

H.O.P.E. Initiative

Helping Offenders Pursue Employment

TALENT FOR TOMORROW



Increase the number of offenders who leave prison with a job already secured.

Why?

Missouri has the eighth highest incarceration rate in the nation. Nationally, 75% of former offenders are still unemployed a year after being released from prison.

Between **18,000 and 20,000** offenders are released from Missouri prisons every year.

Of those, the Department of Corrections estimates that about 80% are capable of entering the workforce with proper training and support. Employment reduces recidivism by up to 20%, with a greater impact when offenders are employed closer to the release date.

What?

The Department of Corrections is currently working closely with local stakeholders, government agencies, and employers to address workforce shortages around the State of Missouri. Through internal mechanisms, such as Missouri Vocational Enterprises factories and the Division of Offender Rehabilitative Service career and technical programs, incarcerated men and women are trained in highly employable and skilled fields. Training skilled labor through these programs, as well as additional programs offered through other state agencies and reentry stakeholders, creates an untapped pipeline of potential employees. The goal through this collaborative work is to train and place 3,000 offenders in jobs by 2021.

How?

By unifying the internal and external training programs through a collaborative approach to job reporting, the workforce shortage in Missouri can be addressed with a trained and ready-to-work labor force.

When?

The H.O.P.E initiative targets offenders nearing release from incarceration. The implementation process would advance in nine month increments beginning with minimum security prisons in months 1-9, expanding to medium security prisons in months 10-18, and to maximum security prisons in months 19-27. By March of 2021, the H.O.P.E. Initiative will reach full capacity.

Opportunities

Addresses specific workforce needs

Engages regional and statewide business leaders

Engages local communities and stakeholders in enhancing public safety

Engages large numbers of legislators

Avoids political approach to funding for special projects

Provides an opportunity to announce investments around the state

Holds institutions accountable for results

Collaboration between state agencies provides a national model for workforce development