



Inclusive work: Marginalized populations in the workforce of the future

Impact, challenges, and opportunities for empowerment

Deloitte Consulting LLP's Anti-Human Trafficking Team advises businesses and governments to incorporate social responsibility into their core strategies and operations, identify and remove human trafficking in their supply chains, and create employee and customer retention through improved societal impact. Contact the authors for more information or read more about our services on [Deloitte.com](https://www.deloitte.com).

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The future of work

This report was primarily written prior to the global COVID-19 pandemic and 2020 national dialogue calling for meaningful racial justice reforms. Though these two important events are not mentioned directly, they have had widespread and disproportionate impacts on marginalized groups, and further highlight the relevance of this report. As organizations choose the path forward, it is imperative they rethink deeply held orthodoxies in order to shape a more inclusive Future of Work. Generating innovative pathways to employment for marginalized populations has never been more critically needed by so many.

— **Seán Morris**

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THE NATURE OF work is changing rapidly. Technological advancements—including robotics, automation, and artificial intelligence (AI)—are shifting roles, responsibilities, and what has traditionally dictated the work of humans versus the work of machines.¹ As automation becomes more prolific, machines will likely perform many predictable cognitive and physical activities, such as operating machinery, administrative tasks, or preparing food.

Collectively, the forces shaping the future of work are likely to have many positive impacts, including creating new employment opportunities,² developing unique platforms to engage alternative workers such as freelancers or contract-based workers,³ and increasing productivity and economic growth.⁴ But they may also create new challenges related to the displacement of jobs and rapidly changing demand for technical and essentially human skills. Many employers are placing a higher premium on human skills such as problem-solving,

empathy, and creativity in their workforce as AI and robotics transform previously manual tasks. Considering alternative hiring pathways could help organizations meet these skills and competency requirements in the future of work.

There are opportunities to access previously untapped talent to meet these evolving workforce needs. One option may be to actively engage marginalized populations who have previously been susceptible to unemployment and underemployment. Many employers and government agencies have used new business models to integrate and scale pathways to employment for individuals from marginalized backgrounds. Through these efforts, employers can realize the tangible benefits of engaging a diverse, resilient, and often untapped workforce, helping to improve outcomes for these individuals, as well as their own organizations.

In 2019, Deloitte and American University's School of International Service cohosted a symposium titled "Building an inclusive workforce of the future." The event centered on the future of work, exploring the potential impacts on individuals who may be particularly susceptible to unemployment and underemployment—specifically, survivors of human trafficking, refugees, and formerly incarcerated persons.

Panelists, speakers, and attendees from across the public, private, and social sectors strategized potential pathways to sustainable and dignified work through the collective social enterprise. Convening service providers and other professionals working directly on this issue enabled valuable knowledge-sharing and relationship-building. The points of view shared during the event provided the impetus for this report.

Creating opportunities for marginalized populations in the future of work

MARGINALIZED POPULATIONS CAN encompass many individuals. For the purposes of this report, we will explore three groups who, while distinct, share common barriers to accessing social, economic, and environmental resources. These are survivors of human trafficking, refugees, and formerly incarcerated persons. These three groups represent a significant pool of untapped talent but continue to face significant obstacles to achieving sustainable employment today.

Research suggests that conscientiously creating opportunities for individuals from marginalized populations can benefit organizations in multiple ways. These may include:

- **Enhanced performance.** Many studies demonstrate the benefits of a diverse workforce, and the need to foster an inclusive environment to maximize its potential.⁵ Diversity and inclusion have been linked to better team performance, and businesses with greater gender

and racial diversity often financially outperform their peers.⁶ The concept of building



teams comprising individuals with different lived experiences falls into a new frontier focused on adding diversity of thought to the traditional demographic lens.⁷ The objective is to derive value from intersectional complexities—uncovering talent and tapping into creative approaches to solutioning. In fact, diverse thinking can enhance innovation by up to 20%, reduce risks by an estimated 30%, and help smooth the implementation of decisions.⁸

- **Attracting and retaining top talent.**

Creating sustainable job opportunities for marginalized populations may result in higher retention rates for employers—from these hires as well as current staff. One study found that surveyed employers of refugees were not only happy with the performance of their recruits, but also saw higher than average retention rates from the refugees they hired.⁹ These same employers also felt that they became more effective managers through their experiences integrating greater diversity of thought, perspective, and identity into their workforce.¹⁰ Additionally, a recent survey found that “millennials and Generation Zs show deeper loyalty to employers who boldly tackle the issues that resonate with them most.”¹¹

- **Strengthened social license to operate.**

Studies show that steady, gainful employment contributes to lowering vulnerability and increasing stability. This can, in turn, create greater economic outcomes for traditionally marginalized individuals and their families, and contribute in small ways toward broader economic equality goals. Fulfilling this role as

an organization can demonstrate a genuine commitment to purpose to the public—a top marketing trend in 2020—and can also lead to greater loyalty from customers and other stakeholders.¹²

- **Access to federal tax credits.** Employers who hire marginalized populations may benefit from federal tax credits in the form of the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) which offers companies that hire from nine “target groups”—including formerly incarcerated persons, recipients of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits, and others—tax breaks of up to US\$9.6 thousand per employee hired.¹³

While the potential benefits are clear, many individuals from marginalized groups continue to face challenges accessing sustainable employment.

SEEN THROUGH LIVED EXPERIENCE

“Going into the job I was terrified that people were going to find out not only about my criminal history, but about the exploitation I went through, and also about the drug addiction that I went through. I had committed to myself to keep that stuffed so far down inside of myself that nobody could ever learn about it because I feared it would impact my ability to grow within the firm. I feared that everybody would think I was doing drugs in the bathroom or that I was sleeping my way to the top if they found out who I was. But then, something shifted inside of me and I decided that part of my story and that part of my life doesn’t define me. They were parts of me, but they didn’t define me.”

Challenges for marginalized populations in the future of work

AS PREVIOUSLY MENTIONED, different marginalized groups can share barriers to accessing social, economic, and environmental resources. Some of them are described below:

1. **Survivors of human trafficking:** Human trafficking is an elusive, complex, and illicit enterprise that impacts 40 million people worldwide, generating more than US\$150 billion in profits for the perpetrators.¹⁴ Each year, conservative estimates suggest that 403,000 people are trafficked in the United States.¹⁵ While survivors come from a wide variety of backgrounds and have a wide variety of needs upon exiting their trafficking situations, the majority of survivors globally are women and girls.¹⁶
2. **Refugees:** Globalization has complicated the political, economic, and social conception of borders and contributed to a growing refugee crisis. According to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), a refugee is an individual who “has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group.”¹⁷ An estimated 70.8 million individuals have forcibly fled their homes due to war, persecution, or violence.¹⁸ Since 1975, over 3 million refugees have been resettled in the United States alone.¹⁹

SEEN THROUGH STATISTICS

“One person is forcibly displaced every two seconds.”²⁰ —UNHCR

3. **Formerly incarcerated persons:** Nearly 11 million individuals are held in penal institutions worldwide.²¹ While incarceration is a global phenomenon, incarceration rates in the United States are staggering—a country that represents 5% of the world’s total population is home to 25% of the world’s prisoners.²² According to the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), 6.9 million people are in probation, jail, or prison or on parole at any given time. HHS suggests that mass incarceration has negative economic consequences, affecting an estimated 5 million Americans between 1980 and 2014.²³ Statistics show incarceration rates are impacted by race and gender.²⁴ For example, African Americans are roughly five times more likely to be incarcerated than whites.²⁵

SEEN THROUGH STATISTICS

“One out of every three Black boys born today can expect to go to prison in his lifetime, as can one of every six Latino boys—compared to one of every 17 white boys. At the same time, women are the fastest growing incarcerated population in the United States.”²⁶ —American Civil Liberties Union

While individuals from each of these populations face different challenges in gaining employment based on their unique backgrounds and characteristics, there are also certain barriers that marginalized populations may share to various extents.

SEEN THROUGH LIVED EXPERIENCE

"As a survivor of commercial sexual exploitation and someone who was previously incarcerated, I did face a lot of barriers to employment—and inside of employment."

Social stigma: One of the most significant barriers to employment for the identified populations comes through social stigma and bias. Race, gender, age, sexual orientation, physical ability, veteran status, religion, and other identities continue to be factors in accessing and fully engaging in employment.²⁷ Adding to implicit bias, some employers may not understand a candidate's unique experiences or situation. Refugees, for example, while legally able to work, may not have a physical social security card upon arrival, and employers may not know what other documentation to ask for to verify their employment eligibility.²⁸ Statistics show the direct impact of a criminal record—for example, a criminal record can reduce the likelihood of being called back or offered a job by 50%.²⁹ Additional barriers exist throughout the employment ecosystem. For example, to get an occupational license, there may be a "good moral character" clause which can exclude candidates at the discretion of the licensing body.³⁰ This can even be used to exclude individuals who were arrested but not convicted.³¹ Barriers experienced by formerly incarcerated individuals could also impact survivors of trafficking who often interact with the justice system. A recent survey showed that 91% of survivors who responded had a criminal record due to their experience of being trafficked.³²

Accessibility: For individuals who lack reliable internet access or digital literacy skills, searching for and securing employment can be incredibly difficult. In an economy where more than 70% of jobs are never publicly posted, the lack of a social or professional network can also create a significant barrier to employment.³³ Without a social or professional network that can enable relevant connections, it can be incredibly challenging to understand the local employment landscape.

For formerly incarcerated persons, in particular, lack of programming to teach digital literacy skills in prisons remains a limitation.³⁴ While the use of computers for instructional purposes is more common in prison today than in years past, this remains one of the most pressing accessibility considerations for formerly incarcerated persons.³⁵ Someone incarcerated for 15 years, released today, would have been incarcerated around 2004 and would enter a technology landscape vastly different than they remember.³⁶ As a result, the currently incarcerated are often unable to receive a "contemporary" education, which can hinder their job prospects upon release.

Behavioral and physical health and trauma:

Mental, emotional, and physical health barriers, as well as geographic restrictions, encumber marginalized populations in their efforts to seek and secure employment. Many survivors have mental health needs upon exit from their trafficking situations, while many others require health screening, medical treatment, and dental care for lingering injuries or illnesses that stem from or went untreated during their exploitation.³⁷ Refugees may face the trauma from experiences of war, natural disaster, persecution, and/or internal displacement prior to their placement in a recipient country. For formerly incarcerated persons who seek to join the workforce, the already formidable barriers to employment could be exacerbated if mental and/or behavioral health issues (including substance abuse disorders) go untreated after release.

Trauma-informed care and adequate support infrastructures are key to enabling individuals to succeed in and sustain employment opportunities.

SEEN THROUGH LIVED EXPERIENCE

"When you have a tremendous gap in your employment because you've been incarcerated, most employers use that against you."

Legal barriers: Survivors of trafficking and formerly incarcerated persons typically face significant legal barriers to employment. Seventy-one percent of foreign-born survivors of human trafficking enter the country legally on guest-worker visas that lack portability, meaning that if these workers were in an abusive employment situation and decided to leave, they would immediately lose their legal status and would be subject to removal by immigration enforcement.³⁸ Of those 71% of foreign-born survivors of human trafficking, 69% were unauthorized by the time they escaped labor trafficking and sought assistance.³⁹ This may present barriers to legal employment as survivors go through immigration proceedings and court processes.

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, approximately 77 million Americans (as many as one in three adults), have a criminal record.⁴⁰ Criminal records are a significant barrier for survivors of trafficking and formerly incarcerated persons. Survivors of trafficking may fall under the purview of the criminal justice system if they were forced to engage in illicit activities through, or by virtue of, the exploitation they experienced at the hands of their traffickers.⁴¹ In some of these cases, records can be expunged, though many jurisdictions fail to recognize forced criminality as a form of exploitation.⁴²

Formerly incarcerated persons are impacted by a wide variety of direct employment barriers and additional postrelease sanctions. Federal law does not prohibit employers from asking about and weighing criminal records when making employment

decisions as long as they are not used in a discriminatory manner.⁴³ For example, some social benefits may take months to reinstate after leaving incarceration.⁴⁴ These collateral sanctions greatly impact formerly incarcerated persons' ability to be self-sufficient upon release and, in turn, can increase the likelihood of recidivism. Other legal barriers that may unintentionally impede employment prospects include restricted access to welfare or food stamps, barriers to receiving government-issued IDs, and even certain conditions of probation or parole (e.g., check-ins during work hours).

Financial constraints: Without stable financial resources, marginalized populations often find it challenging to obtain professional attire, find transportation to job interviews, or understand the process to identify a position that appropriately matches their experience and expectations.

SEEN THROUGH LIVED EXPERIENCE

"If you don't have a network or someone that can vet you, getting a job can become a challenge. I was a certified plumber for 25 years but when I applied for 14 jobs, I was denied ... because of the gap in my employment [or] because I had no reliable transportation and no tools."



Resource constraints also make it difficult for survivors of trafficking, refugees, and formerly incarcerated persons to invest in upskilling, occupational certifications, or the educational credentials required to match the demands of employers.⁴⁵

Misaligned qualifications and education:

Gaps in employment and insufficient or misaligned qualifications (educational or work-based) play a critical role in limiting employment prospects for all three marginalized groups. Many marginalized individuals end up finding employment within industries that have fewer barriers to entry, or less regulated industries that offer workers fewer protections. For survivors of trafficking, in particular, viable employment options may fall within the same industries or sectors where they first experienced exploitation.⁴⁶ Alternatively, certain credentials are not internationally recognized. In the United States, refugees may be required to retake certification examinations in nonnative languages, recomplete academic coursework, or convince employers of the validity of their credentials.⁴⁷ For formerly incarcerated persons, criminal justice experts cite a lack of education and the myriad forms of marginalization and discrimination that individuals face upon release as driving factors behind unstable employment and risk of recidivism.⁴⁸

Facing one or often many of the barriers identified above, individuals trying to navigate an ecosystem of employers, service providers, and training programs are often left in precarious or vulnerable situations. Employers, similarly, may be unsure how to access talent and train employees outside of traditional mechanisms.

SEEN THROUGH LIVED EXPERIENCE

"If you have a good education in your country—if you are a doctor, an engineer— ... you need to change all of your documents and you need United States educational system credentials."

SEEN THROUGH LIVED EXPERIENCE

"When I lived in Iran, I was a hairdresser. When I came to the United States, I tried to get a hairdresser job. I went to a beauty salon, and the owner of the beauty salon asked me a few questions. I didn't understand what she said. She told me to learn English, and after I learn English to come back."

SEEN THROUGH LIVED EXPERIENCE

"Some people start working in restaurants or hotels. I started with housekeeping and it was a struggle for me because I never did a job like that in my country."

Leveraging innovation and mitigating common barriers

ADVOCATES AND ORGANIZATIONS serving marginalized populations are working to develop programs, systems, and technologies to both help mitigate existing challenges and proactively take steps to create employment opportunities for them. Here are a few examples:

Retooling initiatives to address skills gaps and barriers⁴⁹

AnnieCannons: Training survivors of trafficking to become Web developers⁵⁰

AnnieCannons, a California-based organization, believes that “economic opportunity is the key to breaking the cycle of exploitation.” AnnieCannons trains and empowers students with skills such as data literacy, full-stack development, and visual design. The organization connects its students with providers to access the infrastructure (housing, child care, etc.) needed to successfully complete the training. Following the education portion of the AnnieCannons program, the organization sources and manages payments of client projects for graduates so they can promptly utilize their new skills and build their portfolio. Graduates are hired as contractors within AnnieCannons to work on said projects, providing them anonymity from their background as survivors of trafficking.

The impact of AnnieCannons is two-fold. First, the organization is empowering survivors to develop relevant skills outside of their initial industry of exploitation, in a manner that does not necessarily

require the “soft skills” that can often be difficult for survivors to attain. Second, AnnieCannons is also encouraging tech companies to go beyond their traditional pool of hiring. Participating companies in the tech industry are helping to break the status quo and set a trend by hiring individuals from marginalized communities and create opportunities in a highly competitive industry.

The Last Mile: Offering digital literacy and engineering programs to the currently incarcerated⁵¹

Digital literacy and software coding/engineering skills are in high demand from many employers and this demand can help formerly incarcerated persons transcend employment barriers (e.g., criminal record, lengthy periods of unemployment). Since 2010, a nonprofit called The Last Mile (TLM) has been offering coding and entrepreneurship classes inside California’s San Quentin State Prison, California’s oldest and largest state prison, containing the largest male death row prison population in the United States.⁵² The Last Mile co-founders, Chris Redlitz and Beverly Parenti, created the program with the goal of training those incarcerated to develop marketable coding skills and help break the cycle of recidivism. Nearly 600 inmate-students have participated in the program between 2010 and 2018.⁵³ TLM is currently in 22 classrooms in six states including California, Indiana, Oklahoma, Kansas, North Dakota, and Michigan. Furthermore, none of the TLM graduates who joined the workforce since inception have slipped into recidivism.⁵⁴

The Last Mile also recently launched a Web development shop in which advanced students get paid over US\$20 an hour to work on projects for paying clients.⁵⁵

Creating access to employers, networks, and new markets

Talent Beyond Boundaries’ “Talent Catalog”: Connecting refugees with employers who need their skills⁵⁶

Talent Beyond Boundaries (TBB) is a global nonprofit organization that secures suitable international employment opportunities for refugees who are living in countries where they cannot fully integrate, and works with governments to address the barriers refugees might face to successfully migrate with their families.

In their online tool, the Talent Catalog, refugees register by entering their background information, level of education, work experience, and skills. TBB, as well as their global partners, identify employers who are interested in hiring refugees and provide them with a “catalog” of employees who fit the description for what they are seeking. The platform also generates a CV for users to download and personally circulate with potential employers.

More than 20,000 refugees are currently registered on the platform.⁵⁷ In addition to providing a different avenue for refugees to help overcome a primary barrier of identifying appropriate employment opportunities in the global labor market, the aggregation of refugee skills and employment data helps TBB and advocates a compelling case to potential employers and countries for the different value refugees can offer their business and communities.

Prison Entrepreneurship Program: Making entrepreneurship a reality for returning citizens⁵⁸

Created in 2004, the Prison Entrepreneurship Program (PEP), operates an entrepreneurship reentry program inside and outside prisons.⁵⁹ EfficientGov, an information service that tracks innovative local government solutions, cites PEP as an effective program in the United States at reducing recidivism.⁶⁰ Since the program’s inception, PEP states that the, “2,500 graduates who have been released have a recidivism rate under 9%, well below the 23% for the general population, and a recidivism rate of 2% for graduates who go on to complete their post-release eSchool program. The program helps all graduates gain employment within 90 days of release, and over 300 participants have started businesses. Of those, six companies have revenue that exceeds US\$1 million.”⁶¹

Foodhini: Creating a new market for existing skills⁶²

Not all effective employment platforms and models creating opportunities for refugees rely on technology or upskilling. Foodhini is a DC-based food startup founded on the idea that “food can be used to create new opportunities for our immigrant and refugee communities, and also satisfy the appetite of hungry foodies in search of authentic multicultural meals.” They recognize that refugee populations often face a myriad of financial, educational, and cultural barriers, which may make accessing traditional employment a challenge. Instead of focusing resources on pathways to upskilling, Foodhini provides an opportunity for refugees to capitalize on skills they already possess and have been honing for years in their homes.

To fulfill its goal of compensating their chefs with a livable wage, Foodhini provides access to a commercial kitchen, training, and connection to the market to support chefs as full-time employees as they curate menus that are available online for individual meal service as well as through catering and retail. Foodhini capitalizes on a growing trend for ethnic cuisine in the nearly US\$1.5 billion food service and meal-kit industry, while also appealing to people's interest in supporting socially-oriented enterprises.⁶³

Overcoming physical constraints and barriers to sustainable employment

International Sanctuary: Empowering survivors with holistic care, while creating a pathway to new skills⁶⁴

International Sanctuary and PURPOSE Jewelry's mission is to "empower girls and young women escaping human trafficking to embrace their true identity and worth."⁶⁵ The art of craftsmanship through their social enterprise, PURPOSE, paired with holistic care offers women a path to gaining hope, dignity, and freedom for the future. The nonprofit organization operates in four regions (India, Uganda, Mexico, and in Orange County, California) and provides young women and girls escaping human trafficking vital tools they need to be able to gain economic freedom.

International Sanctuary's program activities and outcome goals are planned according to four pillars of personal and economic development: income, education, health care, and community. International Sanctuary works with each participant from helping her open her first bank

account, to creating her own individual financial development plan, while conducting training in financial literacy and providing ongoing mentorship in financial management. Girls and women employed by International Sanctuary receive professional job training, a stable income, access to health care, and the tools necessary to pursue their desired career path. Employers who are interested in retaining talent as the economy embraces more and more part-time and vulnerable workers might consider implementing a similar approach.

National Domestic Workers Alliance, NDWA Alia: Using technology to help domestic workers access benefits⁶⁶

The National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA) is a leader in supporting dignity and fairness for millions of domestic workers in the United States, which is especially important since most domestic workers are employed informally, making it easier for unscrupulous employers to engage in workers' rights violations or other forms of abuse.⁶⁷

NDWA Labs, NDWA's innovation arm, experiments with new strategies to improve work for domestic workers. NDWA Labs developed a tool called "Alia"—"the first portable benefits platform, designed for house cleaners."⁶⁸

Employers or clients of housecleaners can use Alia to contribute toward their housecleaner's benefits; Alia suggests five dollars per cleaning. This includes paid time off, life insurance, and accident insurance, according to the individuals' needs. The employer simply has to sign up and choose their monthly contribution amount. The goal is to "make domestic work good work," which includes benefits in addition to a living wage.

Being part of the solution

A coalition approach

THESE EXAMPLES OF social enterprises and initiatives have demonstrated the opportunities that exist by engaging the untapped talent within traditionally marginalized groups, such as the populations identified here. However, achieving and sustaining employment is often tied to other needs including housing, mental health, and addressing the barriers outlined above.⁶⁹ Employers, themselves, may not be positioned to address the full spectrum of needs identified. By building coalitions with organizations and service providers who address mental health, housing, and other needs, employers will be better able to actively engage an untapped talent pipeline while disrupting traditional barriers to employment.⁷⁰

This solution involves an ecosystem of three stakeholder groups and offers an assisted pathway from service provision (e.g., skills development, training, care) to potential employment. The conditions below are all necessary for an effective coalition approach, but can be completed by one or more stakeholders within the ecosystem. They are:

- 1. Employment opportunities** with companies and organizations engaged and committed to bolstering their talent pipeline and working in collaboration with individuals and organizations in the field.
- 2. Skills development and training programs** that meet the specific hiring needs of employers and have coordinated on the basic needs support necessary during the training period.

- 3. Provision of basic needs**, generally, by direct service providers who coordinate key stability factors such as housing, nutrition assistance, transportation, and mental health services.

Rather than three stakeholder groups working in isolation, a coalition model proposes that these three key conditions can be met through ongoing partnerships or other innovative business models, that can help to form a mutually beneficial pipeline (figure 1).

Additionally, within this model, a service provider may choose to serve exclusively as a liaison, facilitating connections between organizations/trained individuals and willing employers. In doing so, the liaison can help guide the employer in adopting responsible hiring practices and HR policies, match trained individuals with the right employment opportunities, and ensure continuity of care, ultimately enabling the scalability of the model.

As an example, a digital literacy organization working with survivors of trafficking could be paired with a

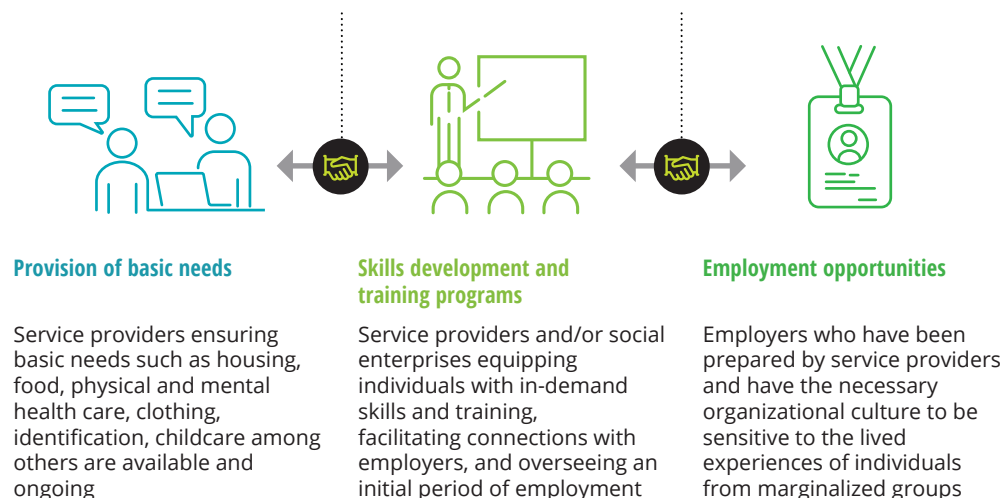


FIGURE 1

A coalition model will engage talent, employers, and service providers

Sustainable employment pathway

Connecting skilled and trained talent with ready and vetted employers by forging connections between service providers providing basic needs, programs offering training and job skills and employers. Effective pathways will **target mutual needs**, allow for **due diligence to build trust**, and provide a **system of support** through service provider involvement.



Source: Deloitte analysis.

technology firm and a local crisis center. In this model, a set number of interview slots or trial positions could be made available for graduates of the digital skills program at the technology firm and the crisis center could coordinate basic needs of each person while they were in training and during their first month of work. Additional services could be coordinated between the parties such as providing trainings to employers or supporting various needs during the early stages of employment. As the partnership grows, the training could integrate into the employment phasing from training only, to training for three days and interning for two days, to full employment over the course of the life cycle. By linking these entities together from the beginning, service providers can make sure that the skills their clients are developing are tailored to what is needed in the market and the business will have the ability to proactively shape the skills of incoming employees.⁷¹ The demonstrated benefit to

each of these groups is amplified by the core competencies of the others: Economic stability contributes to recovery and sustained housing, while skill development and mental health supports job performance and retention.

While employers cannot singlehandedly address the challenges and barriers facing individuals who have been marginalized in the labor market, they are a key stakeholder in helping find solutions. To collaborate effectively with other organizations, employers should examine legacy employment processes and qualifications that could be maintaining barriers and identify ways to create an organizational culture where diversity of background, experience, and thought is not only sought and welcomed, but acknowledged as a driver of strategic advantage. As the future of work becomes more and more an everyday reality, organizations have an opportunity to reframe how they source, attract, hire, and retain diverse talent.

SEEN THROUGH LIVED EXPERIENCE

"About six years after I was incarcerated, I got the opportunity to work at a major financial institution. I was given that opportunity largely because I had been a temporary worker for six months and after seeing the way that I worked, they wanted to hire me full-time. That gave me the opportunity to explain my criminal background, and the hiring manager was much more willing to listen to me because she had experienced me as a person and as an employee."

For marginalized populations, the future of work provides opportunities to further self-confidence, self-sufficiency, and economic empowerment, which are integral to building resilience and reducing the risk of future exploitation. For employers, the future of work can provide opportunities to tap into new, diverse labor markets teeming with potential. A comprehensive pathway to employment that considers the unique needs of each stakeholder in this process could turn this coalition approach to the future of work into a reality, helping to create value for employers and contributing directly to the ability of individuals from marginalized groups to realize their full potential in the workforce.

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