

HEARTLAND ALLIANCE

NATIONAL INITIATIVES

National Center on Employment & Homelessness

Overview

In 2014, with the support of the Oak Foundation and the Melville Charitable Trust, Heartland Alliance's National Initiatives on Poverty & Economic Opportunity built the framework for a national hub dedicated to ensuring that employment is a key element in the fight to prevent and end homelessness.

National Center on Employment & Homelessness

The National Center on Employment & Homelessness (NCEH) works to ensure that everyone who wants to work, regardless of the barriers they face, has the support and opportunities needed to reach that goal. The Connections Project is our flagship effort and will inform and guide NCEH's ongoing work. NCEH will:

Promote Employment as a Fundamental Solution to Homelessness. NCEH will seek acknowledgement and commitment from providers, policies, and systems, at all levels and geographies, that employment in quality jobs is a key element for ending homelessness.

Identify and Advance Evidence-Based Employment Interventions. NCEH will ensure that providers have an understanding of best practices and evidence-based employment interventions for people experiencing homelessness and that they have the tools and resources to implement these interventions.

Advance Systems Change. NCEH will educate and influence decision makers in order to open doors to employment for people experiencing homelessness through all relevant federal legislation, appropriations, and programs.

Connect Workforce Development and Homeless Services Systems. NCEH will influence workforce development systems to prioritize serving people experiencing homelessness and will influence homeless services systems to include employment as a core element of their strategies.



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Why Employment for Homeless Jobseekers?

Most people experiencing homelessness want to work or are working but are not earning enough to make ends meet.

- Individuals experiencing homelessness consistently rank paid employment alongside healthcare and housing as a primary need.¹
- When given the opportunity to work, the majority of people facing barriers to employment do so.²
- Many individuals identify unemployment as a primary cause of their homelessness.³

There is growing national awareness around increasing employment and economic opportunity among homeless jobseekers.

- The federal strategic plan to end homelessness recognizes lack of earned income as one of the drivers of homelessness and highlights the importance of increasing economic security among people experiencing homelessness.
- The primary federal funding stream for homeless services requires communities to demonstrate how they are increasing employment and earnings for homeless jobseekers.

The Connections Project

The Connections Project is a three year, place-based, systems-level collaboration and capacity-building project focused on increasing employment and economic opportunity among homeless



jobseekers. The project advances three high-level goals: increasing access to employment services and supports for homeless jobseekers; increasing the number of homeless jobseekers who get and keep employment; and increasing employment income among homeless jobseekers.

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1. Burt, M.R., Aron, L.Y., & Lee, E. (1999). *Homelessness: Programs and the people they serve*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.

2. Redcross, C., et. al. (2010). *Work after prison: One-year findings from the transitional jobs reentry demonstration*. New York, NY: MDRC.

3. Mojtabai, R. (2005). Perceived reasons for loss of housing and continued homelessness among homeless persons with mental illness. *Psychiatric Services*, 56, 172-178.

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National Initiatives on Poverty & Economic Opportunity

Heartland Alliance's National Initiatives on Poverty & Economic Opportunity (NI) is dedicated to ending chronic unemployment and poverty. We believe that every person deserves the opportunity to succeed in work and support themselves and their families. Employment fulfills individuals, strengthens families, builds communities, and is fundamental to a prosperous America.

Through our field building, we provide support and guidance that fosters more effective and sustainable employment efforts. Our policy and advocacy work advances solutions to the systemic issues that drive chronic unemployment. Working at the intersection of practice, policy and research, we catalyze change that is practical, informed by evidence and grounded in experience.

We are home to several initiatives designed to help focus attention on critical populations and solutions:



The **National Center on Employment & Homelessness** (NCEH) is dedicated to ensuring that employment in quality jobs is a key element in the fight to prevent and end homelessness. Through NCEH, we promote employment as a fundamental solution to homelessness; identify and advance evidence-based employment interventions; advance systems change; and connect workforce and homeless service systems. We have launched a competitive process, the **Connections Project**, in which we funded five sites across the U.S. to plan, implement, and strengthen innovative systems collaboration ideas aimed at increasing employment and economic opportunity for homeless jobseekers.



The **National Transitional Jobs Network** (NTJN) is a national coalition that advances employment solutions for chronically unemployed Americans, including Transitional Jobs that combine wage-paid work, job skills training, and supportive services to help individuals facing barriers to employment succeed in the workforce. NTJN supports the work of Transitional Jobs programs through research and evaluation, education and training, and policy advocacy. The NTJN's coalition is made up of city, state, and federal policy makers; community workforce organizations; and anti-poverty nonprofit service providers and advocacy organization.



The **B.MORE Initiative**—Black Men Overcoming Barriers & Realizing Employment—seeks to open doors to employment and economic advancement for low-income black men across the country through policy advocacy, resource creation, and coalition building. We work at the intersections of child support, criminal justice, and employment to promote better policies and to equip providers to run more effective programs.

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