



Equal Opportunity Award

Submitted by [Michelle Marshel](#) on March 06, 2019

Indiana Ex-Offender Virtual Job Fair Receives National Innovation Award

March 07, 2019

WASHINGTON – This week at the National Association of State Workforce Agencies' (NASWA) 2019 Winter Policy Forum in Washington, D.C., Indiana's Department of Workforce Development received the prestigious William J. Harris Equal Opportunity Award, presented by the NASWA Equal Opportunity Committee. This award is bestowed upon a state demonstrating excellence and innovation in the area equal opportunity.

Last year, Indiana's Department of Workforce Development and Department of Correction, partnered to host an online virtual job fair for soon-to-be-released inmates at correctional facilities across Indiana. Several Hoosier employers participated in the virtual job fair and were introduced to ex-offender job-seekers looking to secure gainful employment upon release. All parties involved deemed the event a success.

"Each year, according to the US Department of Justice, over 650,000 ex-offenders are released from prison. Roughly two-thirds of these individuals will re-offend if they do not obtain gainful employment," said Scott B. Sanders, Executive Director of NASWA. "This virtual job fair was successful in assisting ex-offenders to find a stable job to sustain themselves and their families and become life-long positive contributors to society."

"Finding a job can present barriers for many people, so it's hard to imagine how difficult it can be for those incarcerated," said Indiana Department of Workforce Development Commissioner Fred Payne. "The virtual job fair presented a unique opportunity to help them in their search and to assist employers in need of good workers. We are truly honored to receive such a prestigious award."

For more information about NASWA's Winter Policy Forum, visit <https://www.naswa.org/conferences/winter-policy-forum-2019>. For more information about the NASWA Equal Opportunity Committee, visit www.naswa.org.

(Pictured L to R are Mike Barnes, Indiana Department of Workforce Development; and Jon S. Pierpont, NASWA Board President and Executive Director of the Utah Department of Workforce Services)