

How to Build an Inclusive Hiring Program

Creating Fair Opportunities That Strengthen Business and Community

Introduction

Building an inclusive hiring program is not just the right thing to do — it's a smart, forward-thinking business strategy. At Your Path Back, we help employers create structured, sustainable hiring practices that give justice-impacted individuals a fair chance at meaningful employment. This guide outlines how to launch or refine an inclusive hiring program at your organization.

Step 1: Assess Your Current Hiring Practices

Before making changes, evaluate how your current recruitment and hiring processes may unintentionally exclude qualified candidates with criminal records.

- **Audit Job Descriptions:** Eliminate unnecessary language like “clean background check required” unless mandated by law.
- **Review Application Filters:** Identify systems that automatically disqualify applicants based on background checks.
- **Understand Legal Limits:** Know what your state allows employers to ask or consider during hiring.

✦ *Tip: Use a "Ban the Box" approach — delay background checks until later in the hiring process.*

Step 2: Get Leadership Buy-In

Inclusive hiring starts with a shift in mindset — and that requires leadership support.

- **Share the business case:** reduced turnover, expanded talent pool, and enhanced reputation.
- **Highlight success stories** from other companies.

- Assign champions within HR or management to lead the initiative.

✦ *Tip: Frame second-chance hiring as a workforce development solution, not a risk.*

Step 3: Develop Fair Screening Policies

A past conviction should not be an automatic disqualifier. Implement fair chance hiring policies:

- Use individualized assessments that weigh time since offense, relevance to the job, and rehabilitation.
- Be clear on what disqualifies someone and why — and only where legally necessary.
- Offer an appeal or explanation step so candidates can share their side.

✦ *Tip: Focus on who someone is today, not who they were.*

Step 4: Train Your Team

Bias — even unconscious — can undermine your efforts. Equip your staff with the tools to succeed.

- Provide bias awareness training for hiring managers.
- Include education on second-chance hiring success stories.
- Clarify EEOC guidance on using criminal records fairly.

✦ *Tip: Make training ongoing, not one-time.*

Step 5: Prepare to Support Your New Hires

Success doesn't stop at the job offer. Support justice-impacted hires through onboarding and beyond:

- Assign mentors or workplace buddies
- Be clear about job expectations and performance

- Partner with community organizations (like ours!) for wraparound services

✦ *Tip: Consider workforce starter kits (tools, transit passes, uniforms) to ease the transition.*

Step 6: Monitor and Improve

Track your progress and look for opportunities to grow:

- Collect data on retention, engagement, and performance
- Solicit feedback from second-chance employees
- Share success stories to build momentum

✦ *Tip: Celebrate milestones and highlight impact internally and publicly.*

Closing Thoughts

An inclusive hiring program is a commitment to dignity, growth, and opportunity — for both your team and your community. When you say “yes” to second chances, you’re investing in a stronger, more resilient workforce.

Need Support?

We’re here to help you launch or refine your second-chance hiring strategy.

📍 <https://yourpathback.org>

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👤 Your Path Back