



Employer Engagement Profile: *Overview*

Produced by DDAA in Partnership with the ARC



Businesses are an essential part of any region's recovery to work ecosystem. There is a strong link between employment and long-term, successful recovery. A meaningful career provides purpose, one of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's [four dimensions of recovery](#). Businesses in a region can provide people in recovery with another dimension of recovery, community. But often the biggest challenge regions face in building a recovery-to-work ecosystem is finding companies that are committed to hiring people in recovery.

The most common obstacles regions face in engaging employers range from a lack of awareness to risk aversion and entrenched stigma. Many regions have found ways to address these obstacles and successfully engage businesses as active members of their recovery-to-work ecosystems.

In partnership with ARC, DDAA developed a series of Employer Engagement profiles that showcase different approaches to employer engagement in the recovery space. The profiles were informed by in-depth interviews with multiple regions that have developed their outreach and programs independently and that are seeing results. Some regions combine several approaches.

Regions that are aiming to improve employer engagement in the recovery-to-work space can consider boosting current efforts with one or more of the employer engagement approaches profiled, including:

- ▶ [Partnering with Economic Development Intermediaries](#): Some regions have had success both reaching and supporting employers by partnering with economic development intermediaries like chambers of commerce, local development districts, and workforce boards. These organizations have an ability to work with companies at scale and are a trusted source of information about how to mitigate risk, update HR policies, and approach substance use disorder as a workplace wellness issue.
- ▶ [Recovery Friendly Workplaces](#): States and regions have started Recovery Friendly Workplace initiatives to provide education, training, and resources for companies to support employees with substance use disorder.
- ▶ [Entrepreneurship Programs](#): This approach prepares people in recovery to start their own businesses.
- ▶ [Partnering with Mission-Driven Staffing Agencies](#): In this approach, staffing or temp agencies act as the matchmaker between a person in recovery and a business that needs employees. In some regions, companies use staffing agencies as their primary hiring approach, and should be part of a robust employer engagement approach.
- ▶ [Social Enterprises](#): Social enterprises can bridge the gap between recovery and employment - empowering individuals with substance use disorder to build skills for future employment.

Each profile includes the practical guidance needed to start a new approach, regional examples of successful implementation, an in-depth case study, and lessons learned across the regions and programs interviewed.

Across these five approaches, there are several best practices that rise to the top and can inform any employer engagement work. Successful employer engagement involves:

- ▶ Working with companies systematically and at scale;
- ▶ Helping companies lower the risk of hiring people in recovery;
- ▶ Providing targeted support and resources to companies to help them retain people in recovery;
- ▶ Linking recovery efforts to other issues employers care about, like workplace wellness and employee retention;
- ▶ Connecting companies that are new to the recovery-to-work space with employer champions that are more seasoned and can share their experience and lessons; and, ultimately,
- ▶ Investing time and effort in building relationships with businesses and across the full recovery to work ecosystem.

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