

CT Adult Reentry and Employment Strategic Planning Program (ARES) January 30, 2020

Project Summary

Funding Source: U.S. DOJ Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA)
Timeframe: October 1, 2018 – September 30, 2020

Purpose: Develop the *Connecticut Adult Reentry and Employment Strategic Plan (RESP)*, a statewide guide for establishing policy and programmatic frameworks that build upon existing and future resources for reentry services, education and vocational training, and employment. This guide will qualify DOC to apply for \$1 Million in BJA 24-month implementation funds in 2020.

Project Tasks: (1) Conduct a system-wide gap analysis; (2) complete the *BJA Planning Guide*; and, (3) create an implementation plan.

DOC Project Leadership: Director William Murphy, Superintendent Maria Pirro-Simmons, Director of Re-Entry Services Trina Sexton, David McCluskey, James Gaglione, Parole Director Eric Ellison, David Rentler, Suzanne Mazzotta, Christine Fortunato, and Carol Meglio.

Partners: John Santa (Chair of the ARES Industry and Business Advisory Group); Stephen Cox, Central Connecticut State University’s Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice (Research partner); Eleanor Michael, Office of Policy and Management; Lisa Sementilli, Department of Labor; Erica Nelson, Council of State Governments (BJA’s technical assistance provider).

Grant Required Steering Committees: CJPAC, PJOR, Industry/Business Advisory Group (IBAG, chaired by John Santa), DOC Project Oversight Committee (representatives from DOC, CT Dept of Labor, Central CT State, and OPM). CJPAC serves as the cross-disciplinary, executive-level steering committee to guide the strategic planning process. PJOR serves as the cross-disciplinary working group with representatives from state and local agencies focusing on reentry. IBAG is comprised of representatives of manufacturing, construction, hospitality, and other business sectors and provides input and guidance for removing barriers to gainful employment and promoting direct connections to employers for formerly incarcerated people.

ARES Working Groups: Policy and Statutory Barriers, Data and Technology, Education and Employment, and Reentry and Community Supervision.

Overarching Findings of the System-Wide Gap Analysis

- There are significant ongoing efforts throughout Connecticut aimed at improving employment opportunities for returning citizens. These efforts involve criminal justice agencies, non-criminal justice state and local agencies, non-profit agencies, and private entities.
- There are very few independent evaluations of the effectiveness of Connecticut criminal justice processes and practices.
- There is little shared information regarding the statewide and local efforts resulting in decision-making “silos”. These silos are present within and across criminal justice and non-criminal justice agencies. The presence of the decision-making silos has resulted in the lack of coordinated system-wide efforts at improving employment opportunities for returning citizens.

- Criminal justice agencies collect a large amount of information (e.g., assessments, treatment referrals and outcomes, and supervision outcomes) but little information is shared across agencies.
- There is a lack of system-wide and community awareness of employment-type services and issues inside and outside of facilities. In other words, a lot of activities are taking place and very few people know about them, especially formerly incarcerated citizens.
- Criminal justice agencies primarily focus on addressing criminal risk of recidivism. As such, job readiness and employment are secondary concerns that are part of the risk assessment but not a priority in facility programming and community supervision practices.

ARES Workgroup Challenges

Education and Employment: What are ways to wed education/vocational education with employment opportunities across the criminal justice system?

Policy and Statutory Barriers: How can policy and practices within and outside of the criminal justice system be amended or created to prioritize or better support job readiness and employment?

Data and Technology: How can data/assessments be streamlined so various entities are collecting and sharing similar information?

Reentry and Community Release: How can reentry services and community supervision promote job readiness and employment?

Primary Components of the Strategic Plan

Intake Assessments and Ongoing Classification: Include job readiness assessments at DOC intake and structure the offender's accountability plan around addressing criminal risks/needs and then provide programming aimed at improving the likelihood of obtaining gainful employment.

Facility Programming: Enhance facility programming around obtaining industry-recognized credentials; utilizing tablet applications for access to virtual American Job Centers and Department of Labor services; and, standardize documentation of offenders' learned job proficiencies and incarcerated work history.

In-Facility Community Engagement: Increase and expand community partners and employers' opportunities to identify and provide services to inmates prior to their release.

Re-Entry Planning: Include employment-relevant components such as enrollment in CTHIRES (Department of Labor services) and a re-entry transcript that provides documentation of inmate's job skills, work history, program participation, and industry-recognized credentials.

Post-Release Community Supervision: Create more formalized links to employers and employment services through job supportive halfway houses, parole employment liaisons, and Job Centers.

Post-Release Employment: Remove barriers to employment and create more access to opportunities through continued partnerships with the Department of Labor, the Connecticut Business & Industry Association, the Society of Human Resource Managers, and local Chambers of Commerce.

THE ADULT REENTRY AND EMPLOYMENT STRATEGIC PLANNING PROGRAM GRANT (ARES)

Connecticut Department of Correction

U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Assistance

FY 2018 Second Chance Act Adult Reentry and Employment Strategic Planning (ARES) Program

Project Title: Connecticut Reentry and Employment Strategic Planning (RESP) Initiative (Grant Award: 2018-RQ-BX-0008)

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ARES Project Oversight Committee

William Murphy, CTDOC, Director of Programs and Treatment Division

Maria Pirro-Simmons, CTDOC, Superintendent of Unified School District #1

Trina Sexton, CTDOC, Director of Offender Reentry Services

David McCluskey, CTDOC, Legislative Liaison

James Gaglione, CTDOC, Director of Correctional Enterprises of Connecticut

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Lisa Sementilli, CTDOL, Workforce Development Specialist

Eleanor Michael, CT Office of Policy and Management, Policy Development Coordinator

John Santa, Chair, Industry/Business Advisory Group

Stephen Cox, Central Connecticut State University, Professor, Dept. of Criminology & Criminal Justice

Project Overview

A one year planning grant was awarded from the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) to the Connecticut Department of Correction (CTDOC).

Purpose is to develop a statewide Connecticut Adult Reentry and Employment Strategic Plan for establishing policy and programmatic frameworks that build upon existing and future resources for reentry services, education and vocational training, and employment.

Connecticut was one of eleven locations selected for this grant program. These locations will be invited to apply for additional grant funds during the 2020-2021 federal fiscal year to implement the recommendations brought forward during the planning process.

Common Research Findings

It is difficult for people leaving prison to find well paying jobs

- Over 90% of those incarcerated in Connecticut leaving prison have less than 5 years of employment history prior to going to prison.

Simply connecting someone to a job does not guarantee a reduction in recidivism

- Does not address people's underlying needs related to criminal behavior

Not everyone with a criminal record needs the same services

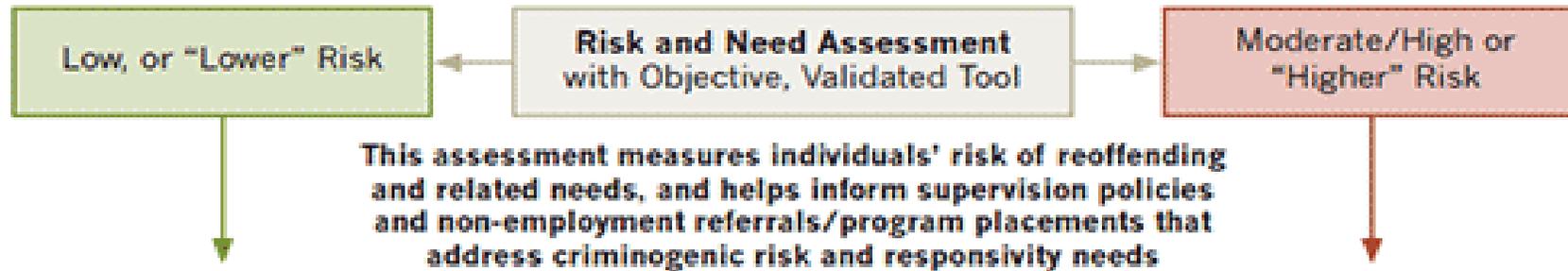
- Differences in job readiness are related to the likelihood of recidivism

Higher-risk people require more intensive interventions while those same services can increase the likelihood of recidivism for lower-risk offenders

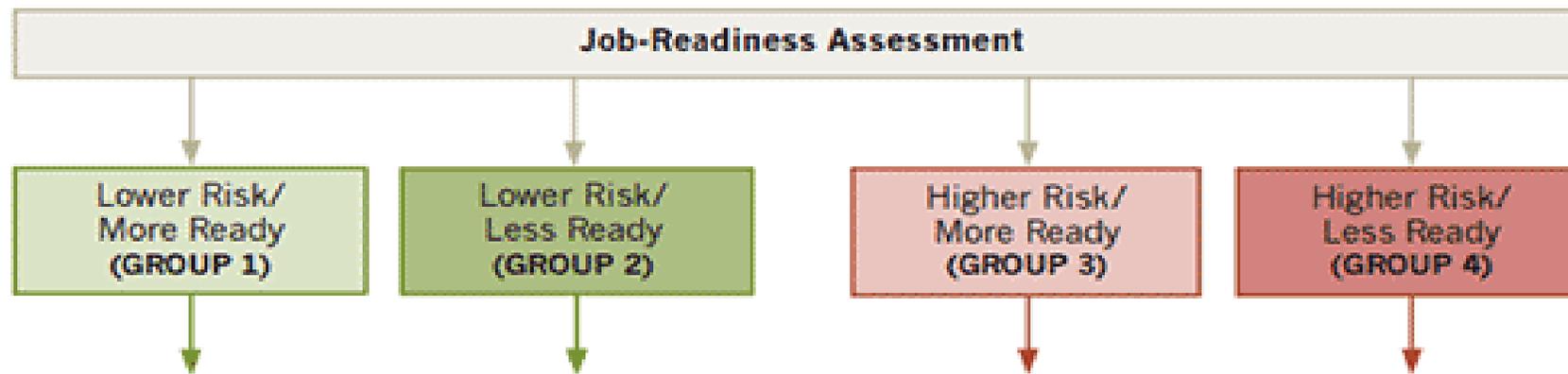
- High risk programs should only be for high risk offenders, most low risk offenders need little or no programming to be successful
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BJA's Criminal Risk and Job Readiness Model

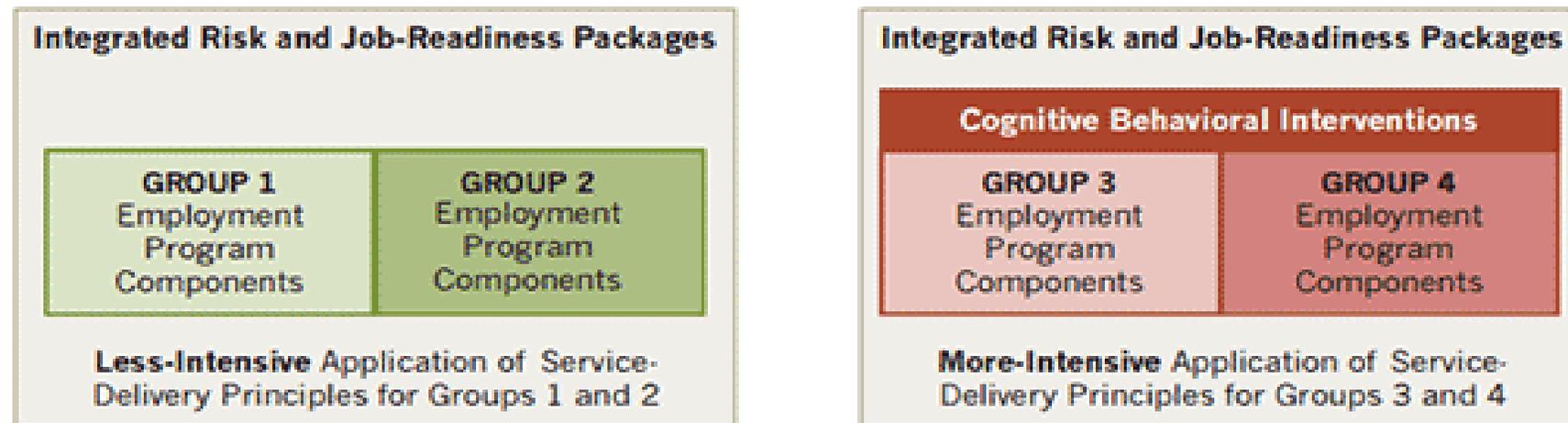
Step 1: Assess Risk and Needs



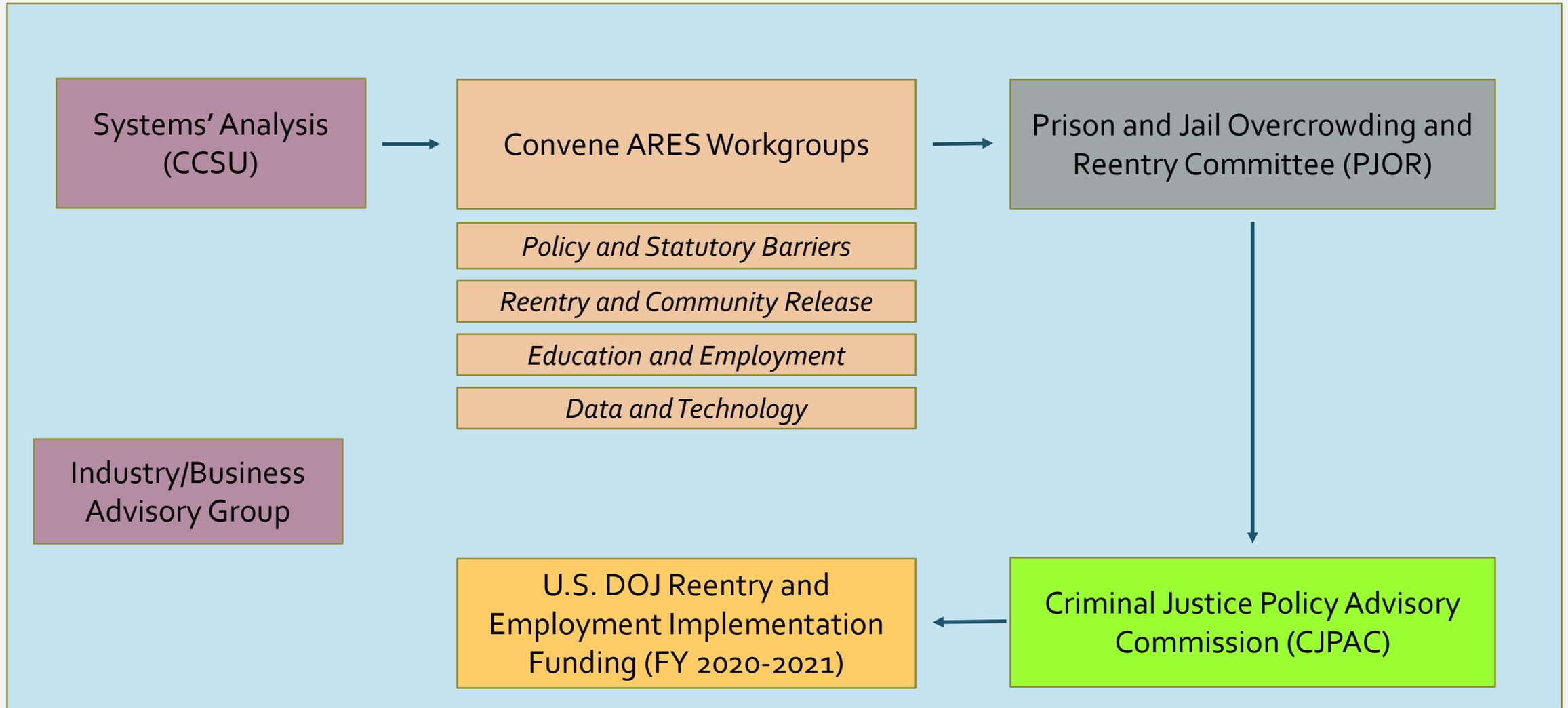
Step 2: Assess Job Readiness



Step 3: Deliver Targeted Services



ARES Project Structure



Findings from the Systems' Analysis – Overarching Themes

- A significant amount of efforts inside and outside of the criminal justice system.
 - There are very few independent evaluations of the effectiveness of Connecticut criminal justice processes and practices.
 - A significant number of “silos” causing a lack of coordinated system-wide efforts and information-sharing.
 - Lack of system-wide and community awareness of employment-type services and issues inside and outside of facilities.
 - Criminal justice agencies primarily focus on addressing criminal risk of recidivism. As such, job readiness and employment are secondary concerns that are part of the risk assessment but not a priority in facility programming and community supervision practices.
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ARES Workgroup Challenges

Policy and Statutory Barriers: How can policy and practices within and outside of the criminal justice system be amended or created to prioritize or better support job readiness and employment?

Technology/Data: How can data/assessments be streamlined so various entities are collecting and sharing similar information?

Education and Employment: What are ways to wed education/career technical education across the criminal justice system with employment opportunities?

Reentry and Community Supervision: How can reentry services and community supervision promote job readiness and employment?

Policy and Statutory Barrier Recommendations

- Eliminate dual supervision: between 200 and 300 people are currently being supervised by probation and parole at the same time (Sentencing Commission).
 - Study the efficacy of Special Parole (Sentencing Commission).
 - Revisit the legislative licensure restrictions placed on people with criminal records (Council on the Collateral Consequences of a Criminal Record).
 - Increase the use of tax credits for employers of the formerly incarcerated (CT Department of Labor).
 - Revise and promote the use of Certificates of Employability in conjunction with the business community.
 - Develop statutory guidelines for job site restrictions and/or background checks (Council on the Collateral Consequences of a Criminal Record).
 - Reduce federal job site restrictions for employers.
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What does the Incarcerated Population Look Like?

Job Readiness by Criminal Risk for People Released from a CTDOC Facility in 2018*

		Job Readiness			Total
		Low	Medium	High	
Criminal Risk	Low Risk	395 (5%)	936 (12%)	84 (1%)	1,415 (18%)
	Medium Risk	611 (8%)	1,312 (17%)	146 (2%)	2,069 (26%)
	High Risk	1,710 (22%)	2,292 (29%)	360 (5%)	4,362 (56%)
	Total	2,716 (35%)	4,540 (58%)	590 (8%)	7,846

*The percentages represent the total percentages (out of 7,846).

Goals of the Strategic Plan

1. Develop integrated employment policies and approaches.
2. Develop and leverage key partnerships with employers and stakeholders.
3. Remove barriers to employment.
4. Create access to opportunities pre-release to post-release.
5. Infuse employment-based efforts into existing correctional models that address risk, need, and responsivity.



Intake / Assessment / On-going Classification

Current Practices

- SCORES/WRNA/TPAI Assessment
- Offender Accountability Plan (OAP)
- Medical/Mental Health Treatment
- Educational/Vocational Assessments
- Community Resources

ARES Enhancements

- Job readiness assessments
- Work history and job skill analysis
- Career Interest Inventory



Moderate to High Risk Inmates (Address Criminal Risk First)

Applying the Risk-Needs-Responsivity approach to decrease criminal risk by addressing criminogenic needs.

Special Populations

- Women
 - 18 to 25 year olds
 - Veterans
 - Aging
-

Criminogenic Needs Programming

- Cognitive-Behavioral Programming
- Domestic Violence
- Anger Management
- Good Intentions, Bad Choices
- VOICES
- Substance Abuse Treatment
- Mental Health Treatment
- Educational services

Facility Programming (All Risk Levels)

Current Practices

- Unified School District #1
 - Elective Programming and Services
 - Facility Employment
 - Limited/Sporadic Technology Availability to the Incarcerated Population
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ARES Enhancements

- Provide more industry-recognized credentials by integrating educational and career technical education services with Correctional Enterprises' experiences
- Introduce Virtual American Job Centers and access to CTHIRES through Tablet applications.
- Standardized documentation of inmates' learned job proficiencies and incarcerated work history.

Unified School District #1

Current Practices

- Mandated and Elective Educational Services for the Incarcerated Population
 - Academic
 - Career Technical Education
 - Post-Secondary
 - Job Readiness Assessments and Career Development
 - Transition services and plans
 - Credentialed and Pre-Apprenticeship Programs
-

ARES Enhancements

- Individualized program development
- Shared job readiness assessments
- Partnership with Correctional Enterprises
- Collaboration with Career Technical Education System
- Apprenticeship Programs
- Increased credentialing opportunities
- USD #1 Transition and Support Services Unit
- Adult education resource guide
- Increased partnerships with colleges and universities

Community Engagement and Information Sharing

Current Practices

- Resource fairs
- Program presentations
- Focus groups
- Distribution of informational literature in facility units
- Facility orientation



ARES Enhancements

- More directed/specific job fairs
- American Job Center programming
- Phone/In person interviews prior to release
- Provide job readiness services through partner agencies (DOL and community partners).
- In-prison links to Re-entry Councils and Workforce Investment Boards
- Community-based Tablet content (e.g., community resources, job postings, DOL publications)

Re-Entry Planning (6 to 9 months prior to release)

Current Practices

- Provision of basic needs
 - Planning and continuity of care and treatment services
 - Personal identification procurement
 - Community referrals
 - Provide 211 information
 - Legal education meetings for special education students
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ARES Enhancements

- Job readiness reassessment
- Registration and enrollment for CTHIRES
- Re-entry transcript
 - Job skills
 - Work history
 - Program participation
 - Industry-recognized credentials
- Inviting employers to participate on Re-Entry Councils

Community Release to Halfway Houses and Parole Supervision

Current Practices

- Work release halfway houses
 - Use of validated risk and need assessments
 - Community needs programming
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ARES Enhancements

- Job supportive halfway house
- Job readiness reassessments
- Parole employment liaison
- Standardized information sharing between parole officers and halfway houses
- Employment and retention specialists (American Job Centers)
- Structured referral and linkages to American Job Centers, Workforce Investment Boards, and community-based programs and services

Post-Release Employment

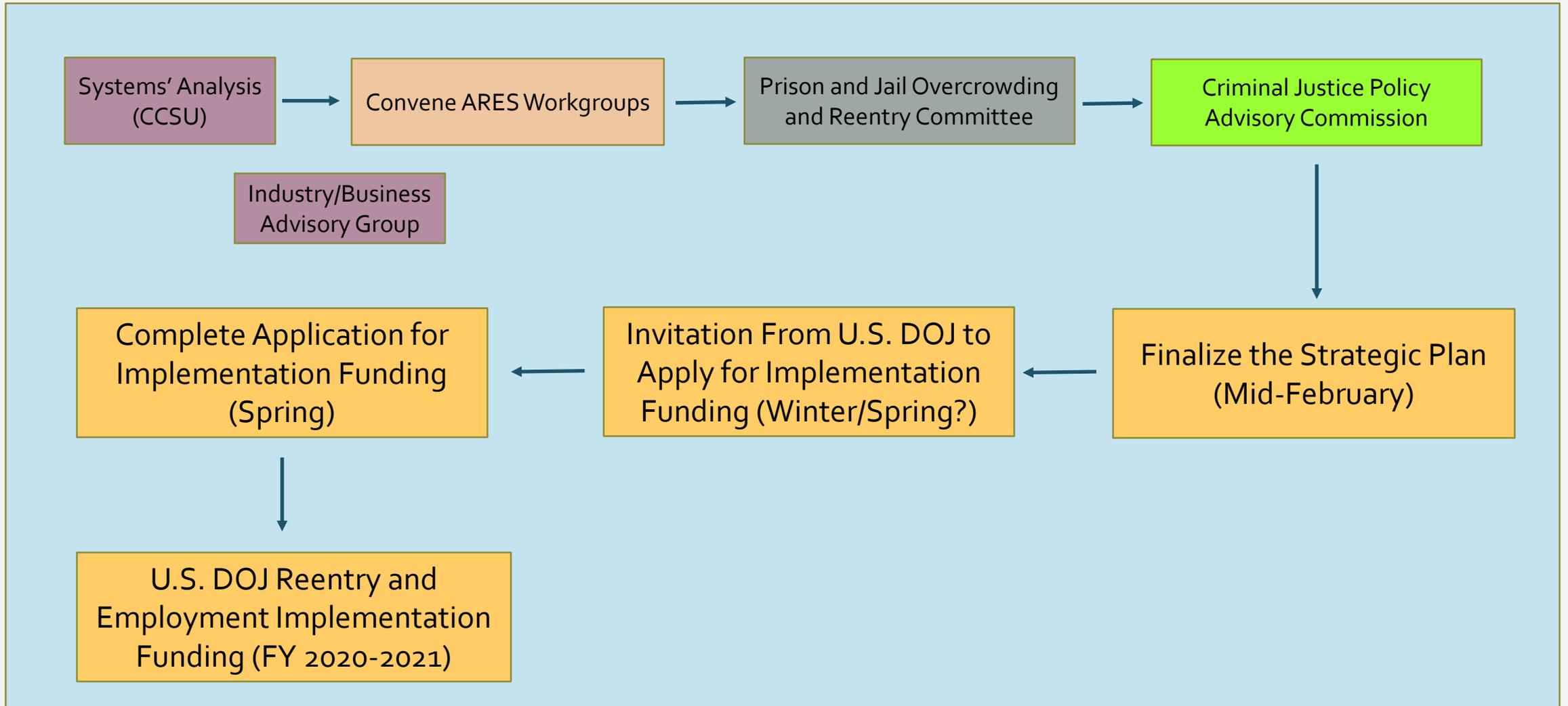
Current Barriers

- Reluctance among employers to hire formerly incarcerated
 - Professional licensure restrictions
 - Job site restrictions (Federal, State, and Local)
 - Criminal background checks
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Recommendations

- DOL employment tracking and inter-agency data sharing
- Employer Hiring Tool Kit (Connecticut Business & Industry Association)
- Redevelopment and widespread use of Certificates of Employability
- Promotion of Federal and State hiring incentives for formerly incarcerated
- Training for employers and hiring managers on fair chance hiring practices
- Continued partnerships and communication with CBIA, SHRM, and Chambers of Commerce

Next Steps



ARES' Impact on Connecticut

- Development of an employer tool-kit; a guide to hiring formerly incarcerated citizens.
 - Creation of industry-recognized licensure and increased credentialing programs within correctional facilities.
 - Expansion of the CTDOC Correctional Enterprises' Prison Industry Enhancement Certification Program (PIECP).
 - Restructuring of halfway house contracts to include job readiness assessments and open information sharing.
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Anticipated Outcomes of ARES Implementation

1. Break down barriers to employment.
 2. Provide pathways to careers and sustainable employment.
 3. Creation of a pipeline to provide CT businesses with a skilled and trained workforce.
 4. Meet staffing demands of CT businesses to foster continued economic growth.
 5. Creation of a coordinated and integrated approach to workforce development through ongoing partnerships between Corrections, Unified School District #1, Parole, Probation, Labor, employers, service providers, and institutions of higher education.
 6. Reduce recidivism and improve public safety through targeted risk and employment-based interventions.
 7. Improve post-release outcomes for individuals and their families.
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Contact Information

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