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Evaluation of the Newark Prisoner Re-entry Initiative Replication Project

Interim Report

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Prepared by:

Kate Dunham
Charles Lea
Jennifer Henderson-Frakes
Sandra Harvey

Prepared for:

U.S. Department of Labor/ETA/
Office of Policy Development and
Research

200 Constitution Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20210

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2008, the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration (ETA) awarded $2 million to the City of Newark to replicate the Prisoner Re-entry Initiative (PRI) model of services on a city-wide basis. The PRI model, intended to help ex-offenders make successful transitions to paid and stable employment, has been tested by ETA in 30 other sites nationally. It involves intensive case management, assistance with work readiness, job search, and job placement, and two unique features: 1) the provision of mentoring and 2) the use of faith-based and community organizations (FBCOs) to deliver services. The Newark replication was intended to bring the PRI model to scale by funding multiple organizations in a single city, thus saturating a single site with re-entry services. The Newark Prisoner Re-entry Initiative Replication (NPRIR) also made use of substantial matching funding (approximately $2 million provided by the Nicholson Foundation) to further expand the reach of NPRIR.

A total of six FCBOs operated programs under the Newark replication. The City contracted with four organizations—La Casa de Don Pedro (La Casa), the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice (NJISJ), Offender Aid and Restoration (OAR), and Renaissance Community Development Corporation Center (RCDCC)—to serve 670 non-violent ex-offenders, while the Nicholson Foundation provided direct financial support to Goodwill and America Works, Inc. to serve an additional 670 violent and non-violent ex-offenders.

This interim report describes various aspects of project implementation, including services provided, collaboration, administrative challenges, and client experiences. Findings presented in the report are based on site visits conducted in June 2009 and March 2010 and administrative data from the PRI Management Information System (MIS). A final report, due later in 2011, will explore outcomes, as identified from program data, Unemployment Insurance wage records, and data from local and state criminal justice agencies.

Recruitment and Enrollment

Recruiting participants was a key goal and the six NPRIR service providers used a variety of means to achieve their enrollment targets, including making presentations to corrections agencies

and local community organizations and, in the case of Goodwill and OAR, conducting pre-release recruitment activities at Northern State Prison and Essex County Jail. In addition, referrals were made by halfway houses and community resource centers (CRCs) under contract with the New Jersey State Parole Board (NJ SPB) and the New Jersey Department of Corrections (NJ DOC), by the city's Office of Re-entry, and by other local agencies, such as the Newark One-Stop Career Center. Goodwill and America Works received most of their referrals from Opportunity Reconnect, a prisoner re-entry services center located at Essex Community College. Finally, many NPRIR participants were self-referred. As a result of all these efforts and resources, the project overall had achieved a total enrollment of 1,000 participants at the time of data collection, 75 percent of the program's overall goal of 1,340.

The typical NPRIR participant was a single African American male in his mid-thirties who had two children with whom he did not live. Only about a third of participants reported having a high school diploma or GED and about two-thirds of participants reported they had not used drugs or alcohol three months prior to either enrollment or incarceration. Thirty-four percent reported working full-time prior to incarceration, with the average length of their longest full-time job being 2.3 years. Housing situations were diverse, ranging from stable to transitional, as some participants reported owning a house or renting a room or apartment, while others were just staying in someone's apartment or house or living in a halfway house or other transitional housing.

On average, NPRIR participants had been incarcerated for 4.1 years over their lifetimes. About four-fifths reported that their most recent incarceration was in a state prison. About 61 percent of NPRIR participants were reported to be on parole while 13 percent were on probation (Federal or local). In terms of presenting offenses, 41 percent of the participants were most recently convicted of a violent crime.

Services

The PRI model required that grantees provide three primary services: intensive case management, workforce services, and mentoring. Each of these is discussed below.

Case Management

Participants received comprehensive assessments of their employment and other service needs, educational background, current and previous work experiences, family ties, and offense history. Once the initial assessment was completed, case managers worked with each participant to create a customized individual development plan (IDP) that included goals (usually in the areas of employment, skill-building, and personal or family) and specific action steps. Case management

was intensive, involving frequent contact between case managers and participants, as required under the City's policy (i.e., weekly contact during clients' first 30 days of participation, bi-weekly contacts for the next 30 days and monthly contacts thereafter). This frequency of contact was made possible by the low caseloads (from 10 to 25 active cases per case manager, depending on the providers). Case managers reported following and even exceeding these contact requirements during the initial phases, with many having almost daily informal contact with participants during the first week or two after enrollment. However, after the first month of participation, case managers reported scheduling monthly in-person meetings with participants. Nonetheless, due to the frequency of contact, a number of participants reported that they developed strong, supportive, and trusting relationships with their case managers.

NPRIR case managers also reported playing an active role in connecting participants to supportive services; 64 percent of exited participants had received a supportive service, such as transportation assistance (the most common) and assistance with obtaining replacement identification (ID) cards. Case managers also reported referring a number of participants to other organizations for a variety of services, including legal assistance, clothing, health care, vocational rehabilitation, housing, food stamps, public assistance, emergency food, and substance abuse treatment services.

Once a participant was employed and appeared stable in that employment, NPRIR service providers typically began providing only follow-up services, including case management, supportive services and mentoring. Overall, 41 percent of exited NPRIR participants had received some type of follow-up service at the time of data collection for this report.

Workforce Services

After case management, the next most common NPRIR service was workforce preparation, which included work readiness training, job placement assistance, job retention assistance, and transitional employment. Eighty-four percent of participants had received at least one workforce preparation service at the time of data collection. All NPRIR providers engaged participants in some type of work readiness training, such as teaching participants to conduct job searches, complete job applications, develop resumes and cover letters, interview for jobs (and discuss criminal convictions), identify career interests and opportunities, understand labor market information, communicate effectively with supervisors, and manage a personal budget.

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One provider also placed participants into transitional jobs[1] immediately following completion of the organization's one-week orientation/work readiness training. Once placed, participants worked three days per week (24 hours a week) for a maximum of eight weeks on conservation or landscaping projects as part of the Clean and Green Initiative. After completion of their transitional jobs, the participants received job placement services just like other NPRIR participants.

Job placement assistance was provided through regular weekly or biweekly in-person meetings between participants who were looking for work and job developers. During these meetings, job developers typically checked in with participants about their job searches and provided them job leads. Two of the providers also required participants in the job placement phase to be present at the providers' offices for a whole day to meet with job developers and case managers, refine their resumes, hone interviewing skills, and search for jobs on their own on the Internet.

Job development (i.e., identifying job vacancies and willing employers) was another important component in the service mix. NPRIR projects conducted outreach to employers, emphasizing continued program support of NPRIR participants during the participants' first few months of employment, and highlighting possible benefits that employers could receive for hiring ex-offenders. However, major challenges to such job development efforts included the general lack of employment opportunities due to the recession, employers' unwillingness to hire ex-offenders, and restrictions on halfway house residents. NPRIR service providers had mixed success in job development, as only 49 percent of participants were reported to have been placed in at least one job. Occupations into which participants were placed included manufacturing (41 percent), food preparation and food service (13 percent), and construction and extraction (11 percent).

Mentoring

Mentoring was another core NPRIR service but one that proved challenging to implement. There was a broad range in how successfully mentoring was provided: one site had robust one-on-one mentoring, for example, while another was unable to provide any mentoring. With one exception, most of the sites provided mentoring using a group-based model, rather than one-on-one mentoring, primarily due to difficulties in recruiting and retaining a sufficient number of volunteer mentors. Other challenges included difficulties in establishing systems for communicating with volunteer mentors and in staffing the mentor coordinator position, as well as misunderstandings regarding requirements to use volunteers outside the organization as mentors.

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[1] Transitional jobs are short-term, subsidized employment.

Project Administration

Overall leadership of the NPRIR was provided by a team that included the deputy mayor, the director of operations for economic and housing development, and the city's Office of Re-entry. The Nicholson Foundation provided leadership to the two service providers it funded. Operational management of the program was assigned to the Office of Re-entry, which developed NPRIR program policies, monitored compliance with those policies, formed systemic partnerships, made participant referrals, and ensured that service providers received sufficient support to carry out the program.

Services were directly administered by the FCBOs, which each had, on average, five permanent NPRIR staff members (including at least one program manager, a case manager, a job developer, and a mentor coordinator). NPRIR service providers reported several challenges related to staffing, including staff turnover, delays in hiring occasioned by late approval of contracts, and insufficient funding for the staffing levels front-line managers felt were needed.

Providers cited several challenges related to funding and fiscal management in the NPRIR, such as delays in the finalization of city contracts and first payments, slow payment of invoices, and delays associated with payments for performance-based contracts (which delayed reimbursement until well after participants began receiving services).

Data on participants were captured through use of ETA's PRI management information system (MIS), which all NPRIR providers were required to use. Two providers also had to enter participant data into a separate system that was funded and required by the Nicholson Foundation. Service providers experienced several challenges in using the PRI MIS, including difficulties in entering data correctly, various technical challenges, and the additional time needed to enter required data in PRI MIS and the other required data systems.

To help with grant and data management, extensive technical assistance (TA) was provided under the grant by an outside organization (Public Private Ventures or P/PV). P/PV assisted in data collection during the initial procurement of providers, helped with regular monitoring, and provided guidance and training to service providers on the MIS and other topics. Overall, NPRIR service providers were generally pleased with these TA and monitoring services, although service providers requested more hands-on MIS training.

Partnerships

The City of Newark was charged with developing a number of partnerships with corrections and workforce development agencies at the Federal, state, and local level in order to implement NPRIR. Collaboration with the corrections system and its myriad and overlapping parts was

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complex. In general, state-level partnerships were stronger than local-level ones. Relationships with community corrections providers, particularly halfway houses and CRCs, had just begun to develop and exert their influence on NPRIR implementation at the time of data collection.

Referrals

According to initial plans, corrections partners were to be particularly critical referral sources for NPRIR. At the time of the second-round site visit, the Office of Re-entry had a well-developed referral relationship with NJ SPB in that the two parties had drafted a near-final MOU to guide their NPRIR partnership. This process had required a significant amount of discussion and collaboration, particularly related to referrals between NPRIR and NJ SPB-contracted community corrections providers.

In contrast, NJ DOC played a more limited role in making referrals to NPRIR. The only pre-release referrals from an NJ DOC prison were made by a social worker at Northern State Prison to Goodwill. However, the Office of Re-entry continued to express interest in developing a stronger partnership with NJ DOC, particularly around how to best serve ex-offenders who are released from NJ DOC prisons but are not under the supervision of NJ SPB. Late in the fall of 2009, NJ DOC agreed to distribute recruitment information on NPRIR to prisoners being released back to Newark. In addition, a growing number of referrals had come from NJ DOC-contracted halfway houses.

Although NPRIR service providers received a significant number of referrals from halfway houses and CRCs, stronger referral relationships were challenged by halfway houses' concerns about service duplication with NPRIR, perceptions that not all NPRIR providers were effective at job placement, and frustrations about inconsistent communication procedures with NPRIR providers about client status and progress. NPRIR providers were also frustrated by the restrictions placed on halfway house residents, particularly around finding suitable work environments and the need for halfway houses to maintain contact with employers.

Neither Essex County Jail nor Essex Probation had strong formal referral relationships with the Office of Re-entry. However, both of these agencies referred individuals to NPRIR providers through informal channels and pre-existing relationships. Federal probation provided a limited number of referrals to NPRIR, but not through a formalized partnership.

Service Provision

The key workforce development partners for NPRIR were the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJ DOL) and NewarkWORKS (a One-Stop Career Center under

the guidance of the Newark Workforce Investment Board). In contrast to the referral role played by the corrections system partners, the primary function of the workforce development agencies was to provide services to NPRIR participants. The Office of Re-entry and the six NPRIR providers were to work collaboratively with the city's comprehensive One-Stop Career Center system, which was to provide NPRIR participants with a range of job training and placement services. Many of these services were to be provided by NJ DOL's re-entry specialist who was located at the One-Stop Career Center.

Overall, NPRIR participants did not seem to be receiving workforce services from the One-Stop Career Center system, even though they were all registered with the system immediately after being enrolled. Instead, participants received work readiness training and job placement from their NPRIR providers, who felt that they could do a better job providing these services and found it unnecessary to send clients to another location that was more crowded and less friendly.

NewarkWORKS was also supposed to provide vocational and on-the-job (OJT) training to NPRIR participants and assist NPRIR providers with job development. However, very few participants opted to receive vocational training or OJT, and only NJISJ had received significant job development assistance from NewarkWORKS by the time of the second-round site visit.

Advisory Groups

There were three advisory bodies associated with the replication: the Newark Re-entry Advisory Board, the Newark Re-entry Coordinating Committee, and the NPRIR Advisory Committee. Each of these groups allowed various stakeholders to come together and collaborate on re-entry issues.

The Newark Re-entry Advisory Board was charged with establishing a broad strategic vision for Newark's re-entry initiatives citywide. Members of this board included representatives from corrections, workforce, human services, and other agencies and organizations at the Federal, state, and local levels.

The Newark Re-entry Coordinating Committee was charged with coordinating referrals and services across law enforcement and community corrections agencies. This committee had participation from significantly more service provider representatives than did the Re-entry Advisory Board.

At the time of the first-round site visit, the NPRIR Advisory Committee was described as a subcommittee of the Newark Re-entry Advisory Board with multiple functions, including engaging the business community, building partner relationships, creating referral and

communication processes, and identifying prospects for NPRIR sustainability. Committee work groups were to focus on job development, working with NJ SPB, and funding. Membership was to include staff members from NPRIR service providers, key partners, and the Office of Re-entry. However, by the time of the second-round site visit, the committee appeared to be completely independent of the Re-entry Advisory Board, no work groups had been formed, and the meetings had primarily focused on specific NPRIR implementation issues. Attendees had primarily been NPRIR service provider staff members, Office of Re-entry staff members, and representatives from P/PV. The first official NPRIR Advisory Committee convening was held on June 29, 2009, though grantees had been convened unofficially as early as February 2009.

The NPRIR Advisory Committee was by far the most active of the three advisory bodies, and it received the greatest amount of positive feedback from respondents, particularly NPRIR providers, who felt that the committee was valuable in providing them with a forum to offer updates, exchange information, discuss issues related to partnerships and service delivery, build interpersonal relationships, and provide peer support.

Overall, the Newark re-entry advisory bodies helped promote communication and collaboration in the re-entry arena, according to multiple respondents. Partner agency and NPRIR provider respondents noted several favorable developments associated with the work of the advisory bodies, such as the sharing of information and best practices about how to effectively assist ex-offenders with the re-entry process.

Conclusion

As of the second site visit, the City of Newark had achieved or appeared to be on track to achieve the goals and requirements of the project but were facing some challenges. Despite some delays in executing the contracts, the city sub-contracted with six organizations to provide "mentoring, supportive services and referrals (housing, substance abuse, and mental health), job training and placement, and retention support."

To coordinate and support the work of service providers, the city selected P/PV to provide technical assistance. At the time of the second site visit, P/PV provided extensive assistance to NPRIR service providers. In addition, the city, primarily through its Office of Re-entry, demonstrated a growing capacity to assist P/PV in monitoring and supporting the activities of the NPRIR service providers.

Thus far, the Office of Re-entry has been able to develop partnerships with some criminal justice and workforce development agencies, but the strength of these partnerships varies. Among corrections agencies, only NJ SPB had a strong relationship with the Office of Re-entry. The

city's partnership with NJ DOC was still very limited, with very little pre-release NPRIR recruitment occurring in state prisons. Relationships with NJ SPB- and NJ DOC-contracted halfway houses and CRCs had just begun to develop, but were growing stronger. Partnerships with Essex County Jail and Essex Probation, by contrast, continued to be relatively undeveloped, although the office had made several efforts to improve its partnership with the latter agency.

Regarding workforce development agencies, the Office of Re-entry appeared to have developed a relatively strong relationship with NewarkWORKS, the operator of the city's comprehensive One-Stop Career Center, and a reasonably good relationship with the other principal One-Stop system partner, NJ DOL. However, thus far, due to concerns about quality of services and accessibility, few NPRIR participants have received services from the city's One-Stop Career Centers (despite the fact that all NPRIR participants were required to register with the city's One-Stop Career Center system).

NPRIR had already achieved three quarters of its ultimate enrollment goal and seemed likely to be able to fully meet the target by the project's end. One provider did appear to have slower-than-expected enrollment, however.

In accordance with the PRI model, contracted providers had begun offering three primary services: intensive case management, workforce services, and mentoring.

Case management was intensive, and participants reported that they developed strong, supportive, and trusting relationships with their case managers. However, providers had particular difficulty maintaining contact with participants once they became employed.

All NPRIR providers offered workforce preparation, which included work readiness training, job placement assistance, job retention assistance, and transitional employment. NPRIR projects also conducted job development activities, including outreach to employers.

A lower-than-expected percentage of participants had received mentoring services by early June 2010. This was due to the challenges service providers faced in implementing this service component, including difficulty recruiting and retaining volunteer mentors, difficulty recruiting participants to engage in mentoring, a lack of understanding of what PRI mentoring entails, difficulty staffing the mentor coordinator position, and the complexity and staff time required to develop mentoring program procedures from scratch. Although as of the spring and early summer of 2010, NPRIR service providers were continuing to build their mentoring programs, it was unclear how successful they will be by the end of the grant.

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While this report does not formally assess the NPRIR program's success in achieving ETA's employment measures,[2] it was clear that some NPRIR service providers had struggled with connecting participants to employment. NPRIR's overall placement rate of 49 percent is relatively low.[3]

Individual NPRIR providers differed significantly in their job placement rates; these differences may have been partly due to the extent to which each provider used suitability screening. NPRIR providers' use of incentives (such as free bus tickets) to encourage job-placed participants to stay employed is a practice that may result in improved employment outcomes.

A final goal of the project was to form a coordinated system for serving returning prisoners. Thus far, the city has taken a number of steps toward achieving this goal, but challenges remain. For example, the city has secured funding to support the infrastructure and services required for such a system, but may have difficulty obtaining funding to sustain it. In addition, the city has established re-entry advisory bodies to provide forums for re-entry stakeholders to communicate and provide input on larger re-entry issues, although further streamlining of these bodies and clarification of their agendas would improve their efficacy. Finally, the city was in the beginning stages of developing systems to collect, store, and analyze citywide re-entry data.

Overall, the City of Newark has made notable strides in implementing NPRIR, but significant challenges persist. It remains to be seen whether the city and its contracted service providers can overcome these challenges and achieve the program's goals by the end of the grant period.

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[2] The evaluation's final report, however, will include such an analysis. It will also analyze NPRIR's success in keeping recidivism rates below 22 percent.

[3] Although, to be fair, the period of operation of the first generation of PRI grantees covered by the Holl, et al. evaluation (2006 to mid-2008), did not include a serious recession; in contrast, the current recession, which began in the fall of 2008, almost completely overlaps with NPRIR's implementation.

I.   INTRODUCTION

In the past 25 years, the number of men and women being released from prison annually has grown more than four-fold. (Harrison and Karberg, 2004). These men and women are returning home having served longer prison terms and received less in-prison programming to prepare them for their return to society than was typically the case in years past. Furthermore, the communities to which prisoners disproportionately return tend to be fragile at best, demonstrating high poverty, high unemployment rates, and high rates of single parenting (La Vigne and Kachnowski, 2003). As such, these communities are often ill-equipped to provide the necessary supports that returning offenders desperately need, and are themselves further stressed and endangered by needing to absorb this population into their mainstream.

In light of these problems, in 2006 the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration (ETA) provided approximately $660,000 to each of 30 faith-based and community organizations (FBCOs) around the nation as part of its Prisoner Re-entry Initiative (PRI), so that these organizations could provide reintegration and employment services, including mentoring, to recently released offenders. Subsequently, ETA awarded an additional $2 million to the City of Newark, which the city has used (along with approximately $2 million in matching funds from the Nicholson Foundation) to conduct a replication of the PRI model called the Newark Prisoner Re-entry Initiative (NPRIR). This replication was designed to test the implementation of the PRI model on a city-wide scale by funding multiple organizations in one city rather than only one. Specifically, with the ETA grant monies, the City of Newark was charged with subcontracting with local service providers and collaborating with Federal, state, and local partners to provide case management, employment services, and mentoring to 670 non-violent ex-offenders returning to the city. Funding from the Nicholson Foundation would support similar re-entry services for an equal number of violent ex-offenders.

Social Policy Research Associates (SPR) was awarded a contract by ETA to conduct an evaluation of NPRIR and was charged with documenting the grantee's administrative and service design strategy, noting implementation challenges and successes, and lessons for other projects. This interim report describes and analyzes the grant's implementation to date.

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Background and Context for Re-entry in Newark

In New Jersey in general and Newark specifically, ex-offenders face challenges and contextual circumstances similar to those encountered by ex-offenders nationwide. For example, of the approximately 14,000 men and women released from correctional facilities throughout New Jersey every year, nearly 62 percent are re-arrested within three years (Travis et al., 2003). Newark alone receives 1,700 formerly incarcerated individuals returning from state prison each year, 1,400 individuals returning from Essex County Jail each month, and a smaller number annually returning from stints in Federal prison. As many as a quarter of the city's 280,000 residents may have, at one time or another, been involved with the correctional system (Greenwald and Husock, 2009).

Like formerly incarcerated individuals around the country, ex-offenders returning to Newark face numerous challenges to their successful re-entry. One important obstacle is their lack of formal education. For example, the Urban Institute reports that in 2002, New Jersey state prisoners held, on average, a 6.0 grade level in reading and a 5.4 grade level in math (Travis et al., 2003). In addition, ex-offenders face tremendous barriers to employment because many have unstable job histories and, due to their years spent incarcerated, have not had the opportunity to hone their job skills. Many employers are often uneasy about hiring them due to their criminal histories. Substance abuse and mental health issues are also major barriers for many ex-offenders; over 60 percent of current New Jersey inmates were identified as being addicted to drugs and/or alcohol and about one third of the population has been diagnosed with at least one significant and/or communicable physical or mental health condition.[4] These conditions make it difficult for ex-offenders to re-assume positive familial and support relationships.

In addition to the individual-level factors that impede ex-offenders' successful re-entry into their home communities in Newark, several community-level contextual characteristics may create further challenges. These include the limited availability of employment opportunities, housing, community support services for ex-offenders, pre-release services for inmates, and mentoring services for ex-offenders.

- **Employment**. Mirroring the economic crisis experienced nationally, the unemployment rate of Essex County, New Jersey, rose from 5.5 percent in 2008 to 11 percent in 2010.[5] With increased competition for jobs caused by the poor economy, ex-offenders are currently at a great disadvantage in securing

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[4] New Jersey Department of Corrections Website, "Frequently Asked Questions," accessed June 2010. http://www.state.nj.us/corrections/OTS/faq_ots.html

[5] BLS website, accessed June 2010. http://www.bls.gov/ro2/countyunemp.htm

employment, particularly jobs that pay higher wages or offer benefits. Access to employment is a key contextual factor in the success of NPRIR participants, as suggested by prior studies documenting the links between access to employment and recidivism as well as illegal forms of employment and incarceration (D'Alessio and Stolzenberg, 1995; Chiricos and Bales, 2006).

- **Housing**. In Newark, re-entry providers report that a shortage of available and affordable housing is one of the most significant and immediate barriers to ex-offenders. This shortage is at least somewhat due to Newark Housing Authority policies that deny Section 8 housing to applicants with a history of criminal activity or who have other household members with such backgrounds (Fishman, 2003).

  Just as subsidized public housing is out of reach for ex-offenders, so is most market-rate housing. The New Jersey Institute of Social Justice (NJISJ) reports that in order for an individual working a minimum-wage job in Newark to afford a one-bedroom apartment in New Jersey, he or she must work 127 hours per week (NJISJ, 2003). Moreover, New Jersey law allows private landlords to evict tenants who knowingly permit individuals who have been convicted of a drug-related offense to reside with them. This law thus prevents ex-offenders from relying on otherwise supportive family members for temporary housing. Consequently, NPRIR service providers report relying heavily on Newark homeless shelters, sometimes with lengthy waitlists, and even temporary spaces in sympathetic Newark churches to address the immediate housing needs of their clients.

- **Education**. Ex-offenders returning to Newark may access educational services at Essex County Community College. However, many ex-offenders, especially those on parole, have employment requirements that make anything other than short-term and part-time education goals difficult to achieve.

In the face of these challenges, there are a number of organizations providing both pre- and post-release assistance of various sorts to ex-offenders as they navigate the re-entry process.

- **Pre-release services**. Both NJ DOC and Essex County Jail provide some pre-release educational and vocational training services, but until now, few inmates have participated.[6] However, the "Education and Rehabilitation Act" signed by New Jersey's outgoing governor in January 2010 may significantly increase the number of NJ DOC and Essex County jail inmates receiving pre-release educational and vocational services. This law makes mandatory the provision of workforce skills training programs in all state correctional facilities for all inmates within 18 months of release. In addition, it requires inmates without a high school diploma or equivalent to participate in an education program to achieve 12th grade educational proficiency levels.

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[6]   In 2003, Travis et al. reported that only six percent of inmates participated in any of NJ DOC's vocational programs.

Another recently passed law, the "Fair Release and Re-entry Act," requires that within 10 days of a prisoner's release, the state Commissioner of Corrections must provide that prisoner with documentation of his or her criminal history and rights, participation in pre-release education and employment programs, medical records, fines, assessments, surcharges, and child support obligations; in addition, the released prisoner must be given personal identification, one-day's transportation costs, and a two-week supply of any prescribed medication.

- **Post-release services**. In addition to NPRIR, other county, state, and Federal agencies provide post-release assistance to ex-offenders in Newark. These services include the following:

  - Nine New Jersey State Parole Board (NJ SPB)-contracted residential and community resource centers (CRCs)[7] and ten residential halfway house facilities under contract to NJ DOC offer drug treatment programs, life skills training, case management and job placement assistance, among other services.

  - Opportunity Reconnect, a center for services to ex-offenders located at Essex County College in Newark, offers access to numerous co-located providers.[8] Through Opportunity Reconnect, ex-offenders can access a wide range of services provided by these partners, such as work readiness training, job search and placement assistance, educational services, housing services, legal assistance, food, health care, substance abuse treatment, and other supportive services.

  - NJ DOC, Goodwill, and the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJ DOL) are also heavily involved in a re-entry pilot project operated by the state of New Jersey called Another Chance. This program is providing pre- and post-release services such as job placement and job coaching to 1,300 state prison inmates returning to Newark, Camden, and Trenton.

  - Newark Comprehensive Center for Fathers, run by NewarkNow, provides mentoring for fathers seeking to repair relationships with their children. However, the organization reports serving only about

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[7] CRCs are non-residential, community-based programs that provide offenders with various support services and supervision to aid in their community reintegration.

[8] Partners with staff co-located at Opportunity Reconnect include Essex County College; NewarkWORKS; NJ SPB; Female Offender Re-entry Group Effort; Essex Vicinage Probation Division (Essex Probation); Goodwill of Greater New York and Northern New Jersey; Legal Services of New Jersey; Essex County Department of Citizen Services, Division of Welfare; America Works of New Jersey, Inc.; Newark Comprehensive Center for Fathers; Newark Homeless Health Care; Single Stop USA; and Dress for Success.

100 men per year, a number of whom are not ex-offenders.[9]
Participants in the New Jersey Intensive Supervision Program (ISP)
also receive mentoring services through that program. [10]

The Newark Prisoner Re-entry Replication Initiative

It was in the context of the large number of ex-offenders returning to Newark and facing serious re-entry challenges that the City of Newark and its Office of Re-entry received $2 million from ETA to implement the NPRIR. NPRIR was intended to reduce rates of recidivism among ex-offenders and reconnect them with the labor market by incorporating the key elements of two promising nation-wide prisoner re-entry initiatives, Ready4Work[11] and PRI. The key difference between these other initiatives and NPRIR is that NPRIR is aimed at bringing these models to scale to thereby produce positive outcomes not just for individual program participants but also for the City of Newark as a whole.

Consequently, the city's NPRIR Implementation Plan states that the city's vision for NPRIR is a PRI "community-saturation model" using FBCOs as service providers to "reduce criminal recidivism and achieve other positive outcomes on a community-wide basis." In the same plan, the city outlined the following specific goals (all quoted verbatim from the plan) for the program, focusing on ex-offender recidivism and employment outcomes as well as citywide re-entry service capacity:

- Employ ex-offenders.

- Prepare Newark's returning former prisoners for success in the labor market and increase their employment opportunities.

- Increase participants' economic viability through strategic employment, retention and advancement plans, training and work supports.

- Strengthen social networks and supports by providing participants with life coaches (a group and one-to-one "mentoring" approach that utilizes volunteers from faith- and community-based organizations).

- Provide a range of case-managed wraparound direct and referral services to address the critical needs of ex-offenders, including substance abuse and

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[9]   Newark Now website, accessed June 2010. http://www.newarknow.org/fatherhood.html

[10]   New Jersey's Intensive Supervision Program (ISP) is a program operated by the New Jersey Administrative Office of the Courts to reduce prison overcrowding by allowing carefully selected offenders to serve the remainder of their sentences in the community under strict supervision from ISP officers.

[11]   Ready4Work was a program funded by ETA that used FBCOs to provide re-entry services, including mentoring, to recently released adult ex-offenders.

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addiction, HIV/AIDs, child support and custody issues, government identification, and mental and physical health needs.

- Promote healthy parental, familial, and intimate relationships.

- Offer services through effective partnerships between local FBCOs, correctional facilities, city agencies, businesses, schools, health-care providers and social service organizations.

- Add to the general knowledge and understanding of effective re-entry programs through good data collection and use of a performance management system.

Structure of NPRIR

The City of Newark decided to assign the lead role of implementing and administering the NPRIR grant to its Office of Re-entry.[12] In addition, it has contracted with Public Private Ventures (P/PV), the organization that designed and implemented Ready4Work, to provide technical assistance and help monitor NPRIR service providers.

The city contracted with four FBCOs to provide NPRIR services to 670 non-violent ex-offenders. These four FBCOs are La Casa de Don Pedro (La Casa), the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice (NJISJ), Offender Aid and Restoration (OAR), and Renaissance Community Development Corporation Center (RCDCC). Below is a brief description of each provider and its history and experience in serving Newark's ex-offender population as of May 2010.

- **La Casa**. This community organization had served mostly Latino individuals and families through six sites in Newark's North Ward since 1972. Historically, La Casa has provided childcare, youth literacy and counseling, housing assistance, immigration services, and job preparation and development to a broad constituency, including ex-offenders. Prior to its participation in NPRIR, La Casa received funding from the New Jersey Department of Human Services to participate in the Responsible Parenting Program. As part of this program, its staff gained access to Northern State Prison to recruit soon-to-be-released inmates for participation. La Casa operated 25 different programs in addition to NPRIR and had more than 50 staff members.

- **NJISJ**. A non-profit organization in Newark that focused on criminal and juvenile justice advocacy, NJISJ was founded in 1999. In 2003, NJISJ co-sponsored the New Jersey Re-entry Roundtable, which brought together Federal, state, county, and other local agencies and organizations to address prisoner re-

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[12] More detailed information on the role, structure and activities of the Office of Re-entry is provided in Chapter IV.

entry issues in the state of New Jersey.[13] For three years prior to NPRIR, NJISJ used other sources of funding to implement its New Careers program for ex-offenders (which is currently operated as part of NPRIR) without mentoring services. NJISJ operated at least three other service delivery programs, a number of advocacy initiatives, and had 15 permanent staff members and many interns.

- **OAR**. OAR was founded in 1984 to assist Essex County residents with returning to the community from incarceration. It was one of 11 OAR chapters around the country. Since its inception, this nonprofit organization has provided re-entry services to adult ex-offenders as well as operated a program called Parents and their Children Together, which assisted parents who were incarcerated in Essex County Jail and their children. OAR had five staff members and a number of interns and volunteers.

- **RCDCC**. Founded in 1995, this faith-based organization affiliated with the Renaissance Church of Newark offered a number of programs, including a food pantry; substance abuse counseling; GED, ESL, and computer training; and various youth services in addition to its ex-offender services. Prior to the establishment of its NPRIR program, the organization's founder and executive director (an ex-offender himself) served as a mentor for ex-offenders who were part of ISP. RCDCC had a staff of six and a number of volunteers.

In addition to the NPRIR service providers funded by the city through the ETA grant, two additional organizations—Goodwill and America Works, Inc. (America Works)[14]—were supported by matching grant funding from the Nicholson Foundation. These organizations had the goal of serving 670 violent and non-violent ex-offenders.[15] Below is a brief description of these two organizations and their history and experience in serving Newark ex-offenders at the time of the second-round site visit:

- **Goodwill**. Goodwill, a non-profit organization founded in 1913, provided education, training, and career services for welfare recipients, the homeless, ex-offenders, those who lacked formal education or work experience, and those who had physical, mental and/or emotional disabilities. This organization brought to NPRIR its prior experience serving Newark ex-offenders as a first-round grantee of ETA's PRI program. The agency served more than 164,000 people in 2009

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[13] See "Coming Home for Good: Meeting the Challenge of Prisoner Re-entry in New Jersey," Final Report of the New Jersey Re-entry Roundtable (December 2003), for more detailed information on Roundtable participants and conclusions. www.njisj.org

[14] America Works was a for-profit organization; the Nicholson Foundation's decision to contract with this organization represents a departure from the PRI model of using FBCOs to provide services.

[15] Originally, these match-funded providers were only allowed to serve violent offenders. However, in early 2010, the Office of Re-entry and the Nicholson Foundation, in consultation with ETA, decided to allow these two organizations to use NPRIR match funding to serve non-violent offenders as well as violent offenders.

throughout the greater New York metro area, operated roughly 84 programs, and had several hundred staff members.

- **America Works**. This for-profit organization was founded in the mid-1980s and had offices in five cities including Newark. With pay-per-placement contracts, America Works used a "workfirst" model to place "hard-to-serve" clients, mainly TANF recipients and ex-offenders, in employment. In 2008, at the behest of the Nicholson Foundation and the city, America Works began providing services to individuals being supervised by the Vicinage of Essex Probation Division (Essex Probation). America Works provided at least 14 programs in five cities and had more than 50 permanent staff members.[16]

Implementation Status to Date

Upon receipt of the NPRIR grant from ETA in June 2008, the city's Office of Re-entry began immediately working with its partners to design and implement the NPRIR program. Beginning in mid-2008, it selected and contracted with organizations to provide NPRIR services. Following the selection of these service providers, P/PV began working with them to provide training on NPRIR, particularly how to enter data in the PRI Management Information System (MIS). For city-funded grantees, P/PV also facilitated the development of NPRIR workplans, which were reviewed and approved by the Office of Re-entry.

The first provider enrolled NPRIR participants in July 2008, with the others following suit beginning in early 2009. Since that time each of these providers has continued to enroll participants and provide services, with total enrollment for the project reaching 1,000 by June 7, 2010.[17]

Evaluation of NPRIR

The evaluation of NPRIR is aimed at describing the implementation of PRI model on a city-wide scale and assessing its challenges and successes. To accomplish this goal, this evaluation is collecting data and reporting on management of NPRIR (by both the city and contracted service providers), service delivery, partnership development, and recidivism and employment-related outcomes for NPRIR participants. This section describes SPR's planned evaluation, beginning

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[16] America Works locations in individual cities were actually subsidiaries of the main corporation, headquartered in New York. Programs offered in each of these cities, were, consequently, operated by different subsidiaries, rather than by the corporate parent. The programs in Newark, for example, were operated by America Works of New Jersey, Inc.

[17] More detailed information on NPRIR enrollment is provided in Chapter II.

with a discussion of its conceptual framework and research questions and followed by a description of planned and completed data collection activities and deliverables.

Summary of Conceptual Framework and Research Questions

The NPRIR evaluation design was based on a conceptual framework that took into account the contextual factors, partnerships, leadership and management, service delivery, and outcomes of the initiative. First, as outlined above, there are various contextual factors that are influencing the implementation of NPRIR, including community factors (employment opportunities, educational opportunities, availability of housing, etc.), individual factors (i.e., protective and risk factors), and partner factors (the orientation, history, organizational structure, and resources of partner agencies and service organizations). At another level, there is the implementation of the program itself, in which project leaders make programmatic decisions, allocate resources, and disseminate information. Each of these leadership and administrative activities affects how services are delivered and what outcomes are achieved.

From this conceptual framework arise the following broad research questions:

- What is the nature of the administrative, management, and leadership functions of NPRIR? How is the strategic vision conveyed and reinforced? How are service functions coordinated? How is the performance of partners monitored? How are interagency agreements negotiated?

- What partnerships and linkages has the grantee developed with the workforce investment system, the criminal justice system, and faith-based and other community-based organizations? How have these linkages evolved over time, and what are the prospects for sustaining them into the future?

- What services (in the areas of case management, job training and placement assistance, mentoring, and support) have been provided and how adequate have they been in meeting the varied and complex needs of ex-offenders?

- What have been the program design and implementation issues, including the challenges encountered in taking the PRI model to scale?

- What participant-level (employment, earnings, and recidivism rates), programmatic-level (service take-up rate, training completion, certificate or diploma completion, transitional jobs held), and system-level (the degree of collaborative/networking capacity and changes in policy and practice) outcomes have been achieved?

- What lessons can be learned from the NPRIR project? What are the implications for replicability? What challenges to effective implementation remain?

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Data Collection Activities and Sources

To collect the data required to answer these research questions, the evaluation draws on a mixed-methods model employing qualitative (site visits, interviews, and focus groups) and quantitative (administrative data for participants) data collection activities and analysis.

Qualitative Data Collection Activities and Sources

In terms of qualitative data collection activities, SPR has conducted two rounds of intensive four-day site visits (in June 2009 and March 2010) to Newark, and conducted one more in the fall of 2010. These site visits were designed to capture the experiences of the city and sub-contracted service providers as they have planned and implemented the activities funded by this grant. During the visits, evaluators conducted interviews with staff members from the Office of Re-entry, P/PV, contracted NPRIR service providers, and other city- and state-level workforce and corrections system partners. During the second-round site visit, evaluators conducted in-depth focus groups with 12 mentors, interviewed 20 participants and reviewed their case files, and observed several work-readiness training sessions to gain a more detailed and qualitative understanding of key interventions. These additional second-round activities will be repeated with different mentors and participants in the final round visit.

Finally, because a number of months passed between site visits, evaluators have also conducted and will continue to carry out quarterly phone check-ins with key project staff members from the Office of Re-entry and P/PV to remain updated on project issues such as recruitment, staffing, and service delivery.

Quantitative Data Collection Activities and Sources

The evaluation has also carried out some quantitative data collection activities and plans to conduct additional activities during the evaluation's final year. The evaluation's primary quantitative data collection activity is to request data from ETA's PRI MIS. This MIS, which was originally developed for PRI grantees and slightly modified for NPRIR, captures detailed information on each project participant, including identifiers (e.g., Social Security numbers, criminal justice identification numbers), demographics, employment and educational status at enrollment, incarceration, program participation, services received, and outcomes. The evaluation is to receive four extracts of key data from this system, and thus far has received two, the second of which was used in the preparation of this report.

A second data collection activity is to gather UI wage and recidivism data from the State of New Jersey. These data will be used to supplement data from the PRI MIS on employment, earnings, and recidivism outcomes for NPRIR participants. Evaluation team members are currently preparing the materials necessary to request these data, and hope to receive them in early 2011.

Finally, SPR will request administrative data from ETA on employment, earnings, and recidivism outcomes for selected participants of other PRI (now Reintegration of Ex-offenders or RExO) programs run prior to and consecutively with NPRIR. These data will be used to conduct a comparison of NPRIR participant outcomes with those of similar individuals served by these other programs.

Organization of the Report

In subsequent chapters of this interim report, findings to date from the evaluation are provided and discussed. Chapter II deals with the recruitment strategies employed in NPRIR and enrollment in the project as of June 7, 2010. It also presents a brief profile of the participants enrolled thus far. Chapter III describes the services provided through NPRIR, with a particular emphasis on case management, workforce preparation services and mentoring. Chapter IV follows with a description of the overall leadership and management of NPRIR by the City of Newark and covers the program's staffing, funding, and data systems. Chapter V describes the partnerships developed between the city's Office of Re-entry and corrections and workforce agencies. Chapter VI then presents a brief summary of implementation thus far, along with a discussion of the progress made in achieving the goals.

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II. RECRUITMENT AND ENROLLMENT

An important goal for the NPRIR program is to recruit and enroll at least 1,340 eligible ex-offenders, as specified by ETA. This chapter describes the methods used by the program to recruit these participants and the sources of most referrals. It also covers a variety of topics related to enrollment in the program: the pre-enrollment intake processes used by NPRIR providers to screen recruited individuals for eligibility and suitability, the program's success in achieving its enrollment goals thus far, and the characteristics of enrolled participants. The chapter concludes with a discussion of promising practices and current and potential challenges related to recruitment.

Recruitment

According to the City of Newark's Implementation Plan, recruitment for NPRIR was to be managed by the city's Office of Re-entry in partnership with participating service providers. Participants were to be recruited from multiple sources, including state and county correctional facilities, NJ SPB and Essex Probation, other service providers, and the community. The plan further specified that recruitment was to occur both pre-release—inside state prisons, halfway houses, and county jails—as well as post-release through structured arrangements with NJ SPB and Essex Probation and through outreach conducted in the community. The following section describes the actual recruitment activities that have been conducted by the Office of Re-entry and NPRIR service providers, and then briefly analyzes data from the PRI MIS on referral sources for enrollees.

Office of Re-entry Recruitment Efforts

To facilitate and manage NPRIR recruitment efforts, the city's Office of Re-entry has primarily conducted three types of activities. It has

- developed strategic referral partnerships with numerous corrections agencies;
- created policies and procedures for making and recording referrals to the program; and

- implemented its own referral process for ex-offenders who come to city hall seeking services.

First, the Office of Re-entry has attempted to foster systemic partnerships with key referral agencies, including NJ SPB, NJ DOC, halfway houses, community resource centers (CRCs) and Essex Probation. For example, the Office of Re-entry was in the process of finalizing an MOU with NJ SPB to guide the referral process with NPRIR service providers. The Office of Re-entry had also met with NJ DOC regarding facilitating improved referrals from NJ DOC halfway houses and had convinced NJ DOC to distribute NPRIR recruitment materials to state prison inmates being released back to Newark. Finally, Office of Re-entry staff members also met with Essex Probation officials to discuss NPRIR. Partnerships between the Office of Re-entry and the above agencies are discussed in greater detail in Chapter V.

At least somewhat due to discussions with these key referral partners, the Office of Re-entry also developed a number of referral policies and procedures, all of which are included in the "NPRIR Referral Guide," released in the fall of 2009 and updated in January 8, 2010.[18] One of the central components of the NPRIR Referral Guide was a description of the steps the Office of Re-entry would like organizations to follow in referring ex-offenders to NPRIR, including how to conduct a preliminary eligibility determination and how to make referrals and follow up with referred individuals. When the individual being referred was being supervised by NJ SPB or Probation or was the resident of a halfway house, NPRIR service providers were requested to email or fax a copy of the signed referral form to NJ SPB, Probation, or the halfway house, as appropriate. However, based on interviews conducted during the second site visit, it did not appear that many referral partners were following all of the procedures described in the Referral Guide.

All six NPRIR providers noted that they did try to inform community corrections agencies (such as halfway houses, Probation, and NJ SPB) when they enroll individuals who are under those agencies' supervision. For example, all providers reported that upon enrolling a participant who is residing in a halfway house they informed a contact person at the house of this enrollment, usually through email. In addition, for participants under supervision by NJSPB, ISP, or Probation, at least two other NPRIR providers reported sending a letter or email informing the participant's supervising officer that the individual had been enrolled in NPRIR.

In addition to specifying overall guidelines for making referrals, the Office of Re-entry's NPRIR Referral Guide delineated the processes by which Opportunity Reconnect's referral staff was to

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[18] The updated version of the Referral Guide had a slightly different title: "Newark Re-entry Referral Network: A Guide to Successful Referrals and Interagency Collaboration."

make referrals to NPRIR and use the PRI MIS to capture information on those referrals. As a major hub for services for ex-offenders in Newark, Opportunity Reconnect itself was expected to serve as a significant source of referrals to NPRIR providers. The process outlined in the Referral Guide called for Opportunity Reconnect's referral staff to make referrals to NPRIR service providers on a rotating basis. Opportunity Reconnect staff members were also instructed to enter a limited amount of data in the PRI MIS on the individuals they referred, and P/PV was to then transfer those data files to the NPRIR provider to whom individuals were being referred.[19]

For a variety of reasons, however, after July 2009 this latter process was not carried out as specified. According to P/PV, it was at that point that Opportunity Reconnect referral staff members not only discontinued entering data on NPRIR referrals in the PRI MIS, but also stopped communicating about referrals with P/PV. According to NPRIR providers, Opportunity Reconnect staff members also generally stopped making referrals for the program to providers that were not co-located at Opportunity Reconnect (La Casa, NJISJ, OAR, and RCDCC).

In addition, in early 2010, the Office of Re-entry changed the process by which Opportunity Reconnect staff members determined to which NPRIR service provider they should make a referral.[20] Specifically, instead of rotating referrals among NPRIR service providers, Opportunity Reconnect staff members were instructed to refer all NPRIR-eligible individuals to Goodwill (one of the co-located providers) unless the individual or the referring agency noted a preference for another NPRIR provider. The stated purpose of this procedure modification was to assist Goodwill in achieving its NPRIR enrollment goals.

A third major recruitment-related activity of the Office of Re-entry has been to develop and implement a process for referring NPRIR-eligible ex-offenders who come to city hall to NPRIR service providers. According to the Office of Re-entry's head (the Chair of Re-entry Initiatives or CRI), its role grew out of the need to deal with the large number of citizens who regularly come to city hall looking for help. Since the beginning of NPRIR, these referrals grew from only three per month in January 2009 to more than 100 per month in February 2010.[21]

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[19] Opportunity Reconnect referral staff members were only to fill out the "New Cases" screen of the PRI MIS. Filling out this screen makes an individual "inactive" in the system. Unless subsequent screens on the MIS are completed, these inactive individuals are not considered enrolled and do not count toward the project's enrollment goals.

[20] However, as of the second site visit, the NPRIR Referral Guide had not been updated to include this new process.

[21] Although some of these referrals were made to programs other than NPRIR, the Office of Re-entry's data analyst stated that about 75 percent of these referrals have been to NPRIR.

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To conduct these referrals, staff members first met with individuals seeking assistance and filled out a "client profile sheet." Based on this information, staff members chose an appropriate NPRIR provider and called to confirm an intake date and time, usually with the ex-offender present during the phone conversation. To ensure that an individual did not expend time and money traveling to a provider's office only to find that no one was available to meet with him or her, the CRI implemented a strict policy that staff members could not make a referral to a provider unless they spoke with the provider first. Since the ex-offender was usually present when the intake appointment was scheduled, this policy also made it more likely that the individual would actually show up at the provider's office.

NPRIR Service Provider Recruitment Efforts

In addition to the Office of Re-entry's efforts to conduct recruitment and facilitate referrals, each of the individual NPRIR service providers conducted its own recruitment and outreach efforts. The most common of these efforts included presentations by service providers to community corrections agencies and their participants, including CRCs and halfway houses contracted by NJ SPB, halfway houses contracted with NJ DOC, and officers of NJ SPB, Probation, and ISP. Another common outreach activity was for providers to attend community job fairs or re-entry events. For example, staff members from at least three providers attended a Fugitive Safe Surrender Event held at a Newark church in November 2009.

Some NPRIR service providers made outreach presentations to a variety of other audiences, including residents of drug treatment facilities, drug court managers, police officers, and churches. One NPRIR service provider reported planning to create NPRIR flyers and distribute them at various locations in the community, including local barber and beauty shops.

Only two NPRIR providers conducted pre-release recruitment in correctional facilities other than halfway houses. One of these providers recruited ex-offenders in the process of being released back to Newark from NJ DOC's Northern State Prison. This recruitment was facilitated by a Nicholson Foundation-funded social worker located at the prison who identified and referred eligible offenders. Another provider also conducted pre-release recruitment with inmates at Essex County Jail. Through a relationship with the jail's social worker, a staff member regularly made presentations about the NPRIR program to jail inmates. This social worker then returned to meet individually with any inmates who were interested in receiving NPRIR services.

Sources of NPRIR Referrals

Referrals to NPRIR came from a variety of sources. Among corrections agencies, halfway houses and CRCs (including those contracted with NJ SPB, NJ DOC, or Federal probation) were most commonly reported as referral sources. Another corrections agency that was reported as a

source of referrals by numerous NPRIR providers was NJ SPB.[22] Other reported sources of referrals from corrections agencies included ISP, Essex Probation, and Federal probation. Only two providers reported receiving any referrals from an NJ DOC prison or Essex County Jail.

Another significant source of NPRIR referrals—but only for some providers—was the Office of Re-entry. Referrals from the city were particularly important for one provider, which reported that the Office of Re-entry was the referral source for two-thirds of its participants. Another provider reported that the Office of Re-entry was the largest single referral source for its participants. By contrast, the Office of Re-entry made few or no NPRIR referrals to other providers either because they were receiving plenty of referrals from other sources or the office had difficulty reaching staff members to schedule intake appointments.

A number of NPRIR participants also originated as walk-ins—individuals who heard about the program from friends or family and decided to come in on their own without a referral from another agency. During the second site visit, one provider's staff members reported a significant number of walk-ins, but said that its policy was to send these individuals to the Office of Re-entry for intake before enrolling them.

Early on in the planning and implementation of NPRIR, Opportunity Reconnect was expected to be a significant source of NPRIR referrals for all providers. However, according to multiple respondents, Opportunity Reconnect has referred large numbers of potential participants only to the providers that are co-located at its site. These referrals made up a significant portion of these two agencies' total NPRIR referrals.

Referrals from other agencies, such as Newark's comprehensive One-Stop Career Center, residential substance abuse treatment facilities, and other community FBCOs were also relatively common.

Pre-Enrollment Intake

Once individuals were referred to them, all NPRIR service providers conducted one or more activities prior to enrolling those individuals in the program. These activities included an eligibility determination and, for all but one, a suitability assessment. Both of these activities are described below.

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[22]   More detail on the referral process between NJ SPB and NPRIR is provided in Chapter V.

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Eligibility Assessment

For all six NPRIR service providers, the first step in the pre-enrollment intake process was to assess whether potential participants met the program's eligibility requirements. These requirements were the same as for other ETA PRI programs,[23] with two exceptions:

- Individuals whose most recent offense was considered violent were eligible to be served, but only by the two Nicholson-funded providers.

- All participants had to be Newark residents when they were enrolled; if they were residents in a Newark halfway house, they had to have been Newark residents prior to incarceration.

Eligibility determinations were usually conducted by case managers during their first in-person meeting with potentially eligible individuals.[24] These individuals were instructed to bring proof of their Newark residency to this meeting, along with their release dates and offense history. For halfway house residents or CRC clients, proof of their release dates and criminal history was often provided in the form of a letter from their CRC or halfway house. For those without hard copy documentation, case managers were usually able to look up an individual's offense history and release date on the Internet via inmate search tools provided by NJ DOC, Essex County Corrections, or the U.S. Bureau of Prisons.

NPRIR case managers estimated that approximately 10 to 15 percent of the individuals who were referred to them were ineligible. The most common reason for ineligibility was not being a Newark resident or—for halfway house residents—not living in Newark prior to incarceration.

Suitability Screening

In addition to conducting eligibility determinations, all NPRIR service providers, except for one, also assessed individuals for program suitability. Typically, providers defined suitability as having the motivation and commitment to fulfill program requirements. In addition, most providers included job-readiness as an element of suitability. For example, most providers said that they deemed individuals with major substance abuse or mental health problems and those who were illiterate or did not speak English as unsuitable for NPRIR because these applicants

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[23] Participants must be 18 or older, have been convicted of a crime as an adult and incarcerated for that crime, and cannot have committed a sexual offense; in addition, all but 10 percent must have been released from incarceration in the past 180 days.

[24] While typically this eligibility assessment was conducted in person with the client present, two providers noted that when an individual was referred from another agency, they tried to conduct a brief phone screening first to make it less likely that the individual would be found ineligible when he or she met with a case manager for the intake appointment.

would need long-term and specialized assistance before they would be able to find or maintain employment.

Among NPRIR providers, the suitability screening process was generally two-pronged. The first part of the process occurred up front during initial intake and eligibility determination meetings, when case managers assessed individuals' literacy levels and asked about substance abuse or mental health problems. When individuals were found to be unsuitable during these initial meetings, case managers immediately referred them to other programs that could better meet their needs.

Following this initial suitability assessment, all five NPRIR service providers that screened for suitability tested potential participants' motivation and commitment to the program by requiring them to attend a series of program meetings or workshops over a one to two week period. These requirements ranged from attending one to two group mentoring sessions to participating in eight work readiness workshops. Those who did not attend all of these required meetings were generally not enrolled, at least until they demonstrated greater commitment to the program.

In addition, during their attendance at these meetings, service provider staff members monitored potential enrollees' behavior and attitudes and used these observations in their ultimate determination of suitability. For example, one provider's work readiness training facilitator said that he looked for signs of ongoing substance abuse during training sessions, such as individuals who arrived while still intoxicated or high. These individuals were then typically deemed unsuitable for enrollment. However, most providers allowed unsuitable individuals to continue to attend work readiness sessions or receive non-NPRIR services, holding open the possibility that they might be enrolled in NPRIR at a later date if there was a suitable change in behavior or attitude.

The percentage of participants screened out by these suitability assessments ranged from about 10 percent at one provider to about 50 percent at another. However, during its first months of NPRIR implementation in the summer and fall of 2009, this latter provider curtailed its screening process somewhat so that it could increase enrollment more quickly and achieve its enrollment targets. The NPRIR program manager reported that, as a result, the program enrolled a few participants who disappeared immediately after being enrolled.

This kind of suitability screening was fairly common among the first group of PRI grantees but much further from being universal; about half of all program sites were reported to screen applicants for suitability (Holl et al., 2009). The higher prevalence of suitability screening among NPRIR providers might be explained by differences in how providers are paid. While ETA pays its PRI (now Reintegration of Ex-offenders or RExO) grantees on a purely

reimbursement basis, as will be discussed in Chapter IV, NPRIR providers are also being paid for achievement of performance benchmarks. NPRIR providers reported that they believe that individuals who pass their suitability screenings are more likely to achieve the program's performance benchmarks. Thus, conducting suitability screenings may be perceived as a way to help providers obtain higher payments.

Enrollment

According to the NPRIR grant agreement, the enrollment goal for the project is 1,340 participants. To achieve this goal, the City of Newark and the Nicholson Foundation made agreements with each of the six NPRIR providers to enroll a certain number of eligible ex-offenders. These individual provider goals are displayed in Exhibit II-1.

As of June 7, 2010, the NPRIR program had achieved a total enrollment of 1,000, 75 percent of the program's overall enrollment goal. Although it seemed that the program should be able to enroll another 340 participants before December 31, 2010 (the grant's end date), one potentially worrisome note was that the provider with the second highest enrollment goal—NJISJ—was behind in enrollment and needed to enroll just over 17 participants per month between June and December 2010 to reach its overall goal for the program, far more than it had typically enrolled on a monthly basis in the past.

Exhibit II-1:
Enrollment Goals and Actual Enrollment for NPRIR

Provider	Enrollment Goal	Actual Enrollment as of June 7, 2010	Percent of Enrollment Goal Achieved as of June 7, 2010
La Casa	138	132	96%
NJISJ	256	136	53%
OAR	138	105	76%
RCDCC	138	133	96%
Goodwill	600	432	72%
America Works	75[25]	62	83%
Total	**1,340[26]**	**1,000**	**75%**

[25] The provider stated that its goal was to enroll from 50 to 100 participants. For ease of calculation, the mid-point of that range is included here as its goal.

[26] To avoid confusion, this is the enrollment goal provided in the NPRIR grant agreement (1,340), not the sum of the individual provider goals, which is 1,345.

As shown in Exhibit II-2, Goodwill was the first provider to enroll participants, doing so in July 2008 and experiencing particularly rapid enrollment growth between November 2009 and March 2010. NJISJ enrolled its first participants in January 2009, America Works in February 2009, and all others in March or April 2009.[27] Despite beginning enrollment in the spring of 2009, three of the city-funded providers had enrolled only a third or fewer of their current participants by September 2009 due to delays in the execution of their contracts. By contrast, the fourth provider—RCDCC—had enrolled two-thirds of its current participants by September. Among the two Nicholson-funded providers, Goodwill experienced particularly rapid enrollment growth in the four months beginning November 2009 and then showed a leveling off of enrollment after March 2010, while America Works has experienced fairly steady growth throughout its period of performance, enrolling about four participants a month.

Exhibit II-2:
Enrollment by NPRIR Provider, July 2008 – May 2010
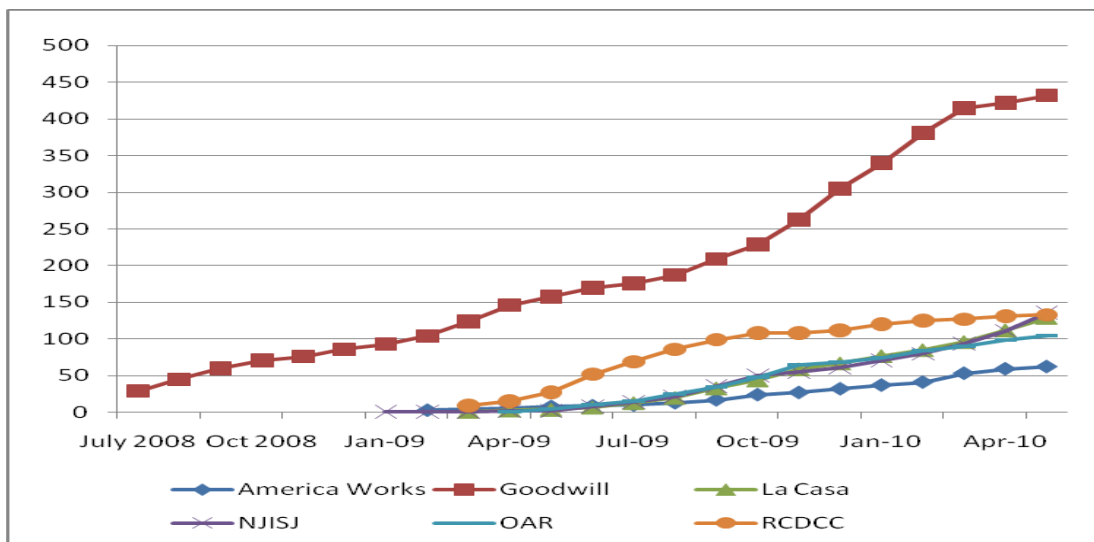
Characteristics of NPRIR Participants Enrolled to Date

As long as they met the enrollment criteria outlined above, NPRIR providers had substantial freedom to enroll and serve individuals with a wide variety of demographic backgrounds and offense and incarceration histories. Using data recorded in the PRI MIS, this section provides a description of the demographic and offense-related characteristics of NPRIR participants who

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[27] Although America Works' period of performance according to its proposal with the Nicholson Foundation did not begin until June 15, 2009, according to the PRI MIS, the provider began serving NPRIR participants in February 2009.

were enrolled from the program's inception through June 7, 2010—both overall and by provider.[28]

As displayed in Exhibit II-3, NPRIR participants have been primarily male and African American thus far, with the next largest groups being Latinos (11 percent) and whites (7 percent). Among specific providers, La Casa served the highest number of both Latino and white participants.

The typical NPRIR participant was single and in his mid-30s, with two children with whom he did not live. This profile fits most providers; RCDCC served participants who were on average three years younger than those served by the other providers, and Goodwill and NJISJ participants had, on average, only one child.

Overall, 32 percent of participants reported having a GED or high school diploma at enrollment, although this varied substantially by provider. For example, 58 percent of America Works participants were reported to have a high school diploma or GED at enrollment, while only nine percent of La Casa's and 18 percent of RCDCC's participants reported having achieved those credentials.

In terms of housing status at enrollment, nearly half of all participants were reported to own or rent a room or apartment or be staying at someone's apartment, room, or house in a stable situation. Just slightly fewer were reported to be living in halfway houses, residential treatment facilities, or other transitional housing. La Casa and America Works reported higher-than-average percentages of halfway house and transitional housing residents, further demonstrating the preponderance of these types of participants served by these two providers. Interestingly, few participants reported being homeless at enrollment; this despite the fact that several NPRIR providers reported that finding housing for participants was a major challenge.

Given that several providers said they screened individuals for substance abuse problems, it is not surprising that 76 percent of participants denied abusing drugs or alcohol three months prior to either enrollment or incarceration. However, because these data are self-reported and of a sensitive nature, they may be inaccurate.

Regarding work experience, only 34 percent of participants reported working full-time prior

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[28] Please note that because many of the characteristics presented here are based on self-reported data, individuals may not have remembered correctly or may not have been completely forthcoming with the provider staff who captured these data. In addition, many of these data items are not required by the PRI MIS, so data is missing for many participants. Consequently, these results should be viewed cautiously.

to incarceration. Among these participants, the average length of their longest job was only 2.3 years. These statistics demonstrate the limited labor market experience of many NPRIR participants prior to incarceration.

Exhibit II-3:
Selected Demographic Characteristics of NPRIR Participants

Characteristic	Provider						
	La Casa	NJISJ	OAR	RCDCC	Goodwill	America Works	Total
Gender							
Male	97%	91%	87%	93%	98%	92%	95%
Female	3%	9%	13%	7%	2%	8%	5%
Race/ethnicity[29]							
African American	97%	96%	92%	87%	89%	84%	88%
Latino	24%	4%	11%	9%	10%	7%	11%
White	27%	2%	7%	3%	4%	13%	7%
Average age at enrollment (yrs.)	38	37	36	32	35	39	35
Marital status							
Single	89%	93%	85%	86%	94%	81%	90%
Married	7%	5%	8%	10%	5%	12%	7%
Divorced/sep. or widowed	4%	2%	7%	4%	1%	7%	3%
Avg. no. of children	2	1	2	2	1	2	2
No. lived with	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Attained H.S. diploma or GED	9%	43%	40%	18%	36%	58%	32%
Housing status at enrollment							
Own/rent or staying with someone (stable)	19%	66%	53%	77%	46%	29%	49%
Halfway/ trans. housing or res. treatment	77%	23%	30%	16%	49%	66%	43%
Staying with someone (unstable)	2%	4%	11%	3%	4%	2%	4%
Homeless	2%	7%	6%	4%	1%	3%	3%
Alcohol/drug Use							
Yes	1%	38%	64%	10%	21%	19%	24%
No	99%	62%	36%	90%	79%	81%	76%
Avg. yrs. worked at longest FT job[30]	1.8	1.2	1.7	3.4	1.8	--	2.3

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[29] Please note that because many of the characteristics presented here are based on self-reported data, individuals may not have remembered correctly or may not have been completely forthcoming with the provider staff who captured these data. In addition, many of these data items are not required by the PRI MIS, so data is missing for many participants. Consequently, these results should be viewed cautiously.

[30] Of those who were reported to have worked full-time prior to incarceration.

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The offense and incarceration-related characteristics of participants are summarized in Exhibit II-4. As shown in this exhibit, about four-fifths of NPRIR participants reported that they were most recently incarcerated in a state prison. However, OAR reported a large number of participants who were most recently incarcerated in a county jail, likely reflecting that provider's strong connections with Essex County Jail. La Casa reported that more than a quarter of its participants were most recently incarcerated in Federal prison.

Exhibit II-4:
Offense and Incarceration-related Characteristics of NPRIR Participants

Characteristic	La Casa	NJISJ	OAR	RCDCC	Goodwill	America Works	Total
Most recent incarceration							
State prison	70%	61%	50%	78%	96%	58%	79%
County jail	3%	28%	41%	20%	2%	32%	13%
Federal prison	27%	11%	9%	2%	2%	10%	8%
Post-release status at enrollment							
Parole	18%	34%	32%	54%	91%	61%	61%
Probation	8%	23%	41%	13%	0%	37%	13%
Other supervision	1%	5%	1%	14%	3%	0%	4%
Not supervised	73%	38%	26%	20%	6%	2%	23%
Presenting offense[31]							
Property	24%	15%	16%	14%	19%	23%	18%
Drug	64%	66%	73%	77%	27%	58%	51%
Weapons	11%	10%	11%	8%	26%	8%	17%
Violent	3%	1%	0%	2%	91%	21%	41%
Lifetime yrs. incarcerated	3.5	2.3	1.8	8.1	4.4	2.6	4.1

In terms of post-release status, sixty-one percent of NPRIR participants were reported to be on parole and 13 percent on probation (Federal or local). Among providers, there was much variation with regard to the post-release status of participants: 91 percent of Goodwill's participants reported being on parole, as compared to only 18 percent of La Casa's participants.

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[31]   An ex-offender's presenting offense is the one for which he or she was most recently incarcerated. Because participants can have multiple presenting offenses, these percentages do not sum to 100 percent.

However, these disparities may be more a reflection of differences in reporting than actual differences in the populations served, as it appears that La Casa may have reported most of the halfway house residents it has enrolled as unsupervised, while Goodwill and America Works reported them as on parole.

In terms of presenting offenses, 41 percent of NPRIR participants were most recently convicted of a violent crime, with the vast majority of these violent ex-offenders enrolled by Goodwill. The fact that Goodwill served a large number of violent offenders is likely the reason why drug-related crimes were reported as presenting offenses for only about a quarter of Goodwill's participants, while they were reported as presenting offenses by close to two-thirds or even three-fourths of the participants enrolled by the other five providers.

Finally, on average, NPRIR participants have been incarcerated for 4.1 years over their lifetimes. RCDCC participants, incarcerated for more than eight years on average, were well above this mean; OAR participants, incarcerated for less than two years on average, were well below.

Conclusion

Overall, the NPRIR program has so far exhibited several key successes and promising practices as well as challenges related to recruitment, pre-enrollment intake, and enrollment. Each of these is discussed below.

Successes and Promising Practices

- **Despite a slow start, the NPRIR program is on target to achieve its enrollment goals.** In particular, the three faith and community-based providers selected competitively by the city and America Works have been successful in enrolling participants.

- **The Office of Re-entry and individual NPRIR providers have been successful in developing referral relationships with some community corrections agencies**. The Office of Re-entry and several providers have been successful in cultivating referral relationships with NJ SPB, halfway houses, and CRCs.

- **The Office of Re-entry has developed a successful referral process of its own that is effectively channeling large numbers of potential participants to NPRIR providers.** Although it only began making referrals at the beginning of 2009, the Office of Re-entry has become a major source of NPRIR referrals for a number of providers.

Current and Potential Challenges

In addition to the promising practices described above, there are several issues that may affect the successful implementation of NPRIR.

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- **Not much pre-release recruitment at prisons or county jails is occurring as part of NPRIR.** Despite a major emphasis on pre-release recruitment and coordination with NJ DOC prisons and county jails in both the Implementation Plan and in the PRI model, only two providers were doing any pre-release recruitment with these types of institutions. By waiting until offenders were released into the community before recruiting them, NPRIR has made it more likely that many eligible offenders would recidivate before being able to access program services, as research has shown that ex-offenders are most likely to recidivate shortly after release (Langan and Levin, 2002).

- **The NPRIR provider with the second largest enrollment goal was behind in enrollment and this could derail the project's ability to achieve its overall goal by the end of December.** Although the other five providers have been successful enough to help the program achieve 75 percent of its enrollment goal, once those agencies reach their own goals for the project, they may discontinue further enrollment. If they do so, the only way the program will be able to meet its overall enrollment goals is if the remaining provider significantly steps up its recruitment efforts.

- **As each NPRIR provider was serving a unique group of participants with characteristics that may differ considerably from those of NPRIR participants as a whole, it may be easier or harder for certain providers to achieve the program's performance benchmarks, regardless of the quality of their services.** Participant characteristics reported in the PRI MIS demonstrate that NPRIR providers were serving groups of ex-offenders that differed markedly. Due to the suitability screening used by five of the six providers, participants may have also differed in ways that were not captured in the PRI MIS, such as in motivation to change. In any case, these differences may make it more difficult for certain providers to achieve program performance goals, even if the quality of their services is equal or superior to that of providers with better performance outcomes.[32]

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[32] Through a variety of statistical methods, the evaluation will attempt to compensate for these difference in the outcomes analysis that will be conducted for the final report.

III. SERVICES

According to the City of Newark's NPRIR Implementation Plan, the primary re-entry services for NPRIR participants were case management, workforce preparation, and mentoring. In this chapter, an overview is presented of how these three primary services have been provided thus far. Because a few participants also received education and training, these services are briefly discussed as well. The chapter concludes with a discussion of promising practices and challenges related to NPRIR services.

Case Management

Case management was one of the primary services offered through NPRIR. As required by the Office of Re-entry, participants received case management throughout their involvement in NPRIR.[33] Due to the key role of case management in the program's structure, the NPRIR Implementation Plan called for case managers to be involved in nearly every aspect of NPRIR. They were directed to:

- conduct recruitment activities;
- carry out initial assessments of participants to identify their needs for successful re-entry and develop individual case plans;
- act as "service brokers" to ensure that participants receive all services necessary for a successful re-entry, including housing, health care, transportation, and clothing;
- help participants solve problems and overcome barriers such as replacing lost identification documents or difficulty in obtaining food stamps;
- ensure that participants receive key NPRIR services such as workforce preparation assistance and mentoring;
- monitor whether participants receive the services in their individual case plans by following up with other staff members, including mentors, or partners regarding the status of referrals;

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[33] City of Newark, "NPRIR Key Definitions."

- reassess participants' needs and make changes to individual case plans on an as-needed basis;

- monitor participants' progress and retention; and

- maintain individual case files through an approved case management system.[34]

NPRIR case managers reported playing each of these roles. In addition, case managers were often the primary staff members who provided workforce preparation services, such as assisting participants with mastering interviewing techniques, developing resumes and cover letters, and conducting job searches. At five of the six NPRIR providers, case managers also entered data on their clients in the PRI MIS.

Assessments and the Individual Development Plan

To determine a participant's need for services and guide the development of his or her individual case plan (called an individual development plan or IDP in the PRI MIS), all six NPRIR service providers conducted some type of assessment. The most common of these assessments involved case managers meeting one-on-one with ex-offenders and asking them a series of questions about their living situation, family ties, educational background, current and previous work experiences, and offense history.[35] As service providers had to enter data on these topics in the PRI MIS to enroll a participant in NPRIR, all service providers conducted an assessment of this type. Some case managers even conducted these assessments by asking participants the questions on the Assessment at Entry screen in the PRI MIS and entering participant responses directly into the MIS.

In addition to completing the basic assessment required by the PRI MIS, case managers at OAR also met with participants shortly after enrollment to complete a "Work-Readiness Checklist." This checklist assessed a participant's readiness for employment by asking specific questions about his or her barriers and skills, such as "Will the client have reliable transportation to get to work?" and "Does the client have an acceptable resume?"

NPRIR providers sometimes assessed participants' basic skills. RCDCC, for example, administered the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) to participants who exhibited low literacy skills. La Casa also sometimes referred participants who wanted to complete their General Educational Development certificate (GED) to NewarkWORKS at the Newark One-

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[34] NPRIR Implementation Plan, pp. 12-13.

[35] This was also the most common type of assessment reported in ETA's evaluation of the first generation of PRI grantees (Holl et al., 2009).

Stop Career Center for TABE testing, although most of these individuals were screened out of NPRIR before this testing occurred.

Once the initial assessment was completed, case managers used the information from the assessment to work with each participant to create a customized IDP. These plans comprised the goals that participants wanted to achieve during their re-entry and the specific action steps required to achieve those goals. The goals were typically in the areas of employment, skills-building, and family or personal life. Usually, the action steps in an IDP called for participants to receive specific services to help them achieve their goals.

Although case managers were the primary staff members who assisted participants with IDPs, job developers sometimes participated in IDP development sessions, particularly regarding participants' employment goals. One case manager stated that job developers could be particularly helpful in providing guidance and insight to participants regarding the specific training or skills needed to enter certain career fields.

Five NPRIR service providers prepared formal IDPs that were included in each participant's hardcopy case file. In contrast, RCDCC case managers developed only informal IDPs, with information on goals and services captured in case notes, rather than formal documents.

Intensive Case Management

A key aspect of the PRI model is intensive case management, meaning that case managers must spend a significant amount of time working with participants, particularly during the days and weeks immediately following enrollment. To carry out this intensive case management, frequent contact is needed between case managers and participants. Consequently, the Office of Re-entry required that NPRIR case managers maintain weekly contact with participants during their first 30 days of participation, bi-weekly contact during the next 30 days of participation, and monthly contact thereafter.

NPRIR case managers followed and even exceeded these contact requirements. For example, nearly all NPRIR case managers reported almost daily informal contact with participants during the first week or two after enrollment. This contact often took place as participants attended required work readiness training sessions or orientations, as these activities were often facilitated by case managers. Case managers also reported scheduling formal in-person meetings on a weekly or bi-weekly basis during participants' first several weeks of enrollment and monthly in-person meetings with participants after the first month of enrollment.

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However, maintaining consistent contact with participants after the first few weeks of enrollment was a key challenge for many NPRIR case managers. One reason for this challenge is that many participants became employed after a few weeks of enrollment, which reduced their available time and weakened their resolve to participate in program activities. Most NPRIR service providers developed program policies and practices to address this challenge. For instance, La Casa required each participant to sign an agreement in which he or she consented to contacting his or her case manager every two weeks while enrolled in the program. America Works provided employed participants with incentives that could only be obtained by coming in and meeting with the intake coordinator (these incentives are discussed in more detail below).[36]

Another key element of intensive case management is maintaining low caseloads for case managers. At the time of the second-round site visit, NPRIR service providers had been relatively successful in doing this, with caseloads varying in size from a low of about 10 active[37] participants per case manager at America Works to a high of about 25 active participants per case manager at Goodwill.

The frequent contact and low caseloads required for intensive case management allowed participants and case managers to develop strong and trusting relationships with each other. The strength of these relationships was demonstrated by comments from participants about their case managers: "I love him [case manager] like a brother" and "[case managers] here have … a caring aspect and they go the extra mile to see that you succeed."

According to several participants, the strength of their relationships with their case managers helped them to be comfortable in expressing their real thoughts and feelings. Said one participant:

> *They* [case managers] *make you feel like a regular person, even though everybody knows this is the criminal section* [at Essex County College]. *But when I come in and sit down, they don't make me feel that way…I can just be a regular person. I don't have to look angry.*

The strength of these case management relationships allowed NPRIR case managers to play a critical role in motivating clients to achieve their goals. For instance, one participant who had completed a few credits towards his bachelor's degree prior to being incarcerated became discouraged about pursuing his degree after release because of his criminal record but said that

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[36]   The intake coordinator at America Works was one of at least two staff members who provided case management services.

[37]   An active participant is one who has not exited or entered follow-up services.

he regained the confidence and self-esteem needed to go back to college after working with his NPRIR case manager.

Another participant, whose case manager was also an ex-offender, noted that he was even more motivated because of this shared life experience:

> *I can tell from the stories he expressed that he's experienced the same type of life as me. So I thought, if he could change, why won't this work for me?*

Connecting Participants to Supportive Services

As noted above, the NPRIR Implementation Plan expected that case managers would serve as "service brokers" who would connect participants with all of the services necessary for successful re-entry, including supportive services such as transportation, housing, health care, child care, and substance abuse treatment. These services were expected to be either paid for or offered by NPRIR providers, or made available through referrals to other organizations. In these efforts, Opportunity Reconnect was supposed to "…be the central, but not exclusive, tool for FBCOs for referrals to supportive services…"[38]

NPRIR case managers played very active roles in connecting participants to supportive services, as evidenced by the PRI MIS, which showed that 64 percent of exited participants had received a supportive service (please see Exhibit III-1).[39] Among the six NPRIR service providers, America Works participants were the most likely to have received a supportive service, with all exiters served by this provider reported to have received such a service. RCDCC and NJISJ were the two providers whose exiters were least likely to have received a supportive service.

Among the types of supportive services provided, transportation assistance was the most common; case managers at all but one NPRIR provider (RCDCC) reported giving bus tickets to participants to help them travel to provider locations, job interviews, and worksites.[40] Some case managers, such as those at Goodwill, also reported using bus tickets as incentives for program participation.

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[38] NPRIR Implementation Plan, p. 14.

[39] As of June 7, 2010.

[40] Instead of providing bus passes, RCDCC used a van to transport some participants to job interviews and work sites. Goodwill also reported transporting some participants to employer locations to apply for jobs.

Exhibit III-1:
Percent of Exited Participants who Received Supportive
Services as of June 7, 2010

	Percent of Exiters
La Casa	51%
NJISJ	25%
OAR	88%
RCDCC	24%
Goodwill	83%
America Works	100%
Total	**64%**

Due to significant costs associated with providing bus tickets to participants, several NPRIR providers reported that they might have to discontinue offering this service. Others have had to use other sources of funding to cover these costs. The city attempted to assist providers with covering the costs of bus tickets by providing them with tickets funded with Workforce Investment Act dollars; however this funding was quickly exhausted.

Another very common supportive service provided by case managers was assisting participants with obtaining replacement identification (ID) cards. Many ex-offenders lack photo identification and Social Security cards, and these individuals cannot become employed without replacing these documents. However, obtaining replacement IDs can be confusing, time-consuming and costly, requiring travel to numerous public agencies and payment of tens of dollars in fees. NPRIR case managers assisted participants with this process by providing participants with guidance on how to obtain these documents and by covering the cost of document fees. Among NPRIR providers, OAR case managers were particularly active in assisting participants with obtaining replacement IDs, and often received referrals from other NPRIR providers to assist those providers' participants with this process.

Case managers at America Works and Goodwill reported referring participants to Opportunity Reconnect and to the service providers located at Opportunity Reconnect for supportive services. They were the only case managers to report making more than a few such referrals. Specifically, they made numerous referrals to Dress for Success,[41] Newark Homeless Health Care, Essex

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[41] Dress for Success Essex County offered free interview clothing to ex-offenders. Other NPRIR providers also reported referring participants to Dress for Success, but to the organization's main location, not the office located at Opportunity Reconnect.

County Welfare Department, and Legal Services of New Jersey, each of which was located onsite at Opportunity Reconnect.

NPRIR case managers at other providers also referred a number of participants to legal services, but many of these referrals were to Re-entry Legal Services Network (ReLeSe), a non-profit legal assistance organization that is not located at Opportunity Reconnect. Other commonly noted referrals were for clothing, health care, vocational rehabilitation, housing, food stamps, public assistance, emergency food, and substance abuse treatment services.

Follow-Up Services

Once a participant was employed and appeared stable in that employment, NPRIR service providers typically began providing only follow-up services.[42] Some participants also moved into follow-up after case managers lost contact with them and 90 days passed without another service. According to case managers, the key goal of follow-up services was to support job retention among participants. Overall, 41 percent of exited NPRIR participants had received some type of follow-up service.

Follow-up services provided by case managers included case management and supportive services. According to case managers, the most common follow-up service was transportation assistance, usually bus tickets. Case managers explained that transportation assistance was often critical to employment retention because it ensured that participants could get to their jobs.

Another somewhat common follow-up service was follow-up mentoring.[43] While only about a third of all exited participants (38 percent) received a follow-up mentoring service, case managers reported that mentoring, particularly group mentoring, was a key follow-up service because it kept participants engaged in the program. They explained that when participants in follow-up attended a group mentoring activity, case managers (who usually helped facilitate group mentoring meetings) would typically take a moment to check-in with each participant individually to assess his or her need for additional assistance.

Case managers also engaged in outcomes tracking during the follow-up period. Although this was not a service itself, it was often directly related to provision of follow-up services. During each of the three quarters after a participant's exit quarter, NPRIR service providers were

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[42] Once a participant has received only follow-up services for 90 days, he or she is formally exited from the PRI MIS, although the exit date goes back to the date of the last non-follow-up service.

[43] Follow-up mentoring is explained in more detail later in the chapter.

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required to check in with former participants to collect information and documentation on employment status and hourly wage. Typically case managers combined tracking with providing participants with job retention assistance or other follow-up services.

Workforce Preparation Services

After case management, the next most common NPRIR service was workforce preparation, which included work readiness training, job placement assistance, job retention assistance, and transitional employment. According to the PRI MIS, 84 percent of NPRIR participants had received at least one workforce preparation service as of June 7, 2010 (please see Exhibit III-2). Workforce preparation services were common across all six NPRIR providers, with three providing these services to 95 percent or more of their participants.

Exhibit III-2:
Percent of NPRIR Participants that had Received
Workforce Preparation Services as of June 7, 2010

	Percent Received Workforce Preparation Services
La Casa	64%
NJISJ	95%
OAR	99%
RCDCC	86%
Goodwill	80%
America Works	95%
Total	**84%**

Work Readiness Training

According to the NPRIR Implementation Plan, work readiness training (called soft skills training in the plan) was a required component of NPRIR programs. The Implementation Plan suggested that such training deal with:

- how to handle questions about one's criminal background in job interviews, applications and on-the-job;

- punctuality and other issues related to the work ethic;

- appropriate work attire;

- business culture, work attitudes and behaviors; and

- anger management, communication, and other life skills such as money management, financial literacy, etc.[44]

At the time of the second-round site visit, all NPRIR service providers engaged most of their participants in some type of work readiness training within the first two weeks of enrollment.[45] Service providers reported that only participants who were assessed to be job ready at enrollment—a very small number—were allowed to bypass work readiness training. Work readiness training was also an extremely common service among the first generation of PRI grantees (Holl et al., 2009).

As specified in the NPRIR Implementation Plan, the work readiness trainings offered by NPRIR providers typically trained participants in the following skills:

- completing online and hard copy job applications;
- developing a resume and cover letter;
- interviewing for jobs, including how to talk about criminal convictions;
- identifying career interest and opportunities;
- understanding labor market information;
- communicating effectively with job supervisors;
- developing and managing a personal budget; and
- conducting job searches.

In addition, providers with access to on-site computer labs taught their participants about the basic functions of a computer, helped participants establish e-mail accounts, and taught them how to send and receive e-mail with attachments.

All providers but one—RCDCC—offered formal work readiness training to NPRIR participants in a group setting, with groups ranging from about 5 to 15 participants per session.[46] These

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[44] NPRIR Implementation Plan, p. 18 (direct quotes).

[45] Although work readiness training is a specific service captured in the PRI MIS, due to inconsistent reporting by service providers (i.e., work readiness training activities reported in multiple MIS categories), the data in the PRI MIS on work readiness training was inaccurate and is not included here.

[46] RCDCC did offer a formal, eight-week work readiness course through its Renaissance Computer Training Institute, but this training was not a regular part of its NPRIR program and relatively few NPRIR participants took part in this course. At the time of the second-round site visit, La Casa had just begun a pilot to provide work readiness services in a group setting; subsequent to the site visit, La Casa decided to provide this week-long group work readiness training only occasionally (since March 2010, the training has been provided only June 26-30 and July 26-30).

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group trainings lasted from 2 to 60 hours, and were typically completed over a period of one to two weeks.

The provider with the longest work readiness training, America Works, required its participants to attend work readiness training from 9 a.m. to noon and from 1 to 4 p.m. until they were assessed as job-ready, which was typically after two weeks of training. In comparison, Goodwill had the shortest work readiness trainings, in which participants attended a minimum of two one-hour workshops on different days of the week on how to act in professional settings and how to write a resume and cover letter and succeed in an interview. As at America Works, Goodwill required participants to continue attending these workshops until they were assessed as job-ready.

In contrast to the other NPRIR providers, RCDCC did not provide formal work readiness training but rather made its case managers and job developer available to assist participants with mastering work readiness skills. Unemployed participants were required to be at its offices at least four days a week for roughly five hours per day to work on their resumes, conduct job searches, and participate in other activities such as computer training and community service. During these hours, case managers and the job developer were available to assist participants with these activities.

Although the NPRIR Implementation Plan includes an expectation that the Newark One-Stop system would also assist NPRIR participants in mastering many workforce readiness skills, this has not been the case in the program thus far. Instead, because of concerns about the quality of services provided by the Newark comprehensive One-Stop Career Center, and the inconvenience of sending participants there when most NPRIR service providers offer the same services, few NPRIR participants were reported to have received workforce readiness training from the Newark One-Stop system.[47]

Transitional Jobs

One NPRIR provider, NJISJ, offered its participants the opportunity to engage in a transitional jobs program.[48] According to the NPRIR Implementation Plan, transitional jobs were to be made available to "ex-offenders seeking immediate employment, but who are not prepared for the

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[47]   The relationship between NPRIR and the Newark One-Stop Career Center is described in further detail in Chapter V.

[48]   Transitional jobs are short-term, subsidized employment.

workforce," and transitional jobs were expected to benefit these ex-offenders by providing work experience that would be "a bridge to permanent employment."[49]

Nearly all NJISJ participants were placed in transitional jobs.[50] According to staff members, only two groups of participants did not receive this service: those who never successfully completed the program's orientation and those who were assessed as job ready upon enrollment (and so were judged not to need a transitional job to secure unsubsidized employment).

Participants were placed in transitional jobs immediately following completion of their one-week orientation/work readiness training. Once placed, participants worked three days per week (24 hours a week) for a maximum of eight weeks for $7.82 per hour on a conservation or landscaping project overseen by Greater Newark Conservancy, as part of the Clean and Green Initiative.[51] On the two days per week that participants did not work, they were required to attend work readiness and life skills workshops at NJISJ. After completion of their transitional jobs, participants received job placement services just like other NPRIR participants.

Job Placement and Retention Assistance

Job placement assistance is required by the NPRIR Implementation Plan. Consequently, all six NPRIR service providers provided this assistance and all six indicated that it was received by most participants.[52]

At five of six NPRIR providers, job placement assistance was led by job developers, with assistance from case managers (the remaining provider, OAR, did not have a job developer so its case managers provided all placement assistance). This assistance usually began after a participant had completed work readiness training (or completed transitional employment) and had been assessed by case managers as "job ready." Typically, a job-ready participant was one who had a photo ID, a Social Security card, an updated resume, clear employment goals, and was available to work (i.e., was not in full-time substance abuse treatment).

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[49] NPRIR Implementation Plan, p. 20.

[50] According to the PRI MIS, as of June 7, 2010, 85 percent of NJISJ's NPRIR participants had received a "subsidized employment" service.

[51] The Greater Newark Conservancy is an organization based in Newark that provides environmental education, community gardening, beautification of neighborhoods, and job training opportunities.

[52] The PRI MIS does not have a services field to capture job placement assistance, so it is not possible to determine exactly how many participants received this service.

SPR

The first step in the job placement process was usually a one-on-one meeting between the participant and a job developer. During these meetings, job developers assessed the participant's skills, career interests, and work experience. Based on this assessment, job developers provided a participant with career guidance and job leads that matched his or her skills, interest, and experience.

After this initial meeting, job developers continued to work with participants until employment was secured. For most providers this meant regular weekly or biweekly in-person meetings between participants who were looking for work and job developers (or case managers, for the provider without a job developer). During these meetings, job developers checked in with participants regarding the status of previous job leads and provided them with new ones.[53] The process was somewhat different at America Works and RCDCC: participants who were in the job placement phase were required to be at these providers' offices much of the day (unless they were on a job interview). While on-site, participants met with job developers and case managers and continued refining their resumes, honing their interviewing skills, and looking for jobs on their own on the Internet. The site manager at one of these providers said that this kind of structure was particularly important for ex-offenders who were used to having a lot of structure in their lives.

Once participants were placed in employment, job developers and case managers continued to work with them, providing services to foster both job retention and advancement. These services usually involved NPRIR case managers or job developers checking in with participants and employers in person or by phone to discuss participants' needs, behavior, performance, and work ethics. Additionally, a number of NPRIR service providers provided participants with incentives, such as bus tickets, for staying employed. One provider, America Works, paid its participants $50.00 for retaining employment for 30 days and an additional $50.00 for staying employed for 90 days.

Because only a few participants found jobs on their own, most NPRIR placements stemmed from job development conducted by NPRIR staff members. NPRIR staff members reported utilizing a standard procedure in conducting job development. First they described NPRIR to employers, going over the program's target population, eligibility requirements, and the services and supports provided to participants. During this overview of NPRIR, job developers focused on eliminating employers' fears of hiring ex-offenders and emphasized that NPRIR participants would continue to be supported by the program during the participants' first few months of employment. Finally, job developers usually told employers about benefits, such as the Work

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[53] Sometimes job leads were e-mailed to participants as well.

Opportunity Tax Credit, that employers could receive for hiring ex-offenders (however, job developers asserted that few employers expressed interest in these benefits).[54]

NPRIR job developers reported placing most participants in warehouse, food service, and construction jobs.[55] These statements were generally supported by data from the PRI MIS, which showed that 41 percent of all employed NPRIR participants were placed in production-related jobs, many of which involved work in a warehouse (please see Exhibit III-3). Other occupational groups in which large numbers of NPRIR participants were employed included food preparation and serving related (13 percent) and construction and extraction (11 percent). Within the food preparation and serving related occupational group, 41 percent of participants were placed as "cooks," and within the construction and extraction occupational group, 91 percent of participants were placed as "laborers."

Job developers reported several reasons for their focus on production, food service, and construction-related occupations. First, employers in these occupations had been willing to hire ex-offenders in the past. Second, many participants had work experience in these occupations. Third, many participants expressed interest in jobs that involved working with their hands, and these were occupations that involved at least some manual labor.

Exhibit III-3:
Occupational Groups of Participants' First Job Placement

	Percent
Production	41%
Food Preparation & Serving Related	13%
Construction & Extraction	11%
Sales and related	10%
Building & Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	7%
Transportation & Material Moving	7%

Some NPRIR job developers also placed participants with little or no work experience in jobs with temporary agencies. Although these jobs were temporary, job developers asserted that they

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[54] The Work Opportunity Tax Credit provides as much as $2,400 for each employer who hires an adult who has been convicted of a felony within a year of the ex-offender's conviction or release from prison.

[55] These were also the top three sectors for placement reported by job developers among the first generation of PRI grantees according to Holl, et al.

were beneficial because they allowed participants to gain work experience. One service provider that had used this option was Goodwill, which had placed a number of participants in its own GoodTemps[56] program, which provided long- and short-term temporary assignments in the public and private sectors for people with disabilities and other barriers to employment. RCDCC's job developer also placed a number of participants in temporary agencies, at least partly because so few other jobs were available due to the recession. A third provider, OAR, placed some participants in jobs with temporary agencies, although the program manager said that most of these were "temp to perm" jobs that would eventually lead to permanent employment. Fairly extensive use of temporary employment may be one reason why 16 percent of participants were reported in the PRI MIS as having been placed in two or more jobs.

As of June 7, 2010, it appeared that NPRIR service providers had had mixed success in job development, as only 49 percent of participants overall were reported to have been placed in at least one job (please see Exhibit III-4).[57] This was a far lower placement rate than the 68 percent achieved by the first generation of PRI grantees (Holl, et al., 2009). Three providers—NJISJ, La Casa, and RCDCC—had placed even smaller percentages of their participants. To explain why placements were low, NPRIR providers reported a number of challenges. One of these was that there were very few available jobs in Newark due to the recession, and competition for the few jobs that are available was fierce. Most of these available jobs were also located in suburban areas, requiring long and expensive bus rides for participants to and from Newark. Another challenge was that a number of employers were unwilling to hire ex-offenders. In particular, a number of large retail employers had instituted policies that did not allow anyone with a criminal record to be hired. This latter challenge was also noted by the first generation of PRI grantees as the greatest barrier that PRI participants faced in obtaining employment (Holl et al., 2009). Staff turnover at NJISJ and performance problems with the previous job developer at La Casa were also noted as reasons for those agencies' low placement rates.

NPRIR service providers who worked with halfway house residents noted that restrictions on those participants were another job placement-related challenge. Halfway house participants were only allowed to be released from their houses if they obtained a pass, which could sometimes take 24 to 48 hours. However, job developers sometimes could not schedule job interviews more than 48 hours in advance, and consequently a number of halfway house

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[56] GoodTemps was a temporary staffing division of Goodwill Industries of Greater New York and Northern New Jersey that offered long- and short-term temporary assignments in the public and private sectors for people with disabilities and other barriers to employment.

[57] This placement could have occurred at any time after enrollment in the program, and so the placement rate is not the same as the Entered Employment rate for the program.

participants missed job interviews because they were unable to obtain a pass in time. In addition, there were restrictions related to the jobs halfway house residents can have. For example, halfway house residents were not allowed to work in establishments where alcohol was served. Further, employers of halfway house residents had to supply information about their businesses to halfway house staff and their worksites often needed to be inspected—requirements that some employers found onerous. For all of these reasons, NPRIR service providers asserted that placing halfway house residents in jobs was much more challenging than placing other participants.

Exhibit III-4:
Percent of Participants Placed in at least One Job as of June 7, 2010

	Percent of Participants Placed in at least One Job
La Casa	36%
NJISJ	29%
OAR	66%
RCDCC	41%
Goodwill	57%
America Works	55%
Total	**49%**

The Office of Re-entry and its contracted TA provider, P/PV, attempted to address these job placement and job development challenges in a number of ways. First, to address the challenge of placing halfway house residents, the Office of Re-entry began convening meetings between NPRIR service providers and representatives of halfway houses to discuss potential solutions to these problems (these meetings became the Newark Re-entry Coordinating Committee, which is discussed in Chapter V). Additionally, the Office of Re-entry worked with other city staff members to support social ventures involving the hiring of ex-offenders. For example, the city has funded the development of a pest control company called "Pest at Rest" by the Doe Foundation. The goal of this company would be to hire formerly incarcerated Newark residents to perform pest control services (See Chapter IV for more information). The Office of Re-entry also sought to involve NewarkWORKS in assisting NPRIR providers with job development. However, as will be discussed in Chapter V, only one provider had received significant job development assistance from NewarkWORKS as of the second site visit.

In contrast to the challenges faced by other NPRIR providers, OAR's placement rate (66 percent) was nearly as high as that of the first generation of PRI grantees. That provider's manager

attributed at least part of his organization's success with job placement to the organization's philosophy that it wants participants to look for jobs themselves. He said that the organization's motto for job placement is "We help you [participants] to help yourself." Consequently, he estimated that 70 percent of its participants find jobs on their own.

Mentoring

Another core NPRIR service—and a key element of the PRI model—is mentoring. According to the NPRIR Implementation Plan, mentors—typically called life coaches—were expected to provide the following kinds of support to NPRIR participants:

- emotional support to help them through a re-entry process "…filled with so much fear, anger, isolation, confusion and sadness…";

- "practical support to meet the everyday challenges" such as "finding a place to live, getting a driver's license, figuring out how to commute to work…"; and

- "constructive social or interpersonal support that encourages the development and maintenance of positive behaviors."

The Implementation Plan also notes that although mentoring is a "vital" service, it is "the most challenging program element to implement…because mentoring adults—particularly former prisoners—is largely uncharted territory." [58] Holl et al., in their report on the first generation of PRI grantees, found that grantees that lacked experience in operating mentoring programs for adult ex-offenders faced numerous challenges in developing their PRI mentoring programs.

Consequently, it is not surprising that all NPRIR service providers lacking experience operating PRI mentoring programs found mentoring to be the most problematic service to implement. As of the second-round site visit, only one of the five NPRIR mentoring programs appeared to be well established and providing mentoring as required under NPRIR. [59] (This was the program operated by Goodwill, which had four years of experience operating its mentoring program as a first generation PRI grantee.) For this reason, the information on NPRIR mentoring programs presented here should be considered a snapshot of those programs at a certain point in time, as they have continued to evolve since completion of the second-round site visit, which is when most of the data presented here were collected.

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[58] NPRIR Implementation Plan, p. 24.

[59] America Works does not provide mentoring services.

With the exception of Goodwill, NPRIR organizations provided few participants with mentoring services until the summer and early fall of 2009 (please see Exhibit III-5). [60] After that, however, the number of participants receiving a mentoring service increased relatively steadily for most providers.

Exhibit III-5:
Cumulative Number of NPRIR Participants who Received Mentoring Services

	Apr.-June 09	July-Sept. 09	Oct.-Dec. 09	Jan.-Mar. 10	Apr.-May 10
La Casa	3	23	37	67	77
NJISJ	0	13	34	58	100
OAR	0	6	15	30	44
RCDCC	13	48	62	83	85
Goodwill	84	147	188	239	275
Total	**100**	**237**	**336**	**477**	**581**

In terms of the percentage of NPRIR participants who received mentoring services, by the end of May 2009, 58 percent of NPRIR participants had received at least one mentoring service. Among providers, NJISJ had provided mentoring to the highest percentage of participants of any provider (74 percent); in contrast, OAR still lagged behind other providers, as it had only provided mentoring services to 42 percent of its participants (please see Exhibit III-6).

The cumulative percentage of participants who were provided with mentoring services at Goodwill, La Casa and RCDCC increased and decreased over the implementation of NPRIR, although by the end of May 2010, both Goodwill and RCDCC reported having provided 64 percent of their participants with mentoring, while La Casa reported that it had provided 60 percent of its participants with mentoring services.[61] In the case of La Casa and RCDCC, one possible reason for the slight decrease in the percentage of participants who had received mentoring in the second quarter of 2010 was that these two organizations operated their mentoring programs with only paid staff until early May 2010 due to problems recruiting and retaining volunteer mentors. Consequently, it was likely that these two organizations had to

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[60] Goodwill actually began providing mentoring services as early as October 2008. However, due to problems related to the delayed entry of its data in the PRI MIS, data on Goodwill's mentoring services prior to April 2009 were inaccurate. Consequently, mentoring data prior to April 2009 are not presented in this report.

[61] However, many of the participants served by La Casa and RCDCC did not receive allowable mentoring services as those services were provided by paid staff rather than volunteer mentors. Consequently, the percentage of participants who received allowable NPRIR mentoring services at these providers was likely much lower.

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decrease the amount of mentoring they provided as they revamped their programs to include volunteer mentors as required by ETA.

Exhibit III-6:
Percentage of NPRIR Participants who Received Mentoring Services 4/09–5/10
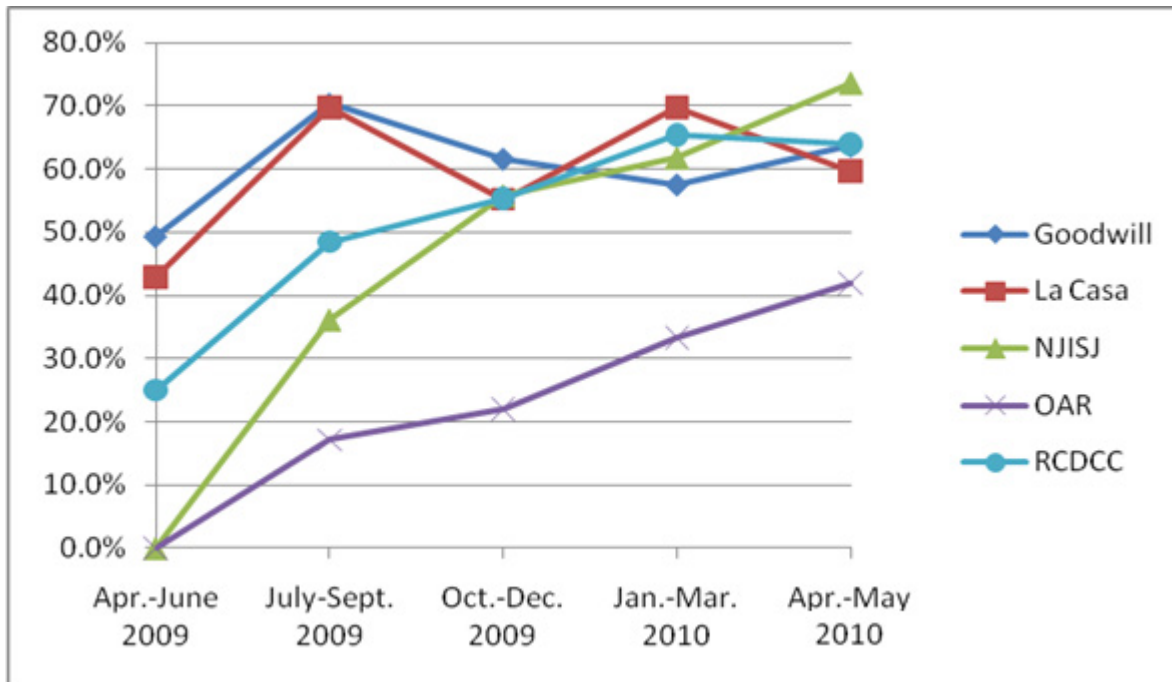
Modes of Mentoring

According to the NPRIR Key Definitions document developed by the Office of Re-entry, NPRIR service providers were able to use three approaches in providing mentoring services:

- *group mentoring,* which consists of four to five participants meeting with one mentor, or eight to ten participants meeting with two mentors;

- *one-on-one mentoring*, which consists of same-gender matches of one adult with one participant; and

- *team mentoring,* which consists of two to five mentors matched with one participant.

Among NPRIR mentoring providers, all but Goodwill initially opted to provide both group and one-on-one mentoring (Goodwill initially planned to provide only one-on-one mentoring). However, by the time of the second-round site visit, only two providers, Goodwill and OAR, were providing one-on-one mentoring. The main reason for this shift in mode was that setting up one-on-one mentoring programs required a great deal of administrative effort—particularly to recruit and retain volunteer mentors—while group mentoring could be provided with fewer

volunteer mentors (or in the case of La Casa and RCDCC—no volunteer mentors), and thus less administrative resources. Similarly, many of the first generation of PRI grantees added or switched to group mentoring services over the first two years of grant implementation (Holl et al., 2009). Below is a description of both types of mentoring activities as they were being provided at the time of the second-round site visit.

Group Mentoring

Although all five NPRIR mentoring providers offered group mentoring, these sessions differed greatly by provider. At Goodwill, La Casa, and RCDCC, group mentoring sessions were attended (and facilitated) by the mentor coordinator or other program staff, with no volunteer mentors present. At NJISJ, in contrast, volunteer mentors (from a variety of FBCOs) facilitated sessions and program staff did not usually attend. Finally, at OAR, both program staff and volunteer mentors attended sessions.

The format of group mentoring meetings also differed by provider. At Goodwill and La Casa, group mentoring meetings usually featured a formal presentation or speaker. By contrast, at OAR and RCDCC mentoring meetings typically featured informal group discussions, or, at OAR, paired discussions between a mentor and mentee.

The number of mentees who typically attended these meetings also varied and was often higher than the standard set by the Office of Re-entry. For example, OAR group mentoring meetings were reported to have had only 11 or fewer attendees, while La Casa's mentor coordinator estimated that he usually had 30–40 mentees per session. The other three providers estimated that they typically had from 10 to 20 participants per session.

Finally, providers differed in how often group mentoring sessions were offered, although most met at least biweekly to meet the standard set by the Office of Re-entry. NJISJ, offered several sessions a week, either on-site or at mentoring partner organizations; RCDCC had sessions twice a week, Goodwill and La Casa once a week,[62] and OAR only once a month. OAR's NPRIR manager said that his organization planned to move to biweekly mentoring meetings, but had found it difficult due to the challenge of coordinating mentor and mentee schedules.

Despite these differences in format, frequency, and numbers of attendees, sessions were similar in length and covered similar topics. Group mentoring meetings usually lasted from two to three hours. In terms of topics, most group sessions covered work readiness, job retention or life skills

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[62]   During the second-round site visit, La Casa was piloting daily mentoring sessions. However, after the site visit, these sessions were not regularly conducted.

topics such as interviewing skills, getting along with your supervisor, and anger management. The group mentoring sessions at NJISJ that were facilitated by a volunteer from Rutgers Cooperative Extension were an exception in that those sessions always focused on nutrition (attendance at all eight of her sessions resulted in a certificate).

One-on-One Mentoring

As noted above, at the time of the second-round site visit only Goodwill and OAR were providing one-on-one mentoring.[63] The one-on-one mentoring programs offered by these organizations differed substantially, with the latter sub-grantee having a much larger, more established, and more formal program than the former.

One difference between these two programs was in how participants were matched to mentors. At Goodwill, the mentor coordinator matched mentors and mentees by carefully studying applications filled out by both parties, as well as notes from interviews conducted with both mentors and mentees. Based on mentor and mentee preferences and characteristics, the mentor coordinator then made tentative matches; for each pair, the coordinator contacted both parties and gave each one information on the person with whom he or she had been matched. If the parties tentatively agreed to the match, the mentor coordinator facilitated an introductory meeting at which the mentor and mentee could decide to move forward, consider the match further, or request to be re-matched.

By contrast, OAR's matching process was much less formal. Until the arrival of the volunteer mentor coordinator in March 2010, the provider's NPRIR program manager did the matching. As he knew most of the mentees through his management of program activities and also was very familiar with most of the mentors (who had been recruited through personal connections with program staff members), he made matches based on his own assessment of who would work well together. Once the volunteer mentor coordinator was in place, she began to make one-on-one matches at the end of group mentoring meetings based on her observation of mentor and mentee characteristics and how well mentors and mentees got along during the meeting.

Goodwill had well-established methods of communicating with one-on-one mentors. All of its volunteer mentors were recruited by partner organizations, and these organizations were required to ensure that one-on-one mentors completed and submitted monthly mentoring logs that recorded the amount of contact between mentors and mentees. OAR's NPRIR program manager, by contrast, admitted that his organization had not yet developed an efficient process of

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[63] Mentor coordinators at NJISJ and RCDCC said that their organizations hoped to offer one-on-one mentoring in the future.

collecting information about the activities of one-on-one mentors, although the NPRIR program manager said that this would be a task for the new mentor coordinator.[64]

Despite these differences in matching and communication procedures, both Goodwill and OAR required mentors to have at least four hours of contact with mentees a month. This matched the contact requirements set by the Office of Re-entry.

Due to the challenges in finding and retaining mentors and accommodating those mentors' schedules, however, both Goodwill and OAR had difficulty matching NPRIR participants one-on-one with mentors. As a result, mentors were asked to take on more than one mentee (and still meet one-on-one with both) and some participants either had to wait a long time to be assigned a mentor or were never assigned one.[65] To determine which participants should be matched first, Goodwill participants who requested a one-on-one mentor were ranked according to their need for one, and those ranked highest were matched first. "Max-out" participants,[66] those whose parole or probation officer mandated mentoring, and individuals who lacked family support or were assessed as needing a positive influence in their lives, were ranked highest.

Follow-up Mentoring

Most NPRIR service providers attempted to continue engaging participants in mentoring activities even after program exit. These follow-up mentoring services were exactly the same as those provided to enrolled participants. However, because participants in follow-up were typically employed, providers reported having a particularly difficult time keeping these participants engaged in mentoring services.

Volunteer Mentors

Only Goodwill, NJISJ, and OAR were recruiting volunteer mentors at the time of the second-round site visit.[67] As the program with the longest history of providing mentoring, it is not surprising that Goodwill had the most well-established and successful process for recruiting volunteer mentors.

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[64] Two months after the second-round site visit, OAR's NPRIR program manager said that the organization had started to request that mentors fill out and submit monthly mentoring logs, but that these were not required. Instead, it was the responsibility of the mentor coordinator to collect this information by phone or e-mail.

[65] Both organizations encouraged participants to take part in group mentoring sessions no matter whether they were matched one-on-one or not, and a number of participants did participate in both types of mentoring activities.

[66] Max-outs are individuals who served their entire prison sentence and so are not under any form of supervision by a community corrections agency.

[67] However, after the City of Newark clarified that mentoring services must be provided by or with volunteer mentors in early May 2010, both RCDCC and La Casa began recruiting and using volunteer mentors.

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This process involved partnerships between Goodwill and five other Newark-area FBCOs that sponsored community members to serve as Goodwill mentors. These partner organizations were required to provide support and guidance to referred mentors, and they are reimbursed $250 for every mentor that was successfully matched with a mentee. These organizations also received an additional $250 when a mentor relationship lasted for three months.

NJISJ and OAR used a more informal process of recruiting mentors. At OAR, this mostly consisted of various staff members asking people they knew, using Facebook and sending out e-mails. As of the second-round site visit, the program had also recently begun recruiting mentors at local colleges and universities, and the mentor coordinator was planning to make a recruitment presentation at a local church. NJISJ began its recruitment of mentors by developing relationships with several local organizations and asking these organizations to provide one or more group mentoring sessions. These organizations included Prodigal Sons and Daughters (which was started by ex-offenders) and Rutgers Cooperative Extension.

NJISJ's mentor coordinator said he had also specifically targeted faith-based organizations to provide group mentoring sessions, but had had mixed success. After "cold calling" local churches proved fruitless, he began dropping in on churches to talk to the pastors, and from one of those visits developed a partnership with Bethel Ministries. However, after this one success he had difficulty finding another faith-based partner, which he attributed to the fact that most churches lack the organizational capacity to participate in a mentoring partnership. For this reason, he decided to start offering to pay faith-based organizations for providing mentoring, in the hope of making a partnership more feasible. As part of this new strategy, he was planning to pay a new faith-based mentoring partner, Churches in Cooperation, $100 for every mentoring session it provided.

Once they identified volunteer mentors, Goodwill, OAR, and NJISJ used various methods to screen potential mentors and organizations to ensure they were appropriate. All three providers required potential mentors to complete a mentor application and an in-person or phone interview and provide references (although only Goodwill said that it actually called those references). OAR also conducted a criminal background check.

Both Goodwill and OAR required individuals to participate in formal training prior to serving as a mentor. At OAR, these trainings took place for an hour and a half prior to the beginning of monthly group mentoring sessions and involved presenting the program's mentoring training manual and informing new mentors of mentoring guidelines (such as not lending money to mentees). New Goodwill mentors were required to participate in a two-hour training in which they were similarly informed of the organization's rules for mentoring and then discussed

effective mentoring practices. Additionally, once matched, the mentors were also required to participate in a one-hour supplementary training approximately three months after beginning to serve as mentors.

NJISJ's mentor coordinator said that he had not required training for new mentoring organizations as those organizations already provide training to their staff; he also felt that it was presumptuous to assume that all new mentors needed training.

Mentoring Challenges

Overall, NPRIR mentoring providers have faced a number of daunting challenges in developing their mentoring programs and providing mentoring services. The greatest challenge noted by all of these providers was recruiting and retaining volunteer mentors. Each of the NPRIR programs faced great difficulty finding appropriate individuals who were able to commit to the time requirements of being a mentor. Carrying out this recruitment process was also reported to be extremely time-consuming for staff members. And even among those individuals successfully recruited, mentor coordinators reported that it was hard to retain volunteer mentors for longer than a few months. Recruiting and retaining mentors was also a major challenge for the first generation of PRI grantees (Holl et al., 2009).

Another challenge reported by both the first generation of PRI grantees and most NPRIR providers was that it was difficult to persuade participants to engage in mentoring services. While some participants did not take part simply because they didn't see the need for mentoring, others did not have time to participate. Participants were especially less likely to participate once they became employed, as they were often scheduled to work during the times that mentoring sessions were held. Consequently, even though most providers strongly encouraged participants to engage in mentoring (La Casa and Goodwill even required attendance at group mentoring sessions), many participants did not participate or participated for only a short time.

Three of the four organizations that were implementing PRI mentoring programs for the first time faced challenges related to their lack of experience. One problem was a lack of understanding of the definition of mentoring. Neither La Casa nor RCDCC understood that they needed to use volunteer mentors to provide mentoring. After the city clarified in May 2010 that using only paid staff to provide mentoring was not allowable, these organizations had to revamp their mentoring programs and begin recruiting volunteer mentors again. OAR's NPRIR manager reported that he had difficulty setting up a system to collect information from volunteer mentors assigned to work one-on-one, and he and the new mentor coordinator were still clarifying this process at the time of the second site visit.

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OAR's NPRIR manager also said that the establishment of his program's mentoring program—particularly the one-on-one component—had been delayed due to his inability to bring on a dedicated mentor coordinator.[68] As will be discussed in Chapter IV, he asserted that his organization did not have sufficient NPRIR funding to hire a paid mentor coordinator, and he was not able to arrange for a volunteer mentor coordinator until March 2010.

A final mentoring-related challenge was that as of May 2010, none of America Works' NPRIR participants had received mentoring services. Although the America Works site manager reported referring 15 percent[69] of his participants to Goodwill for mentoring services, Goodwill's NPRIR manager reported via e-mail that, as of May 2010, none of these participants had been provided with mentoring services, because America Works staff had not provided Goodwill with contact information for these referred participants.

Education and Training Services

Although not considered a core NPRIR service according to the NPRIR Implementation Plan, a small number of NPRIR participants were reported to have received an education and training service (please see Exhibit III-7).[70] These services included occupational skills training, on-the-job training (OJT), unpaid work experience, and basic skills training (GED preparation and math and reading remediation).

Exhibit III-7:
Percent of Participants Receiving Education and Training Services

	GED Preparation	Math/Reading Remediation	OJT/Work Experience	Occupational Skills Training
La Casa	5%	1%	0%	0%
NJISJ	0%	0%	0%	1%
OAR	2%	0%	1%	7%
RCDCC	17%	2%	12%	2%
Sub-grantee Five	1%	0%	1%	0%
Sub-grantee Six	2%	0%	2%	0%
Total	**4%**	**0.3%**	**2%**	**1%**

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[68] For this reason, as of the second-round site visit, very few OAR participants had been matched with mentors.

[69] America Works' grant agreement with the Nicholson Foundation requires 60 percent of its participants to be referred to another provider for mentoring services.

[70] Similar to NPRIR, relatively small numbers of participants served by the first generation of PRI grantees received education and training services (Holl et al., 2009).

The most common type of education and training service received by NPRIR participants thus far was basic skills instruction, including GED preparation and math or reading remediation. According to the PRI MIS, as of June 7, 2010, four percent of NPRIR participants had received GED preparation services, and 0.3 percent had received math/reading remediation services. The majority of these participants were served by RCDCC, which, as discussed in Chapter II, is the only service provider that did not screen out participants with low literacy skills or those who wanted to earn a GED. Both RCDCC and La Casa offered on-site GED preparation courses.

After basic skills instruction, the next most common education and training service was OJT/work experience, with two percent of participants reported to have received this service. Most of these participants were served by RCDCC, which provided them with unpaid work experience through its Renaissance Construction Company. During this work experience, participants learned about green construction and weatherization design processes, site preparation and clearance, Occupational Safety and Health Administration standards, construction terminology, blueprint design and specifications, and dry wall preparation framing, installation, and finishing. Other participants who were reported to have received OJT services received them through referrals to NewarkWORKS.

Only one percent of NPRIR participants were reported to have received occupational skills training, with most of these participants served through OAR. According to its NPRIR program manager, most of these were served by the eCycling@Newark (eCAN) program being provided by the Urban Renewal Corporation (URC) in cooperation with the Office of Re-entry. The eCAN program provided occupational skills training and internships to 22 NPRIR participants enrolled by a variety of NPRIR providers, including OAR. During the first four to six months of eCAN, participants were to attend classes Monday through Thursday for eight hours a day at URC's computer recycling center in Kearny, NJ, earning a $150 food and transportation stipend for regular weekly attendance. On Fridays, participants were also to receive a food and transportation stipend for spending five hours marketing the benefits of e-waste recycling throughout Newark. Following completion of this training and marketing component, participants were to be placed in stipended six-month internships with URC partners.

The two percent of RCDCC's participants who received occupational skills training likely received it through the provider's on-site computer training program. This program offered introductory courses on Windows, keyboarding, and Microsoft Office software programs. It also offered the following certificate programs: basic computer keyboarding, Call Center Specialist, and QuickBooks Specialist.

There were two primary reasons why so few NPRIR participants have received education and training services thus far. One is that, by design, NPRIR providers were primarily focused on placing participants in employment, not in education and training programs. Another reason was that NPRIR participants reported needing to find work as soon as possible to support themselves and pay fines and restitution fees. Some participants, such as those in ISP, were also required to obtain employment within a short time after being released or be subject to reincarceration.[71]

Conclusion

As discussed throughout this chapter, case management, workforce preparation, and mentoring were the core services offered to NPRIR participants. In providing these services, NPRIR providers achieved several successes, developed promising practices, and experienced a number of challenges.

Successes and Promising Practices

The NPRIR program has demonstrated a number of successes and promising practices with regard to service delivery:

- **Relatively low caseloads and frequent contact appeared to allow NPRIR case managers to develop close trusting relationships with clients.** These close relationships, inferred from interviews with a small number of clients, may allow case managers to support and motivate NPRIR participants to achieve successful outcomes.

- **Requiring participants to be on-site every day for most or all of the day until they find a job may be good for many ex-offenders.** This practice, part of the program at two of the providers, may be beneficial for many ex-offenders, particularly those who have just completed long prison sentences and are therefore used to having very structured lives.

- **The use of incentives may help motivate participants to retain employment.** NPRIR providers' use of incentives such as free bus tickets to encourage participants to stay employed is a practice that may result in improved employment outcomes. One provider's use of $50 financial incentives for participants who retain employment for 30 and 90 days was a particularly noteworthy version of this practice.

Current and Potential Challenges

In addition to the successes and promising practices described above, there are a few current and potential challenges that may affect the successful implementation of NPRIR:

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[71] Individuals in ISP are required to find a full-time job within 30 days of release from prison.

- **NPRIR service providers struggled with maintaining contact with NPRIR participants.** Providers had particular difficulty maintaining contact once participants became employed.

- **NPRIR service providers have had difficulty placing participants in employment, particularly those residing in halfway houses**. NPRIR providers reported having great difficulty placing participants in employment. They attributed this challenge to the poor economy, many employers' blanket prohibitions on hiring ex-offenders, and on restrictions on halfway house residents.

- **NPRIR service providers—in particular those without prior experience with PRI mentoring—have struggled with providing mentoring services.** Mentor coordinators and other NPRIR provider staff members reported that recruiting and retaining volunteer mentors has been a key challenge in implementing mentoring programs. This challenge combined with several others to slow the implementation of mentoring programs and reduce the number of participants receiving mentoring services below expected levels.

- **Several providers' group mentoring programs stretched the definition of "mentoring services."** The group mentoring programs offered by some providers seemed more like educational services than mentoring. In particular, the nutritional classes provided by Rutgers Cooperative Extension, did not seem to fit ETA's definition of mentoring: "a relationship over a prolonged period of time between two or more people where caring volunteer mentors assist ex-prisoners in successfully and permanently reentering their communities by providing consistent support as needed, guidance, and encouragement…"

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IV. PROJECT ADMINISTRATION

In a program such as NPRIR, with multiple service providers ranging from small FBCOs to Federal partners, leadership, management and administration are critical and complex functions. Program leaders need to ensure that the program is heading in the right direction overall. They also must monitor and support program managers to make certain that services are being provided effectively and service delivery activities and participant outcomes are being reported accurately. Finally, program administrators and managers need to ensure that programs are staffed, funded, and run successfully.

This chapter begins with a discussion of leadership and management of the NPRIR program by the City of Newark and the Nicholson Foundation; this discussion includes a description of the role of the city's Office of Re-entry and its staff. The chapter then covers, in sequence, the following topics: administration of NPRIR services, the funding and fiscal management of the program, the data systems used in NPRIR, and the technical assistance (TA) and monitoring provided by the Office of Re-entry and its contractor, P/PV. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the key promising practices and challenges related to leadership, management, and administration.

Leadership and Management

While the mayor was not directly involved with project administration, according to city staff members, his leadership has been critical to the implementation of NPRIR as well as city re-entry efforts in general. These staff members asserted that prior to the mayor's election, re-entry was not a priority for the city, and re-entry services were uncoordinated and insufficient. After he was elected in 2006, however, the mayor made prisoner re-entry an important focus of his administration, creating the Office of Re-entry to coordinate re-entry efforts within the city. Staff members reported that the mayor was instrumental in supporting the city's quest for funding from multiple sources, including ETA, to support the development of NPRIR and a

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broader re-entry system.[72] Most recently, the Chair of Re-entry Initiatives (CRI) reported that the mayor played a critical role in advocating for several re-entry-related bills being considered by the state legislature that were eventually signed into law.[73]

Although city staff members asserted that the mayor continued to be regularly informed about the implementation of NPRIR, management of re-entry efforts, including NPRIR, is handled by the staff of the Department of Economic and Housing Development. The head of that department, the deputy mayor, was described as providing "overall strategic vision for re-entry in the City of Newark," while the director of operations and management for the department (who works under the deputy mayor), supervised the operations of the Office of Re-entry as well as the city's One-Stop Career Center system.[74]

The center of operations for the day-to-day management of re-entry efforts in the city was the Office of Re-entry. This office was led by the CRI, who was assisted by a part-time data analyst who reviewed and analyzed PRI MIS data and assisted with the client referral process. The Office of Re-entry also had a program specialist who provided some assistance to NPRIR service providers on the PRI MIS and supervised the office's client referral process and an intake coordinator who met and referred to appropriate NPRIR providers most of the ex-offenders who came to the office seeking assistance. As was briefly discussed in Chapter II, the office also had a liaison to Opportunity Reconnect who was based there and managed the Opportunity Reconnect referral process. Finally, a senior fellow from the Manhattan Institute assisted the Office of Re-entry with performance management and overall re-entry strategies.[75] Due to city budget limitations, the only Office of Re-entry staff member who was a regular city employee was the liaison to Opportunity Reconnect; all others were officially employed by entities such as the Manhattan Institute or the Brick City Development Corporation.[76]

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[72] Detailed information is provided below on the multiple sources of funding the city has used to support re-entry efforts since the beginning of NPRIR.

[73] As an example of his advocacy efforts, the mayor wrote an opinion piece supporting these bills that was published by the *New Jersey Star-Ledger* on January 3, 2010.

[74] NPRIR Quarterly Narrative Report for the quarter ending March 31, 2010.

[75] The Manhattan Institute is a policy research organization based in New York City.

[76] The Brick City Development Corporation is an economic development entity that conducts business attraction and retention activities on behalf of the City of Newark.

The other entity that provided some measure of leadership to NPRIR was the Newark-based Nicholson Foundation.[77] The primary role of the Nicholson Foundation in NPRIR has been to provide major funding for the program, although the foundation also played a key role in monitoring the performance of the two NPRIR match providers and rewarding them for the achievement of performance benchmarks (discussed below). A Nicholson Foundation staff person oversaw the foundation-funded activities of these providers and met regularly with their NPRIR program managers to discuss program implementation and performance. Since only the Nicholson Foundation could decide to terminate or suspend its agreement with these providers due to performance problems, the Nicholson Foundation was a key player in any decisions about the activities of the NPRIR match providers.

Finally, through its ongoing participation on two of the city's re-entry advisory groups—the Re-entry Advisory Board and the Re-entry Coordinating Committee—the Nicholson Foundation provided input to the city's re-entry efforts, including NPRIR. However, because foundation staff members had participated in only one meeting of the NPRIR Advisory Committee, the advisory body with the most direct oversight of NPRIR operations, this input was limited (please see Chapter V for more details on these three advisory bodies).

Role of the Office of Re-entry

As part of its day-to-day management of NPRIR, the Office of Re-entry had a number of roles:

- **Develop policies and guidelines for the NPRIR program.** Early on in the implementation process, the Office of Re-entry worked with its contracted TA provider, P/PV, to develop a list of key definitions to guide program operations. In the fall of 2009, as discussed in Chapter II, the city developed the NPRIR Referral Guide, which described the required steps for making referrals to the NPRIR program, as well as the process for registering participants with the city's One-Stop Career Center system. More recently, in May 2010, the Office of Re-entry put together an NPRIR Operations Manual, which included all of the relevant policies and guidance the office had developed thus far, including the NPRIR Referral Guide and key definitions.

- **Monitor compliance by city and match-funded NPRIR service providers.** For example, in May 2010, Office of Re-entry staff members met with certain NPRIR service providers to inform them that they needed to change the way they were providing mentoring services in order to be in compliance with city and ETA guidelines. The city also worked closely with P/PV during the winter and spring

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[77] The Nicholson Foundation has a geographic focus on the City of Newark and other urban neighborhoods in Essex County and, since 2002, has funded a number of prisoner re-entry-related activities in this area.

of 2010 to ensure that NPRIR service providers were including all required documentation in participant files.

- **Develop systematic partnerships on behalf of NPRIR.** This included convening multiple re-entry advisory groups. (Office of Re-entry activities related to partnership development and advisory groups are the subject of Chapter V.)

- **Ensure that NPRIR service providers receive sufficient support to implement the program effectively.** To carry out this role, the city relied primarily on its contracted TA provider, P/PV. However, in the case of certain providers struggled in implementing NPRIR, the Office of Re-entry played a more hands-on role in providing assistance. This support role is discussed in greater detail below in the section on TA activities.

- **Report to ETA on the program's progress.**

- **Refer to NPRIR service providers potentially eligible individuals who come to city hall seeking assistance.**

Although management of NPRIR continued to be a major focus for the Office of Re-entry, in early 2010 it took on, according to the CRI, "a broader mission that includes supporting new legislation, networking with re-entry providers about issues beyond NPRIR, providing leadership on overall re-entry policy, and making sure that provider and One-Stop services are aligned with the needs of re-entry clients." As part of this expanded role, the Office of Re-entry, through its Re-entry Advisory Board, played an important role in shaping the state re-entry legislation that was signed into law in January.[78] The office was also instrumental in helping the city secure additional funding to develop other re-entry programs, such as the Gateway ID program, which assisted ex-offenders with obtaining replacement IDs, and the Steps to Employment Program 1 (STEP 1), which assisted ex-offenders who are ineligible for NPRIR.

Communication between Service Providers and the Office of Re-entry

All four of the city-funded NPRIR service providers reported regular phone and e-mail contact with the Office of Re-entry (usually the CRI) regarding overall implementation, contract and payment issues, and eligibility questions. By contrast, the two Nicholson-funded providers reported little communication with the CRI around these issues. The four NPRIR providers that received large numbers of referrals from the Office of Re-entry also noted regular communication regarding these referrals. NPRIR service providers also said that they occasionally communicated with the Office of Re-entry's data analyst and program specialist regarding PRI MIS questions or challenges. However, most communication regarding the PRI

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[78] More details about the Newark Re-entry Advisory Board's role in shaping this legislation are discussed in Chapter V.

MIS was with the city's contracted technical assistance provider, P/PV, rather than with city staff members.

NPRIR Service Provider Assessments of the Office of Re-entry

NPRIR managers from three service providers reported that the Office of Re-entry had succeeded in providing them with effective support in implementing their NPRIR programs. These managers also noted the responsiveness of members of the Office of Re-entry staff. As one NPRIR manager put it, the Office of Re-entry has been "on top of every single detail, especially performance. They are not critical but really just want to help." Another NPRIR manager, with many years of experience working in Newark, noted that this was not what he had come to expect from city staff members: "The city surprised me…about the amount of support they have provided. They didn't even have a Re-entry Department before, and now every one of their workers is really accessible and responsive. They have been really helpful." On the more negative side, one manager felt that Office of Re-entry staff members did not completely understand his program, and consequently had unrealistic expectations about how quickly it could be implemented.

Administration of Services

NPRIR services were administered by the six NPRIR service providers. The average number of permanent NPRIR staff members per provider was five. Each NPRIR service provider had at least one staff member who served as NPRIR program manager, although none of these managers worked full-time on NPRIR. At three providers, NPRIR program management duties were shared among two or three staff members. In addition to program managers, each of the NPRIR providers had two or more staff members who served as case managers.[79] Five of these providers had at least one case manager who worked full-time on NPRIR. One provider supplemented its case managers with social work interns. All but one of the NPRIR providers had at least one staff member who served as a job developer.[80] The only provider that did not have a job developer wanted to hire one but could not afford to do so. Finally, four of the providers had a mentor coordinator, although one of these coordinators was an unpaid

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[79] America Works was the only one of these providers that did not use the title of case manager for any of its staff members. Instead, the program had a trainer who facilitated work readiness training sessions and an intake specialist who conducted intake and made follow-up calls, among other tasks. However, America Works' Newark site manager asserted that these staff members also provided case management services, assisted at times by himself and the program's job developer.

[80] America Works called its job developer a "sales representative," but he essentially carried out the same activities as the job developers at other NPRIR providers. One difference is that he received incentives for making job placements.

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volunteer.[81] At one provider, the duties of the mentoring coordinator were handled by the NPRIR program manager.

NPRIR service providers reported a number of challenges related to staffing. One of the major challenges thus far has been staff member turnover, which was also a common challenge among the first generation of PRI grantees (Holl et al., 2009).   According to respondents at the provider that experienced the most staff-member turnover, this problem has significantly slowed down the process of implementing NPRIR. The lengthy contract approval process for the four city-funded providers prevented some providers from hiring all of their NPRIR staff members until late summer or early fall 2009, several months after they began enrolling participants.[82]

Several providers noted that NPRIR funding was insufficient for hiring all of the staff members they felt they needed. One provider lacked sufficient funding to hire a much-needed job developer and a paid mentor coordinator, and instead used a volunteer to serve as its mentor coordinator and assigned job development duties to other staff members. Similarly, two other providers could not pay for all necessary staff members with NPRIR funding, so they used funding from other programs to pay for the time they spent on NPRIR.

Funding and Fiscal Management

Sufficient funding and effective fiscal management are both important to the success of the NPRIR program. The city has been very successful in obtaining funding from a variety of sources to supplement ETA funding. To support its NPRIR grant application to ETA, the city obtained pledges from foundations for more than $2.3 million in match funding for the program, including the $2 million in matching funds from the Nicholson Foundation. In addition to this cash match, NJ DOL and NJ SPB both committed to providing significant in-kind support for the NPRIR grant.

The city also obtained additional funding to help support NPRIR programming. The city received US Department of Justice (DOJ) earmark grants in 2008 and 2009, which paid the salaries of several Office of Re-entry staff members, as well as the transitional jobs program for NPRIR participants. The Manhattan Institute also provided money to support a number of the Office of Re-entry staff members, including the CRI.

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[81]   One provider did not have a mentor coordinator because it did not provide mentoring itself, but referred participants to other providers for this service.

[82]   The reasons for the delays in contract approval are discussed below.

Funding Provided to NPRIR Service Providers

To set the parameters for funding each provider's NPRIR services, the city and the foundation established contracts or grant agreements with each service provider. The contracts and agreements for all NPRIR service providers were quite similar in terms of the scope of services they specify. For example, all providers are expected to enter data into the PRI MIS and to offer case management and workforce services, such as job development and job placement. In terms of other services, all agreements require NPRIR providers to offer access to supportive services, and all but one provider's grant agreement included a requirement to provide mentoring services.[83] In an exception to the generalization that all the agreements specify a similar scope of services, the city's contract with one of the providers explicitly required this organization to provide transitional job services, while none of the others mentioned transitional jobs.[84]

The contracts and agreements differed in the methods of payment specified and the benchmarks or outcomes to be achieved. One key difference was that the Nicholson-funded providers had contracts or agreements that were entirely performance-based—meaning that all funding was to be provided upon completion of certain benchmarks. By contrast, city NPRIR contracts had only 14 to 20 percent of their funding predicated on achieving benchmarks, with the rest provided either up front or on a reimbursement basis.

The benchmarks that the four city-funded providers have to meet to obtain payment for the performance-based portions of their contracts are as follows:

- provide case management to all active program participants;
- provide mentoring services to a minimum of 60 percent of participants;
- place a minimum of 60 percent of exited participants in unsubsidized employment with an average hourly wage of $9.00 per hour;
- ensure that a minimum of 70 percent of exited participants retain employment for six consecutive months; and
- maintain a recidivism rate of less than 22 percent of participants, as measured one year after release from prison or jail.

By comparison, to receive half of their total per-participant payment ($1,500), the Nicholson Foundation-funded providers have to show that a participant worked for 30 days for 20–25 hours

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[83] Although, as previously discussed, America Works is required to refer participants to other organizations for these services.

per week. To receive an additional payment of $1,500, one of these providers has to show that that same participant worked for 90 days, while the other provider is paid an additional $750 for each participant who achieves a positive outcome on the ETA Entered Employment and Employment Retention measures.[85]

Although neither organization is paid for achieving the other ETA PRI performance outcomes related to recidivism or earnings, the agreements with the Nicholson Foundation-funded providers both mentioned that those organizations would track and achieve some or all of those measures.[86] In terms of service-related benchmarks, however, neither agreement included a case management benchmark (present in the contracts of all of the city-funded providers) nor a benchmark for the provision of mentoring services.

Funding/Fiscal Management Challenges

In the implementation of NPRIR thus far, both the city and some of the program's service providers have faced challenges related to funding and fiscal management. One challenge that occurred somewhat early in the program's implementation was a delay in finalization of city contracts. Until these contracts were finalized, the city could not pay these providers either the upfront portion of their contracts or reimburse them for expenses already incurred. These contract delays resulted in slower-than-planned program implementation at some of the providers, as they had to wait until they received their first NPRIR payments to hire needed staff people and pay for required participant services.

Another funding challenge mentioned by at least two NPRIR service providers was the lengthy amount of time it took for the city to pay invoices. One of these providers reported that it generally took six to eight weeks for invoices to be paid. This occasionally caused cash-flow

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[84] Another contract difference, unrelated to scope of service, was that the city contracts require providers to cooperate with P/PV regarding technical assistance, including site visits and training sessions, while the Nicholson agreements did not address cooperation with P/PV.

[85] A positive outcome on the Entered Employment measure is defined as unsubsidized employment of any length during the first quarter after the participant's exit quarter. A positive outcome on the Employment Retention measure is defined as unsubsidized employment in the second and third quarters after their exit quarter for those participants that were employed in the first quarter after their exit quarter.

[86] The grant agreement for one of the Nicholson Foundation-funded providers, America Works, stated that the organization would achieve a recidivism rate that did not exceed 22 percent; its site manager said the organization also was striving to achieve the $9.00 per-hour wage-rate goal. The other Nicholson Foundation-funded provider's (Goodwill) contract made no mention of specific performance measures other than the entered employment and employment retention rates, but stated that the agreement could be terminated if the provider failed to meet the ETA performance outcomes.

issues at these organizations, as they did not have many other sources of funding with which to support the program.

The manager at one provider noted that having a portion of the organization's funding contingent upon the achievement of performance benchmarks was challenging because the organization's small budget made it very difficult to wait as long as was stipulated (nearly a year, in some cases) before it could request payment based on the achievement of some benchmarks. The complexity of how these benchmarks were measured also made it difficult for some of the city providers to understand when they could request payment for achieving them.

NPRIR Data Systems

As discussed above, all NPRIR providers were required to enter data on participants in ETA's PRI MIS, the same system used by all PRI grantees funded by ETA. This system tracks NPRIR participants' characteristics, the services they receive, enrollment and exit dates, and performance outcomes.

All of the city-funded providers began entering data on NPRIR clients into the PRI MIS in the spring of 2009, almost as soon as they began serving clients. Due to delays in the availability of the system, however, the early implementing provider's staff members were not able to enter data until March 2009. Consequently, they had to manually transfer data on NPRIR clients enrolled earlier from their own data system into the PRI MIS. Another provider's staff members were also not provided with access to the PRI MIS immediately after they began serving NPRIR participants, so they also had to transfer data on NPRIR clients enrolled from February to October 2009 from their own system into the PRI MIS.

At four of the six NPRIR service providers, all case managers entered data into the PRI MIS on a weekly or daily basis. The data entered by these staff members were monitored by either the program manager or a lead case manager. Only at two providers did the program manager enter data into the system on his own.

PRI MIS Challenges

The Office of Re-entry and NPRIR service providers have faced numerous challenges related to the PRI MIS. One of the most pervasive of these challenges is that due to the complexity of this

system most NPRIR providers have had difficulty understanding how to correctly enter data.[87] Other PRI grantees also reported great difficulty in understanding the PRI MIS (Holl et al., 2009). Providers had many questions, in particular, about what service categories to use when reporting their activities. For example, providers were not clear about whether their employment-related activities should be reported as work readiness services, workforce information services, or career/life skills counseling. Providers were also unclear about what services should be reported as mentoring services, as they were recording some individual and group meetings between participants and paid program staff members as mentoring.[88]

NPRIR service providers noted numerous other areas where they were unclear about what to enter in the MIS. Some providers did not understand how to correctly enter information on participant characteristics, such as limited English proficient, or how to properly record pre-release contact with participants. Service providers also had many questions about how to record that a participant had exited and entered follow-up, how and where in the PRI MIS to correctly enter outcome data, and how ETA's performance outcomes were calculated.

To deal with these misunderstandings and questions about the system, sites requested additional training. As will be discussed in more detail below, the city and P/PV, which had already provided more than one training on the PRI MIS, acted quickly to provide additional guidance and training at a meeting of NPRIR providers on May 6, 2010.

Some NPRIR service providers faced technical challenges with the PRI MIS. Two providers had problems with the system when they transferred data on already-enrolled participants into the PRI MIS. One of these problems noted was that participants with certain enrollment dates were exited as soon as they were entered in the system, before staff members could enter any services data. These challenges were resolved with assistance from P/PV and ETA. In early 2010, another provider began receiving large numbers of alerts (300 or so) informing them of data they needed to enter. Although these alerts were meant to be helpful, there were so many—including some that were unwarranted—that they made it difficult for staff members to use the system.

Two city-contracted NPRIR program managers reported that the amount of time it took for them or their staff people to enter all of the required data into the PRI MIS was another challenge.

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[87] Because Goodwill was a previous PRI grant recipient, its staff members already had years of experience using the system when they began using it for NPRIR. For this reason, these staff members faced few challenges using the PRI MIS for NPRIR.

[88] ETA's Office of Youth Services has clarified that only meetings that involve volunteer mentors and participants can be recorded as mentoring services.

They noted how time consuming it was to enter information on all of the services each participant received—especially if a single activity actually translated into several services. The burden of entering data was even greater for the two Nicholson-funded providers, which were also required to enter data on NPRIR participants in another data system called the Reconnect Administrative System (RAS).[89] Managers from both of these organizations said that because their staff members were required to enter data into the PRI MIS, RAS, and their own data systems, it was challenging for them to keep up with data entry responsibilities.

Data-driven Management

The city and its Office of Re-entry used the PRI MIS and other re-entry data systems primarily to inform the decisions they made about how to manage the city's re-entry system. Consequently, city staff members regularly reviewed reports on NPRIR implementation from the PRI MIS prepared by P/PV. Like Office of Re-entry staff members, most NPRIR service providers used reports from the PRI MIS to manage their programs. For example, one provider's program director stated that she used data from the system in her regular performance meetings with case managers. Managers from other providers said that they regularly used PRI MIS reports, such as the Quarterly Progress Report, to review their programs' success in achieving benchmarks and to make program management decisions.

Due to this widespread use of data for program management, the CRI said that she felt that the city was well on its way to developing a data-driven re-entry system. She said that prior to NPRIR, no one working in re-entry in the city talked about data and little or no data were collected on re-entry services. As a result, she said "no one in the city had any idea what services were available or how effective those services were." She contrasted that with the situation at the time of the second-round site visit, in which the Office of Re-entry had access to multiple data systems capturing information on re-entry services.[90]

Technical Assistance and Monitoring

As NPRIR is a multifaceted program being implemented by six service providers—some of which are small FBCOs—technical assistance and monitoring are critical tasks. To ensure that

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[89] This system was also commonly called Business Access, as it was developed by Business Access, Inc. It is discussed in the next section.

[90] These systems include the PRI MIS, RAS, and the Office of Re-entry's own referral tracking system. The Office of Re-entry's referral tracking system was an Excel spreadsheet that was used to record information on the referrals made by office staff members to re-entry service providers.

sufficient resources would be available for these tasks, the city selected P/PV to serve as its technical assistance provider and charged it with the following specific tasks:

- provide consultation to the city on effective prisoner re-entry programs;
- lead the request for proposal (RFP) process to select three NPRIR service providers to receive city funding; and
- provide city-funded providers with day-to-day guidance, technical assistance, and training on NPRIR implementation, particularly data reporting.

In addition, in the spring of 2009, the city asked P/PV to provide TA and monitoring assistance primarily related to the PRI MIS to the two Nicholson-funded providers.[91]

Technical Assistance Provided by P/PV

P/PV has provided extensive TA and monitoring services for the city and its four city-funded NPRIR service providers, and limited assistance to the two Nicholson-funded organizations. In its first significant provision of technical assistance, P/PV led the RFP process for selecting FBCOs to serve as city-funded NPRIR service providers. In November 2008, P/PV, in coordination with the city, developed an RFP for this purpose and held a bidder's conference for interested providers. P/PV then assisted the city in selecting the winning proposals in January 2009.

Once these FBCOs were selected, P/PV began providing technical assistance to them and the other NPRIR service providers. First, P/PV facilitated an orientation on February 20, 2009 for all providers and NPRIR partner organizations. P/PV staff members then conducted day-long site assessment visits to the four city-funded providers. Based on these visits, P/PV staff members developed workplans, including strategies and timelines for meeting NPRIR benchmarks, with each of these providers.

P/PV conducted additional site visits to the four city-funded providers approximately every other month in 2009 and once a quarter in 2010. During months that did not include a site visit, P/PV staff members conducted check-in phone calls. During these visits and calls, P/PV staff members typically covered a number of issues, including:

- staffing;
- recruitment and enrollment;
- service delivery, particularly mentor recruitment and training;

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[91] These providers were also to be invited to all TA convenings for NPRIR, but P/PV was to provide little other assistance or monitoring.

- partnerships;
- achievement of benchmarks; and
- data entry and reporting in the PRI MIS.

About every other quarter, P/PV staff members also conducted case file audits during site visits to NPRIR providers. During these audits, P/PV staff members randomly selected a small number of participant files to review, checking whether all documentation required by the city and ETA —such as proof of selective service registration and Newark residency—was included. Due to the city's desire to have P/PV focus on the city-funded providers, P/PV has conducted only quarterly visits and occasional phone calls with the two Nicholson-funded organizations. Except for the initial visit, visits to Nicholson-funded providers also included case file audits. Following completion of each of these visits, P/PV developed formal notes of what was discussed and shared these notes with both the provider that was visited and the Office of Re-entry.

Another regular TA and monitoring activity conducted by P/PV was sending each service provider—both city- and Nicholson-funded—a monthly data reconciliation memorandum. These memoranda noted any missing or erroneously entered data, and asked the organizations to correct these problems.

In addition to the support provided through these memoranda and site visits, P/PV staff members also engaged in regular communication with service providers, via e-mail and phone, to answer day-to-day questions. MIS questions were common topics of discussion in this ongoing communication.

P/PV also organized regular meetings of NPRIR service providers. These meetings, which occurred approximately monthly, included a mix of professional development trainings on topics such as mentoring, transportation, job development and placement; sessions on using the PRI MIS; and discussions of program policies, challenges and promising practices (these meetings have also served as NPRIR Advisory Committee meetings; please see the discussion of this committee in Chapter V). Typically, these meetings were co-facilitated by Office of Re-entry staff members and attended primarily by NPRIR providers, although partners have also occasionally attended.

To keep the Office of Re-entry informed of its contact with NPRIR service providers, P/PV e-mailed a weekly progress report to the CRI. This report detailed the technical assistance provided to NPRIR service providers during that week and any outstanding policy or implementation questions that had arisen.

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Technical Assistance and Monitoring Provided by the Office of Re-entry

Although P/PV has provided most of the TA and monitoring for NPRIR, Office of Re-entry staff members have also conducted some TA and monitoring activities. For example, as noted above, the city co-facilitated many of the monthly service provider meetings. Office of Re-entry staff members also occasionally accompanied P/PV on site visits or participated in check-in calls to providers with major performance problems or that were out of compliance with NPRIR requirements.

The Office of Re-entry also took the lead on developing official guidance for NPRIR service providers. For example, as discussed earlier, the Office of Re-entry developed an NPRIR Referral Guide and an NPRIR Operations Manual. In the spring of 2009, the Office of Re-entry also authored memoranda clarifying the program's policy on mentors, outlining a protocol for obtaining information on the employment status of NPRIR participants, and providing instructions on how to check whether participants have outstanding municipal warrants.

Usefulness of P/PV and City TA

Overall, NPRIR service providers were pleased with the TA and monitoring provided by P/PV and the Office of Re-entry, with all but one staff member reporting that it had been helpful. NPRIR service providers particularly lauded P/PV staff members for their responsiveness to calls and e-mails. Staff members from two city-funded providers also noted that P/PV staff members were very approachable, making it easy to share concerns with them.

Generally, NPRIR service providers said that MIS-related assistance was the most useful TA offered. Three city-funded providers commented that the monthly data reconciliation memoranda were particularly useful, and reported that these had helped them to remedy numerous MIS problems. These same providers also liked the in-person MIS training provided by P/PV in May 2009.

Three city-funded providers also expressed appreciation of the NPRIR service provider meetings because they provided a forum for sharing challenges and learning from others. One provider's staff members noted that P/PV staff members were helpful in implementing their mentoring program.

However, NPRIR service providers also had some complaints and suggestions for improving TA efforts. First, all providers but the one with previous experience mentioned that they would have liked more hands-on training on the MIS system. Although several days of MIS training were provided at the program's start, all four of the city-funded organizations commented that they

would have benefited from additional hands-on training a few months later, after they had had more experience using the system. One NPRIR manager said that due to this lack of hands-on training after the program's start-up, his staff had to figure out how to use the MIS largely through "trial and error."

Other Technical Assistance

A few other entities in addition to P/PV and the city also provided assistance to NPRIR providers. Early on in the grant's implementation, an ETA consultant who specializes in the PRI MIS collaborated with P/PV on providing training to NPRIR service providers. This training was widely praised by service providers, but most felt that it came too early in the program's implementation. Consequently, these staff members requested that the city schedule a subsequent training by this consultant, something that Office of Re-entry staff members were still arranging at the time of the second-round site visit.

NJ DOL, in collaboration with NJ SPB, provided training to NPRIR service providers on how to conduct workforce services for ex-offenders. This training included a three-day introduction to becoming an Offender Workforce Development Specialist (OWDS) and a three-week OWDS certification program. Both of these trainings used curricula developed by the National Institute of Corrections, Offender Workforce Development Division. Numerous staff members from the four city-funded service providers attended the three-day workshop and four completed the three-week program. In general, these staff members felt these training programs were most useful to staff people who were new to working with ex-offenders, and not that useful to more experienced staff members.

Conclusion

In regard to leadership, management, and administration, the NPRIR program has exhibited several key successes, developed a number of promising practices, and experienced numerous challenges. Each of these is discussed below.

Successes and Promising Practices

After more than a full year of operation, the NPRIR program has exhibited a number of successes and promising practices related to project administration:

- **Using a TA contractor was an effective way to provide support for small FBCOs**. The four city-contracted FBCOs delivering NPRIR services—two of which are quite small—had considerable need for technical assistance; by choosing to provide this assistance through a contractor (P/PV), the City of

Newark found an effective way of filling a crucial need without overburdening Office of Re-entry staff members. Largely freed from this responsibility, city staff members were able to focus on system-wide tasks such as partnership-building, policymaking, and sustainability planning.

- **Using NPRIR to strengthen the Office of Re-entry's management capacity will make a sustainable, integrated city re-entry system more likely after the grant ends**. Through the implementation of NPRIR, the Office of Re-entry strengthened its capacity to guide and support re-entry efforts in the city. Numerous respondents noted that this office had developed the capacity to bring re-entry stakeholders together and manage re-entry programs and policies in ways that no one in the city was doing previously. The Office of Re-entry's development of several new NPRIR policy memos in May 2010 demonstrated this heightened capacity. This improved capacity made it more likely that the city would be successful in developing and maintaining a truly integrated re-entry system.

- **Analyzing re-entry data will make it easier for the city to more effectively manage its re-entry system.** Although the city had not yet developed a comprehensive re-entry data system, the Office of Re-entry had begun to use data from the PRI MIS and its own referral tracking spreadsheet to better understand the city's current re-entry system. Access to these and other sources of data, once they become available, will allow the Office of Re-entry and other city policymakers to make better-informed decisions about how to fund and manage the local re-entry system.

Current and Potential Challenges

In addition to the promising practices described above, the NPRIR program faced a number of current and potential challenges that may affect its long-term success:

- **The FBCOs providing NPRIR services may need even more intensive assistance to implement NPRIR effectively.** Despite receiving intensive assistance from P/PV and the Office of Re-entry, NPRIR service providers continued to struggle with some aspects of implementation. In particular, these providers had great difficulty using the PRI MIS correctly. Even with additional assistance and monitoring in this area, it is unclear whether the program's MIS problems can be resolved prior to the end of the grant.

- **The payment of Nicholson-funded providers based solely on achievement of employment benchmarks may result in these providers paying less attention to other outcomes**. Even though other outcomes are included in their contracts or grant agreements, this payment structure may detract these organizations from providing or referring participants for mentoring services, placing participants in jobs that pay more than $9.00 per hour, or keeping participants from recidivating. In addition, the fact that America Works can receive its entire per participant

reimbursement for only 90 days of employment rather than the four to nine months[92] required by ETA's employment-related performance measures may mean that the organization is less likely to provide the kinds of employment retention services needed for participants to achieve positive outcomes on these measures.

- **Performance-based contracts can be difficult for small providers.** Although using performance-based contracts is a potentially promising way to prod providers into performing better, it is also a challenge for small providers. Small providers such as OAR and RCDCC have few alternative sources of program income and therefore need a certain level of on-going funding to remain solvent. Tying program reimbursements to achievement of benchmarks may make it harder for these small organizations to remain in business because it delays payments until the achievement of the benchmarks can be ascertained. If one of the goals of NPRIR is to develop the capacity of small FBCOs, the use of performance contracts may be counterproductive—although the city's decision to tie just a portion of contract reimbursement to achievement of benchmarks mitigates the risk somewhat.

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[92] Due to the way ETA's performance measures are calculated, participants may need to be employed as long as four months after exit to obtain a positive outcome on the Entered Employment measure and up to nine months to achieve a positive outcome on the Employment Retention measure.

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V. PARTNERSHIPS

At the heart of Newark's effort to take the PRI model to scale and provide a seamless service delivery system to ex-offenders was a rich array of partners consisting of corrections agencies, contracted service providers, and workforce development agencies. The emphasis on partnership was made explicit in the NPRIR Implementation Plan, which stated that the four core areas of NPRIR—recruitment and enrollment, intensive case management and referral services, employment, and mentoring/life coaching—would be offered "through effective partnerships between local faith- and community-based organizations, corrections facilities, city agencies, businesses, schools, health-care providers and social service organizations."

This chapter is most concerned with two categories of NPRIR partners—corrections partners, who are most critical as sources of client referrals, and workforce development partners, who are most critical as co-service delivery providers. For both of these partner categories, the chapter reviews the key players, discusses their originally anticipated roles as described in the NPRIR Implementation Plan, and examines how the partnerships have actually unfolded. The chapter also analyzes partnership realized through larger vehicles, namely the Newark Re-entry Advisory Board, the Newark Re-entry Coordinating Committee and the NPRIR Advisory Committee. The chapter concludes with a discussion of successes, promising practices, and challenges related to partnerships.

Corrections Agency Partnerships

For NPRIR, the Office of Re-entry had a number of named local, state, and Federal corrections partners, though these partnerships varied greatly in terms of the partner's actual level of involvement and strength as a client referral source. NJ DOC and NJ SPB were the two corrections agencies with the greatest anticipated roles, although their contracted halfway houses and day reporting centers had, by late 2009, assumed a more prominent position in terms of NPRIR visibility and partnership. Each of the anticipated corrections agency partners is briefly reviewed below.

- **New Jersey Department of Corrections (NJ DOC).** NJ DOC manages and operates the state's prison facilities, which in 2010 included 14 major institutions housing approximately 25,000 inmates. For NPRIR, the Office of Re-entry was working primarily with NJ DOC's Division of Programs and Community Services, which supervised contracted halfway houses.

- **New Jersey State Parole Board (NJ SPB).** As the state's lead re-entry agency, NJ SPB works to ensure that ex-offenders transition back to society as law-abiding citizens. In 2010, the agency's Division of Parole was responsible for the supervision of more than 15,000 offenders statewide, and within that division, the Community Programs Services Unit managed the provision of treatment and services to individuals on parole—largely through community-based programs such as community resource centers (CRCs) and halfway houses. The Division of Parole was the entity collaborating with the Office of Re-entry on NPRIR, with the Community Programs Services Unit having specific responsibility for referring parolees to NPRIR.

- **New Jersey Office of the Attorney General (NJ OAG).** The NJ OAG houses the Statewide Director of Re-entry Programs—a position that was created as part of the last governor's anti-crime strategy. This position serves as the state's liaison to the City of Newark on re-entry issues and leads the state's Re-entry Coordinating Council, whose members include NJ SPB, NJ DOC, and NJ DOL.

- **Essex County Jail.** In 2010, the Essex County Jail was the largest county jail in New Jersey, housing 2,280 inmates.

- **Essex Probation.** Essex Probation is a unit under the New Jersey judiciary. In 2010, Essex Probation supervised approximately 4,000 adults in Essex County.

- **Federal Probation.** U.S. probation officers serve as officers of the Federal court system and as agents of the U.S. Parole Commission. They are responsible for the supervision of individuals conditionally released to the community by Federal courts, the Parole Commission, and military authorities. Federal Probation supervised 249 individuals in Newark.

The NPRIR Implementation Plan described how the City of Newark and NPRIR service providers would manage recruitment for NPRIR, and as part of this effort, how they would partner with NJ DOC, NJ SPB, Essex Probation, and Essex County Jail to recruit and enroll ex-offenders.[93] Part of this partnership process was to develop MOUs with these entities. The partnership with NJ DOC was highlighted as particularly critical.

Pre-release recruitment activities were to center on working with NJ DOC and Essex County Jail to provide NPRIR service provider staff members with regular access to all appropriate state prisons, halfway houses, and county correctional facilities so that these staff members could

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[93] Little to no mention was made of NJ OAG or Federal Probation in the NPRIR Implementation Plan.

recruit eligible inmates. NPRIR service providers were also to be provided with the release dates and times of potential program participants so that provider staff members could meet inmates at the time of release. Finally, pre-release recruitment activities were to include referring eligible returnees to NPRIR.

Post-release recruitment activities were to center on working closely with NJ SPB and Essex Probation. NJ SPB and Essex Probation were to refer eligible ex-offenders to NPRIR, provide NPRIR provider staff members with access to the parole or probation plans of NPRIR enrollees, and maintain ongoing communication with NPRIR providers regarding participant engagement and recidivism.

New Jersey State Parole Board (NJ SPB)

NJ SPB enjoyed a well-developed relationship with the Office of Re-entry for NPRIR. Part of the reason for this was that the Office of Re-entry held early and regular meetings with NJ SPB leaders to discuss NPRIR and the agencies' similar goals with regard to improving re-entry services and decreasing recidivism. Furthermore, the Office of Re-entry prioritized its relationship with NJ SPB, given the latter's ability to refer large numbers of eligible ex-offenders to NPRIR.

As noted above, the Community Programs Services Unit was the main unit within NJ SPB's Division of Parole that was responsible for referring parolees to NPRIR. The Director of Community Programs supervised the contractors who provided services to parolees through CRCs, halfway houses, and other specialized programs. According to the head of the Division of Parole, parole officers were not permitted to make direct referrals to NPRIR; rather, referrals to NPRIR providers were coordinated through the contracted CRCs and halfway houses, which then referred parolees to Opportunity Reconnect or FBCOs. This restriction was one of the reasons, as discussed in Chapter II, that halfway houses and CRCs made up the largest source of referrals for NPRIR participants.[94]

At the time of the first-round site visit, the Office of Re-entry and NJ SPB had developed a first draft of an MOU detailing how NJ SPB officers would refer parolees to Opportunity Reconnect, with Opportunity Reconnect then making referrals to NPRIR service providers. According to the Office of Re-entry, this MOU was finalized in November 2009 but had not yet been signed by the time of the second-round site visit. The delay in signing was primarily because NJ SPB

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[94] Despite this restriction, some NPRIR service providers reported having direct relationships with NJ SPB officers who referred parolees to them.

wanted assurances that NPRIR services would enhance, not duplicate, those provided by community corrections providers, and that the Office of Re-entry would share information with NJ SPB on the status and whereabouts of their referred clients. These concerns led the Office of Re-entry and NJ SPB to organize a meeting of community corrections providers on December 6, 2009, to address issues such as NPRIR referrals, job placement, and case management. This initial meeting led to the development of the Newark Re-entry Coordinating Committee—one of the three advisory bodies discussed later in this chapter.

New Jersey Department of Corrections (NJ DOC)

Although working with NJ DOC was highlighted as particularly critical in the NPRIR Implementation Plan, partnership development with this agency was hindered by a number of factors. Originally the Office of Re-entry and NJ DOC had discussed an arrangement whereby NJ DOC would provide NPRIR service providers with referrals and comprehensive discharge plans for non-violent as well as violent offenders from multiple NJ DOC facilities; thus far, however, NJ DOC's role has been limited to referring eligible violent offenders at Northern State Prison to Goodwill, as well as providing their comprehensive discharge plans. This was due to the fact that NJ DOC would have required funding for an additional social worker at each referring correctional facility and the Office of Re-entry decided that this was not the best use of NPRIR grant funds.

Aside from the Northern State Prison–Goodwill connection, the links between NJ DOC and the Office of Re-entry were largely those that existed prior to NPRIR but benefitted NPRIR nonetheless. One of these was a relationship between some NJ DOC halfway houses and Opportunity Reconnect, which the Office of Re-entry has used to secure client referrals to NPRIR. In fact, at the time of the second-round site visit, halfway houses were the strongest point of connection between NJ DOC and NPRIR (halfway houses are further discussed in the next section on community corrections providers).

The Office of Re-entry has continued to work on developing a more robust partnership with NJ DOC, particularly around how to best serve the NJ DOC "max out" population. In late 2009, the Office of Re-entry persuaded NJ DOC to distribute recruitment materials on NPRIR to inmates being released from state prisons to Newark. The Office of Re-entry also met with job developers from NJ DOC halfway houses and representatives from NewarkWORKS on August 27, 2009, to improve collaboration between the latter two groups; similarly, it met with representatives from all of the NJ DOC halfway houses on August 10, 2009, to increase

participation of halfway house residents in NPRIR.[95] Finally, the NJ DOC Commissioner was invited in May 2009 to participate on the Newark Re-entry Advisory Board. While no NJ DOC representatives attended the first meeting on May 21, 2009, the NJ DOC Director of Transitional Services attended the October 26, 2009 meeting. (A new NJ DOC Commissioner was appointed by the newly elected New Jersey governor in early 2010; this change in leadership may have further slowed communication and partnership development between NJ DOC and the Office of Re-entry.)

Community Corrections Providers

Both NJ SPB and NJ DOC contract with private, non-profit agencies for the provision of various residential and non-residential services to eligible offenders.[96] These programs—more commonly referred to as halfway houses and CRCs—are designed to provide a wide array of intensive workforce, educational, support, treatment, and case management services that prepare offenders for re-entry into society and help prevent recidivism. Although the private agencies that operate these community corrections programs are subcontractors to NJ DOC and NJ SPB, they have become critical NPRIR partners in their own right, and are thus further discussed here, particularly in terms of their evolving role in NPRIR.

As discussed in Chapter II, the Office of Re-entry has been relying on these halfway houses and CRCs to serve as a major source of referrals for NPRIR. Many of these referrals have come through Opportunity Reconnect, as a number of halfway houses escorted eligible residents to Opportunity Reconnect on a weekly basis in order to connect them to services. Case managers from several NPRIR providers also visited halfway houses to conduct recruitment for NPRIR.

It is clear that community corrections providers had much stronger interactions and relationships with some NPRIR providers than others. For example, Tully House staff members indicated that they referred their residents primarily to Goodwill or America Works.[97] The director of Tully House said that his staff members avoided referring their residents to most other NPRIR

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[95] According to the City of Newark's Quarterly Narrative Report, for the quarter ending December 31, 2009.

[96] As of the spring of 2010, NJ DOC's Office of Community Programs had contracted with a number of private organizations to operate 10 halfway houses in the City of Newark. NJ SPB's Division of Community Programs had contracted with some of these same organizations to operate nine residential halfway houses and non-residential CRCs in Newark.

[97] At the time of the second-round site visit, Tully House had referred 60 individuals to NPRIR, with 30 referred to Goodwill, 20 to America Works, and 10 to La Casa.

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providers because they did not want their participants to be spread out widely and because they perceived that these providers were the most successful in job placement.[98]

Despite the large number of referrals from community corrections providers to NPRIR, there have been a number of difficulties related to this partnership. These difficulties included halfway house restrictions on offenders, concerns with service duplication, and inconsistent communication procedures. From the perspective of NPRIR providers, the most significant of these problems has been the halfway house restrictions on residents, particularly in terms of employment. As discussed in Chapter III, halfway houses restricted where and how residents could be employed (but did not always communicate these requirements to providers), which made it more difficult to place halfway house individuals in jobs.

In part because of these restrictions, OAR made the strategic decision to limit its work with NJ DOC or NJ SPB halfway houses. OAR's NPRIR program manager asserted that because halfway house residents were, in effect, still incarcerated, these individuals did not have the flexibility needed for case managers to effectively assist them with re-entry. Although 80 percent of its participants were referred from halfway houses, La Casa echoed this broader concern, observing that halfway house restrictions (e.g., requiring advance approval for outside activities) hindered residents' participation in mentoring sessions and job interviews.

According to NJ OAG's Statewide Director of Re-entry Programs, community corrections providers were reluctant to refer clients to NPRIR in part because they believed that the services offered by NPRIR providers duplicate their own services. She said that these providers wanted to develop an improved referral and service delivery model so that NPRIR services would truly enhance, rather than duplicate, those provided by halfway houses and CRCs. Generally, the main NPRIR service that community corrections providers believed was of added value to their clients was job placement.[99]

A final major challenge was inconsistent communication procedures between halfway houses/CRCs and NPRIR service providers. Although the NPRIR Referral Guide discussed in the previous chapter provided clear instructions on the process for making and receiving referrals from community corrections providers, it was unclear to what extent this detailed referral process

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[98]   The director also said that Tully House had referred 10 participants to La Casa.

[99]   Interestingly, CRCs and most halfway houses also offer job placement services; they do not, however, typically offer mentoring services, making mentoring one of the only NPRIR services that does not duplicate those provided by community corrections agencies. However, community corrections respondents did not mention mentoring as a reason for their referrals to NPRIR.

was being followed and whether it was working well. These protocols required that NPRIR providers maintain an attendance sheet for all participants residing in halfway houses, e-mail a copy of the attendance sheet to appropriate community corrections contacts, and field requests for employment verification from community corrections providers so that employers were not being contacted by more than one agency.

At least one halfway house complained about the inadequate level of ongoing communication from NPRIR providers about the services their residents/participants were receiving. Community corrections providers' desire for improved status updates on their residents was one of the concerns at the root of the Newark Re-entry Coordinating Committee—an advisory body that has representatives from nearly all the community corrections providers and is further discussed later in this chapter.

New Jersey Office of the Attorney General (NJ OAG)

NJ OAG did not figure prominently in the NPRIR Implementation Plan. However, this office has played an important role as liaison between the state and the City of Newark. Specifically, the former Director of Re-entry for the City of Newark became the Statewide Director of Re-entry Programs at NJ OAG, and served as a link between city and state efforts—in part because of personal relationships and in part due to serving as a member of the Newark Re-entry Advisory Board and leading the State's Re-entry Coordinating Council (whose members include NJ SPB, NJ DOC, and NJ DOL).[100]

The Statewide Director of Re-entry Programs also possessed a knowledge of the structure and operations of key state-level partners such as NJ DOC and NJ SPB, which was helpful during NPRIR's design phase (in which the critical support of state-level partners was enlisted) and for the development of the NPRIR Referral Guide.

At the time of the second-round site visit, the Statewide Director of Re-entry Programs continued to keep the city's Office of Re-entry apprised of the governor's re-entry-related vision and goals, and helped open lines of communication between NPRIR and state partners, particularly in the context of advisory body meetings. For example, at a December 6, 2009, meeting of community corrections providers organized by the Office of Re-entry and NJ SPB, the Statewide Director of Re-entry Programs facilitated the discussion between the City of Newark and the state-level partners.

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[100] The State's Re-entry Coordinating Council was meeting monthly under the former governor to work on re-entry issues at the state level.

Overall, however, the liaison/broker role of the Statewide Director of Re-entry Programs appeared to be diminishing as the Office of Re-entry reached out to state-level partners more directly. Furthermore, Office of Re-entry staff members expressed some level of confusion on NJ OAG's ongoing role with regard to NPRIR.

Essex County Jail and Essex Probation

As of the second-round site visit, no formal partnership or arrangement for referrals existed between Essex County Jail and NPRIR. This may be because Office of Re-entry respondents during the first-round site visit indicated that county jail inmates might not merit prioritization for NPRIR services due to a perceived lesser need for re-entry services. However, county jail respondents disagreed with the assessment on which this lower priority status was based, asserting that many of their inmates were repeat offenders who faced numerous obstacles to securing and retaining employment and avoiding recidivism. Moving forward, the CRI indicated that the Office of Re-entry would need to deliberate further on how to involve Essex County Jail in NPRIR.

Despite the lack of formal partnership between the Essex County Jail and NPRIR, the former already enjoyed an informal partnership with OAR, one of the NPRIR providers. The county jail thus provided some NPRIR clients, though not in a deliberate manner.[101]

The Office of Re-entry also did not enjoy a strong NPRIR-related partnership with Essex Probation. According to an Essex Probation respondent, part of the reason for this was that his agency was not involved in NPRIR from the early design and implementation stages, as were other corrections agencies such as NJ SPB. In fact, this respondent felt that NPRIR focused primarily on serving the needs of parolees, despite the fact that probationers' needs were equally pressing. He also stated that NPRIR's eligibility requirements, particularly those concerning incarceration, further curtailed the program's ability to address the needs of probationers in the City of Newark, who far outnumber parolees.

While representatives from Essex Probation and the Office of Re-entry met on July 6, 2009, and had subsequent phone conversations about how to better involve Essex Probation in NPRIR, by the time of the second-round site visit few changes had been made to the partnership between the two entities. Essex Probation had not been represented at any meetings of the three advisory bodies discussed later in this chapter.

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[101] Thirteen percent of NPRIR participants as of June 7, 2010 were most recently incarcerated in a county jail; only 0.6 percent of NPRIR participants were reported to be referred from Essex County Jail. See Chapter II.

In contrast to its relationship with the Office of Re-entry, Essex Probation enjoyed a closer tie with the Nicholson Foundation (which, as discussed in Chapter IV, previously funded America Works to serve probationers outside of NPRIR) and with America Works itself. Due to the familiarity many probation officers gained with America Works as part of the earlier Nicholson-funded contract, a significant number of officers referred their clients to this NPRIR provider. As a reflection of this, America Works had, in relation to other NPRIR providers, the greatest number and largest proportion (21 percent) of clients referred by Essex Probation.[102]

Despite the historically close relationship, the America Works site director noted that the number of referrals from Essex Probation had diminished by the time of the second-round site visit, possibly because probation officers, not completely clear on NPRIR requirements, became frustrated when some of the individuals they sent to America Works turned out to be ineligible.[103] The Deputy Chief of Essex Probation further observed that America Works could improve its communication with probation officers about the status of referred clients. While the Deputy Chief and the America Works site director met in January 2010 about improving the referral process, further conversations were deemed necessary. OAR was the only other provider to cite direct relationships with probation officers as the source of a significant number of client referrals.

Federal Probation

Reflecting the fact that Federal Probation was not anticipated to be a major NPRIR partner, as of June 7, 2010, only eight percent of NPRIR enrollees, according to the PRI MIS, were incarcerated most recently in a Federal prison. Nonetheless, Federal Probation made steps to further its relationship with NPRIR providers after five of its clients became NJISJ participants. One of these steps was to attend the November 12, 2009, NPRIR Quarterly Convening at Opportunity Reconnect, where they made a presentation about the various types of individuals they supervise and provided contact information.

Workforce Development Partnerships

The Office of Re-entry's two key workforce development partners for NPRIR were NewarkWORKS (under the direction of the Newark Workforce Investment Board) and NJ DOL. NewarkWORKS is the city's workforce development arm and is designated by the Newark

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[102] As of June 7, 2010.

[103] Under America Works' previous contract with the Nicholson Foundation, the organization could serve anyone under Essex Probation supervision.

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Workforce Investment Board as the operator of the comprehensive Newark One-Stop Career Center. Both NewarkWORKS and NJ DOL are the major service providers at this career center. NewarkWORKS is the provider of WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker services, while NJ DOL provides primarily Wagner-Peyser-funded Employment Services and Unemployment Insurance services. The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS)—a unit within NJ DOL—also provides some services at the Newark One-Stop Career Center. In addition to providing services at the comprehensive One-Stop center, NewarkWORKS provides WIA services at Newark's lone other One-Stop Career Center, a satellite office located at Essex County College.

Although it was anticipated in the NPRIR Implementation Plan to play an important role in job development efforts, as of the second-round site visit, the Northern New Jersey Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development (WIRED) initiative had had little involvement with NPRIR.

In contrast to the corrections system partners discussed above, the primary function of the workforce development partners as described in the NPRIR Implementation Plan was to provide services to NPRIR participants. The Plan emphasized that the city would work collaboratively with the city's comprehensive One-Stop Career Center to provide employment services to ex-offenders that visit the One-Stop and also to refer ex-offenders to participating NPRIR providers. NPRIR participants were all to be referred to the Newark One-Stop Career Center, which would provide them with a range of job training and placement services, such as resume and job interview preparation, computer literacy and vocational training, and job placement, retention and replacement services. The One-Stop Career Center would also provide services to employers, such as on-the-job training subsidies, to serve as incentives for them to hire those with criminal convictions. Another stipulation of the Plan was that all NPRIR providers would be required to partner with NJ DOL, NewarkWORKS, and the One-Stop Career Center system as a whole.

From the outset of NPRIR, the Office of Re-entry has had a relatively strong connection with NewarkWORKS because both entities were located in the city's Department of Economic and Housing Development. Both were also supervised by that department's director of operations, although NewarkWORKS staff members were located at the comprehensive One-Stop Career Center, while the Office of Re-entry was located at Newark City Hall, a couple of blocks away.

NewarkWORKS long-standing connections with NJ DOL helped the Office of Re-entry to develop a partnership with NJ DOL. NewarkWORKS and NJ DOL both have lengthy histories in the community, a shared commitment to the city's One-Stop Career Center system, and a mutual interest in serving ex-offenders. Both have also been major partners in the Newark One-

Stop Career Center system since its inception. In 2004, at the WIB's behest, both moved into the current comprehensive One-Stop Career Center in downtown Newark.

One-Stop Career Center Orientation and Registration

Due to the Implementation Plan's emphasis on collaboration with the city's One-Stop Career Center system, the Office of Re-entry required that all NPRIR participants be registered with that system, but did not need to go to a Career Center to do so. This policy was explicitly stated in the NPRIR Referral Guide, which required NPRIR participants who were not already registered to receive a basic One-Stop Career Center orientation from their NPRIR provider using a PowerPoint presentation supplied by NewarkWORKS. Participants were also required to fill out various Career Center registration forms including a Workforce New Jersey Customer Registration Form. Providers were then required to submit these forms to the director of NewarkWORKS. Once registered, if participants were in need of services from the One-Stop Career Center, the provider and participant had to complete the NewarkWORKS Referral Form in the Referral Guide to request one or more specific services, such as TABE testing or job training. Providers were also required to inform NewarkWORKS when a participant was placed in a job.

NPRIR providers differed in how likely it was for their participants to already be registered with the One-Stop Career Center when referred to NPRIR and whether they conducted the orientation process themselves or sent individuals to the Career Center for the orientation. Two providers in particular—Goodwill and RCDCC—reported that participants generally have already registered at the One-Stop Career Center prior to visiting them for the first time. However, if participants had *not* already registered, Goodwill and RCDCC case managers informed them that they had to visit the One-Stop Career Center to do so before proceeding with NPRIR enrollment. NJISJ and AW also required their clients to visit the One-Stop Career Center to complete the orientation and registration process, while La Casa and OAR conducted the orientation in-house.

One of the main problems related to the orientation and registration process thus far has been that some clients have been forced to attend the general orientation at the One-Stop Career Center after already completing it with their NPRIR provider. This redundancy may be attributable to the fact that it takes three to five days for registration paperwork sent to NewarkWORKS to be entered into the Career Center's system after clients complete their orientation with their NPRIR provider.

A second challenge related to the registration process was a lack of knowledge among some providers about their ability to conduct the initial One-Stop system orientation in-house. One NPRIR manager in particular complained about the need to send his clients to the Newark One-

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Stop Career Center for registration since such an excursion required accompaniment by his staff members and, for halfway house residents, advance notice. This complaint indicated that the manager was unaware that he could complete the orientation and registration paperwork in-house.

From the perspective of one NJ DOL staff member, there were no challenges involved with the One-Stop Career Center orientation and registration process itself, but rather with the extent to which NPRIR participants actually utilized the NJ DOL and NewarkWORKS services available at the Career Center after registration. This staff member expressed particular concern that NPRIR participants were not accessing NewarkWORKS training resources or the services provided by the NJ DOL re-entry specialist.

NJ DOL's Role in NPRIR

Thus far, NJ DOL has played the role of both technical assistance provider and service provider for NPRIR—though these roles had not been formalized as part of an MOU by the time of the second-round site visit.[104] As part of a $480,000 contract with ETA, NJ DOL offered training to NPRIR providers on providing workforce services to ex-offenders; as part of the same contract it provided resources to the city to improve job development for NPRIR, enhance the connection between NPRIR and Newark's One-Stop Career Center system, and explore the feasibility of using WIA and American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds to support NPRIR and other re-entry efforts.

NJ DOL's service provider role in NPRIR was mainly carried out by its re-entry specialist at the Newark comprehensive One-Stop Career Center.[105] According to an NJ DOL respondent, all NPRIR providers were informed at the outset of the program that they could refer participants to this specialist for a range of services, including job placement, assistance with job searches and work readiness assessments. These services were largely provided as part of a "Re-entry Job

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[104] While an NJ DOL respondent initially indicated that he expected there to be an MOU developed between NJ DOL and the Office of Re-entry, during a subsequent interview he indicated that there were no longer plans to develop such an MOU. According to the NPRIR Implementation Plan, Memoranda of Agreement (MOAs) were to be created between the city and each project partner that outlined the partnership terms and timelines. The timeline for developing these MOAs was six weeks from the Implementation Plan.

[105] Another relatively minor component of NJ DOL's role as service provider were the services provided by DVRS, a separate division within NJ DOL that is a co-located partner at the comprehensive One-Stop Career Center and provides services that assist individuals with disabilities to find employment or retain their existing jobs. DVRS was not substantially involved with NPRIR since it did not have services specifically targeted to ex-offenders, though a significant number of ex-offenders had disabilities, particularly learning disabilities. Thus far, DVRS' involvement with NPRIR has been limited to attending occasional NPRIR convenings.

Finding Club" provided on certain days each week. To qualify for these services, ex-offenders had to first attend a re-entry orientation conducted by the re-entry specialist. The re-entry specialist also collaborated with the NewarkWORKS re-entry job developer to conduct job development on behalf of ex-offenders. Additionally, the NewarkWORKS job developer attended the NJ DOL re-entry orientations to help improve understanding and coordination among NJ DOL, NewarkWORKS, and the Office of Re-entry.

Assessments of the services provided by the NJ DOL re-entry specialist from some NPRIR providers and their participants were mixed to negative. Though some providers felt obliged to refer their clients to these services, many felt they were not helpful or were an inefficient use of time. For example, one program manager indicated that a number of his participants had already been to the One-Stop Career Center to attend sessions with the re-entry specialist by the time they enrolled in NPRIR and that the re-entry specialist's services had not been adequate to secure employment. Furthermore, this program manager attended a re-entry specialist session in the past and found that the bulk of the time was dedicated to simply reading off available jobs to those in attendance and instructing them to follow up on their own. A staff member at another NPRIR provider observed that participants from his agency attended the general but not the re-entry orientation at the One-Stop Career Center because the re-entry orientation was duplicative with what his organization provided.

Assessments of the relationship between the NJ DOL re-entry specialist and the Office of Re-entry were also mixed. Thus far, the two partners have not demonstrated a particularly strong partnership or willingness to work together to revisit processes and services for ex-offenders. As a result, the Office of Re-entry has instead focused mainly on its partnership with NewarkWORKS as a way to improve coordination between NPRIR and the One-Stop Career Center.

NewarkWORKS and other One-Stop Career Center Services

The NJ DOL re-entry specialist was only one of the resources available for NPRIR participants at the Newark comprehensive One-Stop Career Center. Other services were provided by NewarkWORKS and other Career Center partners. However, according to multiple respondents, NPRIR providers were unlikely to rely heavily on the Newark One-Stop Career Center for employment-related services. The only Career Center services NPRIR participants were

somewhat likely to receive were TABE testing provided by NewarkWORKS and a one-day forklift safety certification program.[106]

NPRIR providers offered various reasons for why they did not capitalize more often on Career Center services for NPRIR participants. One of the more commonly cited reasons was that NPRIR providers offered these services themselves or else referred participants to a partner that offered similar services. In receiving services from their NPRIR providers, rather than the Career Center, participants were also saved the hassle and expense of traveling to another location.

 In terms of the NewarkWORKS training services available from the One-Stop Career Center, one reason that NPRIR participants did not receive them was simply that they did not want them. According to the acting director of NewarkWORKS and the director of operations for the city's Department of Economic and Housing Development, ex-offenders *could* access training from NewarkWORKS if they were eligible (as determined by sufficiently high TABE scores) and were interested in training for an occupation that would employ them despite their previous offense. However, as discussed in Chapter III, few ex-offenders were interested or able to participate in training because they were in need of immediate employment to support themselves, pay child support and/or fines, and avoid reincarceration.

NewarkWORKS Job Development Assistance

In addition to providing direct services to NPRIR participants, NewarkWORKS assisted with job development for the program and for ex-offenders overall. To spearhead this assistance, NewarkWORKS hired a lead job developer in fall 2009. The original objectives for this lead job developer position included working to convince companies to hire individuals with criminal records and improving communication between the One-Stop Career Center and re-entry organizations, particularly NPRIR providers.

The NewarkWORKS lead job developer initially focused on providing assistance to a single provider that faced particular challenges placing participants. The job developer met with staff members to discuss ways to improve placement outcomes and to encourage the organization to utilize the resources at the One-Stop Career Center.

At the time of the second-round site visit, the lead NewarkWORKS job developer had not yet had much direct contact with other NPRIR providers. Instead, most of the communication

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[106] In addition, as discussed in Chapter III, a handful of participants were reported to have received OJT services through NewarkWORKS.

between NPRIR providers and NewarkWORKS regarding job development had been indirect, with the CRI or another Office of Re-entry staff member acting as the go-between. Consequently, it is not surprising that NJISJ was the only provider that reported having a relatively strong relationship with NewarkWORKS regarding job development. By contrast, the other NPRIR providers expressed confusion, disappointment, or indifference about the role of NewarkWORKS in providing assistance with job development. For example, one NPRIR manager stated that his organization had not worked with any job developers from NewarkWORKS and was unsure about the kinds of assistance that could be provided. Other NPRIR providers reported that they had not worked with NewarkWORKS on job development because the lead job developer had been largely inaccessible and/or they had sufficient job development services in-house.

Newark and NPRIR Re-entry Advisory Bodies

The Newark and NPRIR re-entry advisory bodies represented a broader level of partnership than the two partner categories discussed thus far. Organized for differing purposes and scopes of work, the three re-entry advisory bodies—the Newark Re-entry Advisory Board, the Newark Re-entry Coordinating Committee, and the NPRIR Advisory Committee—allowed various grant and city stakeholders to come together and collaborate on re-entry issues. In terms of number and orientation, these advisory groups differed from what was originally anticipated.

The NPRIR Implementation Plan called for the creation of a city PRI Advisory Council that would formally convene the different stakeholders working in re-entry, so that they—and their re-entry programs—might benefit from one another's collective knowledge and experience. Members were to include representatives from the city, P/PV, the One-Stop Career Center system, NJ DOC, NJ SPB, NJ OAG, NPRIR service providers, the business community, and the ex-offender community. In the interest of continuous improvement, this group was to provide advice and recommendations on program implementation, service delivery, inter-partner relationships, funding opportunities, and sustainability. The group was to meet monthly for the first six "ramp-up" months of implementation and then meet quarterly.

None of the three re-entry advisory bodies operating at the time of the second-round site visit mapped back to this originally anticipated advisory council, though there were some similarities in function and membership. Each of these three re-entry advisory bodies is described below.

Newark Re-entry Advisory Board

According to written documentation from the city, "The Newark Re-entry Advisory Board is charged with the responsibility of establishing a strategic vision for Newark's re-entry

initiatives." To establish this board, individuals were identified and formally invited by the Mayor of Newark to attend the first meeting of the Newark Re-entry Advisory Board on May 21, 2009. As of the time of the second-round site visit, these same individuals had been invited to one subsequent board meeting held on October 26, 2009.

An examination of the Re-entry Advisory Board's attendance rosters showed that, of the individuals invited, about half attended the May meeting, along with members of the Office of Re-entry, a representative of P/PV, and the director of operations from the city's Department of Economic and Housing Development. Noticeably absent were any members of NJ DOC, Essex Probation, or NJ DOL. However, two senior representatives of NJ SPB (including the executive director) were present, demonstrating the strength of the connection between this agency and the Office of Re-entry.

According to the minutes, this first meeting focused on introductions, the city's strategic plan for re-entry, and the formation of board subcommittees. In addition, participants learned about NPRIR, the mission of the board, and other Office of Re-entry activities.

For the second meeting, noticeable additions to the attendance roster were representatives from NJ DOC, NJ DOL, and Essex County's Office of the County Executive. Two representatives from NPRIR service providers (OAR and Goodwill) also attended. NJ SPB demonstrated the continued strength of its partnership with the Office of Re-entry by having four representatives at this meeting.

In addition to these full meetings of the Newark Re-entry Advisory Board, there were also three sub-committees that had met at least once since May 2009:

- Performance Measurement and Management;
- State and Legislative Issues; and
- Formerly Incarcerated Individuals.

NPRIR providers gave mixed reviews on the effectiveness of the Newark Re-entry Advisory Board. While OAR's NPRIR program manager felt that his attendance at the second board meeting had been worthwhile because attendees were engaged in discussing effective strategies for serving ex-offenders, another program director felt that the meeting was not useful because the diverse stakeholders in attendance were not united in a common purpose, but rather were pursuing their own agendas.

Overall, because the full Newark Re-entry Advisory Board had met only two times by the time of the second-round site visit, respondents reported that its role had been overshadowed by those of the Newark Re-entry Coordinating Committee and the NPRIR Advisory Committee (both

discussed below). In addition, the board did not appear to have realized substantial progress toward larger objectives, such as creating a seamless network of services for ex-offenders. However, in holding discussions regarding re-entry legislation pending in the New Jersey legislature and providing the lead legislator for those bills with feedback, the State and Legislative Issues Subcommittee did appear to have played a role in contributing to re-entry policy-making at the state level.

Newark Re-entry Coordinating Committee

The objectives of the Newark Re-entry Coordinating Committee were to improve delivery of re-entry services, increase workforce participation of ex-offenders, and, ultimately, to decrease recidivism, according to documentation provided by the Office of Re-entry. The committee was also charged with responsibility for coordinating referrals and services across law enforcement and community corrections agencies.

Unlike the by-invitation-only membership of the Newark Re-entry Advisory Board, membership in the Newark Re-entry Coordinating Committee was open to all re-entry stakeholders. In part because of its more open nature, the committee enjoyed participation from numerous re-entry service provider representatives, including halfway house representatives and NPRIR contractors. Other attendees included state and local governmental agencies (including NJ DOC, NJ SPB, and NJ OAG).

The number and diversity of individuals involved with this committee was an incentive for some to attend. For example, an employment and training specialist from NJ DOL observed that the Re-entry Advisory Committee meetings were large enough to allow attendees to connect with all of the agencies working with ex-offenders, and they provided an important opportunity for networking in the re-entry community.

The first meeting of the Re-entry Coordinating Committee was held on December 1, 2009, and was attended by representatives from all but two NPRIR providers, the two main halfway house providers, NJ SPB, and the Nicholson Foundation.[107] According to a quarterly narrative report from the city, this first meeting was organized by the city in cooperation with NJ SPB to bring together and facilitate better connections between NPRIR and community corrections providers (NJ DOC and NJ SPB halfway houses). In essence, what spurred the meeting was the desire of NJ SPB halfway houses and CRCs to have improved access to information about the

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[107] No meeting minutes or notes were recorded.

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whereabouts of the clients they referred to NPRIR. To maintain its strong relationship with NJ SPB, the city thus reached out to all of the halfway houses for the purposes of the initial meeting.

The second meeting of the Newark Re-entry Coordinating Committee, which occurred on January 6, 2010, was almost double the size of the first meeting, and included many more representatives from community corrections providers and two representatives each from NJ DOC, NJ DOL, NJ OAG, and NJ SPB. All but one of the NPRIR providers were also represented. The meeting centered on the referral of halfway house residents to NPRIR, including the use of referral sheets and the designation of halfway house representatives. The meeting also covered the use of weekly attendance sheets for halfway house residents by NPRIR providers, and a protocol for employer contact by all parties. Several of the meeting's action items focused on finalizing the NPRIR Referral Guide and improving coordination between NPRIR providers and halfway houses and the One-Stop Career Center system.

By the time of the second-round site visit in early March, the Newark Re-entry Coordinating Committee had met only twice, so it was difficult to assess its effectiveness in achieving its goals. Nevertheless, two key accomplishments of the committee should be highlighted. NPRIR provider managers noted that the Re-entry Coordinating Committee meetings had been instrumental in fostering knowledge of and connections with halfway houses and other corrections agencies.

As a result of the Newark Re-entry Coordinating Committee meetings, the Office of Re-entry, NPRIR providers, and halfway houses were able to agree on a number of procedures for improving coordination and communication between NPRIR providers and halfway houses—e.g., use of an attendance sheet that providers were supposed to complete and e-mail weekly to halfway houses. These procedures were praised by one provider's program director as helping to realize progress toward improved referrals between NPRIR providers and halfway house partners, although, as discussed above, not all issues were resolved.

NPRIR Advisory Committee

At the time of the evaluation's initial site visit in June 2009, the NPRIR Advisory Committee was described as a subcommittee of the Newark Re-entry Advisory Board charged with a number of important tasks. It was to

- engage the business community to support NPRIR;
- develop partner relationships for NPRIR;
- create referral and communication processes among parole officers, NPRIR service providers, and the City of Newark;

- identify grants and resources to support NPRIR's sustainability;

- provide a forum for NPRIR service providers and partners to come together to discuss and address implementation challenges; and

- report regularly to the Board on its activities and the status of NPRIR implementation.

P/PV staff members, who were to facilitate the committee, also reported that committee work groups would be formed to focus on job development, working with NJ SPB, and funding. Membership was to include staff members from NPRIR service providers, key partners, and the Office of Re-entry.

However, by the time of the second-round site visit, the committee appeared to be completely independent of the Re-entry Advisory Board, no work groups had been formed, and the meetings had primarily focused on specific NPRIR implementation issues, such as employment, transportation, and coordinating with NewarkWORKS.[108] However, P/PV staff members continued to facilitate the meetings, working closely with Office of Re-entry staff members to develop meeting agendas and invite relevant speakers, such as the Office of Re-entry's Opportunity Reconnect liaison, who clarified the referral process being used by Opportunity Reconnect staff members. The membership also stayed fairly constant, with regular attendance from each of the six NPRIR service providers and the Office of Re-entry.

City and P/PV staff members reported that the first official NPRIR Advisory Committee convening was held on June 29, 2009. However, the city and P/PV had begun convening grantees unofficially as early as February 2009. Including these unofficial meeting dates, committee members had met a total of 14 times as of the second-round site visit (about once a month).

Overall, the NPRIR Advisory Committee was by far the most active of the three advisory bodies. It also received the greatest amount of positive feedback from respondents, particularly NPRIR providers, who felt that the committee was valuable in providing them with a forum to offer updates, exchange information, discuss issues related to partnerships and service delivery, build interpersonal relationships, and provide peer support. For example, one provider's program director stated that the NPRIR Advisory Committee had served as a valuable support group for frontline NPRIR staff members because it allowed them to come together to discuss challenges as well as receive problem-solving support from their peers, P/PV, and the city. As an example

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[108] Specific topics covered included PRI MIS issues, the ETA audit and compliance requirements, job development and placement challenges, mentoring services, transportation challenges, recruitment challenges, eligibility clarifications, funding and sustainability, and the partnership between NPRIR and the One-Stop Career Center system.

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of the addressing of partnership needs, P/PV reported that this committee had improved the coordination between NPRIR providers and the One-Stop Career Center by developing, in collaboration with NewarkWORKS, the procedures to allow NPRIR providers to conduct, in-house, the basic Career Center orientation for their NPRIR participants.

The breadth of topics covered during the numerous NPRIR Advisory Committee meetings demonstrated that this advisory body, in particular, discussed a wide range of cross-grant and cross-city re-entry issues. However, it was unclear to what extent these discussions had led to actions, or to what extent these discussions (and any related actions) addressed the Committee's key goals, described above. For example, based on a review of meeting topics and service provider feedback, it appeared that one of the key goals—engaging the business community—had thus far received little attention. In contrast, the key goals of developing partner relationships and troubleshooting program implementation challenges appeared to have been discussed more often.

Conclusion

NPRIR's partnership model is, by necessity, complex in nature—involving a broad range of agencies collaborating in the areas of program design, referrals, and service provision. Generally speaking, corrections partners were anticipated to serve as primary referral sources for NPRIR, while workforce development partners were to share service provision responsibilities with contracted NPRIR service providers. The advisory bodies served as different partnership vehicles altogether, allowing NPRIR and other local re-entry stakeholders to come together around grant and broader-level re-entry concerns. Following is a discussion of the key successes and promising practices and current and potential challenges related to NPRIR's partnerships and linkages.

Successes and Promising Practices

The NPRIR program has demonstrated a number of successes and promising practices in the area of partnership development:

- **The Office of Re-entry enjoyed a strong relationship with NJ SPB regarding NPRIR.** By the time of the second site visit, the MOU between these two agencies had been finalized (though not signed) and reflected a strong level of ongoing conversation and collaboration about how NJ SPB officers would refer parolees to NPRIR. The MOU also incorporated NJ SPB's concerns about avoiding duplicative services and accessing ongoing updates on referred clients.

- **Community corrections providers had assumed a more prominent role in NPRIR than was originally anticipated.** Although the private agencies that

operated these community corrections programs were subcontractors to NJ DOC and NJ SPB, the programs were critical partners in their own right, in part because of the significant number of client referrals they provided (e.g., through Opportunity Reconnect or through arrangements with NPRIR providers). Their heightened partner role was reflected by such developments as the August 2009 meeting between the Office of Re-entry and NJ DOC halfway houses to increase the latter's participation in NPRIR. The meetings of the Newark Re-entry Coordinating Committee also helped foster NPRIR providers' knowledge of and connections with community corrections providers.

- **The three advisory bodies had important accomplishments, primarily related to halfway houses and networking opportunities.** The Re-entry Coordinating Committee promoted knowledge of halfway houses and other corrections agencies, and provided a vehicle for developing referral procedures between NPRIR providers and halfway houses. The NPRIR Advisory Committee was valuable as a forum for NPRIR providers to exchange information, share challenges, and offer strategies and peer support.

Current and Potential Challenges

In addition to the successes described above, there were a number of partnership issues that may affect the successful implementation of NPRIR:

- **Both workforce development and corrections system partners were concerned that the services provided by NPRIR providers duplicate their own services**. NPRIR might benefit from a further detailing of the value-added qualities of partner services and a refinement of its service delivery model.

- **NPRIR provider assessments of job development assistance from NewarkWORKS and re-entry services from the NJ DOC re-entry specialist were mixed to negative.** NPRIR could benefit from further consideration of how services from these two entities could be made more accessible as well as more valuable to NPRIR providers and participants.

- **Problems remained in the One-Stop Career Center registration process.** Some NPRIR participants were still being required to attend the general orientation at the One-Stop Career Center after already completing it onsite with the NPRIR provider. Additionally, not all NPRIR providers appeared to be aware that they were permitted to conduct the orientation in-house.

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VI. CONCLUSION

More than a year and a half after the NPRIR grant was awarded to the City of Newark by ETA, the NPRIR program was fully implemented but still evolving. Each of the six contracted service providers had served a significant number of participants, but some were still developing or changing certain program elements, particularly mentoring services. The program's leaders had created a number of guidelines for the program and, with the help of their contracted TA provider, had offered extensive support for implementing them. But these leaders had also recognized the need to further clarify these guidelines or develop new ones. Program leaders and managers had begun to focus on securing funding to sustain the program after the ETA grant ends. Finally, program partnerships were still unfolding, with some well-developed and others nascent.

Based on the data and analyses presented in the previous five chapters regarding the implementation of the NPRIR program through the spring of 2010, this conclusion briefly assesses the City of Newark's progress in bringing the PRI model to scale in Newark.

Start-up and Enrollment

The city sub-contracted with six organizations to provide "mentoring, supportive services and referrals (housing, substance abuse, and mental health), job training and placement, and retention support." After a significant delay, the city was able to finalize contracts with four FBCOs—La Casa, NJISJ, OAR, and RCDCC—and the Nicholson Foundation contracted with a fifth FBCO, Goodwill, as well as a for-profit organization, America Works. Each of these programs was providing the services specified above, with the exception of America Works, which was not required to provide mentoring.

Despite a slow start to program implementation, the NPRIR program had enrolled 1,000 participants as of June 7, 2010, which represents very nearly 75 percent of its enrollment goal (serving 1,340 participants by December 31, 2010). The program seems likely to be able to enroll 340 more participants in the program's remaining months and thus meet its goal. Although one provider has a slower-than-expected enrollment trajectory thus far, the NPRIR

program can meet its overall enrollment goal if this provider significantly steps up its enrollment efforts or if other providers exceed their goals.

Providing Technical Assistance

To coordinate and support the work of service providers, the city selected P/PV to be the coordinating agency that provided technical assistance; as described in Chapter IV, P/PV has provided extensive assistance to NPRIR service providers. However, this assistance has been expensive and thus may be difficult to sustain after the grant's end. In addition, there is only so much a contracted "coordinating agency" can do, particularly when subcontractors are not performing well, as was the case with several NPRIR providers. In those situations, the contracting agency—in NPRIR's case, the City of Newark—needs to get involved to force providers to take action or make changes.

After a somewhat slow start-up, the city, primarily through its Office of Re-entry, demonstrated a growing capacity to assist P/PV in monitoring and supporting the activities of the NPRIR service providers. There were several examples of this evolving capacity:

- **Developing system-wide policies.** Over the course of NPRIR's implementation, the Office of Re-entry demonstrated increased capacity to issue program and system guidance. The Office of Re-entry began by relying heavily on P/PV to issue guidance. However, by the spring of 2010, it was able to author several NPRIR policy memoranda, primarily on its own.

- **Monitoring NPRIR service provider performance and providing support.** Although early on in the implementation of NPRIR, Office of Re-entry staff members were less involved in visiting and monitoring NPRIR service providers, they became more involved with these efforts as the program continued. For example, the Office of Re-entry staff started working closely with one provider in the fall of 2009 as it became apparent from PRI MIS data that this provider was struggling with low job placement rates. In the spring of 2010, Office of Re-entry staff members also took part in meetings with the two providers whose mentoring programs were out of compliance with ETA guidelines to inform them of required changes.

- **Co-facilitating the NPRIR Advisory Committee to provide a forum for peer support and to discuss implementation challenges.** Office of Re-entry staff members, particularly the CRI and data analyst, played an increasingly important role in co-facilitating NPRIR Advisory Committee meetings with P/PV. This committee was lauded by NPRIR service providers for providing a critical forum for front-line staff to share challenges and promising practices, and it also became important as a vehicle for the Office of Re-entry to clarify NPRIR policies and guidelines.

Thus far in the implementation of NPRIR, P/PV has not been very involved in facilitating partnerships, except to a limited extent through the NPRIR Advisory Committee. Instead, the City of Newark and its Office of Re-entry have taken the lead on partnership development, an issue discussed in the context of the next requirement.

Partnerships

Thus far, the Office of Re-entry has been able to develop partnerships with some criminal justice and workforce development agencies, but the strength of these partnerships varies. Among corrections agencies, only NJ SPB had a strong relationship with the Office of Re-entry. The city's partnership with NJ DOC was still very limited, with very little pre-release NPRIR recruitment occurring in state prisons. (However, the Office of Re-entry has recently been successful in developing closer ties to NJ DOC-contracted halfway houses, and in late 2009, NJ DOC agreed to distribute NPRIR recruitment materials to inmates who are being released back to Newark.[109]) Relationships with NJ SPB- and NJ DOC-contracted halfway houses and CRCs had just begun to develop, but were growing stronger. Partnerships with Essex County Jail and Essex Probation, by contrast, continued to be relatively undeveloped, although the office had made several efforts to improve its partnership with the latter agency.

In terms of partnerships with workforce development agencies, the Office of Re-entry had a relatively strong relationship with the local WIB and NewarkWORKS, the operator of the city's comprehensive One-Stop Career Center. The relationship with NewarkWORKS recently became even closer with the assignment of a NewarkWORKS job developer to work in the Office of Re-entry two days a week. The Office of Re-entry also had a reasonably good relationship with the other principal One-Stop system partner, NJ DOL. However, thus far, due to concerns about quality of services and accessibility, few NPRIR participants had received services from the city's One-Stop Career Centers. This was despite the fact that all NPRIR participants were required to register with the city's One-Stop system. The local WIRED initiative has thus far not played an important role in NPRIR.

Services

The PRI model required that grantees provide three primary services: intensive case management, workforce services, and mentoring.

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[109] As of May 2010, a new state law required that NJ DOC provide all inmates being released with information on available re-entry services.

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Case management was intensive, involving frequent contact between case managers and participants, as required under the city's policy. Due to the frequency of contact, a number of participants reported that they developed strong, supportive, and trusting relationships with their case managers. These close relationships may allow case managers to support and motivate NPRIR participants to achieve successful outcomes. However, providers had particular difficulty maintaining contact with participants once they became employed.

All NPRIR providers offered workforce preparation, which included work readiness training, job placement assistance, job retention assistance, and transitional employment. One provider also placed participants into transitional jobs,[110] which involved working three days per week for a maximum of eight weeks on conservation or landscaping projects. Job placement assistance was provided through regular meetings between participants who were looking for work and job developers. The practice of requiring participants to be on-site every day for most or all of the day until they find jobs may be good for many ex-offenders, particularly those who have just completed long prison sentences and are therefore used to having very structured lives.

Job development was another important component in the service mix. NPRIR projects conducted outreach to employers, emphasizing continued program support of NPRIR participants during the participants' first few months of employment, and highlighting possible benefits that employers could receive for hiring ex-offenders. However, such job development efforts faced major challenges, including the general lack of employment opportunities due to the recession, employers' unwillingness to hire ex-offenders, and restrictions on halfway house residents.

As of June 7, 2010, only 58 percent of NPRIR participants had been reported as having received at least one mentoring service from the five NPRIR service providers that offer mentoring—less than the 65 percent goal established in the NPRIR Implementation Plan.[111] Furthermore, the 58 percent figure includes a number of participants who were incorrectly reported as having received mentoring services for participating in activities that involved only paid provider staff

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[110] Transitional jobs are short-term, subsidized employment.

[111] Note, however, that DOL's mentoring participation measure is measured each quarter, not cumulatively; it measures only the percentage of active (not exited) participants who received mentoring in a particular quarter., The cumulative percentage of participants who had received mentoring is presented here for analytical simplicity.

members, and thus overstates the percentage of participants who received allowable mentoring services.[112]

The lower-than-expected percentage of participants who had received mentoring services by early June 2010 was due to the challenges service providers faced in implementing this service component. These challenges included difficulty recruiting and retaining volunteer mentors, difficulty recruiting participants to engage in mentoring, a lack of understanding of what PRI mentoring entails, difficulty staffing the mentor coordinator position, and the complexity and staff time required to develop mentoring program procedures from scratch. Establishing successful mentoring programs was also a major challenge for the first generation of PRI grantees, so it was no surprise that it proved difficult for the NPRIR service providers that had no prior experience implementing PRI mentoring programs. Although as of the spring and early summer of 2010, NPRIR service providers were continuing to build their mentoring programs, it was unclear how successful they will be by the end of the grant.

Outcomes

This report does not formally assess the NPRIR program's success in achieving ETA's employment measures.[113] However, based on what was known about the number of participants placed in at least one job, it was clear that some NPRIR service providers had struggled with connecting participants to employment. Compared to the placement rate documented by Holl et al. in the evaluation of the first generation of PRI grantees (68 percent), NPRIR's overall placement rate of 49 percent is relatively low.[114] According to service providers, NPRIR job placement rates have been low due to the recession, many employers' blanket prohibitions on hiring ex-offenders, and restrictions on halfway house residents.

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[112] Due to a lack of clear information on the time periods when these organizations provided mentoring services without using volunteer mentors, the evaluation was not able to determine precisely which participants to exclude in order to calculate the accurate percentage of NPRIR participants who have received at least one allowable mentoring service. The evaluation, did, however, exclude all America Works participants from this calculation. America Works has never used volunteer mentors to provide mentoring services and has no plans to do so. Instead, the organization is supposed to refer participants to other providers for mentoring. However, Goodwill clarified that as of May 2010, it had not provided mentoring to any America Works participants who were referred to it for such services, and Goodwill was the only organization to which America Works reported making mentoring referrals. Consequently, it is clear that no NPRIR participants served by America Works could have received mentoring services, at least through May 2010.

[113] The evaluation's final report, however, will include such an analysis. It will also analyze NPRIR's success in keeping recidivism rates below 22 percent.

[114] Although, to be fair, the period of operation of the first generation of PRI grantees covered by the Holl, et al. evaluation (2006 to mid-2008), did not include a serious recession; in contrast, the current recession, which began in the fall of 2008, almost completely overlaps with NPRIR's implementation.

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Individual NPRIR providers differed significantly in their job placement rates; these differences may have been partly due to the extent to which each provider used suitability screening. One provider with a low placement rate did not screen at all for suitability, and thus may have served a greater proportion of participants who were more difficult to place due to a lack of motivation. In contrast, the provider with the highest placement rate employed one of the more extensive screening processes, one that likely screened out most unmotivated individuals. Screening, however, cannot explain all of the differences between providers, since two other providers also reported screening for suitability *and* had low job placement numbers.

Another possible factor explaining low placement rates among certain providers may be the measureable differences among the participants served by these providers. For example, one provider's participants were much less likely to report having achieved a high school diploma or GED at enrollment, and these low educational levels might have made these individuals more difficult to place. [115] (However, the characteristics of its served population do not explain another provider's low placement rates because its participants, on average, appeared quite similar to those served by more successful providers.[116])

NPRIR providers' use of incentives (such as free bus tickets) to encourage job-placed participants to stay employed is a practice that may result in improved employment outcomes. One provider's use of $50 financial incentives for participants who retain employment for 30 and 90 days was a particularly noteworthy version of this practice.

Developing a Coordinated System for Serving Returning Prisoners

A final goal for NPRIR was for the City of Newark to form a coordinated system for serving returning prisoners. Thus far, the city has taken a number of steps in that direction, although several challenges remain.

- **The city has secured funding to support the infrastructure and services required for such a system**. The city has been very successful in obtaining funding from multiple sources to cover the cost of Office of Re-entry staff members (none of whom were paid out of city general funds), as well as to pay for many re-entry-related service delivery programs, such as NPRIR, Gateway ID, and STEP 1.

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[115] In the final report, the evaluation will use multiple regression analysis to examine the influence of measureable characteristics, such as education levels, on participant employment outcomes.

[116] One possible alternative explanation might be that this provider has had more NPRIR staff turnover than the others, and that turnover might have affected its ability to make placements.

- **Remaining challenge**: Securing funding for the future may be difficult. Obtaining the funding to continue operating the city's re-entry programs on an on-going basis may be difficult, especially in light of widespread budget cuts among public agencies and lowered grant-making by foundations due to the recession.

- **The city has established re-entry advisory bodies to provide forums for re-entry stakeholders to communicate and provide input on larger re-entry issues**. In addition to the NPRIR Advisory Committee described above, these groups included the Re-entry Coordinating Committee and the Re-entry Advisory Board. These bodies were credited by a number of NPRIR respondents with bringing stakeholders together in a way that had not happened in Newark before.[117] A sub-committee of the Re-entry Advisory Board also provided important input to the state legislature on several bills related to re-entry that were later signed into law.

  - **Remaining challenge:** Having three advisory groups was confusing and resource-intensive. The fact that there were three different advisory groups operating at one time was confusing to a number of respondents—some of whom were not sure which group was which. In addition, facilitating three separate groups may be difficult for the Office of Re-entry to sustain given time and resource constraints. Consequently, it may make sense to consolidate two or even three of these groups at some point in the future.

  - **Remaining challenge:** NPRIR services and those offered by community providers under contract to NJ SPB and NJ DOC were duplicative. A number of respondents expressed concern about the fact that both community corrections providers (operating halfway houses and CRCs) and NPRIR providers were providing many of the same services (case management, supportive services, and job placement) to many of the same participants. One or more of the city's re-entry advisory bodies should tackle this issue and come up with an improved referral and service delivery model that ensures services are not being duplicated.

- **The city has used available data systems, such as the PRI MIS, to gain a better understanding of NPRIR**. The Office of Re-entry has begun to use available data systems to gain a clearer understanding of re-entry services and outcomes in Newark. Office of Re-entry staff members regularly analyzed data from the PRI MIS to review the progress of NPRIR implementation.

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[117] Although NJISJ respondents noted that their organization, as part of its advocacy efforts, had established a network of re-entry providers as early as 2007.

- **Remaining challenge**: The use of multiple re-entry data systems, such as RAS and the PRI MIS, was somewhat duplicative as well as burdensome for the Nicholson-funded providers since they had to enter data on NPRIR participants in both systems.

Overall, the City of Newark has made notable strides in implementing NPRIR, but significant challenges persist. It remains to be seen whether the city and its contracted service providers can overcome these challenges and achieve the program's goals over the next several months.

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