AWS re:Invent

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Second-chance hiring in tech

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“A year ago, I felt like an outsider to this industry and like there wasn’t a place for someone like me in it. Coming from where I come from, it’s basically unheard of that someone has the opportunity to work for a company like AWS doing what I am doing. I get to be an inspiration to those who come from backgrounds like I do and the generation of young boys and men behind me.”

Data Center Operations Associate, AWS

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Agenda

Understanding the issue – where we are today

Creating a network of collaborating organizations

Leveraging AWS resources to drive economic empowerment and dignity

Setting a path for the future – whiteboarding session

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Defining the terms

- A “returning citizen” or “prison leaver” is an individual who was previously incarcerated
- “Second-chance hiring” is the practice of hiring individuals with a criminal record
- “Supportive services” include assistance that allows for a successful transition from incarceration to leading a healthy and productive life after release
  - May include housing, social and wraparound services, and programs focused on financial literacy, career development, and life skills

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Understanding the Issue

"NO CURRENT OPENINGS" – HOW POVERTY AND UNEMPLOYMENT DRIVE RECIDIVISM

- The criminal legal system continues to disproportionately affect racial minorities, because they are overrepresented in prisons across the globe
- The US releases over 600,000 people from prison each year; "Within 3 years of their release, 2 out of 3 people are rearrested and more than 50% are incarcerated again."[1]
- In the US, returning citizens are unemployed at a rate of over 27% compared to 5.2% of individuals who have not faced incarceration; within Black and Latinx populations, it is even higher (39% and 32%, respectively)[2]

[1] Healthypeople.gov, "Incarceration," https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/social-determinants-health/interventions-resources/incarceration
[2] Couloute and Kopf, "Out of Prison & Out of Work: Unemployment among Formerly Incarcerated People," https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/outofwork.html

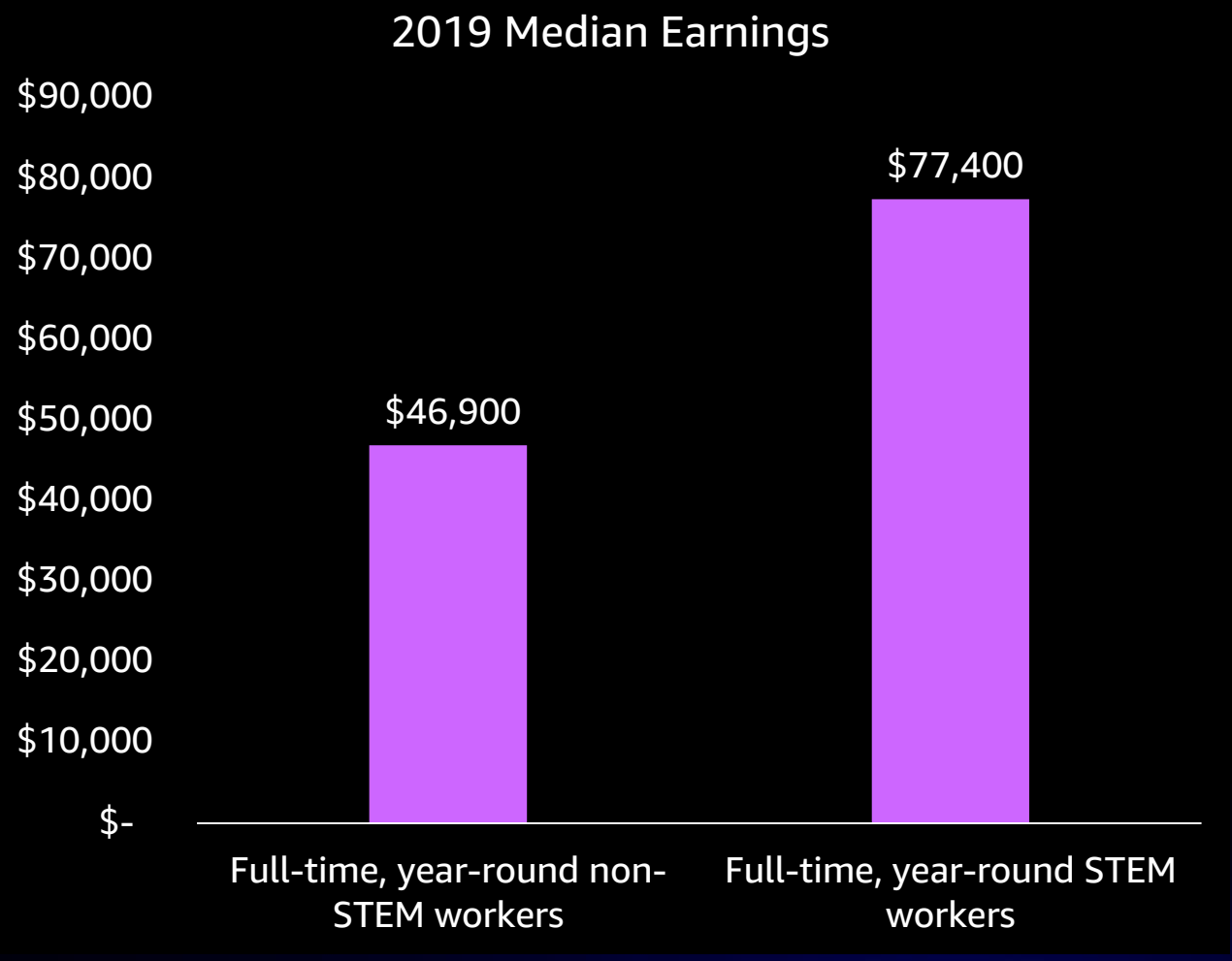
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Understanding the Issue

THE DEMAND FOR STEM PROFESSIONALS OVER THE NEXT DECADE

- Black and Latinx workers are underrepresented in STEM jobs relative to their shares in the US workforce as a whole[3]
- Thousands of STEM jobs go unfulfilled every year
- STEM workers enjoy higher median earnings than those in other, non-STEM occupations



[3] Kennedy, Fry, and Funk, "6 facts about America's STEM Workforce and Those Training for It," https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/04/14/6-facts-about-americas-stem-workforce-and-those-training-for-it/

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Understanding the Issue

THE DEMAND FOR STEM PROFESSIONALS OVER THE NEXT DECADE

	2019	2029	% Change
STEM occupations*	9,955.1	10,752.9	8.0
Computer occupations	4,633.4	5,164.6	11.5
Engineers	1,810.1	1,879.1	3.8
Life scientists	344.8	361.4	4.8
STEM post-secondary teachers	294.1	308.8	5.0
Physical scientists	276.6	291.4	5.3
Mathematical science occupations	211.7	267.8	26.5
	Note: Employment numbers in thousands.		

*Source: Zilberman and Ice, "Why computer occupations are behind strong STEM employment growth," https://www.bls.gov/opub/btn/volume-10/why-computer-occupations-are-behind-strong-stem-employment-growth.htm

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The importance of creating a network

Organizations focused on supporting returning citizens include

- American Prison Data Systems
- CodeAtt
- Friends of Guest House
- Justice Through Code
- Televerde Foundation
- The Last Mile

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Spotlight: American Prison Data Systems

Problem

- Education in correctional settings is underfunded, difficult to access and insufficient
- Incarcerated persons have had limited meaningful interaction with loved ones due to reduced in-person visitations during COVID and high costs for video calls, creating a harder road to successful re-entry and connections upon release

Approach

- EdTech provider dedicated to corrections that never charges justice-involved individuals for its technology or services; APDS secure tablets, which provide high-quality programming, are in use in 90+ correctional facilities across 17 states in the US
- Launched ThrIVE, built on AWS, which is sold directly to jurisdictions at a significantly lower rate per minute, with no cost passed on to inmates or families

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Spotlight: American Prison Data Systems

Outcomes

- APDS programs increase public safety and economic mobility through improving learner outcomes and post-prison opportunities; APDS has delivered 12+ million hours of safe and secure programming and driven real outcomes for returning citizens
- Inmates using the APDS platform have demonstrated they are 130% more likely to pass the GED when preparing with an APDS tablet and also an improvement in reading comprehension by 4 grade levels in 9 months

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Spotlight: Televerde Foundation

Problem

- Joblessness is the number one predictor for recidivism and the growing skills gaps could lead to a damaging $2.5 trillion impact on the economy over the next decade
- 81,000 women are released from prison each year, many of whom have the talent needed to join and succeed in the global workforce; unfortunately, these women are 45% less likely to become employed due to their background

Approach

- Provide “a path forward” to currently and formerly incarcerated women through prison-to-workforce development program
- The women who participate in Televerde Foundation PATHS (Prepare, Achieve and Transform for Healthy Success) programs receive the training and certification necessary to work in IT, customer service, digital marketing, or inside sales

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Spotlight: Televerde Foundation

Outcomes

- 91% lower recidivism rate
- 2x more likely to be gainfully employed after one year
- Earn salaries almost 4x the national average
- Children are 11x more likely to graduate high school and 11x less likely to become incarcerated adults
- Program participants achieve higher levels of education post release

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Leveraging AWS resources

- Expertise
  - Technical and nontechnical mentorships
- Curriculum integration
  - AWS trainings and certifications
- Jobs pipeline
  - Early career talent programs
- Technical solutions

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Setting a path for the future

Suggested questions/FAQs

- What have been your biggest blockers to success?
- In what other ways can AWS cloud solutions support this work?
- Are there gaps in technology services that can support these efforts?
- What does a second-chance hiring pilot program look like?
- How do I launch a second-chance hiring program at my company?
- Who should I contact to get started?
- How can I volunteer my time to mentor a returning citizen focused on advancing their tech skills?
- I’m an AWS employee. How can I get involved?

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Thank you!

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