of Veteran Affairs	Co-enrollment for veterans (program designated for Veterans with a criminal history)
Interagency Council on Homelessness	Housing
Dept. of Education	Pell grants and financial assistance

NOTE: Working with these agencies may help to streamline or accelerate the enrollment process for PROWD participants. Sharing policy and procedural information across these agencies may spark systemic changes to improve services for returning residents.

Tips for Working with Prison Partners

- Workforce staff and prison staff should take the time to adjust to each other's organizational cultures.
 - PROWD grantees may encounter greater flexibility in minimum- and low-security prisons
- PROWD grantees need to assure prison staff that they will adhere to the prison's rules and procedures.

- While the primary role of workforce staff is to help clients find and maintain employment, the primary role of corrections officers is to ensure safety and security by focusing on care, custody, and control.
 - Differences between the organizational cultures of prison and workforce systems reflect the distinct roles of their agencies and staff. To achieve its goals, prisons are generally hierarchical: Staff must clear decisions through a chain of command and use formal titles such as “commander” and “lieutenant.” Prisons also have detailed procedures in place to regulate inmates’ movement, schedules, and programming.
- Successful workforce staff will balance their desire to create a post-release culture with the need to conform to the prison’s rules and setting.
- In addition to workforce staff attending mandatory prison-safety training, PROWD grantees may institute their own orientation program on navigating prison procedures. Alternatively, grantees may hold weekly check-ins during the start-up period to allow workforce staff operating inside the prison to ask questions, discuss solutions, and be debriefed on their experiences.
- Orient prison staff on the program to encourage buy-in. It may be challenging to get buy-in from corrections officers responsible for escorting inmates to the PROWD center if they do not understand the purpose and importance of the program.
- Grantees can hold an open house for prison staff involved in implementing the program. Make the prison staff feel welcome and valued.
 - Serving donated refreshments goes a long way.
- In requesting changes, PROWD grantees will do well to remember that they are a guest of the prison.
- Any alteration to the PROWD center, such as mounting motivational posters or changing the color to reflect a post-release environment, benefits from discussion and approval in advance. Workforce staff may also advocate for modifications to prison practices, such as allowing participants to dress in professional clothing for mock interviews. However, PROWD staff will want work to gain buy-in from prison staff to achieve these changes.



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Resources

[Bridging Workforce Development and Corrections Cultures: Issue Brief - Early Lessons from LEAP](#)

This article describes how workforce development and jail staff members collaborated across their distinct organizational cultures in the early implementation of jail-based American Job Centers funded through LEAP grants.

[Federal Interagency Reentry Council: A Record of Progress and a Roadmap for the Future](#)

This report lays out specific agency actions—the development of training, technical assistance, and strategic communications—to ensure federal staff as well as state, local, and community stakeholders are aware of the tools available to them and are using these tools to implement robust reentry policies and programs.

[Managing for Results: Implementation Approaches Used to Enhance Collaboration in Interagency Groups \(GAO\)](#)

GAO selected four interagency groups that follow its key practices for enhancing and sustaining collaboration, aiming to learn about the approaches they used and found successful. These groups addressed issues of homelessness, the reentry of formerly incarcerated individuals, rental housing policy, and the education of military-dependent students.