



PY24-25 LEGISLATIVE REPORT

**Re-Entry Workforce
Development
Demonstration Grants**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

03 BACKGROUND

05 ADMINISTRATION OF THE PROGRAM

07 KEY PROGRAM ELEMENTS

09 GRANTS SUPPORTED IN PY24 & PY25

15 PROGRAM MANAGEMENT AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

17 PILOTING A LONGITUDINAL RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

21 ANNUAL PROGRESS UPDATE – GRANTS CLOSED IN PY24

24 ANNUAL PROGRESS UPDATE – GRANTS ACTIVE IN PY25

26 SUCCESS STORIES

32 REFERENCES



PICTURED HERE: PAACA STAFF WITH NORFOLK COUNTY SHERIFF

BACKGROUND



The Re-Entry Workforce Development Demonstration Program (RWDDP) is an initiative in Massachusetts administered by Commonwealth Corporation on behalf of the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development with the goal of improving workforce outcomes for individuals returning to their communities after incarceration (i.e. returning citizens). This grant program is funded annually through line item (7003-0150) in the General Appropriation Act Massachusetts State Budget. This report describes the administrative functions of the program and client outcomes. It provides an update on grants funded in Program Year 2024 (or PY24, formerly called FY23 Cohort 2), which were supported by appropriations in FY23 and FY24; and Program Year 2025 (PY25), which are supported by appropriations in FY24 and FY25.

JUSTIFICATION OF NEED:

On any given day in Massachusetts, approximately 12,000 individuals are detained in Massachusetts state prisons and county jails (both pre-trial and sentenced individuals).[1]

Over past decades, re-entry programs have increasingly provided formerly incarcerated jobseekers with services such as job training, job placement assistance, and other job-search-related resources.[2] However, in the United States, unemployment among formerly incarcerated people is five times higher than the general public.[3] Examples of barriers that contribute to this finding are social stigma around returning citizens, housing instability, and transportation.[4] In Massachusetts, a recent study revealed that employment posed a serious challenge for men and women, particularly just after release, with nearly 50% of respondents indicating they had not secured full-time employment one-year post incarceration release.[5] The 2023 U.S. Census data reports that in Massachusetts 68.8% of the population are White, while only 9.6% are Black, 13.5% are Latinx, and 0.6% are American Indian and Alaska Native (Indigenous people).[6] Black, Latinx, and Indigenous people are represented in Massachusetts correctional facilities at a higher rate than the general population, while White people are represented at a lower rate than the general population.[7] This disparity is striking as Massachusetts holds the highest incarceration rate differential between White and Latinx individuals in the country.[8]

BACKGROUND CONTINUED

When jointly modeling employment and earnings for post-incarcerated individuals, Black and Hispanic returning citizens are estimated to have lower total earnings than White returning citizens. This determination holds true even after accounting for other factors like worse health outcomes, higher rates of drug addiction and criminal involvement, and higher human capital found among post-incarceration White job seekers. A decomposition attributes most of the earnings gaps to racial and ethnic inequalities in employment. Qualitative interviews suggest that White job seekers, more than Black and Hispanic job seekers, find stable, high-paying jobs through friends and family.[9]

According to the Massachusetts Department of Correction (DOC), the number of DOC incarcerated individuals decreased by 41% over the past decade. Additionally, 59% of formerly incarcerated individuals are released to ten major cities including Boston, Springfield, Worcester, New Bedford, Brockton, Fall River, Lowell, Lynn, West Springfield, and Lawrence.[10]

Commonwealth Corporation, in partnership with the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, is committed to ensuring that populations, regions, and locations most impacted by incarceration in Massachusetts have access to vocationally centered programs that promote job training and retention.



SUBMITTED BY URBAN IMPACT

ADMINISTRATION OF THE PROGRAM



PICTURED HERE: SECRETARY OF LABOR AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT LAUREN JONES WITH COMMCORP STAFF, GRANTEE ORGANIZATION REPRESENTATIVES, AND ELECTED OFFICIALS FOR A GRANT ANNOUNCEMENT AT PAACA

ADMINISTRATION OF THE PROGRAM

Most recently, the FY25 GAA budget appropriated \$2.6 million for Re-Entry Workforce Development Demonstration Program (RWDDP). This investment builds on \$2.5 million also appropriated in the FY24 GAA budget and an additional \$3.5 million appropriated in the FY23 GAA budget, which provisioned to allow spending during part of FY24, as indicated below.

Referring to the period of performance listed below, funds appropriated in the FY23 and FY24 GAA budget were used to support grantees funded in PY24. Funds appropriated in the FY24 and FY25 GAA were used to support grantees funded in PY25, which maximized the timeline available to provide services to formerly incarcerated individuals.

BUDGET APPROPRIATION YEAR	GRANT COHORT	# GRANTS AWARDED	\$ AWARDED	GRANTEE PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE
FY23 & FY24	PY24	12	\$2,360,000	July 1, 2023 – August 31, 2024
FY23 & FY24	PY24	4	\$244,025*	May 1, 2024 – August 31, 2024
FY24 & FY25	PY25	11	\$2,617,900	June 28, 2024 – June 30, 2025

*Supplemental funding. Refer to page 12.



ADMINISTRATION OF THE PROGRAM

KEY PROGRAM ELEMENTS

In April 2023, Commonwealth Corporation, on behalf of the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, issued a Request for Proposals soliciting applications from eligible organizations to provide a comprehensive set of re-entry services tailored to assist with workforce training and employment services for the target returning citizen population, while strengthening their partnerships to achieve positive outcomes. Eligible applicants had to:



ESTABLISH KEY PARTNERSHIPS

Create a partnership between a regional House of Correction/Department of Correction facility, two employer partners, a training provider, and a community-based organization.



TRAINING DEVELOPMENT

Develop a training program to meet the needs of employment partners and address the barriers of formerly incarcerated individuals.



ENGAGE AND RECRUIT PARTICIPANTS

Collaborate with HOC/DOC staff on behind-the-wall activities, engage and recruit prospective participants to the program, and introduce prospective participants to employer partners.



IMPLEMENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Implement wrap-around services and culturally responsive management immediately upon release, designed to support the unique barriers to employment faced by formerly incarcerated individuals.



FOSTER A SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY

Provide cohort-based training programs, both behind-the-wall and post release, creating a community of formerly incarcerated individuals to support one another.



JOB PLACEMENT AND RETENTION

Provide job placement support to formerly incarcerated individuals to obtain and retain employment with sustainable wages in growing occupations or industries with viable career pathway potential at pre-identified partner businesses.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE PROGRAM

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

At the time, eligible applicants included (1) community-based organizations, (2) non-profit education, training or other service providers, (3) MassHire Career Centers, (4) MassHire Regional Workforce Boards, and (5) House of Correction/Department of Correction facilities with existing, successful programs with demonstrated positive outcomes for the following target populations:

- Individuals in a Department of Correction facility who will be released within 60 days of a program start date or individuals who were released no earlier than 12 months prior to enrolling in a program, or a combination of both.
- Individuals in a House of Correction facility who will be released within 60 days of a program start date or individuals who were released no earlier than 12 months prior to enrolling in a program, or a combination of both.

Applicants were required to demonstrate that they had a relationship with an organization that had access to and provided referrals to the program, including at least one of the following types of organizations: House of Correction Facility, Department of Correction Facility, Office of Community Corrections, Department of Probation (Juvenile or Adult), or Department of Parole.

House of Correction (HOC) Facilities partners included:

Franklin County HOC, Hampshire County HOC, Suffolk County HOC, Worcester County HOC, Norfolk County HOC, Plymouth County HOC, Middlesex County HOC and Jail

Department of Correction (DOC) Facilities partners included:

Suffolk County DOC, Essex County DOC, Boston Pre-Release Center, Massachusetts DOC facilities

Department of Parole Partners included:

Hampshire County Sheriff's Office – Parole House



GRANTS SUPPORTED IN PY24 & PY25



SUBMITTED BY QCC

PROGRAM YEAR 2024

GRANTS SUPPORTED IN PY24 AND PY25

Program Year 2024 (PY24)

The following chart provides information about the 12 organizations awarded grants in PY24, including the grant award amount and a description of the project. These grants began July 1, 2023, and provided services through August 31, 2024.

AWARDEE	AWARD AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION
Bridge Club of Greater Lowell	\$200,000	Implemented Bridge Club of Greater Lowell partnered with Middlesex County Sheriff's Office to offer a training program focused on the manufacturing services industry. The goal was to place successful program graduates into warehouse worker, machine operator, and package handler roles at Spruce Environmental Technologies Inc. and Westrock.
Community Action Pioneer Valley	\$160,000	Implemented Community Action Pioneer Valley partnered with Franklin County Sheriff's Office and Hampshire County Sheriff's Office to offer a training program focused on the culinary and manufacturing industry. The goal was to place successful graduates into line cook and production occupation roles at Herrell's Ice Cream, Deerfield Packaging/Mayhew Steel, The Western MA Food Processing Center at the Franklin County Community Development Corporation, and Quabbin Wire and Cable Company, Inc.
Community Work Services*	\$200,000	Implemented Community Work Services partnered with Suffolk County Sheriff's Department to offer a training program focused on clean energy solar technology, culinary arts, and hospitality industry. The goal was to place successful program graduates into solar photovoltaic installer/technician roles and terraponic farm to table workers at Nexamp and Finesse Hospitality.
Dorchester Bay Economic Development Corporation	\$200,000	Implemented Dorchester Bay Economic Development Corporation partnered with Suffolk County House of Correction to offer a training program focused on the manufacturing industry. The goal was to place successful program graduates into production assistant roles at Cycling 1854 and Chop Value.

PROGRAM YEAR 2024 CONTINUED

AWARDEE	AWARD AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION
MassHire Greater Lowell Workforce Board	\$200,000	Implemented MassHire Greater Lowell Workforce Board partnered with Billerica House of Correction to offer a training program focused on the social services and manufacturing industry. The goal was to place successful program graduates into recovery coach, outreach worker, and machine operator roles at Thrive Communities and 4 in 1 Company.
New England Culinary Arts Training	\$200,000	Implemented New England Culinary Arts Training partnered with Suffolk County House of Correction, Boston Pre-Release Center, and Norfolk County Sheriff's Office to offer a training program focused on the food service and hospitality industry. The goal was to place successful program graduates into line cook, prep cook, sous chef, and first-line food prep supervisor roles at Tatte, Highgate Hospitality, and Travelers Hospitality Group.
Positive Action Against Chemical Addiction*	\$200,000	Implemented Positive Action Against Chemical Addiction partnered with Bristol County Sheriff's Office and New Bedford District Court Probation to offer a training program focused on the health care/addiction treatment and services industry. The goal was to place successful program graduates into community health worker, recovery specialist, recovery coach, recovery counselor, peer navigator, and outreach worker roles at High Point Treatment Center, PAACA – Common Grounds Café, Recovery Connection, Ignite Recovery, Seven Hills Foundation, and There Is a Solution.
Quinsigamond Community College	\$200,000	Implemented Quinsigamond Community College partnered with Worcester County Sheriff's Office to offer a training program focused on the culinary industry. The goal was to place successful program graduates into food preparation roles at Massachusetts Restaurant Association and Snapchef.
STRIVE Boston	\$200,000	Implemented STRIVE Boston partnered with Middlesex County Sheriff's Office and Suffolk County Sheriff's Office to offer a training program focused on the health care and social assistance industry. The goal was to place successful program graduates into security, patient transport, food and environmental service, direct and relief staffer, and therapeutic mentor roles at Brigham and Women's Hospital and Justice Resource Institute.

PROGRAM YEAR 2024-2025

AWARDEE	AWARD AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION
Uncornered*	\$200,000	Implemented Uncornered partnered with Suffolk County House of Correction to offer a training program focused on the health care and social assistance industry. The goal was to place successful program graduates into social and human service assistant roles at InnerCity Weightlifting and Uncornered Inc.
Urban Impact Initiative Massachusetts*	\$200,000	Implemented Urban Impact Initiative Massachusetts partnered with Hampden County Sheriff's Department to offer a training program focused on the building trades, construction, CDL, and hospitality industry. The goal was to place successful program graduates into light truck driver, tractor-trailer driver, cook, and customer service roles at S-Cel-O Painting and Supplier and The Artist Café.
WeReach	\$200,000	Implemented WeReach partnered with Plymouth County Sheriff's Department to offer a training program focused on the information technology industry. The goal was to place successful program graduates into cyber security support technician roles at Boston Project, Truly Given, Roads Consulting Group, and DPV Transportation.

*PY24 grantees were able to apply for supplemental funding to increase their original grant award amount for the purpose of expanding programming and/or services, supporting workforce outcomes for participants within the grant's period of performance. The following four programs received additional supplemental funding:

- Community Work Services received \$100,000
- Positive Action Against Chemical Addiction received \$25,525
- Uncornered received \$100,000
- Urban Impact Initiative Massachusetts received \$18,500

Program Year 2025 (PY25)

The following chart provides information about the 11 organizations awarded grants in PY25, including the grant award amount and a description of the project. These grants began June 28, 2024 and are active through June 30, 2025.

AWARDEE	AWARD AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION
Bridge Club of Greater Lowell	\$250,000	Bridge Club of Greater Lowell is partnering with Middlesex County Sheriff's Office to offer a training program with a focus on the culinary arts and manufacturing industry. Successful program graduates will be placed in roles as line cooks at Lenzi's Catering and warehouse workers, machine operators and package handlers at Spruce Environmental.

PROGRAM YEAR 2025

AWARDEE	AWARD AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION
Community Action Pioneer Valley	\$165,000	Community Action of Pioneer Valley is partnering with Hampshire County Sheriff's Office and Franklin County Sheriff's Office to offer a training program with a focus on the culinary arts and manufacturing industry. Successful program graduates will be placed in roles as line cooks and production workers at High Brow, Local Burger, Herrell's Fitzwilly's, and Franklin County CDC Food Processing Center.
Community Work Services	\$250,000	Community Work Services is partnering with Suffolk County Sheriff's Office to offer a training program with a focus on the clean energy technology and culinary arts/hospitality industry. Successful program graduates will be placed in roles as solar photovoltaic installers, electrical power analysts, terraponics farm to table workers and hotel hospitality managers at Nexamp and Finesse Hospitality.
Future Hope Apprenticeship and Recovery Program	\$244,464	Future Hope Apprenticeship and Recovery Program is partnering with Plymouth County Sheriff's Office and Suffolk County Sheriff's Office to offer a training program with a focus on the building trades industry. Successful program graduates will be placed in roles as skilled laborers, roofers, painters and carpenters at Cross Country Painting, Inc. and Built Better 55, LLC.
New England Culinary Arts Training	\$249,593	New England Culinary Arts Training is partnering with Suffolk County Sheriff's Office to offer a training program with a focus on the food service and hospitality industry. Successful program graduates will be placed in roles as line cooks, prep cooks, sous chefs and first-line food prep supervisors at Tatte Bakery, Sodexo, Hilton Boston Park Plaza and Earls Kitchen and Bar.
Positive Action Against Chemical Addiction	\$250,000	Positive Action Against Chemical Addiction is partnering with Bristol County Sheriff's Office to offer a training program with a focus on the health care and addiction treatment services industry. Successful program graduates will be placed in roles as community health workers, recovery specialists, recovery coaches, recovery counselors, peer navigators and outreach workers at High Point Treatment Center and Seven Hills Foundation.

PROGRAM YEAR 2025 CONTINUED

AWARDEE	AWARD AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION
Quinsigamond Community College	\$239,216	Quinsigamond Community College is partnering with Worcester County House of Correction to offer a training program with a focus on the culinary and hospitality industry. Successful program graduates will be placed in roles as food preparation workers at Snapchef and MA Restaurant Association members.
Snapchef Foundation	\$219,626	Snapchef Foundation is partnering with Norfolk County Sheriff's Office to offer a training program with a focus on the culinary industry. Successful program graduates will be placed in roles as cooks at Snapchef and Southside Tavern Restaurant.
STRIVE Boston	\$250,000	STRIVE Boston is partnering with Suffolk County Sheriff's Office to offer a training program with a focus on the health care and social assistance industry. Successful program graduates will be placed in roles as security workers, patient transport workers, food and environmental service workers, direct and relief positions and therapeutic mentors at Brigham and Women's Hospital and Justice Resource Institute, Inc.
Uncornered	\$250,000	Uncornered is partnering with Suffolk County Sheriff's Office to offer a training program with a focus on the health care and social service industry. Successful program graduates will be placed in roles as social and human service assistants at Uncornered Inc. and Inner City Weightlifting.
WeReach	\$250,000	WeReach is partnering with Essex County Sheriff's Office to offer a training program with a focus on the information technology industry. Successful program graduates will be placed in roles as cybersecurity support technicians and computer support specialists at Roads Consulting Group, Boston Project, DPV Transportation and Assura, Inc.

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT & **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**



PICTURED HERE: COMMONWEALTH CORPORATION STAFF WITH CAPV STAFF

COMMONWEALTH CORPORATION PROGRAM MANAGEMENT AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

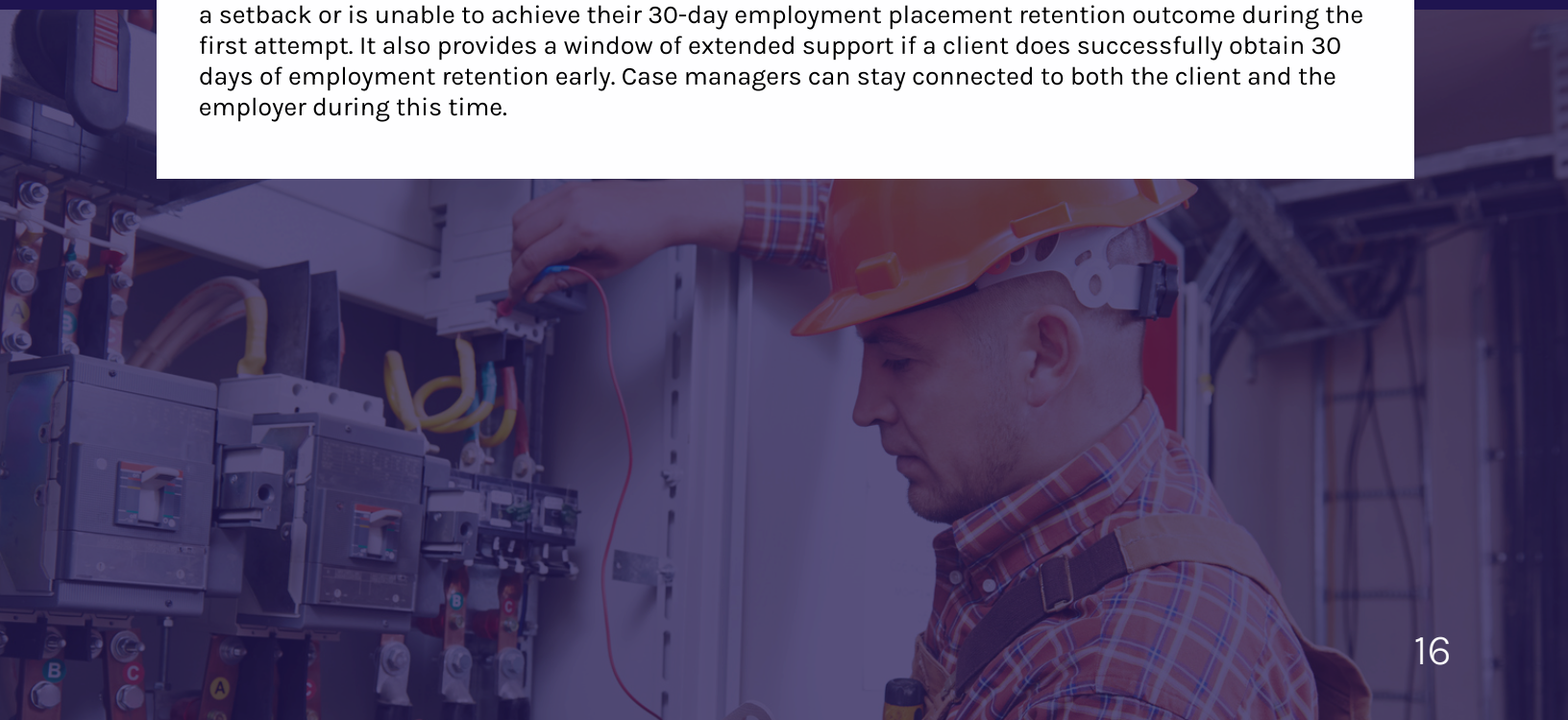
SERVICE DETAILS

Re-Entry Workforce Development Demonstration Program (RWDDP) implementation grants are designed to support agencies with the capacity to implement services immediately, while providing program design support within the first three months to others who may need to modify their program model to better navigate emerging needs or challenges.

Over the span of 12 months, sites meet with Commonwealth Corporation program leadership for 10 technical assistance (TA) Learning Community meetings as a network. Meetings are facilitated, guided discussions on specific topics based on feedback from the field, as well as best practices, and external services. Sites may also use this time to present case studies to the network for feedback and support. These regular convenings also provide a forum for cross-program referrals for situations where clients relocate to other cities or seek other industry focused job training based on interests. This level of collaboration may prevent service interruptions.

Ensuring a 12-month implementation window is incredibly important for service delivery to re-entry clients. Many are transitioning back into the community with legal, financial, and court-mandated barriers that can take up to eight months to stabilize. Allowing extra time for funded sites to provide the important and necessary case management required to support people who were formerly incarcerated in the first few months of their re-entry into the community is key to the client's success in a workforce training program.

During the final three months of the grant period, re-entry clients who have successfully completed training shift into the placement phase of their program. This allows for a grace period if a client has a setback or is unable to achieve their 30-day employment placement retention outcome during the first attempt. It also provides a window of extended support if a client does successfully obtain 30 days of employment retention early. Case managers can stay connected to both the client and the employer during this time.



PILOTING A **LONGITUDINAL RESEARCH FRAMEWORK**



PILOTING A LONGITUDINAL RESEARCH FRAMEWORK



In 2024, the program piloted a longitudinal research study evaluation framework supported with funds appropriated in the GAA FY24 state budget as a response to the budget line-item requirement (7003-0150) to describe “plans for the longitudinal evaluation framework”. The external research consultant, Rojas Blakely & Associates, was selected to assist Commonwealth Corporation with the development of this framework. The primary goal was to design a framework that evaluated past participants’ progress and overall well-being as related to employment and employment readiness. The past participants surveyed to pilot the framework comprised PY23 program graduates.

Program graduate progress was measured by surveys containing three parts: (1) social determinants of work, (2) program quality measures, and (3) employment outcomes. The initial survey combined elements of a longitudinal survey with a program evaluation survey. One component of the survey was based around understanding the social determinants of work, using a framework as described by the United Way of Chicago and Dr. Angela Jackson of Future Forward Strategies. This framework highlights the interconnected set of resources and challenges that affect workers or potential workers' ability to access and succeed at employment. The eight barriers of focus in this framework are: job flexibility, health care, childcare, transportation, sustained education, home and community health, broadband access, and access to justice (fair interactions with the justice system; legal counsel when needed; opportunities post-conviction).[11] The second component included survey questions measuring program quality by inquiring on the extent to which the participant felt the program was helpful in securing employment. The third and final component focused on measuring current employment status, wage, and economic mobility.

The survey was disseminated to 249 participants primarily through email (the survey was also disseminated through text messages to participants we had phone numbers for). Out of the 249 participants who received the email, 23 completed the survey, resulting in a 9% response rate.

It is believed that the short window for project completion and communication with program graduates contributed to this low response rate. Key results of the survey can be found on the next page.

PILOTING A LONGITUDINAL RESEARCH FRAMEWORK CONTINUED



Of the 16 respondents who answered the question about their employment status, four were still looking for work at the time of the survey. Two-thirds of respondents were currently employed, with nearly half of those employed working in a full-time capacity.



Respondents did indicate three main barriers to finding employment: having a criminal record, being unstably housed or homeless, and transportation.



About half of respondents noted having a child or family member that they were a caregiver. However, only half of those felt that their caregiving requirements were a barrier to their employment.



Nearly all respondents reported the following positive outcomes:

- Feeling like their jobs were flexible.
- Feeling like they could manage their family and personal responsibilities in addition to their work responsibilities.
- Had health care and were satisfied with their health.
- Had access to a computer and the internet.
- Felt that the interview preparation that they were provided was helpful in their job search.

Running a pilot for this study uncovered and provided insight into challenges in collecting data and processes for future research project implementation. Commonwealth Corporation anticipates continuing to develop longitudinal study frameworks for future implementation and believes a longitudinal study will effectively demonstrate the long-term program impacts of RWDDP grants over time. However, it is also important to consider that allocating resources to the study may reduce funding available for programs and the number of participants programs serve.



ANNUAL PROGRESS UPDATE

PY24 & PY25



SUBMITTED BY SNAPCHEF FOUNDATION

ANNUAL PROGRESS UPDATE

GRANTS CLOSED IN PY24 - PROGRAM OUTCOMES

As of February 2024, the grants closed in PY24 have concluded with reported final outcomes. As a result of \$2.5 million in funding to support 12 organizations for services to formerly incarcerated individuals from July 1, 2023 to August 31, 2024, the PY24 grantees collectively produced the following participant outcomes.

- 463 total participants enrolled in training
- 321 participants completed training, a 69% completion rate
- 159 of the total participants enrolled in training were placed in employment. 147 of the 321 participants who completed training were placed in employment, a 46% employment placement rate. 12 participants who were enrolled and did not complete training (but otherwise received wraparound services) were also placed in employment.
 - The average placement wage was \$19.30 per hour
 - The hourly placement wage ranged from \$15.00 (minimum) to \$65.00 (maximum), with a median wage of \$18.50/hr
 - More than 119 unique employers hired a program graduate

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

PY24 PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC DATA | N=463

Age	Age 18-24 Years Old	11%
	Age 25-34 Years Old	30%
	Age 35-44 Years Old	35%
	Age 45-54 Years Old	16%
	Age 55+ Years Old	8%
	Average Age	38

Gender	Self-identified Female	15%
	Self-identified Male	83%
	Non-Binary/Other	0%
	Undisclosed/Missing	2%

Race	American Indian/Alaska Native	1%
	Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0%
	Asian	2%
	Black/African American	38%
	White	31%
	Multi-Racial	3%
	Other/Not Disclosed	24%

Ethnicity	Hispanic or Latinx	30%
	Not Hispanic or Latinx	62%
	Other/Not Disclosed	8%

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA CONTINUED

Educational Attainment Level

Less Than High School	24%
High School Diploma	25%
HiSET/GED	29%
Some Postsecondary/College	18%
Associate Degree or Higher	4%

Pre-Program Status

Unemployed	81%
Underemployed	19%

Other Characteristics

Persons with Disabilities	19%
Immigrant	9%
Language Not English	5%
Receiving at least one form of Public Assistance (TAFDC, SSI, Refugee Assistance, EAEDC, Veteran's Benefits, SNAP)	54%

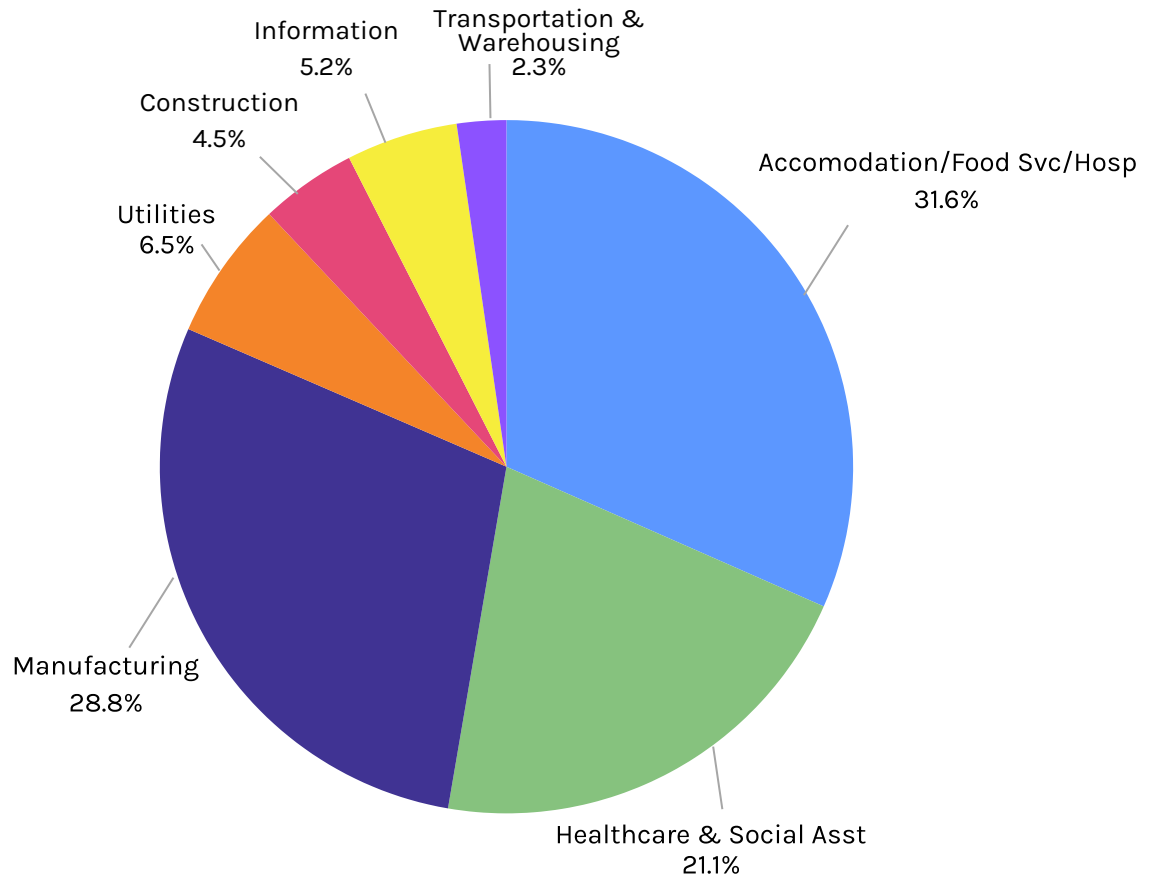
**According to the Prison Policy Initiative, White job seekers, more than Black and Hispanic job seekers, are more likely to find stable, high-paying jobs through friends and family.*

It's important to note that formerly incarcerated individuals navigate barriers that affect their ability to complete programming and reintegrate into their communities. These barriers may include transportation, housing instability, food insecurity, mental health services/addiction, etc. Services provided to mitigate barriers included providing benefits and housing application assistance, locating government documents (i.e. ID, birth certificate), arranging mental health services or recovery support, arranging transportation, etc. Among the participants who did not finish the program, 53% could not be reached via email or text message; therefore, the reason for their discontinuation remains unknown. Additionally, 6% were not able to complete a final certification after attending training; 3% moved from the area of training; 3% stated overall transportation to and from training was a barrier for continued attendance; 7% expressed personal or family issues for not completing; and 1% acknowledged health issues for not completing training. 27% selected "Other" with a write-in option, and out of the 27% of individuals who selected "Other," 3% are due to reincarceration.



ANNUAL PROGRESS UPDATE – GRANTS CLOSED IN PY24 PROGRAM INDUSTRIES

PY24 INDUSTRIES



*Total enrollments: 463



ANNUAL PROGRESS UPDATE

GRANTS ACTIVE IN PY25 - DEMOGRAPHICS

The following table provides characteristics of participants enrolled in grants funded in PY25 as of January 2025. This grant is on-going and ends June 30, 2025.

PY25, PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC DATA | N=158

Age	Age 18-24 Years Old	13%
	Age 25-34 Years Old	34%
	Age 35-44 Years Old	32%
	Age 45-54 Years Old	17%
	Age 55+ Years Old	4%
	Average Age	36

Gender	Self-identified Female	12%
	Self-identified Male	85%
	Non-Binary/Other	1%
	Undisclosed/Missing	3%

Race	American Indian/Alaska Native	3%
	Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0%
	Asian	1%
	Black/African American	41%
	White	30%
	Multi-Racial	7%
	Other/Not Disclosed	19%

Ethnicity	Hispanic or Latinx	23%
	Not Hispanic or Latinx	68%
	Other/Not Disclosed	9%

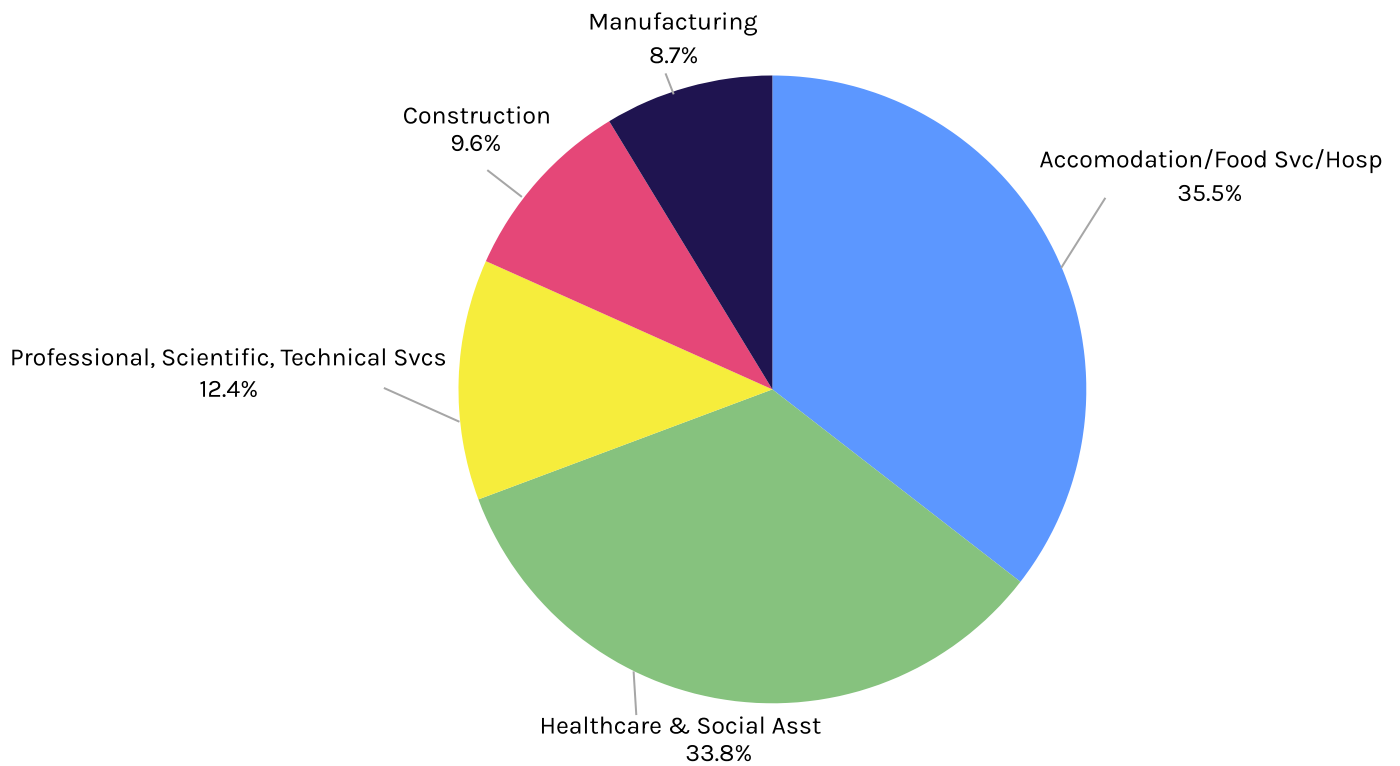
Educational Attainment Level	Less Than High School	22%
	High School Diploma	31%
	HiSET/GED	26%
	Some Postsecondary/College	15%
	Associate Degree or Higher	6%

Pre-Program Status	Unemployed	77%
	Underemployed	23%

Other Characteristics	Persons with Disabilities	12%
	Immigrant	9%
	Language Not English	9%
	Receiving at least one form of Public Assistance (TAFDC, SSI, Refugee Assistance, EAEDC, Veteran's Benefits, SNAP)	64%

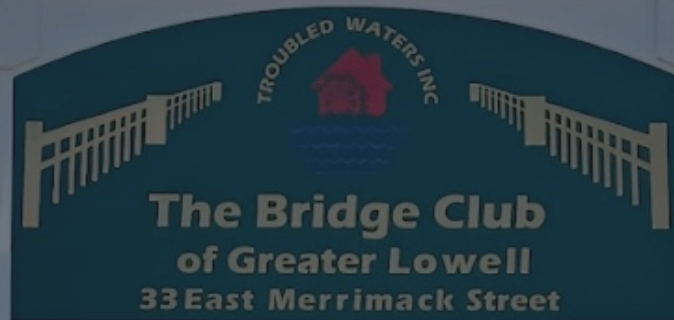
ANNUAL PROGRESS UPDATE – GRANTS ACTIVE IN PY25 PROGRAM INDUSTRIES

PY25 INDUSTRIES



*Total Planned Enrollments: 311





SUCCESS STORY

The Bridge Club of Greater Lowell exemplifies the powers of compassion and opportunity in reducing recidivism and supporting individuals on their paths to economic stability. —→

SUCCESS STORY

Building Bridges, Saving Lives

The Bridge Club of Greater Lowell exemplifies the powers of compassion and opportunity in reducing recidivism and supporting individuals on their paths to economic stability. Founded in 2019 by Bob Cox, Bridge Club has become a lifeline for individuals overcoming addiction. From providing access to three months of sober housing upon release to offering transportation to and from work, Bridge Club ensures participants have the resources they need to thrive. Bob shares, “We drive them to work, help them with clothing, food, and even getting back their driver’s license. It’s about more than just finding a job—it’s about creating a support system that empowers them to succeed.”



Since its inception in 2019, Bridge Club has grown into a hub of recovery and upward mobility through workforce opportunities. At its core, Bridge Club’s mission is to break the cycle of addiction and incarceration—something Bob Cox knows too well as a recovering alcoholic himself. As Bob explains, “It’s a never-ending circle. They can’t get a clean CORI check, so they return to what they know. This program offers them a second chance at life.”

Funded in part through Re-Entry Workforce Demonstration Grants, Bridge Club’s work has made a significant impact on individuals like Emanuel*, a program participant who spent 12 years incarcerated. For Emanuel, Bridge Club has been life changing. “When I came out, I didn’t know what I was going to do. Bridge Club helped me with my first meal, work clothes, and essentials. They even drive me to work every day. That’s the highlight of my day—we talk to the driver, and it’s something I look forward to every day. It’s amazing to still have a relationship with the people that are part of the program. They are still there, being good people and talking to you like you are just a regular person. It’s a good feeling.”

Bridge Club empowers participants through workforce training in culinary arts and manufacturing, helping them rebuild their lives and secure meaningful employment. Partnerships with employers ensures access to job opportunities, while certifications like ServSafe, OSHA 10, and sexual harassment training boost confidence in employability. Currently, they are also in the process of launching an onsite culinary arts training program.

The Bridge Club connection helped Emanuel land a job at Restaurant Depot, where he found stable work and a mentor. "It is a very welcoming place and there I met someone who came through the [Bridge Club] program, and he took me under his wing and said I know what you are going through," says Emanuel.

Open seven days a week, Bridge Club embodies its philosophy: "Addiction doesn't take a day off, so we can't either," says Bob. With over 30 Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meetings offered weekly and a focus on recovery coaching, Bridge Club ensures participants have continuous support.

"Truly, they can stay with us for as long as they want," says Kyana Mora, Administrative Lead at Bridge Club, emphasizing their commitment to long-term support. Emanuel's journey stands as a testament to this success. "He is really doing very well in life, and we are very proud of him," says Kyana.

"The support was huge, but not just for being able to have a job, but having people who have empathy for you," says Emanuel. "From the outside, looking in, they put themselves in my shoes and went above and beyond. I know that I can call to this day and there's always someone to talk to."

As Emanuel continues to thrive, he remains grounded in the lessons he's learned. "I just want to make sure I can take it one step at a time. I realize that I have to appreciate the small things in order to succeed in the life I'm living now," he said.

**Participant's last name has been omitted at their request.*

NEXT.

1.



EMANUEL, SUBMITTED BY THE BRIDGE CLUB OF GREATER LOWELL

SUCCESS STORY

The Re-Entry Program at Community Action Pioneer Valley in Greenfield offers vital support, demonstrating that with the right resources, second chances can lead to meaningful change and new opportunities. →



SUCCESS STORY

Redefining Pride Through Purpose



LUIS MERCER-TORRES WITH HIS WORK SUPERVISOR JASON NOYES, SUBMITTED BY CAPV

After being in and out of the prison system for nearly half of his life, Luis Mercier-Torres is now working towards building a new life and on the path of becoming a man that his family and his children can feel proud of. “It really has been a new beginning for me, both professionally and in my personal life,” says Luis.

It was through the Re-Entry Program at Community Action Pioneer Valley in Greenfield that Luis began a transformative journey, proving that with the proper support, second chances can lead to extraordinary outcomes. “This program was eye-opening,” Luis says.

“To me, these programs are essential for people like me who struggle and just don’t have a chance. Being able to participate has been a lifechanging event where I didn’t think it would do much, and I am now looked at as a different person in society; it changed my personality, and I would really recommend it for people who are trying to change their life and get on a career path,” said Luis.

Community Action’s Re-Entry Program offers a holistic approach to workforce training and development for returning citizens. Participants, often referred by parole officers, step-down facilities, or shelters, receive wraparound support that begins with meeting their immediate needs—such as food, clothing, and transportation—before moving on to job skills training and placement.

“We serve individuals facing serious barriers like homelessness, and we make sure their basic needs are met at the start,” says Nafeeza Castro, Workforce Development Manager at Community Action. “Then we help them build long-term skills with resume workshops, mock interviews, and certification programs. It’s a real-life, real-time approach, and we’re there for them every step of the way.”

The organization partners with Greenfield Community College (GCC), Holyoke Community College (HCC), MassHire Franklin Hampshire Career Center, and MassHire Franklin Hampshire Workforce Board to offer training in culinary and manufacturing. Participants enroll in training programs at HCC as line cooks or GCC for manufacturing production, earn certifications like OSHA and Manufacturing Advancement Center Workforce Innovation Collaborative (MACWIC) credentials, and are placed in paid on-the-job training with local employer partners.



Luis enrolled in the manufacturing training program at GCC, where he earned his OSHA certification and MACWIC credentials. These certifications, combined with hands-on practice and mock interviews, helped him gain confidence and prepare for the workforce. “The program gave me the confidence to show that I am reliable and capable of achieving something higher,” he says. “It taught me how to navigate resources and present myself in interviews.”

Today, Luis holds two stable jobs: one as a production worker at the Western Mass Food Processing Center—an opportunity he was able to obtain thanks to Community Action—and another job as a cashier and shipping/receiving associate at Green Fields Market. For someone who had previously never held steady employment, these accomplishments mark a profound change in Luis’s life. “I didn’t expect for my life to be the way that it is now,” he says.

The impact of the program goes far beyond professional success. Luis is now reconnecting with his children, searching for a new apartment, and redefining his role as a father and community member. “I’ve learned to be reliable and trustworthy,” he says. “I’m earning respect and love from my family, and I’m grateful for this new start.” Reflecting on his past, Luis shares how the program helped him break free from the tough exterior he had developed during his years in the system. “I had a hard, street-life mentality. This program made me break that character and become more personable,” he says. “It opened up a side of me I didn’t even know was there. I am forever grateful to them.”

With stable employment, certifications, and a renewed sense of self-worth, Luis is ready to embrace his role as a father and contributor to his community. “I’m now looked at as a different person in society,” he says. “I’ve changed my personality and my outlook on life. I realized that I couldn’t let my past define or make up who I am. I can change. I have learned to be reliable and truthful, and all I can say is that I am forever grateful for a new start.”

Now, embracing a fresh start, he looks forward to being a present father for his children. “I really look forward to being there and seeing my kids on the weekends because they live close,” he said.

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