COACHING PACKET

Establishing a Rational Planning Process

One in a series of Coaching Packets designed to assist jurisdictions in the implementation of effective practices that will support successful offender outcomes

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Introduction to the Coaching Packet Series

The Center for Effective Public Policy (the Center) and its partners, The Urban Institute and The Carey Group, were selected by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Assistance to serve as the training and technical assistance providers to the Fiscal Year 2007 Prisoner Reentry Initiative grantees (hereafter "PRI grantees"). The project team served in this capacity from April 2008 to June 2010.

The Center is a nonprofit criminal justice consulting organization based in Silver Spring, Maryland. Since the early 1980s, the Center has provided training and technical assistance to the criminal justice field on a wide array of topics, including transition and reentry, and has administered a number of national projects of this kind. The Urban Institute was established as a private, nonprofit corporation in Washington, D.C. in 1968 and is a leader in prisoner reentry research, focusing on making best practice information accessible to practitioners and policymakers. The Carey Group is a justice consulting firm with extensive practitioner experience in evidence-based practices, strategic planning, community and restorative justice and corrections.

As a part of its technical assistance delivery to the PRI grantees, the Center developed a series of tools to assist grantees in specific areas of their reentry work. The final products of this work include eleven Coaching Packets in three series. These Coaching Packets offer practical value beyond the jurisdictions involved in this initiative and are available to criminal justice professionals and their partners interested in enhancing their strategies for reducing recidivism and improving offender outcomes.

Each Coaching Packet provides an overview of a specific topic as it relates to successful offender reentry, and offers tools and resources for those interested in exploring the topic in greater depth.

- *Series 1* provides a blueprint for an effective offender reentry system. This series provides a conceptual framework for addressing prisoner reentry at the policy level; outlines a strategic planning process to support implementation efforts; and explores the establishment of successful collaborative partnerships at the policy and case management levels.

- *Series 2* addresses key issues related to the delivery of evidence-based services to offenders. This series summarizes the key literature with regard to implementing evidence-based practices; explores advances in approaches to case management; addresses the important role of staff in changing offender behavior; and summarizes research and practice as it relates to working with women offenders, engaging families, and mentoring.

- *Series 3* provides guidance and tools to ensure that reentry efforts achieve their intended outcomes. This series describes methods to assess the effectiveness of reentry efforts and offers strategies for achieving continuous quality improvement.

FY 2007 Prisoner Reentry Initiative (PRI) Grantees

The Prisoner Reentry Initiative (PRI) – intended to support the development and implementation of institutional and community corrections-based reentry programs to help returning offenders find employment and provide other critical services – is a collaborative effort of the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Assistance and the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). Grants were awarded to state and local corrections agencies by DOJ to provide pre-release and transition services to offenders and were "matched" by DOL grants to faith- and community-based organizations (FBCOs) to provide post-release services, focusing on employment assistance and mentoring.

Thirty-five states received grants in three cycles of the Initiative during Fiscal Years 2006, 2007, and 2008.[1] Of these, 23 FY 2007 PRI grantees received assistance under this project. FY 2007 grants were awarded in the fall of 2007 and implemented from 2008 to 2010; however, some grantees will not complete their activities until 2011. The FY 2007 grantees provided technical assistance under this project included:

- ✓ ALASKA, Native Justice Center
- ✓ ARIZONA, Criminal Justice Commission/ Yuma County Sheriff's Office
- ✓ CALIFORNIA, Department of Community Services and Development
- ✓ COLORADO, Division of Criminal Justice Services/City of Denver
- ✓ DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, Government
- ✓ FLORIDA, Department of Corrections
- ✓ HAWAII, Department of Public Safety
- ✓ INDIANA, Department of Corrections
- ✓ IOWA, Department of Corrections
- ✓ KANSAS, Department of Corrections
- ✓ MAINE, Department of Corrections
- ✓ MICHIGAN, Department of Corrections
- ✓ MINNESOTA, Department of Corrections
- ✓ NEVADA, Department of Corrections
- ✓ NEW JERSEY, Department of Corrections
- ✓ NORTH CAROLINA, Department of Corrections
- ✓ OHIO, Department of Rehabilitation and Correction
- ✓ PENNSYLVANIA, Department of Corrections
- ✓ RHODE ISLAND, Department of Corrections
- ✓ TENNESSEE, Department of Corrections
- ✓ VIRGINIA, Department of Criminal Justice Services
- ✓ WISCONSIN, Department of Corrections
- ✓ WYOMING, Department of Corrections

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[1] The PRI program will end when the FY 2008 grantees complete their activities.

Acknowledgments

Becki Ney, Principal, Center for Effective Public Policy, served as the PRI Training and Technical Assistance Program Project Director. Ms. Ney conceptualized and oversaw the development of the Coaching Packet series.

Madeline M. Carter, Principal, and Rachelle Giguere, Program Associate, Center for Effective Public Policy, served as the key editors for the Coaching Packet series. Ms. Giguere also provided extensive research support to the development of the series.

Introduction to the Establishing a Rational Planning Process Coaching Packet

The Contents of this Packet

This Coaching Packet provides:

- An introduction to a rational planning process for achieving successful offender reentry;
- A review of the key elements of a rational planning process;
- The ten steps that teams can take to implement such a process to advance their offender reentry efforts;
- A tool to determine your jurisdiction's strengths and gaps in implementing a rational planning process;
- An aid to developing plans to address identified gap areas; and
- References to additional resources on this topic.

The Intended Audience for this Packet

This Coaching Packet was originally developed to assist grant teams that were established to manage local PRI initiatives. The teams were composed of representatives from institutional and community corrections and faith-based or community organizations involved in the delivery of pre- and post-release services to offenders transitioning from prison to the community. The content of these Coaching Packets has much broader application, however; the information and tools contained within this Coaching Packet can also be used by teams of criminal justice professionals and their partners to assess the status of their efforts in implementing evidence-based practices and effective reentry services to offenders.

This Coaching Packet is intended specifically for policy level and mid level management teams who have the authority to make policy decisions for their agencies. However, it may also be useful for mid-level managers who have the authority and responsibility to influence those above and below them, or to assume responsibility for policy changes themselves.

How to Use this Packet

SECTION I: READ THE OVERVIEW ON ESTABLISHING A RATIONAL PLANNING PROCESS.
This section of the Coaching Packet provides an overview of using a rational planning process to achieve offender reentry objectives. Review its content, and if the information it contains is applicable to your work and addresses an area in which you feel you need to focus your efforts, use the tool in Section II to assess your jurisdiction's strengths and gaps with regard to implementing such a process.

SECTION II: COMPLETE THE ESTABLISHING A RATIONAL PLANNING PROCESS COACHING PACKET CHECKLIST.

As a team, complete the Establishing a Rational Planning Process Coaching Packet Checklist. (Based upon the information you read in Section I, consider who may need to be involved so that you are able to answer the questions thoroughly.) Complete the checklist as a group and discuss your responses along the way.

- Rate each item listed in the checklist (yes, no, not clear).

- For items where your response is "not clear," make note of the additional information the team needs to collect in order to be able to rate this item.

- Add additional items that may relate to your jurisdiction's implementation of a rational planning process that are not already included on the checklist.

- Develop a consensus-based response for each item on the checklist.

- Once the checklist is completed, consider your jurisdictions' strengths in implementing a rational planning process. Make note of these.

- Next, consider your most significant gaps. Make note of these as well.

SECTION III: DEVELOP AN ACTION PLAN.

If, after completing the checklist in Section II, your team determines that further work on this topic is necessary or would be helpful, follow the steps below to identify your goals, objectives, and action items, and any additional assistance or expertise needed.

Working as a team, review your findings from the Establishing a Rational Planning Process Coaching Packet Checklist. Specifically:

1. Determine whether, based upon what you have read and discussed, you desire to advance your jurisdiction's work with regard to engaging in a rational planning process.

2. If you determine you have a desire to improve in this area, write a goal statement that reflects where you want to be with regard to improving your current efforts. Your goal might be to "Revise our team's vision and mission for offender reentry," "Refine our team composition to ensure that all necessary stakeholders are at the table," "Determine our data collection needs," or another goal. Using the Action Planning Worksheet in Section III, note your goal in the area of engaging in a rational planning process.

3. Identify your three most significant strengths in this area and discuss how you might build on those to overcome some of your gaps.

4. Identify your three most significant gaps. For each gap, write an objective. Your objectives might be, "To determine a process by which the team can increase their knowledge of evidence-based practices in reentry," or "To begin collecting information on the offender population targeted for this initiative," or something else. Note your three objectives on the Action Planning Worksheet.

5. Add the following on the Action Planning Worksheet for each objective:

   a. The specific sequential steps that must be taken to meet the objective.

   b. The individual who will assume lead responsibility for this action item.

   c. The completion date for this action item.

6. Discuss whether additional assistance or outside expertise is needed to successfully achieve any of your action items. For instance, explore whether additional literature, guidance from another practitioner over the telephone, examples of work products from other jurisdictions, or on-site technical assistance would be helpful options.

    a. For each action item, identify those for which assistance/expertise is needed.

    b. Identify the type of assistance/expertise needed.

    c. Prioritize each of these need areas. If assistance/expertise will be limited, for which action items is assistance most needed?

    d. Begin exploring ways to secure the needed assistance/expertise.

How to Seek Additional Information

To download copies of the Coaching Packets, please visit the Center's website at http://www.cepp.com/coaching.htm. To obtain further information on the use or content of this or any of the Coaching Packets, or on the 2007 PRI Training and Technical Assistance Program, please contact:

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Section I: Establishing a Rational Planning Process

What is Rational Planning?

A rational planning process is an approach to problem-solving and decisionmaking that is deliberate and thorough, and provides a structure for the kind of critical self-assessment necessary when addressing a complex issue such as offender reentry. Experience has demonstrated that teams that are most successful in achieving identified goals or outcomes are those that invest the time and resources needed to engage in this kind of deliberate and objective process, and identify and strategically address targets of change in order to reach their objectives.

Engaging in a rational planning process can be an unfamiliar problem-solving process, particularly when engaged in by a multidisciplinary team not conversant with working together; however, utilizing this approach can help teams avoid the kind of stagnation and faulty decisionmaking that can otherwise occur. Even a team with the best intentions, commitment, and leadership can falter and fail to produce desired outcomes if the team lacks:

> Some reasons why typical approaches might not solve complex offender reentry problems:
>
> - A lack of true understanding of the nature of the problem;
>
> - A failure to appreciate the individuals who may be impacted by the problem; and/or
>
> - An inability to see the full range of possible solutions that might be employed to solve the problem.

- ✓ A clear understanding of the reasons they came together (the desired outcome);
- ✓ The expectations of them (a clear set of goals and objectives);
- ✓ A structure or timeline for finishing their assignment; and
- ✓ Sufficient knowledge about the problem they are attempting to solve.

In such a situation, the team may begin to meet only periodically, remain confused about their purpose, and face growing disinterest from team members. Consequently, decisions may be made and changes implemented based on recommendations from the team that ultimately do not address the problem or are difficult to implement.

> As DOJ and DOL grant recipients contemplate moving forward in the offender reentry area, they must objectively consider their current practices, opportunities, and strengths, and – comparing these to their preferred outcomes – determine what must be addressed or modified in order to advance in their desired direction.
>
> By looking at the issue at hand objectively, teams are better prepared to move forward in a constructive, and efficient, manner.

Providing a comprehensive map for teams to follow in conducting a rational planning process is beyond the scope of this Coaching Packet. Rather, what is provided here is a blueprint for the process, a guide that will highlight the essential elements and key steps. Teams interested in implementing a rational planning process to enhance their efforts to achieve successful offender reentry should consider consulting the following documents (as well as the other resources listed in Section IV: References and Additional Resources) for additional information.

✓ *Increasing Public Safety Through Successful Offender Reentry: Evidence-Based and Emerging Practices in Corrections* (Center for Effective Public Policy, 2007).
✓ *Getting It Right: Collaborative Problem Solving for Criminal Justice (*McGarry, P. & Ney, B., 2006)
✓ *TPC Reentry Handbook – Implementing the NIC Transition from Prison to the Community Model* (Burke, P., 2008)

The Critical Elements of a Rational Planning Process

A VISION FOR SUCCESSFUL OFFENDER REENTRY
While it may seem easy to identify the problem to be solved (e.g., high recidivism rates, high numbers of violations or infractions, low numbers of offenders securing employment), identifying effective solutions to any problem requires a clear focus on the desired end result. Where does the team want to be with regard to this issue in the future? What are the results or outcomes that the team ultimately hopes to achieve? As organizational management author Stephen Covey[2] says, our problem solving should start by "keeping the end in mind." If the current vision statement does not convey the true beliefs of the current team members then it should be amended. A rational planning process begins by being clear about what the team wants to see happen.

> **A team will be most successful in reaching its vision for successful offender reentry if it knows where it is, where it wants to go, the obstacles in its way, and the best methods for overcoming those obstacles.**
> *Adapted from: CEPP, 2007.*

INVOLVING COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS
Once the team knows where it wants to end up, the team then needs to consider whether all of the necessary partners to achieving that vision are at the table. When looking at the issues associated with complex matters such as offender reentry, it is clear that problem solving efforts must involve a variety of individuals with diverse skills, expertise, and resources. Often this includes individuals representing different agencies or organizations with a stake in the

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[2] Covey, 1989.

outcome.[3] Developing an appreciation of the potential breadth and depth of an offender reentry issue and involving key partners who can assist in its consideration is critical.

A SOLID WORK STRUCTURE

Once a team knows where it wants to go and includes the right people in its process, a work structure is required to ensure that the team has productive discussions and implements evidence-based solutions. This requires teams to:

✓ Have clear instructions about the nature of their assignment or adopt a clear vision;
✓ Clearly understand the roles and responsibilities of team members;
✓ Analyze how work is currently done, gathering pertinent baseline data or flowcharts that describe work activities;
✓ Identify strengths and gaps in their current methods;
✓ Appreciate evidence-based practices in the criminal justice field;
✓ Adopt a structure that can identify and implement the most appropriate solutions; and
✓ Monitor the results and make further changes if needed.

A rational planning process assists teams to avoid implementing quick solutions to complex offender reentry problems, and instead take the time to create a vision, engage other important partners, and work in a structured manner to determine the best possible course of conduct.

Ten Key Steps to Establishing and Maintaining a Rational Planning Process

1. ARTICULATE A VISION AND MISSION.

For teams in many jurisdictions, the vision concerning improved public safety is integrally connected with the belief that, by applying appropriate practices and techniques, organizations can assist offenders to become "successful" during their time in the criminal justice system and beyond. The belief that offender attitudes, actions, and behaviors can positively change is supported by extensive research conducted over the past twenty years.[4] Thus, the critical link in many vision statements dealing with reentry is that criminal justice practitioners are embracing the idea that public safety can be enhanced by taking actions that promote more offender success.

> A good test for a vision statement is to read the statement to an individual who does not work in your field or on your team.
>
> **Does that person understand what you are striving to do, what you hope to accomplish or promote?**
>
> If so, then you have a clear vision statement.

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[3] See the Coaching Packet, Engaging in Collaborative Partnerships to Support Reentry, for more information.
[4] See the Coaching Packet on Implementing Evidence-Based Practices for more information on this topic.

This idea is contained in the following vision statements:

✓ "We will promote public safety through collaborative partnerships, which reflect a seamless system that ensures all returning offenders are law abiding, productive citizens." (Georgia Reentry Impact Project)

✓ "Reduce crime by implementing a seamless plan of services and supervision developed with each offender, delivered through state and local collaboration, from the time of their entry into prison through their transition, reintegration, and aftercare in the community." (Michigan Prisoner Reentry Initiative)

✓ "We have to engage the offender in the change process and address the criminogenic needs of offenders that have been proven by research to impact recidivism. If we are successful in effecting a positive change in the criminal offender's behavior, recidivism can be reduced thus making our communities safer." (North Carolina Division of Community Corrections)

Developing a Vision Statement

While a vision statement does not have to be lengthy, it should include a statement of a *preferred future* for offender reentry. It is what the team hopes to achieve, or hopes to help achieve, in carrying out its work together. Consider a vision statement that:

✓ Identifies the team's intended destination or direction;

✓ Reflects the values, ideals, and principles of the team (as a whole);

✓ Is optimistic;

✓ Is lofty and compelling (i.e., it creates momentum and energizes);

✓ Is broad and general in nature (i.e., it is not weighted down with specifics); and

✓ Can be easily understood.

It is not sufficient to create a vision statement and never look at it again. As the team's work unfolds, as new members are added, and as new issues or opportunities are discovered, the vision statement should be revisited. The vision statement should be considered from time to:

✓ Determine if it needs to be revised in light of new information or developments;

✓ Allow new members to have the opportunity to provide input or feedback; and

✓ Keep team members properly focused on the purpose of the overall effort.

Developing a Mission Statement

A vision statement is different from a mission statement. A vision indicates, in broad terms, what the team believes in and where it wants to go. A mission statement, on the other hand, indicates what the team must do in order to move in the direction of the team's intended outcomes (i.e., as indicated in the vision statement). It is likely that there are many activities associated with moving in the direction of a vision; these should be included in the mission statement.

A mission statement should:

✓ Be consistent with the vision statement;

✓ Have sufficient parameters (e.g., time frames) so that the team knows when they have accomplished their mission; and

✓ Express the intended destination of the team.

While the vision statement helps a team to understand *where* it wants to go, a mission statement can help a team to understand *what* they are expected to do to move in the direction of that vision.

To distinguish vision and mission statements, consider the following. In his inaugural address in 1961, President Kennedy indicated his <u>vision</u>:

"Together let us explore the stars, conquer the deserts, eradicate disease, tap the ocean's depths, and encourage the arts and sciences."

However, in 1963, President Kennedy offered a <u>mission</u>:

"By the end of this decade we will land a man on the moon."

Based on this mission statement, a team would know what is expected, when it is expected, and how they will know whether or not they have accomplished their mission.

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2. ESTABLISH A TEAM TO UNDERTAKE THE PROCESS.
A rational planning process requires that the team set parameters for membership, so that the team can accomplish its mission most effectively. Two critical questions the team should address are who will participate and how many members should the team have?

Team Composition
Teams should consider the preferred future that has been articulated. Who must be present on a team that can help solve problems, identify and resolve issues, and create solutions to help the team move in the direction of that future? Since offender reentry issues are so complex, it is likely that the team will want to include a number of partners in their efforts (as appropriate) including[5]:

✓ Courts
✓ Institutional corrections agencies
✓ Community corrections agencies
✓ Paroling authorities
✓ Mental health agencies
✓ Public health departments

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[5] For more information, see the Coaching Packet on Engaging in Collaborative Partnerships to Support Reentry.

- ✓ Veteran's affairs officials
- ✓ Housing authorities
- ✓ Employment agencies
- ✓ Social services agencies
- ✓ Faith-based and community-based organizations

Teams must consider which of these agencies or organizations should be represented on the team, and within these agencies or organizations, which individuals are best positioned to join the team and contribute to its success.

Team Size

When setting the parameters for team membership, it is important to satisfy the need for wide representation without letting the team get too large. When a team has too many members (e.g., more than 12-14) it can become unmanageable, and possibly lose its identity and focus. When the inclusion of a large number of individuals is necessary, consider establishing subgroups to work on specific topics or problems. This may allow for numerous representatives from various agencies or organizations to participate in the effort, without allowing the core team to grow too large.

Three Reasons to Invite Others to Join Your Team

1. Multi-disciplinary offender reentry issues can touch upon a variety of sensitive topics; the more partners involved with you in exploring these issues, the more likely you will be able to successfully navigate difficult waters.
2. You need substantive experts from a variety of disciplines in order to adequately and accurately consider current reentry practices, as well as establish realistic and achievable goals for the team.
3. When it is time to implement changes, having other partners involved from the beginning will make it easier to identify and take the necessary steps to improve reentry practices.

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3. UNDERSTAND THE RESEARCH ON EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE.

One of the first key steps in a rational planning approach includes reviewing and understanding the research on what works regarding offender management and transition. Research over the past twenty years indicates that certain treatment and intervention strategies can reduce offender recidivism. Researchers have also found negative or negligible impacts on recidivism associated with punishment-oriented strategies.[6] The application of this research to practice is often referred to as *evidence-based practice*.

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[6] For a review of this literature, see the Coaching Packets on Implementing Evidence-Based Practices and Shaping Offender Behavior.

Teams working on any issue related to offender reentry will benefit from becoming familiar with the literature on evidence-based practice. Understanding this research on "what works" will assist the team in better analyzing their current strengths and gaps (i.e., how well is the jurisdiction doing in implementing what has been proven to work?). Furthermore, teams that strive to implement the principles of evidence-based practice are more effective in assisting offenders to become successful. Teams are encouraged to review a number of documents available to them to start this process.[7]

Develop an Understanding of Evidence-Based Practice

Teams focused on offender reentry issues should develop an understanding of the literature regarding what works in changing offender behavior and reducing recidivism. Consider the following eight principles of evidence-based practice:

1. Assess actuarial risk/needs.

2. Enhance intrinsic motivation.

3. Target Interventions.

    a. *Risk Principle*: Prioritize supervision and treatment resources for higher risk offenders.

    b. *Need Principle*: Target interventions to criminogenic needs.

    c. *Responsivity Principle*: Be responsive to temperament, learning style, motivation, culture, and gender when assigning offenders to programs.

    d. *Dosage*: Structure 40-70% of high-risk offenders' time for 3-9 months.

    e. *Treatment*: Integrate treatment into sentence/sanction requirements.

4. Skill train with directed practice (use cognitive behavioral treatment methods).

5. Increase positive reinforcement.

6. Engage ongoing support in natural communities.

7. Measure relevant processes/practices.

8. Provide measurement feedback.

Source: Bogue et al., 2004.

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4. COLLECT INFORMATION ON THE PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES.

It is not enough for a team to have a vision for where they want to go and a mission outlining what they will do to get there. A team must also understand *where they are now* before they can begin to move forward in a logical and purposeful fashion. This requires the objective collection of baseline data and information.

Consider the following in regards to where the team currently stands:

✓ *The Current Process.* Does everyone on the team understand how the current process operates? A flow chart could be designed that will aid the team in understanding how work

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[7] See Bogue et al., 2004; Burke, 2008; CEPP, 2007.

is currently done. The team should consider the key outcomes being sought (i.e., recidivism, employment) and where key decisions are made.

✓ *Offender Population.* The team should look closely at the offender population it is serving. That is, how many are currently being served, to what communities are they returning, what are their criminogenic needs, etc.? The information needed will depend on the particular issue taken on by the team. It might also be helpful to look at similar data over a period of time to get a sense of trends or changes that may impact the team's decisions (e.g., a change in risk levels or in the age of the offender population).

✓ *Policies and Practices.* Consider existing policies and practices, and what they mean for the focus, purpose, or direction of the team. Do these policies support the current direction of the team, or are there policies that could serve as a barrier to the team as it tries to reach its vision? The team also should consider current informal practices of the agencies involved in the effort and how these might help or hinder the work of the team.

✓ *Available Resources.* How well is the team equipped to provide the desired services to offenders? As the team gets to know more about the offender population and their needs, a comparison should be made to determine whether resources are available to meet those needs.

✓ *Staff Involved in the Effort.* In order for the team to employ evidence-based practices and provide the desired assistance to offenders returning from prison, the proper allotment of staff must be present. What is the current deployment of staff? What are their responsibilities in the area of offender reentry? What expectations of staff currently exist that may need to be revisited?

5. DETERMINE THE STRENGTHS AND GAPS IN CURRENT EFFORTS.
Once information is collected on the current circumstances, the team should consider it alongside the research on evidence-based practice. For example, to produce a list of strengths and gaps, a team might consider information about their current efforts against the following elements of an effective reentry process:

✓ Admission, intake assessment and the identification of risk and criminogenic needs factors;

✓ The development of appropriate case plans to address these factors;

✓ The provision of risk-reducing programs and services consistent with case plans;

✓ The identification of necessary transition needs and the provision of transition services;

✓ The release of the offender to the community at the appropriate time with necessary conditions;

✓ Community supervision that is driven by a success-oriented philosophy; and

✓ The provision of community services which address criminogenic needs.

If your team already knows where it wants to be regarding offender reentry, the question then becomes…

Why aren't we there already?

Asking this question might help to clarify what needs to be tackled in order to move forward.

Depending on the specific vision of the team regarding offender reentry, some of the above areas may or may not be relevant to their work or within their power of authority. For instance, a team focused on providing employment services to offenders may not be concerned with identifying changes to the timing of the release process or the setting of conditions. However, such a team may determine that they currently have no access to offender case plans, which might provide them with helpful information when assisting offenders with finding employment. Regardless of the team's focus, the team must make a deliberate effort to compare what *currently is* to the *ideal*, in order to determine how best to move forward.

6. DEVELOP AND PRIORITIZE GOALS.
In light of the strengths and gaps identified, the team should develop specific goals that lead them toward achieving their mission.

✓ Identified gaps should be "filled." That is, goals should address directly the mismatches between what is currently happening (and preventing the team from reaching its vision) and what should be happening.

✓ Teams should reflect on their strengths while developing goals. This ensures that team assets are maximized and that processes or activities that are currently working are not mistakenly changed.

Once goals are established, they should be prioritized so that the team can clarify its focus and determine where to invest the most time and energy. In prioritizing goals, consider the following questions:

✓ Which goals, once reached, will have the greatest impact on the achievement of our mission?

✓ Which goals will be the easiest (i.e., in terms of time and effort) to achieve?

✓ Which goals will be the least expensive to implement?

> Goal: Ensure that 60% of the offender population is employed within 12 months.
>
> Objective: Meet with local employers to provide education on the tax benefits available to those who employ ex-prisoners.

Based on the answers to these questions – and perhaps other considerations specific to the team (e.g., grant requirements, funding barriers, level of authority) – the team should prioritize its goals so that a sequence for action is clear.

7. DEVELOP SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES FOR EACH GOAL.
The next step is to develop specific objectives that must be met to accomplish the team's identified goals. These objectives should:

✓ Indicate specific actions that should be taken to achieve the desired goal;

✓ Identify particular individuals who will be responsible for overseeing the actions indicated; and

✓ Specify timelines by which each objective should be completed.

Finalizing a Strategic Plan

By identifying and articulating a vision and mission, specifying the critical goals that should be accomplished, and determining the essential objectives that must be met in order to achieve these goals, the team has created a strategic plan for its work.

This strategic plan should:

✓ Represent appropriate outcomes to strive for in light of the team's vision for reentry;

✓ Contain sufficient information and justification to support the actions suggested (i.e., the mission);

✓ Include goals that are appropriate and can be embraced by the team; and

✓ Outline objectives, timelines, and steps that are properly prioritized.

Before beginning to implement the strategic plan, the team should consider the following:

✓ Are there team members that must be added in light of the goals and objectives contained in the strategic plan?

✓ What process measures should be established to determine whether the team is taking the steps it agreed to take (e.g., did we conduct assessments as outlined in the strategic plan)?

✓ What outcome measures should be established so that the team will know when it has accomplished its vision (e.g., are offenders recidivating less)?

8. IMPLEMENT THE STRATEGIC PLAN.
Once the team is satisfied with its strategic plan for reaching its vision, the team will move from contemplation to action. The team should proceed with its defined work, focusing first on goals deemed highest priority. Individuals responsible for certain objectives should begin their work and report regularly to the team concerning their progress, noting any problems or issues that may require assistance from other team members.

From time to time, the strategic plan should be considered alongside the team's progress, to determine whether changes in course are necessary. Remember that the strategic plan is a dynamic document that can and should be changed to serve the needs of the team.

> Despite a team's best efforts, some indicators may show results significantly below expectations. Perhaps fewer offenders than anticipated are reporting for or completing services. However, it is important to remember that…
>
> **It is often possible to learn as much or more from failure as from success. View less-than-expected results as opportunities for improvement, rather than as failures.**
>
> *For more information, see the Measuring the Impact of Reentry Efforts Coaching Packet.*

9. MONITOR THE IMPACT OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN.

Once the team has completed its work, effort must be taken to understand the impact of what has occurred, to document outcomes, and to determine whether the team's effort has resulted in movement towards their preferred destination.[8] Winston Churchill once noted that, "however beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results."

As a result of this information, teams should consider:

✓ Are we making progress in achieving our desired goals?

✓ Are we moving forward at a satisfactory pace or to a satisfactory degree?

✓ Have new problems or issues emerged that were not anticipated? And do these issues require further attention?

✓ What changes should we now undertake to improve our results, speed up our actions, or overcome additional challenges?

10. MAINTAIN MOMENTUM.

For many teams getting started may be difficult. But maintaining momentum, commitment, and energy for an ongoing effort can prove even harder. Undergoing a rational planning process – and then implementing the plan – can take a significant amount of time. In order to keep team members enthusiastic and focused in the reentry effort, consider some of the following strategies.

✓ Develop minutes or a record of meetings and distribute this information to ensure that roles, responsibilities, and next steps are clear to everyone.

✓ Identify key timeframes or benchmarks for the work being done. As progress is made on issues – even minor progress – the team should reflect on its meaning and celebrate positive results.

✓ Share responsibilities. Rotate undesired responsibilities amongst all team members. Avoid having only a few people doing the bulk of the work for the team.

✓ Hold each other accountable for attending meetings and completing assignments. If individuals fail to follow through, the team must discuss the issue and take steps to resolve it.

✓ Regularly consider the vision statement, mission statement, and goals established by the team. Consider whether the team is moving in the proper direction or if it has gotten off track.

✓ Find ways to enjoy both the discussion and the work of the team. Meet in different locations to make meetings more pleasant. Bring food to meetings.

✓ Consider ways that team members can be recognized for their efforts. Use positive reinforcements to stimulate continued commitment and effort from everyone involved.

The rational planning process assists teams in identifying their desired outcomes and focusing on the critical activities needed to achieve success. By knowing where the team wants to go in

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[8] See the Coaching Packet, Measuring the Impacts of Reentry Efforts, for more information.

regards to offender reentry, where it currently stands, and what it needs to accomplish, the team is better positioned to assist offenders in successfully transitioning to the community.

Conclusion

The rational planning process presented in this document is intended to assist corrections professionals and their partners in their efforts to engage in a deliberate and thorough problem-solving and decisionmaking process, one that will support critical self-assessment of present circumstances and assist the team to identify, prioritize, and measure the effectiveness of change strategies in order to reach objectives. This Coaching Packet provides only an overview of the ten key steps in rational planning; there are a number of resources available for professionals interested in learning more, including the Coaching Packets on "Implementing Evidence-Based Practices" and "Measuring the Impact of Reentry Efforts."   For a summary of the key topics covered in the other Coaching Packets, see Exhibit 1. For more information on rational planning efforts generally and offender reentry specifically, see Section IV: References and Additional Resources.

Coaching Packet	Assessment	Case Management	Programs/ Services	Success-Driven Supervision	Staff-Offender Interactions	Enhancing Motivation	Prosocial Supports	Collaboration/ Team Approach	A Vision for Reentry	Planning	Measuring Reentry Efforts	Quality Assurance
Effective Case Management	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×				
Implementing Evidence-Based Practices	×		×		×	×	×				×	×
Shaping Offender Behavior	×		×	×	×	×	×					
Engaging Offenders' Families in Reentry	×	×	×	×	×	×	×					
Building Offenders' Community Assets Through Mentoring			×		×	×	×					
Reentry Considerations for Women Offenders	×	×	×	×	×	×	×					
Engaging in Collaborative Partnerships to Support Reentry		×						×	×	×	×	
A Framework for Offender Reentry	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×		
Measuring the Impact of Reentry Efforts									×	×	×	
Continuous Quality Improvement	×	×	×		×					×	×	×

Exhibit 1:
Topics Covered by Other Coaching Packets

Section II: Establishing a Rational Planning Process Coaching Packet Checklist

Rational Planning	YES	NO	NOT CLEAR	NOTES
1. Does your team have a vision statement for offender reentry?				
2. Has a mission statement been developed that outlines the general activities the team must accomplish to reach their vision?				
3. Are all the necessary stakeholders on the team that are needed to accomplish its reentry goals?				
4. Has effort been made to understand the research on effective offender management and reentry (i.e., evidence-based practices)?				
5. Do team members adhere to the principles of evidence-based practices (where possible)?				
6. Has the team collected information on the current process, including policy, practice, and resource considerations that may play a role in the team's success?				
7. Has the team collected information on the offender population it is serving?				
8. Has the team's current efforts been compared and contrasted to evidence-based practice to determine strengths and gaps?				
9. Have goals been developed to fill in these gaps?				
10. Has the team agreed on the order in which these goals will be addressed (i.e., prioritization)?				
11. For each goal, have objectives been developed indicating who is responsible for achieving it and by when?				
12. Has the team combined their vision, mission, goals, and objectives into a coherent strategic plan for their work together?				
13. Has the team developed outcome and process measures based on its vision and strategic plan?				
14. Do team member check in regularly to report progress in achieving goals and objectives?				
15. Does the team revisit the strategic plan from time to time to determine whether any changes are needed?				
16. Are team meetings and decisions recorded and shared with all team members?				
17. Are all team members contributing equally?				
18. Do team members hold each other accountable for completing assignments?				
19. Does the team celebrate its successes – even small ones?				
20. Has the team reviewed the results (i.e., outcome and process measures) to determine whether goals have been achieved?				

Section III: Action Planning Worksheet

GOAL:			

Objective 1:

Tasks	Lead Person	Completion Date	Assistance/Expertise Needed
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

Objective 2:

Tasks	Lead Person	Completion Date	Assistance/Expertise Needed
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

Objective 3:

Tasks	Lead Person	Completion Date	Assistance/Expertise Needed
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

Section IV: References and Additional Resources

References

Bogue, B., Campbell, N., Carey, M., Clawson, E., Faust, D., Florio, K., Joplin, L., Keiser, G., Wasson, B., & Woodward, W. (2004). *Implementing Evidence-Based Practice in Community Corrections: The Principles of Effective Intervention*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections.

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Covey, S.R. (1989). *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People.* New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.

McGarry, P. & Ney, B. (2006). *Getting It Right: Collaborative Problem Solving for Criminal Justice.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections.

Additional Resources

Burke, P. (2008). *TPC Reentry Handbook – Implementing the NIC Transition from Prison to the Community Model*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections.

Burke, P. (2004). *Parole Violations Revisited – A Handbook on Strengthening Parole Practices for Public Safety and Successful Transition to the Community*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections.