

# Labor shortage creates new employment for those who have historically struggled

Publication info: Crain's New York Business ; New York Vol. 38, Iss. 21, (May 30, 2022): 8.

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## FULL TEXT

The prolonged labor shortage makes running a business difficult for many employers. But at the edges of this cloud is a tinge of sunshine for people who have historically struggled to find work.

For example, in recent weeks Crain's has reported that Goodwill Industries of Greater New York and Northern New Jersey has found it easier to place qualified workers with disabilities in jobs.

There is also renewed energy around reaching people who've served time in prison as well as those in somewhat dead-end jobs who want a higher-paying career but can't afford much time out of work to go back to school, and people with some college but not a degree who, again, want to make more money without investing a lot of time. As a society, we benefit when these individuals are working in jobs they find rewarding.

A new report by the Center for an Urban Future, a city think tank, details barriers faced by the roughly 10,000 people returning to the city annually from prison (see page 1). It says 4 in 10 are interested in entrepreneurship and self-employment. The report identifies specific pitfalls for those with prior convictions who try to lease space, buy insurance and raise capital.

The program Defy Ventures has been providing much-needed support by conducting entrepreneurship training in and out of prisons in several states, including New York. For alumni of the program, the one-year recidivism rate is 7%, compared with a national average of 30%.

Another encouraging initiative comes in the form of Jobs Direct at LaGuardia Community College, a City University of New York campus in Long Island City. As senior reporter Cara Eisenpress writes in this week's issue, Jobs Direct is piloting two three-month nondegree programs in health care that can give graduates access to higher-paying work (see page 20).

What's more, New York state has agreed that students in these LCC programs will now be eligible for Tuition Assistance Program grants. The college is planning to help with scholarships, covering as much as 100% of the cost, as well as job-placement services and connections to industry professionals.

Investing in people pays off. Not only are people happiest at work when we are useful and growing, but as a fortunate consequence, employers may find that the hunt for skilled labor eases as well.

## DETAILS

**Subject:** Entrepreneurship; Labor shortages; Employment; Community colleges

**Business indexing term:** Subject: Entrepreneurship Employment; Industry: 61121 : Junior Colleges

**Location:** United States--US; New York

**Classification:** 61121: Junior Colleges

<b>Publication title:</b>	Crain's New York Business; New York
<b>Volume:</b>	38
<b>Issue:</b>	21
<b>First page:</b>	8
<b>Publication year:</b>	2022
<b>Publication date:</b>	May 30, 2022
<b>Publisher:</b>	Crain Communications, Incorporated
<b>Place of publication:</b>	New York
<b>Country of publication:</b>	United States, New York
<b>Publication subject:</b>	Business And Economics
<b>ISSN:</b>	8756789X
<b>Source type:</b>	Trade Journal
<b>Language of publication:</b>	English
<b>Document type:</b>	News
<b>ProQuest document ID:</b>	2672381646
<b>Document URL:</b>	<a href="https://www.proquest.com/trade-journals/labor-shortage-creates-new-employment-thos-e-who/docview/2672381646/se-2?accountid=44910">https://www.proquest.com/trade-journals/labor-shortage-creates-new-employment-thos e-who/docview/2672381646/se-2?accountid=44910</a>
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<b>Last updated:</b>	2022-06-02
<b>Database:</b>	ABI/INFORM Collection

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