



Arquet

An Employer's Guide to

Successful Fair Chance Hiring

ArouetEmpowers.org



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Acknowledgements

We express our heartfelt gratitude to all those who contributed to the creation of this Fair Chance Hiring guidebook. Their support has been instrumental in making this resource a reality.

Alison Rapping, Shamia Lodge, and Kristal Cordova Mathews researched, wrote, and organized the content of this guidebook. Their collective expertise in the field of Fair Chance Hiring is invaluable and their research—with assistance from Valley Leadership—enriched this guidebook with critical insights and statistics. Joe Watson of Hey Joe Media meticulously edited and proofread the content, ensuring its clarity and cohesiveness. Tobie Group's creativity and talent in designing the layout and visuals has made the guidebook visually appealing and user-friendly. The commitment to quality and attention to detail by Short Run Printing, LTD brought this guidebook to life in its physical form.

The willingness of the Arouet Team—including Brandy Smith, Kim Thomas, Samantha Garcia Pennell, Shaun Land, and Grant Packwood—as well as Checkr.org's Ken Oliver, State Rep. Alma Hernandez, (former) State Sen. Steve Kaiser, Community Bridges, Pipeline AZ, Awake Windows and Doors Co., and Community Medical Services to share their experiences and insights provided real-world context to the information provided.

We are also grateful to all our funders and supporters who have financially invested in our mission and vision, such as JPMorgan Chase and Co., PNC Bank, Bank of America, and many more; and to Valley Leadership, ARIZONA@WORK, and Pipeline AZ for their partnership and collaboration in promoting Fair Chance Hiring practices. Special thanks to the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), LISC Phoenix, and Valley of the Sun United Way for the initial funding that made all of Arouet's workforce efforts possible.

To all for their dedication to the cause of Fair Chance Hiring: Thank you! Together, we can build a more just and inclusive society.

From the desk of **THE CEO**



Every willing person deserves the opportunity to work. They deserve to be able to support themselves and their families, pursue life goals, and strengthen their communities. I'd argue that it's a fundamental human right. Yet, this is not the case for **more than 80 million Americans with a conviction or arrest history**. We always hear that failure doesn't define us. We're told that what we do after we fail determines the kind of person we are. But our willingness to work, change, and rebuild must also be met with a Fair Chance to succeed.

Half of Americans have family members who have been incarcerated. They are our brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, spouses, daughters, and sons. And as formerly incarcerated people, they are unemployed at a rate of **over 27%**, which is both higher than the total U.S. unemployment rate at any time in history and an unsustainable burden

on families everywhere. This number doesn't reflect their quality of character or differences in aspirations but rather a lack of public will, policy, and practice to do better.

The current hiring process is broken. Keeping this group of people out of the workforce costs us in every way imaginable. The research is there. The benefits of inclusion are proven. The time to act is now.

As an organization dedicated to empowering incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women with education, workforce development, and job opportunities, Arouet is so much more than a nonprofit. We're a group of passionate people working tirelessly to create a movement. One that changes hearts and minds and creates a brighter, more sustainable future for us all.

Confronting the challenges to re-entry starts with all of us, and it will take hard work. But it's worth it. There is so much untapped potential among those who are formerly incarcerated and so much benefit to employers who decide to embrace Fair Chance Hiring practices. We know because we see it every day.

I hope you find the information in this guidebook to be helpful, inspiring, and just what you need to start transforming lives, communities, and your business.

Alison
Alison Rapping, Arouet CEO

Fair Chance: An Overview

An Employer's Guide to Successful Fair Chance Hiring provides an in-depth evaluation of both the challenges and potential of reintegrating formerly incarcerated individuals into the workforce. This includes key barriers to entry for this population of workers; the economic, communal, and organizational consequences of recidivism; and tools, resources, and actionable steps that policymakers and/or small business owners can take to implement Fair Chance Hiring successfully.

Key highlights include:

- ◆ The state of reentry and employment for formerly incarcerated individuals
- ◆ Use cases on successful Fair Chance Hiring strategies
- ◆ An overview of Arouet's four-phase transition model (Program Inside, Release, Engagement & Ongoing Support)
- ◆ Best practices for Fair Chance Hiring, including pre-hire and weekly onboarding checklists
- ◆ Industry Leaders insights on the promise and growth of Fair Chance Hiring

Readers will learn how to:

- ◆ Take steps to improve reentry and unemployment for the formerly incarcerated
- ◆ Drive measurable gains in efficiency, productivity, and revenue through Fair Chance Hiring
- ◆ Apply the right tools and strategies to make Fair Chance Hiring work for their organization
- ◆ Join a critical movement to overcome the stigma of hiring people with an arrest or conviction history



50%

of Managers want to hire the best candidate for the job

\$635 million

state-level annual savings by decreasing recidivism by 10%

13%

lower turnover in employees that have a conviction

45,000

State and federal release conditions that formerly incarcerated people must meet after they are released from prison

By the Numbers:

- ◆ **The No. 1 predictor** of recidivism is joblessness.
- ◆ State and federal statutes mandate or sanction approximately **45,000** release conditions that formerly incarcerated people must meet after they are released from prison, including what they can do for a living, where they live, and whether they can vote.
- ◆ For the first year following their release from prison, **70%** of people who are formerly incarcerated report no income at all. By their second year of release, **55%** earn approximately **\$10,000** per year.
- ◆ Lowering the recidivism rate by just **10%** could save states an average of **\$635 million** annually.
- ◆ People with a conviction history tend to be more loyal with **13%** less turnover, creating an estimated **\$800** in savings per employee.
- ◆ **50%** of managers want to hire the best candidate for the job regardless of their conviction history.

There are currently **more jobs than there are people to fill them in** the United States. Fair Chance Hiring is a proven strategy for narrowing today's record-breaking skills gap. It benefits the employees, the communities where they live and work, and those who employ them. A shift in thinking is needed in today's business climate. The concept of Fair Chance Hiring is gaining traction among policymakers and business owners, going well beyond community leaders and worker advocates. The time to get involved is now.

Leaders in Support of Fair Chance Hiring:

Fair Chance Hiring Gains Support Across the Spectrum

Supporting Fair Chance employment, thereby reducing recidivism and lowering criminal justice costs, is a bipartisan movement that has garnered support from a variety of leaders. Just read what they've had to say in support of Fair Chance Hiring!

ELECTED LEADERS



I firmly believe that a person's worth lies in who they are today, not in their past. This perspective has always been rooted in my faith, a bedrock that guides me to treat everyone as they wish to be treated. It was this ethos that compelled me, as a small business owner before I campaigned for office, to offer second chances to those who had already paid their dues. During job interviews, revelations about conviction histories would often surface. My response was unwavering: It was never about their past, but about the potential for a brighter future.

— (Former) State Rep. Steve Kaiser (R), Arizona LD-2



I am acutely aware of the privilege I have had in my journey. And I know that countless others do not have access to a network of support like mine. That's why I'm committed to working alongside an incredible coalition of fellow lawmakers, service providers, and advocacy organizations across Arizona to create a more just system for us all. Organizations like Arouet, whose work to support justice-impacted women and advocate for inclusive and equitable Fair Chance Hiring practices align perfectly with the values I hold dear.

— State Rep. Alma Hernandez (D), Arizona LD-20




BUSINESS LEADERS



Business biases against hiring [Fair Chance] candidates have always come at a cost to the formerly incarcerated, and now we're seeing the opportunity cost for business and society at large. Today, with the widening talent gap and over 11 million unfilled job openings, recruiting from this untapped source of candidates is no longer a business nicety; it's a business necessity. Our collective economic well-being is tied to citizens' ability to produce and consume goods and services, earn income, and pay taxes. [Fair Chance] hirings open a door for returning citizens to become contributors, not just consumers of our nation's largesse.

— Johnny Taylor, CEO and President of the Society of Human Resource Management



"It's really important from an equity standpoint to provide each and every person—whether they have a record or not—equal access to the American economy and the middle-class economy. We're asking employers not to lower the bar but to lower the barriers. For companies who want to be innovative and on the forefront of tomorrow, the future of work, believe it or not, involves the 80 million people who have a conviction or arrest history. The American economy and businesses can't grow at the levels and pace that they want to scale without them."

— Ken Oliver, Checkr.org



What is Fair Chance Hiring?

Fair Chance Hiring refers to a set of policies and practices—sourcing, evaluating, hiring, retaining, and promoting employees—aimed at providing individuals with a conviction or arrest history an equal opportunity to secure good, impactful, well-paying jobs.

Fair Chance Hiring recognizes that individuals with a record face significant barriers to employment, even after they have served their sentence or completed their probation. These individuals often face discrimination during the hiring process based solely on their conviction history, regardless of their qualifications or ability to perform the job.

Fair Chance Hiring seeks to level the playing field by postponing inquiries about an applicant's conviction history until later in the hiring process, typically after an initial interview or conditional job offer has been made. This allows jobseekers with records to showcase their skills, qualifications, work experience, and values without being judged based on their past mistakes.

The goal of Fair Chance is to provide people with a conviction or arrest history an opportunity to rebuild their lives, find stable employment, and reduce the likelihood of recidivism. By giving applicants a Fair Chance to be considered for employment based on their merits, rather than their conviction or arrest history, employers can tap into a larger pool of talent and contribute to creating a more inclusive and equitable workforce. Fair Chance Hiring aims to increase employment opportunities, reduce discrimination, and promote social and economic inclusion.

It's worth noting that Fair Chance Hiring policies may vary across jurisdictions, as different states, counties, and cities have implemented their own laws and regulations to address this issue.

Recidivism

/rə'sidə,viz(ə)m/

the tendency for people to encounter the justice system after concluding prior terms of prison or probation

Fair Chance Hiring: The Need

Currently, one in three people in the U.S. has a conviction or arrest history. Each year, as roughly **650,000** citizens are released from prison and return to their communities, they face an uphill battle to successful reintegration into society.



Rate per capita of incarcerated residents

Number of people in the US with a criminal record

Citizens released from prison each year in the US



We have the opportunity to provide support to our returning neighbors on their journey to obtain employment. Fulfilling that mission is critical, for several reasons:



Rehabilitation and reintegration: Offering people a Fair Chance can be crucial in their rehabilitation and successful reintegration into their community. It allows them to demonstrate their ability to change and evolve, reducing the likelihood of reoffending.



Reducing recidivism: Research has shown that stable employment significantly reduces recidivism rates. By providing Fair-Chance opportunities, employers contribute to breaking the cycle of crime and create safer communities.



Addressing systemic inequalities: People with records often face significant barriers to employment due to the stigma associated with their past. This can contribute to a cycle of poverty, unemployment, and recidivism. Fair Chance Hiring helps to address systemic inequalities by offering individuals the opportunity to rebuild their lives and support themselves.



Tapping into a new pool of talent: Many individuals with a conviction or arrest history possess valuable skills and talents that often go unrecognized due to their past mistakes. Fair Chance Hiring allows employers to tap into this often-overlooked talent pool, bringing in motivated and dedicated individuals who can contribute positively to the workforce.



Filling labor shortages: With a growing labor shortage in many industries, Fair Chance Hiring can help fill vacant positions. By considering people with records, employers can find skilled and dedicated employees whom others may overlook.

Fair Chance Hiring is not only a compassionate approach but also a practical solution to the economic and public safety issues our communities face. By providing people with a conviction or arrest history an opportunity for employment, we can work towards their rehabilitation, reduce recidivism rates, address systemic inequalities, tap into new pools of talent, and fill labor shortages.

Visit ArouetEmpowers.org or call (480) 660-5854 today to learn how you can partner with us to implement Fair Chance practices in your community.

Fair Chance Hiring:

The Business Case

According to Jeffrey Korzenik, author of the groundbreaking book, *Untapped Talent: How Second Chance Hiring Works for Your Business and the Business Community*, the business case for hiring people with a conviction history is simple:

“We’re running out of labor in the United States.... Workforce growth and productivity of that labor force are the core elements of economic growth in any country and any economy. There are not enough workers to serve your existing customers, let alone grow your business.”



83%

said they would feel comfortable if an employee helping them has a non-violent criminal record.

82%

of Americans said they would feel comfortable patronizing a business known to give those with criminal records a second chance.

51%

said they would be proud to work for an employer who hires people with criminal records.



The deepest and broadest labor pool of opportunity can be found in the 19 million Americans with a felony conviction history. Pioneer business leaders have already discovered that this pool of untapped talent can work not as an employee of last resort but as viable, highly-engaged, and loyal employees.

It's a recipe for productivity that drives profitability.

By implementing Fair Chance Hiring practices, your organization will have the best opportunity to attract the best jobseekers for every job opportunity.

In his book, *Untapped Talent: How Second Chance Hiring Works for Your Business and the Business Community*, Korzenik describes three hiring models: the Disposable Employee Model, the Undifferentiated Model, and the True Second Chance Model. (Korzenik uses the terms "Second

Chance" and "Fair Chance" interchangeably.) It is the latter of these—the True Second Chance model—Korzenik argues, that is the most effective model for attracting and keeping the best workers. It involves the following:

- **Process and Partners (Internal hiring practices and wrap-around services)**
- **Building the Talent Pipeline and Having Alternative Talent Pipelines**
- **Employee Support Process**
- **Finding the Right Nonprofit Partner**

Implementing a True Second Chance Model is an investment like any other investment in a chosen talent pool. It requires knowledge and processes that can determine the best fit for the position and also support the employee's prosperity and growth.

THE CRISIS OF UNEMPLOYMENT FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE FORMERLY INCARCERATED

Should your past mistakes keep you from realizing your full potential today? The answer for nearly all of us would be a resounding “no.” Regardless of their intellect, achievements, ambition, or potential, people with a conviction history are often reduced to a single checkbox on a job or housing application that effectively disqualifies them from working in favorable positions that pay a livable wage or from renting homes in safe communities.

According to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, there are currently **6.1 million unemployed workers available to fill 10.1 million job openings**, a phenomenon of more open jobs than unemployed people that the U.S. has never before experienced. For years, employers have been struggling to fill an increasingly growing skills gap due to a lack of prospects with the right training for available positions. Now, the job market has reached a unique inflection point. If organizations want to fill these job openings, they must raise wages or find more innovative ways to recruit workers.

Today’s population of unemployed, formerly incarcerated individuals in the U.S.—which totals nearly 1.5 million people—represents a massive pool of talent that few companies have considered.

With one fell swoop of a background check, these high-performing candidates are dismissed. Of course, it’s critical that employers practice due diligence during the hiring process. (Not doing so is negligent, at best, and can open organizations to legal action should the new hire be convicted of committing a new felony.) Yet, relying on these background checks alone can be extremely harmful and trigger a destructive cycle of behavior the potential hire is struggling to leave behind.

The number one
predictor of recidivism is

Joblessness

For the first year following their release from prison, 70% of formerly incarcerated individuals report no income. Only 55% report any employment at all in their second full year of release and just \$10,000 per year in earnings, less than half of the average cost of living per person in the U.S. (\$20,194), according to research from the **Bureau of Labor Statistics**.



In addition, state and federal statutes mandate or sanction approximately 45,000 release conditions that formerly incarcerated people must meet after returning to their communities from prison, including employment and housing restrictions and whether they have the right to vote. Depending on the industry, formerly incarcerated individuals are ineligible for certain licenses that would advance their careers. Steep fines can make it nearly impossible to regain one's driver's license. People who are formerly incarcerated face a variety of consequences that make their re-entry and recovery exceedingly difficult.

From a young age, we're taught that following laws is part of the path to a life of success and that, conversely, breaking laws leads to hardship. This moral teaching, though well-intended, has led to a social construct in which we punish people for years, even decades, after their release from prison. The collateral consequences of this are astounding. It harms our communities, endangers our economy, and depletes organizations seeking qualified talent.

Incarceration costs the U.S. approximately **\$80.7 billion annually in public prisons and jails and over \$3.9 billion in privately-run facilities.** We continue to pour money into a model that delivers a net loss on our investment.



Four out of every five individuals who leave prison will return in the future. No one is served by this revolving prison door. Both sides of the political aisle agree that we must get smart about criminal justice reform. Legislative initiatives, coupled with more willing and forward-looking employers, are needed to help people with a conviction history find employment. **The First Step Act**, signed into law in December 2018, was a great start. We need to continue building off this momentum to create lasting change.

Every day, companies strategize about making the right investment that will bring the biggest return to their bottom line. Innovation is driving them to think outside the box and take advantage of a trend that's not only making dollars but also making sense. Companies are outsourcing to third parties for temporary or permanent workers, and trends are pushing these brands to become more socially conscious.

For so many organizations, Fair Chance Hiring is a viable solution.

Industry Snapshot:

Why Fair Chance Hiring Works



Industry Snapshot:

82%

of executives find their Fair Chance hires are as successful as their traditional hires

50%

of managers say they want to hire the best candidate, regardless of criminal record

13%

Lower turnover rate in employers who hire workers with conviction history

Fair Chance practices are more than just a fad or quick fix. With the right legislation and collaboration between businesses and policymakers, they can become a sustainable solution to a very real problem by creating immense value for decades to come. Fair Chance Hiring pairs organizations paying livable wages with eager, dedicated employees.

Global brands like McDonald's, Delta, Comcast, and Aetna are providing Fair Chance opportunities as part of their inclusion strategy, with impressive results. The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) reports that **82% of executives find their Fair Chance hires to be at least as successful as their traditional hires**. SHRM's research also shows that most managers and HR professionals find the "quality of hire" for workers with a conviction or arrest history to be as good or better than those with a traditional background. And 50% of managers say they want to hire the best candidate for the job, regardless of criminal record.

At the same time, a recent study by Kellogg School of Management found there was **no difference in termination rates between employees with or without a conviction history**. In fact, employers who hired workers with a conviction history had a 13% lower turnover rate, creating an **estimated \$800 in savings** per employee. SHRM concludes that today, only 14% of HR managers refuse to consider Fair Chance Hiring practices.



It really takes employers who are willing to let go of their biases in pursuit not only of equality but of the best candidates.

— **Lucius Couloute, policy analyst at the Prison Policy Initiative**



On the consumer side, a recent study from the Koch Institute and SHRM found that 78% of Americans feel comfortable buying goods or services from businesses where **the customer-facing employee has a non-violent conviction history**. More than half feel comfortable buying from businesses where the employee was incarcerated for five or more years. Overall, 75% feel comfortable if the brands they do business with choose to give a second chance to those who have a conviction history. Research also shows that Fair Chance Hiring has virtually no effect on corporate culture, with 76% of those surveyed saying they'd be comfortable working for an employer known to engage in Fair Chance practices.



HEAR FROM OUR EMPLOYER PARTNERS

Community Medical Services is a rapidly growing organization, and partnering with other Fair Chance organizations to provide opportunities to candidates who can directly or indirectly relate to our vision only adds to our organizational dedication. Not only do we add amazing talent to our teams and build our pipelines accordingly, but we also gain individuals who are excited and determined to make a positive impact in our communities.

— Jena Hirth, CMS





To start, [Fair Chance] means connecting with strong community partners who are aligned with our values. This has, by far, been the best way to find the right individuals for our company.

Next, the hiring process looks different. We conduct 'roaming interviews' where individuals arrive as they are (no special interview dress code) and tour our facility. They get a chance to meet others who have been in their shoes and have an opportunity to get a feel for whether or not this is the type of work for them. We look at former employers, personal references, family support system, even disciplinary records while incarcerated to get an idea of whether or not this is an employee who could thrive at our company.

Finally, after they are hired, employees have access to resources. We have a full-time position dedicated to assisting employees with wrap-around services such as housing, transportation, or other services they may need. Employees meet with their supervisors on a monthly basis to ensure they are comfortable in their job and cared for. Any issues that arise can be referred to our training coordinator to provide support and help them succeed.

In the future, we would love to launch a peer support program allowing the wealth of experience and passion found in our employees to help others to reach their full potential.

— Joe Mason, Awake Door & Windows



66%

would be proud to work for an organization that offered training, guidance, or mentorship to people with criminal records

57%

said they would be proud to work for an organization who publicly addresses the stigmas that people with criminal records face

52%

agree that employers should do all they can to help people with criminal records get jobs

Fair Chance Hiring: Where To Begin

If you are just getting started and want to implement Fair Chance Hiring practices in your organization, here are **10 steps you should follow**:

01

Educate yourself: Understand the concept of Fair Chance Hiring, its benefits, and its legal requirements. Research organizations and case studies that have successfully embraced Fair Chance Hiring to learn from their experiences.

02

Assess your current hiring practices: Review your current hiring policies and procedures to identify any potential barriers or biases that may prevent individuals with records from being considered. Look for areas where you can make changes to promote Fair Chance Hiring.

03

Obtain support from leadership: Gain support from key decision-makers in your organization, such as executives or the HR department, by highlighting the benefits of Fair Chance Hiring, including access to a larger talent pool and the potential for reduced turnover.

04

Establish a Fair Chance Hiring policy: Develop a clear and well-defined Fair Chance Hiring policy that outlines your organization's commitment to providing individuals with records an equal opportunity for employment. This policy should include guidelines on how records will be considered and evaluated during the hiring process.

05

Train hiring managers and staff: Provide training to hiring managers and staff on Fair Chance Hiring, including the legal framework, unconscious biases, and strategies for evaluating candidates with records. This training will help ensure a fair and consistent approach during the hiring process.

06

Adjust job applications and advertisements: Review your job applications and advertisements to remove any barriers that may discourage applicants with records from applying. Avoid asking questions about conviction or arrest history at the initial stages of the application process to allow candidates to showcase their skills and qualifications before disclosure.

07

Implement fair assessment and screening processes: Design an assessment and screening process that allows candidates with records to demonstrate their qualifications and potential job fit. Consider utilizing skills-based assessments, interviews, and reference checks to evaluate candidates fairly.

08

Provide support and resources: Implement support programs – such as mentoring, training, or counseling – to help individuals with records successfully integrate into the workplace and address any potential challenges they may face.

09

Evaluate and monitor progress: Regularly assess the effectiveness of your Fair Chance Hiring practices by tracking key metrics, such as the number of applicants with records, their hiring rates, and their retention rates. Use this data to make improvements and adjustments as needed.

10

Engage with community organizations: Build partnerships with organizations that work with individuals with records, such as re-entry programs or community-based nonprofits. These partnerships can help you identify potential candidates and provide additional resources and support.

By following these steps, you can begin the journey toward implementing Fair Chance Hiring practices in your organization, creating a more inclusive and diverse workforce.



The Arouet Process

OUR FOUR-PHASE TRANSITION MODEL



Arouet is a modern and innovative Fair Chance movement for women transitioning out of the correctional system with a mission of restoring individuals, rebuilding families, and positively impacting communities. We provide preparation for re-entry, workforce development, health and wellness, and successful community integration for career and life success. We continue to fulfill this mission as we enter a new phase of expanding and deepening our services.

When Arouet was founded, we recognized the need to provide wrap-around social support for women exiting Arizona's prison system. With pre- and post-release programs, Arouet

supports women through educational and employment assistance, mentoring, wellness and behavioral health, life skills development, and opportunities for advocacy.

Arouet is working to build a society in which every formerly incarcerated woman has all the opportunities to successfully reintegrate and make productive contributions to our communities. If businesses are asked to hire people returning home from prison without working to fully train people with a conviction history or provide wrap-around components, they are setting up their new employees to fail and hurting the company's bottom line.

Following Arouet's **4-Phase Transition Model** (below), however, can help transform a Fair Chance employee into an employee for life.



PROGRAM INSIDE

Preparation takes place inside prison and includes a detailed curriculum designed to support everything women need to be successful when they re-enter society. Arouet's program includes nine modules that encompass a myriad of topics: from identifying values and crafting a personal mission statement to measuring career readiness and building a successful re-entry plan.



RELEASE

Arouet provides women with guidance and support services for a successful transition home. We ensure that all women are immediately given the help they need once they are outside the prison gates.



ENGAGEMENT


Arouet has built an intensive program comprised of one-on-one mentorship and group workshops, which are designed to build stability and skills that formerly incarcerated women need to successfully reintegrate into the community.



ONGOING SUPPORT


Our Transition Model provides formerly incarcerated women with the opportunity to build strong leadership skills, craft strategic action plans for their personal and professional development, learn about their communities, discover volunteer opportunities, and become more civically engaged.

We do it to strengthen community and promote economic prosperity.



Community Bridges, Inc. (CBI) recognizes the value of employing people who are in recovery from mental health or substance use disorders in roles supporting our clients' treatment. Recognizing the positive impact of having employees who have experienced recovery under similar circumstances to those we serve every day has been vital to Community Bridges making an impact in the communities we serve

— **Jeremey Reed, CBI**



Fair Chance Hiring is critical to give prospective employees equal opportunity in the job market. Companies benefit from a more diverse workforce, with lower turnover. Pipeline AZ is a career development resource for all Arizonans, connecting students and job seekers to training, education, and employment. We ask organizations whether they are a Fair Chance employer at registration. This allows job seekers and supporting workforce organizations access to a dynamic directory of Fair Chance employers. We also work closely with Valley Leadership's Impact Makers to provide resources to employers so they can learn about Fair Chance Hiring practices and policies.

— **Mary Foote, CEO Pipeline AZ**



AROUE T SUCCESS STORIES



Valerie Ochoa's past is just that: the past. Today, she works for Demand Base, a sales and marketing support company for other businesses. What started out as just a business-to-business sales job—a means to escape her confined reality—evolved over the years as she honed her coveted skills, including client relations, demand generation, sales optimization, marketing integration, sales and team development, account management, and much more. Valerie is proof that the desire for education and personal development is all that's needed to become a skilled worker capable of driving desired business outcomes.

'It's not just me. Everywhere I look, I see women thriving,' Ochoa said in a recent interview. 'I see women growing with self-confidence and self-esteem. We're not just gaining job skills. We're learning about ourselves, our strengths, capabilities, and dreams. I am where I am today because successful business leaders once stood where I am in orange, incarcerated.'

'I learned that I can be successful. I can be a positive role model to my children, my family, and my community.'





— **Samantha Garcia Pennell**,
Mentor & Volunteer Services
Manager

What impact has Fair Chance Hiring had on you personally?

I had never had a chance to stand on my own experience and be viewed as a peer. Fair Chance Hiring has changed my life. The stigma of 'felon' is not a life sentence anymore. I get to be the best version of myself and embrace my definition of success.

If there was no Fair Chance Hiring, how would your life be different now?

If there was no chance of someone taking a chance on me, I most likely would have reverted back to my old life. I have been able to change the trajectory of my life as well as my family's.



Fair Chance Hiring has been a game changer for me. As someone previously incarcerated, one of the biggest challenges and obstacles in the past, has been finding not just a job, but an opportunity to thrive.

— **Brandy Smith, Director of Programming**



The term 'Fair Chance' is subjective at best. In my experience, those that claim to be 'Fair Chance' or 'Felon Friendly' proclaim it in name only. The restrictions and limitations on how 'fair' or 'friendly' an organization truly is are vast and misleading.

In my first year of release, I was told 'No' 33 times, and every one of those employers claimed to be 'Fair Chance' or 'Felon Friendly'.

I wish that, instead of proclaiming how altruistic they were, companies would simply hire on merit.

— **Kim Thomas, Program Coordinator**

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

In addition to Arouet, there are other resources companies can utilize. A few are:

- 1. Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES)** – DES offers various employment programs and resources for jobseekers, including those with conviction histories. Through DES, employers can file for federal bonding and the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC).

- a. FEDERAL BONDING**

- i. The Federal Bonding Program is a federal initiative. Employers can receive up to \$5,000 of Fidelity Bond insurance for a six-month period at no cost and no deductible for at-risk jobseekers. After six months, employers can buy additional bonding for the employee.

- b. WORK OPPORTUNITY TAX CREDIT (WOTC)**

- i. The WOTC program in Arizona provides tax credits to employers who hire individuals from specific groups, including those with conviction histories. Here are the requirements for employers when claiming the WOTC for employees with a conviction history:

1. **Employee Eligibility:** The employee must be a member of a group eligible for the WOTC.
 2. **Certification Process:** To claim the WOTC, employers must obtain certification from the Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES) by submitting Form 8850 (Pre-Screening Notice and Certification Request for the Work Opportunity Credit). This form must be completed by the eligible employee within 28 days of their hire date.
 3. **Form 9061:** In addition to Form 8850, the employer may also need to collect Form 9061 (Individual Characteristics Form) or another appropriate form based on the group the employee belongs to. This form provides additional information about the employee.
 4. **Employer Certification:** The employer must complete the applicable parts of Form 8850, including information about the business and the job offered to the employee.
 5. **Submission to DES:** After completing the required forms, the employer must submit them to the Arizona DES within the designated time frame.

6. Recordkeeping: Employers should maintain accurate records and documentation related to WOTC certification, including copies of Form 8850 and any other required forms
7. Claiming the Credit: Once the certification is approved by DES, the employer can claim the WOTC on their federal income tax return. The credit amount varies based on the group, the number of hours worked, and the wages paid during the first year of employment.

ii. It's essential for employers to ensure they comply with the latest DES requirements when claiming the WOTC for employees with a conviction history. If you have questions or need assistance, consider consulting with a tax professional or DES, or just contact Arouet.

2. ARIZONA@WORK – A statewide workforce development network designed to connect jobseekers with employers, providing a comprehensive range of employment-related services.

3. Local Nonprofit Organizations – Like Arouet, there are numerous local nonprofits in Arizona that focus on helping individuals with conviction histories find employment opportunities and support their reintegration into society.



ADDITIONAL WAYS TO SUPPORT



Advocacy

1. **Advocate for Fair Chance Hiring:** Raise awareness about the importance of giving individuals with records a Fair Chance by speaking at community events, writing articles or blog posts, and sharing information on social media platforms.
2. **Advocate for Policy Changes:** Advocate for policy changes at the local, state, and federal levels that promote Fair Chance Hiring. This can include supporting legislation that provides incentives for employers who hire individuals with a record or advocating for the sealing or expungement of certain felony convictions.



Philanthropy

1. **Partner with Community Organizations:** Collaborate with local organizations that work with individuals with records to create job placement and training programs. This can help to establish a pipeline of qualified candidates for Fair Chance Hiring initiatives.
2. **Create Internship or Apprenticeship Opportunities:** Offer internships or apprenticeships specifically designed for individuals with records. This allows them to gain valuable work experience and develop new skills, increasing their chances of successful employment in the future.
3. **Provide Supportive Services:** Offer additional supportive services to help individuals successfully transition into the workforce. This can include providing transportation assistance, childcare resources, or access to mental health services.
4. **Encourage Workforce Development Programs:** Support and fund workforce development programs that specifically aim to train and prepare individuals with records for employment. This can help them gain industry-specific skills and certifications.



Internal Practices

1. **Offer Training and Education:** Provide training and education programs for both employers and job seekers with criminal records. This can include workshops on interviewing skills, resume writing, and job search strategies.
2. **Engage Business Leaders:** Engage business leaders and executives to champion Fair Chance Hiring within their organizations. Encourage them to share success stories and promote the benefits of hiring individuals with records.
3. **Implement Ban the Box Policies:** Remove the checkbox on job applications that asks about criminal history upfront. This allows individuals to be evaluated based on their qualifications and skills without their record being considered.
4. **Create Inclusive Hiring Practices:** Develop hiring practices that are inclusive and focus on individuals' potential rather than their past. Look for transferable skills, experiences, and character traits that align with the job requirements.





Everyone has that moment in life when something so earth-shattering happens that it tears them apart. For me, it was the realization that millions of people – and subsequently, the families they are part of, communities they serve, and organizations that employ them – suffer because of a box that must be checked on a job application. The current hiring process is broken. Keeping this group of people out of the workforce costs us in every way imaginable. The research is there. The benefits are proven. The time to act is now.

— Alison Rapping, Arouet CEO

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

- **Person with an Arrest Record** — Includes people who have had interactions with the justice system that never led to a conviction
- **Person with a Conviction History** — Someone who has been found guilty of a crime
- **Formerly Incarcerated Person** — Someone who has had their freedom revoked and who has served time in jail or prison. Not every person who has been incarcerated was convicted of a crime
- **Fair Chance Hiring** — policies and practices that enable a company to effectively source, evaluate, hire, retain, and promote justice-involved individuals
- **Justice-involved** — any individual who has a misdemeanor or felony conviction record or an arrest record In the FBI database, regardless of incarceration status. The term “justice-impacted” includes this group and, broadly-defined, their families and close associates.
- **Recidivism** — the tendency for people to encounter the justice system after concluding prior terms of prison or probation
- **Misdemeanor** — any lesser criminal act that is generally less punitive than more serious felonies; typically, misdemeanor convictions come with monetary fines or community service
- **Felony** — a crime; in general, a more serious offense than a misdemeanor, resulting in prison time of one year or longer
- **Conviction** — a judgment of guilt against a defendant
- **Organizational Justice** — how employees perceive fairness in the workplace
- **Untapped talent** — job candidates often not considered for employment due to perceived barriers (e.g., candidates with a conviction history)
- **Bias** — prejudice against people, ideas, etc., resulting in inequitable treatment

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