



WHEN THE GATES OPEN

Ready4Work

A National Response to the Prisoner Reentry Crisis

By Joshua Good and Pamela Sherrid

Field Report Series

Public/Private Ventures October 2005

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Public/Private Ventures is a national nonprofit organization that seeks to improve the effectiveness of social policies and programs. P/PV designs, tests and studies initiatives that increase supports, skills and opportunities of residents of low-income communities; works with policymakers to see that the lessons and evidence produced are reflected in policy; and provides training, technical assistance and learning opportunities to practitioners based on documented effective practices.

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INTRODUCTION

What can be done to help people who are released from prison steer clear of a return to crime? The doctrine that “nothing works” has for many years been the dominant view. The mainspring for that fatalistic outlook was an influential 1974 assessment of rehabilitation efforts in the journal *Public Interest*. That study, by criminologist Robert Martinson, witheringly concluded that “rehabilitation efforts that have been reported so far have no appreciable effect on recidivism.”¹

Thirty years later, the Martinson legacy finally may be dissipating. A new, more activist, approach to prisoner reentry is emerging, thanks partly to recent empirical findings and partly to urgent necessity. Having criticized Martinson’s methods, today’s experts are coming to new conclusions based on fresh evidence. “Data from meta-analysis of tens, if not hundreds, of studies confirm that treatment can work to reduce recidivism,” writes Joan Petersilia, a criminologist at the University of California at Irvine.² Many experts now say that the question needs to be framed in terms of what *kind* of intervention works best—not *whether* treatment can be effective.

Society sorely needs new answers in a hurry. The U.S. is facing a reentry crisis. A record number of prisoners—roughly 750,000 annually—are now released from confinement each year, a level triple that of the 1970s.³ The current wave of returnees is the inevitable outcome of the tremendous growth in the U.S. prison population during the past 30 years. (The rate of imprisonment grew from 110 prison inmates per 100,000 U.S. residents in 1970 to 478 inmates per 100,000 U.S. residents in 2000.⁴) The high volume of returnees threatens already vulnerable communities, as most former prisoners return to impoverished and disenfranchised neighborhoods with few social supports and persistently high crime rates.

Alarm raised by the reentry issue is reverberating in the U.S. Congress, where in early 2005 there were at least five bills circulating that would provide new funding for reentry programs. That followed President Bush’s signal that tackling the reentry issue was one of his administration’s domestic priorities. “America is the land of the second chance, and when the gates of prison open, the path ahead should lead to a better life,” the president declared in his 2004 State of the Union address. The administration’s proposed budget for 2005-06 contained the first installment of the \$300 million, four-year commitment, and Congress funded \$30 million for the first year of the president’s request. But policymakers developing a national approach to the problem must grapple with the fact that, until now, promising approaches to reducing recidivism have taken root mostly in small local programs.

The Ready4Work initiative is likely to provide additional valuable lessons. Launched in 2003, Ready4Work is a national demonstration project that represents some of today’s best thinking by both government and the private sector on how to curb recidivism. The initiative has already served more than 2,500 adult prison returnees and an additional 300 juveniles who have come back to their communities after detention in the criminal justice system. The program is an unusual public-private partnership. Its three-year, \$27 million funding flows primarily from the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), but also from the U.S. Department of Justice and two private foundations—the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Ford Foundation—as well as from Public/Private Ventures (P/PV), which is administering the project.

Ready4Work brings together a constellation of partners that have rarely collaborated: the business sector, which is providing the returnees with jobs;

the criminal justice system; and faith-based and community-based social service providers. Ready4Work was born from research conducted by the U.S. Department of Labor's Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (CFBCI) on how to help returnees overcome the many obstacles they face finding employment, and from P/PV's experience with the National Faith-Based Initiative for High-Risk Youth (NFBI).⁵ Two individuals in particular—Brent Orrell, former director of CFBCI, and Fred Davie, P/PV's senior vice president for public policy and community partnerships—then took the lessons from these early projects and worked together to design the Ready4Work program and get it funded.

Ready4Work is part of the ongoing exploration of how committed faith-based and other grassroots organizations can increase their services to disadvantaged and underserved populations. But in many ways, Ready4Work is attempting to move beyond the politically charged question of whether faith-based institutions *on their own* can or cannot do a better job of delivering services than their secular counterparts. Of the lead agencies at 11 Ready4Work “adult” sites that agreed to serve returnees between 18 and 34 years old, one is a local government entity and two others are secular nonprofits that partner with church congregations. In all instances, the lead agencies, whether faith-based or secular, are fortified by expertise provided by P/PV or by other organizations specializing in job placement and other tasks.

Ready4Work's 11 adult sites each recruit prisoners convicted of nonviolent, non-sexual felonies, all of whom voluntarily agree to enter the program at some point during the period from 90 days prior to release to 90 days afterwards. The program comprises three main elements: job training and placement, mentoring and case management. Services are provided either by the lead agency or by specialist

organizations that are brought in by the lead agency or P/PV.

Building on evidence that returnees who find jobs are less likely to return to crime, Ready4Work puts job skill training and job placement at the center of its efforts. Businesses, for their part, are willing to hire Ready4Work participants because they see a source of needed employees. Ready4Work also harnesses the commitment and credibility of volunteers from faith-based and community-based organizations. These volunteers act as mentors to help returnees change their personal mindsets, deal with workplace challenges and build social relationships. Finally, rigorous case management helps ensure that returnees can tap into available benefits in crucial areas such as housing and medical care.

Ready4Work also separately serves young people ages 14 to 18 who are leaving juvenile-detention facilities or have otherwise entered the criminal justice system. At the program's seven juvenile sites, the aim is to help the young returnees benefit from mentoring, case management and education services, while at the same time offering job training and employer matches for those who are ready for jobs.

This report briefly sketches out the dimensions of the recidivism problem and the rationale behind Ready4Work. It then describes in some detail the genesis of the program, including the orientation of its major partners and how they came together. Another section deals with the start-up and implementation of the program. This is followed by a brief overview of promising practices that have begun to emerge from Ready4Work. The concluding section looks to the future, giving consideration to the outcomes data Ready4Work is beginning to produce and the program's role in influencing future reentry initiatives.

The Reentry Crisis

Urgency defines the issue of prisoner reentry—from the perspective of society at large, from the perspective of the often-struggling communities where prisoners flock on release and from the perspective of the prisoners themselves.

Let us consider the larger societal view first. As a result of the quadrupling of the U.S. prison population over the past three decades, our society now faces the challenge of integrating an unprecedented number of former prisoners. This year 750,000 prison inmates, including 150,000 juveniles, will be released from secure facilities and returned to their communities. That is more than 2,000 returnees hitting the streets every day. But many of them will not be free for long. A 2002 study by the Bureau of Justice Statistics found that 30 percent of returnees were rearrested during the first six months of their release from prison, 44 percent within the first year and a staggering two thirds within three years.⁶ The cost to society of this revolving door is immense. In fact, recidivism contributes mightily to the expensive and continuing growth of the U.S. prison population. People arrested while on parole account for about 35 percent of new prison admissions each year, up from 17 percent in 1980.⁷

For communities, the return of released prisoners represents a variety of challenges, including the obvious threat to public safety. Research by the Urban Institute has shown that returning prisoners are increasingly concentrated in a small number of urban “core” counties. For instance, in Illinois, 51 percent of its ex-prisoners returned to Chicago, and to Cook County in particular, with six neighborhoods receiving 34 percent of the total influx. What’s more, “churners”—people who have served a second prison sentence and are more likely to break the law again—are being released into core counties in higher concentrations than in earlier decades.

“The return of violent offenders may be like sowing weeds back into communities,” notes the Urban Institute.⁸

Crime clearly harms families: the victims’ obviously, but also the perpetrators’, in which children who lose a parent to prison suffer a host of poor outcomes, including poverty. High rates of crime retard economic development and undermine the social service efforts of both government agencies and private organizations. No wonder that faith leaders have identified the problem of recidivism as one of the most critical issues facing urban neighborhoods. Pastors in Chicago and Jacksonville told CFBCI’s Orrell they “can’t help but to recognize ex-prisoners are returning to our communities—and they’re affecting our congregations, *regardless* of whether they’re sitting in our pews, or out on the streets.” P/PV’s experience with the NFBI evinced a similar reality.

When it comes to urgency, the needs of the individual returnee may well be the most pressing. Consider prisoners—typically young men with few employable skills, little education and a history of alcohol, drug abuse or homelessness—who take off their prison garb after years of incarceration and walk out the prison gates. Joan Petersilia paints a picture of their predicament in her 2003 book, *When Prisoners Come Home: Parole and Prisoner Reentry*:

Most of them will be given a bus ticket and told to report to the parole office in their home community on the next business day... If they live in a state that provides funds upon release (about one third of states do not), they will be given \$25 to \$200 in gate money. Some states provide a new set of clothing at release, but these “extras” (e.g., shoes, toiletries, a suit) have declined over time. Sometimes, a list of rental apartments or shelters is provided, but arrangements are generally left up to the offender to determine where to reside and how to pay for basic

essentials, such as food, housing and clothing. Employment is also mostly left up to the offender.⁹

No job, no money, no place to live—one can almost hear the clock ticking. Returnees quickly find themselves beset with the same pressures and temptations that attracted them to crime in the first place. A recent P/PV study of former drug dealers who were trying to avoid re-involvement in crime describes how, as younger men, they felt an intense desire to benefit from the material wealth of mainstream America but lacked legitimate means for earning money.¹⁰ With criminality pervading their communities, peer networks and families, and unemployment being the norm in many inner-city communities, youth may see few role models of adult men who are successfully supporting themselves and their families in a legitimate job. Crime, by contrast, brings social as well as economic benefits: the men in the study reported earning hundreds and even thousands of dollars a night from “hustling.”

Prison, meanwhile, is unlikely to have given inmates new skills they can use to launch an alternative career. Prison crowding has resulted in long waiting lists for classes of any kind, and only a minority of those released have had a chance to participate. Many states have cut spending on prison vocational and technical-training programs, as a result both of budgetary pressures and harsher punitive attitudes toward criminals.¹¹

Ready4Work’s New Approach

Ready4Work’s approach keeps these aspects of returnees’ experiences in mind, as well as the lessons learned from past disappointments in trying to lower recidivism rates. To begin, the program is based on the idea that there is a narrow window of opportunity for positively redirecting the life of a returnee immediately upon his release from prison. “If a returnee can’t find resources or get connected to

help *quickly*, the evidence is clear that that person is likely to return to crime,” says Davie, primary director of the initiative. Ready4Work tries to make a connection with inmates while they are still in prison and insists on surrounding recently released ex-prisoners with services and supports within 90 days of, and preferably immediately after, their release.

Each of Ready4Work’s key program components—employment, mentoring and case management—is essential, but none alone is sufficient. Consider employment, for instance. Criminal justice experts agree that employment is one of the most important vehicles for hastening offender reintegration. A 1995 meta-analysis of 400 studies found that employment was the single most effective factor in reducing recidivism.¹² Interviews with ex-prisoners demonstrate that gainful and lasting employment is not only a monetary means to avoid criminal behavior but also helps returnees to accomplish a critical shift in perspective about their lives. Taking care of their families and being productive lead to important and positive changes in self-esteem.

Unfortunately, most returnees have a very hard time finding work. Not only do they tend to lack marketable skills, but there is a serious stigma attached to a criminal history in the legitimate labor market. A 1996 survey of employers in Atlanta, Boston, Detroit and Los Angeles found that employers are much more reluctant to hire ex-prisoners than any other group of disadvantaged workers, including welfare recipients and the long-term unemployed.¹³ Returnees are barred from jobs that require licenses in many states. A 2005 column in *The New York Times* described one returnee who had taken courses that were offered in prison to become a barber, only to discover that his prison record prevented him from getting a barber’s license.¹⁴

While job training and placement are clearly key elements in any attempt to reduce recidivism, many such programs have had disappointing results. For instance, a 1970s program, The Transitional Aid Research Project, offered ex-prisoners varying levels of unemployment compensation and job placement assistance. Random assignment studies found that no combination of job placement and income assistance reduced recidivism. Another program of the same era, the National Supported Work Demonstration, assigned participants to 12 to 18 months of unsubsidized employment in a supportive environment. The program initially had a strong positive impact on employment for former prisoners, but, by the end of the first year, the outcomes for the treatment and control groups were nearly identical. Perhaps more important, there was no impact on re-arrest rates.¹⁵

Thus it seems job training and placement may not be enough, particularly for offenders who have become “embedded” in criminality. Some offenders have gotten used to easy gains and violence and have weak bonds to conventional society, such as attachment to parents and commitment to jobs or school. After reviewing a history of job training programs in their 2002 article “Labor Markets and Crime,” Shawn Bushway and Peter Reuter conclude that such individuals “need to be motivated to work before things like job skills can make a difference; although unemployment may have contributed to their criminal activity, a job opportunity (and job skill training) by itself does not solve the problem.”¹⁶

This is where Ready4Work’s commitment to mentoring—to matching returnees with caring, responsible adults in their community—comes in. Prisoners facing release in recent years have served longer prison sentences than in the past, and family ties weaken as prison terms lengthen. Only the luckiest returnees can count on meaningful family sup-

port. Yet as Petersilia points out, “Every known study that has been able to directly examine the relationship between a prisoner’s legitimate community ties and recidivism has found that feelings of being welcomed at home and the strengths of interpersonal ties outside prison help predict post-prison adjustment.”¹⁷

Ready4Work is testing the idea that mentors can make a crucial difference in helping returnees gain much-needed motivation. The program incorporates mentoring of juveniles by adults at its juvenile sites and of adults by adults at its adult sites. While this concept has rarely been tested, early indications from faith-based Prison Fellowship programs suggest that mentoring adult prisoners and returnees may be an important ingredient in post-prison success, since mentoring can provide the returnee with access to a moral compass, as well as support, guidance and assistance with the world of work and other life challenges.¹⁸ And evaluations of programs designed to mentor younger individuals, such as the Big Brothers/Big Sisters program, have clearly indicated that mentoring can have a positive impact on youth.¹⁹ Ready4Work has been designed to further explore whether mentoring can work successfully with a challenging, older population—namely adult returnees.

P/PV’s earlier work with faith-based organizations showed how these groups vary widely in their ability to administer services and monitor their delivery. Because of the demanding nature of working with returnees and the narrow opportunity to make a difference in their lives, Ready4Work has made it a priority to recruit only mature provider organizations that can ensure that nothing falls between the cracks, and it both prods and supports the providers by requiring rigorous monitoring and reporting of the services that returnees receive.

At the same time, past project experience with faith-based and community organizations demonstrated that one of these grassroots groups' greatest strengths is their connectedness to other actors and partnering agencies in the neighborhoods in which they work. Just as the employment, mentoring and case management components of Ready4Work complement and reinforce one other, diverse partners—primarily religious congregations, businesses, criminal justice agencies and community agencies—each bring their own strengths to the program. Churches bring distinctive assets, such as large volunteer bases—as do for-profit job placement agencies, One-Stop Career Centers, local employers and even shelters for the homeless. Since each of these organizations working alone is unlikely to achieve the hoped-for success in combating high recidivism trends, partnership becomes critical. In fact, the story of how Ready4Work was conceived and launched is also a story of partnerships.

THE ROAD TO READY4WORK

DOL's Path

The Department of Labor's Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (CFBCI) was established in 2001 to empower faith-based and community organizations to help their neighbors enter, succeed and thrive in the workforce. Linked to the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, the CFBCI is one of 10 such centers created by President Bush within federal agencies. Its mission is to help grassroots faith-based and community leaders compete on equal footing for federal dollars, receive greater private support and face fewer bureaucratic barriers. Brent Orrell, director of CFBCI from 2001 through 2005 and a former legislative director for two senators, has been active since the late 1990s in trying to expand opportunities for grassroots organizations to partner with federal social service programs. He and other proponents of this approach recognize that in many of the nation's distressed urban communities, churches often maintain a physical presence, a tradition of service and a moral authority unmatched by secular social service providers.

An important macroeconomic trend guides DOL's activities in the prisoner-reentry field and also gives employers a motivation to be involved—business needs workers as much as returnees need jobs. During the next several years the economy is expected to produce more jobs than people to fill them. In fact, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, by 2008, new jobs will exceed available workers by 7 million. At the same time, over the next three years approximately 1.8 million people will be released from state and federal prisons. "Returnees represent another labor pool that needs to be tapped," says Orrell. "This is the next step after welfare-to-work," the government initiative that focused on finding jobs for millions of hard-to-employ individuals on public assistance.

Orrell traces the genesis of Ready4Work in his mind to a visit he paid to Chicago in early 2002 for an event hosted by Ceasefire, a University of Illinois initiative aimed at reducing youth violence. At that meeting, he engaged in conversation with a caseworker trying to find job opportunities for ex-prisoners. When Orrell suggested the resources of the federal bonding program, which bonds high-risk individuals that private insurers will not, the caseworker "just laughed at me," he remembers. That program, the caseworker said, did little to reassure employers and instead merely reinforced the stigma of a prison record by making returnees "wear a scarlet letter."

Orrell left that meeting pondering the question of what incentives *would* encourage employers to hire returnees. He had preliminary talks with the National Association of Blacks in Criminal Justice, a professional and community-leaders organization that encourages former prisoners to join as members, and with Prison Fellowship, a faith-based organization that works with prisoners, ex-prisoners and families.

Before long, Orrell came to the conclusion that "we just don't know what would make the difference to businesses," and he decided to convene a series of focus groups and interviews with the business community to find out. In the spring of 2002, CFBCI conducted six focus groups with employers in Washington, DC, Chicago and Jacksonville. The focus-group participants were from companies with 50 or fewer employees and had been prescreened as being open to hiring people who had been incarcerated. CFBCI, in cooperation with the Center for Workforce Preparation of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, also conducted interviews with national corporations to gauge their perception of, and experience with, hiring ex-prisoners.

According to Orrell, two key findings emerged. The first was that business leaders wanted information about the crime a former prisoner had committed before they would consider hiring him or her. They wanted to know how much liability they would assume if they hired an ex-prisoner who later committed a crime against a fellow employee or customer. The second finding was that employers would be much more willing to hire a former prisoner if he came with a community sponsor, such as a pastor, who could vouch for the person's character. "That would take some of the fear away," says Orrell. What's more, the sponsor was seen as important to helping the returnee with lifestyle and practical issues. "Businesses don't want to babysit, and they don't want to chase people around. They just want a good employee," recalls a focus-group participant.

In the summer of 2002, CFBCI started a small reentry pilot program in Jacksonville, Florida. Called the "Ready4Work Initiative," it incorporated mentoring and job training at Operation New Hope, a community development corporation that since 1999 had been doing its own grassroots work with returnees. Its executive director, Kevin Gay, together with local pastor Garland Scott, who is himself an ex-prisoner, discovered that if they were able to give an ex-prisoner a recommendation based on a few months as an employee at Operation New Hope, that individual would have a much better chance of finding another, more permanent job.

Meanwhile, Orrell was working with his colleagues within DOL to fund this initiative, because CFBCI has no grant-making authority. Orrell had to make the case to funding entities, such as DOL's Employment and Training Administration, that spending on returnees was worthwhile. Like other supporters of rehabilitation efforts, he pointed out that the Ready4Work investment could have a very high level

of return if one compared the cost of helping the returnee to be a productive and law-abiding citizen with the much larger cost of prosecuting him and housing him in prison after he's committed another crime. "Ready4Work winds up costing \$4,900 per participant for 12 months, while we spend \$25,000 to \$40,000 per year to put adults and juveniles in prison," notes Orrell. "There are significant savings possible—if this approach works. So we needed to find out if it works," he says.

P/PV's Path

As it happened, P/PV was in the planning stages of a reentry initiative at the same time as the Labor Department's CFBCI. P/PV regularly helps government and foundation funders judge the effectiveness of their social service spending by evaluating programs; sometimes it also designs innovative initiatives to meet unanswered social needs.

P/PV became interested in the potential of faith-based institutions to deliver social services to distressed communities and individuals long before it was highlighted as a key domestic-policy priority. P/PV's conception of Ready4Work was influenced by three prior demonstrations designed to engage faith-based organizations in the delivery of services to high-risk populations. These earlier P/PV initiatives are Amachi, a mentoring program for children of incarcerated parents; YET, a literacy program for youth in danger of school failure; and, most relevant of all, NFBI, which offered employment, education and mentoring for older youth who had been involved in the juvenile justice system. These experiences helped illuminate the assets that faith-based organizations bring to their work with low-income populations and also established an important base of knowledge about how best to support these groups to be effective.

A 2002 analysis by the Manhattan Institute found that faith-based organizations appear to have a special advantage in helping individuals overcome difficult circumstances such as drug addiction and imprisonment.²⁰ That assessment was borne out in the experiences of NFBI, according to Robert Flores, administrator of the Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), which was a major funder of NFBI. According to Flores, "Churches take a holistic view of a person, and they embrace that person. The youths who are in the criminal justice system are not cuddly, not quiet or humble. It's hard to open your arms to them, but the faith community sees it as part of its job." Faith-based mentors are likely to have a deep belief that people can undergo a change of character, a helpful orientation for dealing with individuals with troubled lives.

P/PV first started thinking about a comprehensive reentry initiative in the late 1990s, "when it became clear there was going to be at a great outpouring of people from prisons," says P/PV President Gary Walker. Among Walker's earliest discussions on the subject were those with political scientist John DiIulio, who was then on P/PV's board. DiIulio was joining the faculty of the University of Pennsylvania and was soon to be the first director of the White House's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives.

From its first conception, says Walker, P/PV saw its reentry initiative as involving faith institutions, employment and mentoring in some form. In 1998, P/PV had established the effectiveness of mentoring for young people in its landmark control-group study of outcomes from the Big Brothers Big Sisters program, but Walker knew that adult returnees would pose a much bigger challenge. He spoke with Robert C. Embry, Jr., president of The Abell Foundation and a former district attorney who had personally mentored eight former prisoners. Embry told Walker that having

someone who cared did matter, but that that positive influence would not do much good if returnees did not also have help with the practical problems of life, including finding a job. Also influential in the early formulation of the program was a visit Walker paid to America Works, a for-profit workforce development company in New York City. Walker came away convinced that any pitch to an employer about hiring an ex-prisoner would have to appeal to the self-interest of the employer rather than emphasizing social responsibility or charity.

Another important early contributor to the creation of Ready4Work was Sam Atchison, a chaplain at New Jersey State Prison in Trenton, whom DiIulio introduced to P/PV. In addition to his work with inmates, Atchison had become familiar with the challenges facing returnees during an earlier stint in an urban ministry with soup kitchens and emergency shelters. "I started dealing with guys on the outside and now was working with them on the inside," Atchison says. "So I started thinking about how to build the bridge of successful reentry." Atchison felt that churches had a tradition of serving in prisons, but that they could be harnessed to do more to help prisoners once they were released. Atchison joined P/PV as a consultant in July 2001 and developed a concept paper for a demonstration project.

The project started to gain steam in early 2002 once it attracted the attention of Fred Davie, who had joined P/PV the summer before. Davie, who holds a master's of divinity degree, had worked in religious institutions and the public sector before becoming the Ford Foundation's program officer for Faith-Based Community Development. There he had helped to fund NFBI, and he joined P/PV to head its faith-based initiatives. Davie and other P/PV staff visited Atchison at his prison in February 2002 and had a long discussion about what shape a reentry program should take to effectively curb recidivism.

The lessons that Davie and P/PV had learned from their experience with NFBI, which began in late 1998, were crucial in shaping the Ready4Work model. While very heartened by his experience working with faith-based partners, Davie had discovered that many local congregations did not have the capacity, in terms of staff or professionalism, to deliver services consistently. Because of the demanding nature of a reentry initiative, Davie felt from the start that it needed to be built around mature organizations that had already worked with high-risk populations who were involved with the justice system. He also saw the need for a more structured and prescriptive approach to delivering program components. In NFBI, each site agreed to develop programs that included mentoring, education or employment readiness. By contrast, for the reentry program, P/PV decided to insist on the delivery of three interlocking program components: mentoring, job training and placement, and case management. P/PV did not expect the lead agencies to have all the necessary expertise in house. Rather, it expected that the agencies would have strengths in one or two areas and that P/PV would help them achieve competency in the areas in which they were lacking, by bringing in a subcontractor or through direct technical assistance from P/PV.

Through its work with the OJJDP-funded NFBI, P/PV also had gained valuable experience in bridging the differences between the institutional cultures involved in a faith-based reentry initiative. Historically, there had been a tense relationship in urban communities between the criminal justice system and the faith community. Church leaders typically have been critics of police brutality, while prosecutors have tended to see the clergy's pleas for mercy as the equivalent of coddling criminals. "NFBI sites initially had to deal with that adversarial relationship, but they were able to build trust and break down barriers," says Gwendolyn Dilworth,

a program specialist at OJJDP. In addition, P/PV gained experience in how to encourage faith-based organizations to be more oriented toward producing measurable outcomes, an important mindset for participating in a program with foundation and government funding.

Drawing on these existing relationships, P/PV initiated conversations with OJJDP about juvenile reentry, and in the summer of 2002 P/PV received approval from the agency to use \$50,000 of its NFBI grant to plan a reentry initiative for juvenile offenders. Meanwhile, P/PV also wrote a concept paper for a reentry program that focused mainly on adults aged 18 to 34. But in a pattern that was reminiscent of Orrell's difficulty in winning funding at DOL, Davie was finding it hard to win funding for prisoner reentry from foundations, despite his deep and relevant experience in foundation circles. "We wandered in the wilderness for a while," he recalls.

That difficulty in gaining foundation funding was hardly surprising. In a 2001 survey of foundations involved in programs for children, youth and families, P/PV found few of them ever tried to tackle the seemingly intractable problems of young adults. Of the 42 funders surveyed, 22 funded programs for early childhood and 19 funded programs for children ages 7 to 15, but only eight funders tried to help individuals aged 16 to 24. Public investment in this age group had declined in the 1990s, and foundations were loath to go where there was not a clear model for success. One foundation officer stated that age 16 is just "too late to start."

The few foundations involved in criminal justice programs per se are mostly involved in advocacy, not service to ex-prisoners, which is viewed as risky because of the potential liability for bad publicity if a program participant commits a violent crime. All in all, says Davie, "reentry is definitely an issue that needed government, as well as private, sources of funds."

Nonetheless, in 2005 he asked several officials at the White House to consider suggesting to the President that he call together some of the nation's leading foundations, to reflect collaboratively with public officials not only about reentry work, but about a wider range of social services that could be provided by faith-based and community organizations.²¹

The Partners Come Together

The Ready4Work program crystallized when DOL and P/PV decided to work together in early 2003. Once that decision was made, financing arrangements fell into place, the program gelled quickly and implementation began in short order. The eventual partnership evolved from initial conversations between Davie and Orrell that had taken place in the fall of 2001, concerning how DOL might cooperate with NFBI. Davie also told Orrell about P/PV's interest in developing an adult reentry initiative. Conversations continued during the summer of 2002, and Orrell told P/PV about the findings of CFBCI's focus groups with businesses. These findings underlined the promise of developing a job training and placement program tied to a mentoring program that used faith-based volunteers.

In the fall of 2002 Davie approached Orrell about P/PV assisting with CFBCI's reentry project and to see how the two organizations might work together. At first, it was assumed that the project, with an estimated budget of \$2.5 million for its first year, would be put out for competitive bidding with a request for proposals. But P/PV realized that with such a route, it could take a year to 18 months to get the project going. P/PV decided to try to win a sole-source contract for managing the project by bringing its own funds to the table. If P/PV succeeded, Ready4Work could be funded before the end of that fiscal year.

The likelihood of government support helped P/PV to line up the foundation funding that had eluded it before. The Annie E. Casey Foundation, which supported P/PV's work in the past, quickly agreed to commit \$850,000 over a three-year period.

P/PV also had its own funds at its disposal. In 1997 the Ford Foundation had given P/PV a \$4 million endowment and a \$3.5 million new venture fund to help get new initiatives off the ground. In February 2003 P/PV's board gave permission to use up to \$1 million of that venture fund toward working with DOL on a reentry program. So, with the funding from the Casey Foundation, "we were able to come to the table with about \$2 million," says P/PV's Walker, as a match for the \$2.5 million in DOL funds.

With that, things moved quickly. P/PV's proposal included case management as a key program component, along with employment and mentoring. P/PV's experience with NFBI had convinced it that case management was necessary to ensure consistency of service delivery and reporting. Orrell agreed, happy to have the advantage of P/PV's hands-on experience with small faith-based organizations. The DOL's Employment and Training Administration agreed to fund P/PV's proposal with a first-year grant of \$2.5 million, subject to approval by a federal procurement-review board that examines the awarding of sole-source contracts. Under federal rules, such contracts are allowed, among other reasons, if the proposal is unique and innovative or if the government is able to leverage its funds with private resources. The review board found that P/PV's proposal could be approved on either ground, and gave the go-ahead.

Another source of funding soon fell into place when OJJDP, with the support of Senator Judd Gregg (R-NH), agreed to spend funds allocated under the Partnership for High-Risk Youth to create Ready4Work sites specifically for juveniles ages 14 to 18. That funding, up to \$3 million a year for three years, was slated to begin the following fiscal year, in September 2003.

By March 2003, *Ready4Work: An Ex-Prisoner, Community and Faith Initiative* was born.

THE PROGRAM AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION

Having heard the need expressed by community and faith leaders, and having reflected on the challenge of serving the reentry population, Ready4Work's planners were prepared to launch a major new initiative. With resources for the first year of the program lined up, P/PV began implementation in March 2003. Earlier demonstrations provided considerable insights into how to set up the infrastructure for Ready4Work. A tri-level governance structure was created to oversee the initiative; it was composed of a national advisory council, local advisory councils and local lead agencies.

The National Advisory Council

As a first step in implementing the program, P/PV formed an advisory council of experts in the fields of criminology, prison administration, justice, social services and faith. This group was instituted to meet two times a year in person and twice annually via conference call to discuss current research and understanding of reentry, to define the knowledge gaps in the field and to develop strategies to address them.

Members come from a variety of backgrounds and represent some of the country's leading experts in reentry, program administration, public policy, the corrections system and the urban faith community. Among others, members include the Hon. Mary Leftridge Byrd, deputy secretary for specialized facilities and programs for the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections; The Honorable Renée Cardwell Hughes, who serves on the bench of Pennsylvania's Court of Common Pleas; Stacia Murphy, president of the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence; the Rev. Dr. Calvin Pressley, a pastor for over thirty years and recent director of the Interdenominational Theological Center's Institute of Church Administration and Management; Dr. Ronald Mincy, Russell Professor of Social Policy at Columbia University; and Dr. Matthew McGuire, vice president of institutional marketing

and client services for Ariel Capital Management, Inc.

The council was designed to react to ongoing challenges facing the initiative, offer feedback and oversight, and shape evaluation strategies. P/PV staff would then pass on guidance from this body of experts to staff leaders and practitioners in local sites.

Site Selection, Local Lead Agencies and Local Advisory Councils

Throughout their planning processes, P/PV and DOL engaged in extensive reconnaissance around the question of who should be the local lead agencies for a reentry initiative. They looked for organizations with strong capacity to work with high-risk individuals and a track record of building solid collaborations in areas with high populations of returning prisoners.

Geographic diversity was important, and DOL wanted to include both community-based and faith-based institutions. The partners also sought out contexts in which there existed a demonstrated willingness on the part of the local business and criminal justice sectors to take part in a collaborative reentry initiative.

With input from DOL and OJJDP, P/PV eventually selected 11 adult sites and seven juvenile sites, listed in the box on page 14.

One of the first responsibilities of each lead agency was to develop a local advisory council to guide the implementation of its local effort. At each site, this local council would be composed of representatives from the initiative's organizational partners and other community stakeholders, including the business community, criminal and/or juvenile justice institutions, social service agencies, workforce development agencies, local education institutions and local government. The council would provide advice, identify resources, and establish connections for the local initiative.

Ready4Work Adult Sites

Chicago:	<i>The SAFER Foundation</i> Secular nonprofit
Detroit:	<i>America Works</i> For-profit, in collaboration with Hartford Memorial Church
Houston:	<i>Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church and InnerChange Freedom Initiative</i> Faith-based nonprofit
Jacksonville:	<i>Operation New Hope</i> Faith-based, nonprofit community-development corporation
Los Angeles:	<i>Union Rescue Mission</i> Faith-based nonprofit
Memphis:	<i>The City of Memphis, Second Chance Ex-Felon Program</i> City program
Milwaukee:	<i>Holy Cathedral/Word of Hope Ministries</i> Faith-based nonprofit
New York:	<i>Exodus Transitional Community</i> Faith-based nonprofit
Oakland:	<i>Allen Temple Housing and Economic Development Corporation</i> Faith-based nonprofit
Philadelphia:	<i>Search for Common Ground</i> Secular international nonprofit
Washington DC:	<i>East of the River Clergy Police Community Partnership</i> Faith-based nonprofit

Ready4Work Juvenile Sites

Boston:	<i>Straight Ahead Ministries</i> Faith-based nonprofit
Brooklyn:	<i>Girls Reentry Assistance and Support</i> Secular public agency
Camden:	<i>Volunteers of America Delaware Valley</i> Faith-based nonprofit
Houston:	<i>Greater St. Paul Community Development Corporation</i> Faith-based nonprofit
Los Angeles:	<i>LA Ten-Point Coalition</i> Faith-based nonprofit
Seattle:	<i>Church Council of Greater Seattle</i> Faith-based nonprofit

Business participation on the council was also critical for developing job opportunities: through its research, DOL had come to believe that the best spokesperson to encourage businesses to employ ex-prisoners would be another businessperson. “It isn’t as effective to have a social worker talk to business people,” says Orrell. DOL wanted to see business-to-business testimonials emerge from Ready4Work, with one business owner telling another that hiring returnees was helpful for the bottom line.

Program Components

The local lead agencies, with the support of their advisory councils and technical assistance from P/PV, were made responsible for planning and implementing the local initiative. Their tasks included the following:

- *Identifying participant referral sources.* Ready4Work program participants needed to be adult and juvenile offenders who were returning to a targeted geographic area from municipal, state and federal institutions. Each lead agency, along with its advisory board, was tasked with identifying correctional institutions that could recommend candidates for the program. Adult participants had to be between the ages of 18 and 34, and prisoners who had committed violent or sexual offenses were not eligible. Juvenile participants had to have been sentenced for an offense between the ages of 14 and 18, although they were permitted to be as old as 21 upon enrollment in the program. Site leaders—often the case managers—worked to cultivate strong relationships with officials in nearby correctional facilities. They also sought out potential participants through congregations and local community organizations.
- *Screening Ready4Work candidates.* Suitability for the initiative took into consideration the criminal record, public-safety factors, and the attitude and willingness of each former prisoner.

Given the time commitment needed to participate in the program’s various elements, it was critical that those who enrolled did so freely and because they desired to improve their circumstances after release from incarceration. Sites were also required to serve all prospective participants who fit the age and committing-offense criteria.

- *Offering services designed to ensure long-term and meaningful attachment to the labor market.* To help create a seamless network of local employment services, lead agencies worked with a variety of other programs, including Workforce Investment Boards, One-Stop Career Centers, workforce development organizations, local educational institutions and other community-and faith-based organizations. Moreover, at conferences and through web-based meetings, P/PV’s workforce-sector technical assistance providers offered insight and training in this component.

Each site developed mechanisms for employment readiness, placement and post-placement support services. Sites worked hard to “recruit” employers, treating them as customers and describing to them the merits of hiring prescreened and trained Ready4Work participants. Faith- and community-based organizations offered orientation and post-placement support for business leaders and managers who were willing to employ program participants. Whenever possible, sites informed the development and implementation of employment services by involving businesses in the local council. Business leaders participated in mock job fairs and provided feedback to local sites about the strengths and weaknesses of their programs. As hoped, business executives serving on Ready4Work local councils generally proved to be effective at introducing the concept of Ready4Work to other businesses, and at addressing employer anxieties and at opening doors for returnees.²²

- *Recruiting, screening, training and supporting faith-based mentors.* Each lead agency was required to develop and implement a strategy to recruit and retain mentors who were then matched with returnees. P/PV offered guidance, including training in best practices; The Mentoring Center, the National Association of Blacks in Criminal Justice and several other consultants were brought on to assist site staff with the mentoring component. P/PV's senior advisor on faith-based initiatives, the Rev. W. Wilson Goode, Sr., also provided advice in this area, based on his extensive experience with the Amachi program.

The goal was to match every adult Ready4Work participant with an appropriate mentor, who was primarily responsible for supporting the returnee in the transition back to the community, especially to the workplace—offering support, guidance and assistance with personal and work challenges. Not every participant wanted a mentor, but the majority did.²³ Youth participants were also matched with mentors, who provided academic, relational and, where appropriate, world-of-work support. Lead agencies worked closely with the congregations and community-based organizations that recruited mentors. They screened the mentors according to national standards, matched them with program participants, offered ongoing support and provided case management for mentors and mentees. Mentors were required to complete a monthly log describing their contact with their mentees. Case managers regularly asked participants about their relationships, to help reinforce participation and negotiate any concerns.

- *Providing case management and referral and/or direct wraparound services as needed.* Case management was conceived as the primary component that would hold together Ready4Work's

various other elements. Each site developed a strategy whereby case managers worked individually with participants to maximize their likelihood of job retention and progress, establish successful mentoring, and identify other services needed to successfully reenter society at large. Sites typically hired two to four full-time case managers, who were required to meet regularly with participants and to offer individual referrals for outside services, such as substance abuse treatment, housing, transportation and mental and/or physical health services. Areas of special emphasis included health-related concerns such as HIV/AIDS support, services for parents and families, and assistance with obtaining identification (usually a driver's license or social security card).²⁴ Sites were urged to keep case managers' client lists manageable—25 to 35 participants—which helped ensure the successful delivery of services.

- *Providing literacy, education and work-based learning opportunities.* For adult ex-prisoners demonstrating need, and for all juvenile returnees participating in the local initiative, sites provided appropriate educational opportunities in partnership with other local institutions. These included GED programs, alternative high schools for delinquent youth, community colleges or historically black colleges and universities, specialized work-learning programs for youthful offenders and soft skills or training programs tailored to the reentry population.
- *Maintaining contact and compliance with P/PV and the national initiative.* Each lead agency had responsibility for data collection and reporting to P/PV (P/PV staff developed and trained sites to use a common data-collection system). Site leaders and P/PV operations staff worked together to organize quarterly on-site technical assistance visits, as well as monthly desk audits and weekly progress reports.

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- *Sharing lessons learned.* Sites in P/PV's previous demonstrations had reported that some of their richest learning experiences came from hearing about what other agencies were doing to meet implementation challenges. The Ready4Work initiative was designed to provide ample opportunity for cross-site learning, with sites being called upon to present their implementation strategies, successes and challenges to other sites at national conferences. For example, all 17 sites came together for a three-day conference in the spring of 2004, in Los Angeles, and again in March 2005, in Seattle. The juvenile Ready4Work sites gathered in Philadelphia in August 2005, to discuss issues specific to serving younger returnees. In addition to these in-person gatherings, sites have also been required to take part in a series of web-based meetings, in which technical assistance was regularly offered in areas such as financial management, case management, job development, mentoring and financial sustainability.

P/PV has regularly shared other relevant material with the sites as well, including an occasional newsletter, *Ready4Work News*. It developed a mentoring pamphlet, which identified boundaries concerning proselytization and prohibitions against publicly funding any inherently religious activity; sites used the pamphlet as a resource in local mentor training sessions. P/PV also convened information sessions about emerging public policy in the area of prisoner reentry.

PROGRAM EXPANSION

In the late spring of 2004, Ready4Work received \$5 million from DOL to fund the second and third years of its program. That summer, Ready4Work received an additional \$10 million from DOL, to be used over the next two years—primarily to intensify and strengthen the services it can offer participants, to support the sites' technical assistance needs and to fund an enlarged communications and report strategy.

The expansion grant has strengthened Ready4Work in the following ways:

Integration and Enhancement of Services to Participants

- *Job development and job placement.*

Recent research from the Center for Research on Religion and Urban Civil Society has found that different kinds of providers have distinct strengths in implementing welfare-to-work programs. Faith-based programs, for example, were found to be particularly effective in increasing clients' sense of hope and creating a social network. Moreover, in a study of welfare-to-work programs in Los Angeles, for-profit providers were deemed nearly twice as successful as other kinds of agencies in placing unemployed clients in jobs. Specifically, 12 months into providing services to welfare-to-work recipients, these for-profit programs were able to find jobs for 59 percent of their populations, compared with the average employment rate of less than 25 percent attributed to other providers.²⁵ Familiar with this research, DOL officials asked P/PV to reach out to such for-profit providers and to enlist them in partnerships with local Ready4Work sites. DOL wanted to see whether for-profit providers could effectively employ strategies not commonly used by nonprofit agencies, such as giving financial incentives to jobs counselors to get ex-prisoners to complete training programs, meet their parole requirements and find and hold jobs. While the study was anecdotal rather than

conclusive, P/PV agreed to explore whether there could be benefits in partnering with this sector.

The expansion grant allowed Ready4Work to use leading for-profit job placement firms, most notably America Works, to strengthen the placement methods currently being used by project sites. Operation New Hope in Jacksonville, Florida, Ready4Work's first site, said that input from America Works "was one of the most important things that has taken place." Kevin Gay, New Hope's executive director, noted the consultant from America Works stressed that the program needed to consider employers as the program's "customers" and the participants in the program as the "product." As Gay added, "We need to get our product ready for the market." The interaction with America Works led Operation New Hope to change its staffing and to transform its job-readiness training for participants into a formal two-week curriculum that includes resumé-writing, interview skills and how to research job possibilities.

The new funds also allowed P/PV to draw on lessons learned from the earlier linkage of NFBI to the Job Corps. In that program, youth enrolled by mentors from faith-based sites had a higher success rate than did others referred to Job Corps.

- *Integration of Ready4Work with other government programs.* From its inception, Ready4Work's program was designed to enable the program to be able to tap into sources of support that could sustain returnees even beyond the duration of the initiative. Two national experts on these issues are now consulting with Ready4Work sites. The first is Jason Turner, who helped design successful welfare reform efforts in Wisconsin and New York City. The second is Mark S. Hoover, another key principal of welfare reform in

Wisconsin and New York. Their goal is to help the sites access public services available to returnees, such as food stamps and TANF funds, and generally promote the long-term sustainability of the sites. DOL's Employment and Training Administration believes one important route is to link Ready4Work to the Department of Agriculture's Food Stamp Employment and Training Program funding streams.

Knowledge Development and Dissemination

In addition to the planned publication of the project's research reports, P/PV has convened three major conferences for site leaders and practitioners; another conference will be convened in early 2006 to disseminate the project's lessons and work—both for those inside the initiative and for policymakers and social workers considering its lessons for future projects. Moreover, P/PV has commissioned a study by two outside scholars, who will conduct an in-depth analysis of three Ready4Work sites in the Southeastern U.S. (the programs to be profiled are in Washington DC, Memphis and Jacksonville).²⁶

P/PV is also providing technical assistance to sites through ongoing web-based conferences. Smaller in-person conferences are also being convened. These have included a "New Horizons in Reentry" gathering for all site leaders, focusing on a more seamless model of reentry, based on the experiences of those outside the Ready4Work project. Additionally, P/PV hosted a Juvenile Ready4Work seminar focusing exclusively on the concerns of juveniles who are leaving detention centers, with a particular emphasis on education and vocational training. A conference for religious leaders is also planned and will focus on how congregations can better equip returnees and volunteers alike to address concerns around rising rates of HIV/AIDS.

Finally, with funds from P/PV's Venture Fund and the Annie E. Casey Foundation, P/PV is producing a feature-length documentary on Ready4Work, highlighting its New York site, Exodus Transitional Community. P/PV believes the documentary will inspire service on the part of volunteers and inform public understanding of reentry issues.

PROMISING PRACTICES

Halfway through the Ready4Work demonstration, initial best practices have begun to emerge. Since the circumstances faced by each site vary slightly, unique strategies are being employed. Nonetheless, common themes are evident, ranging across the four primary program areas: recruiting participants, providing case management, developing the mentoring component and building an effective job training and placement program. While additional best practices will likely become discernible in the final year of the project, the following strategies have been identified as particularly promising.

Recruitment

- *Establishing corrections partnerships.* While recruiting, sites have found it valuable to establish formal partnerships with the local Department of Corrections (DOC), including federal prisons, state penitentiaries, and, in the case of programs involving young people, local Juvenile Justice commissions. Sites have been encouraged to develop relationships with incarcerated individuals prior to their release, since this allows more time for relationships to develop between participants and their case managers and mentors. Many sites have discovered that DOC officials are quite willing to gather eligible participants for a special presentation inside prisons, and this offers case managers or other program staff responsible for recruiting Ready4Work participants an opportunity to speak directly to prospective participants.
- *Advertising.* In recruiting participants after their release from prison, several sites have found that the use of advertising in the local newspaper is a remarkably promising tool, for several reasons. Most importantly, this process inherently screens prospective participants for those wanting to work, enabling those willing to engage “the system” to take the initiative to find a program that can help them do

so. In both Detroit and Milwaukee, for example, small “Help Wanted” advertisements generated hundreds of responses. Similarly, in Oakland, the lead Ready4Work site distributed flyers in zip codes where exceptionally large numbers of returnees were living, and this too produced a large pool of self-motivated applicants.

Case Management

As noted earlier, the case management element has been found to be critical, since in many ways it is the glue that holds together the program’s various components. Sites have learned, first, that it is crucial to develop a clear definition of case manager roles and responsibilities. Case managers are typically responsible for many tasks: for recruitment, for performing the initial assessment, for connecting participants to housing and other support services, and for ensuring that participants receive suitable job training, educational services and mentoring. Since the case manager’s role is in many respects to be “the face” of the program, expectations for this job need to be clearly delineated. It is also important that they be given a manageable caseload, typically 25 to 35 participants. Providing training and closer supervision for those less experienced, or for those who come from less traditional backgrounds, has also been found useful by Ready4Work’s most successful sites.

Mentoring

The mentoring component is perhaps the most distinctive—and the most experimental—element of Ready4Work. Several important practices have emerged in this new field.

- *Hiring a mentor coordinator.* Sites have found that hiring a mentor coordinator is crucial to the success of the mentoring component. Programming has typically worked best when this is one person, not several, who works

full-time or half-time as a member of the program team, so he or she will be familiar with all mentoring concerns. An alternative model is to provide a stipend for congregational mentor coordinators, whereby one coordinator in each congregation oversees volunteer mentors from a particular church, synagogue, or mosque, and facilitates their public recognition and support.

- *Obtaining pastoral endorsement.* When working with congregations, it is critical to have “buy-in” and support from the pastor, rabbi or imam so that they regularly carry the mentoring message to their congregations, challenging them to become involved and to persevere in the work. Several sites have generated remarkably large numbers of male mentors—an unusual trend in many urban communities—precisely because pastors have challenged the men in their congregations to work alongside this disadvantaged population. (Cross-gender matches are disallowed, except in the instances of group mentoring that could involve both a male and female mentor with a larger group of participants.)
- *Early mentoring intervention.* Ex-prisoners are in many ways a challenging population. Many have psychological barriers and past experiences that hinder their involvement as mentees. Sites have found that these barriers can often be minimized by beginning the mentor-mentee relationship prior to a participant’s release from prison, giving the relationship more time to develop.
- *Offering robust mentor training and support.* With P/PV’s assistance, sites have been able to offer effective training to help prepare mentors for their roles. Staff from The Mentoring Center and mentoring expert Jerry Sherk (a former Cleveland Browns player who now works as a full-time mentoring consultant) have also been brought in to provide such training.²⁷

Based on past research findings from P/PV, sites have worked to ensure that case managers play an active role in mentoring relationships.²⁸ This provides stability for the participant, reinforces the mentor training sessions and offers a window for the mentor to discuss other program elements, including any possible concerns.

Employment

- *Developing outside collaborations.* One of the most important practices has been to develop partnerships that can provide a wider range of educational and jobs-oriented training for participants. These can include cooperation with local One-Stop Career Centers, with outside agencies who offer soft skills or interview training, with community-based GED training groups and many others. When available, transitional jobs that offer stipends can be another critical factor for participants.
- *Balancing creativity and flexibility.* Sites have been challenged to balance a focus on strong job training with their participants’ need to begin work immediately. Many case managers and program directors say they have found it helpful to cultivate flexible approaches that can meet individual participants “where they are.”
- *Recruiting employers for job development.* Sites have also noted the importance of having one staff member focus on recruiting employers, especially when he or she has professional experience in this role. This person, typically called a job developer, should take a business-to-business approach, emphasizing to prospective employers that Ready4Work participants have been screened and trained—and that employers stand to gain from the Work Opportunity Tax Credit, as well as the Federal Bonding Program, which protects employers from possible law-

suits for past crimes that the returnees might have committed.

- *Matching employees strategically.* Sites need to utilize strategies that match the right participant with specific job openings, thus cultivating wider employer satisfaction and strengthening the likelihood of a participant's job retention. It is critical that the job developer gets to know both sides—the prospective employer and prospective employees—in order to make effective matches.
- *Following up.* Follow-up, both with participants and their employers, is crucial. It is important to see job placement not as an end but rather as a beginning. On-the-job visits by the job developer or case manager have proved effective in many sites, offering insight into job satisfaction, work conditions and employers' concerns—or appreciation.

The above-named practices, especially when rooted in program activities that truly place individuals and their needs at the center of services, are likely to produce greater success and help participants move toward self-sufficiency.²⁹

AWAITING THE RESULTS

Ready4Work arose in response to feedback from employers about what it would take for them to hire returnees; it also grew from the desire to tap the potential of faith-based organizations to work with these high-risk individuals. The hoped-for outcomes of the model are reduced recidivism, productive engagement by returnees in the workforce and the creation of healthy social relationships.

While it will take a formal impact evaluation of the program's results to see if the Ready4Work model lives up to its promise, the initial trends appear to be positive, with high participation statistics and few reported instances of recidivism. As of June 1, 2005, 97 percent of both adult and juvenile participants were being actively case-managed through a comprehensive needs-assessment and the subsequent provision of services, monitoring and follow-up; 66 percent had received one-to-one or group mentoring support; and 61 percent of all active participants were employed—with 58 percent of those having retained their job for at least three months.³⁰ While the average wage was reported at \$7.95 per hour, some participants, especially those who had taken advantage of apprenticeship programs and vocational training, reported wages as high as \$26.00 per hour. Finally, of all participants who had *ever* enrolled in the program, 59 percent had gotten jobs.

P/PV is conducting ongoing research on the program's implementation to develop knowledge for funders, policymakers and others about successful program strategies. Specific implementation guides will look at two potentially difficult areas that reentry programs must address: first, how sites most effectively connect returnees to the labor market and educational opportunities, and second, how sites most effectively facilitate supportive relationships among returnees, community volunteers and/or returnee family members.

Of course, abiding questions about the implementation of the initiative are widespread, and their answers will find a large interested audience. For example, what are the characteristics of the men and women the initiative serves, and what kinds of participants can benefit most from a cross-sector intervention of this kind? How successfully do faith-based and community-based organizations provide ongoing employment readiness, post-placement support, mentoring and case management to the men and women who are reentering society? How effective are the lead organizations in forming and maintaining effective partnerships with the varied organizations that are required for the success of this intervention? Are the needs of the local businesses and employers being met through the initiative—and are local businesses able and willing to provide employment opportunities and training to this population of former prisoners? How does the initiative's ability to provide employment opportunities vary with changes in local economic conditions, and what other contextual issues provide opportunities and challenges to the implementation of the initiative? With regard to mentoring, what kind of mentoring—group, individual or team—is best when it comes to working with this high-risk adult population? What challenges exist in identifying needed services and in collaborating with other service agencies? Can those challenges be overcome?

Initial responses to these questions that are discernible through Ready4Work have already helped to form core principles of the Prisoner Reentry Initiative (PRI), a much larger initiative of the Bush administration. By its original design, the PRI program was designed to cost \$300 million over four years (2005–2009), involving the Department of Housing and Urban Development as well as the Department of Labor and the Department of Justice. A proposed element was that, in addition to providing returnees with

job training and mentoring, the PRI planned to partially subsidize transitional housing for returnees. However, the initial program year received \$35 million in Congressional support, and awards to local community-based and faith-based groups were scheduled for release by October 2005. Planning for all three cabinet agencies was convened by the Department of Labor, whose officials have stated that their experience with Ready4Work informed the solicitation for grant applications for the PRI.

With a new grant from the Ford Foundation, P/PV is also exploring ways for faith-based groups engaged in this work to support participants and others in their communities who are HIV-positive and/or have AIDS. Ex-prisoners today are five times more likely than the general population to have HIV, and in 2002, 8.8 percent of prisoners tested positive for HIV.³¹ The infection has reached near-epidemic status particularly in the African American community, which makes up the majority of those served by Ready4Work. In North Carolina, for example, African Americans account for nearly 70 percent of existing HIV/AIDS cases.³² The grant is specifically intended to support the health assessments of Ready4Work participants themselves, assess the capacity of sites to address HIV and AIDS, support sites in increasing their capacity in this area (primarily through the development of a referral network), and develop a public policy, advocacy and education agenda aimed at reducing the spread of HIV/AIDS by the reentering population.

Clearly the needs of this population are significant; by design, this initiative—in addition to meeting many of those needs—is beginning to provide policymakers and practitioners with important insights about how the public sector, philanthropies, businesses and local community-based and faith-based organizations can work together to help ex-prisoners achieve self-sufficiency. It is

also serving a group of individuals that few in society have taken considerable time or interest in assisting. Experts have demonstrated that ex-inmates, without this kind of help, are returning to prison at astonishing rates. The public costs of recidivism affect all of us—beyond harming victims, perpetrators and their immediate families in particularly traumatic ways.

Ready4Work is taking a hard, thorough look at whether faith-based and community-based groups can help fill a void and steer returnees away from a life of crime. And since recent trends suggest reentry in the U.S. is an expanding rather than a retreating social policy problem, practitioners and policymakers alike may do well to carefully heed its results.³³

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- 22 According to William Hudson, president and general manager of the Memphis Area Transit Authority and also a member of the local advisory council of Second Chance, his city's Ready4Work initiative: "Executives would pull me aside and say, 'Tell me a little more about how the program works.'"
- 23 As of the middle of the second program year (February 28, 2005), for example, 78 percent of all adult participants and 60 percent of juvenile participants had received one-to-one or group mentoring support.
- 24 Some faith- and community-based institutions in the initiative also established partnerships with community health clinics, community-based substance abuse or mental health providers. Primarily, sites focused on assisting program participants in navigating the health system, identifying resources and understanding eligibility requirements and application processes for services and insurance available to the returnee population. Additionally, sites worked to facilitate relationships between ex-prisoners and their families, including both assisting fathers in negotiating the child support system (often an area of frustration for returnee parents), and in

- some cases actually helping individuals and organizations negotiate with local child support systems to reduce or waive child support payments for certain periods of time.
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- 26 This report is being written by two sociologists from the Institute for Families on Society at the University of South Carolina, Dr. Andrew Billingsley and Dr. Patricia Motes, and is expected to be published by P/PV in 2006.
- 27 Based in California and founded in 1991, The Mentoring Center has a two-tiered mission: to improve the quality and effectiveness of mentoring programs and to provide a direct service mentoring program model designed to transform the lives of the most highly at-risk youth. The organization was created to serve as a technical assistance and training provider for mentoring programs in the Bay Area, and it has served more than 800 mentoring programs in its 12 years of operation (see www.mentor.org).
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- 29 For more information about Ready4Work's emerging best practices, see Linda Jucovy's forthcoming report, which will be available on P/PV's website, www.ppv.org.
- 30 While anecdotal evidence from sites about known instances of recidivism appear to be quite positive, more time is needed before any comprehensive analysis is done. Additionally, these statistics come from an updated, second-year "snapshot" of the program's work, based on more than 2,700 total participants who had been recruited by the sites.
- 31 The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services estimated that in 2000, over 56,000 current inmates were HIV-positive, and AIDS is the number-one killer of ex-prisoners in several states (see "Special Programs of National Significance Report on New 1999-2000 Initiatives: Correctional Settings," at [ftp://ftp.hrsa.gov/hab/SpnsRpt5.pdf](http://ftp.hrsa.gov/hab/SpnsRpt5.pdf), September 2000, p. 35).
- 32 Clemetson, Lynette. "Links Between Prison and AIDS Affecting Blacks Inside and Out," *The New York Times*, August 7, 2004.
- 33 See Petersilia's *When Prisoners Come Home*, which suggests at least 635,000 people will be released from federal prisons in the years following 2002 (see especially p. v, and pps. 3-20). See also "Matters of Faith ... and Prison," written by Josh Good and published by the Center for Public Justice, which outlines average annual costs of detaining an individual, reincarceration rates in the U.S., and the problem of overflowing jails due to stiffer drug penalties and other "get-tough-on-crime" legislation on the books since the 1980s (available online at [http://www.cpjustice.org/stories/storyReader\\$1233](http://www.cpjustice.org/stories/storyReader$1233)).

APPENDIX A: ADULT READY4WORK SITES

Chicago, IL

The SAFER Foundation opened its doors in Chicago in 1972 as a service provider to former offenders seeking to obtain employment following release from prison or jail. Today, at nine locations in Illinois and Iowa, SAFER provides services to over 8,000 former offenders each year. The Foundation's focus remains preparing released prisoners for the world of work and then helping them to find and keep meaningful employment through a full range of employment services. SAFER also provides its clients with additional services, including substance abuse treatment, education and life skills. In addition, as the only nonprofit private organization to manage adult transition centers for the Illinois Department of Corrections, SAFER provides secured oversight and services for over 500 males in two residential facilities located on the west side of Chicago. Through its involvement with the Ready4Work project, SAFER is partnering with five congregations in Chicago neighborhoods that have the largest numbers of returnees, providing technical assistance and other resources to enhance program development and the delivery of services for former prisoners. Full-time case managers operating out of offices near each congregation work with SAFER staff to provide returnees with pre-employment training, job referrals and placement opportunities. SAFER also has a very strong reputation with a network of local businesses that hires returnees.

Detroit, MI

America Works Detroit is a for-profit job training and placement organization that is leading the local Ready4Work initiative in collaboration with the Hartford Memorial Church of Detroit, where Dr. Charles Adams is the senior pastor. In an innovative display of cooperation between the church's leadership and Detroit America Works, Hartford Memorial is recruiting mentors to work with participants on a one-to-one basis. America Works administers comprehensive job training, case management and job placement services, with an emphasis on rapid attachment to the workforce following a mandatory one-week, 40-hour job-training class. As a nationally recognized job placement agency, America Works operates out of an innovative, market-driven approach to welfare programs, and has achieved demonstrable success in administering its criminal justice curriculum with participants. Two staff members work full-time to recruit employers and help job seekers with the interview process, offering employment opportunities matched to participants according to their abilities and interests.

Houston, TX

Moving Forward is run by the Innerchange Freedom Initiative (IFI) in collaboration with Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church (WABC). WABC has a 41-year history of ecumenical and outside collaboration in providing services to children, Boy/Girl Scouts, prisoners, the poor, homeless and the elderly. Officially, WABC's 5 C's Foundation is serving as the church's lead agency, which subcontracts direct services to IFI, which also offers programming for 200 inmates and 130 former inmates at the Carol Vance Unit prison. (Inmates who are classified as "minimum-in" or lower custody may be housed at the unit.) Only inmates who are going to return to Harris County or surrounding counties may participate in Moving Forward's program. Upon successfully completing the in-care portion of the program, members are placed in aftercare, where they receive help in securing a home, finding employment and establishing a relationship with a mentor. After six months of successful reintegration, they may then be recommended for graduation from the program. The program also receives direct referrals from the

Harris County Probation and Parole Departments; unlike IFI's other program, Moving Forward's participants are not required to develop a relationship with a church.

Jacksonville, FL

Jacksonville Ready4Work was developed in 2002 by the Department of Labor's Center for Faith Based Initiatives as the pilot site of the Ready4Work initiative. Jacksonville Ready4Work brings together a collaboration of existing programs that together create a web of services for returnees. Two faith-based organizations have thus far combined efforts to provide leadership for this program: Operation New Hope and City Center Workforce Development. Operation New Hope was formed in January 1999 to provide affordable housing in the historic Springfield District of downtown Jacksonville and the surrounding urban core, and today provides job training and job placement in the construction field for returnees. City Center Workforce Development recruits participants into the program from prison facilities, partners with other organizations to recruit mentors from the faith community and supplies case management to participants and mentors.

Los Angeles, CA

Founded in 1891, the *Union Rescue Mission* (URM) is the largest homeless mission in the United States. URM's mission is to bring help and hope to homeless and poor men, women and children living in the city of Los Angeles. Many of the clients seeking assistance from URM are returnees. Over the years URM has grown in its efforts to feed both body and soul, helping individuals and families break the cycle of poverty and achieve self-sufficiency. URM works with and provides valuable services to returnees in many different capacities such as emergency services (food, shelter and clothing), mental, dental and health services, job-training and placement services, and spiritual/recovery programs. In 1994 URM moved into a 225,000 square foot facility able to shelter 1,000 persons per night, and which includes a computer-based learning center, library, children's play and study areas, and a gymnasium for its short-term and long-term guests. Thanks to the many community partnerships it has formed, URM has become a community hub for its clients. Given its strong partnerships with local colleges and universities such as the UCLA School of Nursing Health Center, Pepperdine University Mental Health Clinic, USC Dental Clinic and Pepperdine University Legal Aid Clinic, URM is one of the most comprehensive service centers for the returnee population in the city. Its annual budget is approximately \$20 million, and it has developed an intensive, nine-month Life Discipleship Program for Ready4Work returnees.

Memphis, TN

The City of Memphis Second Chance Ex-Felon Program, a public/private partnership between the city and local businesses, was launched in December 2000 by Mayor W. W. Herenton. The program leadership describes their effort as seeking to change lives by giving returnees the one thing they're missing: an opportunity. The program's goal is to lower Memphis' recidivism and crime rates by connecting first-time felons with employers willing to hire them in living wage jobs, and to provide follow-up case management during the employment transition period. Unlike many other Memphis public social service programs, this program is at the very heart of Mayor Herenton's administration. Every participant meets personally with the Mayor, and after shaking his hand, commits to do what it takes to succeed in the program. The program operates under the day-to-day leadership of an accomplished ex-felon, and delivers "heart" with help.

Milwaukee, WI

Word of Hope Ministries is a comprehensive service program of the Holy Cathedral Church of God in Christ. Founded in 1995, Word of Hope Ministries has a mission to provide an array of services that support the physical and spiritual needs of individuals in the community. Through its Family Resource Center, Word of Hope currently offers case management, referrals, substance abuse counseling, job training and placement, health care, computer-based GED preparation and basic computer skills training. Holy Cathedral Church of God is a large, prominent church in the city, and it is also the parent organization for the Family Resource Center, which houses office space for case managers to provide Ready4Work's job placement, mentoring and case management components. Local collaborations in the city include relationships with the Milwaukee Private Industry Council (job training and placement) and the Faith Partnership Network (case management).

New York, NY

Exodus Transitional Community, Inc. was founded in 1996 by a returnee from Sing Sing who received his master's in professional studies from the New York Theological Seminary while incarcerated. Located in East Harlem, the organization offers social, economic, educational and spiritual supportive programs and case management to individuals in transition from incarceration, drug addiction and homelessness. Exodus' programmatic approach is based on a "contract" with individual returnees—a combined assessment tool and action plan, by which participants evaluate their status and set goals for themselves in the areas of family, physical well-being, education/vocation, technology knowledge and community involvement. This self-evaluation is the basis for formulating goals and the case management support of each individual during reentry from incarceration to community. Exodus' staff consists primarily of former prisoners or individuals directly affected by incarceration in their immediate families. Exodus also has a Ready4Work program designed for juvenile returnees, described in Appendix B.

Oakland, CA

Allen Temple Baptist Church was established in 1919, and provides not only for the spiritual and worship needs of its congregation, but also the community service needs and cultural enrichment of East Oakland. Over the years, Allen Temple has flourished under the leadership and direction of Pastor Dr. J. Alfred Smith, Sr., under whom its membership grew from 600 in 1972 to over 5,000 in 2003. The church has demonstrated a strong commitment to improving the quality of life in East Oakland by creating the Allen Temple Housing and Economic Development Corporation (ATHEDCO) to promote housing and jobs for low-income residents. The corporation expanded its services to include counseling, job training and placement, substance abuse treatment, family services, and housing for returnees. Through its various ministries and social programs, Allen Temple serves adults and youth including low-income residents, elderly, adults afflicted with AIDS, and former prisoners—offering them a wide range of services/programs including food, clothing, housing, GED preparation, computer classes, recreation, job-training, anger management workshops and referrals to other social service agencies. ATHEDCO constructed senior housing and more recently began the Dr. J. Alfred Smith Training Academy to focus on preparing men and women for construction and other service trades; all Ready4Work participants undergo this intensive training program.

Philadelphia, PA

Philadelphia's *Search for Common Ground* emerged after a diverse group of public and private sector organizations, agencies and individuals met in March 2002 to address the problem of high rates of recidivism among the city's returnee population. The group, at the time called the Philadelphia Consensus Group on Reentry & Reintegration of Adjudicated Offenders (PCGRRAO), was comprised of representatives from Philadelphia's court and prison systems, the Philadelphia police department, attorneys from Community Legal Services and the District Attorney's Office—as well as service providers, faith-based organizations and community groups who work with Philadelphia jails and returnees. A consensus process was initiated by Search for Common Ground, a Washington DC-based conflict resolution organization with a presence in 16 countries. PCGRRAO formulated an innovative action plan to meet the needs of returning offenders through developing and promoting pragmatic and concrete measures to enhance participation in society by men and women leaving the Philadelphia prison system. The program encourages accountability, preserves neighborhood safety and ensures that victims of crime are respected, protected and restored. Through Ready4Work, Search for Common Ground's Philadelphia Consensus Group is implementing this plan by providing sub-grants and technical assistance to local faith-based service providers for the support of increased direct services to returnees.

Washington, DC

East of the River Clergy, Police, Community Partnership (ERCPCP) is the lead institution for a group of multid denominational, faith-based institutions throughout the Washington area that collaborated with the District's Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA) in May 2002 to implement an innovative reentry initiative. ERCPCP's Ready4Work initiative is designed to provide reintegration services for participating ex-prisoners returning to the community upon their release from incarceration. The services ERCPCP has designed support each returnee in successfully bridging the gap between prison and the community. Mentors walk alongside former prisoners as they begin their new lives. ERCPCP has had considerable success in creating a pool of more than 20 diverse faith institutions and service providers who act as partners in providing mentoring for returnees.

APPENDIX B: JUVENILE READY4WORK SITES

Boston, MA

Straight Ahead Ministries provides holistic services to juvenile offenders who are incarcerated in detention facilities, and continues to provide services upon these young adults' release into society. An interdenominational Christian organization, the program operates in ten states: Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Maine, Vermont, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Jersey, Georgia, Nebraska and Colorado. Its mission is to use Bible studies, positive adult role models, sports and training to substantially curb recidivism rates and restore young men and women as young leaders in their local communities.

Brooklyn, NY

Girls Reentry Assistance Support Project (GRASP) is a faith-based re-entry initiative for young girls aged 13 through 18 that was established by the Kings County District Attorney's Office (KCDA) in conjunction with the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) and other placement or correctional facilities. Its goal is to reduce criminal recidivism among female youth returning to the community after serving time in a placement or correctional facility, and to provide the youth with positive adult role models. GRASP seeks to provide these girls with the ability to change their lives and communities for the better through mentoring, job and educational opportunities, cultural activities and community service projects, and to reduce the influence of risk factors that correlate with high levels of recalcitrant criminal behavior. GRASP uses a team mentoring model in its program.

Camden, NJ

Volunteers of America Delaware Valley (VOADV) is a local chapter of a national faith-based nonprofit organization that provides human service programs and other opportunities for individual and community involvement. Volunteers of America (VOA) was founded by two Christian social reformers in 1896 as a broad spiritual movement to "reach and uplift" Americans nationwide. Today VOA has 40 branches throughout the country. For the local Juvenile Ready4Work program, VOADV has developed an extensive range of community services, and works directly with county, city and state public officials to provide services and programs for needy individuals. It currently runs six corrections programs for young adults, including Fletcher House (84 residents), Day Reporting Center (55 clients), Hope Hall (150 beds), Station House (100 ex-prisoners) and the Aftercare Support Promoting Inmate Re-Entry Program (ASPIRE). Working out of office space at the Day Reporting Center, three full-time case managers are providing wraparound services for Camden's Juvenile Ready4Work participants.

Houston, TX

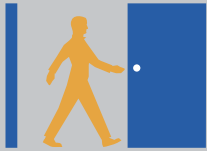
Houston's Juvenile Ready4Work program is administered by *Moving Forward*, in collaboration with the Greater St. Paul Community Development Center. The program serves the third and fifth wards of Houston, providing court advocacy and other wraparound supportive services such as educational assistance, job-training, mentoring and placement into the local workforce. To meet the needs of the many Hispanic returnees in Harris County, the site has a full-time Spanish-speaking case manager. It is strongly supported by the Harris County Juvenile Parole and Probation Department, and works closely with Moving Forward's adult Ready4Work program.

Los Angeles, CA

Los Angeles TenPoint was established in 2004 to minister to, mentor and monitor high-risk youth through the implementation of best practices in youth violence prevention identified by the National TenPoint Leadership Foundation and its sites across the United States, and through collaborative crime analysis of youth violence trends and information gathering and sharing. The coalition also focuses on developing neighborhood-based strategies for addressing the unique developmental needs of gang-involved youth in Los Angeles. Los Angeles TenPoint works closely with the West Angeles Church of God in Christ where Bishop Charles Blake, Sr. is pastor. The West Angeles Church of God in Christ has over 175 employees, and coordinates a force of over 1,000 volunteers to serve the congregation and community through some 80 specialized ministries, programs, and support groups that assist and empower its participants.

Seattle, WA

The Church Council of Greater Seattle (CCGS) brings Protestant and Roman Catholic churches to serve at-risk youth, the elderly, the homeless and hungry. It also advocates for racial justice, economic justice and global peace, and it encourages ecumenical and interfaith cooperation. CCGS is partnering with the Center for Career Alternatives (CCA) for the delivery of services to returning youth. CCA is a Presidential Award-winning agency established in 1979 with the following mission: “to provide the highest education, employment, training and career development services leading to individual self-sufficiency and self worth for a culturally diverse population of disadvantaged youth and adults.”



Ready4**Work**

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