

Report of the Jobs, Opportunity, and Prosperity for All Action Team Released

The Jobs, Opportunity, and Prosperity for All Action Team has released its first report, focusing on five key priorities: boosting opportunities for individuals with disabilities, expanding access to high-quality educational and workforce opportunities, and investing in employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities and the Second Chance community. Team representatives noted that it “squarely focused on building inclusive economic growth and opportunity in New Jersey by expanding access to good-paying jobs, educational and workforce resources, and small business opportunities for families across New Jersey. This approach should be led from the top, with a new level of prioritization and resource allocation from the front office and State agencies.”

The, [Jobs, Opportunity, and Prosperity Team report](#) proposed the following key priorities:

- Reducing dDisparities in businesses’ access to opportunity, capital, and State contracts/
- Expanding evidence-based job training and apprenticeship initiatives.
- Investing in higher education and workforce pathways.
- Supporting jobs programs in the re-entry system.
- Boosting opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

The Jobs, Opportunity, and Prosperity team proposes that the Administration consider the following recommendations:

- Create a “One Open Door” New Jersey Small Business Initiative under the Chief Operating Officer to consolidate and integrate overlapping small business-related services and programs currently spread across multiple State agencies under one roof with the authority to manage all small business support and referrals. They also recommend centralizing and managing all current and planned State contracting and procurement targets, goals, and programs to address the gaps in businesses’ access to opportunity, capital, and State contracts identified in the New Jersey Disparity Study published in 2024.
- Create an office within the New Jersey Business Action Center focused on expanding opportunities and cutting through red tape for historically underrepresented small businesses, particularly those that were highlighted by the 2024 New Jersey Disparity Study as systemically lacking access to State contracts.
- Establish a Taskforce under the Chief Operating Officer with the responsibility of conducting a full review within the first 100 days of all existing State-run business support programs and resources and identifying potential barriers to access to those programs for small businesses and businesses highlighted by the 2024 Disparity Study as lacking fair access to State contracts and opportunity. Based on the review, the Taskforce should provide recommendations to the Chief Operating Officer and the “One Open Door” initiative on how to reform rules and

requirements for State-funded business assistance programs to make them more accessible and available to small and underrepresented businesses.

- Expand access to apprenticeship and workforce training programs for underrepresented businesses by reviewing the level of access that small businesses and businesses highlighted by the 2024 Disparity Study have to the apprenticeship and workforce training programs funded by the State and issue recommendations for how to boost access to these programs for more businesses.
- Expand support for small businesses in accessing affordable healthcare plans and tax forgiveness programs.
- Boost the integrity and effectiveness of New Jersey's construction trade apprenticeship system and statewide labor protections through stronger standards and enforcement.
- Launch a Youth Apprenticeship Program to create pathways for young people into apprenticeships and expand summer youth employment opportunities. Modeled on Colorado's CareerWise program or South Carolina's Youth 6 Apprenticeship Carolina, this new program would enable students to pursue registered apprenticeship/pre-apprenticeship opportunities while in high school. The program should combine high school curriculum and career and technology training with paid, on-the-job work-based learning at a local business, connecting the educational needs of students with the talent needs of industry.
- Expand resident and stakeholder access to data on evidence-based workforce development opportunities and earnings outcomes. The Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Department of Education, Office of the Secretary of Higher Education, and Chief Operating Officer to make the New Jersey Statewide Data System (NJSDS) the required source for annual reporting around education and workforce development program opportunities and earnings and employment outcomes.
- Create a degree-apprenticeship office within the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE) to coordinate new apprenticeship opportunities in the higher education system.
- Expand access to good-paying jobs in the film and television sectors by bolstering the bridge-loan market and creating a standalone post-production incentive.
- Create a cross-agency focus on economic opportunity through enhanced coordination between institutions of higher education, workforce programs, and the K–12 system
- Adopt a new postsecondary educational attainment goal for 75% of adults in the labor market to have postsecondary degrees or credentials by 2040.
- Foster student success and completion in postsecondary education by expanding financial aid, basic needs supports, and evidence-based retention and completion programs

- Expand the New Jersey Pathways to Careers program and other workforce training opportunities to boost cooperation between colleges and universities, the K–12 system, and businesses.
- Provide stable, predictable funding for two- and four-year colleges and universities, including deferred maintenance and capital funding.
- Create an Assistant Commissioner of Reintegration Services position within the department of corrections and expand individualized caseworker support for returning citizens.
- Direct the Department of Corrections, Office of the Secretary of Higher Education, and Department of Labor and Workforce Development to expand educational and workforce opportunities for returning citizens, both during their period of incarceration and in the re-entry process.
- Consider reforms to the clemency and expungement process to support re-entry for residents who have served their sentences, including a formal board to handle clemency petitions.
- Direct the Chief Operating Officer to study current barriers to obtaining occupational licenses and state employment for returning citizens and issue recommendations for how to support a fair licensing and government employment process as part of the re-entry system.
- Direct the Department of Corrections (NJDOC) to review the current mental health and substance abuse treatment services available to incarcerated individuals and those in the re-entry system, and issue recommendations for how to expand access to these evidence-based services.
- Establish a coordinated statewide initiative to support individuals with disabilities (including hidden and mental health conditions) in accessing good-paying job opportunities, including through employer support and financial assistance, targeted job training, and counselling support services.
- Strengthen statewide governance for disability inclusion and workplace protections for individuals with disabilities.
- Improve customer service and accessibility for programs that support workers with disabilities.
- Expand education and employment pathways for neurodivergent students.