

REPORT

Operating a Vocational Training Program in a Juvenile Correctional Facility: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

In July 2012, Fort Scott Community College in Fort Scott, Kansas, received a grant totaling \$1.5 million to develop and implement the water technologies training program for residents of the Kansas Juvenile Correctional Complex (KJCC) in Topeka. The goal of the training program was to increase incarcerated youth's employment and earnings potential and reduce their recidivism rates after release from the correctional facility. Obtaining good job placements in high-demand occupations could help youth develop economic stability and, ultimately, self-sufficiency.

Operating a vocational training program within a correctional facility presented unique challenges. These included securing approvals for non-corrections staff to work with incarcerated youth, achieving buy-in of line staff at the correctional facility and partners, addressing the security requirements for students and staff, and accommodating restrictions on access to certain needed tools and equipment. Yet, operating a program within the correctional facility also had advantages, including cost savings achieved by leveraging existing resources and high program completion rates.

This case study explores the history of the water technologies training program operated by Fort Scott Community College in KJCC from its conception through implementation, focusing on challenges, successes, and lessons learned for future similar programs.

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In recent decades, the number of arrests and the rates of incarceration among youth have increased substantially, despite an overall decrease in juvenile crime (Brown et al. 2012). More than 2 million youth under age 18 were arrested in 2008 alone (Puzzanchera 2009). Recent estimates suggest that approximately 100,000 youth reside in juvenile correctional facilities (Sedlak and Bruce 2010), and more than 450,000 young adults ages 18 to 24 are in adult prisons (Harrison and Karberg 2010). Each year, of the roughly 700,000 people released from incarceration, about 200,000 are under age 24 (Carson and Golinelli 2013).

Once released, youth offenders face daunting obstacles to successful reentry in their communities, including difficulty finding jobs, housing, and services for substance abuse or mental health problems. They also face challenges reintegrating with their families. Without significant support, many youth offenders will find few educational and employment opportunities, continue to participate in unlawful activities, and be rearrested and/or reincarcerated. The most recent national statistics show that 84 percent of those who were 24 or younger at release were rearrested within five years (Durose et al. 2014).

Recognizing the importance of re-engaging youth offenders in education and connecting them to career pathways, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) invested in the Training and Service Learning (TSL) grants, authorized by the Workforce Investment Act for Reintegration of Ex-Offenders (RExO). The specific requirements for TSL-funded programs are summarized in Exhibit 1.¹ Generally, the TSL grants were designed to improve the employability of youth offenders and reduce their recidivism rates by providing skills training combined with service learning.² The grants targeted youth offenders ages 18 through 21 who had been involved with the juvenile justice system but had never been convicted as adults under federal or state law.

In July 2012, Fort Scott Community College (Fort Scott CC) in Fort Scott, Kansas, received a \$1.5 million grant under the TSL funding strategy.³ With these funds, Fort Scott CC developed and implemented the Water Technologies Training (water tech) program for residents of the Kansas Juvenile Correctional Complex (KJCC) in Topeka. During the original grant period from July 2012 to December 2014, Fort Scott CC expected to serve 96 youth. In fall 2014, Fort Scott CC received a one-year, no-cost extension to continue serving KJCC residents.

¹ See http://www.doleta.gov/grants/pdf/training_and_service_learning_sga.pdf.

² Service learning projects aim to connect participants to the community in an effort to rebuild community trust while developing participants' work-based skills, such as leadership and time management.

³ Fort Scott CC was the sole Training and Service Learning grant recipient.

Exhibit 1. Training and Service Learning grant program required components

- Meaningful service learning opportunities
- Educational interventions that lead to placement opportunities in postsecondary education, and vocational training that leads to industry-recognized credentials in high-demand industries in geographic area served
- Community awareness of the youth's service projects that rebuilds the community's trust and enables the community to view the youth as assets rather than liabilities
- High staff-to-participant ratios, including close adult supervision on service learning projects
- Career development
- Post-program support and follow-up
- Partnerships with juvenile justice system and social service agencies

In 2013, DOL awarded Mathematica Policy Research and its partner, Social Policy Research Associates, a contract to evaluate the Grants Serving Young Offenders. These grants included Face Forward, High Poverty High Crime, and the TSL grant awarded to Fort Scott CC. Because of the operational challenges involved in implementing a vocational and service learning program within a juvenile correctional facility, DOL asked that the evaluation include a case study of the Fort Scott CC program. In November 2014, nearly a year and a half after the grant was awarded and near the end of its original period of performance, the evaluation team conducted a two-day site visit to KJCC. The site visit addressed the following key questions:⁴

- What was the design and planning process for the program at KJCC? What steps were involved in setting up the program there?
- What core services, including service learning activities, were available in the water tech program? How were they delivered?
- How did Fort Scott CC address the security requirements for operating inside KJCC? What adjustments to the service design were necessary to successfully implement the program in a correctional facility?
- What partnerships did Fort Scott CC develop, and how did these partnerships aid in delivering services at KJCC?
- What were the cost implications of operating the program inside the correctional facility?
- What challenges did Fort Scott CC experience in operating the program at KJCC and how did it address them? What lessons did Fort Scott CC learn that could benefit future programs hoping to operate in a similar context?

To address these questions, the evaluation team conducted interviews with 15 program staff, partner staff, and youth participants, including:

⁴ See Appendix A for a list of specific site visit questions.

- **Fort Scott CC and program staff: former college president, dean of finance, program director, two case managers, and a classroom instructor.** These interviews focused on how the program was designed, planned, and implemented; what services were delivered and how; partnerships; cost implications; and successes and challenges to implementation.
- **KJCC staff: the facility superintendents, two correctional counselors, and a mentoring coordinator.** These interviews focused on the operations at KJCC, security requirements, and the broad context for the implementation of the water tech program. Site visitors asked about the history of the facility, staffing, services, and trends over time; policies and procedures for implementing the water tech program; coordination between facility staff and the Fort Scott CC program staff; and successes and challenges to program implementation.
- **Partners: a probation officer and one employer who hired a former participant.** These interviews focused on how the partnerships were developed, whether they were informal or formal, how program staff coordinated efforts with the partners, and the role of partners in providing services to water tech program participants.
- **Program participants who were enrolled in the water tech program at the time of the site visit.** Study team members conducted separate interviews with two program participants. The interviews focused on the participants' experiences with the water tech program and their perceptions of its strengths and weaknesses.⁵

In addition to these interviews, the evaluation team conducted classroom observations of the water tech program and reviewed relevant program documents, such as the grant proposal, curriculum, program budget, and reports to DOL. This case study summarizes the findings from the site visit including the context for operating the program, planning and design process, implementing the program, challenges and solutions, and key lessons learned.

Program context

Fort Scott CC is a two-year educational institution that serves about 2,500 students per year at its main campus in Fort Scott, Kansas, and several satellite facilities. Founded in 1919, it is the oldest community college in Kansas. The college offers diverse academic and technical training in high-demand industries such as agricultural technology, allied health, cosmetology, construction, HVAC, and nursing. It also offers an associate's degree in water technologies, which it adapted for use in KJCC.

KJCC is a maximum-security correctional facility with the capacity to house 290 residents ages 10 to 22. The facility houses both male and female residents, who are strictly segregated. At the time of the site visit in November 2014, the facility housed 137 residents, 16 of whom were females. The youngest resident was 13 years old and the oldest was 22.⁶ KJCC is the larger of two juvenile correctional facilities in Kansas. As a maximum-security facility, most youth in

⁵ KJCC staff selected the youth to be interviewed. These youth were not necessarily representative of the larger participant population; the interviews were intended to gather rich qualitative data, not a representative sample of participants' experiences.

⁶ Kansas State law allows the Department of Corrections to retain custody of a juvenile offender until the age of 22 ½ in a juvenile correctional facility and the age of 23 in the community.

residence have committed felony offenses, although Kansas state law also allows youth to serve misdemeanor sentences at the facility. The average length of stay is about nine months, though some residents serve much shorter or longer sentences.

As of December 2014, the facility had 218 staff. Among these were 10 correctional counselors, a workforce development specialist, and a reentry specialist. Through the correctional counselors and workforce development specialist, KJCC residents had access to services such as case management support, individual and group counseling, vocational training, work readiness training, reentry services, and court-mandated group therapy sessions such as Thinking for a Change, Aggression Replacement Training, Anger Management, Skill Streaming, and Motivation to Change, among others.

Contractors provided all educational and vocational training services at the facility. Residents of KJCC who did not have a high school diploma or GED were required to attend Lawrence Gardner High School, which was located on site. For many years, Greenbush, a private educational services contractor that provides alternative education services in Kansas, operated the high school. Greenbush staff had a long history with KJCC and, through personal connections with the Fort Scott CC leadership, facilitated a partnership between Fort Scott CC and KJCC to adapt its water tech training program for KJCC residents (further details below). However, during the grant operation period in 2013, the Kansas State Legislature selected a new contractor—Smoky Hill Education Services Center—to replace Greenbush through a competitive procurement process.

Although in the past KJCC had a robust offering of technical and vocational programs for its residents, in 2013 the Kansas State Legislature drastically cut funding for these programs. As a result, the facility provided very limited vocational training at the time of the site visit. Youth could enroll in either construction training offered by Smoky Hill Education Services Center, or the water tech program delivered by Fort Scott CC.⁷

In addition to enrolling in the high school or occupational skills training, residents had the option of working at the facility for up to six hours per day for \$0.50 to \$1.50 per hour. Some of the jobs available included kitchen help, laundry, and various maintenance jobs. Thus, the water tech program operated in an environment where residents had relatively few other options.

When the water tech program first enrolled participants in March 2013, the facility housed 317 residents. By November 2014, this number had decreased to approximately 137 residents. The decrease in residents coincided with an increased emphasis at the state level on alternatives to youth incarceration.

Program planning

Program planning occurred in five distinct steps, beginning with the development of an initial idea of what type of training program to offer and concluding with a signed memorandum of agreement among the partners. Key steps along the way included recruiting key stakeholders

⁷ They could not enroll in both because of limits in their daily schedule.

and obtaining formal approval, obtaining buy-in from KJCC staff, and developing an approach to accommodating the security restrictions required by the facility.

Step 1: Identify an appropriate training program

According to Fort Scott CC's former president, the water tech program was a good fit for youth offenders because of high demand for jobs in the water technologies industry, relatively high starting wages of those jobs, and a willingness on the part of employers to hire individuals with previous justice-system involvement. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2014 the median hourly wage for Water and Wastewater Treatment Systems Operators in Kansas was \$17.50.⁸

In addition to the training being a good fit for youth with previous justice-system involvement, Fort Scott CC already offered the water tech program on its campuses. Thus, the DOL grant provided an excellent opportunity for the college to broaden its reach in the community and serve a high-need population, while building on a training program that it had already developed.

Step 2: Recruit key partners and stakeholders

Gaining the necessary approvals and buy-in to get the water tech program up and running inside KJCC was no small feat. The success of these efforts, according to respondents, is largely attributable to Fort Scott CC's former president, who wrote the grant proposal and mobilized support for implementing it. But the context at the time also played a role, as state budget cuts taking place then had left fewer education and training options for residents of the correctional facility and the Kansas Juvenile Justice Authority (JJA) was actively seeking partnerships with postsecondary institutions. Exhibit 2 summarizes the synergies at the time the program was being developed.

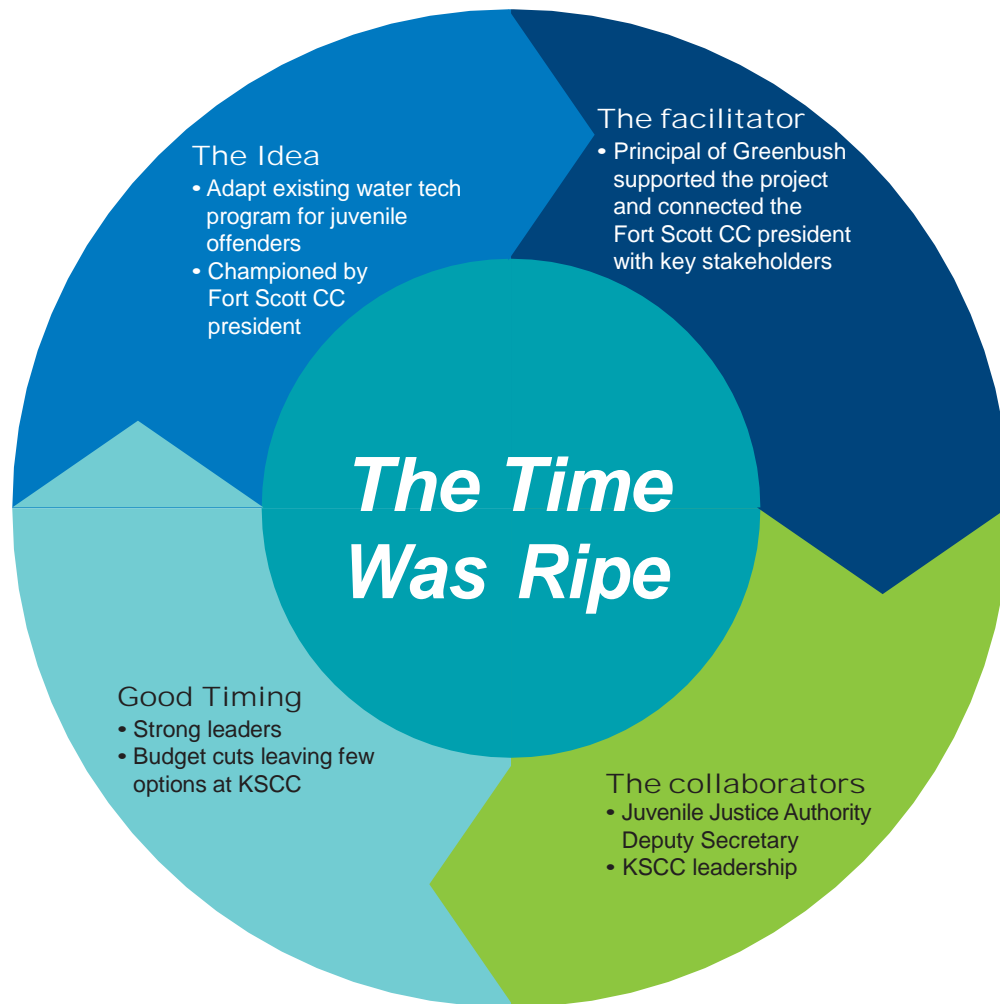
The water tech program was originally designed to serve youth offenders in the community, rather than inside a correctional facility. Fort Scott CC had identified a core partner during the early planning and design phase—a community-based organization that would provide facility space and case management support. However, the community partner was ultimately unable to provide services in a community setting, so Fort Scott CC explored the option of implementing the program at the correctional facility instead.

As part of those efforts, Fort Scott CC's former president contacted Greenbush, which was operating the on-site high school at KJCC. The principal at the high school at the time fully supported the water tech program. With the connections of the principal and his support, Fort Scott CC recruited other key stakeholders whose support would be instrumental in operating the water tech program within KJCC: the commissioner of the Kansas JJA,⁹ which oversaw the KJCC facility, and the superintendent and deputy superintendent at KJCC.

⁸ Source: http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_ks.htm#51-0000.

⁹ On July 1, 2013, the JJA merged with the Kansas Department of Corrections. The commissioner of JJA became the deputy secretary of the Juvenile Services division within the Kansas Department of Corrections. During the grant planning period, the merger had not yet occurred.

Exhibit 2. Synergies leading to implementation of the program



The program needed formal approval from JJA to operate inside the correctional facility. Representatives from Fort Scott CC met with the JJA commissioner to share information about the program and its goals and objectives. At that time, according to respondents, JJA was actively looking to establish partnerships with postsecondary institutions to enhance the educational options for residents of juvenile correctional facilities. Upon learning about the water tech program and its benefits, the commissioner fully supported the program and, according to respondents, “understood that it would help students and it would give them an opportunity for a better life,” characterizing it as a “win-win.”

Program staff noted that there were some political benefits for the JJA as well. As one respondent said,

I think JJA leaders saw this [program] as a way to raise the profile of corrections, be able to talk about collaboration and cooperation, and be able to put forth a positive face for juvenile corrections.

–Fort Scott CC program staff

“The time was ripe” for the water tech program at KJCC, according to the program staff, because the program would fill a critical need for KJCC residents in the face of recent cuts to vocational training services at correctional facilities statewide. KJCC leadership felt that the program would provide opportunities that youth otherwise would not be able to access.

We were looking for something and when this opportunity came along, timing could not have been more perfect.
–Site visit respondent

As a result of the confluence of these factors, the formal approval to operate the water tech program at the facility came fairly quickly after a number of meetings between staff from Fort Scott CC, KJCC, and the JJA commissioner.

Step 3: Gain support from KJCC facility staff

After gaining approval from the JJA commissioner, the Fort Scott CC president and the KJCC superintendent and deputy superintendent held a series of meetings with KJCC staff. The goal of these meetings was to achieve buy-in from KJCC staff, including those responsible for building security and maintenance, as well as counselors and other support staff, for the water tech program schedule, the service learning activities, and the use of materials and supplies in the facility. In addition, facility staff would serve as critical sources of referrals to the program.

One KJCC respondent summed up the process for gaining buy-in from all levels of the KJCC staff as follows:

We had to sell [the program] to the employees, get them to understand how it works. Changes are sometimes met with resistance and skepticism. We had to get through this by talking about the program in different meetings and emails to let people know that this is coming. We introduced the [facility] staff to folks from Fort Scott in tours as they were looking at the space.
–KJCC staff

The Fort Scott CC president and the facility leaders met at least weekly during the planning phase, to ensure that there was a shared understanding of the program and the potential effect of its activities on daily operations in the facility. In addition, the deputy superintendent of KJCC convened a series of meetings with maintenance, operations, and kitchen staff to address questions and concerns. These meetings were crucial to ensuring that the facility and program leaders understood their respective roles and responsibilities, procedures for setting up the program, and strategies to incorporate the training with youth’s schedules. One respondent said that these meetings were important because

A facility like this is very stuck in its ways, and we aren’t going to change. It would be difficult for a facility to do something like this. It requires administration, mid [-level] staff, line staff, to be flexible and to think outside the box.

–Site visit respondent

Step 4: Explore and address security requirements

To set up this program at KJCC, we had meetings on how to make it work. Staff from maintenance, education, and operations all have to be involved. We needed to figure out the who, what, where, and why. Where will it be, how will we provide security for it.

–KJCC staff

The complex security requirements at the facility presented challenges for designing the program because of the time and effort involved in complying with them. When possible, KJCC leadership worked with Fort Scott CC staff to brainstorm alternatives and workarounds within their security requirements. There were three main categories of issues: (1) the need for secure facilities and supplies, (2) staffing requirements, and (3) restrictions on program activities.

Need for secure facilities and supplies. Certain school supplies like pens, pencils, and paper had to be kept in a highly secured cabinet with double-locked doors, and their use had to be closely monitored; program staff had to keep a daily inventory of items, including the number of pencils and sheets of paper used each day, and report this to KJCC staff.

In addition, residents were not allowed to move freely in the facility, which meant that Fort Scott CC staff would need to spend a significant amount of time escorting program participants to and from the classroom. Moving between the classroom and locations within the main KJCC building could take 20 minutes or more, as the buildings are not connected and—once in a building—staff and youth must pass through a series of locked doors.

Further, residents were under 24-hour video surveillance. Because the water tech program was to be located in an old building (it was the only space available for the program), the building did not have security cameras. Initially, facility staff had some concerns about safety for residents and staff. During the initial planning meetings, Fort Scott CC and KJCC staff developed a plan to remodel the building to meet security regulations, such as by adding a locked door to separate classroom and office space.

Staffing requirements. Other security requirements applied to the staff: Kansas state law requires that all individuals working in a juvenile correctional facility undergo a criminal history background check, Kansas Child Abuse Registry check, drug test, and 40 hours of security training, which could be completed online or in person. All program staff and interns had to complete these requirements before working at the facility, regardless of the number of hours they worked per week or month at the facility.

Restrictions on program activities. Because residents are strictly prohibited from using the internet during their incarceration, the water tech program would not be allowed to use KJCC's internet. Although the program was designed to assist youth in locating job opportunities, because of the restrictions, program staff would need to search the internet themselves for such opportunities, and then describe them to youth. Therefore, the program needed to have its own internet line.

The program was unable to conduct service learning activities outside the facility grounds, since it is strictly forbidden for residents to leave the facility. As a result, the program coordinated with the KJCC maintenance department so that participants could plant flowers near the classroom as a service learning activity.

Step 5: Formalize the partnership

The culmination of the planning discussions was a formal memorandum of agreement outlining the roles and responsibilities of the JJA, Fort Scott CC, and the Lawrence Gardner High School (Appendix B). Key agreements included the following:

- KJCC would provide classroom and office space in-kind, and support the program's recruitment efforts.
- Fort Scott CC would provide course instruction, safety training, case management, and service learning activities. The training would be offered to up to 24 students every six months. Fort Scott CC would comply with all KJCC and JJA policies, including those pertaining to staff security clearances.
- Lawrence Gardner High School would facilitate referrals of youth to the program and support the program as needed.

The commissioner of JJA, the Fort Scott CC president, and the principal at the high school signed the memorandum of agreement in October 2012, several months after the grant award.

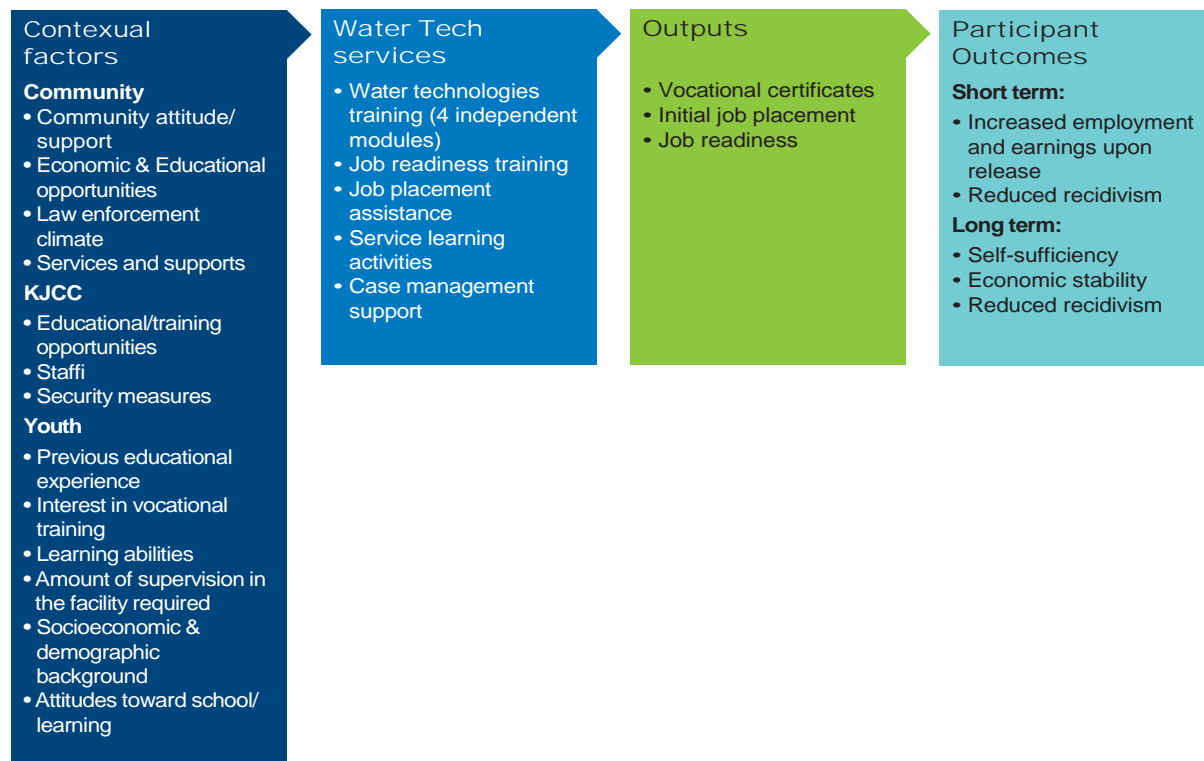
Implementing the program

Upon execution of the memorandum of agreement, the partners collaborated to implement the water tech program at KJCC. Exhibit 3 provides a visual overview of the program model. The program operated within the context of the community, but most saliently within the correctional facility. This presented some challenges to design and implementation of the program. Other contextual factors were the backgrounds of the youth the program targeted, including their previous education and/or training experiences, learning abilities or disabilities, attitudes toward learning, and socioeconomic and demographic backgrounds.

The water tech program provided a range of services centered on the vocational training in water technologies. It consisted of four, stand-alone six-week modules, each of which culminated in industry-recognized vocational certificates. Participants could enroll in up to four modules, but did not need to enroll in every module to receive a certificate. In addition to the vocational training, program participants engaged in service learning activities designed to provide work experience while they gave back to the community, as well as job readiness training and job placement services.

The ultimate goal of the program was increased employment and earnings potential and reduced recidivism upon release from KJCC. Fostering good job placements in high-demand occupations could help youth develop economic stability and, ultimately, self-sufficiency.

Exhibit 3. Water Tech program conceptual model



The following subsections provide additional details about the services offered, eligibility for and recruitment into the program, program management and staffing, coordination and collaboration with partners, and the cost implications of operating inside a correctional facility.

Services offered

The water tech program included five components:

1. **Training in water technologies.** The cornerstone of the program was college-level classes that covered a range of topics related to water technology, such as water plant operation, water distribution system operations and maintenance, wastewater plant operation, and wastewater collection systems. The training included a laboratory component in which students tested water samples and built an aquaponics system.¹⁰ Because of restrictions on supply use for security reasons, program staff developed a mock lab using available and allowable supplies, such as plastic containers rather than glass, so that students could experience the lab setting.

The full training consisted of four stand-alone modules. For each module, students attended classes for 3.5 hours per day, five days a week, for six weeks. The modules were offered sequentially, and participants could enroll in as many as they wanted to. Students earned 7 college credits for each module they completed, for a total of up to 28 credits if they

¹⁰ An aquaponics system is a system of aquaculture in which the waste produced by farmed fish or other aquatic creatures supplies the nutrients for plants grown hydroponically, which in turn purify the water.

completed all four modules. These credits could be applied toward an associate's degree at Fort Scott CC or another community college.

When students completed a module, they received a certificate, and the program hosted a graduation ceremony for them and their families. Nearly all enrollees completed the module in which they enrolled.

2. **Service learning activities.** As a key component of the TSL grant, service learning was embedded in the water tech curriculum through hands-on learning activities. Fort Scott CC originally planned for participants to carry out an environmental restoration project in a riverbed just a few yards outside the KJCC facility as part of their service learning activity. However, the leadership at KJCC was unable to obtain permission for residents to leave the facility to participate in this project. In addition to this challenge, implementing service learning activities in a correctional facility was constrained by security considerations restricting the use of certain materials, such as shovels, rakes, and glass bottles.

Despite these limitations, the program developed and provided alternative types of hands-on service projects within the confines of the facility. In the first year of operation, the program hired interns from a nearby community college to work alongside the participants to plant flowers and vegetables and build the aquaponics system in the classroom. The program staff also worked with participants to assemble rain barrels for the local housing authority, donate vegetables cultivated in an outdoor garden and indoor aquaponics system, and produce brochures and videos to educate the public about water conservation.

3. **Job readiness training.** The program provided job readiness training, though the scope of this training was somewhat limited because the program did not want to duplicate the services already available through KJCC's reentry specialist. Program participants attended job readiness workshops offered by the program's case managers, who conducted mock interviews and assisted them with their resumes and cover letters. Participants worked with the case managers to review and discuss water technology-related job descriptions and brainstormed how to talk about their incarceration and previous offenses with potential employers. In addition, the case managers provided informal job search assistance, using the program's own computers, to search for employment opportunities and postsecondary education options.
4. **Job placement assistance.** Job placement services initially involved the case managers connecting with employers, such as the Topeka Water Department, to identify openings and set up interviews for graduates of the water tech program. Fort Scott CC staff reported that they were successful in finding job leads for several students, but they did not successfully place them in those jobs largely because the students did not end up being released to the cities where the jobs were located, discussed further below. The program staff struggled to provide meaningful job placement services, and these services were very limited at the time of the site visit.
5. **Case management support.** Two case managers helped participants set personal, educational, and career goals; obtain school transcripts; and assisted them with job search. Another case manager was responsible for post-program follow-up, which included filling out forms on the participants' whereabouts and their employment status. At the time of the site visit, the follow-up services were somewhat limited because the case manager was unable to locate the vast majority of former participants after they were released from KJCC.

If the participants were still residents at KJCC, follow-up and tracking activities were easier to achieve, as the case manager communicated with the correctional counselors to get updates on the participants' work situation and other services they were receiving at KJCC.

Recruitment and eligibility

Program staff relied on several recruitment strategies to attract participants to the water tech program:

- **Attend intake meetings.** Program staff made an effort to attend intake meetings with the correctional counselors when new residents arrived at the facility. At these meetings, the program case managers provided an overview of the water tech program and requirements for participation.
- **Solicit referrals from correctional counselors.** The case managers alerted correctional counselors and other staff about upcoming enrollment dates and encouraged them to refer potential participants.
- **Deliver presentations at the on-site high school.** Program staff delivered presentations about the program at various events, including group meetings at the high school and group therapy sessions facilitated by correctional counselors.

According to respondents, referrals from correctional counselors were by far the most effective method of recruitment. The correctional counselors used multiple messages to promote the water tech program to residents whom they believed could benefit from additional education and training. The most common message used by the correctional counselors was promoting the opportunity to obtain college credits or a certificate in a high-demand industry. In addition, correctional counselors emphasized that enrolling in the program could improve the terms of residents' sentences, as judges sometimes look favorably on residents' efforts to improve their life with additional education and training.

Despite their efforts, program staff experienced significant challenges in recruiting participants. The number of potential new students available at KJCC was somewhat limited because of the decrease in the population at the facility. Program staff estimated that only about three to four residents per month would be eligible for and interested in participating in the program.

To be eligible, residents ages 18 to 24 had to have a GED or high school diploma. Initially, the program sought to enroll only residents identified as "low risk" in terms of behavior, to avoid potential security threats in a building with no video cameras or security guards. The program received some resistance from KJCC staff, who wanted a broader pool of residents to participate; as a result, the program lifted some of the restrictions on supervision required.

Once residents expressed interest in the water tech program, the case managers met with them. During this meeting, the case managers provided the interested residents with information about the expectations of the program and informally assessed their suitability for the program. The program and facility staff together made final suitability determinations by weighing whether the participants would be a good fit for the program based on their sentencing terms, behavior at the facility, and expected release date.

At the time of the site visit, 11 students were enrolled in the program. According to the program director, as of November 2014, the program had enrolled 86 out of the planned 96 participants. Roughly half of these 86 enrollees were so-called “returning” participants—those who had completed a module and returned to enroll in additional modules to obtain additional credits and certificates. Thus, about half of the 86 enrollees were duplicate enrollees.¹¹

To attract more students, the program added night classes for those who worked in on-site jobs during the day. Staff reported that they expected that this, along with expanding the eligibility pool to somewhat higher security-risk youth, would help boost program enrollment.

Management and staffing

Fort Scott CC, as the grant recipient, provided administrative oversight for the program. Initially, the program employed seven to eight staff members, but the staffing fluctuated over the grant period:

- The Fort Scott CC president worked with the facility to set up the program, and then checked in weekly with the program’s on-site director.
- A program director supervised program staff and coordinated with administrative staff at KJCC.
- An instructor taught the water tech curriculum and oversaw classroom-based activities.
- A service learning coordinator carried out service learning projects on site.
- Two to three case managers provided case management support, counseling, job search assistance, and work readiness training to program participants. They also recruited participants, escorted them to and from the water technology classroom, and followed up with them after program completion. At the time of the site visit, the program employed two full-time case managers for 11 active participants. One additional case manager was responsible for program follow-up.
- One classroom aide escorted residents to and from the water technology classroom. This position was not budgeted in the original proposal, but was added to reduce the amount of time that case managers spent escorting students around the facility.

The program was fully staffed for about one year of the grant cycle. After that, it experienced significant staff turnover, losing most of its original staff: the Fort Scott CC president resigned, and several others left, including the program director, instructor, service learning coordinator, and classroom aide. At the time of the site visit in November 2014, there were five staff members—the (new) program director, three case managers—two of whom had been with the program since the beginning—and a (new) instructor. The program decided not to

¹¹ Based on a review of Fort Scott CC’s grant application and revised scope of work when requesting the one-year grant extension, it is not clear whether the 96 participants referred to the expected number of unique youth or also included returning youth. Each returning youth could conceivably count 4 times towards the total, if he completed all four modules. Due to inconsistent reporting during the staff transitions, the program director could not provide a number of unduplicated enrollees, so the enrollment numbers should be considered very rough estimates.

fill the vacated service learning coordinator and classroom aide positions because the program was winding down. The instructor took over the service learning coordination.

Respondents mentioned several reasons for the high staff turnover. Some staff left because they knew the grant was ending and sought more stable employment. Others left for personal reasons, including the challenge of working in a correctional facility and the long commute; two former staff members had traveled nearly 70 miles each way.

Coordination and collaboration

The implementation of the water tech program at KJCC required close coordination and collaboration between program and KJCC staff at multiple levels.

- **Recruitment and referrals.** The program coordinated with KJCC staff to facilitate recruitment and referrals into the program in several ways:
 - KJCC allowed program staff to attend intake meetings of new residents to tell them about the water tech program. These meetings took place about once per week, as new residents arrived.
 - Corrections officers participated in “three-way meetings” involving themselves, the program case managers, and youth. For instance, one correctional officer invited a case manager to talk to his full caseload of youth to help recruit them for the program. Although this practice seemed to occur between the program staff and some correctional officers, it did not appear to be facility-wide.
 - KJCC promoted the program during its job fair and career day, which community colleges and employers were invited to attend. Facility staff helped set up a display of the Fort Scott Water Treatment program, and one of the participating youth presented to staff and other residents.
- **Program schedule.** KJCC and program staff coordinated to accommodate the participants’ schedules, adjusting their class work if they missed a class due to court-mandated group meetings such as substance abuse treatments or mental health services. At times, the program accommodated youth’s work schedules, allowing them to arrive late to class or leave early. According to program staff, this flexibility was crucial to ensure that the program retained youth.
- **Ongoing communication.** The program director met with the KJCC deputy director every other week to check in about the program, get updates, and address any issues or concerns that had surfaced. Other than these meetings, communication between KJCC and program staff was mostly informal. The instructor regularly communicated with maintenance staff to get approval for bringing in materials and to borrow the facility’s tools. Program case managers also regularly communicated through email or in person about enrolled residents’ behavior. In addition, the staff often communicated via walkie-talkies with the security or maintenance staff to communicate about residents’ movements between buildings.

Despite these successes, the program continued to struggle with aspects of ongoing coordination and collaboration in a way that could deepen its connection to KJCC’s core practices. For instance, program staff requested to attend the pre-release meetings with the youth,

correctional officers, and probation officers. According to program staff, these meetings would help the program staff develop youth's transition plans for job placement or postsecondary institutions. Program staff reported being unable to attend these meetings despite multiple requests.

Budget and cost savings

Fort Scott CC received \$1.5 million through the TSL grant to implement the water tech program. The program allocated most of these resources to staff salaries. As of October 2014, the program had spent \$662,780 of its budget, or just under half of the grant amount. The program spent its budget more slowly than anticipated because of significant savings on staffing and the in-kind contributions of KJCC; these savings had not been anticipated because the program was originally intended to operate in the community. The savings on staffing came about because the program leveraged on-site services, such as case management and counseling support, already available through KJCC. The program leaders also did not replace several staff members who resigned because they did not think they were needed while program enrollment remained low. These vacant slots included the classroom aide and service learning coordinator, as well as the program director position, which was unfilled for about six months in the second year of the grant.

In addition, the program received the following types of significant in-kind support from the facility, resulting in important cost savings, according to the program staff:

- **Classroom and office space.** The program received free classroom and office space from the facility, including utilities.
- **Basic tools and equipment.** KJCC allowed program staff to use appropriate maintenance equipment and tools, such as shovels and a tiller, for hands-on service learning projects.
- **Case management and supportive services.** The program did not need to hire as many case managers as planned because some of this support was available through the facility's correctional counselors.

The program director estimated that the in-kind support from the facility yielded a cost savings equivalent to about three full-time staff members. Fort Scott CC received a one-year, no-cost extension to spend down the grant's remaining funds; negotiations with DOL were ongoing at the time of the site visit.

Challenges and solutions

Operating a vocational training program within a juvenile correctional facility presented a number of challenges. In addition to securing the cooperation and buy-in of numerous stakeholders and adhering to the facility's security requirements, discussed above, the program management and staff faced challenges to delivering the program as intended. Other challenges included collaborating among program and facility staff and developing partnerships to maximize youth's potential for success upon release. Exhibit 4 summarizes the challenges and their solutions.

Exhibit 4. Challenges and solutions to implementing the water tech program in a correctional facility

Challenge	Solution
Youth had other mandatory activities which at times conflicted with class sessions.	The instructor tailored the sequence of class sessions and/or skipped certain portions for students when needed to keep them on track to complete the module.
Restrictions on use of some materials, such as wood, glass, and nails, made it impossible to fully carry out planned program activities.	Program staff developed creative work-arounds to replicate the lab setting without restricted materials, by substituting approved materials, such as plastic rather than glass.
Service learning activities in the community were infeasible because youth could not leave the correctional facility.	Participants took part in a service learning project that benefited the community, but it was conducted within the facility.
Coordination between program and KJCC staff, particularly around the post-release transition plans of youth, was difficult.	Senior leadership of the program and KJCC held regular meetings to convey status and recruitment updates. However, this challenge was ongoing at the time of the site visit.
Partnerships with employers were difficult to develop because program staff, and often the youth themselves, did not know to which community or other facility they would be released.	The program was still working on finding solutions to this at the time of the site visit.

Adhering to the program model

As mentioned previously, the program model as conceived included a sequence of training activities in four modules combined with hands-on service learning activities. Three major challenges affected Fort Scott CC’s ability to follow the program model faithfully:

1. Despite coordination efforts, participants had to adhere to their work schedules at the facility and group therapy sessions, which sometimes conflicted with water tech classroom sessions. To address this challenge, the program instructor needed to tailor the sequence of the training or even skip some portions of the training so that the students could complete a module.
 2. The program was unable to carry out some components of the training fully, including the water tech lab, because of the restrictions on the use of certain supplies such as glass and wood. Other materials—such as nails, scissors, and shovels—were also prohibited at the facility. To address this challenge, the program staff had to find ways to replicate a lab setting without these materials, by using plastic containers instead of glass and borrowing supplies from the facility’s maintenance department.
 3. Despite program staff’s strategies to adjust service learning activities at KJCC, service learning in the larger community—an emphasis of the TSL grants—was infeasible. For instance, activities that required students to engage in service learning outside the facility were strictly prohibited. As a result, students were unable to restore a nearby creek as planned. Other security rules prevented the program from sharing a participant-produced educational video beyond the facility walls. To address these challenges, the participants did a service learning project in which they created children’s books that were donated to local schools.
-

In spite of these challenges, the staff tried to adhere to the program model through creativity and ingenuity whenever possible and maintained high expectations for students' performance in college-level classes.

Developing and maintaining collaborative relationships

During the program planning phase, Fort Scott CC leaders worked diligently to form collaborative relationships with the Juvenile Justice Authority, the on-site high school, and KJCC staff to gain approval and buy-in for the water tech program. Some of these collaborative relationships continued during program implementation; for example, the program director and KJCC deputy superintendent met regularly. However, other program staff reported facing challenges in creating collaborative relationships with KJCC staff. For example, most youth released from KJCC are assigned to aftercare facilities or halfway houses throughout Kansas, including facilities so geographically distant that they had no relationship with KJCC. Release information was often not disclosed to program staff, so they did not know where to focus their job placement activities on behalf of youth. Staff reported that several placements had fallen through when youth were not released to the geographic area where the job was located. Although probation officers usually shared information about participants' release terms, including where they would be released, with KJCC's reentry specialists, the program staff were unsuccessful in obtaining this information from either probation officers or reentry specialists.¹²

In addition, the high school contractor changed during the implementation period. The principal at the previous, long-time contractor was very supportive of the water tech program and collaborated with program staff. After the change in contractor, program staff needed to develop connections to the new contractor's high school staff because the water tech program relied heavily on the high school to recruit participants. However, at the time of the site visit, program staff were struggling to develop a strong, collaborative relationship with the high school staff, and were continuing to explore ways to partner with the school to meet their enrollment goals.

Developing other partnerships

After the initial planning and design stage, program staff struggled to develop and maintain partnerships with other partners such as probation officers and employers. Program staff indicated that, while they tried to connect to probation officers, their efforts were mostly unsuccessful. Probation officers often did not return phone calls, and when they did, they were reluctant to share information about their clients with the program staff. As a result, the program staff did not know where youth would be placed after leaving the facility, making it nearly impossible to assist them with job search activities. As for employers, program staff reported that they did not prioritize building relationships with employers because, as mentioned previously, program staff were largely unable to discern where youth would be released, making it difficult to locate a feasible job placement. As a result, the program did not have strong partnerships with employers at the time of the site visit. The one employer whom the evaluation team interviewed

¹² An obvious question is why the program did not obtain this information directly from the participants. Respondents reported that youth often had no idea where they would be released. Many expected to go home but instead were released to aftercare facilities or halfway houses.

did not have a formal partnership with the program; the former participant whom the employer hired found the job on his own.

Lessons learned

The Fort Scott CC experience reveals lessons for the designers and implementers of programs “inside the fence.” The lessons learned from the implementation of the water tech program at KJCC can inform how other correctional facilities can partner with postsecondary institutions and workforce development systems to offer relevant education and training in a challenging setting:

- **Although it seems challenging, partnerships between postsecondary institutions and juvenile correctional facilities are achievable when strong champions exist.** The Fort Scott CC president at the time galvanized support for operating the water tech program inside the correctional facility. He identified a relevant training program for youth offenders and pitched the idea to the principal of the on-site high school. He, in turn, became a champion of the program and facilitated meetings with the JJA and KJCC staff. The timing was good for introducing such a program, given recent cuts in services offered for KJCC residents and JJA’s desire to foster connections with postsecondary education providers.
- **Understanding and adequately addressing the correctional facility’s security requirements is critical.** The security requirements at KJCC—such as restrictions on residents’ use of certain materials and needing to escort them to and from the classroom—are mandatory, and it was infeasible for the facility to modify requirements for some residents only. Program staff assessed these requirements and then worked closely with KJCC staff to address their security concerns, taking care to leverage support where it was available and find ways to adapt the program model when needed. With the collaboration of KJCC staff, program staff developed creative work-arounds to deliver program services as comprehensively as possible, within the security requirements.
- **Implementing a program inside a correctional facility takes longer than in other contexts.** Obtaining buy-in from KJCC line staff and addressing the security requirements of the facility for participating students took longer than would be expected in a community setting. In addition, KJCC leaders had to carefully review and approve the training and proposed service learning activities. Finally, according to respondents, the background checks and clearances required for program staff to enter the facility were time-consuming and challenging to complete in a timely fashion, particularly for part-time staff. In recognition of this, future efforts should consider allotting extra time for program planning after grant award.
- **Implementing a program for youth offenders inside a correctional facility holds certain advantages over trying to serve them in the community.** After two years of implementation, according to one program leader:

I think there are huge benefits to doing this at KJCC. At the facility, it was easier because our students were there; they came to class; they were on time. I really can’t imagine how the program would have worked [for this population] outside the walls.

In addition, operating at KJCC allowed the program to leverage in-kind transfers of space, equipment, and staff from the facility, ultimately reducing costs to the program.

- **Better information about youth’s transition plans is needed to adequately provide job placement assistance to them.** Youth who completed the water tech program obtained vocational credentials and learned resume writing and interviewing skills that would serve them well wherever they were released. However, program staff lamented that they could not access specific information on youth’s transition plans, which would have allowed them to directly place youth into jobs they could have started immediately upon release from KJCC.

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APPENDIX A

DOL SITE VISIT QUESTIONS

- Design, planning, set-up
 - How did you outreach to secure the facility?
 - What challenges did you face in starting the program and maintaining operation?
- Operations
 - Are you allowed to use the Internet? If so, how did you manage this approval?
 - What types of approvals did you have to obtain from the facility to operate the program? What are the restrictions?
 - Do your staff members have to complete a background check and/or training? If so, what type? FBI?
 - Do you have any collaboration agreement or partnership with a public, private or nonprofit organization?
 - Do you have a satellite off-site for participants that have been released?
- Services
 - How do you screen for enrollment? Do you have a written policy?
 - How are the classes taken at the correctional facility (on-line vs on-site?)
 - How are the course funded?
 - What other supportive services are provided for the participants? (i.e., career planning & services, mentoring, counseling, etc.)
 - How do you provide service learning?
 - How do you provide career exploration?
 - How do you provide service learning?
 - How do you provide career exploration?
- Costs
 - What are the cost involved and are there savings from working within the facility?
- Lessons learned and challenges
 - What were the challenges in the community college operating a RExO grant?
- Outcomes
 - What is the rate that participants continue their education once released? How is it then funded? (PELL)

APPENDIX B

MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE KANSAS JUVENILE JUSTICE
AUTHORITY, LAWRENCE GARDNER HIGH SCHOOL AND FORT SCOTT
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

**Memorandum of Agreement
between
The Kansas Juvenile Justice Authority,
Lawrence Gardner High School
and
Fort Scott Community College**

This Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) is entered into by and between the Kansas Juvenile Justice Authority (JJA), Lawrence Gardner High School (LGHS) and Fort Scott Community College (FSCC), collectively referred to as the parties. Except as specifically provided, this MOA shall be non-financial in nature. The parties understand as follows:

WHEREAS, FSCC is the recipient of a U.S. Department of Labor/Education Training Administration grant. As part of that grant FSCC is desirous of offering a Water Technologies program to juvenile offenders at the Kansas Juvenile Justice Complex (KJCC) through the educational curriculum offered by JJA's educational contractor LGHS; and

WHEREAS, JJA is statutorily required to continually review and evaluate its programmatic and educational mission and is authorized by K.S.A. 75-7024(h) to enter into memorandums of agreement with other governmental entities to carry out those responsibilities; and

WHEREAS, in recognition of their mutual interests in ensuring that juvenile offenders have available to them diverse and quality educational opportunities, FSCC, LGHS and JJA propose this MOA as a means to achieve that goal, to establish a cooperative and mutually beneficial working relationship between and among the parties, and to set forth the relative responsibilities of the parties.

NOW, THEREFORE, in consideration of the mutual aims and desires of the parties to this MOA, and in recognition of the public benefit to be derived from an effective alignment of the parties to provide a Waters Technologies program aimed at juveniles, the parties understand and agree to the following:

I. TERM

The term of this MOA shall commence on January 1, 2013, and end December 31, 2014.

II. JUVENILE JUSTICE AUTHORITY

JJA will:

1. Provide sufficient classroom space at KJCC to FSCC.
2. Provide office space for eight FSCC grant personnel (Project Director, Office Assistant, Water Technologies Instructor, Water Technologies Assistant, three Case Managers, Case Manager Assistant).
3. Assist in identifying and placing juvenile offenders into the FSCC Waters Technologies program

III. FORT SCOTT COMMUNITY COLLEGE

FSCC will:

1. Provide content instruction and training, developmental education, safety training, service learning, and case management.
2. Offer Water Technologies training to up to 24 KJCC/LGHS students every six months over the course of the term of this MOA.
3. Comply with all applicable federal and state statutes and regulations pertaining to the providing of educational programs, to include, but not limited to, Title IX requirements
4. Comply with all KJCC and JJA policies. FSCC understands and agrees that FSCC grant personnel are subject to security clearance policy and procedure of KJCC and JJA which includes a criminal history background check and a Kansas Department of Children and Families Child Abuse Registry check.

IV. LAWRENCE GARDNER HIGH SCHOOL

LGHS will:

1. Serve as point of contact for FSCC.
2. Facilitate the referral of juvenile offenders into the FSCC Waters Technologies program.
3. Provide assistance as necessary to FSCC in administering the Water Technologies program.

V. JOINT EFFORTS

1. The parties understand and agree that this MOA only provides a general understanding and agreement in principle to providing a Waters Technologies program by FSCC at KJCC

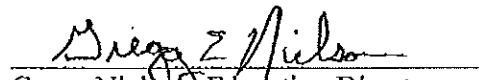
2. The parties agree to meet and arrange all mutually acceptable details and logistics of carrying out the terms of this MOA prior to the start date.

The parties hereto have entered into this Memorandum of Agreement ("MOA") on this the 18 day of October, 2012, by affixing their signatures hereto below.

KANSAS JUVENILE JUSTICE AUTHORITY


Terri Williams, Commissioner

LAWRENCE GARDNER HIGH SCHOOL


Gregg Nielson, Education Director

FORT SCOTT COMMUNITY COLLEGE


Clayton Jatro, President

Memorandum of Understanding

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is entered into between Fort Scott Community College (FSCC) and Washburn University (WU).

WHEREAS, the U.S. Department of Labor awarded FSCC a grant to implement a [Serving Young Adult Ex-Offenders through Training and Service-Learning - SGA-DFA-PY-11-03](#) grant;

WHEREAS, FSCC may expend such funds as permitted by the terms of the DOL; and

WHEREAS, FSCC and WU have agreed to collaborate through the [Serving Young Adult Ex-Offenders through Training and Service-Learning - SGA-DFA-PY-11-03](#) project.

NOW THEREFORE, the parties agree as follows:

1. TERM

The term of this MOU shall be from the date this agreement is signed by both parties through December 31, 2014, contingent upon continued funding.

2. COVENENANTS BY WU

WU will: (A) Participate as outlined in this MOU between FSCC and WU, and (i) complete all required tasks and documents, data submissions and reporting requirements, and (ii) participate in all related events as requested by the FSCC management team; (B) Submit to FSCC an invoice for contractual expenses as outlined in the grant; and (C) Request funds no later than December 31, 2014, after which date WU agrees that no further payments by FSCC will be due or owing.

WU participation includes:

Development and Implementation of Service Learning experiences for program participants. These service learning experiences will span the duration of the grant with four participant cohorts each working for six months. Each (maximum 24-person) cohort will be divided into four teams of six participants to work at the service sites. A 1.0 FTE LinC staff person will supervise the teams led by 4.0 Equivalent LinC Student Leaders discussed in a later section. This staff member will be responsible for facilitating the reflection groups. Each team will be required to spend five to ten hours per week on site over their six-month commitment. Participants will also be required to attend two hours a week of guided reflection with their team. The reflection will focus on both the importance of the service project to the environment, skill development and the development of the participants as leaders and engaged citizens. Reflection meetings will focus on personal skills, including active listening, understanding personal boundaries, communication, decision making, organization and planning, time management, and understanding of the impact the service project is having on the community.

Leadership Development: The service learning model used by LinC encourages the development of a problem-solving approach by promoting the development of collaborative problem-solving teams. This collaborative planning model involves community partners, LinC staff, and the participants. Leadership Development will include conflict resolution, delegation of roles, planning, public speaking, organizing a meeting, teamwork, and working with diverse groups.

Instructional Intervention: Washburn Institute of Technology will assist and/or provide the following education interventions as opportunities arise through the grant: 1) Work Keys testing and, 2) OSHA-10 safety training.

3. CONVENANTS BY FSCC

FSCC will: (A) Reimburse WU as outlined in the grant for personnel, contracted services, and supplies through December 31, 2014 in the amount of \$192,356, payable in monthly installments upon receipt of invoice from WU. (B) Pay WU for enrolled students' tuition and fees for instructional interventions. (C) Provide direct and indirect supervision to WU grant personnel as outlined by the grant. (D) Assist in service learning and educational intervention reporting requirements as outlined by the grant. (E) Meet quarterly with WU representatives to review progress on the MOU.

4. CONTACTS

- [Serving Young Adult Ex-Offenders through Training and Service-Learning - SGA-DFA-PY-11-03](#) Project Director, Matt Brillhart, mattbr@fortscott.edu
- FSCC President, Clayton Tatro, claytont@fortscott.edu
- Rick Ellis, Professor, Human Services/Director of the Center for Community Services, rick.ellis@washburn.edu
- WIT Associate Dean of Instruction, Gillian Gabelmann, gillian.gabelmann@washburntech.edu

Authorized Institutional Representatives:

Print Name: _____

Print Name: _____

Title: _____

Title: _____

Date: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Signature: _____

Washburn University

Fort Scott Community College

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