

# SECOND CHANCES, SAFER COUNTIES

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT & REENTRY



NATALIE ORTIZ, PH.D.  
SENIOR RESEARCH ANALYST

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### **FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:**

Natalie Ortiz  
NACo Senior Justice Research Analyst  
research@naco.org

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Counties have a key responsibility in maintaining safe, secure and economically resilient communities. Counties operate 91 percent of all local jails in the United States, which admitted 11.4 million individuals in 2014. Jails also release more than 135,000 inmates each day. In addition, individuals released from federal and state prisons may turn to county social services for assistance upon returning home. Employment is one of the best ways to reintegrate formerly incarcerated individuals, as it reduces recidivism and allows them to contribute to their families and communities.

Counties and local workforce development boards (local WDBs) cooperate to provide workforce training services and assistance to residents, including formerly incarcerated adult and youth populations. Reentry programs provide assistance and services to individuals who have been released from jail or prison or who are preparing to be released. Federal resources devoted to workforce development through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) play a major role in supporting reentry programs at the local level.

## REENTRY PROGRAMS ARE AN IMPORTANT PART OF COUNTIES' STRATEGY TO KEEP COMMUNITIES SAFE AND SECURE.

With support from the National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB), NACo surveyed 550 local WDB directors between October and November 2015 to better understand how county governments, including county jails, work with local WDBs on reentry programs and workforce development. The results of the 2015 NACo survey show that:

- 1 COUNTY GOVERNMENTS COLLABORATE WITH LOCAL WDBS IN REENTRY PROGRAMS THAT PROVIDE SERVICES TO CORRECTIONAL POPULATIONS.** County governments play an active role in the operation of the 550 local WDBs across the country and are involved in 90 percent of local WDBs. Almost half (47 percent) of respondent local WDBs operated reentry programs for adults (44 percent) or youth (30 percent), as of November 2015. Local WDBs join forces with county governments to deliver reentry programs that provide workforce training and services to individuals who are currently or were formerly incarcerated. This partnership includes different county departments, from social and human services to the sheriff and probation departments. County governments benefit directly from reentry programs; 92 percent of respondent local WDBs with reentry programs reported that individuals who are incarcerated or released from county jails or county juvenile detention centers receive program services. Responding local WDBs with reentry programs report many successes; 44 percent place formerly incarcerated individuals into jobs, another 39 percent indicate formerly incarcerated individuals are employed in non-subsidized jobs and an additional 29 percent reduce recidivism, including new arrests and incarceration. To learn more about reentry programs and the services they provide, see the [Region VI Workforce Investment Board](#) and [Clackamas County](#) case studies accompanying this report.
- 2 FEDERAL FUNDING, SUCH AS WIOA'S ADULTS AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES PROGRAMS, PLAY AN ESSENTIAL ROLE IN SUPPORTING LOCAL REENTRY PROGRAMS.** Eighty-one (81) percent of respondent local WDBs with reentry programs receive the largest share of their funding from federal agencies, including the Labor, Education and Justice Departments. Two thirds (66 percent) of local WDBs with reentry programs receive the majority (50 percent or more) of their program funding from the federal government. Funding from the U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) Adult WIOA program is the federal source tapped most by respondent local WDBs (77 percent) for adult reentry programs followed by

Dislocated Worker funding (44 percent). Most respondent local WDBs (85 percent) with reentry programs for youth use federal Youth WIOA program funding from DOL. Besides federal funding, local WDBs access other government funding sources to maintain their services, including county funding (21 percent of respondent local WDBs) and state funding (45 percent). To learn how the federal government helps counties reduce recidivism through reentry programs, see the [Ventura County](#) case study accompanying this report.

**3 REENTRY PROGRAMS ARE A HIGH PRIORITY FOR COUNTY GOVERNMENTS AND LOCAL WDBS, BUT PRESENT CHALLENGES.** The successes and challenges of the reentry programs developed by local WDBs affect counties and their residents. Tackling the challenges of delivering reentry programs contributes to a stronger workforce and safer counties. Maintaining reentry programs is a high priority for 77 percent of local WDBs. In the areas in which local WDBs do not currently have reentry programs, there is a significant interest in establishing such programs. Sufficient funding for reentry programs is a concern for a majority of respondent local WDBs, regardless of whether they are trying to maintain or create reentry programs. However, challenges extend beyond the local WDBs. For example, background checks hinder the success of integrating formerly incarcerated individuals into the workforce, as indicated by 34 percent of responding local WDBs. Often, individuals involved in the justice system who receive program services cannot pass background checks and, therefore, remain unemployed. Another recurrent issue is family stability, as reported by 42 percent of local WDBs. Family is an important source of social support for formerly incarcerated individuals who are trying to find and hold jobs. Previous research shows that formerly incarcerated individuals with strong family ties are less likely to recidivate.

**4 COUNTY GOVERNMENTS AND LOCAL WDBS WORK WITH A WIDE NETWORK OF PARTNERS TO IMPROVE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR FORMERLY INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS.** Counties and local WDBs partner most often with non-government organizations to deliver reentry programs. Seventy-nine (79) percent of local WDBs with reentry programs work with non-profits to provide services to reintegrate formerly incarcerated individuals into their families and communities. Other partners include faith based and philanthropic organizations as well as the private sector. In addition to WIOA, federal programs such as the Second Chance Act, can support services provided through non-profits that are partners of local WDBs. Nearly half (47 percent) of local WDBs with reentry programs have education partners, including schools and colleges. These partnerships demonstrate the efforts of counties to capitalize on resources that will reduce recidivism and protect public safety. To learn more about how reentry programs work with non-profits, see the [Dane County](#) case study accompanying this report.





# KEY TERMS USED IN THIS STUDY

**ADULT**, in this report, refers to an individual at least 18 years old who is or has been incarcerated and does not qualify as youth as defined herein.

**ADULT WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT (WIOA) FUNDING** is the federal funding for employment and training activities managed by local WDBs and other entities for individuals who are 18 years and older. The activities carried out with this funding include establishing the one-stop delivery system; providing career services through the one-stop delivery system; coordinating training services for individuals to obtain or retain employment; building relationships with employers; and developing industry and sector partnerships.<sup>1</sup>

**COUNTY CORRECTIONAL FACILITY (FACILITIES)** is any county jail, county detention center, county juvenile hall or similar county-operated agency where offenders are incarcerated.

**DISLOCATED WORKER WIOA FUNDING** is the federal funding for employment and training activities managed by local WDBs and other entities for individuals who have lost employment, including by layoff or termination, and unable to collect unemployment compensation.<sup>2</sup>

**FORMERLY INCARCERATED INDIVIDUAL** is any adult or youth individual, regardless of conviction status, who is or has been incarcerated.<sup>3</sup>

**LOCAL AREA (SERVICE AREA OF A LOCAL WDB)**, as defined by WIOA, refers to a geographical area designated by the governor of a state that is consistent with labor market areas in the state, that contributes to economic development in the state and has the resources, including education and training providers, necessary to administer workforce development services.<sup>4</sup>

**LOCAL WORKFORCE PLAN** refers to the workforce development strategy developed by a local WDB for a local area. The local workforce plan describes how local WDBs will engage employers; support the workforce development system to meet the needs of employers; coordinate workforce and economic development programs; maximize access and value of the one-stop center delivery system to jobseekers and employers; use Adult and Youth WIOA and Dislocated Worker funding; coordinate workforce investments with the education system and social services; and carry out other workforce development activities described in WIOA.<sup>5</sup>

**LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD (LOCAL WDB)** indicates the group of individuals appointed by chief elected officials in a local area who are responsible for federally funded workforce development activities. Local WDBs develop the local workforce plan; conduct workforce research and labor market analysis; convene workforce system stakeholders and leverage resources; engage with local area employers; align education, training, employment and supportive services to develop and implement career pathways within a local area; promote the use of evidence based strategies to meet the needs of employers and jobseekers; manage the administration and use of federal workforce development funds; provide program oversight of federally funded workforce development activities; and select one-stop center operators and service providers.<sup>6</sup>

**LOW INCOME**, as used in WIOA, is determined by using the Lower Living Standard Income Level (LLSIL). If individuals or their families have earnings less than 70 percent of the LLSIL, then they are considered low income. In cases where the national poverty guideline figure is higher, then that figure is used instead to determine whether an individual is low income. Individuals living in a high poverty area are considered low income.<sup>7</sup>

**ONE-STOP CENTER** refers to the brick-and-mortar location in each local area that makes available to jobseekers and employers the resources and services funded by WIOA.<sup>8</sup>

**REENTRY** is a process that begins when someone is incarcerated, continues after they are released from incarceration and ends when they are reintegrated into the community.<sup>9</sup>

**REENTRY PROGRAM**, in this report, refers to a workforce development program designed to provide assistance and services to individuals who have been released from jail or prison, or who are preparing to be released, and helps participants overcome challenges to employment related to incarceration.

**WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT (WIOA)** refers to Public Law 113–128, which took effect in July 2015 and replaced and amended the Workforce Innovation Act (WIA) as the federal statute that supports a public workforce development system. The purposes of WIOA are increasing employment, education, training and support services; aligning workforce investment with education and economic development systems; improving the delivery of workforce development services to better address the needs of employers, workers and jobseekers; developing a skilled workforce that can secure employment with family-sustaining wages; and promoting economic growth.<sup>10</sup>

**YOUTH**, in this report, refers either to an individual between 16 and 24 years, not attending school, who is or has been incarcerated or to an individual between 14 and 21 years, attending school, who is low income, as defined herein, and who is or has been incarcerated. WIOA uses income status for youth attending school to establish eligibility for activities.<sup>11</sup>

**YOUTH WIOA FUNDING** is the federal funding allocated for education and training activities for in-school and out-of-school youth. In-school youth includes low income youth between 14 and 21 years who are attending school and have one or more barriers to employment or circumstances that make them eligible for services. Out-of-school youth include youth between 16 and 24 years who are not attending school and have one or more barriers to employment or circumstances that make them eligible for services. Local WDBs and other entities use the funding for the purpose of assessing skills, interest and needs; developing service strategies that will result in training and/or educational attainment; providing services that will lead to educational achievement and prepare youth for work opportunities.<sup>12</sup>

# INTRODUCTION

Counties have a key responsibility in maintaining safe and secure communities and ensuring economic opportunities for residents. Incarceration, whether for a few days, months or years, removes individuals from the workforce and reduces their ability to financially contribute to their families and communities. Reintegrating individuals involved in the justice system back into the workforce keeps counties safe and secure.

## INCARCERATION, WHETHER FOR A FEW DAYS, MONTHS OR YEARS, REMOVES INDIVIDUALS FROM THE WORKFORCE.

Reentry and employment for formerly incarcerated individuals is a substantial issue facing counties. County governments invest \$93 billion annually in justice and public safety for their residents and support local economies through more than \$25 billion investment in economic development annually, including workforce training.<sup>13</sup> Strong and resilient county economies rely heavily on an employable and skilled workforce. Preparing justice involved individuals to be successful in the labor market and expanding their employment opportunities yields dividends to counties. Funding from the federal government, including from the U.S. Departments of Labor, Education and Justice, supports counties' efforts to reduce recidivism and improve the employment outcomes of formerly incarcerated individuals.

Counties are the front door of the U.S. criminal justice system. Because of this position, counties have a significant interest and role in identifying cost effective solutions that not only reduce the county jail population, but also protect public safety. Counties operate 91 percent of all local jails in the United States.<sup>14</sup> Reducing incarceration and the corresponding costs are high county priorities.<sup>15</sup> Over time, counties have experienced growing jail populations and soaring jail costs.<sup>16</sup> In 2014, jails held nearly 745,000 inmates.<sup>17</sup> Between 2000 and 2014, the number of jail inmates increased 20 percent.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, county corrections expenditures swelled by a staggering 74 percent between 2000 and 2012.<sup>19</sup>

Counties are working to reintegrate formerly incarcerated individuals into the community and keep them from returning to jail. Each week, jails turn over more than half of the total jail population. County jails release both pretrial detainees who are charged with a crime and unconvicted and jail inmates who have completed their sentence following conviction. Employment has a positive effect on individuals released from incarceration by providing a source of income, transferable skills and experience, a routine and a stable environment. Further, formerly incarcerated individuals who are working are less likely to recidivate and return to county jails.<sup>22</sup>

Improving the labor market opportunities for formerly incarcerated individuals is part of counties' strategy to break the cycle of incarceration, reduce county jail spending and protect public safety. This approach focuses on increasing employment opportunities for all individuals in the justice system, both county justice system populations and former federal and state prisoners. Once released from prison, these individuals may turn to county social services for assistance upon returning home. At the same time, if former prisoners recidivate, they return to county jails.

Reentering the workforce is a great challenge for individuals who were incarcerated. Time away from the labor market because of incarceration, in addition to having an arrest or criminal record, is a barrier to employment.<sup>23</sup> Further, evidence shows that employers are reluctant to hire applicants with a criminal record.<sup>24</sup> Even short term pretrial incarceration can result in individuals losing jobs.<sup>25</sup>



To increase the job and economic opportunities of formerly incarcerated individuals, counties partner with local workforce development boards (local WDBs) in reentry programs that focus on employment (See Key Terms Used in this Study). Reentry programs are designed to provide workforce training services and assistance to formerly incarcerated individuals, including adults and youth, who have been released from a correctional facility or who are preparing for release. Reentry programs bring together the workforce development and justice systems to reduce recidivism and often use criteria to establish eligibility for participation, such as a probation officer's recommendation or a risk assessment score that indicates if an individual is at a higher risk of recidivism. Unlike other workforce development services, reentry programs are designed to help individuals involved in the justice system overcome specific challenges, including criminal records, limited work opportunities and employment gaps because of incarceration. In some cases, reentry programs begin working with individuals when they are still incarcerated in an effort to prepare them for release from incarceration. Establishing and maintaining the services provided through reentry programs is an essential element for safe and secure counties, helping county efforts to reintegrate formerly incarcerated individuals, reducing recidivism and supporting county workforce development and the local economy.

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This study examines reentry programs that help counties achieve their public safety goals and promote a vibrant and resilient economy. With support from the National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB), NACo surveyed 550 local WDB executive directors between October and November 2015 (referred to as the "2015 NACo survey" in this study). The research provides an understanding of how county governments, including county jails, work with local WDBs on reentry programs and workforce development and how the county benefits from reentry programs. Further, this study examines the funding sources of local reentry programs, the importance of federal funding to local reentry programs and the challenges facing reentry programs. This study only focuses on reentry programs developed and delivered to formerly incarcerated individuals by local WDBs that receive funding from a variety of sources.



# BACKGROUND

County governments have a high stake in the workforce system and economic development. Effective workforce systems support and strengthen county economies. In turn, strong county economies provide new opportunities for county governments, businesses and residents. Federal policies that promote a skilled workforce help the economic progress on the ground, in county economies.

## THE WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT (WIOA) SEEKS TO EXPAND WORKFORCE OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED IN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) supports the public workforce system. Passed in 2014 and taking effect in 2015, WIOA is a vital funding source for workforce development that helps counties tackle and overcome the challenges facing job seekers and employers. WIOA replaced the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), the previous federal statute governing federal funding for workforce development.

WIOA seeks to expand workforce opportunities for individuals involved in the justice system. Chief among WIOA purposes is to increase labor market access for individuals with barriers to employment, including “ex-offenders.” WIOA defines ex-offenders as an:

“Adult or juvenile who is or has been the subject to any stage of the criminal justice process and for whom services under [WIOA] may be beneficial, or who requires assistance in overcoming artificial barriers to employment resulting from a record of arrest or conviction.”

According to this definition, WIOA can provide education and training and employment resources to any segment of the county justice population. This population includes individuals who have been released from county jail and individuals who are under the supervision of county probation or community corrections. It also includes individuals who are preparing to be released from jail, including individuals who are pretrial, with their cases still moving through the court system. More than 60 percent of the county jail population is pretrial and some of the pretrial population is released from incarceration. Individuals released from federal and state prisons also meet WIOA’s definition of ex-offenders. In this study, the term “formerly incarcerated individuals” is used to indicate an adult or youth, regardless of conviction status, who is or has been incarcerated.

WIOA funds three major programs: Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth. Each program targets a group identifiable by its eligibility for employment and training activities under that program (See Key Terms Used in This Study). For example, Adult WIOA funding targets individuals who are 18 and older. Dislocated Worker funding targets jobseekers who have lost their job and are unable to collect unemployment compensation. Youth WIOA funding targets younger workers, depending on their age, school status, income status and barriers to employment. A fourth WIOA program provides universal access to employment assistance through the Wagner-Peyser Act. The Wagner-Peyser program provides job seekers with self-service and staff-assisted help with looking for jobs, job referrals and job placement.

WIOA also establishes the one-stop center delivery system, which provides convenient access to job search assistance, workforce training and career services through brick-and-mortar locations. WIOA funding, including Wagner-Peyser, and one-stop centers expand labor market opportunities for the county justice population.



WIOA, like its predecessor WIA, creates and emphasizes the role of workforce boards that put WIOA into action. WIOA requires the governor of each state to establish a state-level workforce development board. In order for a state to receive WIOA money, the governor must also establish local areas (See Key Terms Used in this Study) in the state. Each local area has a workforce development board (local WDB; See Key Terms Used in this Study). In 10 states, the governor designated the state as one local area, so the state workforce board assumes also the responsibilities of local boards.

Because of differences in the areas they serve, state workforce boards and local WDBs have very different functions under WIOA. State workforce boards provide assistance to local WDBs, but are responsible for developing and implementing workforce development activities that support all workers and employers in the state. In contrast, local WDBs are working to strengthen local economies and expand workforce opportunities for the local area, using local expertise and labor market information. Local WDBs do this, in part, by working with counties to innovate and deliver workforce development programs. They also oversee the one-stop center delivery system that assists local job seekers and employers.

Implementing WIOA taps the efforts of local elected officials, including county officials. Local elected officials work alongside local WDBs to develop local plans for workforce development (See Key Terms Used in this Study) and implement federal workforce programs. County officials have an important role in local WDBs by appointing board members from the business, labor and education communities as well as representatives from economic and community development agencies. County officials may also sit on the local WDB. Through their positions as local elected officials and on local WDBs, county officials provide oversight and monitor local WDB operations. Counties and local WDBs not only work together on workforce development but also develop and implement strategies that will address the most pressing issues facing local areas, including employment for formerly incarcerated individuals.

Collaboration is an essential element in the success of workforce programs, such as those improving employment for formerly incarcerated individuals. Funded by WIOA, reentry programs are an outcome of the collaboration between local WDBs and counties to improve the labor force participation and employment outcomes of formerly incarcerated individuals and reduce recidivism. Through WIOA, the federal government is a partner in local reentry programs that contribute to an employable and skilled workforce. While it is too early to assess the successes and challenges of implementing WIOA, the results of the 2015 NACo survey provide some early indications of how local WDBs are faring in its implementation to date (See Sidebar on “Implementing WIOA: What’s Working, What’s Challenging”).

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# IMPLEMENTING WIOA: WHAT'S WORKING, WHAT'S CHALLENGING

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) maintains the core principle of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), to improve the U.S. workforce by focusing on occupational skills, employment, retention of employment and increased earnings. WIOA aims to build a stronger, more skilled workforce that can earn good wages, contribute to the economy and help advance America's position in the global economy. WIOA improves the aims of WIA by providing the needed funding and framework for a modernized, demand driven workforce development system.

An essential component of WIOA's success going forward is maintaining local governance of workforce development activities. WIOA recognizes that local elected officials and local workforce development boards (local WDBs) play a critical role in workforce development and the overall economic health of our local communities. WIOA protects local authority in workforce development boards and local areas. It also enhances flexibility to address local workforce challenges.

In replacing WIA, WIOA contains several provisions that have a direct impact on local WDBs and the ways in which the federal government's workforce investment supports and invests in workers and businesses in local areas. WIOA's new provisions include:

- Potential re-designation of local areas
- Regional planning across contiguous local areas
- Permitting up to 20 percent of Adult and Dislocated Worker funding to be reserved for incumbent worker training
- Permitting up to 100 percent of funding to be transferred between the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs in a program year
- Changing the indicators used to measure performance
- Requiring a competitive process to select one-stop center operators
- Requiring 75 percent of Youth funding to serve out-of-school youth

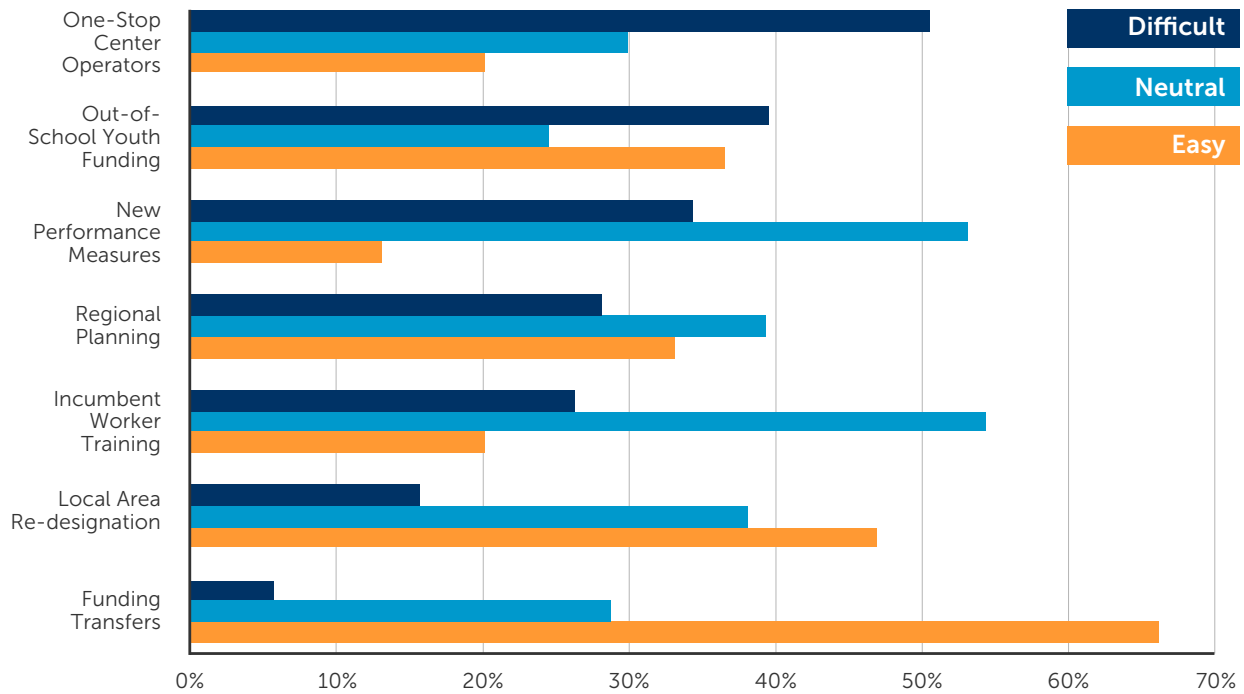
Based on the results of the 2015 NACo survey of local WDB executive directors, local WDBs are adapting to WIOA and implementing many of these provisions with relative ease, even that some provisions are more difficult to implement than others (See Figure 1). This analysis is a very early snapshot of how local WDBs are dealing with the implementation of some of WIOA's provisions. The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) will finalize the rules for implementing WIOA in 2016.

The competitive selection process of one-stop center operators is the most challenging of the WIOA provisions local WDBs are working to implement. A majority — 50 percent — of responding local WDBs indicated that selecting one-stop center operators using a competitive process is difficult. Difficulty in implementing this provision is most evident among local WDBs in medium-sized service areas, those with 500,000 to 1 million residents (53 percent), and small service areas that have fewer than 500,000 residents (51 percent). Larger service areas local WDBs — with more than 1 million residents — also report challenges with this provision (41 percent).



**FIGURE 1.**

**LOCAL WDBs' EXPERIENCE IMPLEMENTING WIOA PROVISIONS, PERCENT OF RESPONDING LOCAL WDBS, OCTOBER–NOVEMBER 2015**



Source: NACo survey, October–November 2015.

Notes: The 2015 NACo survey asked local WDB executive directors to rate their experience to date using scaled responses. The scale used in the survey included five categories: very difficult, difficult, neutral, easy and very easy. The analysis combines “very difficult” and “difficult” into one category, which is labeled and reported as “difficult” in the graph and text. The analysis also combines “very easy” and “easy” into a single category, which is labeled and reported as “easy” in the graph and text.

The respondent local WDBs are split on the level of difficulty to implement the WIOA provision that requires 75 percent of Youth WIOA funding to focus on workforce development for out-of-school youth. The increase in funding for out-of-school youth under WIOA is up from a minimum of 30 percent under WIA. Thirty-nine (39) percent of responding local WDBs indicated that it is difficult to implement this provision. At the same time, however, 36 percent of local WDBs reported that it is easy to implement this provision. Local WDBs in the larger service areas are more likely to report adapting to this provision with ease (47 percent of local WDBs in service areas with more than 1 million residents). Local WDBs with smaller service areas have higher difficulty; 41 percent of local WDBs in small service areas stated that the increase in out-of-school youth funding is difficult to implement.

# FINDINGS

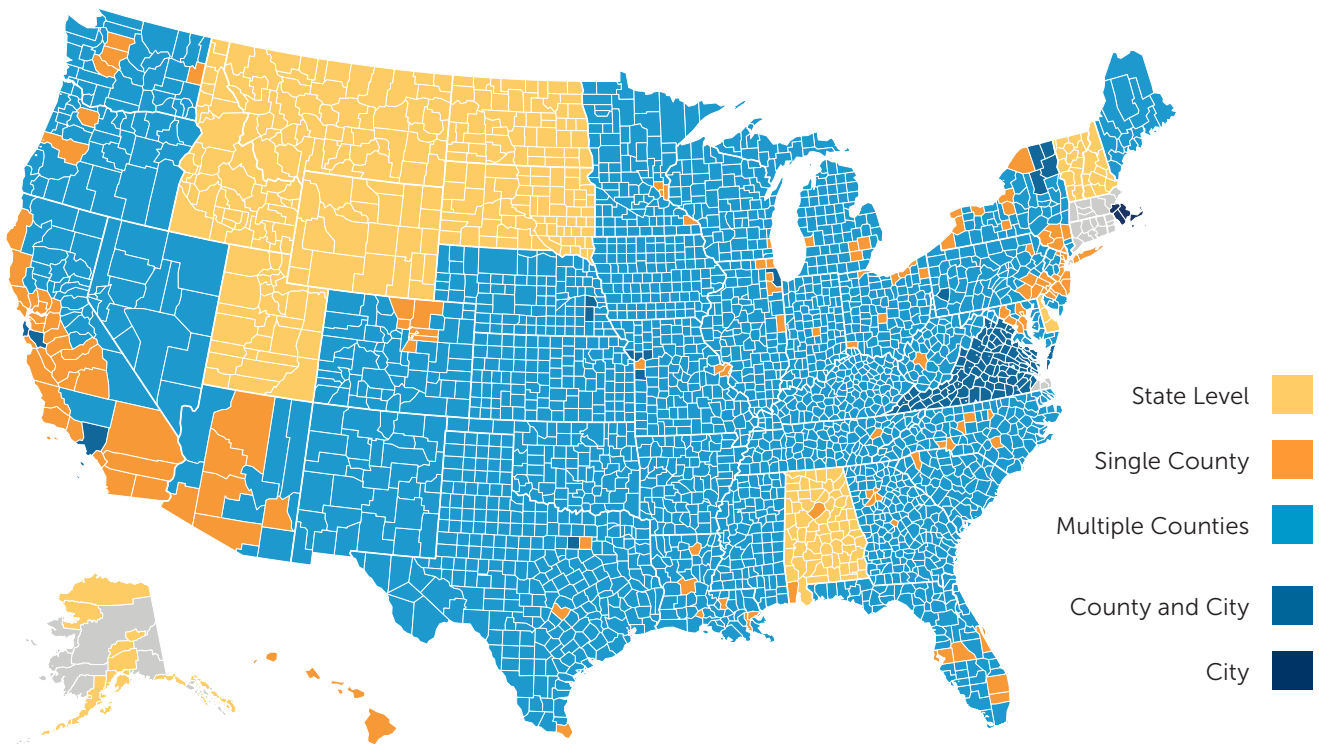
## 1. COUNTIES COLLABORATE WITH LOCAL WDBs IN REENTRY PROGRAMS THAT PROVIDE SERVICES TO CORRECTIONAL POPULATIONS.

Counties are key contributors to local workforce development efforts. Local WDBs provide workforce development services to a local area designated by the governor of the state. Many local WDBs work with one or more county governments in their service area (See Map 1). Almost two thirds of local WDBs — 64 percent — serve small areas, covering fewer than 500,000 residents. One quarter (25 percent) of local WDBs have medium-sized service areas, with populations between 500,000 and 1 million residents. Local WDBs with large service areas serve more than 1 million residents — most often covering a single county — and represent 11 percent of local WDBs.

COUNTIES ARE INVOLVED IN 90 PERCENT OF THE NATION'S 557 LOCAL WDBs.

### MAP 1.

## COUNTIES ARE INVOLVED IN 90 PERCENT OF THE NATION'S 557 LOCAL WDBs LOCAL WDBs BY TYPE OF SERVICE AREA, AS OF OCTOBER–NOVEMBER 2015



Source: NACo analysis of U.S. Department of Labor data, 2015.

Notes: Counties are classified into one of the following five categories based on the type of local workforce development board (local WDB) serving the county: State Level, Single County, Multiple Counties, County and City or City. State Level means a county is in the service area of a state-run workforce board that fulfills the responsibilities of a local WDB under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. Single County indicates the local WDB serves only the area of one county. Multiple Counties indicates the local WDB serves the area of two or more counties. County and City means a county and one or more cities, including independent cities, are in the service area of a local WDB. A City local WDB serves only some cities within the county so that the entire county is served by multiple local WDBs. The Alabama Governor's Office of Workforce Development, which is a state-run board, serves 65 counties in Alabama. This map reflects only the service areas of local WDBs that cover counties with county governments. The dark grey areas in Conn., R.I., parts of Alaska, Mass. and Va. are counties or county-equivalents without county governments.

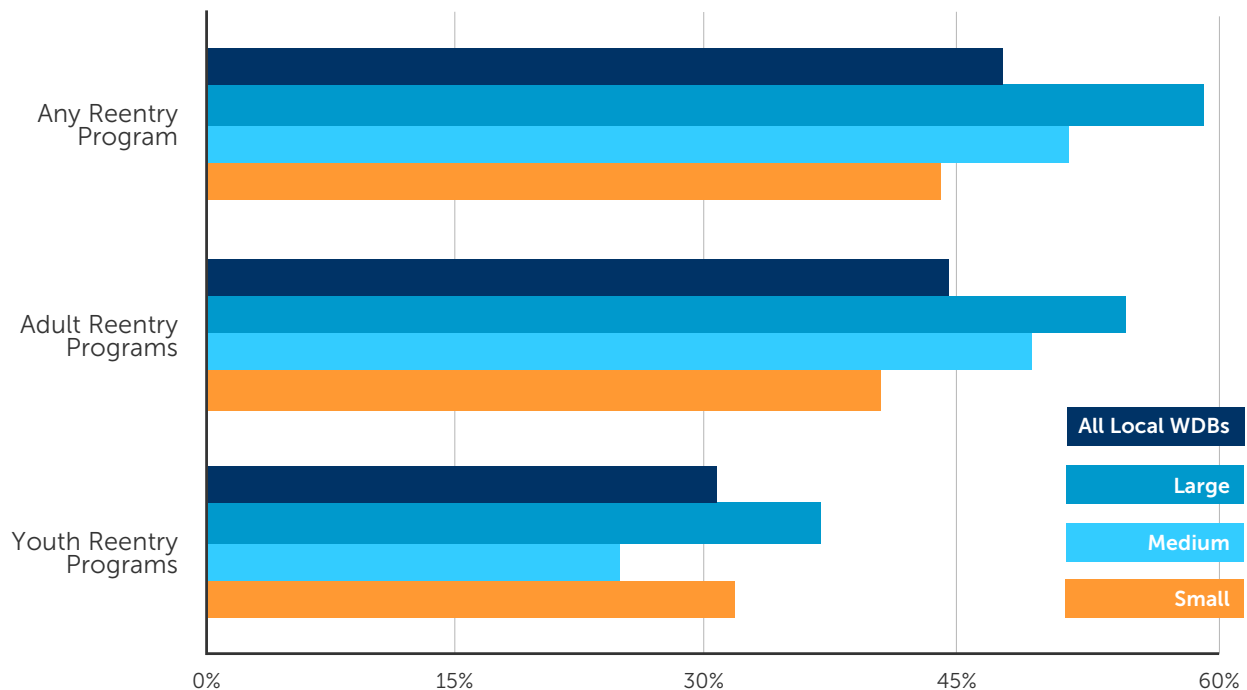
Counties are the backbone of local WDBs. Counties are involved in 90 percent of the nation’s 557 local WDBs.<sup>27</sup> Counties and local WDBs partner to develop strategies that support and train a skilled workforce and improve county economies. Respondents to the 2015 NACo survey of local WDBs (hereforth, “2015 NACo survey”) report that county officials help determine local WDBs priorities and establish local workforce plans by appointing members to the local WDB (58 percent), being part of the local WDB (26 percent) and serving on local WDB committees (15 percent). Counties also provide administrative support to local WDBs as 28 percent of local WDBs are within a county department or function as a county government department.

One issue that brings together the local WDBs and counties is increasing employment among formerly incarcerated individuals. Counties collaborate in reentry programs developed by local WDBs that provide job and training services to county correctional populations. Reentry programs are a strategic initiative to target the justice involved population and meet the specific needs of formerly incarcerated individuals. Almost half (47 percent) of respondent local WDBs operate a reentry program, as of October–November 2015 (See Figure 2). The focus of reentry program is more on adults (44 percent of local WDBs with reentry programs) than youth (30 percent). Local WDBs in large service areas with more than 1 million residents are more likely to maintain reentry programs (59 percent) than those in service area with fewer than 500,000 residents (43 percent). This result may reflect the higher correctional populations in the larger service areas.<sup>28</sup>

**FIGURE 2.**

**ALMOST HALF OF LOCAL WDBs OPERATE REENTRY PROGRAMS**

LOCAL WDBs OPERATING REENTRY PROGRAMS, PERCENT OF RESPONDING LOCAL WDBs BY POPULATION IN SERVICE AREA, OCTOBER–NOVEMBER 2015



Source: NACo survey, October–November 2015.

Notes: Large service areas have more than 1 million residents. Medium-sized service areas have between 500,000 and 1 million residents. Small service areas have fewer than 500,000 residents.

Counties help local WDBs deliver reentry program services. More than 70 percent of local WDBs with reentry programs join forces with county governments to provide reentry program services. Key county justice partners include the county jail, sheriff and probation department. The partnership between the county justice system and local WDBs with reentry programs provides an opportunity to connect workforce development services to the justice involved population. In 53 percent of reentry programs operated by local WDBs, county sheriffs and jails work with the local WDBs while probation departments supervising justice involved populations in the community take part in 72 percent of reentry programs. The county justice system assists local WDBs with reentry programs by providing in-reach opportunities in county jails

## **92 PERCENT OF REENTRY PROGRAMS PROVIDE SERVICES TO COUNTY JAIL AND JUVENILE JUSTICE POPULATIONS**

that provide inmates with information on workforce services available in the community. County departments also provide referrals to and share information with the local WDB operated reentry programs. These partnerships support county efforts to provide safe and secure communities by linking the justice involved population to workforce and employment services that will reduce reoffending and help individuals contribute to their communities.

## **53 PERCENT OF REENTRY PROGRAMS INVOLVE THE COUNTY SHERIFF AND COUNTY JAIL**

In addition to their partnership in service delivery, counties are beneficiaries of reentry programs developed by local WDBs. For example, an overwhelming majority of local WDBs respondents with reentry programs – 92 percent – reported that individuals who are incarcerated or released from county jails or county

juvenile detention centers receive program services. Individuals who were incarcerated in federal or state prisons may also participate in reentry programs operated by local WDBs. Local WDBs provide reentry services both in county correctional facilities and through one-stop centers. Eighty-seven (87) percent of local WDBs with a reentry program deliver program services at the local one-stop center. Reentry programs that begin to work with participants while they are incarcerated are more likely to go through a one-stop center, because it allows the reentry program participants to continue receiving services and assistance upon release from incarceration. The resources available at one-stop centers complement reentry programs by providing community based access to staff and resources, such as computers

Reentry programs provide a range of assistance that will prepare formerly incarcerated individuals to enter the workforce, find work and retain employment. Common services include assessing for skills and job interests (92 percent of local WDBs with reentry programs), building a résumé (99 percent), preparing for interviews (96 percent) and developing workplace skills, which are also called “soft skills,” including listening, building professional relationships and communicating with co-workers and customers (90 percent). Soft skill development is an important service, as a lack of these skills is often cited by employers as a reason for not hiring job applicants with a criminal record.<sup>29</sup> Reentry programs also focus on educational components of workforce development, including enrolling in school, developing study skills, identifying occupational training providers, and preventing participants from dropping out of school. To ensure the value of the workforce development services to employers, reentry programs advocate on behalf of program participants to hiring managers. To further encourage employers to hire individuals with a criminal record, nearly one quarter (23 percent) of local WDBs use one-stop centers to hold workshops on the benefits of employing this group.

Local WDB reentry programs target not only the local workforce, but also public safety. Respondents indicate that the main goals of local WDB reentry programs are to increase the number of program participants who are participating in the labor market (87 percent of reentry programs operated by local WDBs) and to





increase the amount of time program participants hold a job (83 percent). Reentry programs developed by local WDBs also aim to help counties protect public safety. Reducing recidivism is an objective for 80 percent of respondent local WDB reentry programs. Other goals reported by local WDBs with reentry programs include increasing the number of program participants with an occupational credential, with a high school diploma and employed in non-subsidized jobs. Reentry programs also work to increase the income level of participants, which was reported as a goal by 64 percent of respondent local WDBs with a reentry program.

**80 PERCENT OF REENTRY PROGRAMS DEVELOPED BY LOCAL WDBs HAVE REDUCING RECIDIVISM AS A GOAL**

Local WDBs achieve some of their objectives through reentry program services. Close to half (44 percent) of responding local WDBs with reentry programs report the most success in getting program participants into the workforce. The second most common success is placing participants into a non-subsidized job, as reported by 39 percent of responding local WDBs operating a reentry program. Reducing recidivism, including new arrests and incarceration, is achieved by 29 percent of local WDBs with reentry programs. Many external factors to local WDBs and reentry programs complicate their efforts, from participant motivation to work, limits on financial aid for individuals with a criminal record to pursue higher education and hourly wages set by employers, to employer willingness to hire individuals with a criminal record.

Reentry programs operated by local WDBs are just one approach to reintegrating formerly incarcerated individuals. For local WDBs that do not have any reentry program, 57 percent are still within the network counties use to provide information to justice involved individuals on employment related resources. In these cases, the network formed between local WDBs and counties does not guarantee an individual will pursue any workforce development services, but does make individuals aware of their availability. This type of arrangement is found among local WDBs in all sizes. The county role in local WDBs is a key attribute that facilitates this kind of partnership.

Counties influence local workforce development strategies through their participation in local WDBs. Reentry programs are an essential part of the collaboration between counties and local WDBs. These programs provide education, training and other workforce related services to individuals who have been incarcerated in county correctional facilities. By helping these individuals gain employment and reducing recidivism, reentry programs contribute to safe and secure counties and prevent formerly incarcerated individuals from cycling back into to the county justice system.

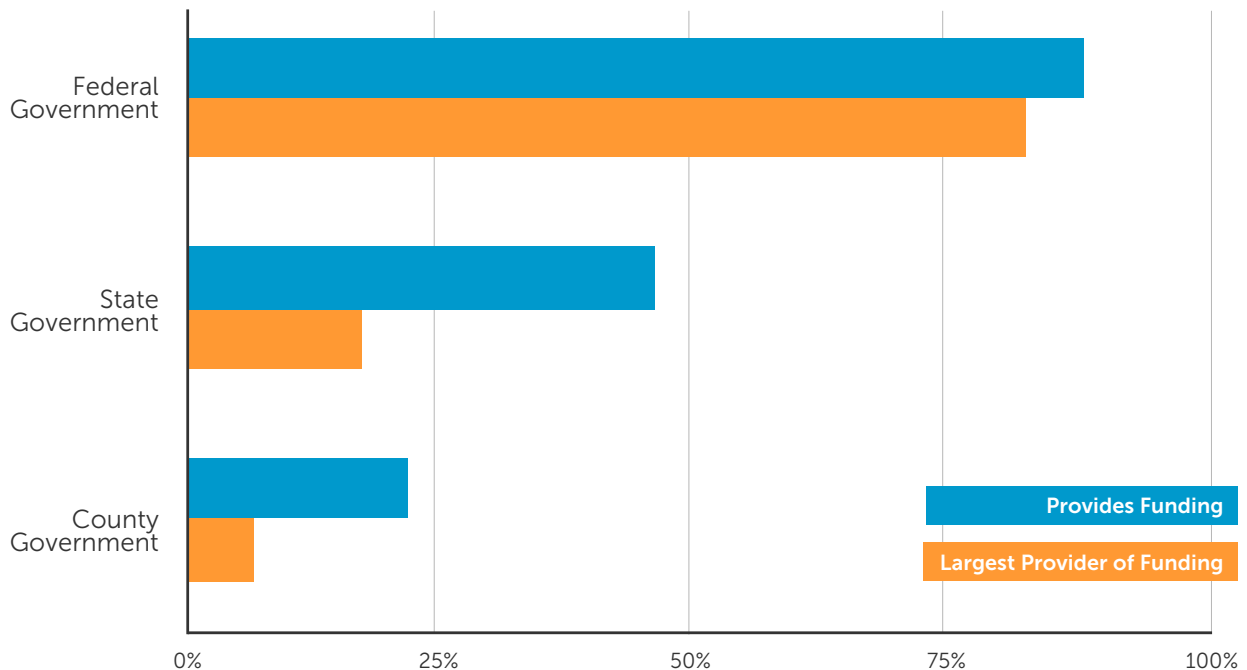
## 2. FEDERAL FUNDING, SUCH AS WIOA'S ADULTS AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES PROGRAMS, PLAY AN ESSENTIAL ROLE IN SUPPORTING LOCAL REENTRY PROGRAMS.

The federal government is the largest source of financial support for a majority of reentry programs developed by local WDBs (See Figure 3). Eighty-one (81) percent of local WDBs with reentry programs receive the largest share of their funding from the federal government. Most responding local WDBs — 86 percent — use federal funding to support adult or youth reentry programs. Two thirds (66 percent) of local WDBs with reentry programs receive the majority (50 percent or more) of their program funding from the federal government. The federal government provides the majority of funding for reentry programs in 86 percent of local WDBs with medium-sized service areas (with populations between 500,000 and 1 million) and 73 percent of local WDBs with large service areas (with more than 1 million residents). Further, the majority (56 percent) of reentry programs in small service areas (those with fewer than 500,000 residents) receive more than half of their reentry program funding from the federal government.

**FIGURE 3.**

### THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IS THE LARGEST PROVIDER OF FUNDING FOR REENTRY PROGRAMS

PROVIDERS OF REENTRY PROGRAM FUNDING, PERCENT OF RESPONDING LOCAL WDBs, OCTOBER–NOVEMBER 2015



Source: NACo survey, October–November 2015.

Reentry programs receive funding from the state and county governments. Close to half (45 percent) of local WDBs with reentry programs tap state resources to provide program funding (See Figure 3). At the same time, counties are not only partners in the delivery of reentry programs, but provide reentry program funding. Twenty-one (21) percent of responding local WDBs with reentry programs indicated that counties financially support their programs. Most local WDBs combine different sources of funding. Collaboration of this nature between federal, state and county governments maximizes the availability of resources to reintegrate formerly incarcerated individuals and protect public safety.

**66 PERCENT OF LOCAL WDBs' REENTRY PROGRAMS RECEIVE THE MAJORITY OF THEIR FUNDING FROM THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT**

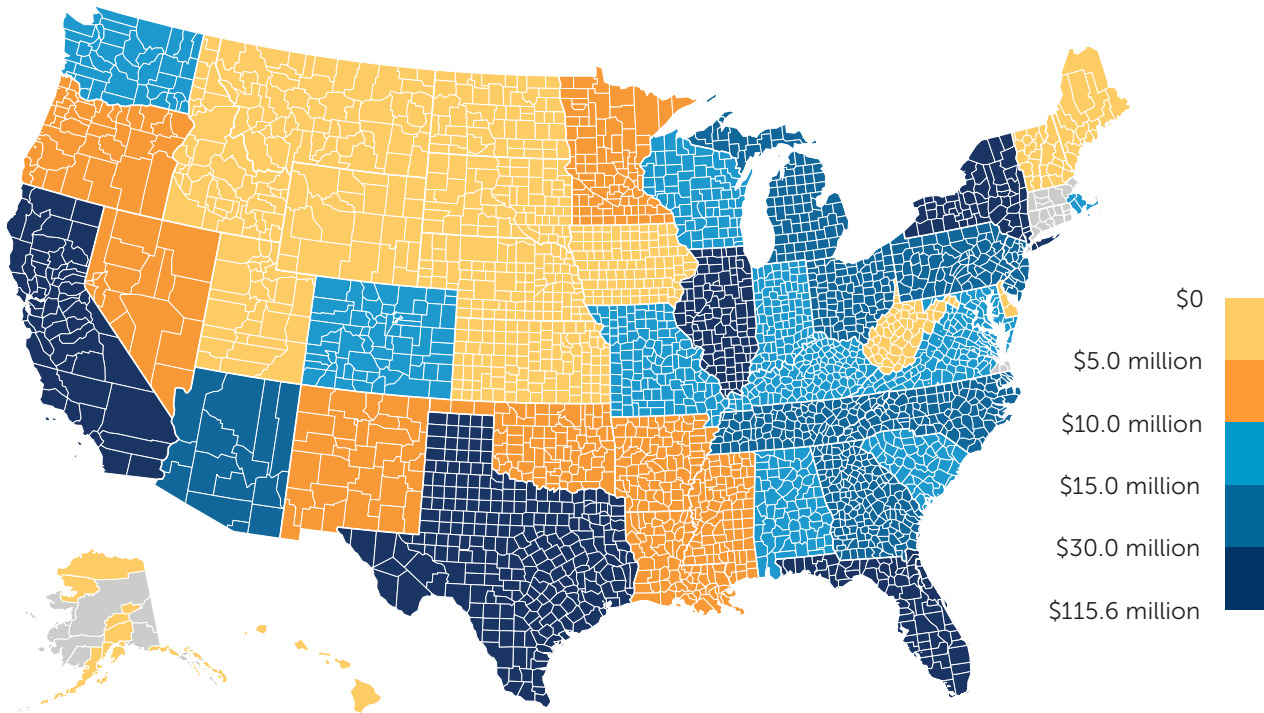
**FEDERAL FUNDING FOR ADULT REENTRY PROGRAMS.**

The federal government helps in county efforts to reintegrate formerly incarcerated individuals through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The Department of Labor's (DOL) Adult WIOA program

**MAP 2.**

**WIOA PROVIDED \$773 MILLION FOR EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING FOR ADULTS, INCLUDING ADULT REENTRY PROGRAMS IN 2015**

STATEWIDE WIOA FUNDING ALLOCATIONS FOR ADULT EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES, PROGRAM YEAR 2015



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, State Statutory Formula Funding data, Program Year, 2015.

Notes: Statewide Workforce Innovation and Opportunity (WIOA) funding allocations for adult employment and training activities refers to the amount of Adults WIOA funding allocated by the Department of Labor to the state for Program Year 2015 (July 1, 2015-June 30, 2016). States receive formula based funding from the federal government and can reserve up to 15 percent of the allocation to support statewide activities. The remaining share of funding is distributed to local workforce development boards (local WDBs) using a formula specified in WIOA. This map reflects only the service areas of local WDBs that cover counties with county governments. The dark grey areas in Conn., R.I., parts of Alaska, Mass. and Va. are counties or county-equivalents without county governments.



supports adult reentry programs (See Key Terms Used in This Study and the Background Section). In 2015, \$773 million in WIOA funding went to states and local areas to support employment and training for adults, including for the reintegration of formerly incarcerated adults (See Map 2). More than three quarters (77 percent) of local WDBs with reentry programs responding to the 2015 NACo survey rely on Adult WIOA funding to provide workforce development activities to participants in adult reentry programs. Furthermore, Adult WIOA funding is the largest source of federal funding for more than half (56 percent) of adult reentry programs operated by respondent local WDBs. This trend is most evident among local WDBs with reentry programs in service areas with 500,000 to 1 million residents. In these medium-sized service areas, 71 percent of local WDBs with reentry programs reported that Adult WIOA funding provides the greatest amount of financial support for their adult reentry programs.

A COMBINATION OF  
WIOA PROGRAMS  
SUPPORT REENTRY  
PROGRAMS  
THAT IMPROVE  
THE COUNTY  
WORKFORCE.

DOL's Dislocated Worker program is another WIOA program accessed frequently by local WDBs to fund adult reentry programs (See Key Terms Used in This Study). The Dislocated Worker program provided \$1 billion to states and local areas in 2015 for employment and training for workers who have lost jobs, including for adult

reentry programs.<sup>31</sup> Forty-four (44) percent of responding local WDBs use Dislocated Worker funding to support adult reentry programs. Respondent local WDBs with reentry programs in service areas with less than 500,000 residents were more likely to report using Dislocated Worker program funding than local WDBs with reentry programs in service areas with more than 1 million residents (49 percent compared to 27 percent).

**77 PERCENT OF LOCAL WDBs USE ADULT WIOA FUNDING TO PROVIDE ADULT REENTRY PROGRAM SERVICES**

Finally, the Wagner-Peyser program, as part of WIOA, helps local WDBs and counties with job assistance services for formerly incarcerated adults. Wagner-Peyser funding, which provided \$661 million to states and local areas in 2015, enables local WDBs to provide job search assistance, job referrals and placement assistance at local one-stop centers.<sup>32</sup> Thirty-four (34) percent of responding local WDBs use Wagner-Peyser funding to support adult reentry programs. This funding is mostly accessed by local WDBs for adult reentry programs in medium service areas, which have 500,000 to 1 million residents. Through a combination of WIOA programs, the federal government supports local WDBs and county efforts to improve the local workforce by increasing individuals' job skills and labor force opportunities.

**FEDERAL FUNDING FOR YOUTH REENTRY PROGRAMS.** Federal workforce development funding is also used to support local WDBs' youth reentry programs. Youth WIOA funding (See Key Terms Used in This Study and Background Section) from DOL is the main source of funding for youth reentry programs. The Youth WIOA program provided \$815 million to states and local areas in 2015 for education and training for

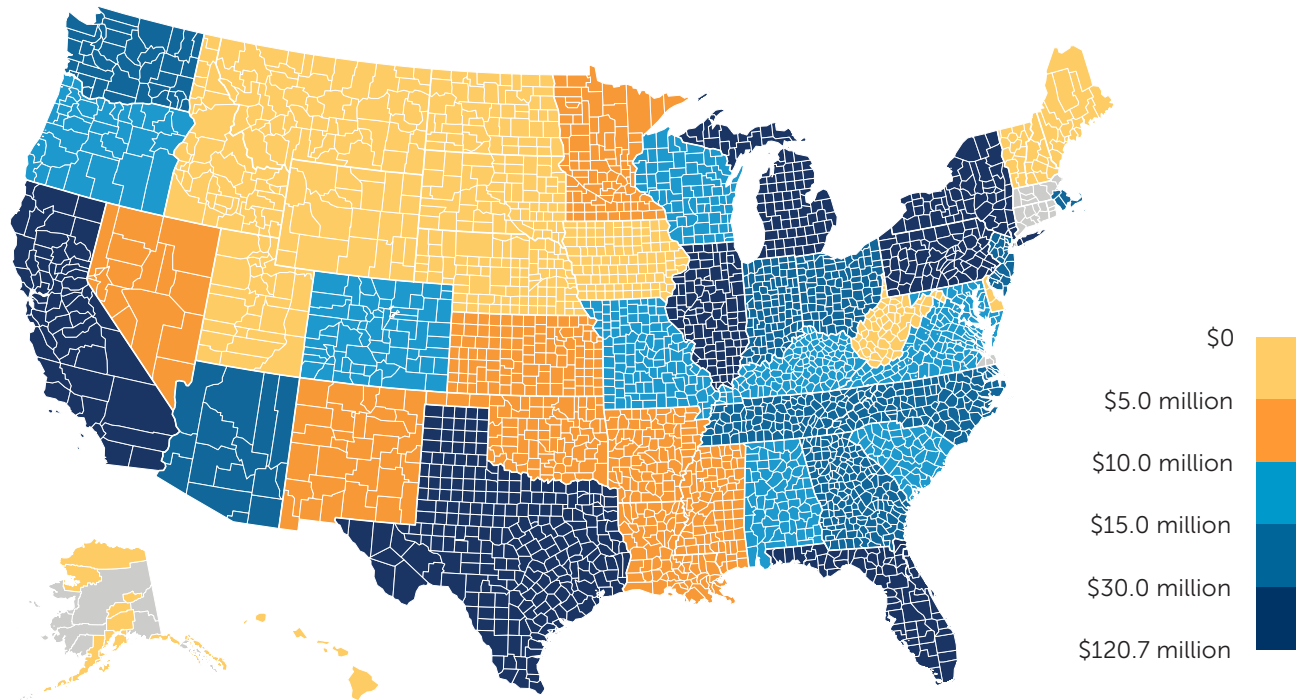
in-school and out-of-school youth, including for youth reentry programs (See Map 3).<sup>33</sup> It allows local WDBs to prioritize services for youth who are involved in the justice system, regardless of their conviction status. Eighty-five (85) percent of responding local WDBs capitalize on this program to fund services for youth in reentry programs.

**85 PERCENT OF LOCAL WDBs USE YOUTH WIOA FUNDING TO PROVIDE YOUTH REENTRY PROGRAM SERVICES**



**MAP 3.****WIOA FUNDED \$815 MILLION TO SUPPORT EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR YOUTH, INCLUDING REENTRY PROGRAMS IN 2015**

STATEWIDE WIOA FUNDING ALLOCATIONS FOR YOUTH ACTIVITIES, PROGRAM YEAR 2015



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, State Statutory Formula Funding data, Program Year, 2015.

Notes: Statewide Workforce Innovation and Opportunity (WIOA) funding allocations for youth activities refers to the amount of Youth WIOA funding allocated by the Department of Labor to the state for Program Year 2015 (July 1, 2015-June 30, 2016). States receive formula based funding from the federal government and can reserve up to 15 percent of the allocation to support statewide activities. The remaining share of funding is distributed to local workforce development boards (local WDBs) using a formula specified in WIOA. This map reflects only the service areas of local WDBs that cover counties with county governments. The dark grey areas in Conn., R.I., parts of Alaska, Mass. and Va. are counties or county-equivalents without county governments.

Youth WIOA funding is the largest source of funding for most youth reentry programs developed by local WDBs. Almost three quarters (72 percent) of responding local WDBs with youth reentry programs reported that Youth WIOA provides a majority of youth reentry program funding. This trend is pronounced in local WDBs with service areas with more than 1 million residents. In small service areas, covering fewer than 500,000 residents, Youth WIOA funding is the largest source of funding for 66 percent of local WDBs with youth reentry programs. Through funding and a focus on youth involved in the county justice system, the federal government plays an important role in ensuring youth are prepared to enter the workforce and contribute to their communities.

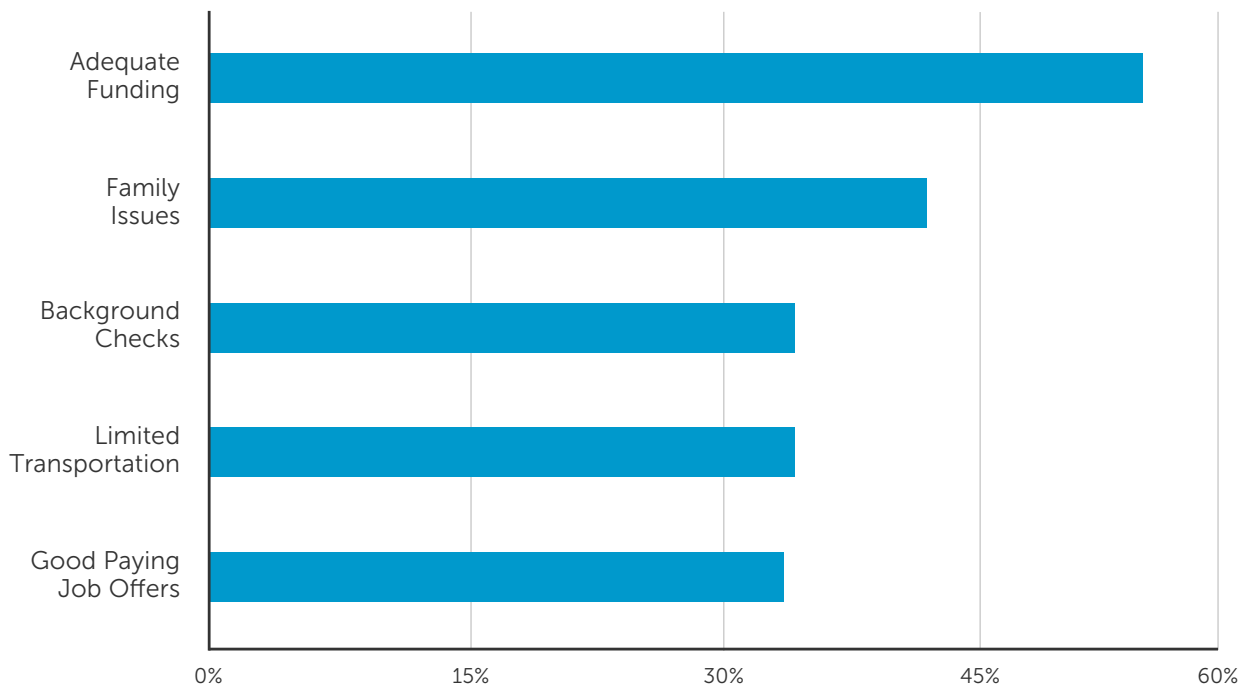
The federal government plays an essential part in county efforts to reduce incarceration and recidivism. The overwhelming majority of local WDBs responding to the 2015 NACo survey receive federal funding to maintain reentry programs. Federal support allows local WDBs and counties to innovate and support reentry programs that improve county economies and reduce crime. Continued funding is vital to the ability of local government to achieve these goals.

### 3. REENTRY PROGRAMS ARE A HIGH PRIORITY FOR COUNTY GOVERNMENTS AND LOCAL WDBs, BUT PRESENT CHALLENGES.

Reentry programs developed by local WDBs help county governments' efforts to reduce recidivism and improve employment among formerly incarcerated individuals. Maintaining reentry programs is a high priority for 77 percent of responding local WDBs. At the same time, 41 percent of respondent local WDBs without a youth or adult reentry program indicated that establishing a reentry program is a high priority. Respondents place an equally high priority on youth reentry programs as they do on adult reentry programs. Whether local WDBs and counties are seeking to maintain or working to create reentry programs, there are challenges that require collaboration in resolving them.

Tackling the challenges confronting reentry programs contributes to a stronger workforce and safer counties. Having adequate funding for reentry programs is a concern for a majority of respondent local WDBs (See Figure 4). More than half of local WDBs (54 percent) identify funding as a major challenge to creating or maintaining reentry programs that reintegrate formerly incarcerated individuals. The issue of funding will only become more acute, as the federal government and many states have recently enacted or are currently considering policies that reduce incarceration and enable prisoners to return to their communities, which will increase the demand for reentry services. A decline in funding for reentry programs would reduce resources for formerly incarcerated populations at a time when reliable and adequate funding is necessary to meet public safety and policy goals.

**FIGURE 4. FUNDING REENTRY PROGRAMS IS THE TOP CHALLENGE FOR LOCAL WDBs IN EFFORTS TO REINTEGRATE FORMERLY INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS**  
TOP 5 CHALLENGES TO REENTRY PROGRAMS, PERCENT OF RESPONDING LOCAL WDBs,  
OCTOBER–NOVEMBER 2015



Source: NACo survey, October–November 2015.

Many challenges to reentry programs extend beyond local WDBs. For example, an employer's background check that uses information on criminal history as a first level filtering mechanism hinders the success of integrating individuals with a criminal record into the workforce. Often, the individuals who receive reentry program services cannot pass background checks that eliminate job applicants who were previously incarcerated and, therefore, cannot gain employment. Approximately one third (34 percent) of respondent local WDBs indicated that background checks are an obstacle to the success of reentry programs (See Figure 4). As of December 2015, over 30 counties have passed "ban the box" policies that remove questions about criminal history from job applications and allow employers to inquire into criminal history further into the hiring process.<sup>34</sup>

## 54 PERCENT OF LOCAL WDBs IDENTIFY FUNDING AS A MAJOR CHALLENGE TO CREATING OR MAINTAINING REENTRY PROGRAMS

Another challenge confronting local WDBs in reentry programs is family stability among formerly incarcerated individuals. A significant portion of respondent local WDBs — 42 percent — reported family issues as a hurdle to reintegrating individuals into the labor market (See Figure 4). Having a positive relationship with family members offers support for individuals who are trying to gain and retain employment. Previous research shows that formerly incarcerated individuals who have good family ties are more likely to be working and less likely to recidivate than those with poor relationships with their families.<sup>35</sup> Additionally, family offers emotional support when individuals are unable to obtain an ideal job situation. To this point, 34 percent of local WDBs reported that justice involved individuals are rarely offered good paying full-time jobs that will lead to self-sufficiency.

Local WDBs and counties confront many challenges to delivering successful reentry programs. Some are more under their control, while others depend on federal partners and others. For example, the Work Opportunity Tax Credit may incentivize employers to hire individuals with a criminal record.<sup>36</sup> Reentry encompasses many areas, including work and family, and individuals are often reintegrating into each of these areas at once. Even the ability of formerly incarcerated individuals to get to and from work and reentry program services is an obstacle confronting local WDBs and county efforts in reentry. County strategies and services that address such issues complement local WDBs' efforts in reentry.



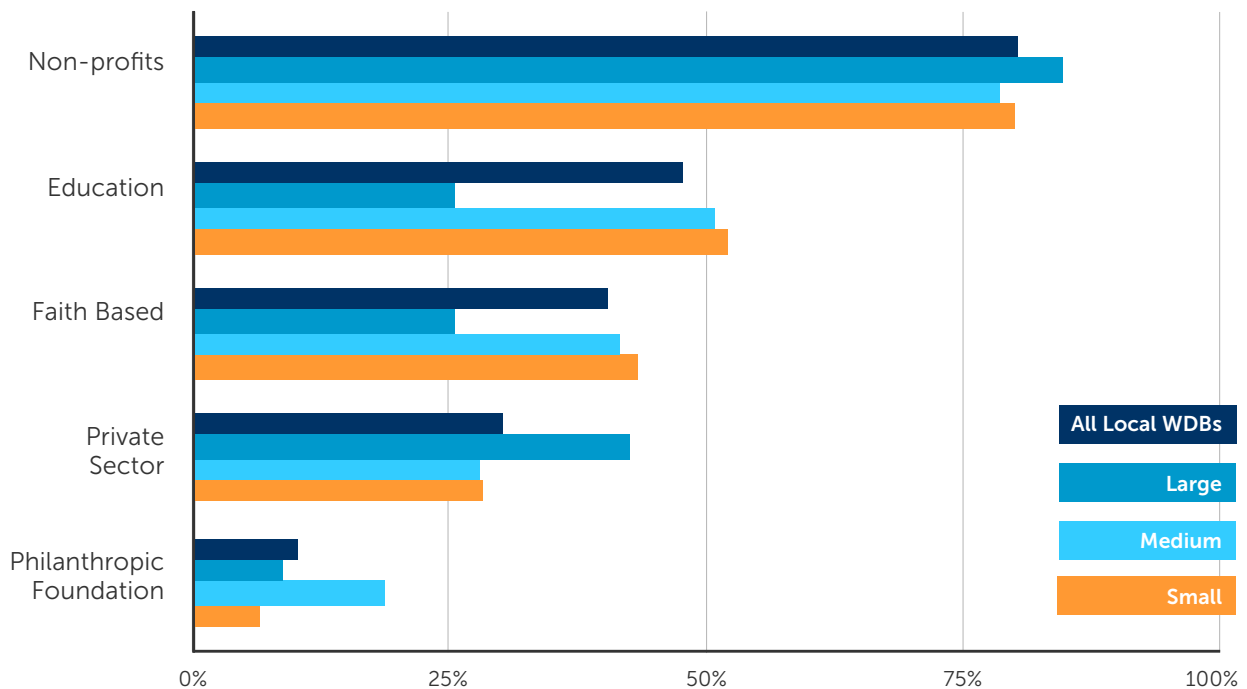
## 4. COUNTY GOVERNMENTS AND LOCAL WDBs WORK WITH A WIDE NETWORK OF PARTNERS TO IMPROVE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR FORMERLY INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS.

Reintegrating formerly incarcerated individuals into the workforce requires the collaboration of many stakeholders. Non-profit organizations are a significant part of the delivery system of reentry programs. Another important reentry program partner for counties and local WDBs is the education system, such as schools, colleges and technical training providers. Further, faith based organizations, philanthropic foundations and the private sector also contribute to counties' and local WDBs' capabilities to improve employment for formerly incarcerated individuals (See Figure 5).

**FIGURE 5.**

### NON-PROFITS ARE THE MOST COMMON PARTNER FOR LOCAL WDBs IN REENTRY PROGRAMS

REENTRY PROGRAM PARTNERS, PERCENT OF RESPONDING LOCAL WDBs BY POPULATION IN SERVICE AREA, OCTOBER–NOVEMBER 2015



Source: NACo survey, October–November 2015.

Notes: Large service areas have more than 1 million residents. Medium-sized service areas have between 500,000 and 1 million residents. Small service areas have fewer than 500,000 residents.



Non-profits have a prominent role in reentry programs operated by local WDBs. A majority (79 percent) of respondent local WDBs with reentry programs work with non-profits to prepare individuals for reentering the workforce (See Figure 5). These partnerships are a valuable resource for local WDBs and counties. In addition to local WDBs who receive federal workforce development funding to support reentry programs, non-profits may also receive federal funding to help reintegrate formerly incarcerated individuals. The Department of Justice's (DOJ) Second Chance Act provides competitively awarded grants to non-profit organizations to provide mentors and supportive services to adults that will help them successfully reenter their communities and prevent recidivism.<sup>37</sup> Under WIOA, Second Chance Act programs are mandatory one-stop center partners.<sup>38</sup> Second Chance Act grants to non-profits support counties with protecting public safety. In 2015, the Second Chance Reauthorization Act was introduced in Congress, which would reauthorize funding through 2020.

Education partners also collaborate with counties and local WDBs to help ensure safe and secure counties. A major focus of workforce development is providing education and training that will lead to jobs and careers. Close to half (47 percent) of local WDBs with reentry programs join together with schools and colleges to improve employment opportunities (See Figure 5). Local WDB partnerships with colleges are more common (36 percent) than partnerships with K-12 schools (26 percent). In addition to academic programs, community colleges provide occupational certificates for a number of in-demand industries that teach skills useful to accessing employment opportunities and better paying positions. Good paying jobs enable individuals to contribute to their families and communities.

Many local workforce development efforts include faith based organizations. Forty (40) percent of respondent local WDBs partner with faith based organizations to deliver reentry services (See Figure 5). Local WDBs with youth reentry programs are more likely to partner with faith based organizations than local WDBs with adult reentry programs (42 percent compared to 35 percent). DOJ awards competitive funding to non-profit and faith based organizations to reintegrate formerly incarcerated youth into their families and communities.<sup>39</sup> This type of funding is beneficial to local WDBs and counties given the importance of family support to the success of reentry programs.

The private sector has a meaningful role in getting formerly incarcerated individuals into jobs that will reintegrate them into the workforce. Thirty (30) percent of local WDBs with reentry programs involve the private sector. Private sector employers are an asset to reentry programs, as they can offer local WDBs insight into the skills employers are seeking, help program participants prepare for reentry into the labor force and offer opportunities to gain on-the-job training, especially in high skill, high wage jobs. Research demonstrates that employer engagement in workforce programs is a promising practice to increase the wages of program participants.<sup>40</sup>

Counties and local WDBs depend on strong partnerships with others to provide employment assistance to justice involved individuals. These networks include a multitude of entities, from non-profits and faith based organizations to the private sector and educational institutions. These networks and partnerships all come together to help counties and local WDBs maximize efforts to reintegrate individuals and reduce recidivism.



**79 PERCENT OF LOCAL WDBs  
WITH REENTRY PROGRAMS HAVE  
PARTNERED WITH NON-PROFITS**



**30 PERCENT OF LOCAL WDBs  
WITH REENTRY PROGRAMS  
PARTNER WITH THE PRIVATE  
SECTOR**

# CONCLUSION

Counties play an active role in criminal justice and workforce development efforts. These endeavors focus on the labor market success of formerly incarcerated individuals and their reintegration into the local economy. Counties are in the position to work alongside local WDBs to implement and deliver reentry programs that reintegrate individuals into the workforce and reduce recidivism. Reentry programs are part of larger county efforts to maintain public safety while reducing the jail population and jail costs, including preventing jail inmates from cycling in and out of county jails. Because of their central position within the criminal and juvenile justice system, counties help local WDBs reach the justice involved population.

Federal WIOA funding is the largest source of financial support for local WDBs' reentry programs. WIOA prioritizes funding for individuals with barriers to employment and enables local WDBs in association with

## **REENTRY PROGRAMS ARE PART OF LARGER COUNTY EFFORTS TO MAINTAIN PUBLIC SAFETY WHILE REDUCING THE JAIL POPULATION AND JAIL COSTS.**

counties to develop strategies that will expand employment opportunities for justice involved individuals. The future of reentry programs, both their availability and continued success in reintegrating formerly incarcerated individuals, depends on continued funding of the WIOA programs accessed by local WDBs to maintain their services.

Counties, local WDBs and their partners face significant challenges to the success of reentry programs. Maintaining funding is essential, especially as the federal government and many states have recently enacted or are currently considering policies that reduce incarceration and enable prisoners to return to their communities, which will increase the demand for reentry services. Further, background checks that filter out job applicants with a criminal record blocks individuals from job opportunities. These practices counteract the impact of reentry programs to prepare formerly incarcerated individuals for the labor market. Some counties and states are taking action to implement policies that would allow individuals to move further through the job application process before an employer asks about an applicant's criminal history. In addition, individuals are most successful in reentry programs when they have social support. Partnerships with organizations that facilitate mentorships or support individuals who are trying to reunify with their families help increase the chances of reentry success.

Counties are centrally situated in the workforce development and justice systems to help realize the public safety and economic benefits of reentry and employment. Getting formerly incarcerated individuals into jobs that lead to self-sufficiency helps strengthen county economies and maintain public safety. Criminal justice reform efforts are progressing around the country. Reentry programs are increasingly part of the solution that addresses the changing needs of the county justice system.

# METHODOLOGY

This report is based on an analysis of survey data collected by NACo from executive directors (or their designees) of local WDBs. With support from the National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB), NACo developed a web based survey and distributed it to local WDB executive directors between October and November 2015. The survey was designed to help NACo better understand how counties collaborate with local WDBs in reentry programs. In addition, the survey asked about how local WDBs fund reentry programs, who their partners are, the services reentry programs provide to participants, program goals and challenges. The survey also included a section on the implementation status of select WIOA provisions.

NACo developed the sampling frame for the survey using publicly available data from *Career One Stop* (<http://www.servicelocator.org/workforcecontacts.asp>), which is a website sponsored by the Department of Labor. The website provided the names and contact information, including email addresses, for 597 workforce board executive directors and the service area for each workforce board. This total includes state workforce boards and local WDBs. Of the 597 workforce board directors, 557 are local WDBs directors. The overall number of local WDBs includes the directors of the workforce boards in the ten states where the governor declared the entire state one local area; one local WDB that serves 19 tribal areas in Arizona; five local WDBs in Connecticut and two local WDBs in Rhode Island.

Using the national sample of workforce boards, NACo developed the survey sample. Because of differences in roles and responsibilities between state boards and local boards, the sample excludes the directors of the state workforce boards in the 40 states that have one or more local areas. As a result, the survey sample includes local boards only. Connecticut and Rhode Island do not have functional county governments, so local boards in these two states (seven in total) were excluded from the sample. Of the 550 local WDBs in the NACo survey sample, email addresses for 13 local WDB executive directors were invalid. The final survey sample is comprised of 537 local WDBs executive directors.

In October 2015, NACo emailed the survey to the executive directors of 537 local WDBs. Coinciding with NACo's email, NAWB included an announcement in their newsletter to local WDB executive directors that recommended participation in the research. NACo sent three reminder emails to non-respondents throughout the data collection period to encourage their completion of the survey.

Overall, 182 of the 537 local WDBs responded to the NACo survey for a response rate of 34 percent. This study only reports aggregated survey data for groups of local WDBs. The analysis adjusts for non-responses to survey questions based on answers to control questions.

Responding local WDBs closely follow the characteristics of the survey sample. Local WDBs were classified by their service areas, including population size. The Department of Labor delineates the service area of workforce boards on the *Career One Stop* website. Service areas are delineated by county and/or city or by state.

The survey sample of local WDBs included 91 percent of local WDBs with service areas that are aligned with the geographical areas of one or more counties (See Table A1). These county-aligned service areas provide a basis for understanding how county governments help govern and support local WDBs. Among respondents to the survey, 93 percent of local WDBs have service areas covering one or more counties. Local WDBs with service areas that encompass an entire state or one more cities also responded to the survey at a rate that parallels their representation in the survey sample.

**TABLE A1.****SERVICE AREA DISTRIBUTION OF THE SAMPLE OF LOCAL WDBs AND RESPONDING LOCAL WDBs**

SERVICE AREA	SAMPLE OF LOCAL WDBs (%)	RESPONDING LOCAL WDBs (%)
COUNTY-ALIGNED	91.2	92.9
CITY-ALIGNED	6.7	6.0
STATE	1.9	1.1
TRIBAL	0.2	0.0

Local WDBs are further characterized by the size of the population in their service area. U.S. Census data were used to determine the number of residents in the service area for each local WDB. Small service areas are characterized by residential populations fewer than 500,000. Medium-sized service areas have between 500,000 and 1 million residents. Large service areas have more than 1 million residents. In cases where a city is aligned with one local WDB and the county in which the city is located is aligned with another local WDB, the city population is subtracted from the county population.

The population in the service areas of respondent local WDBs is similar to the population size of local WDBs in the survey sample (See Table A2). A majority (64 percent) of local WDBs in the survey sample serve fewer than 500,000 residents compared to 62 percent of responding local WDBs. Local WDBs in medium-sized service areas account for 26 percent of responding local WDBs, which is close to the representation in the survey sample. Large local WDBs were only marginally more likely to respond to the survey relative to their share of the national sample (12 percent compared to 11 percent).

**TABLE A2.****POPULATION SIZE DISTRIBUTION OF THE SAMPLE OF LOCAL WDBs AND RESPONDING LOCAL WDBs**

POPULATION SIZE	SAMPLE OF LOCAL WDBs (%)	RESPONDING LOCAL WDBs (%)
SMALL	64.2	63.2
MEDIUM	25.0	25.7
LARGE	10.8	12.1



# ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act*, H.R. 803, 113th Congress, 2nd session, available at <https://www.congress.gov/113/bills/hr803/BILLS-113hr803enr.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Joan Petersilia, *When Prisoners Come Home: Parole and Prisoner Reentry*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Kevin Warwick, Hannah Dodd and S. Rebecca Neusteter, "Case Management Strategies for Successful Jail Reentry," (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2012), available from <http://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/alfresco/publication-pdfs/412671-Case-Management-Strategies-for-Successful-Jail-Reentry.PDF>.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> NACo analysis of U.S. Census Bureau, *2012 Census of Governments, Government Finance* (Department of Commerce, 2012). Expenditures of county-city consolidations and independent cities that are considered county governments under state law are included in the total for counties; Emilia Istrate, Kavita Mak, Anya Nowakowski and The LBJ School of Public Affairs, "Strong Economies, Resilient Counties: The Role of Counties in Economic Development," (Washington, DC: National Association Counties, 2014), available at [http://www.naco.org/sites/default/files/documents/FINAL\\_web\\_Econ%20Dvlp.07.02.14.pdf](http://www.naco.org/sites/default/files/documents/FINAL_web_Econ%20Dvlp.07.02.14.pdf).

<sup>14</sup> U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, NACo analysis of U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, Census of Jails, 2013 data (Department of Justice, 2016)

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## ABOUT NACo

The National Association of Counties (NACo) unites America's 3,069 county governments. Founded in 1935, NACo brings county officials together to advocate with a collective voice on national policy, exchange ideas and build new leadership skills, pursue transformational county solutions, enrich the public's understanding of county government, and exercise exemplary leadership in public service.



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