



Center for  
Employment  
Opportunities

# QUALITY JOBS & REENTRY



The Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) is the nation's largest reentry employer. CEO operates in 31 sites across 12 states to provide comprehensive workforce development services exclusively to individuals returning back to their communities from incarceration.

## THE ISSUE

More than half a million individuals return home from prison each year eager to rejoin the workforce and be successful. However, up to **75 percent of people who have been incarcerated face persistent unemployment** up to a year after their release. Without structural changes, opportunities for fulfilling jobs remain limited. For example, while there is broad discretion for states and localities to leverage federal workforce investments into infrastructure development or sector-training, few of these funds reach people who are systems-impacted. Additionally, when designing job training, returning individuals seldom have the opportunity to define what a quality job means for them.

## JOB QUALITY AT CEO — EVIDENCE & STRATEGY

At CEO we believe that every person, regardless of their past, should have the opportunity to obtain a job that supports their social and economic mobility. There are multiple job barriers that must be addressed during reentry: lack of skills training; limited access to employers and unnecessary exclusions to a job for those with a prior felony; large gaps in employment history; and challenges related to health, housing, transportation, and childcare. In addition to removing structural barriers, we must also foster the tremendous value of impacted workers and increase access to quality jobs as part of a healthy economy, strong communities, and thriving families.



### JOB QUALITY METRICS IN OUR PROGRAMMING

CEO integrated the Job Quality Metric (JQM) into our data gathering to improve job placements, specifically tracking: **job satisfaction, wages, hours/schedule, benefits, and commute**. We also advocate for public policy and employer hiring practice change to open up more career pathways for individuals returning home.



### INVESTMENTS IN ADVANCED TRAINING

CEO invests in **advanced training in transportation, construction, information technology (IT), and human services**. CEO pays for training + cost of the credential for a Commercial Driver's License (CDL), CompTIA certifications, and completing union-led pre-apprenticeships.



### LEADING WITH CONSTITUENT VOICE

The Quality Jobs Committee is a group of **16 CEO participants and program alumni spanning across 9 states** who engage in leadership development through storytelling and policy advocacy. Committee members advocate for policy improvements that will make access to high caliber jobs less challenging for returning individuals.



"A quality job for me is having accessible opportunities to learn & grow." - Antonia, TN



"A workplace that's free of prejudice and bias." - John, CA



"Doing something you like, something you trained for, and giving back to others." - Fred, PA

Learn more at [CEOWorks.org](http://CEOWorks.org)



# RECOMMENDATIONS

CEO's Quality Jobs committee members hope that sharing their stories inspire and motivate others who are coming home. However, CEO recognizes that no matter how many people we can help transition into employment, government leaders must reform the laws, regulations, and discriminatory practices that further exacerbate the harms of incarceration. **Policy Committee members agree that the following elements define a quality job:**



**Living Wage:** Income earned supports self-sufficiency and mobility



**Benefits:** Fair support that allows individuals healthy, secure lives



**Skill-Building Opportunities:** Training progression for new skills and career growth



**A Non-Biased Workplace:** Employers foster fair workplaces that don't stigmatize workers for a past conviction



**Fulfilling Work:** Job access based on both interests and skills recognizing that impacted workers will have different job goals

## FEDERAL AND STATE LAWMAKERS CAN:

1. **Invest in Reentry Employment:** Lawmakers should invest in paid reentry job training that both prioritizes quality jobs access, and stages appropriate levels of training for individuals who may be returning from prison with no prior work experience or after a long period of incarceration.
2. **Track Data & Encourage Collaboration:** Workforce agencies should collect measures of job quality, and incentivize partnerships across reentry organizations, unions, training providers, and employers which may, collectively, provide a better pathway to a job.

## What does a quality job mean for you?

More from CEO's Job Quality Policy Committee



"A good wage, benefits, working at a place that's not toxic (no micro-management, great communication, your team can meet you half way)." ~Tonya, OH

"Growth is important - advancing and learning new skills, educational opportunities." ~William, MI



"Good benefits to help with childcare." ~Melvina, GA

"Being a part of something where you feel like you can actually get something done." ~James, OK



"A place where there's room for growth, has a decent salary, want to feel fulfilled." ~ Sean, CA

"Equity and sustainability with jobs, and living a debt free life." ~Melinda, OH