

Prison to Employment Program

Final Report for Evaluation of Workforce Development Programs submitted pursuant to Supplemental Report of the 2018-19 Budget Act, Item 7120-101-0001

Introduction

In 2018, the California legislature appropriated \$37 million for the Prison to Employment Program (P2E) to be administered by the California Workforce Development Board (CWDB).¹ Funding for P2E was appropriated in the 2018-19 Budget Act. P2E funds the integration of workforce and reentry services through grants to workforce service providers across California, paving a pathway towards employment and away from recidivism for the formerly incarcerated and justice-involved population. The legislation required CWDB to submit an interim report 18 months after initial grants were awarded and a final report on the progress of P2E six months after the program's funding had been completely spent and all necessary information from grantees had been provided to CWDB. The interim report² produced pursuant to this requirement was submitted in June 2021. In addition to the mandated reports, CWDB contracted the Robert Presley Center of Crime and Justice Studies at the University of California, Riverside (UCR) in 2021 to conduct an independent evaluation of the P2E program. An Evaluation Report³ was produced in December 2024. The final report is required to contain the outcome data collected for these grants pursuant to Unemployment Insurance Code 14033, including any available information on the following:

- Ability to provide the services proposed in the grant to the number of individuals specified in the grant, as evidenced by, among other things, whether the grantee completed the work proposed. This information is presented in Tables 1 and 2 within this report.

¹ P2E was proposed in the Governor's 2018-19 Budget, available at <http://www.ebudget.ca.gov/2018-19/pdf/BudgetSummary/PublicSafety.pdf>.

² P2E Interim Report is available for download at https://cwdb.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/43/2021/10/P2E-Interim-Report_ACCESSIBLE.pdf

³ Mahutga et. al, "An Evaluation of the Prison to Employment Initiative", 2024, CWDB, available at: https://cwdb.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/43/2025/07/25_7_1_Evaluation-of-P2E-Initiative.pdf.

- Ability of individuals to successfully complete relevant programming funded under the grant, as demonstrated by relevant measures directly related to the purpose of the program. This information is presented in Table 3 within this report.
- Ability of individuals to transition into or be integrated into the broader workforce and education system as evidenced by enrollment in relevant programs. This information is presented in Table 6 within this report.
- Ability of individuals to succeed in both the broader workforce and education system and the labor market once they transition into the broader system. This shall be measured by tracking these individuals utilizing the existing performance monitoring systems and metrics governing relevant programs and outcomes once they transition into the broader system. This information is presented in Table 6 within this report.

CWDB submits this final report in fulfillment of the reporting requirement. The report presents an overview of P2E and aggregate participation and outcome data. Additionally, this report will cite and refer to participant viewpoints and policy recommendations made in the UCR Evaluation Report.

Overview of the Prison to Employment Program

Among those with barriers to employment, formerly incarcerated and justice-involved individuals are some of the most difficult to serve. Returning to their communities and families, they not only need to find a job, but many also struggle with substance abuse problems, insufficient education and job skills, few housing options, and mental health issues. In addition to these barriers, most formerly incarcerated and justice-involved individuals in California are people of color. This compounds the challenges they face in trying to succeed in the workforce due to historical and institutional barriers that disproportionately affect people of color. As part of California's efforts to improve its criminal justice system and reduce recidivism through increased rehabilitation, the CWDB, California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), California Prison Industry Authority (CalPIA), and California Workforce Association (CWA) created and finalized the Corrections-Workforce Partnership in late 2017. This historic partnership agreement links education, job training, and work experience in prison to post-release jobs by fostering a system of coordinated service delivery to a population that faces a variety of barriers.⁴

To spearhead California's efforts to promote equity and create economic opportunities for formerly incarcerated and justice-involved individuals, the Governor's 2018-19 Proposed Budget included \$37 million over three years for P2E. P2E funds the integration of workforce and reentry services in all of California's labor regions, or Regional Planning Units (RPUs). The federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) establishes guidelines for California's

⁴ The partnership agreement is available at https://cwdb.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/43/2018/02/Corrections-Workforce-Partnership-for-the-Prison-to-Employment-Initiative_.pdf.

workforce system. At the local level, Local Boards implement plans under WIOA to align partnerships with education, business, and community organizations for skill attainment, economic mobility, and shared prosperity.

At the regional level (e.g. the Inland Empire and the East Bay), RPUs are associations of Local Boards that implement plans designed to coordinate their Local Boards' efforts. P2E funds were awarded to RPUs, with the greatest amounts going to where the highest numbers of formerly incarcerated and justice-involved individuals reside.⁵ P2E enrolled its first participants in October 2019, and services were completed by March 31, 2022. The program is designed to support regional planning efforts, fund regional plan implementation, and provide resources for direct services to formerly incarcerated and other justice-involved individuals. It also sets aside specific resources for both supportive services and earn and learn activities, which were identified as a major gap by previous grantees and local service providers.

The mission of P2E and the broader Corrections-Workforce Partnership is to create a pipeline for formerly incarcerated and justice-involved individuals towards employment and away from recidivism. To accomplish this mission, P2E funds both “direct services” and “supportive services.” Direct services provide participants with career and skills training assistance, like interview coaching and tuition for Multi-Craft Core Curriculum (MC3) training in the construction trades. Supportive services provide participants with assistance in meeting their basic needs, like stipends to cover participants’ transportation, clothing, and food costs. “Earn and learn” models enable participants to upgrade their skills while earning wages from an employer. Funds for P2E services were awarded with two grants: one for direct services and one for supportive services/earn and learn.

CWDB measures the effectiveness of these services with the ability of P2E participants to (1) transition from P2E into the broader workforce and education system, (2) obtain employment, and (3) earn higher wages. These data are tracked using the Employment Development Department’s CalJOBS case management system.

The Prison to Employment Pipeline

Perhaps the most important accomplishment of the P2E program is the building of a substantial infrastructure to funnel formerly incarcerated and justice-involved individuals towards employment and away from recidivism. Together with its partners in the Corrections-Workforce Partnership, CWDB has made substantial progress in sewing together an often-disjointed patchwork of pre-release and post-release services into a coordinated effort. The Corrections-Workforce Partnership assists individuals as they prepare for release, providing career counseling, arranging for housing and supportive services, and hosting hiring events within the state prisons. Job centers across the state have been regularly receiving referrals from the

⁵ A list of grantees and awarded amounts for the Prison to Employment Initiative is available at https://cwdb.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/43/2020/11/P2E_Award_Announcement_Implementation_Grants_Updated_ACCESSIBLE.pdf.

CDCR’s Parole Division when their area receives new parolees. And “warm handoffs,” in which a parole officer personally introduces a parolee to their workforce case manager, are increasingly becoming the norm. Because of P2E’s focus on systems change, the two systems now work together to align services. This promotes a more efficient use of government resources, better employment outcomes for justice-involved individuals, and reduced recidivism.

Participant Demographics, Services Provided, and Outcomes

P2E concluded in April 2022. All Regional Planning Units were able to not only meet but exceed enrollment and service provisions targets despite the challenges imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. These results are outlined below.

Table 1 reports the total enrollment numbers along with a breakdown of the racial and ethnic demographics of P2E participants.

Table 1. P2E Enrollments by Race and Ethnicity			
<u>Race/Ethnicity</u>	<u>Enrollments</u>	<u>Percentage of Enrollments</u>	<u>Percentage in CDCR Offender Population⁶</u>
African American	1,412	24.5%	24.0%
Asian American	133	2.3%	N/A*
Hispanic/Latinx	2,584	44.7%	45.2%
Native American	223	3.9%	1.1%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	84	1.5%	N/A*
White	1,950	33.8%	24.9%
Multi-Racial	177	3.1%	N/A
No Response	503	8.7%	N/A
Total Unique Enrollments	5,776		

** The combined percentage for Asian and Pacific Islander categories in the CPL Prison Population Dashboard is 1.6%.*

⁶ Characteristics of felon new admissions and parole violators returned with a new term, Calendar year 2013, Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, Offender Information Services Branch, Available at: https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/research/wp-content/uploads/sites/174/2021/05/ACHAR_d2013.pdf

Note: Participants were able to choose more than one option for this question. Therefore, the percentages do not add up to 100%. “No Response” indicates the participants who elected not to provide information on their race and ethnicity.

Table 2 breaks down P2E enrollments by RPU, showing the geographical distribution of P2E participants. P2E grants were awarded to all 14 RPUs in California.⁷ In their applications, RPUs set aspirational enrollment goals for the two P2E grants: direct services (DS) and supportive services/earn and learn (SSEL). RPUs set enrollment goals that totaled 2,248 for DS and 2,523 for SSEL statewide. Both targets were met. Applications were submitted before the pandemic, which imposed myriad challenges for grantees, including bans on face-to-face interaction, public transportation shutdowns, and a dramatically worsened economic outlook for a population that already faced imposing barriers to employment. In the face of these immense challenges, RPUs adapted and overcame, meeting and exceeding their enrollment targets with nine months remaining in the program.

<u>Regional Planning Unit</u>	<u>Total Participants</u>	<u>DS Participants</u>	<u>SSEL Participants</u>
Bay Peninsula	330	197	133
Capital	229	121	108
Coastal	159	93	66
East Bay	298	196	102
Inland Empire	893	127	766
LA Basin	1,868	1,280	588
Middle Sierra	299	154	145
North Bay	137	72	65
North Coast	81	40	41
North State	247	140	107
Orange	255	193	62
San Joaquin Valley	584	266	318

⁷ The Coastal RPU has since split into the North Central Coast RPU and South Central Coast RPU after P2E grants were announced.

Southern Border	251	168	83
Ventura	145	88	57
Total Enrollments (Target)	5,776	3,135 (2,248)	2,641 (2,523)

Note: DS stands for the direct services grant and SSEL stands for the supportive services/earn and learn grant. Targets for DS and SSEL Enrollments were set with the understanding that many P2E participants would be enrolled in both the DS and SSEL grants.

Table 3 reports the mix of workforce services that P2E participants have received. Nearly all have received individualized career services, including career counseling, resume guidance, and interview coaching. Over one-third have enrolled in education/training of some type, including adult basic education, forklift operation, food handling safety, truck driving, and construction code compliance.⁸ One hundred ninety (190) P2E participants have received on-the-job training (OJT), often used as part of an earn-and-learn curriculum. About one-fifth were placed in work experience (WEX), often a critical component of a participant’s successful reentry from incarceration. Finally, more than 2,000 participants have received supportive services, including clothing, housing, food, and childcare assistance. CWDB has found these supportive services to be an integral part of successfully serving the formerly incarcerated and justice-involved population.⁹

<u>Services Provided</u>	<u>Participants Served</u>	<u>Percentage of Participants</u>
Career Services	5,532	95.8%
Education/Training (any type)	1,105	19.1%
On-the-Job Training	190	3.3%
Work Experience	1,171	20.3%
Supportive Services	2,003	34.7%
Total Enrollments	5,776	

⁸ A full list of grant-funded activities classified as “Education and Training” is available at https://www.edd.ca.gov/Jobs_and_Training/pubs/wsd19-06att2.pdf.

⁹ The critical role that supportive services play in serving the formerly incarcerated and justice-involved population is outlined in CWDB’s final report to the legislature on AB 2060, the precursor to P2E.

Note: The percentages do not sum to 100 as participants may receive more than one type of service. On-the-Job Training and Work Experience are subsets of Education/Training (any type).

Tables 4 and 5 present cross-tabulations of P2E services provided and participants’ gender identification and race/ethnicity, respectively. These tables provide a sense of P2E’s efforts to promote gender and racial equity, as participants from historically marginalized populations have generally received services in proportion to their makeup of P2E participants as a whole.

Table 4. P2E Services Provided and Participant Gender Identity				
<u>Services Provided</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>No Response</u>	<u>Total</u>
Career Services	961	4525	46	5532
Education/Training (any type)	237	1123	1	1361
On-the-Job Training	19	171	0	190
Work Experience	218	952	1	1171
Supportive Services	383	1595	25	2003

Note: On-the-Job Training and Work Experience are subsets of Education/Training (any type). Gender identity in this table is limited to Female, Male, and Not Provided because the data come from CalJOBS, which does not ask about non-binary or gender non-conforming identities. No Response indicates the number of participants who did not provide any information on their gender identity.

Table 5. P2E Services Provided and Participant Race/Ethnicity									
<u>Services Provided</u>	<u>African American</u>	<u>Asian American</u>	<u>Hispanic / Latino</u>	<u>Native American</u>	<u>Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander</u>	<u>White</u>	<u>Multi Racial</u>	<u>No Response</u>	<u>Total</u>
Career Services	1,224	83	1,607	63	43	1,031	1,001	480	5,532
Education/ Training (all types)	321	21	382	21	19	256	236	105	1361
On-the-Job Training	35	4	42	2	1	51	33	22	190
Work Experience	286	17	340	19	18	205	203	83	1,171
Supportive Services	390	33	548	22	16	439	378	177	2,003

Note: On-the-Job Training and Work Experience are subsets of Education/Training (any type). The numbers do not sum to the total number of participants because none of the columns or rows are mutually exclusive. No Response indicates the number of participants who did not provide any information on their race and ethnicity.

Table 6 reports P2E participants’ outcomes. A total of 2,478 participants co-enrolled into a broader workforce and education program, such as Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs, secondary and postsecondary education programs, and other state-funded workforce programs. Co-enrollments are a major goal of P2E, as they considerably increase the amount of resources available to participants and concurrently increase their chances of success in the workforce. This report specifically presents WIOA Title I co-enrollments, as that workforce program is the broadest in California.

Table 6. P2E Outcomes	
<u>Outcomes</u>	<u>Number of Participants (% of Total Enrollments)</u>
Co-Enrollments: All Programs	2,478 (42.9%)
Co-Enrollments: WIOA Title I	2,222 (38.5%)
Credentials Earned	936 (16.2%)
Employment Placements	2,191 (37.9%)
Median Wage 2nd Quarter after Exit	\$8,908
Median Wage 4th Quarter after Exit	\$9,653

Note: Co-Enrollments: WIOA Title I is a subset of Co-Enrollments: All Programs.

Findings

The quantitative analysis and qualitative interviews conducted by UCR finds that credentials/job training and supportive services are the most consistently correlated with labor market success.¹⁰ Additionally, the qualitative data gathered provides greater insight into client perceptions and evaluations about the P2E services. The full Evaluation Report prepared by UCR provides detailed explanations of the data and methods used to derive these conclusive findings. Summaries of the findings and some examples of client statements regarding P2E services are provided below.

- 1) Credentials are important stepping-stones for positive labor market outcomes for P2E clients. P2E data shows that a vast majority of the obtained credentials are occupational in nature and are focused on applied trades rather than more general associate or bachelor’s degree acquisition. Clients emphasized these as integral to their labor market success. A client stated in an interview, “Well, I was able to take a path where they told me, ‘Look, if you want to get your certified forklift, we’re going to help you get it.’ They

¹⁰ See, Mahutga et. al, “An Evaluation of the Prison to Employment Initiative”, 2024, CWDB, pp. 23-31, available at: https://cwdb.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/43/2025/07/25_7_1_Evaluation-of-P2E-Initiative.pdf

helped me get that. Then they were like, ‘Okay, what else do you want to get?’ I said, ‘I’m looking into getting certified for construction or welding.’ They said, ‘We have those programs available.’¹¹

- 2) Quantitative and interview data suggests that supportive services are critically important to labor market outcomes. Supportive services consist of P2E funding for factors integral to client job attainment and sustained employment, including work-related expenses, school supplies, financial assistance for transportation, housing/rent and bills, and other miscellaneous needs. A client recounted, “I work at Denny’s now – I’m a cook. They helped me get that job and everything I needed because I didn’t have a lot. They helped me buy work clothes and even bought me a cell phone so I could keep in touch with my coworkers.”¹²
- 3) Many clients viewed career services as important to their success. A client stated, “Yeah, because you get that confidence, they help you with your interview, your resume, I didn’t even have a resume, didn’t even know how to make one. Now, my resume looks sharp.”¹³
- 4) Many clients cited the emotional, psychological and general reentry support as pivotal to their employment search and overall reintegration post-incarceration. One client stated, “Without the step-by-step and day-by-day through the hardships with them being there since day one, I wouldn’t have been able to stay motivated to get finished... We all need that person to say, ‘you can do this.’ And there wasn’t ever one time where they were like, ‘hey, that’s out of your reach.’”¹⁴

Policy Recommendations

In this report, we summarize the policy recommendations made by UCR based on their independent mixed-methods evaluation of the P2E program. It is noteworthy that many patterns of success and good practices were already evident at the interim report stage. These preliminary recommendations were thus included in the Interim Report¹⁵ as lessons learned. The Evaluation Report was then able to rigorously apply the full set of data produced by the P2E program to make definitive evidence-based recommendations. Additionally, many of the recommendations cited here have already been pivotal in informing the design of subsequent reentry workforce development programs such as the second round of Prison to Employment

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 24.

¹² *Ibid*, p.26.

¹³ *Ibid*, p.26.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p.28

¹⁵ Prison to Employment Interim Report, pp. 9-10, available here: https://cwdb.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/43/2021/10/P2E-Interim-Report_ACCESSIBLE.pdf

P2E 2.0) and the Helping Justice-Involved Reenter Employment (HIRE) programs within the CWDB. The key recommendations¹⁶ are summarized below:

1) Expand Services Most Consistently Correlated with Successful Labor Market Entry

The analysis of the efficacy of P2E services found that educational training leading to a tangible credential and supportive services were most consistently correlated with successful labor market entry, with the latter most important for early entry into the labor market. Future reentry workforce development policies and programs should therefore focus particularly on helping participants eliminate material barriers to labor market reentry and obtaining tangible credentials through educational training in the service of entering employment upon program exit.

2) Improve Referral Systems and Linkages Between Criminal Justice Agencies and Service Providers

Data and program administration experience show that the earlier potential P2E clients become aware of P2E services, the better. Interviews revealed that many P2E participants became aware of P2E services well after their release. Future reentry workforce development programs should make concerted efforts to increase awareness of their services pre-release and incentivize a greater number of service providers to engage with correctional institutions and parole/probation officers, thereby making potential clients and their correctional supervisors aware of the program and what it offers.

3) Strive to Promote Early Labor Market Integration

Analysis of P2E data suggests that early entry into employment (upon program exit) has a lasting impact on subsequent employment and income. Therefore, programming designed explicitly to promote early labor market success is likely to trigger labor market and other dynamics (e.g. growth in job tenure and tacit forms of human capital, newer social networks, and so forth) that cement successful labor market participation in the long term. It is thus recommended that future programs expand these opportunities for service providers and other relevant agencies, such as regional workforce development boards, to establish better working relationships with diverse employers in the region.

4) Extend Support Past the Active Provision of P2E Services

¹⁶ For full details, see, Mahutga et. al, “An Evaluation of the Prison to Employment Initiative”, 2024, CWDB, pp. 32-33, available at: https://cwdb.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/43/2025/07/25_7_1_Evaluation-of-P2E-Initiative.pdf

Future reentry workforce development programs should ensure that a greater number of services are offered to clients and that there is continued client support from staff for longer durations, especially after clients exit the program and enter the labor market.