

## Results From the Transitional Jobs Reentry Demonstration

[MDRC](#) recently released its final report on the Transitional Jobs Reentry Demonstration (TJRD), [Returning to Work After Prison](#). The report has important implications for policymakers, researchers and practitioners—as well as for prisoners. Some 700,000 people are released from prison each year. Two-thirds of them are later rearrested and half return to prison within three years. Finding steady work is particularly daunting for them, since former prisoners often have low levels of education and skills and no recent work experience. They are also concentrated in a small number of struggling urban neighborhoods that lack resources to assist the reentry process. Many states have developed prisoner reentry initiatives in recent years. At the federal level, the [Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative](#), the [National Reentry Resource Center](#), and, most recently, the [Second Chance Act of 2008](#) have supported these efforts.

While transitional jobs are seen as promising, little is known about what strategies are effective in helping former prisoners find and hold jobs. The TJRD was designed, with support from the Joyce Foundation, to help fill this gap. TJRD focused on programs providing subsidized temporary jobs, support services, and job placement help. It assessed how such programs affected employment and recidivism during the two years after people entered the study. The findings show that transitional jobs can increase the overall rate of employment for former prisoners after release. These increases in employment, however, were found to be due solely to the transitional jobs themselves, with little evidence that they led to better unsubsidized employment outcomes over a two-year period. Thus, the study concludes, researchers and practitioners should also test other strategies. Future tests could examine extending the period of the transitional job, including through vocational training as a core component or through a greater focus on the transition to regular employment by offering stronger financial incentives for participants.

We encourage adult education practitioners, especially, to read the [full report](#), for more detail.

## Advanced Manufacturing Jobs and Innovation Accelerator Challenge Announced

This week the \$26 million [Advanced Manufacturing Jobs and Innovation Accelerator Challenge](#), a funding competition, designed to foster regional collaborative enterprises among research, education, industry, and government, was announced. The challenge is a partnership among the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration and National Institute of Standards and Technology, the U.S. Department of Energy, the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration, the Small Business Administration, and the National Science Foundation. Its goal is to support advanced manufacturing and stimulate economic growth. An important component of the competition is to engage education and training providers, such as community colleges, to assure that workers are prepared to move into new jobs arising from public-private manufacturing partnerships. OVAE helped develop this initiative and will be working with the funders and seven other agencies to support the awardees.

## Accountability—Rewarding High-Performing Programs

[Investing in America's Future: A Blueprint for Transforming Career and Technical Education](#) ushered in the prospect of an era of results-driven CTE. One of the specific reforms proposed in the *Blueprint* is to reward programs for results, for example, reducing gaps in educational attainment and employment between different groups of students, by linking a portion of available funding to outcomes. There is a variety of ways that results and funding may be linked. One is by performance-based funding (PBF), which several states have voluntarily adopted for their adult education programs. PBF has been adopted in CTE by a small number of states, including Washington, Tennessee, and Pennsylvania. In Washington PBF is not limited to CTE, but also includes programs in both adult and postsecondary education.

In 2006, Washington's decennial strategic master plan for higher education set two important goals, combining traditional student achievement and economic development goals to create a quality higher education system that (1) provides expanded opportunity for more Washingtonians to complete postsecondary degrees, certificates, and apprenticeships, and (2) drives greater economic prosperity, innovation, and opportunity. Also in 2006, the Washington State Board for Community & Technical Education began PBF, using state funds to reward community colleges based on the accumulation of "momentum points" awarded when students achieve specified goals. Washington rewards student progress from wherever students begin and grants more points for gains in pre-college rather than in college-level work. Short term, intermediate outcomes are used to allocate momentum points. Once momentum points are earned, the funding attached to this achievement is added to the college's base budget. Thus, colleges compete with themselves rather than with one another.

Washington's community and technical colleges increased their performance across all student outcome categories after their "Achievement Points" PBF plan took effect in 2006. PBF led the colleges to link PBF priorities with strategic planning and accreditation activities, and to focus on improving instruction, tutoring, assessment, and advisement.

Rewarding performance over process enables states to reward high-performing programs, assist low-performing programs, and develop and implement their vision of CTE transformation in a way that meets their economic priorities and community needs. Accountability innovations included in the *Blueprint* build on the initiatives of Washington and several other states by using *Perkins* funding to encourage efficient resource allocation, greater awareness and attention to state priorities, and a results-oriented education for all students.

For further information on PBF in Washington and other states, see the National Governors Association publication *Degrees for What Jobs?* ([www.nga.org/center](http://www.nga.org/center)). Those interested in [Performance-Based Funding in Adult Education](#) may follow the hyperlink to the 2007 MPR report to OVAE by that title.