

2023



CENTER FOR  
EMPLOYMENT  
OPPORTUNITIES

ANNUAL  
REPORT

A NOTE FROM CEO **SAM SCHAEFFER**

# CELEBRATING OUR **ACHIEVEMENTS**

Dear **Supporters, Partners, and Friends,**

I am writing to express my gratitude for your support. You helped us to have a transformative year at the Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO). Each day, we witness the profound and complex journeys of the justice-impacted individuals we serve - all recently returning home and on a unique path shaped by their experiences, choices, and aspirations. As the **nation's largest reentry employment provider**, CEO offers a critical pathway for our participants that includes access to meaningful employment, maintained freedom, and a better life for themselves and their families.

While CEO serves approximately **8,000** individuals each year, there are many more returning home. This is why our work has evolved to include removing barriers and changing policies that **increase fairness** and **access to opportunity** for anyone who is justice-impacted. In early 2023, CEO made

historic efforts in advocating for **SNAP Employment & Training** and other workforce training enrollees to maintain their SNAP eligibility while earning temporary wages through the program. No one should face losing their food benefits while they are engaged in paid workforce training to help them secure a good job. As a leader in a coalition of 100 organizations, CEO will continue to encourage Congress to guarantee access to SNAP benefits for individuals tenacious enough to seek workforce training. Our bill, which is part of the federal Farm Bill, has bi-partisan support, and we are working hard to ensure its passage.

In California, CEO led an advocacy effort with other organizations to secure **\$50 million in new funding** for reentry workforce services. As a result, the California Workforce Development Board (CWDB) awarded a grant that will expand and transform reentry services for many Californians, including

support for a pilot program that provides comprehensive employment services and cash assistance so people leaving incarceration can secure basic necessities while they settle back into their communities. Funding will also support a network of other incredible reentry organizations, allowing coordination of services across providers.

I extend my deepest thanks to our intrepid staff, partners, supporters, and participants who trust us to help them on their journey toward independence. Your commitment fuels our efforts and offers hope for an even brighter tomorrow.

Thank you for your continued support and belief in **the unmatched resilience of justice impacted workers!**



Sam Schaeffer  
Chief Executive Officer

# MISSION & VISION

CEO's mission is to provide immediate, effective, and comprehensive employment services exclusively to individuals who have recently returned home from incarceration.

Our vision is that anyone with a criminal record who wants to work has the preparation and support needed to find a job and stay connected to the labor force. We believe that everyone, regardless of their past, deserves the chance to shape a stronger future for themselves, their family, and their communities.

CEO specifically serves individuals 18 years of age or older returning home from incarceration. Under these requirements, we welcome all individuals regardless of their gender identity, mental health and/or substance use history, geographic area of residence, housing situation, or criminal conviction(s).

Our mission is grounded in the theory of change that if individuals are provided paid work opportunities shortly after they are released from prison or jail, they are more likely to break the cycle of recidivism and build a positive foundation for themselves and their families.





# PARTICIPANT TESTIMONY

**“I got polished,” he says. “I was a diamond in the rough, and they helped me develop my soft skills: communication, interacting with people from all walks of life.”**

Like many people reentering their communities after incarceration, Demetrius faced roadblocks to obtaining employment once he got home. Prospective employers struggled to look beyond his record, and Demetrius found he needed to improve some professional skills to help him stand out as a job candidate.

Thankfully, the CEO Colorado Springs team was able to help Demetrius start on the right path. Not long after enrolling in CEO’s program, Demetrius worked with the Colorado Department of Transportation as a member of their road crew. He also went on to earn his flagger certification, opening up a range of traffic control job opportunities.

“CEO can impact people in all walks of life. Once you’re involved with the justice system, a lot of opportunities get taken away,” he says. “CEO gives the opportunity to gain confidence and make a living, which go hand in hand. To know that there’s places like CEO that can level the playing field is valuable. That’s the difference between a person committing crimes and not.”

# PROGRAM MODEL

CEO’s evidence-based program model consists of employment-focused activities and pathways specifically designed to enable justice-impacted individuals to enter the labor market successfully. By following the road map provided by the model, participants are equipped to achieve the ultimate goal of remaining attached to the workforce and maintaining their freedom. The CEO program model also encourages participants to progress at their own pace to account for differences in needs, skills, and experience.



**Job Readiness Training**



**Transitional Employment and Job Coaching**



**Job Placement**



**Advanced Training and Credentialing**



**Job Retention and Support Services**

# PROGRAMS

- **Orientation and job-readiness training** - CEO's program begins with our paid orientation which prepares participants for workforce reentry and enrolls them in public benefits.
- **Transitional employment** – The foundation of our program model is paid transitional employment, connecting justice-impacted individuals to work experience and income stability to develop successful workplace habits and strengthen their employment history.
- **Job coaching services** – Participants meet weekly with a Job Coach to address employment barriers and develop job-readiness skills.
- **Job development and placement services** – Once individuals are ready to obtain and sustain employment, participants work with a Job Developer to secure permanent, full-time job placement.
- **Advanced training and credentialing** – Participants can access opportunities for long-term economic mobility through CEO's internal apprenticeship program, training to obtain industry-recognized credentials, and policy & advocacy committees. These pathways lead to higher paying jobs and increased security.
- **Job retention services** – Once placed in employment, participants receive a year of job retention services with the goal of building long-term attachments to the workforce.

## THE YEAR IN PROGRAMMING IMPACT



**7,747** Total **enrollments** in CEO programs



**4,324** Total **job placements**



**\$18.19/hour** Average **wage** received at placement



**8,221** Participants employed through **transitional work** crews



**\$18,595,201.64** Total transitional crew **wages earned**

# ECONOMIC MOBILITY

Over the last few years, CEO has started investing more heavily in **advanced training** and **credentialing programs**, along with **key training partnerships** and **apprenticeships with local unions**. In doing so, we are not only connecting participants with employment, but we are empowering them to achieve **social and economic mobility** through good quality, high-paying careers.

CEO's Advanced Training & Credentialing Pathways all meet the criteria of:

- *High wage (above \$20/hr national average)*
- *High growth over the next five years*
- *Relatively low prior conviction restrictions*
- *Having a defined training pathway (less than one year in length) that leads to employment*

Based on the initial success we have seen with our **CDL training**, **IT pathways**, and **Emerging Leaders Program** (CEO's internal on-the-job apprenticeship), CEO has expanded our offerings over the past year to include:

- *Heavy Equipment Operator*
- *Fiber Optic Technician*
- *Service Technician (Mechanic)*
- *Solar Installer*
- *Skilled Construction Trades*

This year, our Emerging Leaders Program's also earned a **critical approval from the U.S. Department of Labor**, designating our Vocational Pathways Training as a certified apprenticeship. This certification is a crucial milestone for ELP, signaling the potential for other apprenticeship tracks and training programs within CEO to earn similar certifications by DOL and state labor agencies, resulting in **expanded access to resources** for those returning home from incarceration.





# ECONOMIC MOBILITY

With our participants' socio-economic mobility at the core of every plan and pathway, CEO has made more progress than ever before. Pathways can even involve actual roads, as is the case for the Commercial Driver's License (CDL) training. CDL has shown consistent placement wage levels 29% higher than local living wages and strong employer demand in a variety of sectors.

CDL Training—enables participants to earn a commercial driver's license and find employment within the transportation industry. CEO provides extensive guidance throughout the entire 4-12 week training program and remains a support system afterward.

## CDL Training Impact



**462** Referrals for the program



**188** Total enrollments



**132** CDL's obtained



**78%** Completion rate



**\$20.50** Average hourly wage

# PARTICIPANT TESTIMONY

It's been a year of accomplishments for Chris, a former participant at the CEO San Jose office. He has not only completed a year of employment post-incarceration, but he also earned his CDL this spring.

In fact, Chris was the first graduate of the CDL program at CEO's San Jose office after initially going through CEO's core program in the summer of 2022. With financial support from CEO covering tuition and a weekly stipend, Chris became a certified Class A Commercial Driver with Tanker Endorsement, which allows him to operate large commercial vehicles.

"All of the staff members were super supportive," he said. "Everybody was there to change their lives. I felt like I was one of them right away."

Chris said that earning his CDL is one of his most significant accomplishments and gives him a new sense of security. **"I'm always going to have a job no matter what,"** he said. **"That means everything to me."**

Chris currently works at a job he loves, doing traffic flagging. He's been there for a full year, which is another big achievement. "It feels good to be responsible," Chris said. "I'm always on time. I always want to learn. I've got a good attitude, and I work hard. Grateful for the support, he shared, **"CEO is my everything. It has helped me so much."**



# INCLUSIVE HIRING

Talent development is only part of the equation in achieving economic mobility for justice-impacted job-seekers. Equally critical is cultivating a business landscape where inclusive employment practices are the norm, creating equitable pathways for this talent pool to enter and enrich the workforce.

Addressing this essential piece, CEO's **Inclusive Hiring** Team is guiding businesses to discover the benefits of fair chance hiring through cutting-edge strategies that bolster their talent pipelines, enhance workforce diversity, and drive overall company success. Our workforce advisory services are paired with strategic partnerships with industry associations, government agencies and other community stakeholders to amplify our collective impact and ensure widespread access to knowledge, tools and resources for fair chance hiring.

**Advisory Services:** CEO's Inclusive Hiring Team equips businesses with evidence-based strategies to launch and refine their fair chance hiring programs, while offering hands-on support throughout the implementation process.

**Talent Pipeline Development:** We assist employers in building relationships with local community partners that serve justice-impacted job-seekers, opening doors to a wider pool of qualified candidates.

**Tools & Resources:** We develop innovative tools and resources that make fair chance hiring more accessible and beneficial for employers and candidates. Additionally, we connect employers with valuable external resources, such as the Federal Bonding Program and Work Opportunity Tax Credits, ensuring they are leveraging all available opportunities and benefits.

## 2023 Inclusive Hiring Impact

- **29,000** job-seekers and HR professionals received training through our online courses and learning events
- **8** employers received advisory services on fair chance hiring best practices



# SYSTEMS CHANGE

With our **Policy Committee and Advocacy Leadership Committee (ALC)**, we push policymakers to reform the laws, regulations, and discriminatory institutions that keep justice-impacted people from success in the workforce, including reducing incarceration and legal responses that disproportionately harm people and communities of color. This includes direct

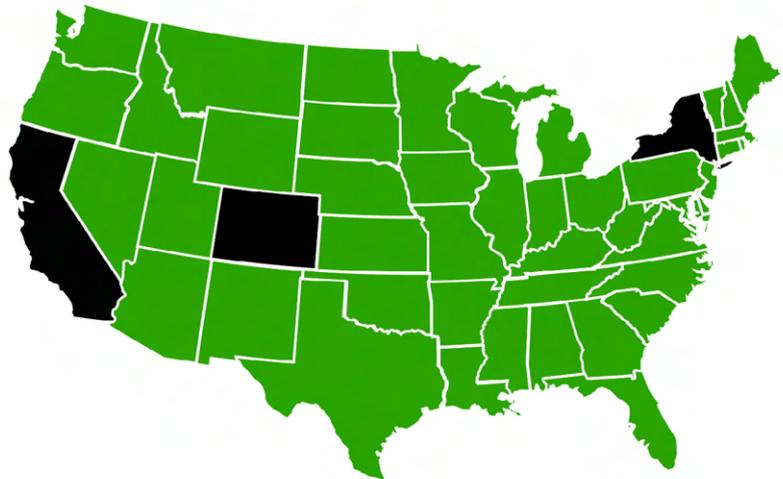
reentry cash support and safety net benefits, job training that is targeted to the particular needs of workers with legal system involvement, and a network of employers, training partners, and reentry organizations that intentionally join forces to support each participant's value as a worker.

## POLICY WINS

**Training and Nutrition Stability Act (TNSA) and RESTORE Act included in the Farm Bill Negotiations**

**CEO led advocacy in introducing the bipartisan, bicameral Training and Nutrition Stability Act, H.R.3087/S. 3190.** Soon after Senator Gillibrand and Senator Ricketts introduced their measure, both U.S House and Senate leadership included this policy fix in their respective Farm Bill frameworks. Passing this legislation would correct a significant flaw within the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) that forces people to choose between essential job training and food security by disregarding the income earned in those programs from SNAP eligibility.

Since the Farm Bill is the country's largest food security package considered by Congress, two of our participant advocates Eddie and Yasmeen travelled to DC to lead a briefing advocating for passage of the RESTORE



Act, S.1753, to lift the SNAP lifetime ban for those with drug convictions. Their advocacy was published in an **op-ed in the Hill** calling for this policy change.

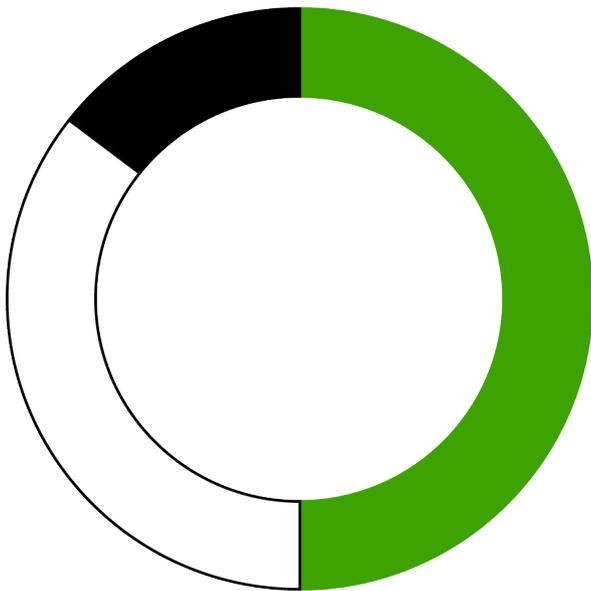
In **California**, our advocates supported the implementation of the **CalHIRE** program, the largest state-funded reentry workforce program that sets aside up to 30% of funds for direct cash support for program participants, championed reentry cash as part of the **California Guaranteed Income Now** and testified on behalf of SB1375 which would increase investment in workforce services by setting aside a

percentage of federal dollars to go towards reentry-focused workforce development in the transportation industry.

Access to financial support during reentry continues to be a key priority across multiple states. In **New York**, CEO has led the Coalition for Reentry Cash supporting A9115/S6643A, which would **reform gate money in New York** and increase it to \$2,665 for individuals leaving prison, and in **Colorado** supported **SB 12** which would establish a reentry cash pilot program and provide up to \$3,000 to individuals participating in evidence-based reentry workforce programs.

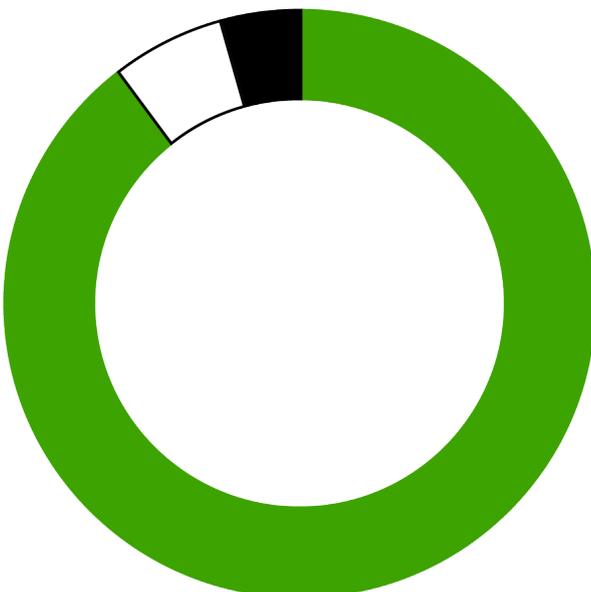
# FY2023 FINANCIALS

July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023



## Revenue \$101,892,940

	Program Service Contracts \$72,330,297
	Contributions \$28,943,179
	Interests & Other Incomes \$619,464



## Expenses \$100,359,172

	Program Services \$89,772,033
	General & Administrative \$6,347,842
	Fundraising \$4,239,297

# WAYS TO POWER CHANGE THAT WORKS

When you make a gift to the Center for Employment Opportunities, you help build and expand pathways for justice-impacted individuals to achieve social and economic mobility.

**Online/Donation page**  
[ceoworks.org/donate](https://ceoworks.org/donate)

### Checks

Please make all checks payable to the “**Center for Employment Opportunities, Inc.**” and mail to:

**Attn: Development**  
**Center for Employment Opportunities**  
50 Broadway, Suite 1604  
New York, NY 10004

*Please contact [gifts@ceoworks.org](mailto:gifts@ceoworks.org) to help you give in any of the following ways:*

### Matching Gift

Many employers have matching gift programs that multiply the impact of their employees. Retirees and spouses of employees may also qualify for a corporate match.

### Stocks and Donor Advised Funds

Making a stock or donor-advised fund (DAF) gift can maximize your impact.

### In-Kind Donations

In-kind donations are gifts of goods. Please complete our online [form](#).

### Legacy Giving

A planned gift in your will is a lasting investment to CEO advancing our mission and ensuring our ability to provide a job and support to individuals returning from prison.

### Host a Fundraiser

To host a peer-to-peer fundraiser, set up a page [here](#).





**Center for  
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