

Labor Dept. funds LISC to improve employment opportunities for reentry individuals with financial opportunity model

NEW YORK (July 11, 2017)—The U.S. Department of Labor has announced \$4.5 million in new funding for LISC Financial Opportunity Centers (FOCs) to help people who recently released from incarceration train for and find quality jobs and careers, and access other wrap-around services they need to succeed as they return to their communities. The new grant is part of [\\$72 million in funding](#) awarded to 32 organizations through the Labor Department’s Reentry Project, which is focused on evidence-based opportunities to reduce recidivism.

The grant will extend the reach of seven FOCs in Chicago, Detroit, Indianapolis, Minneapolis and Providence that operate in communities with high rates of poverty, crime and reentry. The sites are part of a network of 80 FOCs across the country that offer an integrated set of employment and financial coaching supports for low- and moderate-income people—from helping build up their credit to addressing educational gaps.

Data indicates that this bundled approach leads to concrete gains in job retention, net income and credit scores. FOCs work with more than 20,000 people each year, 26 percent of whom have been involved with the criminal justice system at some point in their lives.

“As a country, we have underinvested in our talent -- in preparing people for millions of quality jobs employers must fill to innovate and grow, said Maurice Jones, LISC president and CEO. This is a risk to American competitiveness in a 21st Century global economy. This grant will help us to invest in some of that talent.”

Currently, there are more than 2.3 million people in U.S. prisons, jails and other detention facilities, with 650,000 released each year from prisons alone. Studies indicate that nearly 77 percent are arrested again within five years.

“FOC clients that have histories of incarceration have proven to be just as successful at improving their financial outlook as other clients, said Seung Kim, LISC’s senior director of financial stability programs. The key is the bundle of target services, which helps them move forward, while also reducing crime and expanding economic activity in their communities.”

The FOCs are part of a broader LISC effort to expand economic opportunity for low-income people. It dovetails with LISC’s work on [community safety](#) that builds police-community partnerships, supports data-driven strategies to take on crime hotspots and integrates safety into broader programs on economic development, housing and jobs.

“FOCs are really about economic mobility,” Jones said. “They give people a vision of a different future, and provide them with the services and skills they need to realize it.”

About LISC

With residents and partners, LISC forges resilient and inclusive communities of opportunity across America – great places to live, work, visit, do business and raise families. Since 1980, LISC has invested \$17.3 billion to build or rehab 366,000 affordable homes and apartments and develop 61 million square feet of retail, community and educational space. For more, visit www.lisc.org

About Financial Opportunity Centers

Financial Opportunity Centers (FOCs) provide one-on-one coaching services that help low- to moderate-income people build smart money habits, access higher paying jobs and focus on the financial bottom line. LISC has a network of nearly 80 FOCs across the country embedded in local community organizations known for their history of providing quality services. Since 2011, FOCs have served 77,000 clients in 15 states.