



Promised Pathways

Integrating Justice Impacted Individuals into Public Service

February 1, 2023



Background

Promised Pathways is one of three initiatives devised during the Local Government 2030 convening in Omaha, Nebraska, November 4-5, 2022.

Goals and Objectives

Promised Pathways is an initiative that envisions a local government workforce that is resilient, equitable, and inclusive by creating employment opportunities in the public sector for justice-impacted individuals. It aims to advocate for racial equity, repair harm, and build trust for those communities affected. This initiative acknowledges that local governments struggle to hire at the rate necessary to sustain operational demand. Local governments everywhere are facing similar issues with high vacancy rates in their workforce and in attracting people to fill in positions and keeping them in place for long-term service. The current workforce lacks capacity, support, and trust.

With Promised Pathways, the goal is to create employment opportunities across departments from an available talent pool. To be successful, the initiative recognizes that local governments must take the first steps and lead by example within their organizations. Additionally, federal, state, and local laws must change to support justice-impacted individuals and their families through policy, programs, and initiatives.

Focus Areas

Promised Pathways recognizes that transformative initiatives require a holistic approach that takes into account the individual and their families/support system, and the institutions and systems through their policies and programs that create the inequities.

Individual and Family Support Systems

Vulnerable situations, a lack of social services, and a system that neglects marginalized communities contribute to the US holding the world's highest incarceration rates. Mass incarceration highlights the racial disparity in incarceration rates with many of the individuals impacted by the justice system often being low-level offenders.

Incarceration not only affects the individual but the family and their communities as well. This pillar aims to prioritize services and programs supporting both incarcerated individuals and their families through this process. It will focus on any efforts already set in place within local government along with community organizations doing the work on the ground to provide wrap-around support that may include: cash assistance, job readiness training, mental health services, child/family support, child care, reentry resources, housing, and violence and abuse prevention.

This pillar is committed to long-term investment in community wealth. The lack of investment in community wealth is often what may create the pipeline for an individual to be incarcerated, but providing support systems while individuals are incarcerated and after they are released is imperative. This is one way to care for these individuals and their families and to provide spaces that allow transformation, repair harm and build trust. If Promised Pathways can provide adequate support

systems, then in turn, there can be a reinvestment and reallocation of social services resources that experience increased demand and decreasing capacity.

Institutions and Systems

Imprisonment disrupts the social structure of families and individuals. In order for families and individuals to be restored upon release from prison, there should be institutions and systems in place to provide wrap-around services, to support those who are coming out of the prison system and back into society. A person's successful reentry into society can be viewed through how adequately they are able to meet six basic life needs: livelihood, residence, family, health, criminal justice compliance, and social connections (Jacobs 2015).

Addressing these challenges will be critical for the future of our justice system, and for the well-being of individuals returning back to society. Thus, the need for a program like Promised Pathways to ensure that individuals and families affected by imprisonment, have the tools and resources to be productive and active citizens upon release.

This pillar will focus on identifying and clarifying how various institutions and systems contribute to the broader pipeline that Promised Pathways hopes to build, with a focus on three streams - incarceration service provision (i.e., prison administration, jail services, and probation services), justice and post-incarceration support service provision (i.e., social services for incarcerated individuals, transition services, etc.), and systems of financing support for currently and recently incarcerated individuals. Upon developing clarity around the current state of affairs, future deliverables will be designed in ways that can be tailored to specific geographic needs.

Policy and Programs

To design a local government employment paradigm that creates space for justice-impacted individuals requires intentional changes to the federal, state, and local policy landscape. Beyond initiatives like 'ban the box' and workforce reentry programs, governments must consider the challenges the formerly incarcerated will face in building their life post-sentence and begin equipping these individuals with the tools, resources, and support structures necessary to navigate life outside of the American correctional system.

Rethinking the way that incarcerated individuals are treated - from booking to release - is critical; coupling this with progressive approaches to qualifying experience requirements and removing artificial barriers to workforce engagement can move the needle on recidivism, provide justice-impacted individuals with gainful employment, and address gaps in the available workforce for critical job functions.

This pillar will focus on the policies and programs necessary to mitigate the barriers to employment in local government for those with a criminal background. The goal is to outline a booking-to-release policy environment that shepherds individuals through the justice system while enabling their pursuit of a career serving their community. Additionally, research and information will be compiled related to the political climate of organizations and communities to prepare future communities with what to expect.

Aside from local government employment laws, information related to policies and programs that enable support programs for families will be provided.

Deliverables

Policy Playbook

The goal of this initiative is to develop a policy playbook for local governments and other sectors to support justice-impacted individuals and their families. The policy playbook will highlight communities across the country that have developed and implemented similar programs, policies, and services including their lessons learned. The pillars will serve as a guide for communities to best determine which approach suits their capacity and political climate. It will also serve as a resource guide in identifying potential non-profit partners already engaged in this work both locally and nationally.

Timeline

Ongoing 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present and gather feedback at conferences
FEB-MAR 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research existing policies and programs Engage higher education institutions for opportunities to leverage research capacities
APR 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify public and non-profit partners currently engaged in similar work to collaborate with and engage
MAY - JUN 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convene 'open house' to provide general public with initiative overview and ways to engage Identify resources and funding to deploy recommendations in Policy Playbook Recruit additional committee members and advocates
AUG - OCT 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compile focus areas research and develop a 'Policy Playbook' for implementation
JAN 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare and distribute progress report
FEB 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present progress at 2nd Local Government 2030 Convening

Team

The team working on this initiative includes the following 12 delegates:

Genesis Gavino	Dallas, TX
Marcus Thomas	Greensboro, NC
Kaelan Boyd	Mecklenburg County, NC
Kirsten Decker	Denver, CO
Patsy Diaz	Chicago, IL
Yuri Hattersley	Bellevue, WA
Steve King	Richmond, VA
Erika Lopez	Portland, OR
Roberto Santamaria	Nantucket, MA
Ryan Webb	Grand Ronde, OR
Molly Wetta	Santa Barbara, CA
Janani Yates	Detroit, MI

Coaches

The team is supported by the following advisors:

- Aimee Kane, Equity Officer, Boulder, CO
- Tanya Ange, County Administrator, Washington County, OR