



Helping Justice-Involved Reenter Employment (HIRE) Evaluation

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

Evaluation Grant Term: 1/1/2024 – 6/30/2025¹

September 2023

¹ The project end date is subject to change.

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Introduction and Background

The California Workforce Development Board (CWDB) is the Governor’s agent for the development, oversight, and continuous improvement of California’s workforce development system. The CWDB assists the Governor in setting and guiding workforce development policy, developing innovative initiatives through statewide programs, and expanding the High Road vision through its field branch. The workforce development system is comprised of 49 Local Workforce Development Areas (Local Area), each with its own business-led Local Workforce Development Board (Local Board). These Local Boards work together with the state and their local Chief Elected Officials to oversee the delivery of workforce services relevant to their residents and businesses. The California Unemployment Insurance Code §14200 – §14531 and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) give authority to CWDB to carry out the tasks associated with furthering a High Road workforce system.

California and the CWDB are committed to a High Road vision for the state’s workforce development system that embodies job quality, worker voice, equity, and environmental sustainability principles. Implementing this vision through policy, programs, and other practices will benefit workers, jobseekers, industry, and the state’s workforce development system.

The purpose of this Request for Applications (RFA) is to solicit applications from evaluation teams to conduct a robust, rigorous, and objective evaluation of the Helping Justice-Involved Reenter Employment (HIRE) program. The CWDB has set aside up to \$750,000 for this evaluation.

The objective of this evaluation is to rigorously test 1) which workforce services strategies under the HIRE program caused the greatest impact on program participants’ labor market outcomes and other measures of well-being, and 2) whether the HIRE program’s grant administration structure caused improvements in the program’s efficiency and/or equitable service provision.

The evaluation is viewed as important input into understanding how workforce policy may create more equity and effectiveness in serving justice-involved individuals.² The findings will inform future program selection, funding, design, and implementation decisions by CWDB.

² The term “justice-involved” is defined in Section 14040(b) of the Unemployment Insurance Code and refers to individuals (adults and juveniles) who are on parole, probation, mandatory supervision, post-release community supervision, or are otherwise part of the supervised population as defined in Penal Code §1234(d) and/or under the jurisdiction of a county or the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. This also includes individuals who are on county informal probation, county deferred entry of judgment, or any other county diversion program such as drug courts, veterans courts, community courts or other specialty courts.

Helping Justice-Involved Reenter Employment (HIRE)

Goals and Objectives

HIRE is a funding opportunity for community-based organizations (CBOs) and other nonprofit organizations to provide workforce services to justice-involved individuals. Approximately \$50,000,000 was made available to qualified grantees. The program's objectives are to:

- Increase employment opportunities and job mobility for formerly incarcerated and justice-involved individuals.
- Provide training, reskilling and upskilling, and supportive services to justice-involved individuals to improve employment opportunities and job mobility.

Under HIRE, CWDB funded organizations that advance the goals of its Strategic Plan and build workforce system infrastructure and capacity through:

- Collaboration among partners to develop service delivery strategies and align resources to connect the supervised population to employment.
- Innovation that creates new or adapts existing approaches or accelerates application of promising practices in workforce development and skill attainment.
- System change that utilizes these funds to incentivize the adoption of proven strategies and innovations that are sustained beyond the grant period.

In designing HIRE, the CWDB engaged with stakeholders serving formerly incarcerated and justice-involved individuals throughout the state. These stakeholder engagement sessions were designed to collect input from CBOs, nonprofits, and Local Boards, all of which provided critical feedback that informed the design and structure of the HIRE program. Key program components based on stakeholder feedback that have been integrated into HIRE include:

- A program model and funding structure designed to enhance and/or create partnerships that provide equitable access and support for CBOs to manage state funds.
- A program framework that supports projects that deliver direct participant assistance to program participants including stipends and needs-related payments.
- A unique data collection approach intended to track outcomes beyond traditional workforce development reporting metrics, such as obtaining a driver's license or moving into housing.

Types of HIRE Projects

The CWDB identified three different project types for the HIRE program:

- **Independent Projects** - Independent Projects consist of a single organization, which acts as the lead fiscal agent and is responsible for submitting a complete application package outlining how the organization will recruit, train, and provide supportive services to participants, as well as establish and/or reinforce existing relationships with the local and state corrections system(s) to support participants' successful transition from the justice system to the labor force. For the purposes of this application, small community-based organizations are defined as organizations with an annual budget less than or

equal to \$1.5M. Large community-based organizations are defined as organizations with annual budgets exceeding \$1.5M.

- **HIRE Network Hubs** - A HIRE network is a group of organizations applying collectively via one application. HIRE networks will consist of a single large CBO as the lead applicant, or Hub, and one or more large or small CBO(s) as partner applicants, or Spokes. The Hub's annual operating budget and organizational capacity determine allowable HIRE network sizes. HIRE Hubs will serve as the CWDB's primary point of contact and are responsible for organizing, coordinating, and reporting on project activities, deliverables, and program metrics on behalf of their proposed Network. HIRE Hubs will serve as the fiscal agent, convener, and lead reporting entity for their entire network and are expected to administer fiscal responsibilities for all other projects in their application that will serve this initiative. Like Independent projects and network Spokes, Hubs may also provide services to participants.
- **HIRE Networks Spokes** - HIRE Spokes are community and/or nonprofit organizations that are applying as part of a Network with a Hub via a single application. Spokes will work collaboratively with their Hubs to fulfill CWDB reporting requirements, complete financial transactions, and develop a Community of Practice within their Network. This includes but is not limited to, the issuance of needs-related payments and accounting reports.

More information about the HIRE program, including the program's Request for Applications (RFA), can be found on the [HIRE webpage](#).

Evaluation Objective and Questions

The objective of this evaluation is to rigorously test 1) which workforce services strategies under the HIRE program caused the greatest impact on program participants' labor market outcomes and other measures of well-being and 2) whether the HIRE program's grant administration structure caused improvements in the program's efficiency and/or equitable service provision. The evaluation is viewed as important input into understanding how workforce policy may create more equity and effectiveness in serving justice-involved individuals. The findings will inform future program selection, funding, design, and implementation decisions by CWDB.

CWDB will fund an **impact evaluation** to measure the effects of different workforce services strategies and grant administration structures used in the HIRE program. The evaluation should be: (i) **relevant** by responding to the needs of CWDB decision-makers, (ii) rely on **rigorous** methods to examine causal impact of HIRE activities on participant outcomes, (iii) **representative** of the needs of the communities served by HIRE and its evaluation as expressed by the communities themselves, and (iv) **responsible** in how required personally identifiable information (PII) and/or sensitive data is collected, stored, and potentially shared to balance transparency with the protection of confidentiality.

The evaluator should be **resilient** as demonstrated through impartiality and analysis and interpretation of analysis that is credible and unbiased.

The evaluator will be tasked with documenting the HIRE theory of change related to workforce services delivery – the inputs (financial, technical assistance) CWDB provides, the outputs in terms of quantity and quality, and outcomes to inform the final list of evaluation questions for the Evaluation Design Report. The evaluator will design and implement an evaluation to answer the defined evaluation questions using quantitative and/or qualitative data methods as appropriate. Any evaluation analysis should consider how the HIRE model compares to the standard workforce services model, which tends to focus on rapid reattachment to the labor force through services provided by standard grant administration structures.

Although the final list of questions will be informed by budget and timing, the Evaluation Design will be guided by the following areas:

1. Which workforce services strategies caused the greatest impact on HIRE participants' labor market outcomes and other measures of well-being?
 - a. Consistent with past evaluation findings like the Breaking Barriers evaluation report and the Prison to Employment interim report, are supportive services the most powerful determinant of participants' labor market success?
 - i. What types of supportive services have the greatest impact?
 - ii. What mechanism explains supportive services' impact?
 - b. What types of training and career services have the greatest impact? What mechanism(s) explains this finding?
 - i. How should "labor market success" be measured? Do the standard metrics of employment rates and median wages suffice, or should we also include other aspects of job quality in the measure?
 - ii. Does the extent to which non-wage measures of job quality matter vary according to the pay or other occupational profile of jobs into which participants enter (e.g., hourly-paid vs. salaried, private vs. public sector, union vs. non-union, above vs. below a [cross-industry pay median](#))
 - iii. What aspects of participants' overall well-being besides labor market outcomes improved because of the HIRE program?
2. Did the HIRE program's grant administration structure cause improvements in the program's efficiency and/or equitable service provision?
 - a. What was the impact of HIRE's Hub-and-Spoke grant administration model?
 - i. Did the Hub-and-Spoke model improve HIRE's return on investment (ROI)?
 - ii. Did the Hub-and-Spoke model improve HIRE's ability to serve disadvantaged populations?
 - iii. Did the Hub-and-Spoke model improve CWDB's ability to engage with new CBOs?

- iv. What are the specific service-delivery benefits to participants (if any) of the Hub-and-Spoke model?
- b. Should CWDB continue to explore new types of grant administration models?

Coordination between Evaluator and other Partners

The evaluator will require coordination with CWDB, HIRE grantees, and external partners on the following:

1. **Coordination on data collection** – The evaluator will rely on CWDB performance monitoring data and may coordinate with CWDB and HIRE grantees during evaluation work to ensure adequate data collection.
2. **Engaging with external partners** – The evaluator may require data and other information from partners who are external to the HIRE program to complete their evaluation of the HIRE program.

Evaluation Deliverables

Continuous

1. Monthly meetings to ensure CWDB consultation at each stage of evaluation (expected total: 18 maximum during a 1.5 year period of performance)
2. Produce quarterly 1-page Progress Reports to update on deliverable status and costs/burn rate (expected total: 6 maximum in a 1.5 year period of performance)
3. Travel to grantee offices for qualitative and other data collection (expected total: 4 trips to grantee offices as needed)

Specific

1. **Evaluation Design Report** and related materials – Report must define (i) theory of change, (ii) evaluation questions, (iii) outcomes, (iv) methods, (v) data collection strategy, (vi) consultation strategy, (vii) study limitations, (viii) ethics review process (if engaging directly with human subjects), (ix) workplan and milestones, and (x) budget:
 - a. Includes assessment of existing data for analysis, as well as any other quantitative and qualitative data collection requirements to meet evaluation objectives.
 - b. Includes defining and drawing a sample of HIRE grantees for site visits, with a clearly articulated logic for selected geographies, industries, and worker demographics.
 - c. Includes, as applicable, the development of questionnaire(s), informed consent statement(s), Data Management Plan (if collecting at personally identifiable information (PII) and/or sensitive data directly from human subjects), plans for Institutional Review Board (IRB) review to ensure alignment of evaluation protocols and informed consents with United States Federal Policy for Protection of Human Subjects (Common Rule 2018).

- d. Includes, as applicable, the assessment of need for study participant compensation and/or incentives to ensure sufficient representation rates for evaluation sample.
- e. Includes best practices in research transparency and reproducibility, including consideration of reproducible workflow and data sharing feasibility.

Evaluator will present a draft document to CWDB for review/comment. The evaluator is responsible for documenting comments and evaluator responses to comments.

The evaluator should expect the final Evaluation Design Report be made publicly available and will ensure any identifiable information is assessed before publication.

2. **Interim Analysis Summary** (September-October 2024) and **Final Report** (July 2025):
Conduct analysis and report on evaluation findings in alignment with agreed Evaluation Design Report to provide specific recommendations for program design and scale up, and to directly inform any budget requests for future HIRE funding for the 2025-2026 budget cycle.
 - a. Prepare an interim analysis summary report and accompanying slide deck outlining findings halfway through the evaluation period of performance.
 - b. Present findings to CWDB, sent for review/comment to partners. The evaluator is responsible for documenting comments and evaluator responses to comments.
 - c. Assess feasibility of de-identifying data that underlies analysis report to support access to data (public or restricted-access use) for reproducibility and additional analysis.
 - i. This step should align with efforts to work toward California's Open Data Policy, while also maintaining protection of confidentiality and privacy following Article 1 of the California Constitution, the Information Practices Act of 1977, the Information Practices Act (Civil Code Section 1798 et seq.), the Public Records Act (Government Code Section 6250 et seq.), Government Code Sections 11015.5 and 11019.9, and other applicable laws pertaining to information privacy.
 - d. Finalize the complete Interim Analysis Report in alignment with the agreed Evaluation Design Report by September-October 2024.
 - e. Support dissemination efforts through July 2025 through internal and external presentations, including community engagement to share findings from evaluation with the participant populations and populations targeted by HIRE program
 - f. The evaluator should expect the Interim Analysis Summary and Final Report to be made publicly available.

Governance

The evaluator will be contracted and overseen by CWDB. The evaluator will be asked to submit all key deliverables to CWDB for review and comment prior to finalization. CWDB will provide clearance to proceed with each phase of the evaluation from design to baseline to final data collection based on performance and quality of deliverables.

Clearance is not dependent upon the evaluation findings. CWDB is committed to understanding the positive, negative, and/or null effects of HIRE and supports full reporting by the evaluator.

Evaluation Deliverables Schedule

The evaluation timeline and deliverables schedule are based on the final approved Evaluation Design Report with data collection timing linked to the theory of change and reasonable expectations on when to measure outputs and outcomes.

, The proposed schedule is:

| Deliverable | Expected Date |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| RFA Release Date | September 5, 2023 |
| Applications Due | September 29, 2023 |
| Application Review | September 2023 – October 2023 |
| Award Announcement | October 2023 |
| Estimated Grant Term | January 2024-July 2025 |
| Evaluation Design Report | February-March 2024 |
| Interim Analysis Summary | September-October 2024 |
| Final Report | July 2025 |
| Final Analysis Dissemination | July 2025 |

Period of Performance: The evaluation period of performance for this impact evaluation is expected to be December 2023 - July 2025.

Evaluator Qualifications

To meet the objectives of this evaluation, CWDB requests the contractor summarize which proposed staff meet the qualifications listed below and which staff will be assigned the role of Key Personnel. Staff may meet multiple qualifications and/or roles, but the contractor must

provide justification on how the proposed staff meet the qualifications and how their proposed level of effort will meet the objectives of the evaluation.

Key Personnel

- Project Manager responsible for day-to-day oversight of the evaluation activities.
- Principal Investigator/Co-Principal Investigator responsible for evaluation methods expertise.
- Project Consultant responsible for providing sector expertise.

The contractor must demonstrate a team that can respond to the required qualifications below:

Required Project Manager Qualifications

- Five or more years of data and evaluation-oriented experience which must include responsibility for the determination of design and implementation for at least one data and/or evaluation project.
- Ability to demonstrate strong project management skills and experience managing complex multidisciplinary research and/or evaluation projects.

Required Evaluation Organization Qualifications

Individuals may respond to multiple requirements; however, the evaluator must demonstrate the ability of the team to respond to the required qualifications listed below:

Labor and workforce development sector expertise

- Knowledge of labor issues and strategies with focus on California.
- Knowledge of best practices in labor market outcome indicator definition and measurement.

Evaluation methods and statistical analysis

- Graduate degree or related experience in a social science or related field (such as economics, public policy, public health, political science, or statistics).
- Demonstrated experience designing program evaluation using rigorous methods.
- Experience ensuring an equity lens on analysis through appropriate sampling, survey design, data analyses and reporting of differential impacts across groups (sex, race and ethnicity, income, and other relevant characteristics).

Responsible and ethical data collection and survey management expertise

- Experience with the design and implementation of quantitative data collection methods, including questionnaire design, field sampling, efficient and secure data collection methods.
- Demonstrated experience in designing, sampling, administering, and analyzing qualitative data collection according to industry best practices, such as focus groups and key informant interviews.

- Experience with responsible data management (collection, storage, transfer, de-identification, access).
- Training on protection of human subjects and confidential data management.
- Knowledge of threats to credibility of social science including p-hacking, selective reporting, publication bias, lack of reproducibility.

Preferred Qualifications

- Knowledge of statistics and econometrics, including experience with statistical analysis, power calculations, and sampling procedures.
- Experience producing cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit analysis of social programs.
- Previous experience in working with governmental organizations, through contracts or other formal processes.
- Experience with inclusive, community-centered, and/or participatory methods.
- Experience communicating research findings to policymakers and diverse stakeholders.
- Experience with best practices in research transparency and reproducibility, including pre-specification, standardized reporting, responsible data management, and reproducible workflow.
- Experience producing policy-relevant analysis in Dynamic Documents or other tools that facilitate transparency of analysis and assumptions made in analysis and interpretation of analysis.

Evaluation Proposal Application

The CWDB requests applicants submit the following information in their application:

Evaluation project narratives should be up to 12 pages in length and cover the following elements:

- **Evaluation Objectives:** This section should detail specific aims, objectives, and evaluation milestones.
- **Research and Evaluation Design:** This section should include an overview of the applicant’s thinking and approach regarding the research and evaluation framework for the HIRE program. Include potential research questions, methods, and analytical approaches. This section should guide the reviewer through the sequential steps of the evaluation and intended outcomes. While the final research and evaluation design will be determined during the period of performance, this is an opportunity for the applicant to share their thinking and approach.
- **Experience/Qualifications:** Include details on the evaluation team’s experience and expertise to demonstrate their ability to complete a robust and rigorous evaluation.

Note: In addition to the 12-page narrative, applicants must complete the *HIRE Evaluation*

Application Attachments Excel workbook supplement to the Request for Application.

With the exception of the signed (digital or wet) cover page, please submit application documents in their original file format (e.g. Word, Excel, etc.) using the following naming convention:

HIRE_EVAL_ApplicantName_ProjectNarrative

Applications must be submitted electronically to ResearchUnit@cwdb.ca.gov.

Funding

Funding under this RFA will be provided through the California General Funds HIRE allocation. All awards are subject to the availability of appropriated funds and to any modifications or additional requirements that may be imposed by law. The CWDB reserves the right to adjust the total number, duration, and amount of each grant award.

Funding amount requests should be clearly justified and outlined within the application, including breakdowns of all costs within a line item and thorough descriptions captured in a budget narrative. If this level of detail is not provided, the application may be disqualified due to the inability to review the scope of work, activities, outcomes, and deliverables due to an unclear budget and use of grant funds. If additional information is needed to justify funding requests, the CWDB reserves the right to request additional information.

The applicant also referred to as the Fiscal Agent, is responsible for releasing and distributing funds to any partnering organizations once awarded. Each partnering contractor receiving money must be identified, with services provided and funds allocated clearly outlined.

No obligation or commitment of funds will be allowed prior to or beyond the grant term end date. Any grant funds not expended during the grant period will be returned to the State.

Invoicing

Under no circumstances can the State pay for services provided prior to the start date or the final contract approval of the State, whichever is later. Final approval occurs when all parties have signed the Standard Agreement, with the latest signature date being the date of final approval.

For services satisfactorily rendered and upon receipt and approval of the invoices, the CWDB agrees to compensate the Contractor in accordance with the approved Budget Summary. The total invoiced amount shall not exceed the award amount. Grantee shall maintain thorough accounting ledgers to support all charges and year-to-date expenditures of grant funds.

This grant operates on a reimbursement structure, and Fiscal Agents are required to invoice monthly to receive payment. Invoices are due by the 20th of the month each month. If the 20th falls on a weekend or holiday, the report will be due the following business day. Under the

[California Prompt Payment Act](#), payment should be received within 45 calendar days from the date the invoice is received from the Fiscal Agent.

To adhere to the legality and transparency requirements of the solicitation process, individual CWDB staff cannot respond directly to inquiries or engage with potential applicants during the solicitation period.

All questions regarding this RFA shall be sent via email to ResearchUnit@cwdb.ca.gov.

Application Deadline

Applications are due September 29, 2023, by 3:00 PST. Applications received after the deadline will not be accepted.

Submitting an Application

Applications must be submitted electronically to ResearchUnit@cwdb.ca.gov.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit their application early to allow adequate time to make any corrections by the due date. Applications submitted after the deadline will not be accepted.

APPENDIX

Executive Order N-6-22 – Russia Sanctions

On March 4, 2022, Governor Gavin Newsom issued Executive Order N-6-22 (the EO) regarding Economic Sanctions against Russia and Russian entities and individuals. “Economic Sanctions” refers to sanctions imposed by the U.S. government in response to Russia’s actions in Ukraine and any sanctions imposed under state law. By submitting a bid or proposal, Contractor represents that it is not a target of Economic Sanctions. Should the State determine Contractor is a target of Economic Sanctions or is conducting prohibited transactions with sanctioned individuals or entities, that shall be grounds for rejection of the Contractor’s bid/proposal any time prior to contract execution or, if determined after contract execution, shall be grounds for termination by the State.