

Pathway Home Evaluation Brief: 2021 Grants at a Glance

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August 2023

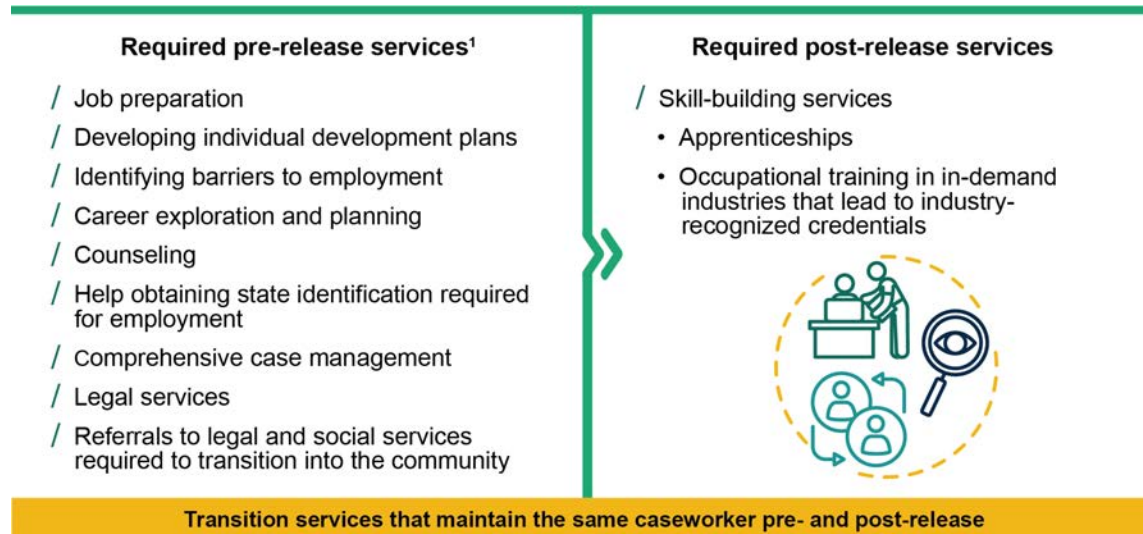
Introduction

This brief is part one in a series of three briefs describing the Pathway Home grants awarded by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) in 2021, with a focus on grantees' six-month planning period and first year of enrollment. The brief discusses the grants and describes the types of organizations funded, their locations, staffing structures, partnerships, and the services provided. Other briefs in the series will describe the grantees' experiences implementing their programs inside and outside correctional facilities during the same period.² Throughout the brief we refer to services provided inside correctional facilities as pre-release services, and those provided outside of correctional facilities as post-release services (see Exhibit 1 for a description of the Pathway Home service model).

Study background

In 2020, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) funded Mathematica and partner Social Policy Research Associates to design and conduct an evaluation of the Pathway Home grants.¹ This brief focuses on the 22 Pathway Home grants awarded in 2021 and describes the grantees' experiences during their first year of implementation. DOL also funded a prior cohort of 20 grantees in 2020 that are described in a separate [brief](#). ▲

Exhibit 1. Pathway Home Service Model



Source: U.S. Department of Labor Pathway Home 2 FOA-ETA-21-02.

¹ Pre-release services such as job preparation, career exploration and planning, and other supportive services begin pre-release but may continue through post-release services.

¹ The Council of State Governments Justice Center was also part of the initial contract and supported the design of the Pathway Home Evaluation.

² Pathway Home Evaluation briefs and reports are available at <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/oasp/evaluation/completedstudies/pathway-home-reentry-evaluation>.

As part of the Pathway Home implementation study, Mathematica administered a survey to Pathway Home grantees and subgrantees from September to December 2022, and another survey to grantees' correctional facility partners from October to December 2022. The grantee survey asked questions about how grantees administer their grant programs, and the facility survey asked questions about how facility partners support program implementation. Overall, the grantee survey had a 94 percent response rate (32 of 34 grantees and subgrantees), and the facility survey had a response rate of 70 percent (83 of 119 facility partners).

The findings reported in this series of briefs are observational and describe the 2021 grantee experiences and should not be interpreted as causal claims.

Summary of findings from the grantee and facility surveys administered to the Pathway Home grantees from September to December 2022

- All grantees partnered with correctional facilities to provide pre-release, post-release, and transition services. Participating prisons were predominantly minimum and medium security facilities (70 percent and 63 percent, respectively), with a little over one-third having maximum security designations (36 percent). Participating jails, on the other hand, had similar security rates across the board (85 percent minimum security, 90 percent medium security, and 90 percent maximum security). Please note that many correctional facilities reported having multiple security designations.
- Overall, grantees followed most of the requirements set out in the funding opportunity announcement. Nearly all grantees offered pre-release education (96 percent) and employment services (100 percent), and all reported offering supportive services (100 percent). However, grantees reported more variety in their post-release education, employment, and supportive service offerings than pre-release.
- When asked which partners they considered most critical for program success, grantees identified employers (93 percent of grantees), education and training providers (86 percent), workforce development boards or American Job Centers (71 percent), housing service providers or agencies (68 percent), and correctional agencies (not including partner facilities) (64 percent) as critical partners.
- All grantees worked predominantly with their preexisting partners to deliver their Pathway Home grant programs and tended to have formal agreements with their partners, especially with partners identified as critical.
- Most but not all grantees provided continuous case management (89 percent), which was a critical aspect of the Pathway Home grant. These grantees reported that participants worked with the same case manager before and after release. ▲

Overview of the 2021 Pathway Home grants

In July 2021, DOL awarded almost \$58 million in grants to 22 organizations to partner with correctional facilities to provide services to people who were currently incarcerated. Grantees and their partners had to provide these services within 20 to 180 days of participants' scheduled release date, and participants had to meet other eligibility criteria (see Box 1). Each 42-month grant cycle started with a six-month planning period, followed by 24 months of participant enrollment and 12 months of follow-up during which grantees tracked participants' outcomes. Some grantees, referred to as direct grantees, provided services directly to program participants, whereas other grantees, referred to as intermediaries, provided services indirectly through partner subgrantees. In addition to providing services to the eligible population while they were still incarcerated, grantees were required to provide transition and post-release services.

Box 1. 2021 Pathway Home program participant eligibility

To be eligible for Pathway Home services, people had to meet all of the following criteria:

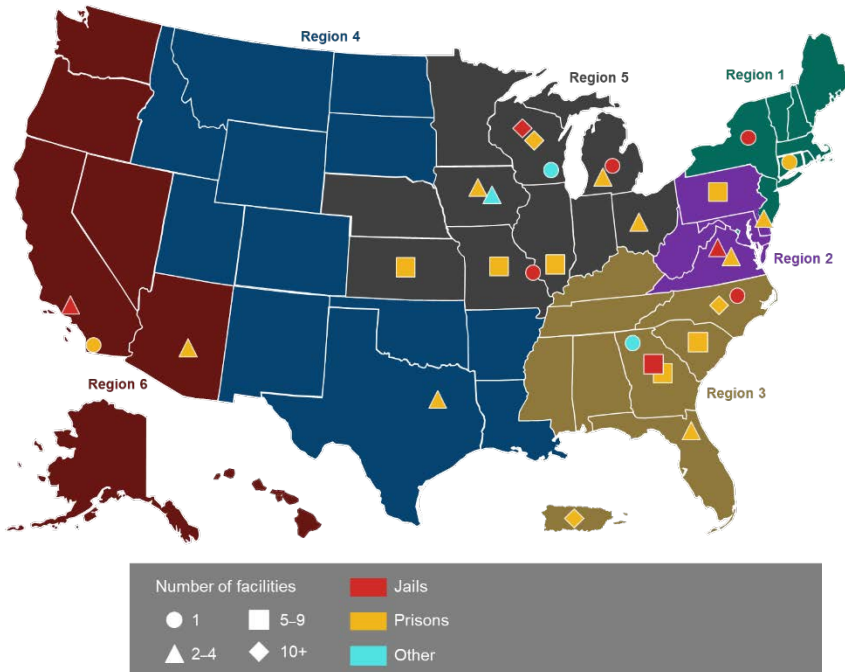
- Be at least 18 years old
- Reside, at the time of enrollment, in a state correctional facility or local jail for adults
- Have a release date scheduled 20 to 180 days from the individual's enrollment in the program
- Upon release, be scheduled to return to reside in the area identified in the applicant's application
- Be legally eligible to work in the United States

Source: U.S. Department of Labor Pathway Home FOA-ETA-21-02.

Locations of the 2021 Pathway Home grant programs

Pathway Home grantees provided services across the country, spanning rural, urban, and suburban areas. The majority of grantee survey respondents (75 percent) reported providing services in both rural and urban communities, including 65 percent of direct grantees and 91 percent of subgrantees. Twenty-one percent provided services exclusively in urban or suburban settings; these were all direct grantees. Only one subgrantee provided services exclusively in rural communities. Exhibit 2 shows the number and locations of participating correctional facilities by type (jails, prisons, and other, such as work-release centers, halfway houses, residential reentry centers, community correctional facilities and courts) in each state.

Exhibit 2. Locations of the 2021 Pathway Home facility partner sites, by type, state, and region



Source: Cohort 2 grantees reported all their facility partners to the study team before the survey was fielded. In December 2022, the partner sites included 34 jails, 103 prisons, and nine sites that were another type of correctional facility (work-release centers, halfway houses, residential reentry centers, community correctional facilities and courts).

Note: States are categorized into regions by DOL (<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/regions>). Please note that this map includes all facilities at the time the survey was administered in December 2022 to Pathway Home facility partners, including facilities that did not respond to the survey.

Types of organizations awarded Pathway Home grant programs in 2021

More than half of grantees who responded to the grantee survey were nonprofit organizations (53 percent), including 65 percent of direct grantees, 50 percent of intermediary grantees, and 36 percent of subgrantees. The second most common organization type was workforce development boards,³ at 28 percent, including 24 percent of direct grantees, 25 percent of intermediary grantees, and 36 percent of subgrantees. Other organization types included government agencies, institutions of higher education, industry or commerce organizations, and for-profit businesses (see Exhibit 3).

Exhibit 3. Organization types of grantee survey respondents (percentage)

| Type of organization | All | Direct | Intermediary | Subgrantee |
|--|-----|--------|--------------|------------|
| Nonprofit organization | 53% | 65% | 50% | 36% |
| Workforce development agency/ board | 28% | 24% | 25% | 36% |
| Institutions of higher education | 13% | 12% | 25% | 10% |
| Government agency | 13% | 12% | 0% | 20% |
| Industry or commerce organization | 3% | 0% | 25% | 0% |
| Private, for-profit business | 3% | 0% | 0% | 9% |
| Sample size | 32 | 17 | 4 | 11 |

Source: Responses from all 32 grantees surveyed in December 2022.

Note: The survey question stated, “Please select the type of organization that best represents your organization.” Please note that percentages may not add up to 100 percent because grantees were allowed to select multiple organizational types.

Correctional facility partners

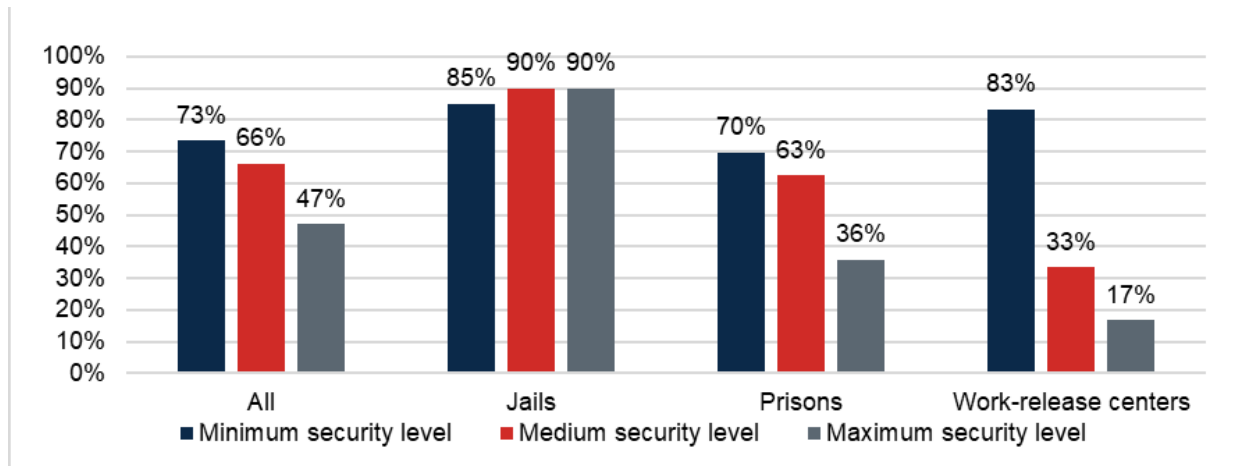
As discussed in the introduction, Pathway Home grantees partnered with a variety of correctional facilities to enroll participants and administer pre-release program services. Of the facility partners that responded to the facility survey, 56 categorized themselves as prisons (67 percent), 20 as jails (24 percent), and six as work-release centers (7 percent). One facility did not identify its type.⁴ Facilities reported having a variety of security levels (minimum, medium, and maximum). Facilities reported having minimum security designations at the highest rate (73 percent of facilities), followed by medium security (66 percent), and maximum (47 percent). Participating prisons predominantly had minimum and medium security designations (70 percent and 63 percent, respectively) as opposed to a minority that had maximum security designations (36 percent) (see Exhibit 4). Participating jails, on the other hand, reported similar security designations across the board (85 percent minimum security, 90 percent medium security, and 90 percent maximum).⁵ Of the six work-release centers that responded, five (83 percent) identified themselves as minimum security.

³ Workforce development boards are local organizations that oversee strategic planning and funding priorities for job seeker and business services funding by the state and federal agencies.

⁴ Please note that Pathway Home grantees continued to establish partnerships with correctional agencies after the data used to inform this brief was collected. This information does not represent partnerships over the course of administering the Pathway Home grant.

⁵ Please note that numbers do not sum to 100 percent because facilities often house multiple security levels and the question asked respondents to select all levels that applied to their facility.

Exhibit 4. Correctional facility partner by type and security level



Source: Responses from 83 facilities surveyed in December 2022.

Note: The survey question asked respondents to identify their facility type. Please note that facilities were allowed to select multiple security levels and as a result, ratios will not add up to 100 percent. Please note that this only includes facilities that responded to the survey.

Grantee experience with reentry programs

Pathway Home grantees described their experience providing reentry services and services to people involved with the justice system in response to the grantee survey.

- **Serving people in correctional facilities.** The grantee survey results indicated that most grantees had multiple years of experience providing services in correctional facilities (94 percent), with an average of 13 years. Years of experience providing services in correctional facilities ranged from a low of zero to a maximum of 80, with a median of nine years. Only two grantees reported one year or less, including a direct and an intermediary grantee.
- **Serving people with justice involvement.** Similarly, most grantees (94 percent) reported experience providing services to people involved with the justice system, with an average of 22 years. One intermediary grantee reported only one year of experience providing services to this population. Years of experience ranged from one to 89 years, with a median of 14 years.
- **Engaging employers who hire people with criminal records or people involved with the justice system.** Grantee survey respondents reported an average of 20 years of experience engaging employers who hire people with justice involvement. Years of experience exactly matched the years serving people with justice involvement (one to 89 years), with a median of 14 years.

Partner types considered by grantees as critical for program services

Pathway Home grantees relied on numerous types of partners to provide employment, education, legal, supportive, and follow-up services to their participants (Exhibit 5). Partners that were most frequently recognized as critical by the grantees included employers (93 percent of grantees), education and training providers (86 percent), workforce development boards or American Job Centers (71 percent), housing service providers or agencies (68 percent), and correctional agencies (not including partner facilities) (64 percent). Grantees identified courts (25 percent) and economic development agencies (21 percent) as critical least often.

Exhibit 5. Percentage of grantees who ranked partner type as top three most critical

| Partner type | Percentage of grantees |
|--|------------------------|
| Employers | 93% |
| Education or training providers | 86% |
| Workforce development boards or American Job Centers | 71% |
| Housing services or agencies | 68% |
| Corrections agencies | 64% |
| Reentry networks or councils | 61% |
| Health care–related organizations | 46% |
| Institutions of higher education | 46% |
| Legal service providers | 36% |
| Courts | 25% |
| Economic development agencies | 21% |
| Other | 4% |

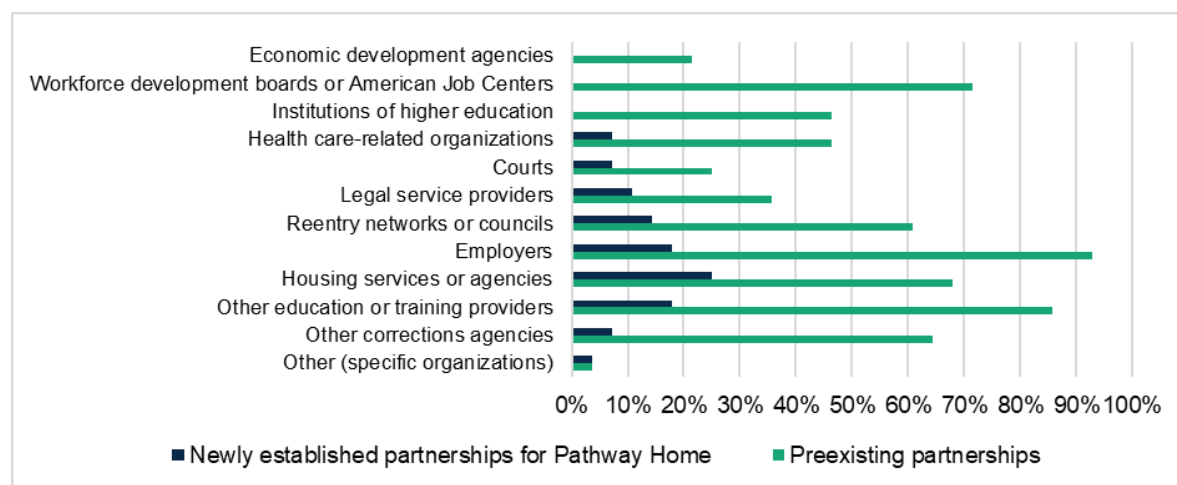
Source: Responses from all 32 grantees surveyed in December 2022.

Note: Respondents were asked to identify the three partnership types they considered most critical.

Newly established versus preexisting partnerships

All grantees worked predominantly with their preexisting partners to deliver their Pathway Home grant programs and tended to have formal agreements with their partners, especially with partners identified as critical. Thirty-eight percent of grantees did not report establishing any new partnerships for the grant as of the time of the survey.⁶ Among those who established new partnerships, the most common included housing providers (25 percent), employers (18 percent), education and training providers (18 percent), and reentry networks or councils (14 percent) (Exhibit 6).

Exhibit 6. Types of new and existing Pathway Home partners



Source: Responses from the 28 direct grantees and subgrantees surveyed in December 2022.

Note: The survey question asked, “Of your critical partnerships, which were newly established as a result of the Pathway Home grant?”

⁶ Note that Pathway Home grantees continued to establish partnerships with employers, correctional agencies, and other service providers after the data used to inform this brief were collected. This information does not represent grantee partnerships over the course of administering the Pathway Home grant.

Staff characteristics

Pathway Home grant program staff were expected to play a key role in achieving desired outcomes (Employment and Training Administration 2021). In the survey, grantees indicated the five characteristics that were most desirable when hiring Pathway Home staff; however, the qualifications that were most desirable varied greatly from grantee to grantee. Although grantees were required to provide case management services, only 7 percent of grantees ranked the length of case management experience as one of the most desirable staff characteristics (Exhibit 7). The low ranking might be explained by grantees' plans to offer training to Pathway Home staff; one of the two most common training opportunities grantees planned to offer was training on case management.

Exhibit 7. Percentage of grantees that ranked staff qualification as top five most desired

| Qualifications | Percentage of grantees |
|--|------------------------|
| Ability to work effectively with people from diverse backgrounds and with diverse perspectives | 46% |
| Prior experience working with people with criminal justice involvement | 36% |
| Ability to work effectively in a collaborative work environment | 32% |
| Willingness to be a strong advocate for participants | 32% |
| Good communication skills | 29% |
| Quality of past work experiences | 25% |
| Familiarity with neighborhood and services in the community | 25% |
| Prior experience working in incarceration facilities | 21% |
| Prior experience working with employers | 21% |
| Prior personal involvement with the justice system | 11% |
| Education level and professional certifications (LCSW, LCPC, and so on) | 11% |
| Ability to manage competing priorities | 7% |
| Length of case management experience | 7% |
| Good critical thinking skills | 7% |
| Willingness to foster self-sufficiency in participants | 7% |
| Length of past work experiences | 4% |
| Some other characteristic (specify) | 4% |
| <i>Organization was not involved in hiring process</i> | 21% |

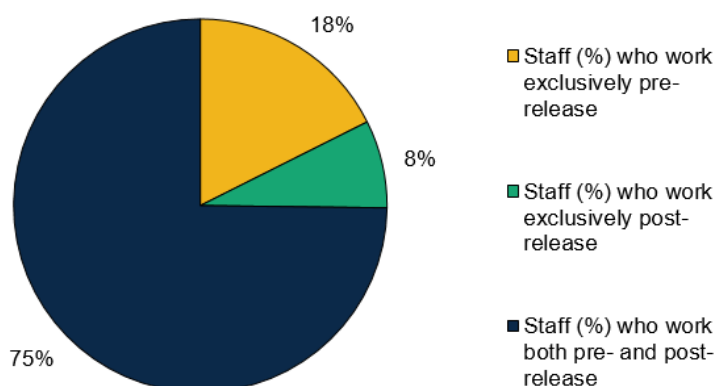
Source: Responses from the 28 direct grantees and subgrantees surveyed in December 2022.

Note: The survey question asked, "When hiring Pathway Home staff who work with participants (through internal assignment or external hiring), which qualifications did you prioritize? (Choose up to five.)" Intermediary grantees that did not provide direct services are not included in this exhibit.

LCPC = licensed clinical professional counselor; LCSW = licensed clinical social worker.

Each grantee had an average of five full-time Pathway Home staff, although two grantees reported no full-time staff, and one grantee reported 20 full-time staff. Across all grantee respondents, 18 percent of full-time Pathway Home staff worked exclusively pre-release, 8 percent worked exclusively post-release, and 75 percent worked both pre- and post-release (Exhibit 8).

Exhibit 8. Breakdown of full-time Pathway Home staff, by pre-release, post-release, or both



Source: Responses from the 28 direct grantees and subgrantees surveyed in December 2022.

Note: The survey question asked, "Think about all of the full-time equivalent (FTE) staff who are funded through your Pathway Home grant and indicate the number of staff providing direct services who work exclusively pre-release, exclusively post-release, or both. Please exclude staff who do not interact with participants." Intermediary grantees that did not provide direct services are not included in this exhibit.

Program services offered by grantees both pre- and post-release

DOL required grantees to provide specific pre-release, post-release, and transition services (see Box 2). The second and third briefs in this series will discuss how grantees implemented these service offerings and the challenges they encountered while doing so. Although each program committed to adhering to the requirements in the funding opportunity announcement (FOA), the precise features of programs varied across grantees (Exhibit 9).

Box 2. 2021 Pathway Home required services

Required pre-release services:

- Job preparation
- Developing individual development plans
- Identifying barriers to employment
- Career exploration and planning
- Counseling
- Help obtaining state identification required for employment
- Assistance with linking inmates to the social services required to help them transition back to their communities

Required post-release services:

- Skill-building services
 - Apprenticeships
 - Occupational training in in-demand industries that lead to industry-recognized credentials

Transition services that maintain the same caseworker pre- and post-release

Source: U.S. Department of Labor Pathway Home FOA-ETA-21-02.

Exhibit 9. Education and employment services that grantees commonly offered

| Share of grantees that provided service | Education and employment services | Other services |
|---|--|--|
| | Offered pre-release | |
| More than 90% | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individualized career planning or individualized development planning Employment barrier identification | - |
| 70–90% | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Job/work readiness training | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case management Planning for benefits assistance |
| 50–69% | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Occupational/vocational skills training Career and technical education that leads to an industry-recognized credential Job-search assistance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cognitive behavioral interventions Obtaining identification and/or a driver's license |
| Offered post-release | | |
| More than 90% | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Job placement Support for participants' job retention | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case management |
| 70–90% | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Occupational/vocational skills training Career and technical education that leads to an industry-recognized credential Job-search assistance Career advancement and mentoring Postsecondary education | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Transportation (such as bus passes) Planning for benefits assistance Obtaining identification and/or a driver's license Clothing and other work supports Financial literacy |
| 50–69% | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individualized career planning or individualized development planning Job/work readiness training Employment barrier identification Supports to employers of program participants Subsidized training Apprenticeships Adult basic education and literacy classes General equivalency degree (GED, TASC) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal assistance Mental health counseling or treatment Substance use disorder treatment Cognitive behavioral interventions Child care Peer support or mentoring Financial incentives |

Source: Responses from the 28 direct grantees and subgrantees surveyed in December 2022.

Note: The survey question stated, "Please indicate which of the following services are offered as part of your Pathway Home program and whether they are offered pre-release or post-release. Please include services funded through the DOL grant and other sources." Intermediary grantees that did not provide direct services are not included in this exhibit. Grantees that indicated they contract with a different organization to provide direct services to Pathway Home participants were instructed to consider the services provided by the organization(s) they contract with when answering this question.

GED = General Educational Development test; TASC = Test Assessing Secondary Completion.

Pre-release services offered:

- The most common education and employment services offered pre-release were employment barrier identification (96 percent), development of individualized career plans or individualized development plans (93 percent), and job or work readiness training (86 percent).
- The most common types of other services offered pre-release were case management (82 percent) and planning for benefits assistance (75 percent).

Post-release services offered:

- The most common education and employment services offered post-release were job placement (93 percent), support for participants' job retention (93 percent), and occupational/vocational skills training (82 percent).
- The most common types of other services offered post-release were case management (93 percent), clothing and other work supports (89 percent), and planning for benefits assistance (89 percent).

Grantees offered a greater variety of education and employment services during the post-release period than during pre-release. Similarly, grantees offered a greater variety of other types of services during the post-release period than pre-release.

More than 90 percent of grantees offered transition services, including reentry/discharge planning, planning for post-release housing, and coordination of information about reentry services in the community. In 89 percent of grantees, participants were reported to be working with the same staff before and after release.

Grantees' program models for case management and employment services

Although the FOA specified that grantees must provide case management and employment services, DOL allowed grantees flexibility in the models they used to offer these services (Employment and Training Administration 2021). Motivational interviewing was the most common case management model, followed by trauma-informed care, cognitive behavioral therapy and coaching, and positive youth development. Sixty-eight percent of grantees reported using more than one case management model, and 11 percent of grantees reported not using a case management model. In terms of employment services, the employer-driven model for justice-involved individuals was the most common, followed by sectoral employment and training, and supported employment (see Box 3). Forty-three percent of grantees reported using more than one employment services model, and 11 percent of grantees reported not using an employment services model.

Box 3. Types of case management and employment service models

Case management models

- **Motivational interviewing (71 percent).** A counseling approach to resolve resistance to change and motivate participants toward positive behavior change (Case Western Reserve University n.d.[a]).
- **Trauma-informed care (57 percent).** A model that seeks to promote healing and prevent retraumatization of vulnerable individuals (Bowen and Murshid 2016).
- **Cognitive behavioral therapy and coaching (46 percent).** An evidence-based approach for reducing recidivism that teaches participants to be mindful of and adapt their thinking away from harmful thoughts and behaviors (Milkman and Wanberg 2007).
- **Positive youth development (7 percent).** A model that seeks to give youth the resources necessary to develop in the context of their communities (Benson et al. 2006).

Employment services models

- **Employer-driven model for justice-involved individuals (39 percent).** An approach that focuses on the needs and expectations of specific employers when preparing people for employment (National Institute of Corrections n.d.).
- **Sectoral employment and training (32 percent).** An approach that focuses on the needs and input of local employers in high-demand sectors (Holzer 2022).
- **Supported employment (25 percent).** An approach that helps people with mental illness and other disabilities obtain competitive work and provides the supports necessary to ensure their success in the workplace (Case Western Reserve University n.d.[b]).
- **READY4WORK (18 percent).** A branded intervention that provides soft skills training (such as résumé writing), mentoring, job training, job placement, and case management (Bauldry and McClanahan 2008).
- **Transition to Success (7 percent).** A branded intervention that treats poverty as an environmentally based medical condition by creating a coordinated system of care across health care, human services, government, education, and faith-based organizations (Wilson 2020).
- **Active career exploration model (4 percent).** A model to learn more about a career or industry by actively speaking with various industry professionals and creating a plan for working in a sector of interest based on the information gathered (Chen et al. 2015). ▲

Source: Responses from the 28 direct grantees and subgrantees surveyed in December 2022.

Note: The survey questions asked, “Do you use any of the following case management/employment program models in your Pathway Home program?” Intermediary grantees that did not provide direct services are not included in this exhibit. Grantees that indicated they contract with a different organization to provide direct services to Pathway Home participants were instructed to consider the program models used by the organization(s) they contract with when answering this question.

Next steps for studying early grant implementation

The findings in this brief describe the Pathway Home grantees and provide an early look at their structures and planned services. A future implementation report will document the experiences of these grantees over the full period of enrollment using information from site visits to the impact study grantee sites, in-depth interviews with program participants, Workforce Integrated Performance System data, and interviews with grantee staff. An impact study will assess how services offered by a subset of Pathway Home grantees affected participant employment, recidivism, and other outcomes.

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This report was prepared for the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), Chief Evaluation Office (CEO) by Bernadette Hicks, Robert Lynn-Green, and Armando Yañez. The views expressed are those of the authors and should not be attributed to DOL, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement of same by the U.S. Government