

Evaluation Summary Report

Innovations in Reentry:

Workforce Development for Peer Services

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The Bridging Group



Table of Contents

Project Overview.....2

Grantee Agency Overviews3

 Asian Prisoner Support Committee.....3

 Building Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency (BOSS)3

 Conscious Voices.....3

 E. C. Reems Community Services.....4

 Oakland Community & Youth Outreach (OCYO).....4

 Genesis Worship Center & Tricities Community Development Center4

Evaluation Methods5

Data Summary.....6

 Demographic Data.....6

 Employment Outcomes.....9

Recommendations and Lessons Learned.....12

About the Evaluators: The Bridging Group.....15

Appendices.....16

 Appendix 1: Participant Focus Group Guide.....16

 Appendix 2: Staff Interview Guide.....18

 Appendix 3: Demographics Data Tables.....19

Project Overview

Alameda County Behavioral Healthcare Services (BHCS) funded five projects for its Innovations in Reentry initiative under the category of “Workforce Development for Peer Services.” These projects were tasked with developing effective and adoptable plans for incorporating formerly incarcerated individuals into the workforce of agencies and programs providing services to the reentry population. Agencies were funded to complete their innovation projects from July 1, 2016 – December 31, 2017. Table 1 provides an overview of the five funded projects. Support for the project was provided through the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) and AB 109 funding.

Table 1: Innovations in Reentry - Workforce Development for Peer Services Projects		
Agencies	Location	Project Population
Asian Prisoner Support Committee & Building Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency (BOSS)	Oakland, CA	Men and Women in Reentry
Oakland Community & Youth Outreach	Oakland, CA	Young Adults in Reentry
Conscious Voices	Oakland, CA	Women in Reentry
E. C. Reems Community Services	Oakland, CA	Faith-based Women in Reentry
Genesis Worship Center & Tricities Community Center	Oakland and Newark, CA	Faith-based Men and Women in Reentry

*“Mental health support, good mental health
– that is the job readiness I need!”*

-Program Participant

Grantee Agency Overviews

Asian Prisoner Support Committee

Asian Prisoner Support Committee seeks to address and challenge root causes of the mass incarceration crisis such as the deterioration of the educational system, the criminalization of youth, and the lack of access to resources for low-income immigrants and communities. The mission of the Asian Prisoner Support Committee (APSC) is to provide support to Asian & Pacific Islander people in prison and jail and educate the broader community about the growing number of Asians & Pacific Islanders in the United States being imprisoned, detained, and deported.



Building Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency (BOSS)

BOSS is an award-winning organization that helps people who are facing deep poverty and multiple special needs. BOSS works one-on-one with each family and each individual to help them achieve stable income, permanent affordable housing, and lasting wellness. The mission of BOSS is to help homeless, poor, and disabled people achieve health and self-sufficiency, and to fight against the root causes of poverty and homelessness.



Conscious Voices

Conscious Voices is dedicated to addressing the needs of



African Americans through community defined strategies. Conscious Voices provides trauma informed mental health services to the community and offers training for providers seeking to be more effective by utilizing strategies designed to improve the safety, health, and mental health of everyone in the community. In 2013, Conscious Voices opened the African American Well-Being Center in Oakland, CA to provide individual and group mental health services and culturally informed clinical training to address the shortage of African American therapists in Alameda County.

E. C. Reems Community Services

E. C. Reems Community Services is a community-based organization founded in 1989 to address the need for health, education, life skills, and workforce development programs in the East Bay community. E.C. Reems Community Services utilizes a collaborative approach that engages partnerships with government agencies, other community services providers, and the faith-based community to realize its mission.



Oakland Community & Youth Outreach (OCYO)

Oakland Community & Youth Outreach (OCYO) helps save lives and develop youth. On the frontlines to prevent violence and support youth to thrive, OCYO provides outreach, mentoring, case management, and support to high-risk youth and young adults throughout the City of Oakland. At the core of its service model, OCYO utilizes specially trained peer mentors – supportive mentors who have similar life experiences to their mentees – a demonstrated effective program strategy used among reentry service providers nationally.



Genesis Worship Center & Tricities Community Development Center

Genesis Worship Center, in partnership with counselors from the College of Alameda, opened the Fresh Start

Academy in 2006. The mission of the Fresh Start Academy is to assist hard to serve youth and formerly incarcerated people living in the Oakland area by providing employment, mentoring and educational assistance.



Tricities Community Development Center is a community-based organization building partnerships to serve groups that fall into low and low moderate income and other individual circumstances that place citizens in various at-risk categories such as: homeless, unemployed, seniors, single parents, former gang members, substance abusers, and people reentering the community after incarceration who reside in the cities of Newark, Union City and Fremont, California (Tri-Cities). Tricities mission is to help move in a positive direction towards achievement in healthy lifestyle choices, job readiness, and family economics and education.

Evaluation Methods

In January 2018, ACBHCS contracted with The Bridging Group (TBG) to complete a small-scale retrospective program and outcome evaluation for the five innovation grantees funded to create projects on workforce development for peer services. The following activities were completed as a part of this evaluation:

- 1) **Participant Focus Groups:** Focus groups were completed with a total of 13 program participants representing four of the five program sites. Participants were people who: a) had successfully completed or participated in the liR program, b) gave permission to be audio recorded during the focus group, and c) could speak or understand English at a level sufficient to participate in an English-speaking focus group. The focus groups lasted 1-hour, and participants received a \$20 Visa gift card at the end of the group to acknowledge them for their participation. *See Appendix 1 for Participant Focus Group Guide.*
- 2) **Staff Interviews:** Interviews were completed with 15 key staff representing all five of the program sites. Staff were selected for interviews because they were involved in the design, implementation or supervision of their Innovations program. The staff interviews lasted 1 – 1 1/2 hours. *See Appendix 2 for Staff Interview Guide.*
- 3) **Quantitative Data Cleaning and Analysis:** Data consultations were completed with staff at each of the five program sites who were responsible for data entry and reporting to the County. Consultations were used to review submitted data and ensure data accurately reflected participant demographics and employment outcomes for each site.

This report provides a presentation of quantitative data reported to the County, a summary of the qualitative data collected through participant focus groups and staff interviews, and a set of lessons learned and recommendations to inform future innovations funding initiatives.

"I was only robbing banks because I was sick of seeing my family do so bad....I don't rob banks anymore, not because I am scared, because I am not a bank robber anymore. This program helped me see a life bigger than that."

- Program Participant

Data Summary

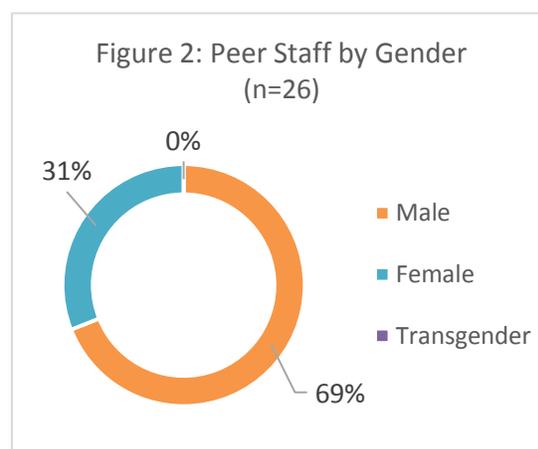
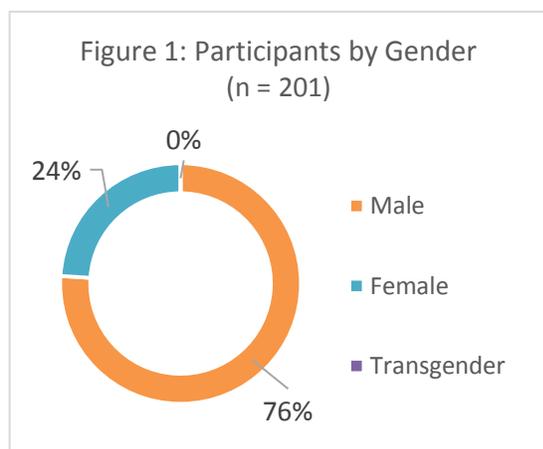
The demographic information presented represents data collected from all five program sites as submitted to Alameda County Behavioral Healthcare Services on a quarterly basis throughout the duration of the grant period. All demographic data was collected by front-line staff. At some of the sites, demographic data was self-reported by the participants and at other sites, demographic data was reported by staff observation.

Demographic Data

Demographic data was reported for a total of 201 participants enrolled into the five program sites. Demographic data was also collected during site visits for 26 peer staff who worked at the program sites. Peer staff was defined as any direct-service program staff who had personal experience within a criminal justice system. Criminal justice system involvement was defined as any incarceration in a jail or prison, on probation or parole supervision, or a combination of any of the above. *All demographic data is summarized in tables found in Appendix 3.*

Gender

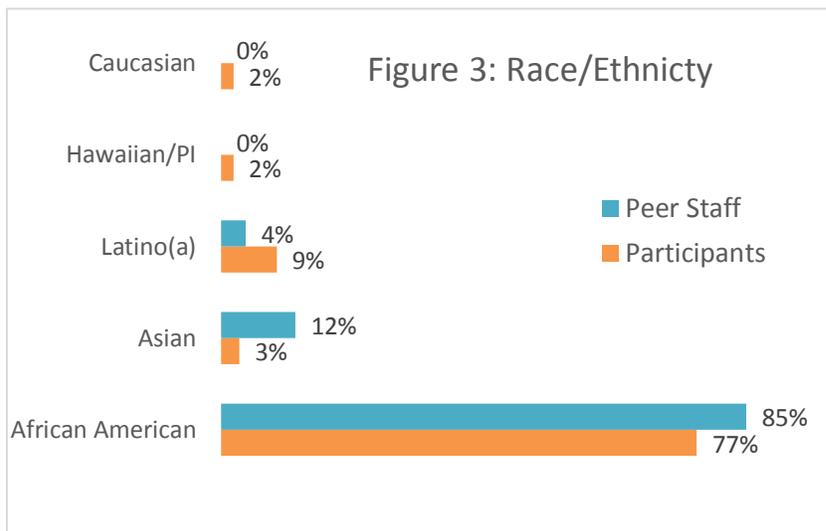
The majority of program participants (76%) and peer staff (69%) were identified as male, though a significant number of both program participants (24%) and peer staff (31%) were identified as female. This gender distribution reflects the disproportionality of men involved in the criminal justice system. The significant number of female program participants and peer staff may be attributed to two of the five program sites who developed gender-specific programs for women with criminal justice involvement. None of the sites reported any transgender program participants or program staff. Figures 1 and 2 provide a comparison of gender by program participant and peer staff.



Race/Ethnicity

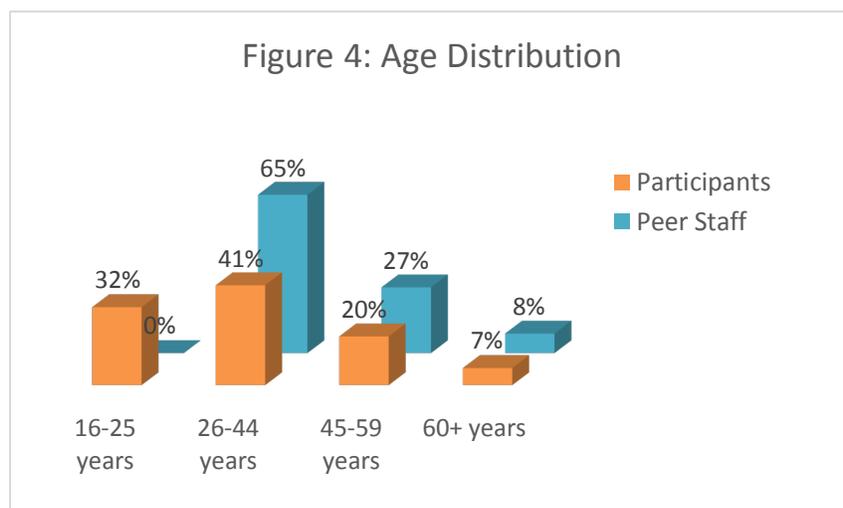
The vast majority of both program participants (77%) and peer staff (85%) were identified as African American. The next highest ethnicity reported for program participants was Latino/a (9%) followed by Asian (3%), Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (2%) and Caucasian (2%). There was a significant number of peer staff, or 12%, who self-identified as Asian or Pacific Islander. All

of the Asian and Pacific Islander staff came from one program site, Asian Prisoner Support Committee who developed a culturally rich program model aimed at serving the reentry needs of the Asian and Pacific Islander community. Figure 3 provides a comparison of race/ethnicity by program participant and peer staff.



Age

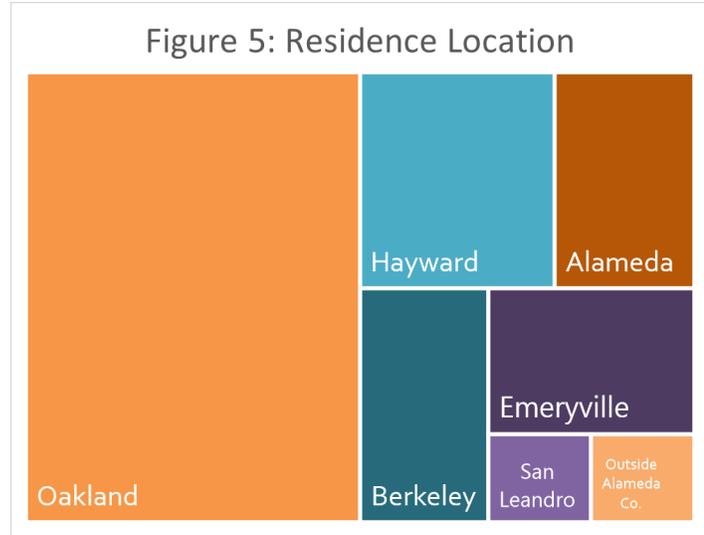
The age distribution of program participants demonstrated a significant number of transitional age youth (16-25 years old) at 32% or younger adults (26-44 years old) at 41%. Additionally, 20% of program participants were 45-59 years old and 7% were 60 years or older. The significant number of younger participants may be attributed to one program site, Oakland



Community & Youth Outreach, who developed a program specifically aimed at meeting the reentry needs of young people living in Alameda County. The majority of peer staff, or 65%, were 26-44 years old. Figure 4 provides an age distribution and comparison by program participant and peer staff.

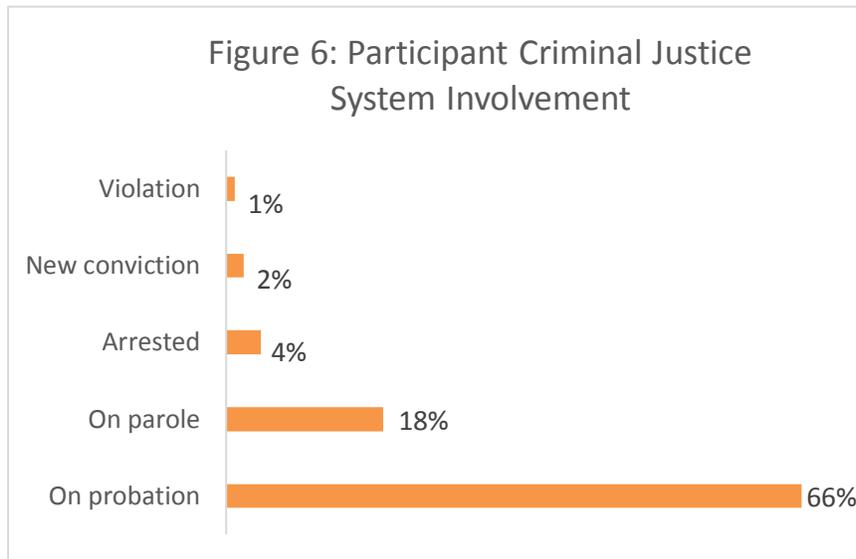
Residence Location

Program sites reported participants living in multiple cities within in Alameda County. The cities most cited include Oakland, followed by Hayward, Alameda, Berkeley and Emeryville. Figure 5 provides a distribution map of program participants' residence location.



Criminal Justice System Involvement

Participant criminal justice system involvement was defined as one of the following variables: 1) currently on probation, 2) currently on parole, 3) arrested during participation in program, 4) new conviction during participation in program, or 5) violation of terms of community



supervision during participation in program. Categories were not mutually exclusive and thus criminal justice system involvement could be reported in multiple categories for individual participants. All criminal justice data was documented and reported through staff observation and not verified through a

criminal justice agency. The majority, or 66%, of program participants were on probation and 18% were on parole at time of program participation. Very little additional involvement in the criminal justice system including arrest, new conviction or community supervision violation was observed and reported by staff from any of the sites. Figure 6 provides a breakdown of participant criminal justice system involvement.

Employment Outcomes

Employment outcome data for jobs in *any* sector and for jobs in *peer services* was reported for a total of 201 participants enrolled into the five program sites.

Employment in peer services was defined as any job placement made within an

agency that provides reentry or other support services for people involved in the criminal justice system, including the grantee sites themselves. Employment data was also collected during site visits for 26 peer staff who worked at the program sites. Peer staff was defined as any direct-service program staff who had personal experience within a criminal justice system.

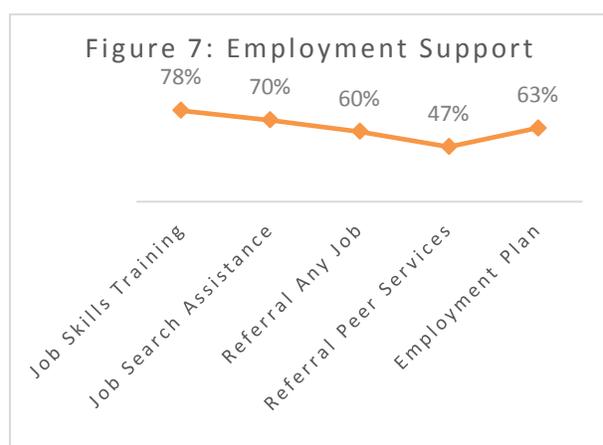
"The County needs to invest on the back end – it gives a lot of money to get people trained but needs to invest more money for employers to hire them."

- Program Director

Employment Readiness & Support

Sites reported data on employment readiness and support in five service areas: 1) jobs skills training, 2) job search and assistance, 3) referral to *any* job, 4) referral to *peer services* job, and 5) employment plan development. Sites provided employment readiness services with at least 60% of program participants in four of the five service areas with less success providing job referrals to peer services

positions which occurred with only 47% of program participants. All five sites provided all five employment readiness and support services for 100% of their peer staff. Figure 7 provides a comparison of employment support services provided for program participants.



Job Placement

Sites reported success in securing job offers for *any* job for 37% of participants and job offers for *peer services* positions for 12% of participants. Of those who were offered jobs, participants were successful at obtaining those jobs. **84% of participants who were offered any job, obtained the job and 80% of participants who were offered a job in peer services obtained the job.**

84% of participants with a job offer, obtained a job

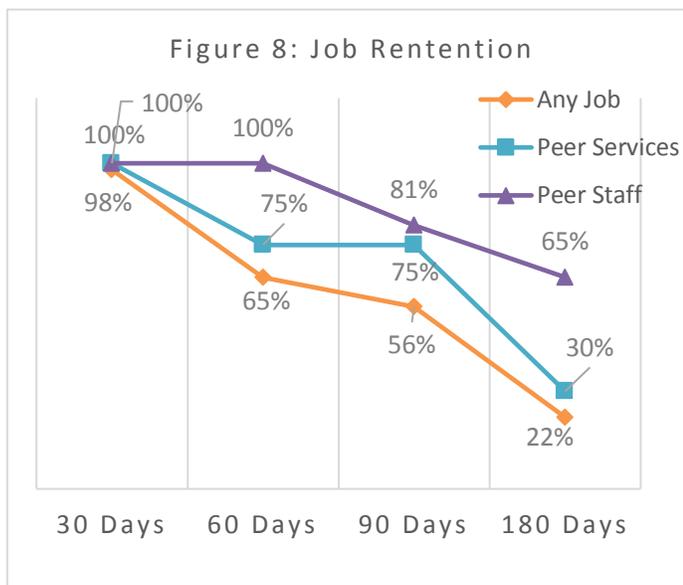
Lack of employers willingness to hire people with criminal justice records and turnover in contacts at viable employers were the two most often cited reasons for challenges with obtaining job offers. Sites also discussed the overall lack of jobs in peer services.

Job Retention

Sites reported some success with job retention, especially through 90 days after job placement. Job retention was especially high for staff in peer positions within program sites and with program participants placed into *peer services* job. There was less success with job retention for program participants placed into *any* job position. Some of the lack of job retention in peer staff and peer services jobs may be attributed to positions that were funded directly through

Innovations grants, and thus positions ended at the end of the grant cycle. Sites consistently discussed the need for ongoing employment support such as job coaches beyond job readiness and placement in order to strengthen job retention over a longer time period. Sites also discussed the necessity to include trauma-informed support into job readiness programs so that participants, many of whom have histories of trauma, were better equipped to handle conflicts in the

workplace that may trigger a trauma-based response such as anger, frustration or lack of job commitment. Figure 8 provides a comparison of job retention across time for peer staff, program participants employed in *any* job, and program participants employed in *peer services*.



"It's like we needed a coach all the way, not just to get us on the team, or through the first quarter, we need a job coach all the way through the season from getting a job, to keeping a job, to owning a job."

-Program Participant

Hours and Pay

Table 2 provides a breakdown of average hours worked per week and hourly pay for peer staff positions, program participants employed in *any* position, and program participants employed in *peer services* positions. Of interest, program participants placed into peer services, on average, made \$1.63 more per hour at \$16.18 per hour than participants placed into any job paid on average \$14.55 per hour. This data indicates that if people are able to find and be placed into peer service jobs, on average, the positions pay a viable and livable wage.

Table 2: Average Hours Per Week and Hourly Pay		
	Average Hours Worked Per Week	Average Hourly Pay
Program Participants Placed into <i>Any</i> Position	19.3 hours	\$14.55
Program Participants Place into <i>Peer Services</i> Position	20.8 hours	\$16.18
Peer Staff	14.5 hours	\$19.75

Recommendations and Lessons Learned

The following is a list of recommendations and lessons learned as drawn from information collected during participant focus groups and staff interviews and from information collected through reports submitted to the County by each of the five program sites.

➤ Peer-based employment models work in ways other programs do not.

Participants shared unanimously at every site the importance and value of having peer-based staff work within the programs. Participants discussed the authenticity, trust, and empathy that peer staff could establish in ways that other staff could not. They felt peer-based staff were especially important given the level of distrust, powerlessness, and shame felt by people who had been involved in the criminal justice system.



"It's like family. Don't feel like I am working with a case manager. It's like I am talking to an auntie, brother, sister. They keep it real with you – straight across the board. But you ain't gonna hear that from others that don't know...it just ain't gonna work."

- Program Participant

➤ Job readiness and placement is not enough, require peer-based job coaches for all employment programs.

Evidence demonstrates that adding mentoring such as peer-based job coaches increases the success of employment programs for people with criminal justice system involvement including outcomes that indicate participants are more likely to find a job, participants are more likely to keep a job, and participants are less likely to recidivate (Bauldry, et al. 2009)

➤ Link trauma and mental health to employment readiness and retention.



*"People don't just get trauma in 1, 2, or 9 months. We are dealing with a lineage of trauma. Participants are learning employment skills when they are in the healing circles, learning communication skills, and getting to the core of deep rooted healing. Once they do get the job, they can come back and continue to get the support they need to keep the job. **It's like we are creating a co-occurring mental health and employment program.**"*

- Program Director

➤ **Families also need support and should be included in future Innovations in Reentry programs.**



There is a growing body of information and research that has established the effects of parental criminal justice system involvement on children and families who are left behind when their loved ones become incarcerated.

Some of this research indicates that providing support for children of incarcerated parents not only benefits children during their parent's incarceration, but also strengthens positive outcomes for children and parents upon reentry including stronger likelihood of parental involvement in children's lives and lower parental recidivism rates (LaVine, Naser, Brooks, & Castro, 2005; McClure et al., 2015). Alameda County Innovations programs would be strengthened by considering how to incorporate support for children and families into their Innovations in Reentry initiatives.

"I took my daughter through all the prisons with me. She been through a lot and now she needs support for her pain too."

-Program Participant

➤ **Programs were successful in working with some of the most vulnerable members of our reentry community.**

Many of the program sites described successful efforts to outreach and engage individuals in the reentry community who were at high risk for recidivism or living in vulnerable life circumstances. Examples of participants included young adults who had previous gang involvement or had been involved in violent offenses or working with people who were chronically homeless and struggling with mental illness and substance use while living on the streets of Alameda County.

"People came to our program who were previously in homeless encampments because they truly had no social support. People came back to life. They were given purpose again, given validation for who they are."

- Peer Staff Member

➤ **Increase engagement and education of employers** through job fairs, county employment program, and word of mouth.



Alameda County has invested in engaging and encouraging employers to hire people with criminal justice involvement. The County-sponsored reentry employment fairs were mentioned by many participants as a highlight of the program. There is still work to be done to engage and identify additional employment opportunities for people in reentry programs, especially in peer services.

"I learned that there a lot of employers that will hire felons (like Tesla, Fire Departments, AC Transit, Greyhound, airports, County of Alameda). The fact that they knew and were still there. Did they get the memo? Did they know the fair was for people in the system? I was very surprised, it gave me motivation."

- Program Participant

"If we had more time and resources, we could do more education and advocacy with employers. We would hear a place was accepting applications from people with felonies, but then there would be a new human resources director – our guy made it all the way to the hiring step, but then no job."

- Program Director

➤ **Identifying with a community** is key for reentry success.

"We intentionally focused on building a community of peers [both staff and participants] from the multitude of reentry populations. Lifers to short-termers, recently released to those who have been out for a while. The hope was to bring together people of color with lived experience in the system to create space, build opportunities for discovering living wage jobs and careers, and build a community of support by traveling together, eating together, being vulnerable together."



- Program Coordinator

About the Evaluators: The Bridging Group

Founded in 2008, The Bridging Group (TBG) is a consulting firm focusing on the effect of incarceration on the public's health, families and community re-entry. The company's expertise includes: 1) Capacity Building Assistance & Organizational Development; 2) Evaluation & Research; 3) Fund & Program Development; 4) Policy Development; and 5) Training, Education & Dissemination. Together, the principal consultants have over 45 years of experience working on the development, implementation and evaluation of programs serving individuals and families affected by the criminal justice system. In addition to the principal consultants, The Bridging Group works with a team of affiliated consultants who represent some of the country's leading experts in criminal justice-based program development, training, evaluation and dissemination. TBG staff has extensive experience working with government agencies at the local, state and federal levels and globally with projects in Haiti, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Thailand, Trinidad, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. TBG also has a strong community/ academic partnership with the University of California, San Francisco.



For more information about The Bridging Group, please visit thebridginggroup.com or contact info@thebridginggroup.com.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Participant Focus Group Guide

IIR Participants in Re-Entry Workforce Development Programs *Focus Group Guide*

Facilitator Script: Before we get started today, I want to outline what is going to happen during the next hour or so and answer any questions you may have. Once again, my name is [NAME]. I've asked you to come today to share your thoughts about [PROGRAM NAME] and the experiences you had participating in this program. There are no right or wrong answers today; I want you to feel free to share your thoughts, feelings and opinions with me. Our goal is to make these kinds of programs stronger and possibly available to more people, and it's important for us to learn what kinds of experiences participants in the program have in order for us to do that. I am going to be asking you questions about things you liked, things you didn't like, and your ideas for what else a program like this could do. No one from Alameda County or [GRANTEE AGENCY] is here so that you'll be able to speak freely, and I will not tell any of the staff members who said what. I will be talking with the staff at [GRANTEE AGENCY] and at the County about the ideas that came up in this group because that will help them know what they're doing well and what they could improve. If there is anything you're particularly concerned about keeping private from the staff, please let me know and I will not include these comments in our discussion with the staff or the final report provided to the County.

Privacy is really important today. I've just been explaining how we protect your privacy in terms of the agency and county staff. I also want to emphasize that we all need to protect each other's privacy within the group. When you are talking, please be sure not to use each other's names or the names of other people you're talking about. Please also remember that what is said in this group stays in this group; I ask that you not share information with people who are not here. Although I hope everyone will respect this, I can't guarantee that they will, so when you are talking, you might not want to reveal very personal details or information that you don't want spread around.

We're going to talk for about an hour today. I'll ask questions, but mainly I want to hear from you. As you were informed before, I will be recording this conversation so that I can remember later what was said. [GRANTEE] or County staff won't hear the recording, only I will be able to listen to it and I won't play it for anyone else. The recorder is not turned on yet; before I turn it on, does anyone have any questions for me?

Answer questions, then turn on recorder

Questions

1. How would you describe [INSERT PROGRAM NAME] to someone who didn't know anything about the program?
2. How did you find out about the program?
3. What do you like about the program?
4. What would you change about the program if you were to help design it in the future?
 - a. What would you add to the program?
5. Did your thoughts about what types of jobs might work for you change because of being in in this program?
 - a. If yes, how did your thoughts change?
6. What made the program "work for you"?
 - a. (i.e., helping you get a job, feel more prepared to get a job, more able to keep a job, more confident about getting a job on your own, etc.)
7. What kind of jobs were you directed to?
 - a. How did you like this process?
8. Can you tell me a little about your relationship with the staff of [INSERT PROGRAM NAME]?
 - a. What did they do that you liked?
 - b. What would you suggest they do differently if they were to run this program again?
9. This has been a great discussion, and I really appreciate your input. Before we end, is there anything else that anyone would like to share about [INSERT PROGRAM NAME]?

Appendix 2: Staff Interview Guide

IIR Participants in Re-Entry Workforce Development Programs Staff Interview Guide

Questions:

1. Please tell me about your program (gain a detailed description of their program design and delivery).
 - a. Why did you develop the program you did? What made you decide to develop the program the way you did?
 - b. How do you think your program has helped people in reentry obtain a job?
 - c. How well did your program do in placing people into **peer service jobs**? What was the difference between these placements and placements into non-peer service jobs?
 - d. Do you have program materials that you are able to share with me (i.e. recruitment flyers, curricula outlines, etc.)?
2. What do you think is the most important component(s) of your program?
3. What have been the biggest successes for your IIR participants?
 - a. Why do you think they have been successes? What is it about the participants that have gained employment that made them successful?
4. *[for collaboration sites only]* What have been the biggest successes to date for the your IIR collaboration?
 - a. Why do you think they have been successes? What is it about the collaboration that makes it successful?
5. What were the challenges in delivering your IIR program?
 - a. How can these challenges be addressed?
6. What do you see as challenges and/or gaps in services for the IIR program in general in Alameda County?
 - a. Probe: think about this question in the context of what you might recommend to the County as they develop their next IIR RFP.
 - b. How can these challenges and/or gaps be addressed?
7. This has been a great discussion, and I really appreciate your honesty and input. Before we end, is there anything else that you would like to share?

Thank you very much for your time!

Appendix 3: Demographics Data Tables

Participant Demographics (N=201)				
Gender		%	Languages Spoken	%
Male	76%	English	94%	
Female	24%	Spanish	5%	
Transgender	0%	Other	2%	
Race/Ethnicity		%	Age*	%
African American	77%	16-25 years (TAY)	32%	
Latino	9%	26-44 years	41%	
Caucasian	2%	45-59 years	20%	
Asian or Pacific Islander	5%	50+ years	4%	
American Indian/Alaska Native	1%	65+ years	2%	
Multi-racial/Other	1%	*age categories not mutually exclusive		
CJ Involvement		%	Sexual Orientation	
On probation	66%	Heterosexual	95%	
On parole	18%	Gay/Lesbian	2%	
Arrested during program	4%	Bisexual	0.5%	
Convicted of new offense	2%	Don't Know	2%	
Violated parole or probation	1%			

Peer Staff Demographics (N=26)

Peer Staff Demographics (N=26)			
Gender	%	Languages Spoken*	%
Male	69%	English	100%
Female	31%	Spanish	4%
Transgender	0%	Other	8%
		*Language categories not mutually exclusive	
Race/Ethnicity	%	Age	%
African American	84%	16-25 years (TAY)	0%
Latino	4%	26-44 years	65%
Caucasian	0%	45-59 years	27%
Asian or Pacific Islander	12%	60+ years	8%
American Indian/Alaska Native	0%		
Multi-racial/Other	0%		
Criminal Justice System Involvement*	%	Sexual Orientation	%
On probation	4%	Heterosexual	92%
On parole	4%	Gay/Lesbian	8%
Arrested during program	4%	Bisexual	0%
Convicted of new offense	0%	Don't Know	0%
Violated parole or probation	0%		
*Data on criminal justice system involvement was reported through staff observation and not verified by a criminal justice system			