

## **Introduction**

This publication is designed as a reference for organizations and communities interested in developing or enhancing prisoner reentry programs. This information is geared toward community-based organizations and Weed and Seed sites using national service resources, specifically AmeriCorps\*VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) members.

The purpose of this document is to provide an introduction, helpful tools, and informative resources for projects seeking to improve the chances of success for ex-offenders. It provides an overview of prisoner reentry, community planning, the Weed and Seed strategy, and how AmeriCorps\*VISTA members and other national service members can help.

Readers of this document will learn the following:

- The key components recommended in developing or enhancing reentry strategies
- How to find helpful resources on reentry, mentoring, and volunteerism
- How to find local resources including Weed and Seed sites and national service programs

## **Background**

Each year more than 600,000 adult inmates are released from state and federal prisons, while an estimated 100,000 juveniles and youthful offenders are released from secure and residential detention facilities. The return of ex-offenders can threaten the fragile cohesion of many of the nation's most troubled neighborhoods.

Ex-offenders often return to their community the way they went into prison: lacking adequate education, with little or no access to labor markets, and with few or no connections to positive social support networks. They are likely to experience addiction, mental illness, domestic violence, and a myriad of other challenges that can contribute to an increased likelihood of return to criminal activity, arrest, and reincarceration.

Ex-offenders may have difficulty reuniting with family members, and family members may not be adequately prepared to accept the ex-offender back into the household. Children of incarcerated parents often face their own challenges. Studies suggest that an overwhelming number of violent criminals in the United States are males who grew up without a father.

Some communities focus attention and resources on working with high-risk youth in order to break the cycle of criminal activity that leads to arrest, incarceration, and a breakdown of the family unit. This preventive measure can be a key component of a sound reentry strategy. Communities and programs can seek support through the Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, for resources such as the Healthy Marriage Initiative and the Fatherhood Initiative.

Whether a community is targeting high-risk violent offenders, nonviolent offenders, adults, or juvenile or youthful offenders, a plan of action is necessary. Weed and Seed sites offer a comprehensive community planning approach to develop a five-year plan to “weed out” crime and “seed in” prevention, treatment, and community restoration. National service participants, including AmeriCorps\*VISTA members, can be an important part of an effective reentry strategy. While AmeriCorps\*VISTA members do not provide direct service, they are instrumental in areas that strengthen a program’s infrastructure, capacity and sustainability. *See Appendix A for information about the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) and Appendix B for resources on AmeriCorps\*VISTA and Prisoner Reentry. See Appendix D for information on Weed and Seed.*

## **Getting Started**

Reentry strategies vary from city to city and from community to community. Each city has some combination of federal, state, and local reentry efforts in progress, and this document is designed to link and enhance those efforts, as well as create new ones. Specifically, it will help develop a city’s reentry capacity by linking the resources of the U.S. Department of Justice’s Weed and Seed and Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative sites with reentry efforts of the state correctional authority and city, faith- and community-based organizations, and national service programs. Some communities may be only beginning to formulate a reentry strategy, while others may have an established, tried-and-true strategy in place.

Below are 10 key components, resources, and activities that can offer assistance to any community interested in planning a new strategy or enhancing an existing one.

### **Key Component 1: Form a Reentry Committee**

A Reentry Committee can provide support, resources, and sustainability to an AmeriCorps\*VISTA reentry initiative. With the increased emphasis being placed on reentry, most states have formed community reentry planning committees. These planning committees are coordinated through the state department of corrections. It is advisable to check with your local representative of the state corrections department to assess the status of reentry efforts in your community and to determine how your efforts could complement current reentry strategies. If there is no current reentry planning and implementation committee, then creating one would be an effective way to proceed. City stakeholders could be the core of a Reentry Committee that could then expand its membership as needed. Some cities also have existing Advisory Councils or other organizations that could serve this function. Consider adding essential agencies and organizations from those listed in Key Component 6, as well as potential representatives from the Weed and Seed Steering Committee.

*Resources and Activities:* The AmeriCorps\*VISTA member could identify those who would be interested in serving on the Reentry Committee. Each committee will determine its own policies and procedures.

### **Key Component 2: Determine the Needs To Be Addressed**

Using relevant crime patterns, recidivism studies, and other key information, communities can begin to determine the specific needs within their cities and neighborhoods.

When developing an AmeriCorps\*VISTA project, organizations should consider conducting a needs assessment of the target community. This assessment

*Community Assessment—Part I*  
A community assessment focuses on identifying both assets and needs. Examples of community assets range from strong resident-led organizations to quality housing stock that can be marketed to attract new homeowners. Other assets are strong social service programs, an active small business community, and government satellite offices in the community. An asset can be any resource that is making or has the potential to make a positive impact on the community.

might include crime mapping to support the decision on where to focus the services. Another part of the assessment could involve taking an inventory of existing reentry resources and surveying citizens (including ex-offenders and their families) and criminal justice professionals (parole officers, etc). *See Appendix C for tips on conducting a needs assessment.*

*Community Assessment— Part II*

*The assessment information includes areas that need increased focus such as where resources are nonexistent or lacking. Areas with a strong base of resources are examined to see how they can be reallocated throughout the community to address deficiencies. The assessment is conducted to examine neighborhood conditions in greater detail, identify specific assets and opportunities that can be leveraged, inventory resources in the neighborhood that can be used to develop and execute key strategies, identify resource gaps that must be filled, and ensure that Steering Committee members are operating from a common base of information about the conditions of and activities in the area.*

*Resources and Activities:* Weed and Seed sites work closely with law enforcement, and most have mapped crime trends in their area. Since Weed and Seed sites are the highest crime areas in the city, they will be significantly impacted by the numbers of returning ex-offenders. The state department of corrections may also have reentry mapping capabilities, as well as some city planning offices. AmeriCorps\*VISTA members and the Reentry Committee could gather and assess this information in order to determine where

and how to target the reentry resources. Crime mapping is also a powerful way to educate a community and city and state agencies about the nature and degree of the problem. *See Appendix D for Weed and Seed contact information and Appendix E for information about crime mapping.*

### **Key Component 3: Determine the Project’s Goals and Objectives**

The goals and objectives of a reentry strategy should address the problems, needs, resources, and capabilities of the community. They should be measurable and attainable.

*Resources and Activities:* Every Weed and Seed site has prepared a five-year strategic plan to “weed out” crime and “seed in” prevention, treatment, and community restoration. Each goal and objective in the plan has a timetable and measurable outcomes. That Weed and Seed strategy may have goals related to reentry that could complement a new reentry plan. Also the Weed and Seed site has the valuable experience of having formed a community-based strategic plan designed to make the neighborhood safer and better. AmeriCorps\*VISTA members could learn about this strategic planning

process and identify community resources and areas of cooperation. *See Appendix D for a Weed and Seed strategy example.*

#### **Key Component 4: Select Target Populations**

Utilizing the information found in the needs assessment, communities should select the population (or populations) they want or need to target. It is important to detail the characteristics of the target population and to be able to demonstrate how the interventions proposed will adequately address the risks posed to the community.

There are two questions the community should consider when selecting a target population:

➤ **What are the characteristics of the ex-offender population chosen?**

The ex-offender population has been incarcerated in prisons, jails, or juvenile detention centers and can represent any of the following age groups:

The mix of youth and/or adult ex-offender participation is determined by the locality and the local planning team. CNCS is providing a special emphasis in the area of adjudicated youth service in concert with the First Lady's Helping America's Youth Initiative.

**Juvenile:** In the United States, definitions and age limits of juveniles vary, the maximum age being set at 14 years in some states and as high as 21 in others.

**Youthful offender:** A young person (age 18 to 24) who commits a crime but is granted special status entitling him or her to a more age-appropriate punishment. Young people who are no longer juveniles may be categorized as youthful offenders. Youthful offender treatment is generally designed to free a young person from the negative consequences of being convicted and punished as an adult in the hope that he or she will be rehabilitated. Factors in the determination of youthful offender status include the crime and the criminal history of the individual.

**Adult:** A person 25 or older who commits a crime

➤ **What offenses are potentially eligible?**

Any or all of the following offenses may have been committed by the ex-offender:

**Nonviolent and serious offenses:** Include drug offenses (possession and trafficking), property offenses (burglary, larceny-theft, auto theft, and arson), civil disorder offenses (gambling, DWI, commercial vice)

**Violent offenses:** Include criminal homicide, sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault

The locality and its representative local planning team should set the parameters for participants' eligibility, which may include either nonviolent or serious and more violent ex-offenders, subject to local determination and the background check process.

When selecting the target population, programs will want to consider conducting background checks for all volunteers working with that target population. Review state and local polices as well as Appendix H for tips on hiring staff, including information on performing background checks.

*Resources and Activities:* Many of the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative (SVORI) sites have this information on the returning ex-offender. Also, most Department of Corrections agencies are doing prerelease assessments that would include information on the characteristics of reentering offenders. AmeriCorps\*VISTA members can check with these resources. If such information is not presently available in your community, identify agencies or organizations that may be of assistance in having these assessments made. *See Appendix F for SVORI contact information.*

## **Key Component 5: Select a Target Area**

Geographic target areas may be broad or can be narrowed to specific communities. The area may be citywide or may be one neighborhood of a city. Determining a target area should depend largely on where the greatest need is and on the ground capacity and demonstration of interest necessary to bring success. The analyses of historical and current quantifiable data, such as demographics, crime patterns and mapping, release mapping, release mechanisms, prior remedial efforts and failure rates, and other measurable data, can help a community select an area that would most benefit from a reentry strategy.

AmeriCorps\*VISTA members can support this process by gathering and analyzing this information for the project.

*Resources and Activities:* Communities are encouraged to consider partnering with targeted Weed and Seed neighborhoods when they are implementing their reentry strategy. As previously noted, Weed and Seed communities will absorb a large number of ex-offenders transitioning from incarceration to home. Like a reentry strategy, a Weed and Seed strategy is a community-based, innovative, and comprehensive multi-agency approach to law enforcement, crime prevention, and neighborhood restoration.

## **Key Component 6: Identify Key Decision Makers**

A community beginning a reentry program will need to involve decision makers in the various agencies who have the authority, responsibility, and control of resources to support the program. Key decision makers also include leaders of organizations and congregations that can provide important resources to the reentry strategy. Identifying and establishing a partnership with key decision makers is critical to the comprehensive development of a successful reentry strategy. Influential and committed individuals who are able to leverage resources and dedicate time to the effort are essential. Key decision makers include state and local officials and community leaders. These decision makers could be asked to join the Reentry Committee.

Federal officials may include the following:

- U.S. Attorney's Offices, Law Enforcement Community Coordinator
- U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) representative
- U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) representative
- U.S. Health and Human Services (HHS) representative
- U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) representative

*Weed and Seed Site Faith-Based  
Implementation Guide:*  
[www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ccdo/fbguid.htm](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ccdo/fbguid.htm)

*Task Force for Faith-  
Based/Community-Based  
Initiatives:*  
[www.ojp.usdoj.gov/fbci/](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/fbci/)

## Key Components of Effective Prisoner Reentry Programs: A Guide to Matching National Service Programs with Weed and Seed and Other Citywide Initiatives on Prisoner Reentry

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State officials and leaders may include the following:

- Head of the state adult or juvenile correctional agency
- Heads of community and faith-based organizations
- Head of the state parole board
- Head of the state substance abuse treatment agency
- Head of the state mental health agency
- Head of the state education agency
- Head of the state agency or department charged with criminal justice system evaluations or an appropriate evaluator
- Head of the state Workforce Investment Board
- Head of the state police
- If available, the state's director of Faith-based and Community Initiatives (*see [www.fbc.gov](http://www.fbc.gov) to determine if your state has such an office*)
- State service commission on volunteerism

Local officials may include the following:

- Mayor's office
- Chief judge of local community judiciary
- Heads of local community and faith-based organizations
- Head of local community corrections agency
- Head of local parole agency



## Key Components of Effective Prisoner Reentry Programs: A Guide to Matching National Service Programs with Weed and Seed and Other Citywide Initiatives on Prisoner Reentry

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- Chief law enforcement officer(s) representing the community
- Chair of the local Workforce Investment Board
- If appointed, mayor's contact for prisoner reentry and/or Faith-based and Community Initiatives
- Director of the local Weed and Seed site if is one nearby
- Head of local/private business enterprise
- Head of the local mental health agency
- Head of the local education agency
- Head of local mediation center
- School superintendent and/or official of a local college, as appropriate to the target population
- Head of local evaluation agency or an appropriate evaluator
- Heads of community volunteer centers

Reentry volunteer initiatives should be developed in strong coordination with existing state and local reentry initiative processes and coordinating groups. Consultation with mayors and county executive officers is strongly recommended for each site to ensure that this initiative will be framed to lend strong support and add momentum to local reentry initiatives and law enforcement priorities as well as to ensure sustainability.

It is not enough to say that a particular individual is the employment person on the Reentry Committee; it is also important to know what that person brings to the effort, what the rules of his or her organization are, and how each key decision maker involved works to meet the goal of assisting the ex-offender through the transition process.

Agencies not normally accustomed to communicating with one another will now have to share records, discuss an inmate's progress while he or she is still incarcerated, establish community linkages, and discuss a myriad of other issues related to the ex-offender's reentry plan.

*Resources and Activities:* Developing cross-system protocols and memorandums of understandings will aid in the process of allowing one key agency to communicate with another key agency with issues of confidentiality and requirements related to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act already addressed. *See Appendix G for tips on effective partnerships/collaboration building.*

Weed and Seed Steering Committees have many of the above-mentioned representatives and may be a good source of experienced and committed leadership. These Steering Committees have representation of the U.S. Attorney's Office (and other federal law enforcement agencies), locally involved law enforcement and community policing, and active community organizations and neighborhood residents. Since a major hurdle of returning ex-offenders is community acceptance, involving community groups and individuals in the committee is key to community investment in reentry efforts. *See Appendix D for a description of the Weed and Seed Steering Committee.*

The AmeriCorps\*VISTA members and the Reentry Committee could assist the building of the partnerships by establishing regular communication methods and supporting the possibility of joint or shared representation on the Weed and Seed Steering Committee or Subcommittees. Regular exchange of information regarding reentry-related activities will enhance the efforts of both.

## **Key Component 7: Design Service Delivery Systems for Each Phase of the Reentry Process**

When developing a reentry strategy, programs and communities may benefit from looking at the transition process in three distinct but critically linked phases. To meet the requirements of each phase, communities should review the membership of the Reentry Committee to determine if decision makers from appropriate organizations and agencies are involved. For instance, if a Reentry

Committee is unable to obtain buy-in from the state or local corrections official, gaining access to jails and prisons in Phase I will be difficult, if not impossible.

**Phase I—Institutionally based Programs.** Six months to one year prior to release, an offender found eligible to participate in a reentry program will go through a risk and needs assessment process to determine what is necessary for a successful community reintegration. The work must begin “behind the walls” while the offender remains incarcerated, by providing him or her with a wide range of services that include education, substance abuse and/or mental health treatment, job training and placement, parenting training, batterer intervention, family counseling, and mentoring. The remaining period of incarceration presents a compelling opportunity for participation in programs that are instrumental to the development of fundamental educational and life skills and the attainment of critical credentials, such as a GED certificate. Establishment of mentoring relationships with local community and faith-based organizations will be effective in assisting offenders during this preparation period.

**Phase II: Community-based Transition Programs.** The period between release and transition back to the community is a vulnerable time for the ex-offender. Programs in this phase should target resources that will address the ex-offender’s family, housing, employment, education, mentoring support, treatment, and other identified areas that typically impact the probability of recidivism.

Forging community reentry mentoring hubs and support teams will be integral to this process. Congregations are one example of a mentoring hub and can be engaged by the AmeriCorps\*VISTA members to recruit volunteers who may constitute an ex-offender’s reentry, community-based support system. *See Appendix J for examples of these models.*

Communities will need to research and identify which agency currently has statutory reentry authority. The reentry authority has the power to order and monitor the ex-offender’s participation in and cooperation with supervision expectations, treatment programs, job skills, work readiness opportunities, education, and victim or community restitution efforts. In a situation of

noncompliance with any of the agreed-upon conditions, the authority should have the ability to impose graduated sanctions or to revoke the ex-offender's release, probation, or parole status.

Reentry authority can be provided through a judge-centered court approach or through a local agency or organization that has the power to enforce the conditions of release. The authority works in conjunction with the service providers and is an integral component of the strategy. In some states, such as Ohio, the state Department of Parole and Rehabilitation has developed a Citizen Circle process that functions in harmony with the reentry authority by monitoring the reentry plan, which has been developed in collaboration with the ex-offender, supporting agencies, community organizations, and family members. Similar processes, such as Family and Community Conferences, provide services and supports to cover all phases of the ex-offender's reentry. Local mediation centers may be able to provide such facilitation services.

**Phase III: Community-based Long-term Support.** The programs in this phase must target resources that establish networks of support for ex-offenders that will be sustained in the absence of criminal justice supervision and after the reentry plan has been successfully implemented. Activities should include aftercare treatment services, continuation of community and faith-based mentoring programs, and linkages to education and community resources that can be accessible as needs arise.

### **Designing Service Delivery Systems**

The delivery of services and supervision should be nearly seamless from institution to community. If substance abuse treatment is warranted during commitment, then it should be linked to substance abuse treatment in the community; job training and placement should be linked to work outside; and so forth. In other words, mirror support systems should be established so that the participating ex-offender can continue seamlessly in treatment after release.

Key to designing a comprehensive delivery of service systems may include the following:

- **Developing a system of assessing risk and needs of ex-offenders:** An assessment of the ex-offender's needs for housing, employment-related services, substance abuse treatment, and

mental healthcare must be conducted well before his or her release date. An individualized risk assessment should be completed to determine an ex-offender's likelihood of recidivism and level of risk to the community. The risk assessment results will also establish the appropriate level of community surveillance and monitoring. Assessments should be conducted regularly to measure progress and determine whether services are working or the ex-offender's needs have changed.

- **Developing a system for ex-offender reentry plans:** Reentry planning ideally should begin at the time of commitment or as soon after confinement as practical to ensure that offenders receive the programs and services necessary for a smooth transition. At a minimum, reentry planning and programming should begin one year prior to an offender's release. Case managers in the facilities must work with community-based service providers, faith-based community congregation mentoring hubs, and the offender to develop a reentry plan that ensures that critical support services are provided during and after confinement. In addition to ensuring that core self-sufficiency issues such as employment, housing, education, and health-care are addressed, case managers should work with ex-offenders to discuss family reunification, parenting, and other fundamental life-maintenance issues.
- **Organizing a transition team:** A transition team comprising treatment providers, corrections staff, law enforcement, employment trainers, and community and faith-based mentors should be assigned to the offender prior to his or her release to assist with the development, monitoring, and enforcement of the reentry plan that will be employed the moment the offender leaves jail or prison.

After the ex-offender's release from commitment, the transition team should regularly update the reentry plan. The ex-offender should be actively involved in all aspects of the plan and should share accountability for its success with the team. Team professionals should provide appropriate supervision and services in a timely fashion, and the ex-offender is responsible for complying with all terms of the plan. The plan will remain in effect as long as the ex-offender participates in the program. Citizen Circles are an example of how reentry plans are developed and implemented.

An individualized reentry plan depends on the results of full diagnostic and risk assessments, but a reentry program must make all of the following services available for participants:

- Substance abuse treatment/drug testing
  - Mental health treatment
  - Housing
  - Educational services
  - Batterer intervention programs
  - Training to improve job skills, as well as assistance in finding and maintaining employment or other means of support
  - Restitution mechanism for the community at large, such as a restorative justice plan that may include community service and responding to victims' concerns, when appropriate
  - Aftercare programs, including peer support groups following initial treatment, e.g., 12-step programs, community- and faith-based mentoring programs
  - Counseling for family reunification issues and parenting skills
  - Counseling for avoidance of criminal behavior and behavior triggers
  - Consequences of noncompliance with the terms of the plan, i.e., graduated sanctions
  - Life skills training such as conflict resolution, problem solving, and anger management
- **Plan for a continuum of supervision:** When coordinated properly through case management, supervision will become synergistic, increasing the chances of positive outcomes for ex-offenders. Effective coordination means that supervision is continuous, when needed, and is provided in the quantity and type necessary. Graduated levels of supervision should begin with intensive methods and highly structured and monitored activities, then step down through less

intensive supervision levels as the ex-offender progresses in his or her reentry plan and maintains compliance with conditions of release.

The following are examples of supervision practices that can be effective:

- Surveillance
- Monitoring
- Sanctions

Possible supervision strategies include enhanced community supervision partnerships in which police, probation and parole officers, and other case managers working in the targeted neighborhood have access to information about the ex-offender's reentry status, including the case management plan and related information on his or her community adjustment.

Supervision is then intensified or reduced based on the person's behavior.

The reentry authority must be kept informed by the team in order to impose safety-specific conditions of release, such as curfews, drug testing, restraining orders, and civil protection orders. The reentry authority should have an established relationship and open communication with law enforcement and the community so that illegal behavior is reported and graduated sanctions are appropriately employed. The U.S. Attorney in these communities can oversee the process of a reentry authority for those cases involving federal ex-offenders and ensure that the authority is accountable to the larger reentry committee and the community.

- **Plan for Continuity of Services:** As with supervision, the continuum of services should be coordinated by the case management team and be as seamless as possible from commitment to reentry into the community. The team, institution, reentry authority, and community supervision providers must work jointly to ensure the access and delivery of services. Communities interested in developing a reentry strategy need to determine how these services will be coordinated, how they can be enhanced if necessary, and what gaps exist in the provision process.

Once the reentry plan is complete, including plans for supervision and continuity of services, the ex-offender should appear before the reentry authority for formalization or ordering of a clearly articulated plan. At this time, the reentry authority, in conjunction with the team, will develop a schedule for the ex-offender to report regularly to the reentry authority to ensure that he or she is in compliance with the plan.

## **Key Component 8: Organize Project Management**

It is essential for a community to assess if management resources and communication systems are adequate to meet the requirements of a reentry strategy. It is often necessary to have at least one full-time person, such as a designated reentry coordinator, to bring the entities and components together. To ensure effective project management, key areas to assess include the following:

- What staff resources are available?
- What community resources are available?
- Is there an effective management plan in place that details how the program will address common coordination difficulties found in designing, implementing, and operating a multisystem program?
- Is there a communication plan in place?
- Is there an effective integrated management information system available to facilitate the identification, referral, assessment, supervision, treatment, and tracking of ex-offenders?



AmeriCorps\*VISTA members can help by facilitating project communication, building an information management system and process to facilitate information sharing, and coordinating the efforts across entities and components.

## **Key Component 9: Determine Available Resources**

A community that is considering the development, operation, or enhancement of a reentry strategy should first assess resources that are currently available from the federal, state, and local level. Is it possible to use existing resources? Or would reorganization of the existing resources provide what is needed to plan, implement, or enhance a reentry strategy?

AmeriCorps\*VISTA members can play an integral role by identifying and linking the resources available for the prisoner reentry program.

### **Community Resources**

Other organizations or groups in a community may have a resource that is just what a reentry program needs. One organization or program does not have to provide every part of the reentry program. What is most important is establishing a cooperative network of effective services for returning ex-offenders. Exploring the community for potential partners and resources can yield tremendous benefit for the reentry program and, ultimately, for the ex-offenders.

Examples of community resources include the following:

- Meeting space for community partners' bimonthly meeting
- Computers donated by local schools
- Internet access donated by a local cable company
- Classroom space for job skills training

*See Appendix E on conducting an environmental scan for community resources.*

## **Volunteer Resources**

Community volunteers are important resources for a reentry program. Volunteers can be recruited to plan a variety of roles at varying degrees of intensity. Some of the activities in which they may be engaged include the following:

- Mentoring ex-offenders through the three phases of reentry
- Mentoring or tutoring children of prisoners or ex-offenders
- Entering data for program evaluation
- Collecting and assembling care packages for the returning ex-offender's first night out (clothes, toothbrush, soap, towels)
- Organizing a job fair for ex-offenders
- Locating donated services and supplies for returning ex-offenders
- Analyzing data for program evaluation (e.g., volunteers from the local university or college)

Reentry programs will need to determine early on the role volunteers will play. If the volunteers will be working directly with prisoners or ex-offenders, it is important that they be thoroughly trained on the stages of prisoner reentry and other critical topics.

Community groups that are good sources for volunteers include the following:

- Community colleges and universities
- Businesses
- Congregations
- Civic groups (Kiwanis, etc.)
- Senior Corps programs

AmeriCorps\*VISTA members are an effective resource in the establishment of a volunteer management system for community volunteers. By helping the program build a sustainable volunteer hub, AmeriCorps\*VISTA members can help ensure the long-term sustainability of the reentry effort. *See Appendix H for tips for effective volunteer recruitment and retention for reentry programs.*

### **Other Resources**

After an exhaustive review of existing resources, communities may want to research the following options for new funding opportunities. AmeriCorps\*VISTA members can help with grant writing and fund development.

- Federal grants
- State grants
- Block grants (Byrne, other)
- State agencies (alcohol and drugs)
- State's service commission on volunteerism (for planning grants and implementation grants for larger AmeriCorps projects in which former offender service could be proposed)
- Community agencies
- Nonprofit foundations (local, national)
- Corporate grants

Determining funding sources and evaluation data needed to meet funding criteria is critical to the long-term success and sustainability of a reentry strategy.

### **Key Component 10: Develop and Implement an Evaluation Tool**

Evaluation is the process of gathering and analyzing data to measure the accomplishment of the program's long-term goals. A process evaluation appraises progress in meeting operational and

administrative goals. An outcome evaluation assesses the extent to which the program is reaching its intended long-term goals.

Communities developing reentry strategies will want to define performance measures that are fundamental to the operation and success of their program. Once performance measures are defined, coordinated management, monitoring, and data collection systems can be established to measure success.

When deciding what to measure, AmeriCorps\*VISTA programs might want to consider using performance indicators from city, state, and national initiatives. The Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative, for instance, has measurements defined to track certain elements of the program. Other elements to consider tracking are volunteer recruitment goals, number of ex-offenders, mentored, etc. *See Appendix I for a description of the SVORI performance measures*

Information for management, monitoring, and evaluation purposes may already exist within the corrections agency or the service provider realm. Local colleges or universities often have the resources to assist reentry programs with the design, development, and implementation of process and outcome evaluations.

The results of an effective process and outcome evaluation of the reentry strategy can help secure future funding and resources. Reentry programs should also consider the use of cost-benefit analysis to examine the economic impact to the community.

AmeriCorps\*VISTA members can help by establishing the systems and procedures for gathering and tracking information for effective program evaluation. *See Appendix I for information on the Corporation's performance measures.*

**A note on cost-benefit analysis for prisoner reentry programs:** The national reentry initiative represents one of the largest mobilizations ever of resources for the corrections population. The federal partners collaborating on this initiative have a keen interest in determining the cost-benefit of this significant undertaking. Local committees should seek out a local source of expertise on cost-benefit analysis. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency, U.S. Department of Justice, has an excellent

cost-benefit model in its Blueprints for the Prevention of Violence Project. In this project the nation's leading criminal justice experts calculated the actual savings generated by carefully implementing proven prevention program models. *See Appendix I for a copy of the briefing on this project.*

## Appendices

- A. Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) and a National Service Overview
  - [a. CNCS Fact Sheet](#)
  - [b. AmeriCorps\\*VISTA and Family Strengthening](#)
  - [c. The CNCS Faith-based and Community Initiative Fact Sheet](#)
  - [d. AmeriCorps State Telephone Directory](#)
- B. AmeriCorps\*VISTA and Prisoner Reentry
  - [a. Ex-Offender Reentry and AmeriCorps\\*VISTA Roles](#)
  - [b. Coming Soon: AmeriCorps\\*VISTA and Prisoner Reentry Online Learning Tool](#)
- C. [Tips on Conducting a Needs Assessment](#)
- D. [Weed and Seed Strategy: Overview, Steering Committee, and Contact Information](#)
- E. [Crime Mapping and Environmental Scans: Using a Community Needs Assessment for Crime Mapping: Example: Oakland, CA](#)
- F. Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative (SVORI)
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- G. Partnership and Collaboration Building With Faith-based and Community Organizations
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  - [b. Benefits and Challenges of Working With Faith-Based Organizations](#)
  - [c. Guidance to Faith-Based and Community Organizations on Partnering With the Federal Government](#)
  - [d. National and Community Service and Faith-Based Organizations Answers to FAQ](#)
  - [e. CNCS Civil Rights Statement](#)
  - [f. Engaging and Supporting Community Organizations in National Service Resource Sheet](#)
- H. Techniques for Effective Volunteer and Staff Recruitment and Retention
  - [a. Volunteer Recruitment: Things To Remember](#)
  - b. Available trainings
    - [i. Member and Volunteer Recruitment](#)
    - [ii. Member and Volunteer Development and Retention](#)

[c. Staff Screening Tool Kit: Building a Strong Foundation Through Careful Staffing](#)

I. Measuring Success and Project evaluation

[a. CNCS AmeriCorps Program Applicant Performance Measurement Toolkit](#)

[b. Measuring Impact: The Next and Necessary Step](#)

[c. SVORI Performance Measures](#)

[d. Cost-benefit Analysis for Juvenile Justice Programs](#)

J. Case Studies of Faith-based Prisoner Reentry Models

[a. Bethel New Life, Incorporated](#)

[b. Exodus Faith-Based Reentry: Working Together To Restore Lives!](#)

[c. Family Life Center Executive Summary](#)

[d. Mount Moriah Baptist Church](#)

[e. Fort Wayne, Allen County, Indiana](#)

[K. Additional Resources on Reentry](#)

a. “Executive Summary of Returning Home: Understand the Challenges of Prisoner Reentry, Maryland Pilot Study: Findings from Baltimore.” Urban Institute, 2004.

b. National Resources for Reentry

L. Stakeholder list

a. By State

b. By Name