

Developing Digital Equity Workforce Training for Justice-Impacted Individuals for Successful Re-Entry

Pilot Program Report and Strategic Recommendations

Washington Workforce Training and Education Board

A Comprehensive Analysis of Trauma-Informed Workforce Development in Correctional Settings

Pilot Program Conducted at Washington Correction Center, Shelton

August 2024 - June 2025

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This report presents findings from a pioneering workforce training pilot and contains strategic recommendations for expanding evidence-based programs that reduce recidivism, meet employer needs, and strengthen Washington's economic competitiveness.

Executive Summary

Washington Workforce Training and Education Board Pilot Program Report

Workforce Training for Justice-Impacted Individuals at Washington Correction Center, Shelton

From August 2024 to June 2025, the Workforce Training and Education Board contracted with ETA Media to conduct a pilot program at Washington Correction Center, with in-facility training from April to June 2025. The aim of the pilot was to address digital equity for incarcerated individuals to both teach them basic IT skills to be digitally literate upon release, as well as to teach specific IT skills that could make individuals more employable in the IT field upon release. This report summarizes key findings, innovations, challenges, and recommendations for expanding workforce programs across Washington's correctional system.

Key Findings

Only 5% of Washington's 13,800 incarcerated individuals earn postsecondary credentials (SBCTC, 2022; Vera Institute). College-in-prison programs reach too few, leaving room for scalable workforce-focused alternatives (RAND Corporation, 2013; SBCTC, 2023). Given the high rates of trauma (85–95%) among justice-impacted individuals (SAMHSA; Messina et al., 2007), traditional education is insufficient. Integrating healing, soft skills, and technical training is essential. Navigation support is critical—recidivism drops from 44% to 25% with dedicated navigators (WA DOC, 2024; Council of State Governments, 2018).

Program Innovations

The pilot introduced a three-pillar model:

1. **Healing and capacity building** – facilitated by individuals with lived experience who can authentically address trauma and the realities of reentry.
2. **Durable skills development** – taught by professional trainers who focus on real-world workplace applications.
3. **Industry-specific training** (e.g., IT) – led by subject matter experts with up-to-date, hands-on industry experience.

4. **Industry based peer assessment** – Implemented peer-review models that is successfully used by some of the largest, most successful companies today.
5. **Rapid Prototyping:** The program also saved over \$20,000 annually by using Squarespace instead of expensive LMS platforms.

Implementation Challenges

Launching required eight months of coordination with DOC systems and personnel. Limited access to hands-on equipment restricted IT practice, and the three-month timeline was too short for deeper behavioral change. Stakeholders recommend a longer, tiered training model.

NOTE: With more time and hands-on lab experience, some participants could potentially reach the level needed to pursue certification and apply for entry-level roles in the IT field. However, it is important to acknowledge that IT remains a challenging sector for many justice-impacted individuals to access, due to persistent gaps in literacy, math skills, digital fluency, and prior educational opportunity.

Recommendations

- **Invest & Develop the individual:** For any workforce training program to be truly effective, it must be paired with durable (soft) skills and trauma-informed practices. Without these foundational skills, technical training alone will fall short.
- **Working Professionals, rather than Teachers:** Prioritize trainers with hands-on experience in the workplace—corporate, small business, or freelance—over those teaching only from curriculum without practical background.
- **Build Relationships:** Partner with facility staff, program coordinators, and DOC leadership.
- **Extend Timelines:** Offer three eight-month training levels with structured and self-paced learning.
- **Ensure Navigation Support:** Assign dedicated navigators to bridge pre- and post-release gaps.

- **Supports and Scaffolding:** Colleges support students (including those in reentry) with on-campus jobs, childcare, and travel assistance to help them stay in school. Reentry programs should offer similar wraparound supports after release—extending what began inside the facility—so participants can continue training and transition successfully into the workforce, as noted further in the report.
- **Leverage Community Organizations:** Especially those led by people with lived experience, to support reentry and provide continuity beyond incarceration.

Scalability and Impact

With the right design and support, workforce training for justice-impacted individuals can reduce recidivism, boost employment, and strengthen Washington’s workforce. A dual-assessment model—technical + behavioral—ensures a more complete view of readiness. The Workforce Board has a unique opportunity to build a national model that meets economic needs while changing lives.

Bottom Line: This pilot proves that bold, trauma-informed workforce training—designed for transformation, not just job placement—can improve public safety, reduce recidivism, and support economic prosperity across Washington.

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Steps and Process: Launching the Pilot

Section Overview: Documents the 8-month process (August 2024-April 2025) of establishing a digital equity workforce training pilot within Washington DOC facilities, including the strategic pivot from reentry centers to correctional facilities and overcoming technical barriers to implement online coursework on DOC's secure network.

Section Summary: Key Takeaways: Reentry centers proved logistically challenging due to limited technology and competing resident schedules. Stakeholders agreed training is more effective during incarceration than post-release. Technical implementation required extensive IT coordination and creative solutions. Success depended on internal champions and facility-level support. The 3-month launch delay highlighted the need for significant lead time when implementing programs in correctional systems.

Connecting with DOC

WTB staff had already laid a strong foundation by initiating contact with key DOC personnel to support integration with DOC's educational and training efforts by the time the project started after a brief delay.

ETA Media would be responsible for building on the initial communication between the Department of Corrections (DOC) and the Workforce Training Board (WTB) and identify and forge new pathways into the DOC education and IT systems.

WTB Project Manager Paulette Beadling was instrumental in this process, providing our team with DOC contacts and facilitating early meetings. The program's success would not have been possible without the ongoing support and collaboration of both WTB and DOC staff.

In August 2024, I was connected with two primary contacts: Kristen N. Morgan, MPA, Senior Administrator of the Reentry Division, and Brian McElfresh, Senior Administrator of Programs.

Both were extremely helpful, with Kristen taking a more active role in supporting the pilot. She would play a pivotal role throughout. After several virtual meetings and email exchanges,

Kristen recommended that we explore launching the pilot at a reentry center and provided the contact information for the Reentry Senior Administrator.

First Option: Reentry (Work Release) Centers

Following that recommendation, I reached out to Carrie Stanley, Reentry Center Senior Administrator, who connected me with three work release centers: two located in Seattle and one in Port Orchard. I contacted Stacy Fitzgerald and Shea-Ann Mehus in Seattle, and Gregg Guidi in Port Orchard. All three administrators noted the following concerns:

1. A lack of computers onsite.
2. Restricted internet access.
3. Residents' schedules were highly limited, as they were working, attending treatment or medical appointments, or visiting with family. This made consistent attendance in a training program difficult to manage.

To better understand and assess the possibilities, I arranged a site visit to the Port Orchard Reentry/Work Release Center, where I met with Sergeant Cook, CCO Tate, Navigator Kara Norsworthy, and Gregg Guidi, who was managing the center at the time. The group validated the logistical challenges but suggested that perhaps one or two hours of programming on weekends might be workable. Additionally, I learned:

1. The handoff between the facility and the reentry center is often incomplete. For example, treatment or support services that should be arranged prior to transfer frequently are not, leaving residents with a gap in care while staff must identify suitable treatment programs and get residents enrolled after arrival.
2. The group strongly agreed that soft skills or job-readiness training would be more effective if initiated *while individuals are still incarcerated*, rather than waiting until they transition into a reentry center.

3. They also emphasized that limiting participation to individuals within five months of release was too narrow. Many residents at reentry centers need more comprehensive, longer-term preparation than job training alone can provide.

In light of these findings, and in coordination with Workforce Board project managers, we decided to attempt implementing the pilot program *inside a correctional facility*, rather than a reentry center.

Navigating Access and Technical Barriers to Launch the Pilot

The first step in implementing the program inside a DOC facility was determining if—and how—our online course could be integrated into DOC's secure network (OSN). Kristen advised us to consult the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC), given their longstanding experience offering college courses in correctional settings.

In October, we met with Hanan Al-Zubaidy, Associate Director of Corrections Education at SBCTC, and members of her IT team. We learned:

1. SBCTC's Secure Delivery System

SBCTC uses a proprietary process that removes all externally linked assets (e.g., videos) from an online course, stores the cleaned content on a virtual server within the DOC OSN, and reassembles it for use inside facilities. This allows SBCTC to offer college courses securely to DOC students.

2. Access Limitation for Our Program

For our course to be included, it would first need to be part of SBCTC's online course catalog. However, SBCTC could not include the Workforce Board program because it was not a for-credit or Career and Technical Education (CTE) course.

As a result, we could not gain access through SBCTC's existing infrastructure.

The next, more complex route was working directly with DOC's IT department to place our course onto a virtual server on their network. Kristen was instrumental in arranging a meeting

with key IT stakeholders. A series of Zoom meetings revealed both barriers and potential solutions:

Technical Challenges and Proposed Solutions

1. Virtual Servers

- **Challenge:** DOC IT manages group policies but not the virtual servers themselves; access is restricted to within each facility.
- **Solution:** If URL whitelisting wasn't feasible, Workforce Board staff would configure and manage the server locally and migrate course content manually.

2. Networked Classrooms

- **Challenge:** Network access is typically limited to rooms reserved for college courses; other areas lack connectivity.
- **Solution:** Coordinate scheduling with SBCTC to use their networked rooms, and deploy facility docking stations with Ethernet-connected, pre-approved computers.

3. Computers and Courseware

- **Challenge:** No Wi-Fi is available in instructional areas; computers cannot be assigned to individuals in cells.
- **Solution:** Procure 10–15 secure, pre-vetted computers from JusticeTechSolutions.com. DOC cybersecurity would vet the software to ensure compatibility with Windows Enterprise SCCM 10.

4. Statewide Network Transition

- **Challenge:** DOC is undergoing a 4–6 month network unification, and no new access permissions will be granted during the transition.
- **Solution:** Use the existing facility-specific network to launch the pilot while broader integration is pending.

5. Identity Mapping Delays

- **Challenge:** A new identity-tracking feature was still months from deployment.
- **Solution:** Proceed with the pilot using existing systems and workflows, bypassing identity tracking for now.

6. OCC Infrastructure Gaps

- **Challenge:** Olympic Corrections Center (OCC) lacked the technical support and infrastructure needed.
- **Solution:** Select Washington Corrections Center for Women (WCCW) as the pilot site, where adequate IT support and connectivity were confirmed.

7. Accessing Multimedia Content

- **Challenge:** Uncertainty around the ability to access video links from platforms like YouTube or Vimeo.
- **Solution:** Embed video content directly in our Squarespace course platform to eliminate the need for external video links.

The final technical solution was to pursue whitelisting the IT/Soft Skills course—still in development—for use on the DOC's secure network. While this required time and coordination, it offered a clear path forward.

Course Development and Production Process

Fortunately, our team consisted of experienced course designers with decades of training and educational course production experience. The project manager was able to break down the various production tasks into manageable components, including script writing, script editing, course and lesson structure design, implementation of the scripts, graphics and video identification from the scripts, graphics/image and video production, video script writing and

editing—all of which needed to occur before the content could be implemented into the training platform.

Using a quick and cost-effective website hosting service as our training course prototyping tool, we selected Squarespace over traditional Learning Management Systems that could cost upwards of \$20,000 annually. The scripts, videos, graphics, and images were then uploaded and organized within Squarespace. Once in Squarespace, creating the connective links and navigation became the primary task, along with quality assurance to identify navigational bugs, editorial errors, and other issues.

The various stages of production overlapped significantly, requiring approximately six months from project start to go-live date. This timeline ran parallel to the technical coordination efforts with DOC IT systems, demonstrating the complexity of both content development and system integration required for correctional facility implementation.

With course production on track, the next step was identifying a facility with appropriate scheduling and space. Kristen provided key recommendations, leading me to connect with Correctional Program Manager Theresa Cohn and Syrena Stevens, Director of Corrections Education at Centralia College (WCC and CCCC). With their support, we secured a GED testing room with 16 computers, allowing us to meet twice weekly as planned. Theresa helped promote the training and screen participants, while Syrena ensured we had what we needed—including a projector once the program began.

Heather Pilgrim from IT Domain Services tested the now-whitelisted course on the OSN and helped whitelist the servers hosting our course images and videos.

By April 7th—three months later than hoped—the pilot was ready to launch. **Note:** See [Monthly reports](#) for additional details.

Trainer Selection and Program Design

Section Overview: Details the strategic recruitment of trainers combining technical expertise with lived incarceration experience, and how input from formerly incarcerated individuals shaped program design around trauma-informed, holistic approaches to reentry preparation.

Section Summary: Key Takeaways: Trainers with lived experience significantly enhanced authenticity and trust-building with participants. Trauma-informed approaches are essential due to past negative educational experiences. Effective reentry requires three pillars: healing, durable skills development, and industry-specific training. Programs need longer timelines and comprehensive support systems. Success depends on helping participants distinguish between "criminal" and "business" thinking while providing living examples of successful reintegration.

Initial Focus

The goals of the program directly informed our trainer selection. We prioritized instructors with real-world experience in the IT field to ensure the training was practical and relevant. I recruited a systems administrator from Clallam County to join our team, while I brought over 20 years of experience in educational technology—including the last seven focused on designing and implementing durable (soft) skills training for high school and college students. Our program has reached 22 schools across four states, with hundreds of students completing our remote workshops.

During the development of the pilot course, we were strongly encouraged to engage individuals with lived experience via Zoom sessions to gather their input and observations. These meetings yielded several critical insights:

1. **Timing Matters:** Colleges often offer training to individuals whose release is far off—sometimes over a year. Effective training for reentry should consider a longer runway, even if the goal is to serve those scheduled to release in five months or less.

2. **Support Systems:** Colleges reduce many barriers through grants and support services—such as transportation assistance, reduced class costs, on-site jobs, and even childcare. For similar effectiveness, reentry programs need to either provide or partner to offer comparable support.
3. **The Power of Lived Experience:** Trainers who have experienced incarceration themselves bring valuable insight and relatability that significantly enhances program effectiveness. They build immediate trust and credibility with participants, though the program demonstrates clear value even when delivered by professional trainers alone, as evidenced by positive participant responses during our focus group sessions at Coyote Ridge Corrections Center.

We were fortunate to partner with David Heppard and Eugene Youngblood—both with lived experience—as co-trainers. Their presence significantly enhanced the program in the following ways:

- **Enhanced Rapport:** Their shared background created an immediate bond with participants that complemented the professional training approach. While Mike and I are experienced educators capable of delivering effective programming independently, David and Eugene's insights added a crucial layer of authenticity and trust to the experience.
- **Expanded Relevance:** Our soft skills training was designed with the workplace in mind, but our co-trainers naturally adapted the content to address life inside the facility and the unique challenges of reentry. This organic shift revealed the need for dual applications of the same core material—one focused on workplace preparation and another on personal healing and capacity building.
- **Living Examples of Success:** Participants expressed appreciation for hearing from professionals like Mike and me, but seeing formerly incarcerated trainers living productive, impactful lives provided additional validation and motivation. It helped them begin to distinguish between "criminal" and "business" thinking while demonstrating that successful reintegration is achievable.

- **Trauma Awareness & Enhanced Healing Focus:** One of the most valuable contributions was highlighting how trauma influences learning. We heard stories of individuals avoiding programs for years because of discouraging experiences with educators. While any effective program benefits from trauma-informed approaches, David and Eugene brought particular insight into a third, essential element for comprehensive job prep/reentry programming: **healing** or capacity building.

While professional trainers can deliver effective soft skills programming that benefits participants, the addition of co-trainers with lived experience revealed the potential for dual applications of the same core content. Without healing-focused capacity building, durable skills development may be hindered. And without durable skills—such as determination, adaptability, initiative, collaboration, communication, and resilience—participants are more likely to struggle with the inevitable challenges of reentry and risk reverting to past behaviors.

Course Development and Production

Creating a comprehensive workforce training program required extensive content development, platform selection, and quality assurance processes that balanced educational effectiveness with cost considerations and technical constraints.

Platform Selection and Cost Considerations

Rather than utilizing traditional Learning Management Systems (LMS) such as Canvas, which can cost upwards of \$20,000 annually to maintain, we selected Squarespace as our rapid prototyping platform. This decision provided several key advantages:

- **Cost Effectiveness:** Significantly reduced ongoing operational costs compared to enterprise LMS solutions
- **Rapid Development:** Allowed for quick iteration and content updates during the development phase
- **Technical Compatibility:** Could be more easily integrated with DOC's secure network infrastructure

- **User-Friendly Interface:** Provided intuitive navigation for participants with varying levels of digital literacy

Content Creation Process

The digital equity course development involved a multi-disciplinary team approach to ensure both technical accuracy and educational accessibility:

Content Development Team:

- **Subject Matter Expert:** A Help Desk professional who had recently passed the CompTIA A+ exam drafted the initial technical content, ensuring current industry relevance
- **Lead Technical Trainer:** With 8+ years of IT experience, refined and validated all technical concepts for real-world application
- **Educational Designer:** Adapted content using analogies, illustrations, and simplified explanations appropriate for the target demographic
- **Lived Experience Consultants:** David Heppard and Eugene Youngblood provided critical input on trauma-informed approaches and facility-relevant contexts

Quality Assurance and Production

The course underwent rigorous quality evaluation processes:

Content Review and Editing:

- Multiple rounds of proofreading and technical editing to ensure accuracy and clarity
- Trauma-informed content review with lived experience consultants
- Accessibility assessment for participants with varying educational backgrounds

Multimedia Production:

- Custom graphics and visual aids designed to support learning objectives

- Video content production featuring both technical demonstrations and soft skills discussions
- Interactive elements designed to engage participants and reinforce key concepts

Course Quality Evaluation (QE):

- Technical accuracy verification by industry professionals
- Educational effectiveness assessment through pilot testing
- Platform functionality testing within DOC's secure network environment
- Feedback integration from early participant interactions

This comprehensive development process ensured that the final course product was both technically sound and pedagogically appropriate for the unique needs of justice-impacted learners preparing for workforce reentry.

Summary

Effective reentry training programs benefit significantly from integrating **three pillars**:

1. **Healing/Capacity Building** (enhanced by facilitators with lived experience who can authentically address trauma and reentry challenges)
2. **Durable skills development** (delivered by professional trainers focused on workplace applications)
3. **Industry-specific training (e.g., IT)** (led by subject matter experts with current industry experience)

While programs can achieve meaningful outcomes focusing primarily on skills development, the integration of all three elements—particularly the healing component enhanced by lived experience perspectives—creates a more comprehensive and effective approach. Our pilot helped illuminate this expanded model and demonstrated how the same core soft skills content can serve dual purposes: workplace preparation when delivered by professional trainers, and personal healing when facilitated by those who have successfully navigated similar challenges.

Training Implementation and Augmentation

Section Overview: This section outlines the design, delivery, and adaptation of a workforce digital equity training program aimed at preparing justice-impacted individuals for entry-level IT roles and workplace success. It highlights the development of a CompTIA A+ aligned IT course, the integration of trauma informed soft skills training, and the challenges in engaging participants in deeper metacognitive reflection.

Section Summary: Key Takeaways: Adapting training for individuals nearing reentry requires intentional design, real-world relevance, and personal support. Establishing the relevance of soft skills training, separating healing-focused discussions from workplace applications, and customizing content to fit participants' specific needs and experiences are crucial for meaningful engagement and skill development within compressed timelines.

Development Planning

The goal of the digital equity grant was to prepare individuals within five months of their earned release date for entry-level positions in the IT field. From the outset, we recognized this would be a significant challenge—especially considering the complexity of IT concepts and the unique needs, skill gaps, and limited prior exposure common among our target demographic.

- Nationally, about 68% of state prison inmates did not have a high school diploma upon incarceration, and approximately 26% earned a GED while serving time (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2003).

To align with the intent of the grant, we built a course around the CompTIA A+ certification—widely recognized as the foundational credential for entry-level IT careers. Using the official exam outline, we developed an online course that introduced participants to the key concepts required for certification. In designing the course, we prioritized three key considerations:

1. **Practical insight** — We involved a working IT professional to ground the course in real-world application and workplace scenarios.
2. **Learner perspective** — We incorporated feedback from someone who had recently passed the A+ exam, and was now working in IT to ensure relevance and focus.

3. **Accessibility** — With the target demographic's potential limitations in reading, math, and tech exposure in mind, we tailored the content using analogies, illustrations, and simplified explanations —approaching it as though teaching a grandparent unfamiliar with modern technology.

A Help Desk professional who had recently passed the A+ exam drafted the initial content. The project's lead trainer, with 8+ years of IT experience, refined the course. Ongoing edits, both during online course production and in-facility training, aimed to simplify concepts without losing the rigor of the certification content.

Despite simplification, we acknowledged the technical complexity of the material. Many concepts and acronyms require memorization and deep understanding, and we adapted as much as possible while honoring the subject's demands.

IT Training Modules Created

As mentioned, we used the CompTIA A+ curriculum guide as the road map for our IT prep course. We created modules covering the different core areas that are tested in the certification exam which are listed in their entirety below. The sections that were covered during our pilot are *italicized and underlined*.

CompTIA A+ Curriculum Outline (220-1101 & 220-1102)

Preparation for IT Support and Technical Roles

Module 1: Mobile Devices

- Overview of laptops, smartphones, and tablets
- Installation and configuration of mobile hardware and operating systems
- Troubleshooting common mobile device issues
- Mobile connectivity and synchronization methods

Module 2: Networking Fundamentals

- Introduction to networking concepts and protocols (TCP/IP, DHCP, DNS)
- Network hardware (routers, switches, access points)
- Wired vs. wireless networking
- IP addressing and configuration
- Troubleshooting network connectivity and performance

Module 3: Computer Hardware

- Identification of PC components (motherboards, CPUs, RAM, storage, power supplies)
- Installation and replacement of internal hardware
- Peripheral and device connectivity (USB, Bluetooth, etc.)
- Storage solutions: HDD, SSD, RAID
- Maintenance and handling procedures

Module 4: Virtualization & Cloud Technologies

- Introduction to cloud computing models (IaaS, SaaS, PaaS)
- Setting up and managing virtual machines
- Benefits and considerations of virtualization
- Cloud storage and syncing tools

Module 5: Hardware and Network Troubleshooting

- Diagnostic tools and troubleshooting strategies
- Identifying and resolving hardware failures
- Network testing and analysis (ping, traceroute, cable testers)
- Interpreting symptoms and documenting issues

Module 6: Operating Systems

Installation and configuration of:

- - Windows OS (including command-line utilities)
 - macOS, Linux, Chrome OS, Android
- System tools and utilities for maintenance and troubleshooting
- Managing files, applications, and users

Module 7: Software Troubleshooting

- Identifying software-related problems on desktops and mobile devices
- Application crashes, boot failures, and compatibility issues
- Malware identification and removal techniques
- Tools for diagnostics and system recovery

Module 8: IT Security

- Threats and vulnerabilities (malware, phishing, social engineering)
- Security best practices (passwords, updates, physical security)
- Configuring firewalls, antivirus, and endpoint protection
- Secure device configuration and data protection

Module 9: Operational Procedures

- Safety and environmental procedures in the workplace
- Documentation and change management
- Communication skills and professionalism in IT roles
- Incident response and escalation processes

Capstone Module: Troubleshooting Mastery & Customer Support

- Real-world troubleshooting scenarios
- Applying diagnostic and communication skills
- Practicing remote and in-person support
- Building a customer-focused mindset in technical roles

All online IT prep course can be viewed [here](#).

Examples of IT training sessions can be viewed [here](#).

Trainer's lesson plans can be viewed or downloaded [here](#).

During implementation, we served 12 participants (limited by equipment and release timelines). Both those with and without tech experience were able to grasp core concepts. The trainer provided added clarification and illustrations as needed.

In the final three weeks, we introduced mobile device content. Given that some participants had limited prior exposure to mobile technology, the trainer adapted the material to focus on practical, immediately relevant questions, enhancing engagement and understanding.

Soft Skills & Durable Skills Integration

We also delivered durable skills training using a micro-learning, metacognitive approach that has been successfully implemented in our other programs. We selected six lessons from the [MindSage Durable Skills Library](#) for the WFB online course, initially assuming that only minor adjustments would be needed. These lessons were chosen based on their potential to significantly impact participants' ability to navigate the challenges of reentry and succeed in the workplace. The selected lessons were:

- GRIT: Flexibility and Adaptability
- Growth Mindset
- Self-esteem
- Importance of Relationships
- Self-motivation

Breaking Limiting Beliefs

The online lessons can be found [here](#).

We revised both the text and video content to better align with the needs of the program's participants. However, as we collaborated with our co-trainers who have lived experience, they emphasized the importance of re-framing much of the lesson delivery to be more relatable and accessible.

In response, we began adapting some of the lessons using a more trauma-informed approach. Ultimately, we found it more efficient to create simplified, trauma-informed printed lesson plans for the trainers, rather than attempting to modify the online lessons.

The modified lesson plans can be found [here](#).

Over the three-month period, the lessons covered included: *Self-Esteem*, *Self-Motivation*, *Breaking Limiting Beliefs*, and *The Importance of Relationships*.

Examples of Soft skills training sessions can be viewed [here](#).

Use of Case Studies and Brainstorming Sessions

In addition, we periodically introduced test cases for group discussion. Case studies—commonly used in top universities and professional training programs—were employed to great effect. These scenarios had no definitive right or wrong answers and were designed to foster problem-solving, reasoning, and critical thinking among participants.

Here are two case studies used in the program: [Case study 1](#) | [Case study 2](#)

Videos of the case study discussions can be viewed [here](#).

Frequency and Length

We initially planned to run the pilot for a full five months as part of this grant project, serving participants who were within five months of their earned release date. However, due to the technical and logistical challenges outlined in other sections of this report, we were ultimately able to conduct only a three-month pilot with participants inside the correctional facility.

Sessions were held twice a week—Mondays and Fridays—from 12:30 to 2:30 PM. On one occasion, training had to be canceled due to a disturbance in the cafeteria that led to a facility-wide lockdown for most of the morning. At other times, minor incidents delayed participant release, resulting in shortened sessions starting at 1:30 instead of 12:30.

Typically, the first half of each session focused on soft/durable skills training, while the second half was dedicated to IT-specific instruction. (See the links above for session examples.)

Utilizing the computers, participants accessed both the IT and soft skills content online. As the program evolved, we transitioned to simplified, trauma-informed printed lesson plans for delivering the durable skills content.

Observations Related to Work Readiness/Preparedness

Regarding the soft skill lessons, it became apparent during implementation that our initial adjustments did not fully align with a trauma-informed approach. Fortunately, our co-trainers with lived experience helped bridge that gap by re-framing the content on-the-fly to better connect with participants' experiences and needs. They grounded the lessons in the realities of facility life, bringing authentic relevance and practical application to the content.

They also emphasized a critical insight: for participants to meaningfully benefit from soft skill development, internal mindset work—or what some described as **healing**—must be supported. While initially we felt that the co-trainers were taking the lessons in a different direction than intended, we quickly realized that with this specific demographic, durable skills development would require a foundation of self-awareness, emotional regulation, and capacity building needed to occur first. Durable skills require a foundation of self-awareness and emotional regulation. We revised and deepened the lessons accordingly.

Throughout the training, we observed a few key challenges that shaped how the durable skills content was received and applied. Many participants had limited or no experience in a structured, functional workplace. As a result, they often related the soft skills lessons to life inside the facility rather than to traditional employment settings. This shaped and impacted how deeply the content could be internalized for future work contexts.

Additionally, we noticed that participants often responded to reflective prompts with surface-level answers drawn from past experiences. Their responses frequently focused on affirming that they already possessed qualities like confidence, motivation, or adaptability—rather than engaging in deeper metacognitive reflection about how and why their particular ways of thinking and acting developed. This may be due to unfamiliarity with reflective practices, a desire to present themselves positively, protective instincts shaped by past experiences, or the reality that many participants lacked workplace experience on which to base their responses to soft skill lesson metacognitive questions.

One key takeaway is the importance of establishing early on why soft skills training matters—even when participants believe they already possess these traits. Framing the training not as a critique, but as a step toward becoming dependable, resilient, and effective contributors in any work environment, may help open the door to deeper engagement. Separating healing-centered conversations from workplace skill development may also allow both areas to be addressed with greater clarity and impact.

Our overall goal was to help participants leave the program prepared to be the kind of employee or employer any workplace would value. While I wasn't fully able to achieve that outcome within the three-month timeframe, the experience offered valuable insights into how future programming can better bridge that gap. Both staff (DOC and ESD), trainers with lived experience, and participants themselves recognized the potential of soft skills—or durable skills—training to benefit incarcerated individuals in meaningful ways. (See Program Comments section.)

This insight is essential for any reentry-focused workforce training program—whether delivered by DOC, the Workforce Board, or another organization. Training must be tailored to meet the specific needs and lived experiences of this demographic. Trainers must be able to communicate expectations clearly and authentically—without watering down the message—while remaining as trauma-informed as possible with their presentation, interaction and training. It's important that participants understand that the traits, mindsets, and behaviors

being emphasized aren't just found in the world's most successful individuals—they are the baseline expectations in today's workplaces.

IT Training Implementation

Regarding the digital literacy, IT training portion of the program, I asked our IT subject matter expert and trainer, Mike, to provide his feedback and observations—specifically on the IT curriculum. Mike has over eight years of experience in the industry, having worked in IT at a tribal school and, more recently, for Clallam County. He has a solid understanding of the level of comprehension required to succeed in the field:

The pilot IT and durable soft skills program served as a strong foundation for introducing essential technology concepts to a group of incarcerated individuals who initially expressed significant apprehension and intimidation toward the field of IT. While the program did not include hands-on training, its structured lessons—covering topics such as hardware, operating systems, mobile device support, and troubleshooting—provided participants with a clear and accessible understanding of IT fundamentals. Several participants noted that their comprehension would likely deepen further with the addition of hands-on or lab-style experiences. This feedback reflects a strong desire not only to learn but to actively apply new knowledge in interactive, practical ways.

Despite delivery limitations, the program sparked genuine interest. A few participants demonstrated sufficient understanding and aptitude to consider pursuing CompTIA A+ certification in the future. On the soft skills side, the program supported the development of confidence, communication, and critical mindset shifts—particularly through lessons focused on challenging limiting beliefs. These soft skills enhanced the technical content and contributed to a more well-rounded learning experience. Participants became more comfortable asking questions, engaging in open discussions about technology, and thinking critically about how to transfer what they learned to real-world settings.

The overall tone of the group shifted from doubt and hesitation to one of curiosity and confidence. Several individuals who had previously felt overwhelmed by the idea of working in

IT shared that the program helped "make it real" by breaking down complex topics into something they could understand and envision themselves doing. Their comfort with the material grew steadily as they began to see how IT connects to everyday life—and how they could realistically contribute to the field upon release.

Many even asked if future classes would include more lab-style learning or hands-on practice, signaling their growing engagement and motivation. This feedback points to a promising path forward: with more experiential learning opportunities, participants are likely to retain more information, develop practical skills, and solidify their interest in pursuing IT further. The pilot not only built foundational knowledge, but more importantly, it built belief—in their own potential and in a future that includes meaningful, skilled work in technology.

Implementation Environment & Support

The DOC facilities at WCC were well-equipped, with 16 computers and full access to the OSN. Participants logged in using credentials provided by the college's on-site administrator.

On most Fridays, we had access to a projector, allowing learners to follow IT lessons collectively or on individual screens.

For the first two months, all four of our trainers were present during sessions, providing personalized support and guidance to each participant. In the final month, as we transitioned into a train-the-trainer model, we operated with three trainers but still maintained a strong participant-to-instructor ratio, especially as several participants began to be released. The continuity of support was key to maintaining engagement and progress.

The DOC staff were consistently helpful and supportive throughout the entire process. The WCC Navigator also attended one of the sessions, demonstrating strong inter-agency collaboration and interest in the program's success.

Key Implementation Notes:

- The digital literacy - IT course supported both group (synchronous) and independent
- (asynchronous) learning.

Since Securus tablets couldn't access the course for study outside of the training, we provided printed copies of each lesson—participants found these extremely helpful.

- Hands-on experience would have greatly enhanced learning. Access to a dismantlable computer for practice—even briefly—would be ideal for future cohorts.
- The classroom (also used for GED instruction) was well-lit and ventilated, providing a comfortable and functional learning space.

Summary

Adapting training for individuals nearing reentry requires intentional design, real-world relevance, and consistent personal support. Establishing the importance of durable (soft) skills, separating healing focused discussions from workplace preparation, and customizing content to reflect participants' lived experiences are essential for meaningful engagement and skill development—especially within compressed timelines. While the digital literacy pilot program lasted only three months and was not sufficient to fully prepare participants to confidently sit for the CompTIA A+ certification exam, it was a success from the standpoint of sparking strong interest, fostering meaningful engagement, and introducing complex IT concepts in a way that participants could begin to understand and connect to real-world opportunities. With more time and hands-on lab experience, some participants could potentially reach the level needed to pursue certification and apply for entry-level roles in the IT field. However, it is important to acknowledge that IT remains a challenging sector for many justice-impacted individuals to access, due to persistent gaps in literacy, math skills, digital fluency, and prior educational opportunity.

Participant Assessment and Program Effectiveness in Correctional Settings

Overview: This section explores the complexities of assessing participant growth and program effectiveness within our pilot correctional workforce training programs. Drawing on observations from the WTB pilot, it highlights the limitations of traditional metrics—such as program completion and job placement—and emphasizes the importance of trauma-informed approaches, peer-based assessments, and realistic training environments. The section argues for broader, more human-centered measures of success that account for mindset, behavior change, and durable skill development.

Section Summary: Key Takeaways: Trauma-informed assessment must be central to any correctional training program, as many incarcerated individuals carry experiences that directly affect their ability to learn and engage. Traditional success metrics—such as program completion or job placement—while helpful, are often inadequate in capturing true participant growth, especially considering staggered release dates and post-release uncertainty. Peer and trainer observations proved to be the most insightful tools for assessing engagement, progress, and durable skill development, offering a more accurate and human-centered measure of readiness. Notably, the contrast between in-facility behavior and post-release actions emphasizes the need for more holistic and sustained support. While realistic, hands-on training environments are ideal, limited facility resources mean that programs should prioritize the development of professional mindsets and soft skills—such as initiative, communication, and adaptability—which are transferable across industries and critical to long-term success.

Considering the Demographic in Assessment Design

While some incarcerated individuals demonstrate average literacy, numeracy, and computer skills, many demonstrate below average abilities in these areas. In addition, it should be taken into account that the vast majority have experienced trauma—both before and during incarceration. This trauma often contributes to their path into the justice system and continues to impact their ability to learn and rehabilitate.

Therefore, in addition to commonly low academic and digital literacy levels, educators and program designers must account for trauma-related learning challenges when developing workplace readiness programs and designing appropriate assessments.

The concept of trauma-related learning impairment is not widely acknowledged outside of educational and psychological circles, yet it is essential to consider when preparing incarcerated individuals for the workforce.

The following provides a brief overview of trauma within or related to correctional facilities.

Prevalence of Trauma Among Incarcerated Individuals

General U.S. Incarcerated Population

An estimated 85% to 95% of incarcerated individuals report experiencing at least one traumatic event, often multiple types (Zielinski et al., 2024; Harner & Burgess). These traumas may occur before, during, or after incarceration. Many enter prison with histories of violence, abuse, or significant adversity, and the prison environment itself can be traumatic.

- 20% of individuals in state prisons experience sexual victimization (Wolff et al., 2006).
- 35% experience physical victimization while incarcerated (Wolff et al., 2008).
- PTSD rates in prison populations are far higher than the general public: 17.8% of men and 40.4% of women in prison meet criteria, compared to 3.9% in the general population (Baranyi et al., 2018).

Washington State

Washington-specific data is limited but indicative of similar trends:

- A Washington DOC study found 35.6% of incarcerated individuals had a traumatic brain injury (TBI), often linked to trauma and victimization (Washington State Department of Corrections, 2016; Comas et al., 2013).

- Over ten years, there were 4,579 inmate-on-inmate investigations: 16% abuse, 37% assault, and 46% harassment—highlighting the frequent occurrence of traumatic incidents within correctional facilities (Washington State Department of Corrections, 2019).

Implications for Education/Training and Assessment

The impact of trauma on learning should be a key consideration in the development of any reentry program. Failing to consider the impact of trauma on learning could undermine the effectiveness of an incarcerated individual's successful reentry.

Trauma can create significant learning barriers, including concentration difficulties, memory issues, and hypervigilance that make traditional educational approaches ineffective. Standard educational methods—such as testing, criticism, and traditional authority dynamics—may trigger trauma responses, causing participants to shut down, become defensive, or avoid programs entirely, behaviors we observed as trainers during several sessions. Without trauma-informed approaches, participants might learn technical skills but lack the emotional regulation and self-awareness needed to handle workplace stress, conflict, or setbacks.

For successful reentry, unaddressed trauma responses can lead to difficulties with authority figures, conflict resolution, and stress management—all critical for job retention and reducing recidivism. Without healing work, individuals might unconsciously sabotage success when opportunities arise, reverting to familiar patterns of behavior. Trauma-informed approaches build both the trust needed for deep learning and behavior change, and the emotional foundation required for other skills to be effectively retained and applied. Without this foundation, technical training alone is insufficient for sustainable workforce success.

Given the context above, incarcerated learners could be considered "special needs" students in the realm of education, requiring trauma-informed, individualized instruction and assessment methods—not one-size-fits-all academic models.

Based on this understanding, we've included a brief overview of how the progress and advancement of special needs learners are assessed.

Assessment of Special Needs Learners

The educational progress of learners with special needs is typically evaluated through the **Individualized Education Program (IEP)** model. While incarcerated individuals may not have formal IEPs, the principles apply.

Key Features:

- **Individualized Goals:** Tailored to each learner's strengths and challenges.
- **Ongoing Progress Monitoring:** Conducted weekly or bi-weekly, using a variety of tools (e.g., reading tests, behavioral observations, time-on-task tracking).
- **Formal & Informal Evaluations:** Includes both standardized testing and classroom-based observations.
- **Holistic Review:** Academic, emotional, social, and behavioral growth is considered.

This process ensures instruction is responsive to student needs, allows for necessary adjustments, and promotes meaningful learning outcomes.

In discussions during the pilot program, participants consistently noted that a more tailored, individualized approach would have significantly improved their learning experience.

However, implementing this type of individualized, participant-tailored training—similar to what is seen in education—would be difficult to scale within the correctional system, as each facility has its own specific standard operating procedures (SOPs), departmental relationships, funding structures, and institutional culture.

Therefore, a successful Workforce Training and Education Board program should include some individualized coaching or mentoring to assess participant progress. This individualized support can be provided by the trainers and co-trainers, as was the case on some days in our pilot when we provided one-on-one mentoring and coaching.

Furthermore, when considering how to evaluate the success of a training program, it's important to examine the types of training and education currently offered through the college system.

College Participation and Completion Rates in Washington Prisons

Here's the paragraph with proper in-text citations added:

Participation

In FY2023, eight Washington community colleges provided postsecondary education across all 12 state prisons (Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, 2023). Nationally, about 16% of incarcerated individuals are enrolled in college or have earned a degree before or during incarceration (Bozick et al., 2018; Tolbert, 2012). Washington appears to reflect similar trends.

Completions in FY2023

- 384 vocational certificates awarded (Washington State Department of Corrections, 2023)
- 350 High School+ diplomas issued (Washington State Department of Corrections, 2023)
- 219 GED® tests administered (Washington State Department of Corrections, 2023)
- Degree completion data (A.A./B.A.) not fully reported, though programs like FEPPS support degree pathways (Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, 2023)

Post-Release Outcomes

- No current data on job placement or retention for Washington graduates
- Nationally, postsecondary education in prison is linked to a **48% reduction in recidivism** (Davis et al., 2013)

- WSIPP is conducting a study (to conclude in 2027) on the impact of education on post-release employment and reoffending (Washington State Institute for Public Policy, ongoing)

Here's the paragraph with proper in-text citations added:

Program Dropout Rates

SUNY College-in-Prison Data (Proxy for National Trends)

- **Year 1 Retention:** 82% remained enrolled or graduated (Runell, 2020; Fine et al., 2019)
- **Year 3 Retention:** Dropped to 36% (Runell, 2020; Fine et al., 2019)
- **Year 4 Retention:** Only 10% remained enrolled (Runell, 2020; Fine et al., 2019)
- **By Year 5–6:** Only 27–33% completed a degree (Runell, 2020; Fine et al., 2019)

This suggests that approximately **70%** of incarcerated students drop out before completing their college programs (Davis et al., 2013).

Washington-Specific Insights

Washington does not report dropout rates directly, but research suggests (Washington Student Achievement Council, 2020; Vera Institute of Justice, 2023; The Seattle Times, 2022):

- Many students participate part-time
- Time to completion is often long
- Institutional barriers contribute to low completion rates

Real Impact

While only 35 percent of state prisons provide college-level courses, and these programs only serve 6 percent of incarcerated individuals nationwide (Center for American Progress, 2018), and studies show that people who have participated in postsecondary education programs in prison may have up to 48 percent lower odds of returning to prison than those who have not

(Vera Institute of Justice, 2025), the completion rates remain challenging. Less than 4% of formerly incarcerated people held a college degree (Prison Policy Initiative, n.d.), underscoring the need to rethink how we define and support educational "success" in prison.

Recommendations & Next Steps

These findings prompt essential questions:

- What further measures can be taken to ensure that individuals who complete their education in prison achieve meaningful success in the workforce—beyond simply earning a degree?
- How can we increase the percentage of incarcerated individuals who enroll in training, stay engaged, and apply what they've learned?

We believe that with consistent funding, the **Workforce Board** could develop a **parallel professional training model** alongside college programming. This program should, in no particular order:

1. Begin **well before release**—perhaps even years in advance
2. Incorporate **healing and emotional adjustment**
3. Provide **durable (soft) skills training** that supports both professional and personal growth
4. Offer **trade or industry-specific training** that leads directly to employment

These components may occur inside or outside correctional facilities but must be coordinated and sequential. It should be noted that trade and industry-specific training is already occurring within facilities through the college system, though the Workforce Board model would complement and expand these existing offerings.

Assessment in Workforce Training

For such a program to be effective, workplace-relevant assessments should be used. One model worth adopting is **peer-reviewed performance assessment**, a system proven to mirror real-world job evaluations and deliver actionable feedback that employers value.

Team members are often the most accurate judges of whether a peer is contributing, participating, engaging, and completing tasks on time—and at what level of quality. They are also well-positioned to observe whether an individual possesses or is developing essential soft or durable skills such as communication, flexibility, responsiveness, adaptability, self-motivation, initiative, and the ability to build and maintain relationships.

By incorporating feedback from team members, leads, and managers, a more comprehensive and well-rounded assessment of a participant's development and application of durable skills can be achieved. This type of peer-informed evaluation is widely used in the corporate world—by both innovative startups and established companies—with strong results. There's no reason this model of workplace-based assessment shouldn't also be applied in workforce training programs.

We learned early in the development of the MindSage program that observations from both team members and trainers provided valuable insight into participant growth. This peer-and-trainer observation model would be equally effective in any professional training setting, particularly in evaluating a participant's actual readiness to enter the workplace, and is strongly suggested as a program assessment component.

Pilot Assessment Approach

The grant identified several key performance indicators (KPIs) to help measure success—such as how many participants completed the program, were able to interview, and ultimately secured employment.

Although we believe the pilot program had a positive impact on participants (see video interviews), in our view, the duration of the pilot was too short to bring about significant

changes in mindset, attitudes, or the development of soft skills such as communication, adaptability, and initiative.

Additionally, because each participant had a different earned release date, the amount of time they spent in the program varied. As a result, defining who actually "completed" the program is challenging. However, the two participants whose release dates extended beyond the three-month pilot window attended every session from start to finish and can be considered as having completed the full program.

Of the roughly ten participants who spent any time in the program, only one had secured employment at the time of this writing. Participant Flatt, who was released to the Peninsula Reentry Center (work release), received support in finding a job. However, within three weeks of his release, he was taken back into custody after testing positive for marijuana use on the job at Jimmy John's.

Participant Blinsman, who was released to a sober house in Clark County, is scheduled to be mentored by a local pastor. This kind of post-release support is critical to long-term success and is discussed further in the **Post-Release Support** section of this report.

The point being, if completion of the program and job placement were used as the sole indicators of success, one might wrongly conclude that the program was ineffective. However, due to the varied release schedules and individual factors unique to each incarcerated participant, other key indicators must also be considered.

Of particular interest was the clear contrast between how participants presented themselves during the program and how they acted following release.

Participant Carlin often reflected during training on how he had failed to use his time constructively during his first two incarcerations, admitting he made little effort to improve himself. This time, however, he expressed a clear shift in mindset. He had enrolled in multiple programs, earned a certificate from one, and shared that his involvement in the Soft Skills/IT program aligned with his commitment to think, act, and live differently upon release.

Carlin was released on June 3, 2025. During a team meeting with our Navigators, we learned that although he was scheduled to be released to his fiancée, she reported that she had not seen or heard from him. As of our most recent team meeting on June 24, no information had surfaced regarding his whereabouts.

The reality that participants may present a certain version of themselves—shaped by the prison environment—should be considered when developing assessment strategies for professional training programs.

Therefore, we attempted to use a **peer-based review system**, even as the size of the training cohort declined over time. We looked at factors such as: Did individuals participate? Were they open to new ideas and differing viewpoints? Did they engage with the material? Were they present whenever possible? Did they take initiative by asking questions? And so on.

For the IT training component, similar indicators were considered. In that case, the trainer's assessment of participants' interest and comprehension—based primarily on their verbal responses—served as the main measure of engagement and understanding.

With the IT training, it is also important to keep in mind that we did not have access to a computer lab, meaning we were not able to provide the participants with any hands-on training—taking apart or putting together a computer to replace memory, for example. The lack of hands-on sessions can also have an impact on the success of a job training program.

For example, an individual could spend over a year studying TIG welding, reading about techniques, and discussing the trade in detail while incarcerated. However, without hands-on experience using actual equipment, working with various metals, and adapting to real-world scenarios, they would not be fully prepared for the job.

It is therefore essential that any workforce training program—particularly those within correctional facilities—have access to a learning environment that mirrors, as closely as possible, the conditions found in college or industry training settings.

We were unable to get our training materials uploaded to the Securus tablets, which would have allowed participants to study or review content independently outside of scheduled

training sessions. However, we began printing booklets for each IT lesson, which participants found extremely helpful.

With the training tools we were able to provide, we were able to observe and discern levels of engagement and interest in the program.

Participant Parks shared that he would often read the lessons in the day room. On one particular day, during the NBA playoffs, he was asked multiple times what was so important that it pulled his attention away from the television—so much so that he was fully absorbed in the booklet. This level of participant engagement, enthusiasm, and eagerness to learn serves as a strong indicator of the program's success and potential impact.

Summary

In summary, any job training or work-readiness program must set realistic expectations for what can be accomplished within a correctional setting, regardless of the trade or industry focus. Securing and retaining employment may be a sufficient measure of success for individuals without lived experience in the justice system. However, when evaluating program effectiveness in correctional environments, other considerations must be included. Success should not be defined solely by job placement, but also by whether participants are genuinely growing, progressing, and developing the personal and professional skills that support long-term success.

Whether the program serves cohorts with similar release dates or rolling enrollment, incorporating peer assessment remains one of the most accurate and insightful ways to measure the development and application of both hard and soft skills.

In cases where access to industry-specific equipment is limited—except for programs that can be conducted entirely online, such as coding, web development, or graphic design—the program's greatest value may lie in helping incarcerated individuals develop essential professional soft skills, mindsets, and personal qualities. These include communication, adaptability, initiative, accountability, and resilience—traits that benefit them not only while inside the facility but also when facing challenges during reentry, finding and keeping a job, and throughout their lives.

Reentry Resource Navigation and Support

Section Overview: This section documents the comprehensive resource mapping, navigator engagement, and individualized support services developed to bridge the gap between incarceration and successful community reintegration. It details the creation of customized reentry packets, collaboration with DOC navigators, and the systematic challenges that emerged during implementation.

Section Summary: Key Takeaways: Successful reentry requires coordinated pre-release preparation, comprehensive resource mapping, and seamless handoffs between facility counselors and community navigators. Current systems face significant barriers including document access challenges, limited navigator availability, and union-driven disconnects between in-facility and community services. As detailed throughout this report, systematic navigation support is critical for program success.

Pilot Program Objective and Mission

Our objective was to empower individuals reentering the community by providing immediate, accessible tools and resources (wrap-around services) to foster purpose-driven lives through work, education, and job training in line with the Grant directives. We recognize that many lack the knowledge or means to navigate available programs, which can hinder successful reintegration. By equipping them with tailored support, we aim to enable rapid, sustainable productivity and reduce recidivism by instilling purpose and self-sufficiency from the moment of release.

Accomplishments

1. Comprehensive Resource Mapping

- Documented reentry centers and WorkSource locations across Washington State counties in a Master Database spreadsheet, detailing services, contacts, operating hours, and locations.
- Compiled local resources by county and neighborhood, ensuring accessibility based on participants' residential areas.

Resource gathering document.

2. Service Verification and Customization

- Identified and verified services using the Reintegration Worksheet from the IT and Soft Skills training program, contacting agencies (e.g., DOL, SSA, SNAP, TANF, DSHS, VA, Vital Records, Tribal SPIPA, Medicaid) to confirm availability and requirements.
- Filtered out inactive or inaccessible resources to ensure relevance.
- Created individualized checklists, resource maps, and timeline charts for participants, covering essentials like IDs, benefits, clothing, and education.
- Developed an "order of operations" file and step-by-step email setup instructions, distributed in personalized packets.

3. Navigator Engagement

See Combined Case Study Report Section

Comprehensive Resource Development

We developed an extensive resource mapping system to ensure participants had immediate access to essential services upon release. This included creating a Master Database spreadsheet documenting reentry centers and WorkSource locations across Washington State counties, complete with detailed information about services, contacts, operating hours, and locations. We compiled local resources by county and neighborhood, ensuring accessibility based on participants anticipated residential areas.

Service Verification and Customization

Using the Reintegration Worksheet developed during our IT and Soft Skills training program, we systematically verified services by contacting agencies including the Department of Labor (DOL), Social Security Administration (SSA), SNAP, TANF, DSHS, Veterans Affairs, Vital Records offices, Tribal SPIPA, and Medicaid providers. This verification process allowed us to filter out inactive or inaccessible resources, ensuring participants received only relevant, current information.

We created individualized support packages for each participant, including customized checklists, resource maps, and timeline charts covering essentials such as identification documents, benefits applications, clothing resources, and educational opportunities. Each participant received an "order of operations" file and step-by-step email setup instructions, distributed in personalized packets tailored to their specific county and circumstances.

Navigator Collaboration and Case Management

We established working relationships with DOC Navigator Janet to clarify criteria for navigator assignment and pre-release procedures, confirming that participants must proactively contact both their assigned navigators and local WorkSource locations. Through collaboration with navigators including Kara, James Amos, and Nick Rankin, we addressed individual participant needs through detailed case studies and personalized support plans.

A notable success was our support of Noah Blinsman (ERD 6/11/25, released 6/9/25), where we coordinated with Navigator Kelly Wenzlick to secure clothing, transportation passes, and Clark College admissions support. This case study is examined in detail in the "How Success is Viewed" section below, demonstrating the powerful impact of combining formal navigator services with community partnerships.

Systemic Challenges and Risk Factors

Document Access Barriers

One of the most significant challenges participants face is securing essential identification documents upon release. Many participants, including Max Flatt, are released without critical documents such as State ID, Social Security cards, or birth certificates. Document fees ranging from \$25-\$29 create substantial barriers for individuals with limited or no funds upon release.

The impact of missing identification documents extends far beyond inconvenience—it delays access to employment opportunities, benefit programs, and essential services, directly contributing to increased recidivism risk. This barrier reinforces the critical importance of comprehensive case management and coordinated service delivery.

Out-of-state vital records present additional complications, with processing times of 7-9 weeks for documents like California birth certificates. These delays require payment or complex fee waiver affidavits, significantly complicating pre-release planning efforts.

Limited Navigator Access and Communication Gaps

Current navigator assignment protocols create significant service gaps, with only approximately 20% of released individuals receiving navigator support due to restrictive eligibility criteria. This limitation is compounded by inconsistent communication patterns—cases like Ronald Carlin's demonstrate how navigator cases can be closed prematurely due to non-communication, often without the participant's knowledge.

Many incarcerates remain unaware of their assigned navigator's identity, contact process, or that their case has been closed. Navigator James Amos closed Carlin's case pre-release without adequate communication, illustrating the systemic communication breakdowns that undermine reentry success.

Resource Access Inefficiencies

WorkSource locations face staffing challenges that limit their effectiveness in serving justice impacted individuals. According to the King County WorkSource manager, understaffing forces these locations to focus primarily on employment services while lacking comprehensive wraparound support services that this population requires.

Behavioral health services present particular challenges, as programs such as anger management and domestic violence intervention are often not covered by insurance and require proof of low income or referrals from primary care physicians. These requirements create additional barriers for individuals seeking mental health support during reentry.

System inefficiencies create extended wait times that delay critical reintegration steps. REAL ID applications, medical appointments, and other essential services often have waiting periods of three or more months, undermining the stability needed for successful reentry.

Pre-Release Preparation Limitations

Current pre-release preparation protocols lack sufficient communication channels and coordination mechanisms. The absence of pre-release video visits or structured communication limits participants' ability to complete necessary forms, secure housing arrangements, or establish service connections before release.

Participants frequently need mailing addresses for official forms and applications but lack access to reliable addresses during the pre-release period. This seemingly simple barrier can prevent access to critical services including sober housing and medical care, fundamentally undermining post-release stability.

Coordination between Community Corrections Officers (CCOs) and navigators remains inconsistent, even for participants entering structured environments like sober housing where peer support is available.

Educational Program Limitations

Our IT and Soft Skills training program revealed important limitations in serving participants with varying release dates and learning needs. The program's structured timeline disadvantages participants who face early release, as demonstrated by cases including Jerry Fluker as compared to Noah Blinsman.

Incomplete training can significantly reduce participants' employability and confidence levels, creating additional barriers to successful reintegration. Expanding access to flexible, self-paced learning options—such as printed materials or courses available on Securus tablets—could greatly enhance participants' ability to continue coursework after release, strengthening the program's long-term impact.

How Success is Viewed

Section Overview: The successful reentry support provided to Noah Blinsman (ERD 6/11/25, released 6/9/25), demonstrated that effective coordination between navigators, community partners, and program resources to achieve positive reintegration outcomes is possible. As one of the trainers with lived experience put it after participant Max Flatt was taken back into

custody just weeks after release, "We view a program successful not based on any one individual, but that we continue to be there for everyone in reentry."

Section Summary: Key Takeaways: Community partnerships significantly enhance formal reentry services, with faith-based and volunteer organizations providing crucial supplemental support. Successful cases require proactive navigator engagement, comprehensive resource coordination, and recognition that informal community support often serves as a catalyst for sustained recovery and reintegration success.

Background and Coordination

Noah Blinsman's case exemplifies effective reentry coordination when multiple support systems align effectively. Navigator Kelly Wenzlick demonstrated proactive case management by organizing a comprehensive 30-minute Reentry Team Meeting that addressed Noah's immediate post-release needs across multiple domains.

Service Coordination and Outcomes

The coordinated approach secured essential resources including appropriate clothing (specifically shirts suitable for employment and community engagement), public transportation passes to ensure mobility for job searching and service access, and Clark College admissions support to continue educational goals.

The case was significantly enhanced by community partnership, specifically pastoral support that provided additional transportation assistance and facilitated access to faith-based services and community connections. Navigator Kelly specifically noted the positive impact of this community support on Noah's overall recovery trajectory.

Implications for Program Development

Noah's case demonstrates the multiplicative effect of combining formal navigator services with informal community support systems. The integration of faith-based and nonprofit organizations and volunteer community members created a comprehensive support network that addressed both practical needs and emotional/mental/emotional wellness during reentry.

This case validates our recommendation to systematically leverage community partnerships, including faith-based organizations, to supplement formal navigator support and ensure holistic reintegration approaches that address the full spectrum of reentry challenges. Nonprofit organizations such as Leveled Up Reentry and Black Rose Collective, and others, are invaluable in providing additional support and association with individuals who have lived experience and have also successfully navigated through the reentry process. These groups also hold individuals accountable and are instrumental in providing continuing moral support, motivation, and most of all compassion—throughout the entire reentry process.

Conclusion and Path Forward

The pilot program has demonstrated significant success in comprehensive resource mapping, strategic navigator engagement, and individualized participant support, with cases like Noah Blinsman providing evidence of achievable positive outcomes. While challenges like document access, limited navigator availability, and service coordination still exist, addressing these areas presents a powerful opportunity to significantly improve reentry outcomes and support long-term success.

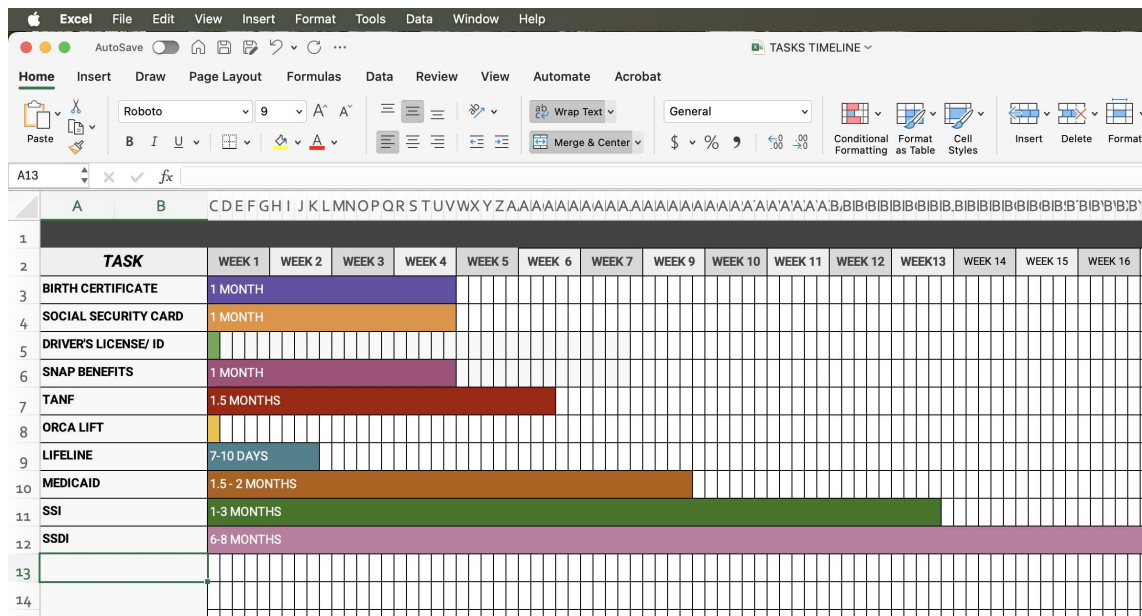
The stark difference in recidivism rates—44% without navigator support versus 25% with support, as documented by Navigator Kara in June 2025—underscores the critical importance of comprehensive case management and coordinated service delivery outlined throughout this report. We recommend that future WTB reentry work training programs implement a Justice Impacted Release Management Database, strengthen pre-release document preparation protocols, and assign dedicated project manager/Navigators in WTB programs to track and support individuals through every stage of reentry—especially those who do not qualify for work release or community navigators. These project managers would coordinate efforts among infacility counselors and navigators, community-based navigators, nonprofit organizations, and local service providers—helping to overcome systemic roadblocks, ensure seamless transitions, and provide immediate access to critical post-release support throughout the reentry process.

By implementing these strategic improvements, we can achieve our fundamental goal of reducing recidivism while equipping individuals with the practical tools, wrap-around support, and sense of purpose necessary for sustainable community reintegration. The evidence demonstrates that coordinated, comprehensive reentry support transforms individual outcomes while benefiting community safety and economic stability.

Key Documents Developed

Task Timeline

To understand the average time required to apply, process and receive key documents.



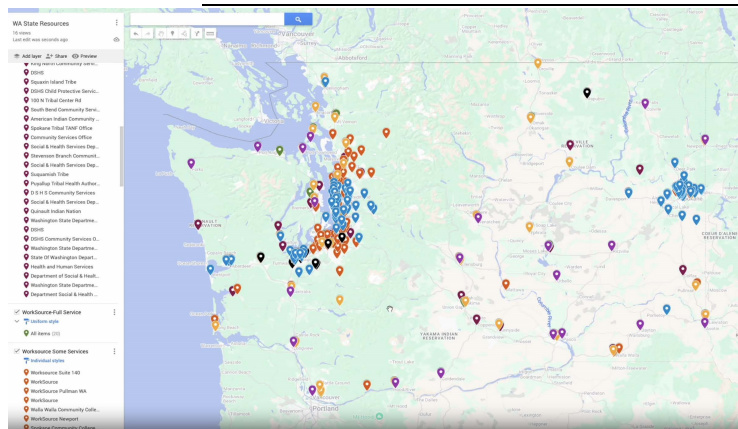
Reentry Resource Packet

This document was created and used as a general intake form (similar to the DOC Individual Reentry Form) during the first session. Later versions of the document (see link below) evolved to include both participant questions—used by the navigation team to gather essential information—and status updates on requested items, documents, or services. It became a dynamic tool that enabled the navigator team to maintain ongoing communication with participants and track their reentry progress in real time. [Download](#)

Mapping Resources

Our team identified and mapped out wrap-around resources for participants' counties of release.

This would help participants identify available resources near their housing location upon release.



Individual resource lists with locations could be generated for individual participants. Or resources listed by location.

All of the research and relationship-building with key partners and wraparound service providers resulted in a document that can inform future Workforce Board programs—should the WTB choose to include a Navigation team to support the overall success of both the program and its participants. Other useful information cataloged included: WorkSource contacts, Washington Coordinated Reentry sites, community education navigators, as well as federal and state program guides.

Note: Not all documents are listed. The documents in this section represent the most useful documents compiled or created by the pilot's Navigation team.

Examples of Navigator Team Meetings

Week 4 with Participant and Navigator | Week 5

Program Comments

"You're here to teach me on a whole other level of going into a company. You're teaching me company. Heppard and Youngblood are teaching me life so I can go into the door of that company...in a broken place like this? You need both." -Participant Davis

Pre-Pilot Comments

From our initial focus group session on soft/durable skills training at Coyote Ridge Correctional Facility—with 27 incarcerated participants—through to the conclusion of the program, we collected valuable reflections and feedback. Many participants voiced a clear need for workforce training programs that break away from traditional classroom formats. They emphasized the importance of learning environments that mirror real-world business or internship settings—places where the focus shifts from grades to collaboration, self-development, and personal growth.

During a 45-minute soft skills pilot session held midway through the program, one participant remarked: "You should be paid more. The stuff you're teaching us—like neuroplasticity—is college level. It's mind-blowing." A large man seated alone in the back of the visiting room raised his hand and added: "What you've said in the last 30 minutes has already changed how I see myself. No one talks to us the way you do—with respect, like we're people. No one tells us we can be better or that we can change. They just tell us what to do. They don't talk to us like humans. But when you talk, and what you talk about—I know you're on our side. Thank you."

While these comments were deeply moving, they were not entirely unexpected. They echoed the kinds of responses we've heard from both high school and college students who, through developing soft— or durable—skills, begin to recognize their own ability to shape their futures. These are the mindsets, attitudes, and character traits associated with personal and professional success. Moments like the one at Coyote Ridge reaffirm our belief that pairing high-level soft/durable skills development with industry-specific training has the potential to create deep, lasting impact.

When asked whether they believed this kind of training would be valuable within the facility, 23 of the 27 participants raised their hands in agreement.

This positive pre-pilot response was also shared by the DOC's Community Participation Program Coordinator (CPPC) and the ESD Program Supervisor, both of whom supported the opportunity to pilot this content.

"Todd, Yes, the feedback was positive with a wish to expand skills and to have additional self-help courses. One aspect they were wondering about was how close to being released did they have to be. Some were worried they had too much time and would not be allowed to take the class.

I do believe that the class would have overall benefits to the incarcerated at CRCC and I would like to see if we could have the program start here as well.

Thank you for following up,

Dawn Seaton, CPPC, Coyote Ridge Correction Center, Connell, WA 99326"

"Todd,

This is really great work you all are doing here. Having instructors in the mix with lived experience is key, now the folks are able to see themselves in this type of role/world. I do think this class would be beneficial to our community, absolutely. But that will need to be Dawn's call if offered in the correctional center. If offering this type of workshop after release is an option down the road, I would love to discuss having WorkSource Columbia Basin as one of your host sites, of course we would need to have more folks at the table as WS is a partnership and many agencies are involved. Thank you for sharing this with me, and I am so happy we were able to have you join us earlier this year at CRCC.

Brooke Menter, CBEP

Program Supervisor

WorkSource Columbia Basin"

Comments From the Pilot

From the very first session of the pilot, following one of the soft skills lessons, participant Davis made a comment that showed he immediately recognized the value of what was being taught:

"This is something for Pine Hall (short term). This should be a mandatory something that happens a couple times a week for Pine Hall inmates because a lot of them are, no disrespect to anyone in brown, but there are a lot of drug addicts, a lot of homeless people, no GEDs, no education—and just

to build soft skills, builds confidence. And when you feel like you have that, you can go to the next stage, the next page. It gives you some more confidence."

Participant Comments

The following are a few comments from our mid-pilot interviews. We recommend viewing the extended version of the interviews in the link provided below:

"I know this is just a pilot course, and I believe, like honestly, like for me, I think you guys should continue to do this. (interviewer: Do you think others would benefit from this?) Oh yeah." - Participant Carlin

"I think this is great. I think this is a really great opportunity and it was very creative of how the people involved were chosen. It's more relatable, it's encouraging, there's a lot of guys engaged. A lot of guys in the facility curious to see—'wait guys are out, coming back in? And then they're also teaching you soft skills? What are those?'" -Participant Parks

"The pilot is good right now. I was kind of surprised that it was a pilot, so, which was pretty cool—and I just think it will be vibrant in a couple of years... I wish I had more time, I could keep coming back every year and seeing more knowledge and more how it changes..." Participant Montiel "I think the program is really good. I like what I've learned so far, and a lot of the things I've learned so far aren't necessarily things I was taught in high school—and so like soft skills and how to talk to people. And the two speakers we have, Youngblood and Heppard, they have a lot of good insight, and I like that. The soft skills side is really good. Some things I've personally never learned and so it's been really nice and useful knowledge that I've gained. And the IT side of it is, I think, pretty excellent." -- Participant Blinsman

"I think every time we have the class, it's, the soft skills part of it, is awesome. I like it. I really do. It makes you think. It makes you think about yourself—and almost how you're seen in other eyes." - Participant Davis

"I think it's all been really enjoyable for me...I don't like being all caught up in the prison world, and like getting that all in your head. I'd rather be in something like this where I can take my mind somewhere else and be involved... I like this a lot." -Participant Glass

Full interviews can be viewed here: [PART 1](#) | [PART 2](#)

Trainer Comments

Mid-program comments about both the IT and Soft skills lessons, especially how the content conforms to the target audience, from our IT/Tech Trainer.

One of the most valuable and insightful aspects of the pilot was the input we received from our co-trainers with lived experience—individuals who now work directly with people in reentry through their nonprofit organization. Having personally experienced incarceration and successfully navigated reentry, they were uniquely qualified to assess whether the program's training content was truly relevant and practically useful in supporting successful reintegration. Here are their comments:

"I wanted to take a moment to share some early reflections on the IT pilot program we've been running with currently incarcerated individuals. As someone who entered prison at 18 and was released 30 years later through clemency due to the personal transformation and healing I underwent, I've spent the last few years deeply committed to community healing, violence prevention, reentry, and justice system reform.

This class has given me the opportunity to combine all of that experience in a new way. While we're teaching tech skills, we're also offering something just as vital—hope.

When we started, many of the participants were skeptical. They didn't know if this would apply to their lives or if they'd be able to grasp the content. I've seen curiosity come alive, confidence begin to grow, and the walls of doubt slowly come down.

What makes this program stand out from others I've seen over the years is that it doesn't just focus on hard skills. It's also about soft skills—communication, imagination, creative thinking, collaboration, critical thinking—and the internal shift that happens when someone starts to believe they're capable of learning, of succeeding, of being more than their past. It has even more value because it also incorporates the knowledge and skills of people with lived experience that those taking the class can relate to in a real way.

We're not just teaching IT. We're teaching transformation.

The early results are clear: this class is working. It's needed. And it's already making an impact. I'm proud to be part of this work.

In solidarity,

Eugene Youngblood"

"Facilitating the IT class inside Washington Corrections Center (WCC) has been an incredibly powerful and affirming experience. One of the most impactful aspects has been witnessing how deeply the men on the inside respond to facilitators who bring lived experience to the classroom. There's an immediate sense of trust and connection when they realize that the people helping to teach them have walked similar paths—and are now walking beside them in solidarity.

The curriculum developed by ETA Media has been phenomenal, offering a strong foundation for technical learning. What makes the sessions even more transformative is our ability to infuse that curriculum with culturally grounded analogies, real-world examples, and personal stories that resonate with the students' lived experiences. These connections aren't just helpful—they're vital. They bridge the gap between abstract technical knowledge and practical, real-life application, making the content accessible, relevant, and memorable.

Beyond technical skills, the class places a major emphasis on soft skills—communication, collaboration, problem-solving, emotional intelligence, and leadership. These are not just workplace skills; they're life skills. We see participants applying what they learn to navigate relationships, resolve conflict more constructively, and build self-awareness and confidence. The development of these soft skills gives them an added edge—not just when it comes to employment, but in how they show up for themselves, their families, and their communities.

This class is more than a technical training; it's a much-needed tool for reentry preparation. Understanding technology isn't optional anymore—it's essential. From accessing services to securing employment, navigating society after incarceration now requires a baseline digital literacy. We've seen firsthand how the lack of this knowledge can lead to setbacks, even violations. In fact, a few of the students in our class have shared that they were violated simply because they didn't understand how to properly use or manage digital devices post-release. That's not just frustrating— it's unjust.

What makes this class truly special is the way it centers humanity. We approach each session with a healing-informed, culturally responsive lens. This allows us to meet students where they are—not just academically, but emotionally and culturally. We don't just teach tech skills; we affirm dignity, build confidence, and foster community. In this context, learning becomes an act of liberation. This work matters. It fills a critical gap. And perhaps most importantly, it affirms that transformation is possible—on both sides of the classroom.

Sincerely,

David Heppard"

Summary

Successful work training programs will ‘listen’ to those for whom it is designed. Because most incarcerated individuals have faced significant trauma, cultivating durable skills is especially vital. Abilities such as self-esteem, self-worth, and self-acceptance—along with initiative, collaboration, self-discipline, responsibility, determination, grit, and emotional intelligence—are crucial for successful reentry, workplace readiness, and long-term life success. Moreover, these skills contribute significantly to lowering the risk of recidivism.

Participants and those in the test group at CRCC gravitated, appreciated and requested more soft/durable skills training. They know it can help them—it can be beneficial.

Given that highly successful corporations invest billions annually in soft/durable skills training for their employees—many of whom have completed college and even hold advanced degrees—it stands to reason that offering the same type of training to justice-involved individuals could be one of the most impactful strategies the Workforce Board can pursue. Importantly, durable skills training does not depend on academic, math, or computer literacy, making it accessible and transformative for this population.

Again, those with lived experience recognize the need. Employers recognize the need. This may be a pivotal moment for government agencies and organizations to invest not only in what a person knows, but in who they are becoming—and who they can become.

Conclusions and Recommendations

What is... and what could be. If we only plan for the present, we risk failing the future. Both must be considered when building real support and lasting success for those in reentry.

The Need for More Programming

At the end of 2022, Washington's prison population was approximately 13,800 (as of June 2024, 13,714) (Washington State Office of Financial Management, n.d.). In recent years, around 6,500 to 7,000 incarcerated individuals have participated annually in Department of Corrections (DOC)-contracted education programs—7,000 in 2019 before the pandemic and 6,500 in 2020 (The Council of State Governments Justice Center, 2023). While exact figures on the number of diplomas or certificates awarded each year are not readily available, national and state estimates suggest that only about 15% of incarcerated individuals earn a postsecondary credential (The Council of State Governments Justice Center, 2023). This suggests that while many engage in education, only a small portion ultimately receive formal credentials. It is estimated that about half of the approximately 15% of incarcerated individuals who earn a postsecondary degree or credential obtain employment within one year of release (Davis et al., 2014). However, there is little data indicating whether those jobs are directly related to their field of study, or pay a living wage (Vera Institute of Justice, 2023).

In addition, while college-in-prison programs are beneficial and have been shown to improve employment outcomes—boosting the likelihood of securing a job by an estimated 10–20% compared to those who did not earn a degree or certificate (Davis et al., 2014; Mackinac Center for Public Policy, 2023)—these programs serve only a *small portion of the incarcerated population* (Council of State Governments Justice Center, 2023; Vera Institute of Justice, 2022; National Conference of State Legislatures, 2022).

Because the majority of incarcerated individuals do not participate in or benefit from education provided by colleges while incarcerated (New America, 2023; Prison Policy Initiative, 2025; Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2003), there remains significant room to expand access to job

training and educational programs—whether they are tied to degrees, certifications, or career and technical education (CTE). Any professional, career, or job training provided by the Workforce Board can play a vital role in preparing individuals for meaningful employment upon reentry.

A comprehensive work readiness program—whether it leads to a college degree, professional certificate, or not—should be designed with careful consideration of the backgrounds, abilities, and experiences of individuals in reentry.

The following are observations and suggestions based on the Workforce Board's pilot program at WCC, in Shelton, WA.

Know the Landscape, Establish Relationships

Each correctional facility functions like a small city, with various departments that rely on—and frequently interact with—one another. At times, these departments may have differing priorities or concerns. Some closely related teams belong to different unions which can pose challenges. Like small cities, different groups or departments within individual facilities have unique needs that may not always perfectly align with those of other correctional facilities in the state. Therefore, strategic communication is essential to ensure all stakeholders have some level of buy-in to any Workforce initiated program prior to its development. In addition to internal DOC considerations, while the shared primary goal of all facilities remains ensuring the safety of DOC employees and supporting the rehabilitation of those in custody—with the understanding that they may one day be your neighbor—there are additional administrative, technological, logistical, and security challenges to navigate. While some challenges can be addressed by working with headquarters in Olympia, most require on-site management of the specific facility's dynamics and internal coordination.

It is therefore advisable to hire or work with individuals or groups who have established relationships or connections within various facilities and departments and build upon those already established.

Relationships play a tremendous role in establishing and maintaining any Workforce training program.

Core Levers

Some of the site-specific coordination and collaboration efforts mentioned above should include:

Director of Education at the college currently providing services to the facility; the facility's Corrections Program Manager (CPM); and the Community Program Participation Coordinator (CPPC), who has the authority to approve programs and arrange facility-specific orientation for program volunteers.

In cases where the program provides Navigators to fill gaps in services typically handled by facility counselors or on-site Navigators (currently, only three facilities have on-site Navigators), communication should be established with both DOC counselors (inside facilities) and community-based Navigators (outside of facilities). Note: Community Navigators are not assigned to specific facilities but are instead assigned to serve a particular geographic region. Any effective workforce preparation program must include navigation support—for both incarcerated participants and the DOC staff supporting them through reentry. After all, what good is technical or trade training if a person reentering society lacks stable housing, reliable communication, transportation, or access to essential services such as medical care, mental health support, and substance use treatment?

At the headquarters level, it is highly recommended that any professional work preparation or career training initiative be implemented from the top down. A strong relationship with, and support from, the Senior Administrator of the Reentry Division is invaluable. While there remains a disconnect between headquarters' understanding of the reentry process and the actual lived experience of reentry, the Senior Administrator can play a key role by directing program developers to the appropriate contacts, making introductions, setting up meetings, and—when necessary—providing encouragement or reminders to DOC personnel essential to the success of a work training program.

Clarity of Purpose, Realistic Goals and Expectations

When evaluating the purpose of any workforce training or education program, it can be distilled into three primary goals: (1) to help individuals obtain family-wage jobs, (2) to meet employers' needs for skilled workers, and (3) to strengthen the overall workforce system in the state. In this section, we'll consider the population of individuals in Washington correctional facilities and explore what would help them meet employers' needs and strengthen the workforce.

In Washington State, nearly half of the incarcerated population did not finish high school, reflecting a trend consistent with or worse than national averages (State of Washington Department of Corrections & Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2023; Washington State Institute for Public Policy, 2024). Nationally, as of 2016, only 23% of state prisoners held a high school diploma, with 62% lacking a completed high school education (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2003). Literacy levels among Washington's incarcerated individuals are also low, with most scoring at or below an eighth-grade reading level—somewhat higher than the national average, where roughly 70% of incarcerated adults read at or below a fourth-grade level (State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, 2024). These figures highlight the urgent need for foundational education and literacy support as part of any reentry or job training/preparation program in Washington's correctional facilities.

It's a common but misguided belief that, simply because individuals in correctional facilities are adults, all they need is job or trade-specific training to succeed after release. But adulthood alone doesn't guarantee readiness for today's workforce. In truth, most incarcerated individuals have faced significant barriers to education, opportunity, and stability long before incarceration. Helping them build the skills, confidence, and resilience needed to meet employer expectations and contribute meaningfully to the workforce requires more than technical training—it demands time, patience, and a comprehensive approach to personal and professional development.

Failing to take seriously the current skill levels and educational backgrounds of most incarcerated individuals can significantly undermine the effectiveness of job training programs. This is not to suggest that incarcerated individuals are incapable of learning complex subjects or preparing for careers that require advanced math or science. However, if such programs are introduced, expectations must be appropriately calibrated. The success of a high school

graduate—especially one with some college experience—completing a preparatory program for CompTIA, Microsoft, or Google certification should be evaluated differently than the outcomes of participants drawn from the general correctional facility population. Therefore, careful thought as to which career paths or industries best align with the abilities of the majority of incarcerated individuals should be considered when designing work training programs. While labor market demand is important, aligning training with participant readiness ensures programs are both realistic and effective.

When alignment is off, the result is wasted resources, unmet employer expectations, and unfulfilled potential. It is our assessment that the most effective programs find the intersection between market need and participant capability—and build from there.

To this end, developing who the individual is, rather than just what they know, should be a key concept in helping incarcerated individuals become skilled workers who meet employer demands and improve the workforce.

Self-Improvement First, Then Skill Development

When discussing the incarcerated population, insights from this pilot—and from conversations with individuals who have lived experience both inside and outside correctional facilities—make one thing clear: successful reentry—and improving the overall workforce in Washington State—is not possible without first providing incarcerated participants the personal support and opportunities needed for growth and stability ('healing').

To illustrate this point, consider the analogy of using a cracked bucket to carry water. If you're trying to put out a small fire, you might tolerate the leaking because any water reaching the flames could help. But if you're watering crops, taking the time to repair the bucket is the logical choice—ensuring long-term effectiveness and impact.

Similarly, workforce development programs must decide what approach to take. One option is to place individuals directly into hard skills, industry or trade specific training, hoping they can function well enough to meet employer expectations once released. The other—and more sustainable—approach is to invest time up front in developing foundational traits such as

emotional regulation, self-awareness, and communication, before moving on to technical or industry-specific training. Programs that prioritize personal development first are more likely to produce individuals who are not only job-ready but life-ready.

If a Workforce job training program chooses to prioritize the individual first, we recommend that *both* soft skills development and personal healing must be integral to the process. The term "healing" may raise concerns for some, as it can sound like stepping into the role of a therapist or counselor.

However, when we use "healing" or "capacity building" in the context of job placement and success, it takes on a different meaning. Those with lived experience have shared that healing can be as simple as creating a safe space to talk about how past or present trauma affects their thinking, behavior, and ultimately, their job performance—which can easily be incorporated into a job training program.

Over the last three months, in our work with co-trainers who have lived experience, we came to understand that healing topics often overlap with the same durable or soft skills commonly taught for workplace success—but applied on a more personal level and viewed through the lens of incarceration and reentry.

In this way, content typically designed to shape high-performing professionals can also serve as a foundation for healing-centered sessions. For example, our pilot included lessons grounded in corporate soft skills training concepts such as self-motivation, self-confidence, self-discipline, relationship building, communication, collaboration, self-esteem, and breaking limiting beliefs. While these topics are familiar in workplace development, the discussions they generated with our participants—many of whom had experienced significant trauma—were fundamentally different from those we've had with college students, high schoolers, or working professionals. The context of incarceration changes not only how these concepts are understood but also how they are internalized and applied.

We believe that as participants worked through these lessons with our co-trainers who have lived experience, they gained meaningful insights and an immediate appreciation for the content. Based on my experience during the soft skills focus group training at Coyote Ridge, as

well as feedback from our pilot participants, I believe that revisiting the same lessons—first administered by trainers with lived experience, the second time led by a trained professional with a focus on workplace application— would significantly deepen the impact. While this approach may require more time and effort, it would better prepare participants for employment and contribute more effectively to workforce development.

To support points two and three of the Workforce Board's charter—meeting employer needs and strengthening the state's workforce—we recommend delivering high-level, corporate-style soft/durable skills training in two distinct phases, rather than trying to merge the personal and professional approaches, as was eventually the case in our pilot.

Phase one would be facilitated by co-trainers with lived experience, who themselves have been trained on the core principles of the work-life skills curriculum. Phase two would be led by a professional trainer skilled in delivering soft/durable skills training with a clear connection to job performance and workplace expectations. Alternately, the two applications could be presented on alternating days—but not in the same session.

In a phased scenario, participants who successfully complete both phases—evaluated through peer and trainer review—could then advance to career or industry-specific programs. Those who need additional time and support could begin the process again with a modified structure to meet their needs more effectively.

In a combined approach, as described below, a similar peer and trainer review process could be used for assessment. This approach allows for dividing applications and provides additional personalized time with trainers who serve as both instructors and mentors.

If corporations invest billions of dollars in soft skills—or durable skills—training for employees who, in most cases, have never been incarcerated and have had at the very least 12 years of formal education, then it stands to reason that any program preparing incarcerated individuals for the workforce should include some form of soft skills training in combination with capacity building sessions. To omit either would ignore both the realities of the workplace and the added challenges faced by those reentering society.

Work Experience, for True Workplace Readiness

Research from Harvard, Stanford and Carnegie Mellon University indicates that 85% of job success in the workplace can be primarily attributed to soft skills, and in particular interpersonal and people skills, rather than technical or hard skills (National Soft Skills Association; Blinkist Magazine; eDynamic Learning). Studies also indicate that when training in durable/soft skills is provided in a real-world work environment, the impact, retention and application is much higher. We have seen this to be the case in our soft/durable skills professional training program with college and high school students.

It is therefore recommended that any Workforce training program emulate a real-world work environment. Our pilot implemented this approach, letting participants know from the start that this program was more like an internship, rather than a classroom. Specifically, we emulated a workplace environment through some of the following approaches:

1. **Organic Discussion:** We allowed discussions to unfold naturally during training sessions, much like they do in real workplace meetings. This encouraged authentic engagement and reflection rather than forcing a scripted exchange.
2. **Collaborative Case Studies:** We broke the larger group into smaller teams and used real-world case studies to promote collaboration and problem-solving—mirroring the kinds of team-based challenges encountered daily in many companies.
3. **No Grades or Tests:** Instead of relying on formal assessments, we prioritized understanding. When participants struggled with certain IT concepts, we revisited those topics and provided clarification beyond the lesson plan. We avoided a rigid agenda and allowed flexibility in pacing— similar to how internal teams are trained within our businesses. This approach was more adaptive to the participants' learning styles than a traditional classroom model.
4. **Team-Oriented Structure:** Rather than emphasizing individual performance, we fostered a team mentality. Through group brainstorming sessions and collaborative case studies, participants worked together to develop solutions or recommendations—often leading the process themselves, with facilitators stepping back into support roles.

5. **Project-Based Learning:** We introduced project-based assignments that required collaboration both inside and outside the training room. This model, which we've found highly effective with high school and college students, gives participants a sense of purpose beyond simply completing an assignment. It builds team spirit and intrinsic motivation. Due to time constraints and facility limitations—such as participants not always being housed in the same area—we weren't able to fully implement this portion of the program. However, it showed early promise. Project-based learning is a powerful tool and should be a core component of any work readiness or professional training program.
6. **Peer Review:** We began to implement peer review to determine a person's growth in various areas (mindsets, traits, qualities, attitudes) like the peer-review process used in high performing companies.
7. **Mutual Respect:** Rather than stick to the teacher-student model, where teachers talk and students listen, we approached the participants with mutual respect, dignifying them as if they were members of our company. We attempted, thanks to our co-trainers with lived experience, to adapt our content in a way that it was 'trauma informed' and often expressed our gratitude for their attention and attendance. Questions were encouraged.

Program Format and Frequency

Our pilot schedule was determined based on several factors:

1. The availability of a computer room at the facility
2. The minimum number of days required for effective training based on our soft skills program delivered outside of correctional settings, and
3. The cost and availability of co-trainers with lived experience.

Participants also shared that they would strongly prefer a program held five days a week. They felt this would help keep the material fresh in their minds and allow for more in-depth instruction. If budget and room availability permit, we recommend offering the program five

days per week. Doing so would not only enhance learning but also help establish a workplace mentality and reinforce a consistent work ethic.

The length of each session would be determined by classroom availability at each correctional facility. However, a minimum of two hours is recommended, consistent with the pilot program. When longer time blocks are available in the facility's programming schedule, participants overwhelmingly preferred sessions lasting three hours.

Note: Due to variable conditions during call-outs—the designated times when incarcerated individuals are permitted to move between areas—participants scheduled for a 12:30 session may not arrive at the education building until 12:45 or 12:50. Therefore what seems like a two-hour training block may be less. Still, to maintain structure and engagement, we found that splitting the two-hour block into two distinct content segments worked well. While the specific approach can be adapted per facility, we recommend dividing each session into two focused content discussions.

For example:

Weekly Training Schedule

Day	Morning Session	Afternoon Session
Monday	Soft Skills Training	Career-Specific Training
Tuesday	Capacity Building (Trauma-Informed Empowerment Work)	Career-Specific Training
Wednesday	Soft Skills (Brainstorming Sessions & Case Study Discussion)	Career-Specific Training
Thursday	Capacity Building (Trauma-Informed Empowerment Work)	Career-Specific Training
Friday	Soft Skills Training	Career-Specific Training

This alternating format—balancing healing-oriented capacity-building work with soft/durable skills training—allows participants to engage with the material through both personal and professional lenses. By working with facilitators who have lived experience, participants can reflect on the content in light of their own journeys. At the same time, sessions led by professionals emphasize how to apply these skills to become invaluable assets in the workplace.

Both sessions support the career-specific training, offering comprehensive preparation and personal transformation that directly aligns with the goals of the Workforce Board. It has also been suggested that the initial career-specific training include—or even focus on—basic computer literacy, helping prepare individuals for the digital world they will encounter upon release.

Duration

There is overwhelming agreement among DOC personnel at reentry centers, staff within our pilot facility and at DOC headquarters, co-trainers with lived experience, and individuals involved in community reentry nonprofits—including those who have been incarcerated—that workforce training and job preparation programs require significantly more than five months to be effective. Given the backgrounds and varied abilities of many incarcerated individuals, five months is simply not enough time to prepare someone for meaningful, sustained employment.

Based on our experience with soft skills training programs for college and high school students, we recommend offering three eight-month program levels, with a suggested one-month break between each level. This repetition is essential to fortify adjustments made and ensure that transformation is not short-lived. Additionally, individuals who are more than two years from release should be allowed to access the training, as it would significantly improve their quality of life inside the correctional facility and better prepare them for eventual reentry.

Because these programs can be taken more than once, we recommend making workforce training accessible to the same populations currently eligible for SBCTC (State Board for Community and Technical Colleges) courses. This may include individuals who are still several years away from their Earned Release Date (ERD).

Beyond the clear benefit of repeated exposure to the material, this extended access could also support the development of teaching assistants and future in-facility trainers—strengthening the program from within and creating a sustainable, peer-supported model.

Cost Considerations

The financial investment required for implementing these recommendations would depend on three primary factors: (1) the number of facilities that would offer Workforce Board job training programs, (2) the level of participant interest and enrollment across facilities, and (3) based on these considerations, the number of co-trainers with lived experience and program navigators needed to effectively serve participants. While the upfront costs may be substantial, the long-term benefits—including reduced recidivism, increased employment rates, and strengthened workforce development—represent significant returns on investment for both participants and the state.

Measuring Success

The primary goal of this program is to create employable individuals who can obtain and sustain family-wage employment. Success measurement should therefore align with this objective through a dual assessment approach:

Industry/Career Training Assessment: Traditional hard skills evaluation methods can effectively measure technical competency and career-specific knowledge acquisition.

Soft Skills Progress Assessment: Given the critical importance of interpersonal and professional behaviors in workplace success, soft skills development will be measured primarily through peer review assessment methods. This approach, widely used in high-performing organizations, provides the most accurate indication of an individual's growth in key areas such as communication, collaboration, emotional regulation, and workplace readiness. Peer assessment offers authentic feedback on behavioral changes and practical application of skills, making it a reliable predictor of employability and job retention potential.

Our pilot program offers a strong template for expanding Workforce professional job training to WCC and other correctional facilities across Washington State. The following steps outline how similar programs can be successfully implemented at scale:

1. **Coordinate planning with DOC Headquarters**, specifically with the Senior Administrator of the Reentry Division.

2. **Engage with the CPM and CPPC at target facilities**, providing a detailed outline of the program—including session times, schedules, and content. Collaborate with them to approve volunteers and screen potential participants.
3. **Allocate sufficient time to identify and train facilitators** for both the lived-experience capacity building sessions and the professional soft skills instruction.
4. **Develop industry- and career-specific curriculum and lesson plans** based on the chosen focus areas. We strongly recommend working with experienced and proven training and educational content developers to ensure quality and relevance of any online or printed course materials.

With these steps, the program can be effectively scaled to meet the diverse needs of facilities while maintaining fidelity to the pilot's core strengths.

Continuous Support Through Reentry

Reentry is an extremely complex—and often daunting—process. Its importance cannot be overstated:

if individuals are unable to successfully navigate the challenges of reentry, even the most well-designed job training programs will fall short. The ultimate goal of the Workforce Board—to help individuals obtain and sustain family-wage employment—depends on consistent, practical, and work-related support extending beyond incarceration. True program success and goal attainment requires stable housing, transportation, means of communication, and continuous community support.

Simply put, without continued support immediately upon release, individuals can quickly become discouraged, fall back into old habits, or lose motivation—ultimately increasing the risk of recidivism.

The Department of Corrections (DOC) has mechanisms in place to assist with reentry. Incarcerated individuals are assigned counselors who help prepare them for release. This preparation may include securing essential documents (such as driver's licenses and birth certificates), arranging housing, applying for financial aid, or coordinating continued medical

and mental health care. Counselors are also tasked with organizing remote planning meetings that include the individual, community navigators, and other relevant DOC personnel. All assist in creating and implementing an Individualized Reentry Plan.

Additional support is provided by the Community Corrections Officer (COO), formerly known as a parole officer, and an education navigator—typically affiliated with the college that has a direct partnership with a specific facility. Both of these resources are available in person after release. However, as noted in the Navigation report, these services are only accessible to a small percentage of individuals who qualify for placement in reentry or work release centers. The vast majority of those released receive no navigator assistance whatsoever after release.

One significant challenge in the reentry process is that counselors and navigators are represented by different unions. This has historically led to confusion and disagreements over which group is responsible for specific reentry-related tasks. While recent negotiations have eased some of the tension, feedback from participants in our pilot program suggests there is still room for improvement, as detailed further in the Reentry Resource Navigation and Support section.

This is where a comprehensive Workforce training program can provide practical, meaningful support. A dedicated navigation team—like the one used in the pilot—serves as a critical connector. Their role is to identify the full range of a participant's needs, map out available resources in the county of release, and actively coordinate with counselors, in-facility and community navigators, Workforce reentry teams, ESD reentry staff, and nonprofit organizations to ensure that any service gaps not covered by DOC personnel are addressed.

As detailed in the Reentry Resource Navigation and Support section, our pilot's navigation team was widely welcomed and appreciated—not only by participants, but also by in-facility and community navigators, Workforce personnel, and numerous nonprofit organizations we engaged with. Rather than viewing the navigation team as competitors encroaching on existing responsibilities, they embraced the added help and collaboration, recognizing the value of consistent follow-up and shared accountability.

The critical importance of navigation support is underscored by data showing a 44% recidivism rate for individuals without navigator support compared to 25% for those receiving assistance—evidence that strongly supports the value of comprehensive case management teams.

The Final Key: Community

Beyond the role of navigators, the collaboration and support of reentry-focused nonprofit community organizations—both those led by individuals with lived experience and those without—are critically important. People with lived experience share a unique bond with those currently reentering society.

They understand firsthand the challenges, setbacks, and emotional triggers that can derail reentry, and they know what it takes to move forward after incarceration.

Partnering with these nonprofit organizations can significantly strengthen any workforce training or job preparedness program offered by the Workforce Training Board. Their support can be the difference between surviving and stumbling during the vulnerable first few months post-release. These organizations help stabilize returning individuals by connecting them with housing, transportation, emotional support, and income—laying the foundation for a more secure and meaningful life.

Innovation Doesn't Mean Impossibility

Being different isn't a liability—it's often what makes real progress possible. While it's natural to lean toward what's familiar or proven to have some success when considering workforce programs, that tendency can prevent meaningful change. The Workforce Board has the opportunity to offer a more informed and impactful training program—one that complements the excellent work already being done in correctional facilities and colleges—by incorporating a few key concepts:

- **Focus not just on what a person knows, but on who they are becoming** as they prepare to reenter society and the workforce.

- **Integrate soft skill training**—drawing inspiration from the most successful and forward-thinking companies—into all Workforce programs.
- **Strengthen soft/durable skills training with capacity-building content** led by individuals with lived experience who have successfully navigated reentry.
- **Offer consistent, daily, project-based training** that mirrors real workplace environments in both delivery and expectations. Pair this with industry-specific and job-relevant training that matches the strengths and needs of the incarcerated population.
- **Provide additional Navigation scaffolding**—Though not directly related to job training, such a team will augment and strengthen wrap-around assistance by identifying and filling gaps in reentry support.
- **Collaborate with reentry nonprofit organizations.** Within these communities, individuals often refer to one another as brother and sister—a reflection of the deep bond forged through shared experience. They hold an understanding that those who have never been incarcerated simply cannot replicate. Partnering with these organizations can be the difference between a program that struggles and one that truly succeeds.

By embracing these approaches, the Workforce Board can lead not just a program, but a shift—balancing evidence-based methods with bold, practical innovation.

Combined Case Study Report: ETA Media Navigation Team

The following case studies demonstrate the practical application of the navigation support detailed in the previous section, showing both successes and challenges encountered with individual participants during the pilot program.

Pilot Case Studies

Participant: Jerry Fluker (ERD: April 11, 2025)

Background

Jerry Fluker, a male participant of unspecified age, was incarcerated and released to King County, WA, with an Expected Release Date (ERD) of April 11, 2025. As the first participant released, the ETA Media Navigation Team had less than two weeks to prepare. Post-release, he was removed from his housing program due to misconduct and was arrested on May 27, 2025, with a scheduled release from South Correctional Entity (SCORE) on July 5, 2025.

Reintegration Planning and Resource Mobilization

The ETA Media Navigation Team leveraged Mr. Fluker's completed Integration Worksheet, which included his county of release, new residence address, and navigator details, to compile a checklist of resources in King County. The team prioritized obtaining necessary documents and forms, mapping:

- Food and clothing banks, DSHS offices, treatment centers, and Department of Licensing (DOL) offices, verifying operational status, eligibility, and locations.

After confirming his release to the House of Mercy in Seattle, the team verified the facility's address to ensure accurate resource mapping. Efforts to provide ongoing support were disrupted when Mr. Fluker was removed from the program.

Collaborative Efforts

The ETA Media Navigation Team collaborated with stakeholders to support Mr. Fluker's reintegration:

- After multiple attempts to contact the House of Mercy, the team connected with a staff member who confirmed Mr. Fluker was in a class and would return the call.
- Upon contact, Mr. Fluker expressed feeling overwhelmed; the team explained the program and planned follow-up support.
- The team later learned from the House of Mercy that Mr. Fluker was removed from the program due to misconduct after less than two weeks.
- While checking the SCORE website for another participant, the team discovered Mr. Fluker was incarcerated at SCORE, arrested on May 27, 2025, with a release date of July 5, 2025.

The team used an internal database to track communications and updates.

His Community and Personal Support Networks

No specific community or personal support networks were identified for Mr. Fluker beyond his initial placement at the House of Mercy. The loss of this housing placement and subsequent incarceration limited opportunities to establish further connections.

Outlook

Mr. Fluker's reintegration outlook is uncertain due to his removal from the House of Mercy and current incarceration. The ETA Media Navigation Team's rapid resource mobilization within a short timeframe demonstrates program efficiency, but his misconduct and arrest highlight challenges in maintaining engagement. Upon his release from SCORE on July 5, 2025, renewed efforts to connect him with resources and a navigator will be essential.

Timeline of Events

- Jerry Fluker completes an Integration Worksheet, providing county of release, residence address, and navigator details.
- The ETA Media Navigation Team compiles a checklist of King County resources and prioritizes document acquisition.
- Mr. Fluker is released to the House of Mercy in Seattle.
- The team makes multiple attempts to contact the House of Mercy, eventually connecting with a staff member who confirms Mr. Fluker's presence.
- Mr. Fluker returns the team's call, expresses feeling overwhelmed; the team explains the program and plans follow-up.
- The team verifies the House of Mercy's address to ensure accurate resource mapping.
- The House of Mercy reports Mr. Fluker was removed from the program due to misconduct after less than two weeks.
- The team discovers Mr. Fluker is incarcerated at SCORE, arrested on May 27, 2025, with a scheduled release on July 5, 2025.

Participant: Max Flatt (ERD: May 25, 2025)

Background

Max Flatt, a male participant of unspecified age, was incarcerated and released to an unspecified county in Washington State with an Expected Release Date (ERD) of May 25, 2025. He participated in ETA Media's IT and Soft Skills pilot program to support reintegration. Post-release, he was sent back to the Washington Corrections Center (WCC) from a reentry center due to substance abuse, and no further contact was established.

Reintegration Planning and Resource Mobilization

The ETA Media Navigation Team used Mr. Flatt's Reintegration Worksheet to identify his needs, focusing on his expressed priority of securing employment quickly. A checklist was drafted, and the team

contacted resources in his county of release to confirm services, operating hours, and required documentation. Key actions included:

- Addressing the absence of his state ID and Social Security card, which were not provided prerelease.
- Supporting his transition goals and educational plans.
- Arranging his release to the Peninsula Reentry Center.

Efforts to provide ongoing support were halted due to communication challenges post-release and his return to WCC.

Collaborative Efforts

The ETA Media Navigation Team collaborated with stakeholders to support Mr. Flatt:

- A video conference was held with Mr. Flatt, a community navigator, and a member of the ETA Media Case Management Team, where he outlined his employment and education goals.
- The community navigator assisted Mr. Flatt in obtaining SNAP benefits post-release.
- The team faced challenges contacting the Peninsula Reentry Center, with sporadic communication from the house manager limiting updates on Mr. Flatt's status.
- The team was notified that Mr. Flatt was sent back to WCC due to substance abuse, after which no further contact was made.

The team tracked these efforts in an internal database, noting communication barriers.

His Community and Personal Support Networks

Mr. Flatt's only identified support was the Peninsula Reentry Center, where he was initially placed. No family, friends, or other community connections were noted. Communication challenges with the reentry center and his return to WCC prevented the establishment of further support networks.

Outlook

Mr. Flatt's reintegration outlook is uncertain due to his return to WCC for substance abuse and subsequent loss of contact. The ETA Media Navigation Team's efforts to address his employment and documentation needs demonstrate program commitment, but pre-release gaps (e.g., missing ID) and post-release communication barriers limited success. Future support will require re-engagement upon a new release date, with a focus on substance abuse treatment and communication protocols.

Timeline of Events

- Max Flatt participates in ETA Media's IT and Soft Skills pilot program.
- Mr. Flatt completes a Reintegration Worksheet, identifying employment and documentation needs.
- The ETA Media Navigation Team drafts a checklist and contacts resources in his county of release.
-

A video conference is held with Mr. Flatt, a community navigator, and a member of the ETA Media Case Management Team to discuss goals.

- Mr. Flatt is released to the Peninsula Reentry Center.
- The community navigator assists Mr. Flatt in obtaining SNAP benefits.
- The team attempts to contact Mr. Flatt at the reentry center, facing sporadic communication with the house manager.
- The team learns Mr. Flatt was sent back to WCC due to substance abuse.
- No further contact is established with Mr. Flatt.

Participant: Courtney Jones (ERD: May 16, 2025, Actual Release: June 5, 2025)

Background

Courtney Jones, a male participant of unspecified age, was incarcerated and released to King County, WA, with an Expected Release Date (ERD) of May 16, 2025, but his actual release was delayed to June 5, 2025, likely due to knee surgery. His intake paperwork included his county of release, navigator details, and DSHS benefits application, but lacked a post-release address. Post-release, he faced health and potential substance abuse challenges.

Reintegration Planning and Resource Mobilization

The ETA Media Navigation Team leveraged Mr. Jones's intake paperwork to begin planning early, mapping resources in King County, including:

- Food and clothing banks, DSHS offices, treatment centers, and Department of Licensing (DOL) offices, verifying operational status, eligibility (e.g., excluding women- or children-only services), and locations.

After confirming his release to The Ark House Ministries in Seattle, the team created a tailored resource list. When Mr. Jones was moved to The Ark House Ministries in Des Moines, the team updated the list to reflect his new address, emailing it to him. The team noted his need for intensive outpatient treatment, clothing, an Orca card, and a backpack with hygiene products.

Collaborative Efforts

The ETA Media Navigation Team collaborated with stakeholders to support Mr. Jones:

- A community navigator provided the address for The Ark House Ministries in Seattle and later confirmed Mr. Jones's relocation to Des Moines due to a fire at the facility.
- The team contacted the manager of The Ark House Ministries, who confirmed Mr. Jones's presence.
- The community navigator arranged clothing, an Orca card, a backpack with hygiene products, and is working to secure a phone for Mr. Jones.

- The team obtained a contact number for Mr. Jones, noting his limited phone access (Wi-Fi only) and potential health-related challenges (e.g., pain medication effects post-surgery).
- The team emailed Mr. Jones a resource list, updating it after his move to Des Moines.

The team used an internal database to track communications, noting Mr. Jones's health and engagement challenges.

His Community and Personal Support Networks

Mr. Jones's primary support is The Ark House Ministries, providing housing post-release. His community navigator is actively supporting his needs, and the team obtained his email for direct communication. No family or other community connections were noted. His limited phone access and health challenges (post-knee surgery) have hindered engagement, but the navigator's provision of essentials supports his transition.

Outlook

Mr. Jones's reintegration outlook is cautiously optimistic, supported by his placement at The Ark House Ministries and the community navigator's efforts. However, his recent knee surgery, potential substance abuse issues, and missed medical appointments due to transportation barriers pose risks. The ETA Media Navigation Team's proactive resource mapping and adaptability to his relocation demonstrate program effectiveness. Continued support for his health, rehabilitation, and transportation needs will be critical for sustained reintegration.

Timeline of Events

- Courtney Jones completes intake paperwork, including county of release, navigator details, and DSHS benefits application.
- The ETA Media Navigation Team maps King County resources, verifying operational status, eligibility, and locations.
- The team connects with a community navigator, who provides the address for The Ark House Ministries in Seattle.
- The team creates a tailored resource list for Mr. Jones.
- Mr. Jones's release is delayed due to knee surgery.
- Mr. Jones is released to The Ark House Ministries in Seattle.
- The team contacts the facility manager, who confirms Mr. Jones's presence and notes a fire-related relocation.
- The team attempts to contact the community navigator, leaving messages.
- The community navigator reports providing Mr. Jones with clothing, an Orca card, and a backpack, and is working to secure a phone.
- The team obtains a contact number for Mr. Jones, noting limited Wi-Fi-only access; Mr. Jones indicates a need for intensive outpatient treatment.

- The team emails Mr. Jones a resource list; he reports relocation to The Ark House Ministries in Des Moines.
- The team updates and emails a new resource list based on his Des Moines address.
- Mr. Jones misses a medical appointment due to lack of transportation; rehab for knee surgery is planned.

Participant: Ronald Carlin (ERD: June 3, 2025)

Background

Ronald Carlin, a male participant of unspecified age, was incarcerated and released to King County, WA, with an Expected Release Date (ERD) of June 3, 2025. His intake form lacked an address and navigator but indicated King County as the release location. Post-release, his whereabouts became unknown, with concerns raised about potential drug relapse, reincarceration, or entry into a treatment facility.

Reintegration Planning and Resource Mobilization

The ETA Media Navigation Team began planning despite incomplete intake information. Once King County was confirmed, the team mapped resources tailored to Mr. Carlin's potential needs, including:

- Food and clothing banks, DSHS offices, treatment centers, and Department of Licensing (DOL) offices in King County.
- Verification of resource availability, ensuring services were operational, suitable for Mr. Carlin's needs (e.g., excluding women- or children-only services), and appropriately located.

After obtaining a post-release contact's address from a community navigator, the team compiled a list of resources proximate to that residence. Post-release efforts were hindered by Mr. Carlin's failure to maintain contact, stalling further resource mobilization.

Collaborative Efforts

The ETA Media Navigation Team worked with stakeholders to support Mr. Carlin's reintegration:

- A community navigator informed the team that Mr. Carlin's case had been closed due to noncommunication before release, raising questions about whether Mr. Carlin was aware of the need to contact the navigator or had contact information. The team requested the case be reopened, and the process was initiated.
- The community navigator provided the name, address, and contact information of a post-release contact person. The team made multiple unsuccessful attempts to reach this person, suspecting possible service disruptions. Upon contact post-release, the person reported that Mr. Carlin had a bus pass and was supposed to meet them at their workplace on release day but did not show up or communicate. They suggested he might be facing challenges in downtown Seattle or elsewhere, though he was not listed on a local correctional facility's inmate roster.
- The community navigator confirmed Mr. Carlin had not reported to his Community Corrections Officer (CCO) and was unaware of any treatment facility he might have entered.

The team used an internal database to track communications, noting the challenges of re-establishing contact with Mr. Carlin.

His Community and Personal Support Networks

Mr. Carlin's primary known support was a close personal contact expected to provide post-release support, but contact was lost after release. No other family, friends, or community organizations (e.g., treatment centers, recovery groups) were identified. The planned connection to a community navigator and resources near the contact's residence did not materialize due to Mr. Carlin's noncommunication post-release. Efforts by the contact to locate him were unsuccessful, and no formal community ties were established.

Outlook

Mr. Carlin's reintegration outlook is highly uncertain due to his unknown whereabouts and lack of communication post-release. Concerns about potential challenges underscore significant risks. The ETA Media Navigation Team's efforts to map resources and reopen his case demonstrate proactive intent, but initial intake gaps and communication barriers hindered planning. Future efforts should focus on locating Mr. Carlin, possibly through broader outreach, and ensuring clearer pre-release communication protocols.

Timeline of Events

- Ronald Carlin's intake form is processed, noting King County as release location but lacking address or navigator.
- The ETA Media Navigation Team maps King County resources (food/clothing banks, DSHS, DOL, treatment centers), verifying operational status, eligibility, and locations.
- The team identifies a community navigator for Mr. Carlin; learns the case was closed due to noncommunication pre-release.
- The team requests the community navigator reopen Mr. Carlin's case; the navigator provides a post-release contact's name, address, and phone number.
- The team compiles a list of resources near the contact's residence; multiple unsuccessful attempts are made to reach the contact.
- The team reaches the contact, who confirms Mr. Carlin's release with a bus pass to meet at their workplace.
- Mr. Carlin is released but does not meet the contact or communicate with them or the community navigator.
- The contact reports to the team that Mr. Carlin may be facing challenges; the team confirms he is not listed on a local correctional facility's inmate roster.
- The team contacts the community navigator, who confirms Mr. Carlin has not reported to his CCO and is unaware of any treatment facility.

- The team continues checking the correctional facility roster (no record); the contact reports no communication despite searching areas he might frequent.

Participant: Noah Blinsman (ERD: June 11, 2025)

Background

Noah Blinsman, a male participant of unspecified age, was incarcerated and released to Clark County, WA, with an Expected Release Date (ERD) of June 11, 2025. He participated in ETA Media's IT and Soft Skills pilot program, designed to equip justice-impacted individuals with technological and interpersonal skills to support reintegration. His background includes a history of substance abuse, but he is committed to recovery and pursuing further education at Clark College.

Reintegration Planning and Resource Mobilization

The ETA Media Navigation Team developed a comprehensive reintegration plan for Mr. Blinsman using a Reintegration Worksheet to identify his needs. A tailored checklist was created, outlining services such as housing, identification, food assistance, clothing, education, and transportation. The team proactively contacted resources in Clark County to confirm services, availability, and required documentation. Key actions included:

- Arranging housing in a sober house in Clark County.
- Submitting a request for a state ID replacement.
- Preparing an application for SNAP benefits through DSHS.
- Organizing a WorkSource flyer, a C-Trans bus pass for transportation, and contact information for the Clark College reentry team for inclusion in a reintegration packet.
- Noting Mr. Blinsman's request for a few shirts to address clothing needs.

Collaborative Efforts

The ETA Media Navigation Team collaborated with a community navigator to coordinate Mr. Blinsman's support. Through multiple discussions, the team ensured:

- A 30-minute Reentry Team Meeting (RTM) was planned before Mr. Blinsman's ERD, involving a community navigator, a DOC representative, and a post-release contact person. Confirmation that the state ID replacement was on track for completion before release.
- Arrangements for sober house roommates to assist with food and basics for the first few days post-release, followed by a same-day DSHS visit to obtain SNAP benefits.
- Commitment to provide enrollment guidance for Clark College, aligning with Mr. Blinsman's educational goals.
- Preparation of a reintegration packet with employment, transportation, and educational resources.

The team utilized an internal database to track communications, ensuring alignment with community partners.

His Community and Personal Support Networks

Mr. Blinsman's support network includes:

- **Sober House Roommates:** Provide initial assistance with food and basic needs.
- **Local Pastor:** Offers practical and emotional support.
- **Recovery Navigators:** Provide ongoing recovery support and address emergent needs.
- **Community Corrections Officer (CCO):** Maintains regular communication with the community navigator to monitor progress.
- **Clark College Reentry Team:** Supports educational aspirations.

While no family connections were mentioned, these community ties form a robust network to aid his transition.

Outlook

The ETA Media Navigation Team is optimistic about Mr. Blinsman's recovery and reintegration, citing his individualized support from a local pastor and the comprehensive resources mobilized. His commitment to sobriety, education at Clark College, and engagement with recovery navigators positions him for a sustainable future. Continued coordination with his CCO, navigators, and community supports will be critical to address post-release challenges, such as maintaining sobriety or balancing education with employment.

Timeline of Events

- Noah Blinsman enrolls in ETA Media's IT and Soft Skills pilot program, preparing for reintegration.
- The ETA Media Navigation Team administers Reintegration Worksheet to Mr. Blinsman, identifying needs for housing, ID, food, clothing, and education.
- The team drafts a checklist of Clark County resources and contacts providers for service details.
- The team connects with a community navigator to coordinate support.
- A request for Mr. Blinsman's state ID replacement is submitted.
- Mr. Blinsman's ERD is confirmed; a sober house in Clark County is secured as housing.
- A Reentry Team Meeting (RTM) is planned with Mr. Blinsman, a DOC representative, and a postrelease contact person.
- Mr. Blinsman requests a few shirts; clothing need is noted.
- A reintegration packet is prepared with a WorkSource flyer, C-Trans bus pass, and Clark College reentry team contacts.

- Arrangements are confirmed for sober house roommates to assist with food and basics for the first few days; a DSHS visit for SNAP benefits is planned for release day.
- Mr. Blinsman is released to the sober house with a state ID secured and reintegration supports in place.

Participant: Hunter Montiel (ERD: June 25, 2025)

Background

Hunter Montiel, a male participant of unspecified age, was scheduled for release from Washington Corrections Center (WCC) to King County, WA, with an Expected Release Date (ERD) of June 25, 2025. His intake paperwork lacked critical details, including a county of release, assigned navigator, and post-release housing location, with a note indicating his case was "pending appeal." This ambiguity, combined with a potential transfer to another facility for a separate case, complicated planning. Ultimately, he was remanded to civil commitment, halting his release.

Reintegration Planning and Resource Mobilization

Due to the initial absence of a release county, the ETA Media Navigation Team faced delays in resource planning. Once King County was confirmed, the team mapped resources tailored to Mr. Montiel's potential needs, including:

- Food and clothing banks, DSHS offices, Department of Licensing (DOL) offices, Department of Health, treatment centers, and WorkSource offices in King County.
- Verification of resource availability, ensuring services were operational, accessible to Mr. Montiel (e.g., excluding women-only services), and appropriately located.

After learning Mr. Montiel was expected to reside at The Journey Project in Tukwila, the team compiled a list of resources proximate to this address. These efforts were paused when it was confirmed that Mr. Montiel would not be released due to civil commitment.

Collaborative Efforts

The ETA Media Navigation Team engaged with stakeholders to clarify Mr. Montiel's status and plan his reintegration:

- A WCC reentry navigator informed the team that, if released, Mr. Montiel would be housed at The Journey Project in Tukwila and identified a community navigator.
- The community navigator confirmed recent assignment to Mr. Montiel's case but lacked details about his status or potential non-release, requesting direct contact from Mr. Montiel if possible. After learning of the non-release, the navigator noted the case would likely be closed until a new ERD is established.
- The team contacted The Journey Project by phone and email, learning via reply that the facility was not expecting Mr. Montiel due to his civil commitment.

The team used an internal database to track communications, noting the uncertainty and stalled progress.

His Community and Personal Support Networks

No information was provided about Mr. Montiel's personal or community support networks, such as family or community organizations. The planned connection to The Journey Project in Tukwila would have provided housing and access to reentry services, but this was not realized due to his non-release. The absence of a confirmed release address and navigator limited efforts to establish community ties.

Outlook

Mr. Montiel's reintegration outlook remains uncertain due to his remand to civil commitment, postponing his release indefinitely. The ETA Media Navigation Team's proactive resource mapping demonstrates readiness to support him once a new ERD is confirmed, but efforts are currently on hold. The challenges encountered—missing intake details, delayed navigator assignment, and lack of release clarity—highlight the need for improved information sharing. Should a new release date be established, prompt communication with the community navigator and The Journey Project will be critical to resume planning.

Timeline of Events

- Hunter Montiel's intake paperwork is processed, noting no county of release, navigator, or housing location; case marked as "pending appeal."
- The ETA Media Navigation Team confirms King County as Mr. Montiel's release location, begins mapping resources (food/clothing banks, DSHS, DOL, health, treatment, WorkSource).
- The team verifies King County resources, ensuring operational status, eligibility, and correct locations.
- The team contacts a WCC reentry navigator, who confirms Mr. Montiel's potential housing at The Journey Project in Tukwila and names a community navigator.
- The team obtains the address and phone number for The Journey Project; compiles nearby resources.
- The team seeks a release update from the WCC reentry navigator, leaving a message due to no response.
- The team contacts the community navigator, who is unaware of Mr. Montiel's potential non-release and requests direct contact from Mr. Montiel.
- The team contacts The Journey Project by phone and email, learns he is not expected due to civil commitment.
- The team informs the community navigator of the non-release; the navigator notes the case will be closed until a new release date is set.
- Mr. Montiel's scheduled ERD passes; no release occurs due to civil commitment.

Participant: Jonathan Parks (ERD: June 28, 2025)

Background

Jonathan Parks, a male participant of unspecified age, is scheduled for release from an unspecified facility to Pierce County, WA, with an Expected Release Date (ERD) of June 28, 2025. He participated in ETA Media's IT and Soft Skills pilot program to equip him with technological and interpersonal skills for reintegration. His primary focus is pursuing education, though personal challenges may impact his eligibility for certain resources.

Reintegration Planning and Resource Mobilization

The ETA Media Navigation Team used Mr. Parks's Reintegration Worksheet to identify his anticipated needs, drafting a checklist of services in Pierce County, including:

- Food and clothing banks, DSHS offices, treatment centers, and Department of Licensing (DOL) offices, verifying operational status, eligibility, and locations.

The team confirmed his release to a Transition House in Tacoma and prepared a tailored resource list. Mr. Parks did not request specific clothing items, and his educational goals were prioritized with plans to provide enrollment information for Clover Park Technical College or a similar institution.

Collaborative Efforts

The ETA Media Navigation Team collaborated with a community navigator to coordinate Mr. Parks's reintegration:

- A member of the ETA Media Case Management Team established contact with the community navigator, who confirmed ongoing communication with Mr. Parks before his ERD.
- The community navigator reported that Mr. Parks's request for a replacement state ID and other records was submitted, expected to be ready by his ERD.
- The community navigator arranged housing at a Transition House in Tacoma and committed to providing educational enrollment information.
- The community navigator noted that Mr. Parks may not be eligible for a personal cell phone due to his history and personal challenges.

As the pilot program concludes at the end of June 2025, no further updates will be available. The team tracked these efforts in an internal database.

His Community and Personal Support Networks

Mr. Parks's primary support is the Transition House in Tacoma, providing housing post-release. His community navigator is actively coordinating his needs, particularly education-focused resources. No family or other community connections were noted. His potential ineligibility for a cell phone may limit communication, but the housing and navigator support provide a foundation for his transition.

Outlook

Mr. Parks's reintegration outlook is promising due to his educational focus and secured housing at the Transition House, supported by the community navigator's efforts. However, his personal challenges and

potential lack of a cell phone may hinder communication and access to resources. The ETA Media Navigation Team's thorough planning and resource mapping demonstrate program effectiveness, but the program's conclusion in June 2025 limits further support. Post-release coordination with his navigator and educational institutions will be critical for success.

Timeline of Events

- Jonathan Parks participates in ETA Media's IT and Soft Skills pilot program.
- Mr. Parks completes a Reintegration Worksheet, identifying his needs and educational goals.
- The ETA Media Navigation Team drafts a checklist and contacts resources in Pierce County.
- The team connects with a community navigator to coordinate support.
- The community navigator confirms ongoing contact with Mr. Parks and submits requests for a replacement state ID and other records.
- Mr. Parks's release to a Transition House in Tacoma is arranged.
- The community navigator notes Mr. Parks's educational focus and plans to provide enrollment information for Clover Park Technical College or a similar institution.
- Mr. Parks does not request specific clothing items.
- The community navigator reports Mr. Parks may not be eligible for a personal cell phone due to personal challenges.
- The pilot program concludes, with no further updates planned for Mr. Parks.

Participant: Adam Davis (ERD: August 3, 2025)

Background

Adam Davis, a male participant of unspecified age, is scheduled for release from Washington Corrections Center (WCC) to Thurston County, WA, with an Expected Release Date (ERD) of August 3, 2025. His intake form indicated he would be released to a friend's residence but lacked the friend's address or a navigator's name. Later information clarified he would be released stating homeless, complicating reintegration planning.

Reintegration Planning and Resource Mobilization

The ETA Media Navigation Team began planning once Thurston County was confirmed as the release location, mapping resources tailored to Mr. Davis's potential needs, including:

- Food and clothing banks, DSHS offices, treatment centers, Department of Licensing (DOL) offices, and Department of Health in Thurston County.
- Verification of resource availability, ensuring services were operational, suitable for Mr. Davis's needs (e.g., excluding women- or children-only services), and appropriately located.

The team researched additional support, identifying an organization offering backpacks with essentials, but learned it was currently non-operational due to funding cuts. The team plans to provide a comprehensive resource list if no address is confirmed, though there is concern this may overwhelm Mr. Davis, or a tailored list of resources near his location if an address is obtained.

Collaborative Efforts

The ETA Media Navigation Team engaged with stakeholders to support Mr. Davis's reintegration:

- A WCC reentry navigator informed the team that Mr. Davis did not attend a pre-release workshop where reintegration planning would have begun and does not qualify for post-release counselors or navigators, limiting formal support.
- The team contacted the sole WorkSource office in Thurston County, learning it operates with reduced staff due to budget cuts but offers employment help and workshops, though no specific reentry team exists.
- The team communicated with a representative from a local organization about backpack distributions, discovering the program was paused due to funding cuts.
- The WCC reentry navigator is attempting to obtain a post-release address for Mr. Davis to facilitate targeted resource planning.

The team used an internal database to track communications, noting the challenges of limited navigator support and resource constraints.

His Community and Personal Support Networks

Mr. Davis's only known support was a friend, initially listed as his post-release residence, but this arrangement fell through, leaving him homeless upon release. No other family, friends, or community organizations were identified. The lack of a confirmed address and navigator assignment has hindered efforts to establish community ties, though the team is prepared to connect him with resources like food banks and DSHS offices upon release.

Outlook

Mr. Davis's reintegration outlook is challenging due to his homeless status, lack of navigator support, and limited engagement in pre-release planning. The ETA Media Navigation Team's proactive resource mapping demonstrates readiness to support him, but the absence of a post-release address and constrained local services (e.g., understaffed WorkSource, paused backpack program) pose barriers. Securing an address before release will be critical to provide targeted resources, and broader outreach to community organizations may help mitigate his lack of formal support.

Timeline of Events

- Adam Davis's intake form is processed, noting release to a friend's residence in Thurston County but lacking the address or navigator.
- The ETA Media Navigation Team maps Thurston County resources (food/clothing banks, DSHS, DOL, health, treatment centers), verifying operational status, eligibility, and locations.

- Later information confirms Mr. Davis will be released stating homeless.
- The team contacts the WorkSource office in Thurston County, learning it operates with reduced staff but offers employment help and workshops, with no reentry team.
- The team researches a local organization offering backpacks with essentials, learns the program is paused due to funding cuts.
- The team contacts a WCC reentry navigator, who reports Mr. Davis did not attend a pre-release workshop and does not qualify for post-release navigators.
- The WCC reentry navigator seeks a post-release address for Mr. Davis.
- The team prepares to provide a tailored resource list if an address is obtained or a comprehensive list if no address is confirmed.

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