

TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT NOTICE	NO. 24-16
	DATE December 20, 2016

TO: STATE WORKFORCE AGENCY ADMINISTRATORS
STATE WORKFORCE ADMINISTRATORS WORKFORCE INNOVATION
AND OPPORTUNITY ACT
STATE WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT LIAISONS
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD STATE AND LOCAL EXECUTIVE
DIRECTORS
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD STATE AND LOCAL CHAIRS
AMERICAN JOB CENTER MANAGERS
ALL EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ADMINISTRATION GRANTEES

FROM: PORTIA WU/s/
Assistant Secretary

SUBJECT: Release and Availability of Five Issue Briefs from an Evaluation of the “Linking to Employment Activities Pre-Release (LEAP) Specialized American Job Centers”

1. **Purpose.** To announce the release and availability of issue briefs from the current evaluation of the Linking to Employment Activities Pre-Release (LEAP) Specialized American Job Centers. These briefs provide lessons learned and implementation issues faced by grantees working to provide employment and training services for incarcerated individuals.
2. **Background.** The LEAP pilot grants were issued to support the development of service models to provide career development and training services to individuals before release from incarceration in local jails. In June 2015, the Employment and Training Administration awarded [20 grants \(https://www.dol.gov/newsroom/releases/eta/eta20151117\)](https://www.dol.gov/newsroom/releases/eta/eta20151117) of approximately \$500,000 each to local workforce investment boards with demonstrated partnerships with their county or municipal governments and their county, municipal, or regional correctional facilities.

In September 2015, DOL awarded a contract to Mathematica Policy Research, in partnership with Social Policy Research Associates, to conduct a three year, cross-site implementation evaluation of the LEAP pilot grants, including an early implementation component to identify lessons learned during the planning period. The purpose of the evaluation is to better understand the elements of the LEAP pilot programs as implemented, the client flow and services provided, the partnerships involved, the coordination with community-based full-service and satellite One-Stop Career Centers/American Job Centers (AJCs), and the administrative and reporting strategies adopted to manage activities, staff, and results.

Key research questions included:

- How is the LEAP grant tailored to the local jail and workforce context?

- What types of services are delivered through the jail-based AJCs funded by LEAP?
- How do LEAP participants transition to services at community-based AJCs upon release?
- What types of services do LEAP participants receive at community-based AJCs?
- How is data on participants collected, shared, and reported?
- How do stakeholders view LEAP?
- What do LEAP grantees report as the most promising elements of implementation and under what conditions can they be replicated?

[A second and third round of LEAP grants](#)

(<https://www.dol.gov/newsroom/releases/eta/eta20160624>) were awarded to 11 organizations in June 2016 and to 10 organizations in September 2016, respectively.

3. Publication Description. These briefs document the early lessons from and explore implementation issues faced by the pilots.

- [Bridging Workforce Development and Corrections Cultures Issue Brief—Early Lessons from LEAP](#)
(https://www.dol.gov/asp/evaluation/completed-studies/IB_MPR_SPR_LEAP_Culture.pdf)
Key Findings include: 1) Formal staff trainings and co-location of workforce staff at the jail during the planning phase helped to strengthen the jail-based AJCs and acclimate workforce staff into jail culture and norms. 2) Although developing a jail-based AJC requires adjustment by both workforce development and jail partners, the level of accommodation and acculturation was generally higher for workforce staff who viewed themselves as “guests” who needed to conform to jail guidelines and rules.
- [Internet Access for Pre-Release Job Search Training Issue Brief—Early Lessons from LEAP](#)
(https://www.dol.gov/asp/evaluation/completedstudies/IB_MPR_SPR_LEAP_Internet%20Access.pdf)
Key Findings include: 1) Planning for Internet installation soon after grant award was critical, given the inherent delays and complexity of establishing Internet access in previously unwired jail settings. 2) Adequate budgeting for both equipment purchases and space upgrades was essential to support Internet installation and access in jails.
- [Structuring Employment-Based Services Within Jail Spaces and Schedules Issue Brief—Early Lessons from LEAP](#)
(https://www.dol.gov/asp/evaluation/completed-studies/IB_MPR_SPR_LEAP_JailSpace.pdf)
Key Findings include: 1) Securing the buy-in of corrections officers was just as important as buy-in from jail administrative staff, given the considerable logistics involved with inmate movement and the complexity of daily jail schedules. 2) Early onsite time with jail leadership and staff was critical for understanding space and scheduling parameters, assessing what was feasible, and making necessary adjustments.
- [Staffing Jail-Based American Job Centers Issue Brief—Early Lessons from LEAP](#)
(https://www.dol.gov/asp/evaluation/completed-studies/IB_MPR_SPR_LEAP_Staffing.pdf)

Key Findings include: 1) Lengthy background checks required to work in the jails, difficulty recruiting qualified candidates, and long hiring processes contributed to staffing delays. 2) Grantees sought to hire staff with a combination of criminal justice experience, workforce development experience, group facilitation skills, and interpersonal skills, but found it difficult to find candidates who possessed all of these skills

- [Expediting the Launch of Service Provision Issue Brief—Early Lessons from LEAP \(https://www.dol.gov/asp/evaluation/completed-studies/IB_MPR_SPR_LEAP_QuickStart.pdf\)](https://www.dol.gov/asp/evaluation/completed-studies/IB_MPR_SPR_LEAP_QuickStart.pdf)
Key Findings include: 1) Jail-based AJCs that began serving participants early on in the planning period were able to leverage existing staff, curricula, knowledge, and partner experience to roll out services quickly. 2) Using the proposal and early planning phases of the grant to solidify the service structure and key relationships helped to expedite the launch of jail-based AJC services.
4. **Inquiries.** For more information about this study, contact Megan E. Lizik, Contract Officer's Representative, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Policy, DOL at (202) 693-5911 or lizik.megan@dol.gov.