

SECOND CHANCE ACT: INNOVATIONS IN REENTRY INITIATIVE

Purpose of Program

The BJA-administered Innovations in Reentry Initiative (IRI): Building System Capacity and Testing Reentry Strategies provides state and local jurisdictions and Indian tribes with the resources to identify assets and gaps in their reentry systems and improve their overall approach to reentry. With the support of training and technical assistance, grantees assess their reentry system, identify strengths and gaps, and then build capacity for either improving reentry systems generally or improving service delivery by implementing or expanding a reentry program.

IRI has specific mandatory statutory requirements outlined under Section 101 of the SCA, including a minimum enrollment number and a match requirement. This program has been part of the SCA suite of programs since fiscal year (FY) 2009. Since then, more than 113 awards have been made, and more than \$73 million in funds has been allocated for this program.

Eligibility

Eligible applicants include:

- State governments
- City or township governments

- County governments
- Native American tribal governments (federally recognized)

Funding Amount

- Up to \$1,000,000 (subject to appropriation) with \$75,000 available during Phase 1 and remaining funds released after approval of the Action Plan.¹
- Program requires a 50 percent match (half of the match must be a cash match; the remaining 50 percent may be in-kind). Match waivers can be requested at time of application.

Award Period

Projects follow a three-phase approach — planning, implementation, and evaluation — over the 4-year grant period.

¹ There has been variation over the years in how much money is available to grantees during Phase 1: Planning. Since FY 2019, grantees have had access to \$75,000. In previous years, grantees had access to up to \$200,000 during this phase.

Signed into law in April 2008 and reauthorized in 2018, the [Second Chance Act](#) (SCA) aims to enhance public safety by reducing recidivism and improving outcomes for people returning from prisons, jails, and juvenile facilities. The SCA authorizes the awarding of federal grants, aligned with the requirements of the legislation, to eligible entities to provide reentry services and programs, including employment and housing assistance, victim support, and substance abuse treatment. Additionally, SCA funds may be used to support general system improvements. The U.S. Department of Justice's (DOJ's) Office of Justice Programs (OJP) funds and administers SCA grants for adults via the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) and for juveniles via the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP).

Feature Grantee Highlights

Pascua Yaqui Tribe, AZ, Reentry Initiative (FY 2019)

Project Description

- The Pascua Yaqui Reentry Initiative will work with the Pascua Yaqui Tribe (PYT) and Department of Corrections (DOC) leadership to address the critical need for data-sharing agreements between tribal and non-tribal agencies, which will lead to (a) early identification of tribal members who are incarcerated in state and federal correctional facilities, and (b) continuity of care and communication pre/post-release to ensure mental health services are maintained and gaps minimized.
- PYT members will have access to their culture while incarcerated and after release. This will include cultural programming/services and community engagement to rebuild/build relationships to support client reentry.

Goals and Objectives

- Design, implement, and evaluate sustainable policy changes to ensure tribal reentry staff and all DOC supervision staff have readily available access to any information on post-release planning to implement consistent processes/approaches.
- Expand the engagement of PYT members while incarcerated and post-release.
- Use culturally appropriate screening and assessment tools to identify appropriate reentry needs and develop case plans.

Example Innovation

The Pascua Yaqui Reentry Initiative is training formerly incarcerated tribal members to serve as peer guides to promote program participants' successful reentry journeys.

Alameda County Probation Department, CA, Redesigning the Pathways Home (FY 2018)

Project Description

- Pathways Home is designed to reduce recidivism among high-risk clients returning to Alameda County from state prison through prerelease case planning, service referrals, reentry preparation, and aftercare supports throughout probation supervision.
- Pathways Home includes four components: (a) prerelease case-planning video conferences; (b) reentry workbooks and an Alameda County-specific resource directory; (c) the Vergil mobile app, which helps clients develop goals and plans, identify sequential tasks, and receive appointments and other reminders; and (d) pre- and post-release virtual reality simulations for clients to envision themselves in new situations and practice appropriate responses.

Goals and Objectives

- Increase reporting within 2 business days.
- Increase probation completion.
- Increase employment and job retention.
- Decrease recidivism, revocation, and criminogenic risk factors (as identified by the COMPAS [Correctional Offender Management Profiling for Alternative Sanctions]).

Example Innovation

Pathways Home prerelease video conferences have increased probation reporting compliance, and clients are generally excited about the Vergil app, virtual reality videos, and prerelease workbooks.

Phase 1: Planning (up to 12 months)

The goals of this phase are to:

- Engage a reentry task force to examine policies and practices in four capacity areas: data-driven decision making, staff allocation, quality and capacity of community providers, and ability to address other barriers to successful reentry. Engage an evaluator to partner with the grantee in a research-practitioner collaboration throughout the award period.
- Finalize plans for either general system improvements or a reentry program focused on reducing recidivism among a target population, and submit an Action Plan for BJA approval.

Phase 2: Implementation (24 months)

The goals of this phase are to:

- Implement proposed project activities.
- Work with the evaluation partner in tracking key metrics to inform program progress and the evaluation.

Phase 3: Evaluation and Sustainability (12 months)

The goals of this phase are to:

- Continue to track recidivism and other outcomes defined in the evaluation to assess effectiveness of the project (recidivism measures must include arrest, conviction, and incarceration).
- Complete required process and outcome evaluations before award closeout.

Allowable Uses of Funds

Include but are not limited to:

- Compensation for personnel (e.g., staff salaries)
- Attending conferences and workshops
- Necessary technology
- See the DOJ Grants Financial Guide at <https://ojp.gov/financialguide/DOJ/index.htm>.

Other Highlights

Practitioner/Research Partnership

In FY 2017, the Palm Beach County (PBC) Department of Public Safety received an IRI grant from BJA. PBC

partnered with Dr. Cassandra Atkin-Plunk of Florida Atlantic University (FAU) to conduct a rigorous randomized controlled trial (RCT) with 240 returning residents (120 adults in the treatment group, 120 adults in the control group). The RCT examined the effectiveness of providing eligible returning residents with stipends for transitional jobs (TJ) and evidence-based cognitive behavioral interventions (CBI).

PBC and FAU share a longstanding partnership and a strong practitioner-researcher relationship. FAU created a 6 month progress report, 1-year outcome report, and 2-year outcome report, and identified implementation barriers, including inaccurate or incomplete data entry and low enrollment rates.

As of March 1, 2021, 171 returning residents were referred to FAU for randomization, with 90 adults randomized into the treatment group to receive TJ and CBI. Initial findings suggest that the treatment group was significantly more likely to be employed, be employed in multiple jobs, and have more jobs on average than the control group. Preliminary analyses also show an impact on recidivism outcomes within the first 12 months post-release.

	Treatment Group	Control Group
Rearrest	24%	34%
Reconviction	13%	17%
Reincarceration	5%	10%

ABOUT BJA

BJA helps to make American communities safer by strengthening the nation's criminal justice system: its grants, training and technical assistance, and policy development services provide state, local, and tribal governments with the cutting-edge tools and best practices they need to reduce violent and drug-related crime, support law enforcement, and combat victimization. To learn more about BJA, visit bja.ojp.gov or follow us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/DOJBJA) and Twitter (@DOJBJA). BJA is a component of the Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs.

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