

Project Restoration Evaluation Findings and Recommendations

Prepared for Volunteers of America Northern New England

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Background

In 2020, Volunteers of America Northern New England (VOANNE) was awarded a three-year Second Chance Grant by the Bureau of Justice Assistance to run Project Restoration, a community-based adult reentry project serving three rural communities in Maine. VOANNE then received a one-year no-cost extension in 2023 to conclude the project in September 2023. Project Restoration has worked to expand on and strengthen already decade-long partnerships providing comprehensive reentry services. The main activities of the project are case management, behavioral health treatment, and restorative practices.

The need

Reentry and community context

Within three years of release from state prisons, federal prisons, and local jails, about half of people are reincarcerated and two-thirds are rearrested (Office of the Assistance Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, n.d.). Existing research highlights how challenges to reentry are compounded in rural communities because they are often underserved and under-resourced. Employment, housing, transportation, and limited social and health services are all common barriers for individuals reentering rural communities, and access to reentry programming is often limited (Benavides et al., 2023; Ward et al., 2016; Ward, 2017; Zajac et al., 2014).

Additionally, the opioid crisis has significantly impacted rural communities, including those in Maine (Maine Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future, 2023). The rate of overdose fatalities in Maine increased from 0.3 per 1,000 population in January 2017 to 0.6 in January 2022, and the rate in Waldo County also increased from 0.2 in 2017 (8 total) to 0.5 in 2022 (20 total; Maine Drug Data Hub, 2024). Overdose fatalities most notably increased during the COVID-19 pandemic: the fatality rate in Maine increased 33% between 2019 and 2020, with 83% of deaths in 2020 due to opioids.

Without opportunities, resources, and support, people reentering rural communities may experience hopelessness and criminogenic needs contributing to recidivism (Ward, 2017; Pettus-Davis & Kennedy, 2019). The findings from the current project also identified many of these challenges. Limited access to and availability of resources and services like internet, public transportation, health care and insurance, employment options, and affordable housing across counties and the state were stressed as barriers hindering the success of the program.

Housing was identified as a particularly significant challenge, and this is compounded by the lack of viable employment options that provide a livable wage. The median cost for a studio efficiency or one-bedroom apartment in Waldo County, Maine in 2023 was \$916-\$922, and

a two bedroom was \$1,174 per month (RentData, 2024). According to the Maine Department of Labor (2024), the minimum wage in 2023 was \$13.80 per hour in the state. Individuals employed full time, earning minimum wage, and who rent at least a studio efficiency would then be considered “cost-burdened”¹ or “severely cost-burdened”² (Office of Housing and Urban Development, 2014). Rent burden contributes to lacking the means to afford other necessities such as food, clothing, child care and more. Furthermore, the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC, 2024) notes the extreme shortage of rentals that are affordable to households whose incomes are at or below the poverty guideline or 30% of their area median income.

In addition to the shortage of affordable housing and within the vicinity of the VOANNE network—within a four-city radius—there were no homeless shelters, nor mental health facilities with detox beds, and only one sober house. While VOANNE provides tents and camp supplies in more dire cases, and connects some participants with temporary transitional housing (including motels), they have access to very few permanent housing supports. Experiencing housing insecurity and homelessness can also negatively impact substance use. For example, efforts to stay awake to protect belongings and avoid violence is associated with developing and worsening substance use disorders (Mehtani et al., 2023).

Existing research and findings from the current evaluation indicate that transportation is often a significant challenge for individuals reentering rural communities (Benavides et al., 2023; Ward, 2017; Zajac et al., 2014). While Maine does have some public transportation, rural areas have limited public transportation. Some communities have fixed route bus services that do not operate 24 hours a day and seven days a week, but these may only be in some counties (Eichacker, 2021). Limited public transportation means limited independence upon reentry to get to and from places like the DMV, a job interview, or to work. Additionally, some participants in the current evaluation did not possess driver’s licenses, further limiting their transportation options.

This evaluation also identified how lack of phone service and high-speed internet make communication difficult and pose a barrier to building independence and integrating into society. Previous research has also identified these as significant reentry barriers (Pettus-Davis et al., 2019).

¹ Rent burden (also referred to as cost-burdened), according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), is when a household has to spend more than 30% of their income on housing (including utilities), this is also known as the 30% rent rule.

² Severe rent burden (also referred to as severe cost burden) according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), is when a household has to spend more than 50% of their income on housing (including utilities).

Correctional system initiatives

In response to the challenges that individuals face while reentering their communities, VOANNE and their partners have implemented several initiatives. Specifically, VOANNE has prioritized building trusting and collaborative partnerships with law enforcement agencies; this evaluation identified the strength of these partnerships. These partnerships facilitate opportunities to strengthen impact, such as the ability to provide services and programming within county jails while individuals are incarcerated. Additionally, post-release offices and community spaces provide critical support to individuals who are reentering their communities after incarceration, and VOA's diversion programming allows VOANNE to serve anyone who could benefit from services (e.g., not just individuals who are or have been incarcerated). VOANNE has also been able to expand to providing services in additional counties and correctional facilities over time.

Limited organizational resources

In addition to community characteristics and related reentry challenges, this evaluation's findings highlight how insufficient resources limit the program's impact. Specifically, these included:

- Lack of VOANNE insured vehicles and staff to provide participants with transportation for job interviews, doctor visits, court appointments and more. Even with a vehicle and a staff member to provide transport, there might be scheduling conflicts, or in the event that a staff member is out sick or on vacation, some programming aspects might cease because there was not a staff member to coordinate or drive.
- Limited staff, burnout, and turnover. Reports of challenges with programming and consistent follow-through were noted by staff and participants. These staffing limitations were exacerbated during program expansions made to offer additional resources and support to participants.

The COVID-19 pandemic intensified the challenges that nonprofit organizations like VOANNE faced as they worked to support individuals working through incarceration and release. The pandemic negatively impacted population health and well-being in many ways, particularly in rural communities and among individuals reentering their communities, straining organizations' capacity and hindering impact even further. For example, the pandemic contributed to increases in overdose fatalities, housing insecurity and homelessness, suicides, social isolation, domestic violence, and mental health concerns across the country, including Maine (Batko et al., 2021; Chandra et al., 2024; Desai et al., 2021; Durant et al., 2023; Franco-Paredes et al., 2021; Fulk et al., 2023; Kim & Royle, 2024; Kramer et al., 2023; Levesque et al., 2021; Schwartz-Mette et al., 2022; Sorg & Daley, 2020).

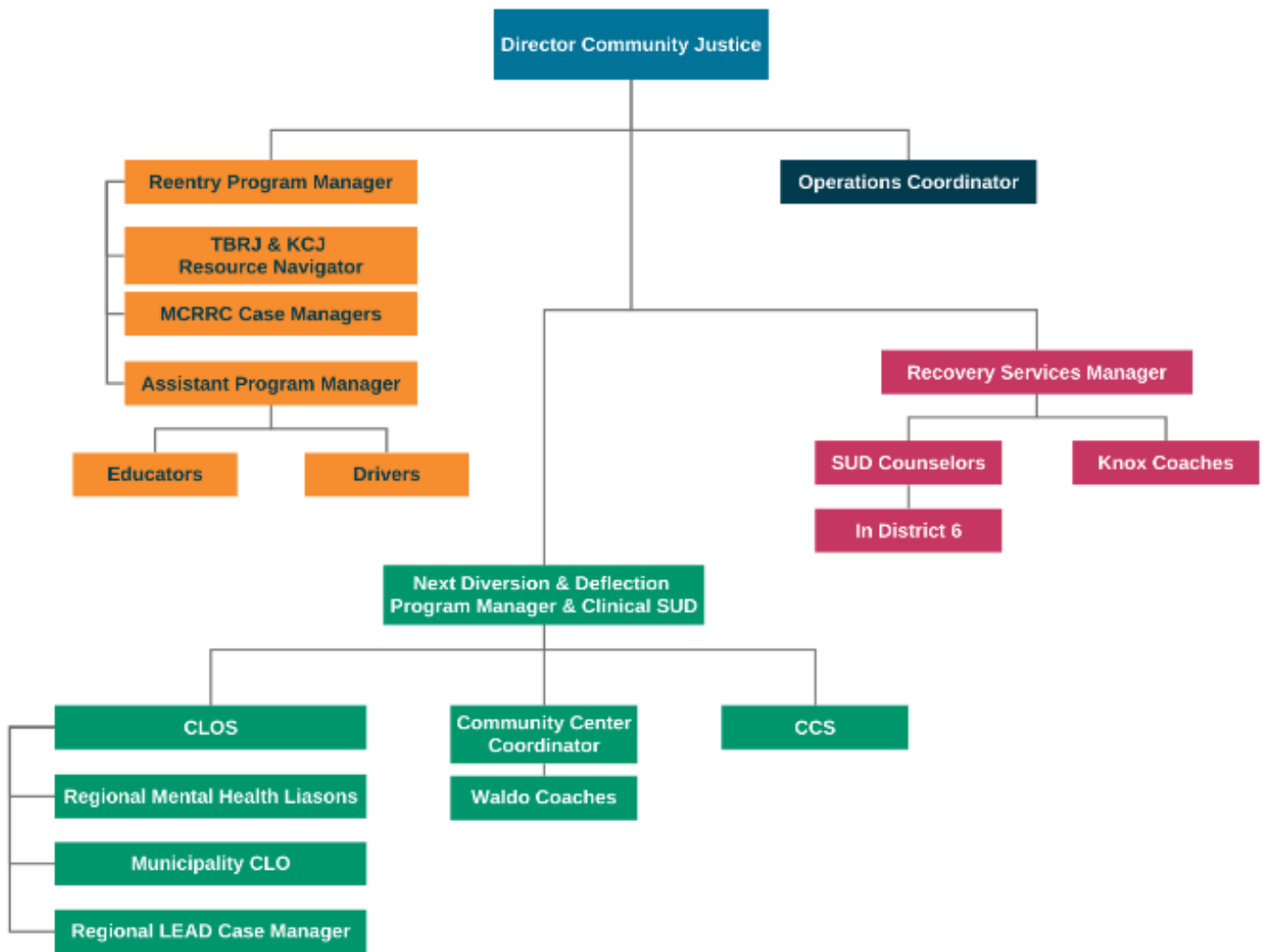
Specific populations

There are special considerations regarding specific populations and their reentry experiences. For example, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) individuals and women face systemic barriers and discrimination based on their identities, and reentry programming may not be culturally responsive or designed to best serve BIPOC individuals and women (Bonsu-Love, 2023; Crain et al., 2024; Holtfreter & Wattanaporn, 2014; Metcalfe et al., 2022; Salem et al., 2021; Scroggins & Malley, 2010; Stepteau-Watson et al., 2014; Western & Sirois, 2019). As a state, Maine has one of the smallest BIPOC populations in the country (9%; U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). This appears to contribute to limited support for those from BIPOC backgrounds. Similarly, while women are increasingly incarcerated at faster rates within the country, they continue to make up a significantly smaller proportion of incarcerates (7% of incarcerated people in federal prisons; Budd, 2024; Federal Bureau of Prisons, 2024).

What is the Project Restoration program?

Project Restoration is part of the Community Justice department/division at the Volunteers of America Northern New England (VOANNE). The department is comprised of three units: Re-entry, Recovery, and Diversion & Deflection. Project Restoration is housed within Project Connect, the physical office space where individuals are connected with services. See Figure 1 for an overview of the program’s organization.

1. Overview of VOANNE NNE’s Community Justice Department



How it operates as a program

Project Restoration provides free, seamless, and comprehensive reentry services to men and women reentering two of Maine’s rural counties (Waldo Knox counties), to improve housing, employment, educational, and substance use outcomes, and ultimately increase public safety and reduce recidivism. Services include post-release case management, recovery coaching, restorative arts, substance use counseling, restorative justice activities, and employment and education assistance. Figure 2 provides an overview of the services client survey respondents found most helpful and key outcomes from program data.

2. Most helpful and frequently provided services

Services most helpful for clients include:



Basic needs (10/11)



Coordination with attorneys and probation officers (9/9)



Education or vocational training (9/10)



Mental health supports or referrals (10/11)



Substance use services (12/13)

Services provided include:

107 participants who received SUD counseling

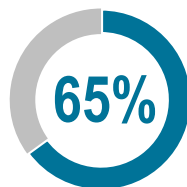
86 people received transportation services

52 people were referred to MAT

42 people received recovery coaching

184 group classes

142 CBT classes



of participants have **no new arrests or charges**

Evaluation of the Project Restoration program

Wilder Research conducted a process and outcome evaluation of the Project Restoration program. The evaluation sought to answer several implementation and outcome questions. Implementation questions included:

- What program components are most helpful, least helpful and missing for participants?
- Did participants receive comprehensive case management guided by care plans based on risk assessments and cognitive behavioral therapy?
- Did collaboration improve between community providers, law enforcement, probation, and other stakeholders?

Outcome questions included:

- Did participants have reduced recidivism?
- Did participants maintain stable housing post-release?
- Did participants establish and maintain employment?
- Did participants get enrolled in school (if applicable) or obtain their diploma or GED?
- Did participants have reduced substance use?

To answer these questions, Wilder Research staff interviewed program staff and partners, conducted interviews with participants, collected participant surveys, conducted a site visit, and reviewed and analyzed available program administrative data. Figure 3 provides an overview of these activities.

3. Data collection and evaluation activities

Activity	Number
Staff and partner interviews ^a	14
Project Restoration interviews	16
Project Restoration post-surveys	14
Site visit	1

^a While 14 interviews were conducted, some respondents participated in more than one interview. Ten individuals participated in 14 interviews.

This report is based on quantitative findings from the survey and program data and qualitative findings from the interviews and open-ended survey items. Interview findings are based on key insights that emerged from the interview responses, and responses were grouped into key insight categories for the purposes of reporting results. Since there were a relatively low number of interview respondents, and staff and partners have different roles and work in different facilities and geographic areas, this report includes some key insights, sometimes shared by only one or two respondents.

The questions asked in the survey of Project Restoration participants were mostly close-ended (i.e., respondents selected an answer from a set of options they were provided). The frequency with which different options were selected were tallied for purposes of identifying themes in the survey results. Responses to open-ended items were also grouped into themes and are reported here accordingly.

Limitations

There are several limitations to the evaluation and its findings, including:

- Systemic gaps in social safety nets and the challenges individuals face during the reentry process contribute to the evaluation’s limitations, as described in an [earlier section of this report](#). For example, while findings indicate that participants didn’t benefit from housing assistance as much as they did from other types of assistance, this is likely partially due to a lack of affordable housing options in the geographic area.
- There were relatively few respondents to the survey and the interviews, potentially limiting the generalizability of the findings to the overall program participant population. Participants often had significant responsibilities in their personal lives (e.g., work, caregiving) and access to limited resources (e.g., lacking access to a cell phone or minutes, lacking internet access or internet-enabled device), making it difficult for some respondents to participate in the evaluation.

Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic limited in-person data collection opportunities and complicated the process for respondents to provide input. While Wilder attempted to contact participants five times to maximize participation, it was impossible to reach some participants (e.g., disconnected phones). VOANNE and Wilder also made several attempts to pivot in response to these challenges (e.g., creating a paper version of the survey to avoid requiring access to a device and internet).

- Evaluation activities were limited partially due to the amount of funding allocated. For instance, it was not possible to conduct in-person interviews on an ongoing basis.
- Most program participants were identified as white males. Accordingly, survey and interview findings may not sufficiently reflect the experiences and opinions of participants from other racial/ethnic backgrounds and who do not identify as male.
- The program data regarding the types of services received by program participants only includes information on whether the participant received a specific service. However, not all participants were necessarily in need of all services, and not all services were relevant to all participants. The data do not then specifically speak to the proportion of participants that would have benefited from a specific type of service, but could have ultimately received that service.

Program implementation and participants

Project Restoration participant demographics

There were a total of 133 Project Restoration participants. Most participants identified as white (80%; Figure 4). Note that race/ethnicity data for 17% of participants were missing or unknown. Most participants identified as male (82%). About two-thirds were enrolled in Waldo County (64%), with about a third enrolled in Knox County (30%). About half of participants originated from Maine Regional Reentry Center (49%), followed by Knox County Jail (30%). About a quarter of participants had housing at the time they left the program (24%).

4. Demographics of participants

	Number	% (N=133)
Race/ethnicity		
American Indian or Alaska Native	2	2%
Black or African American	3	2%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0	0%
Other	0	0%
Unknown/missing	22	17%
White	106	80%
Ethnicity: Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin	1	<1%
Gender		
Female	24	18%
Male	109	82%
County participant was enrolled in services		
Knox	40	30%
Waldo	85	64%
Missing/unknown	8	6%
Facility of participants		
Booking	1	1%
Comm	19	14%
DOC	1	1%
Fed	1	1%
Knox County Jail (KCJ)	40	30%
Maine Regional Reentry Center (MCRRC)	65	49%
MDOC	1	1%
Blank/missing	5	4%
Housing status		
Housed at the time participant left program	32	24%

Supports for Project Restoration participants

Project Restoration participants receive a wide range of services as part of their involvement in the program. Note that not all participants need assistance with every topic area (e.g., not all participants need housing assistance), and not all topic areas are relevant to all participants (e.g., some participants already hold a GED).

Participants most commonly received group substance use disorder (SUD) counseling (81%), transportation services (65%), referrals to medication assisted treatment (MAT; 39%), and recovery coaching (32%; Figure 5).

5. Services received by Project Restoration participants

	Number of participants	% (N=133)
Group SUD counseling	107	81%
Transportation services	86	65%
Referrals to MAT	52	39%
Recovery coaching	42	32%
One-on-one SUD counseling	29	22%
Housing assistance	25	19%
Obtained GED during program	20	15%
Vocational training	17	13%
Employment skills training or referred for vocational services	16	12%
Referrals to medical appointments	13	10%
Referrals for General Assistance	13	10%
Number of people referred to HiSet (GED program)	5	4%
Assistance from Greater Bay Area Ministries	5	4%
SUD assessment	4	3%
Referrals to behavioral health appointments	4	3%
Completed at least some college during program	4	3%
Open Table sessions	4	3%
Referrals to adult education	2	2%

There were 184 group classes provided to participants during the grant period (Figure 6). Additionally, there were 142 cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) classes provided. Staff received 12 cultural competency trainings and 9 motivational interviewing trainings.

6. Staff trainings and participant classes provided

	Number
Group classes provided to participants	184 ^a
CBT classes provided to participants	142 ^b
Cultural competency trainings taken by staff	12
Motivational interviewing trainings taken by staff	9

^a Includes Smart Recovery, Moral Movie, Employment Readiness, Mental Health First Aid, Introduction to Restorative Practices, Pathways to Recovery, Restorative Justice 101, Men's Rap, My Money Works, Let's Talk about Budgeting, Recovery Group, Restorative Art Theater, Circle of Security, Leisure Group, CPR, First Aid, Funcovery, Living in Story, and Epictitus Club.

^b Includes the following evidence-based CBT classes: Inspiring Minds, Moral Recognition Therapy, Relationships, Thinking for a Change, Coping with Anger, Core Skills, Co-parenting, Non-Violent Communication, Reasoning and Rehabilitation II, The Four Agreements, Change Group, Stages of Change, Responsible Thinking, and Social Values.

Evolution of VOANNE and Project Restoration programming

Throughout the grant period, VOANNE built new partnerships, implemented several new initiatives, and modified existing strategies to maximize impact. VOANNE provided this description of how programming evolved during the grant period.

Our post-release services helped build relationships with community law enforcement partners and new and existing partners, and VOANNE opened a community office space for services related to this grant in Belfast, Maine during this project. In building a relationship with the State of Maine, the Director of Opioid Response visited our post-release office and built a relationship with VOANNE, which led to VOANNE accessing funding through the state to turn the community office space into a recovery community center, which allowed us to move into a larger space.

Through our partnership with the Knox County Sheriff's Office during this grant, we gained a new contract in Knox County and applied for two other federal grants in partnership with Waldo and Knox Counties to expand substance use services offered under this grant and build capacity in our diversion work with our partners. Our diversion work in Knox County also led to new contracts with three municipalities. Additionally, we expanded the service area of this grant through a programmatic change to serve Two Bridges Regional Jail in Wiscasset, Maine and provide support to individuals returning to Lincoln and Sagadahoc Counties. This expansion also led to a new agreement with Two Bridges Regional Jail this year to implement ongoing substance use services. The expansion also allowed us to serve 55 more individuals beyond the target number of this grant.

VOANNE also started providing transportation services to individuals pre-release, post-release, and near the end of incarceration (e.g., transportation to work and job interviews) using alternative funding mechanisms. VOANNE provided 1,500 rides last year to probation appointments, treatment rides to sober houses post-release, and medical and mental health appointments.

VOANNE also implemented restorative practices and recovery-focused arts programming. With our partner Belfast Creative Coalition (DBA Artivism in Maine), we provided a three-day art conference to bring the community together. As a result, Artivism in Maine has applied for opioid funding through the state of Maine to continue pre- and post-release arts programming. We also partnered to implement a program that provides backpacks to those going through the reentry process that contain clothes, hygiene, weather-appropriate items, Narcan, fentanyl and xylazine test strips, and other local recovery and reentry resources. We have made this sustainable with community partners who contribute to backpacks, and they are provided to anyone leaving the Maine Coastal Regional Reentry Center or Knox County Jail.

Similarly, our partner Restorative Justice Project Maine applied for opioid funding through the state of Maine to expand ongoing support circles for participants and their families in Waldo and Knox Counties.

During the grant period, VOANNE community justice programs temporarily had access to two efficient apartments available for program participants released in Waldo County. These were crucial to those program participants' reentry plans post-release. While the efficiency apartments are no longer accessible for our program, it has driven conversations internally and externally about the need for recovery and transitional housing not in Waldo County and the broader Midcoast region.

Findings

Some of the Project Restoration participants provided feedback about their experience with the program through surveys (N=14) and interviews (N=17), including what they liked most and least about their time in the program. Wilder also conducted interviews with 10+ key Project Restoration staff and partners. Key themes are summarized below followed by illustrative quotes from participants, staff, and partners. For all participant survey data tables and data collection instruments, see the Appendix.

Program strengths

Program staff, partners, and participants identified several strengths, assets, and philosophies that contribute to the success of Project Restoration.

65% of Project Restoration participants have not had any new arrests or charges since starting services.

Overall participants, staff, and partners reported that program supports, programming, and staff are valuable and helpful. Out of 15 total responses, most survey respondents reported that services were very or somewhat helpful (N=10) in helping them improve outcomes in their lives (Figure 7).

7. Overall, how helpful do you believe that Second Chance Act grant services have been in helping you to improve outcomes in your life?

	N=15
Very helpful	6
Somewhat helpful	4
Somewhat unhelpful	3
Very unhelpful	0
Not applicable	2

VOANNE has also recently expanded the services and supports available to community members, including opening a community center, making support groups open to everyone (including morning and afternoon/evening options), and partnering with other agencies that have telehealth.

Holistic and person-centered approach

Respondents praised the program’s holistic approach, as participants receive assistance with not just immediate needs but also long-term goals, such as education, employment,

and mental health support. Additionally, they described how tailored and responsive support, including communication methods, ensures participants' specific needs are addressed flexibly and comprehensively, and how VOANNE pivoted in response to unanticipated challenges to best meet participant needs.

Most survey respondents reported that the services they received across a wide range of topic areas were somewhat or very helpful, including basic needs (10 out of 11), transportation supports/referrals (10 out of 13), coordination with attorneys and probation officers (9 out of 9), educational or vocational training (9 out of 10), restorative programs (8 out of 10), employment supports/referrals (8 out of 10), and support enrolling in health insurance (7 out of 11).

Note that fewer respondents reported that housing assistance was somewhat or very helpful (4 out of 9), but this is likely due to the lack of housing options in the program's geographic area.

When people get out, they need someone to keep checking on them... They have so much going on... Making sure that they're okay and getting the services they need.
– VOANNE staff or partner

[Staff] helped with a bunch of applications for housing, because I wanted to get out of the motel so bad. [Staff] also helped with applications. None of them panned out, but it's not their fault. Housing is terrible around here. But they sat down and did it with me.
– Participant

Being flexible and not rigid. The ability to engage, remain engaged through text messages, through voice, through phone, through Facebook IMing. – VOANNE staff or partner

We originally built in a bunch of money for Ubers and taxis, but we don't have Uber and taxi in our area. So we transitioned into hiring per diem drivers and using our van.
– VOANNE staff or partner

Approaches to boost mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being

Staff, partners, and participants identified programming to address participants' mental health, emotional, and spiritual well-being as a strength, including offering art-based therapy options, telehealth partnerships to expand access to care, and incorporating spirituality and religion into programming where appropriate. Specifically, respondents described how arts and creative activities engage participants and provide an opportunity to learn new skills and build a sense of accomplishment.

Similarly, most survey respondents reported that substance use services (12 out of 13) and mental health supports or referrals (10 out of 11) were somewhat or very helpful.

The arts, honestly, is what sticks out to me the most... I just think that the arts are a way to engage people that then opens them up to possibilities they didn't even think they were seeking... It's the least invasive way to connect with people. - VOANNE staff or partner

Family involvement

Respondents described how participants benefit from building buy-in with families by providing the space and opportunity for connecting and supporting their loved one going through reentry and hopefully encouraging reunification upon release (e.g., hosting family members at barbecues and other events).

Most survey respondents also reported that family supports, such as parenting skills development and family counseling, were somewhat or very helpful (9 out of 11).

Relationships with program staff

Interviewed participants described the benefit of working with staff (i.e., recovery coaches and case managers) who appeared to be accepting of them rather than judgmental of their situations.

Similarly, when asked what participants liked best about the program as an open-ended question, three of the 14 survey responses described the support they received or relationships they build with case managers or others. See Figure A5 for all responses to this item.

*They did all they could do for me and I'm thankful for all the hard work that they did for me.
– Participant*

The support and feeling I get when I'm feeling down. I'm always reminded of what can be...and what to keep think of and pushing to. – Participant

Having people who have a genuine concern for me. – Participant

Everyone that I met that works for the VOANNE here is absolutely amazing. I'm overwhelmed sometimes how well they treat me. Sometimes, I think I don't deserve it, like, "You're really going outta your way to do all that for me?" – Participant

*Feeling supported, knowing that they have someone to turn to... Someone's got your back.
– VOANNE staff or partner*

They're doing a great job. Doing really good for what they have. I was out there alone, and they found me. I would be much less successful [without them]. When you lose motivation, it's really hard, and they have supported and motivated me. – Participant

Community partnerships

Staff and partners spoke to the benefit of positive community relationships and trusting partnerships, particularly with law enforcement. These partnerships also include connections to restorative circles and community-based volunteers, and corrections across several counties. They described how partnerships can facilitate information and resource sharing,

improve services, facilitate referrals, avoid duplication of efforts, and help identify and address gaps in services.

Respondents specifically mentioned that program meetings with various recovery committees have helped providers coordinate efforts to avoid duplicating services and ensure more efficient support for participants. Additionally, law enforcement particularly emphasized the importance of sharing information and data to make informed decisions that support and address gaps.

Respondents also described how VOANNE’s reliability instilled confidence in the program and helped establish strong relationships with community organizations, probation, and law enforcement. These were crucial to provide comprehensive support to participants. Regular updates and consistent presence were also key to building trust and effective collaboration with law enforcement and other partners.

Respondents also mentioned how VOANNE continues to build and establish new relationships. The program’s success in one county led to expanded services and collaborations with other counties and facilities, increasing the program's reach and impact.

Having events and having the community come together and be in the same room at the same time. So there are providers, community members, staff. If we get everyone together in the same room, we can converse about what we’re doing, what issues we need to work on... So we’re not working in silos. – VOANNE staff or partner

Now that we’re doing so much work with individuals and seeing the results with people staying out of jail, people actually entering treatment. I think providers are seeing what we’re doing. We’re getting more of an open door with other providers [to collaborate more]. – VOANNE staff or partner

The biggest success was that we met the number of participants we wanted to while launching during a global pandemic... [And this was partly due to] having such a long relationship with our law enforcement partners... Otherwise, it would have been really hard to enroll anybody in this. – VOANNE staff or partner

As we were expanding services... It showed law enforcement there are other avenues that we [can be] reliable and capable in the services we’re providing. – VOANNE staff or partner

Outreach and awareness

Respondents also spoke to how the program has helped raise awareness of the challenges faced by formerly incarcerated individuals and the importance of supportive reentry services. Staff highlighted the success of events that brought together providers, community members, and staff to discuss issues and support each other, reducing stigma, fostering a sense of community, and ensuring they are not working in silos.

Staff also noted that law enforcement agencies have adopted more rehabilitative and supportive approaches, moving away from traditional punitive methods.

We have flyers that are out there in the community. We also do community support circles... And we advertise those on Facebook. And with our community providers, our services are learned [about] through them... [And the Waldo County Recovery Committee] is another way for us to get the word out. – VOANNE staff or partner

Working on a restorative justice project has been a huge help. Community building circles, corrections officers' circles, and circles in the past have helped change the mindset. People really stuck in the old mindset of treating substance use as a moral failing instead of a disease are beginning to see it differently. – VOANNE staff or partner

Almost all survey respondents reported hearing about services from VOANNE staff (14 out of 15; Figure A1), indicating that VOANNE staff are effectively raising awareness of the program.

Free and low-barrier services

Respondents described the significant benefit of providing essential services for free, including mentoring, transportation, housing assistance, and essentials distribution. Low-barrier access ensures that participants can easily engage with the services.

No cost services. Low barrier, no cost services. Substance use counseling: free. Case management: free. – VOANNE staff or partner

Educational content and classes

Respondents described how participants benefit from the program's educational content and classes, including information regarding cognitive functioning and development, decision-making processes, and the approach taken by course instructors.

Most survey respondents reported that life skills programming, such as problem-solving skill development, was somewhat or very helpful (9 out of 11). Similarly, when asked what program participants liked best about the program as an open-ended question, three of the 14 survey responses described specific educational content, such as SUD classes, learning about how the brain works, and learning life skills. See Figure A5 for all responses to this item.

You learn about how your brain works so you can change your life. – Participant

I was in the recovery class, which I extremely needed. She actually took some time to ask us what we thought would make the class more interesting and things like that- Instead of saying, "no, this is what we're doing," she's asking us, as a group, what the majority thought and I thought that was amazing. – Participant

Positive impacts on participant well-being and personal growth

Respondents described several ways the program positively impacted the personal development and well-being of participants, including increased stability and independence and improved social, physical, and emotional health.

Healing and mental and social well-being

Respondents described how the program facilitates healing and therapeutic and restorative effects, and how the community-based approach contributes to these effects. Some participants noted that their relationship with their family has improved and they feel motivated to make their family proud.

I'm in a beautiful spot right now. My stress level is down and my anxiety is down. I have night terrors and that's gotten better. Just being in a quiet place has been nothing but healing.
– Participant

[Circles] give everyone a chance to be heard. And it also gives people a chance to listen, and to come at [the situation] with more compassion and understanding..
– VOANNE staff or partner

Boosted morale and self-esteem

Respondents discussed how participants often start to feel good about themselves due to their continued engagement in the program and working on their sobriety, including improved self-esteem and confidence.

I've had significant improvement morale wise. For example, getting out of a tent is a morale booster. [Staff] came with me to city hall and advocate for me. If you go into city hall by yourself, there are a lot of people there to abuse that system. [I'm] starting a job on Monday. [The staff] made me aware of the recovery coach program—someone who assists with [supporting your] treatment. – Participant

Improved work ethic and goal orientation

Respondents described positive impacts to participants' work ethic, satisfaction with work, and investment in personal goals.

I've seen a change in my attitude. My mom said the other day to my probation officer that she actually enjoys spending time with me because I'm not an ass. I used to not [care] and would do whatever I want and didn't care about the repercussions. I'm working 60-100 plus hours a week, not making anywhere near the money I was when doing other things. And I'm happier, because I'm realizing doing the right things. I've got that person looking over my shoulder, "Hey, you're doing good, don't stray off the path." – Participant

Improved attitudes and learning alternative ways to approach life

Respondents described positive impacts to participants' attitudes and behaviors, including how participants learn how to be less reckless and more thoughtful, improved ability to learn from mistakes, increased investment in their own personal development and appreciation for time spent on healing, and building coping skills to better manage anxiety, depression, and stress.

I learned about my criminal background, the errors of my way, what I learned through VOA, there's an easier way, how to live your life everyday. – Participant

*It really just helps me to have a bit more of a positive attitude. Because truthfully, I'm an angry person. I always have been my whole life... [And] it's easy to keep that mentality... But knowing that there is potential help for people that did get in trouble is a positive.
– Participant*

Recidivism and reintegration

Respondents reported positive impact regarding reintegration success, including completing education, securing employment, and improving health, and how participants often feel motivated to successfully reenter the community after participating in the program. Respondents described how participants felt like they can use their experience and what they've learned during the program to contribute to society (e.g., by becoming a counselor). Participants described a desire to make amends and give back to the community (e.g., volunteering), and they identified improvements in their ability to reenter society, including their abilities maintain sobriety, hold a job, and obtain housing.

One of my success stories that I love to tell is I have a client who got out the middle of last year, and I'm still engaged with him. I'm still seeing him twice a month. This is the longest he's been sober in 20 years. He's still going to probation. He's still doing all the classes he's supposed to be doing. He's working. The little things like that are not little. They're huge. This person's life is just changed. – VOANNE staff or partner

We've also helped a lot of people build a recovery support network of people. I had a guy get out yesterday, and I set up his phone, and I was putting in all these contacts in his phone so he would have them. He has a network of people to look to [now]. Rather than the past people he was involved with. – VOANNE staff or partner

They are giving me the tools that I need to feel confident to contact other organizations. Remind me that I'm doing well. They helped me get out of the cold. – Interview participant

*Way more confident and hopeful. There's a lot of confidence in staying clean and accountability. It helps when you see the local cops and they see I'm staying clean.
– Participant*

Additionally, nearly two-thirds of participants have not experienced any new arrests or charges since starting the program (65%; Figure 8).

8. New legal or correctional events since starting program

	Number	% (N=133)
New legal events since starting program		
In county law enforcement custody	6	5%
Maine Department of Corrections state facility	1	1%
Probation revocation	1	1%
Sentenced	1	1%
Summons	2	2%
Warrant	11	8%
No arrests/new charges	87	65%
N/A (enrolled in program under one year)	9	7%
New DOC charges	1	1%

Opportunities for program improvement

Need for more staff and resources

When asked about challenges and areas for improvement, respondents identified the need for more staff and resources. They described the program’s context in the Northern New England area, and how there are not enough resources related to affordable housing, jobs that pay at least minimum wage commensurate with the cost of living, and health facilities (i.e., sobriety houses). In particular, there is a critical need for more housing solutions. Temporary housing options like camps are being closed, exacerbating the housing crisis. Efforts were made to provide temporary housing through hotels, tents, and seeking support from local churches and family members. However, these solutions were not ideal and sometimes exposed participants to undesirable environments during harsh winters.

Respondents also identified inadequate transportation options as a barrier for accessing essential services. However, note that the program was able to hire per diem drivers who provided around 1,500 rides last year mostly helping post-release participants travel to work, mental health appointments, probation appointments, treatment, and sober houses.

Additionally, respondents noted that increasing the number of staff could help serve more individuals and provide more consistent coverage across the large geographic area served by the program, and that continuing to strengthen partnerships could help better meet the

needs of participants with convictions and criminal backgrounds. Some respondents also described how the COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted staff capacity.

Staff getting COVID. We might be back in the facility [after the end of stay-at-home orders], but our case managers are out with COVID for a couple weeks. So those challenges of not having the full team, day in, day out. – VOANNE staff or partner

Staff changeover in general. We've had a lot of staffing turnover in this grant with case managers. I think that just speaks to it just being a hard job during a hard time. – VOANNE staff or partner

Having more capacity and more staffing for a project like this. Covering a larger geographical area would be an improvement. The staff that were under this were spread pretty thin. – VOANNE staff or partner

Only downfall that I noticed was just that there weren't enough people to help. When [one staff member] was there, it was just her and yet they wanted her to take on such a caseload. I can only wonder how overwhelming it would be. That would be the only thing. – Participant

For me, it's not very difficult because I grew up in the area and know everybody. But for somebody that's new to the area, they may not have the network I do. If they can't get a regular job. People like my friend [name]. He's got a heart of gold and always tries to help somebody. I try to connect Project Restoration to him, but his hands are tied and can't hire people. They need to be more active and aggressive, would be appropriate term, to figure out who and what is willing to help people in this community. The intention is there but the groundwork isn't. – Participant

Improvements or expansions needed to specific services

Some survey respondents shared that certain types of services they received were not helpful. Specifically, 4 of the 11 respondents who received support enrolling in health insurance reported that the support was not helpful, and 5 of the 9 respondents who received housing assistance reporting the assistance wasn't helpful (Figure A2). Note that there is a significant lack of housing options in the program's geographic area, likely contributing to this finding.

Survey respondents were also asked which services that they don't currently receive but that they would be interested in receiving or learning more about. Out of 14 responses, they identified:

- Basic needs (e.g., clothing, camping supplies, food supports; N=8)³
- Employment supports/referrals (N=8)

³ Eight respondents selected this service for this survey item (implying they did not receive basic needs supports), but ten respondents indicated the basic needs supports they received were helpful (implying they did receive basic needs supports). Potential reasons for this discrepancy include that they received certain types of basic needs supports but not others or respondents may have misunderstood or misread the question.

- Housing assistance (N=8)
- Education or vocational training (N=6)
- Substance use services (N=4)
- Life skills (e.g., problem-solving; N=3)
- Transportation supports/referrals (N=3)
- Family supports (e.g., parenting, family counseling; N=2)
- Mental health supports/referrals (N=2)
- Restorative programs (e.g., Open Table, Restorative Arts Works Theater group; N=2)
- Coordination with attorneys and probation officers (N=1)
- Support enrolling in health insurance (N=1)

Similarly, survey respondents were asked for their suggestions about how to improve the program to better help participants in an open-ended question. Out of ten total responses, themes mentioned by at least two respondents included:

- Provide more housing assistance (N=3)
- Provide more employment assistance (N=2)
- Provide more health insurance assistance (N=2)
- Improve communication (N=2)
- Provide more substance use and recovery support (N=2)

Housing is the number one issue we're having right now... We've had to expand where we look for housing, expanding to the next towns or even next counties to find housing.
 – VOANNE staff or partner

We need some sort of steady supply of cell phones for people coming out of incarceration and free broadband... [So they can call and say,] "I can't make my appointment." Call probation, "I cant come in today. Can I come in tomorrow?" So many things can be avoided if we can just communicate. – VOANNE staff or partner

There weren't enough people to help... I can only wonder how overwhelming it would be. Just getting good people in there that aren't judgmental that are willing to look at your as a blank book and say, your story starts now. - Participant

Data collection and tracking

Initial challenges with data collection and reporting have highlighted the need for more efficient systems and processes to track progress and outcomes accurately. Improvements in data tracking and reporting systems were necessary to better manage and analyze program outcomes. Staff noted the lesson learned here will be applied in future grant awards.

Staff noted that the Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (LS/CMI) is an evidence-based tool for effectively assessing risks and needs, but that it is labor-intensive. Improvements can include simplifying this process and reducing labor for the test administrator.

[Now that] we're trying to pull all the data together... We're feeling a little overwhelming, in that, sure, we might have been collecting it, but maybe not as efficiently or reviewing it as often... So I think we've learned some lessons there, in terms of the way we look at collecting data and improving that throughout implementation. – VOANNE staff or partner

Obviously the LS/CMI is a best practice tool. It's evidence-based... [But] is there another way to be able to get that [information] that's not as labor-intensive? – VOANNE staff or partner

Stigma

Staff pointed out the persistent stigma within the sheriff's office, where corrections officers often viewed inmates with substance use disorders as offenders rather than individuals with an illness. To address stigma issues, VOANNE has implemented educational efforts, collaborated with restorative justice projects, and conducted community circles with corrections officers and other stakeholders.

The biggest [challenge] for me is there is still that stigma. Especially with the sheriff's office. COs [correctional officers] still having that old mindset that people are not treated as a person with a disease. They're treating people as an inmate. – VOANNE staff or partner

Probation policies

Staff mentioned that supportive probation policies that are less punitive are necessary to help individuals succeed post-release and avoid recidivism. For example, policies that provide flexibility and consider the individual circumstances of those on probation can help reduce barriers to compliance and support successful reintegration.

It would be lovely if there was something that assists with probation. Could there be a credit system in participating in the program? That they would get credit with probation? – VOANNE staff or partner

Need to identify alternative ways to raise awareness

Almost all survey respondents reported that they heard about services through VOANNE staff (14 out of 15), followed by a friend (N=5), jail staff (N=4), lawyer (N=2), a roommate or incarcerated peer (N=2), brochure or pamphlet (N=1), or that they were a walk-in (N=1; Figure A1). This may indicate an opportunity to raise awareness of programming through external channels.

Lessons learned and recommendations

- **Limited resources:** Inadequate funding, staff, and resources limit the impact of reentry services. Additionally, grant activities were severely impacted by the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, including increased need among individuals reentering their communities after incarceration and reduced and diverted organizational resources and capacity within VOANNE and its partners. Respondents also identified a need to provide more support related to housing, employment, and transportation. However, the impact of this assistance is limited given the lack of related services or opportunities in VOA's geographic area (e.g., affordable housing, employment that provides a livable wage, reliable and comprehensive public transportation options).

Increased program funding, staff, and resources would allow VOANNE to provide more services to more individuals, ultimately maximizing program impact. Specifically, VOANNE could provide additional supports related to transportation, housing, cell phones and cell service, and internet access. It is important to note that resource and capacity challenges are faced by most social services organizations, and that many of these needs are systemic and would require larger-scale efforts beyond the scope of VOA's programming to adequately address them.

***Recommendation:** Continue seeking funding and other resources to increase program impact and fill gaps in services in VOA's geographic area. Consider ways to support participants' needs related to transportation, housing, cell phones and cell service, and internet.*

- **Data collection and tracking:** Throughout the grant period, VOANNE experienced and ultimately addressed challenges related to data collection and tracking. Solutions to these challenges led to more efficient systems and processes to track indicators and outcomes that will continue to support data- and evaluation-related activities in the future. Some staff identified a need to streamline the LS/CMI process.

***Recommendation:** Continue assessing areas of opportunity for streamlining data collection and management processes and systems, particularly ways to reduce staff burden when administering the LS/CMI assessment.*

- **Partnerships and outreach:** Findings from this evaluation highlight the importance of strong partnerships with law enforcement and criminal legal agencies and community organizations. Some staff respondents also identified challenges regarding stigma within law enforcement related to substance use and systems involvement, and how these can be addressed through outreach and educational efforts. Additionally, staff mentioned a need for more supportive and less punitive probation policies. VOANNE could leverage their strong partnerships by facilitating communication and collaboration between law enforcement and community organizations and advocating for these changes.

Recommendation: Continue to prioritize strong partnerships with local agencies and organizations and identify opportunities for strengthening partnerships, particularly efforts related to improving understanding of substance use and modifying probation policies.

- **Connection with family:** The findings from this evaluation highlight the importance of facilitating and supporting the connections between individuals reentering their communities after incarceration and their family members.

Recommendation: Explore ways to facilitate and support family relationships among program participants.

- **Organizational philosophy:** VOANNE excels in taking a proactive, thoughtful, and creative approach to its programming. They continuously reflect on program strengths and areas for opportunity and innovation, they are dedicated to optimizing program services and being responsive to participant needs, and they are always willing to try new and promising strategies to better serve program participants. Findings from this evaluation highlight the efficacy of VOA's philosophy, as respondents praised VOA's holistic and person-centered approach to providing services.

Recommendation: Continue prioritizing innovation, reflection, responsiveness, and proactiveness.

- **Supporting staff:** Findings from this evaluation highlight the importance of supporting staff well-being, given the difficult work they do, the large geographic areas they serve, how staff are often on-call, and the high level of need. Moreover, findings emphasize the critical role staff play in program participant success. Staff turnover limited program impact, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, though it is important to note that this is a common challenge faced by many social services organizations.

Recommendation: Identify ways to support staff well-being and reduce turnover (e.g., supporting staff access to mental health services or other resources, offering retreats and other events to promote well-being and strong relationships among staff). Note that VOANNE already provides a sabbatical for staff who continue working for VOANNE for a certain amount of time.

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Appendix

A. Participant survey data tables

A1. How did you hear about the Second Chance Act grant services? CHECK ALL THAT APPLY

	N=15
Volunteers of America staff	14
Friend	5
Jail staff	4
Lawyer	2
Roommate/cellmate/incarcerated peer	2
Brochure or pamphlet	1
Walk in	1
Probation officer	0
Other	0

A2. Reviewing the list of services below, please let us know which services you've received from the Second Chance Act grant, and how helpful they have been for you. (N=14)

	Very helpful	Somewhat helpful	Not helpful	Did not access
Basic needs (e.g., clothing, camping supplies, food supports; N=14)	6	4	1	3
Coordination with attorneys and probation officers (N=14)	7	2	0	5
Education or vocational training (N=13)	3	6	1	3
Employment supports/referrals (N=13)	3	5	2	3
Family supports (e.g., parenting, family counseling; N=13)	5	4	2	2
Housing assistance (N=13)	2	2	5	4
Life skills (e.g., problem-solving; N=13)	7	2	2	2
Mental health supports/referrals (N=13)	6	4	1	2
Restorative programs (e.g., Open Table, Restorative Arts Works Theater group; N=13)	5	3	2	3
Substance use services (N=15)	10	2	1	2
Support enrolling in health insurance (N=14)	6	1	4	3
Transportation supports/referrals (N=15)	8	2	3	2
Other (please specify below; i.e., legal assistance; N=1)	1	0	0	0

A3. Looking at your responses above in question 3, which of the services mentioned that you do not currently receive, would you be interested in receiving or learning more about? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY).

	N=14
Basic needs (e.g., clothing, camping supplies, food supports)	8
Employment supports/referrals	8
Housing assistance	8
Education or vocational training	6
Substance use services	4
Life skills (e.g., problem-solving)	3
Transportation supports/referrals	3
Family supports (e.g., parenting, family counseling)	2
Mental health supports/referrals	2
Restorative programs (e.g., Open Table, Restorative Arts Works Theater group)	2
Coordination with attorneys and probation officers	1
Support enrolling in health insurance	1
Other (please specify below)	0

A4. Overall, how helpful do you believe that Second Chance Act grant services have been in helping you to improve outcomes in your life?

	N=15
Very helpful	6
Somewhat helpful	4
Somewhat unhelpful	3
Very unhelpful	0
Not applicable	2

A5. What about the Second Chance Act grant do you like best?

	N=14
Positive general comment (e.g., “it’s a great program,” “getting the help I needed”)	6
Positive comment about support or relationships with case manager or others (e.g., “people who have a general concern for me,” “comfort speaking with my case manager,” “the support and feeling I get when I’m feeling down”)	3
Specific educational content (i.e., SUD classes, learning about how your brain works, life skills)	3
Other (i.e., basic needs supports, substance abuse services, provides hope or optimism)	3
Case management or service navigation	2
Constructive general comment (e.g., “it needs to be tweaked”)	1

A6. Do you have any thoughts about how the Second Chance Act grant could improve the program to help individuals working to improve their lives and reconnect in their communities?

	N=10
More assistance with finding housing or more housing generally	4
More assistance with finding employment	2
More assistance with finding health insurance	2
Improve communication	2
More substance use and recovery support	2
More assistance generally	1
Increase the number of case managers	1
More education-related assistance	1
More life skills support (e.g., teach us how to be better people, how to keep a job)	1
More basic needs supports (e.g., clothing)	1
More transportation support	1
More community activities	1
More legal assistance	1

B. Data collection instruments

VOA-NNE Second Chance Grant: PROJECT RESTORATION AND SUD EXPANSION
Hybrid-Short-Getting-to-Know-You Interview
October 2023 Site Visit

[INTRODUCE YOURSELF AS NEEDED] My name is _____ and I work for Wilder Research. VOA-NNE contracted with us to be the evaluation partner for Project Restoration and the SUD Expansion Project.

To help us better understand how program implementation is going, we just want to take a few minutes to get to know you and learn a little bit about what you do. The information you share with me will be used to plan future evaluation activities, including more in-depth interviews at a later time. This interview is also completely confidential. We will not report any identifying information. In the interest of time, we are only going to ask you three or four questions today. Do you have any questions for me before we start?

1. BASIC INTRODUCTION - NAME AND POSITION

Please tell me your name. What is your position? And how long have you been in that position?

NAME:

POSITION:

TIME IN POSITION:

WHICH VOANNE PROGRAM DO YOU WORK IN:

2. PROJECT INVOLVEMENT – ROLE DESCRIPTION

How are you connected to Project Restoration and the SUD Expansion project? Please describe your role on the project(s).

HOW DO YOU WORK WITH OTHER STAFF?

HOW DO YOU WORK WITH CLIENTS?

3. PROJECT SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

- Project Restoration: What do you think are the most helpful components or benefits of Project Restoration on participants?
- SUD Expansion: What are you most excited about with the SUD Expansion?

4. FUTURE INTERVIEW

5. We would love to speak with you more in-depth about your involvement with VOANNE and Project Restoration/SUD participants. Could we contact you in the next week or two to follow up?

YES.

- EMAIL:
- PHONE:

NO.



<p>STAFF USE ONLY</p> <p>ID #: _____</p> <p>Date: _____</p> <p>BE SURE TO CONFIRM CONSENT</p>

Second Chance Act Grant– Participant Survey Questions

Dear survey participant, Wilder Research is a nonprofit organization based in Saint Paul, Minnesota. We help nonprofits and other organizations to do research and evaluation projects to learn more about what is working well and what they can do to improve their work and increase their impact. For this project, we are working with Volunteers of America Northern New England (VOANNE) to gather information about [your/client] experience(s) and opinions of the case management and substance use counseling supports through the Second Chance Act grant.

You are being asked to take this survey because our records indicate that you are at least three months into the start of reentry services in Knox or Waldo County.

The survey will take around 10-15 minutes to complete. If you complete the survey, you will receive a \$10 Walmart gift card to thank you for your time. At the end of this survey you will be asked about your interest in a future opportunity to participate in a more in-depth 30 minute interview. Those selected to do the interview will receive an additional gift card.

Participating in this research is your choice! Choosing to complete or not complete this survey will not affect the services you receive from VOANNE or your participation in the program. Completion of this survey will not affect a parent’s ability to visit or communicate with their children. You can withdraw your consent at any time and/or ask any questions you have about this evaluation by calling Julie from Wilder Research at 651.280.2768. If no one answers when you call, leave a voicemail and Wilder Research will get back in touch with you.

All information collected through this survey and project will be kept confidential. Your name will not appear in any reports. Wilder Research will not share your name with anyone outside of our Wilder Research team. This means we also will not share your individual responses with Second Chance Grant staff. Wilder Research will use your feedback along with that of others to write a report about what we learned. You will not be identified in any report.

- I consent to this survey.
- I do not consent to do this survey.

Background

1. How did you hear about the Second Chance Act Grant services? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

- Brochure or pamphlet
- Friend
- Jail staff
- Lawyer
- Probation officer
- Roommate/cellmate/incarcerated peer
- Volunteers of America staff
- Walk in
- Other _____

2. When did you start Second Chance Act Grant?

____ / ____
 Month Year

Note: This survey was developed as part of project funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA-2020-17110)

Program engagement, satisfaction, and barriers

3. Reviewing the list of services below, please let us know which services you've received from the Second Chance Act Grant, and how helpful they have been for you.

Service type	Very helpful	Somewhat helpful	Not helpful	Did not access
a. Basic needs (e.g., clothing, camping supplies, food supports)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Coordination with attorneys and probation officers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Education or vocational training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Employment supports/referrals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Family supports (e.g., parenting, family counseling)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Housing assistance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. Life skills (e.g., problem-solving)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. Mental health supports/referrals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. Restorative programs (e.g., Open Table, Restorative Arts Works Theater group)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. Substance use services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k. Support enrolling in health insurance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
l. Transportation supports/referrals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
m. Other (please specify): _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Looking at your responses above in question 3, which of the services mentioned that you do not currently receive, would you be interested in receiving or learning more about? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

- Basic needs (e.g., clothing, camping supplies, food supports)
- Coordination with attorneys and probation officers
- Education or vocational training
- Employment supports/referrals
- Family supports (e.g., parenting, family counseling)
- Housing assistance
- Life skills (e.g., problem-solving)
- Mental health supports/referrals
- Restorative programs (e.g., Open Table, Restorative Arts Works Theater group)
- Substance use services
- Support enrolling in health insurance
- Transportation supports/referrals
- Other (please specify): _____

5. Overall, how helpful do you believe that Second Chance Act Grant services have been in helping you to improve outcomes in your life?

- Very helpful
- Somewhat unhelpful
- Somewhat helpful
- Very helpful
- Not applicable

Note: This survey was developed as part of project funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA-2020-17110)

6. What about the Second Chance Act Grant do you like best?

7. Do you have any thoughts about how Second Chance Act Grant could improve the program to help individuals working to improve their lives and reconnect in their communities?

8. There may be an opportunity to provide additional feedback about the program with Wilder Research through participating in a phone interview. Would you be interested in participating in a 20-30 minute confidential interview to share your perspectives about the program in more detail? If you are interested in talking with us more about this program, a Wilder Research evaluator will reach out to you to schedule an interview. To thank you for your time, we would provide you with an additional \$20 gift card.

Are you interested in being considered for an interview?

<input type="radio"/> Yes ➔	Please note that consent can be withdrawn at any time and will not negatively affect Second Chance Act Grant services that you receive. However, your feedback is important and may be utilized to enhance aspects of the program. I, _____, consent. Signature required
<input type="radio"/> No	
Phone number: _____	
Email: _____ (optional)	

9. Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey!

Please enter contact information to receive a \$10 gift card.

Name: _____ Phone number: _____

Address: _____ City, State, Zip: _____

Email: _____ (optional)

**Please fold this survey and put in the envelope provided, seal it, and hand it back to the staff who gave it to you. They will mail it to Wilder Research.
Thank you!**

Note: This survey was developed as part of project funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA-2020-17110)

VOA-NNE: PROJECT RESTORATION – Participant Interview Questions

Introduction

Hello, my name is _____ and I work for Wilder Research. We are a nonprofit organization based in Saint Paul, Minnesota. We help nonprofits and other organizations to do research and evaluation projects to learn more about what's working and what they can do to improve their work and increase their impacts. For this project, we're working with Volunteers of America Northern New England (VOANNE) to gather information about your experience and opinions of the Project Restoration program. We want to learn how participating in Project Restoration impacted specific areas of your life, such as employment, housing, and education, as well as sobriety and recidivism post-release.

We are doing phone interviews with Project Restoration participants around 3-6 months after they start reentry services. The interview will take around 30-45 minutes to complete. If you complete the interview, you will receive a \$20 Walmart gift card to thank you for your time.

Here are a few important things you should know about this research project:

- Participating is your choice. Whether or not you participate in the interview will not affect the services you receive from VOANNE, your participation in the program, or your ability to visit or communicate with your children. You may skip questions or withdraw from the interview at any time.
- All information collected through this project will be private. Nobody's name will appear in any report. Wilder Research will not share your name with anyone outside of the research team, including with Project Restoration staff. Staff at Project Restoration will not see your individual responses on the surveys. Wilder Research will combine information and write a report about what they learned from the study. You will not be identified in any report. We may use quotes from individual interviews, but we will remove your name and any other information that could identify it was you who said it.
- The only exception to this is if research staff are told someone is in immediate physical danger, for instance being a victim of abuse or neglect. If that occurs, evaluation staff must pass information about immediate physical danger on to program staff or authorities.
- Many of the questions on the survey ask about your experiences and needs reentering the Knox and Waldo community following incarceration. There is a small risk that you could experience emotional difficulty when thinking about these questions. You have the right to refuse answering any of the questions asked. You can skip any questions you don't want to answer. If you do get upset or need help, support is available at Project Restoration. Ask your case manager about getting an appointment with mental health services.
- It is your choice entirely whether you want to be a part of this research. You can withdraw your consent at any time. You can withdraw or ask any questions you have about the research by calling Julie from Wilder Research at 651.280.2767. If no one answers when you call, leave a voicemail and Wilder Research will get back in touch with you. If you have any questions about how to withdraw, please let your case manager know and they will help you get in contact with Wilder Research.

Wilder Research, January 2022

Note. This protocol was developed as part of project funded by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2020-CY-BX-0022)

I will be recording this interview just to make sure that I capture everything you say accurately, and then I will destroy the recording after I finish the interview notes. Is that OK?

Do you have any questions or concerns before we get started?

Background

1. How did you learn about PROJECT Connect/Project RESTORATION? When did you start?
 - Probe (If participant engaged with project prior to re-entry): Did you continue working with the program once you had re-entered? If so, why?
2. What made you decide to enroll in PROJECT RESTORATION?

Program engagement, satisfaction, and barriers

3. Which types of services have you received from PROJECT RESTORATION? (Probe for: case management, behavioral health treatment, support enrolling in health insurance, restorative programs like Open Table or Restorative Arts Works Theater group, education or vocational training, or housing assistance)
 - Who did you work with at Project Restoration to receive these services? Did they refer you to services at any other organizations?
4. Of the services you've accessed, which ones have helped you the most? How?
5. Of the services you've accessed, are there any that have not been as helpful? Which ones? What made them not helpful? How could they be better?

Barriers and unmet needs

6. Are there any services that PROJECT RESTORATION offers that you wish you could get, but haven't been able to? Which ones? (Probe for: case management, behavioral health treatment, support enrolling in health insurance, restorative programs like Open Table or Restorative Arts Works Theater group, education or vocational training, or housing assistance)
7. What's keeping you from accessing those services? (Examples if needed: Transportation, child care, insurance, unaware that VOA offers service, VOA doesn't offer it, etc.)

Program impact

8. Have you noticed any changes in your life situation since you started PROJECT RESTORATION (e.g., started school, have a job, have housing, etc.) [*if needed: other than being released*]? What are they?
9. Have you noticed any changes in yourself since you started PROJECT RESTORATION (e.g., are you feeling more confident, hopeful, able to maintain sobriety, etc.)? What are they?

Wilder Research, January 2022

Note. This protocol was developed as part of project funded by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2020-CY-BX-0022)

Closing

10. Is there anything that PROJECT RESTORATION could improve to better support you during re-entry?
11. Anything else you want program people, or their funders to know about the PROJECT RESTORATION program?

Gift card

That's all the questions I have for you. To thank you for your time, we would like to send you a \$20 Walmart gift card.

12. Would you prefer an electronic gift card sent to your email, or a plastic gift card sent to your address?
13. What is the best email address/ mailing address to send you the gift card?

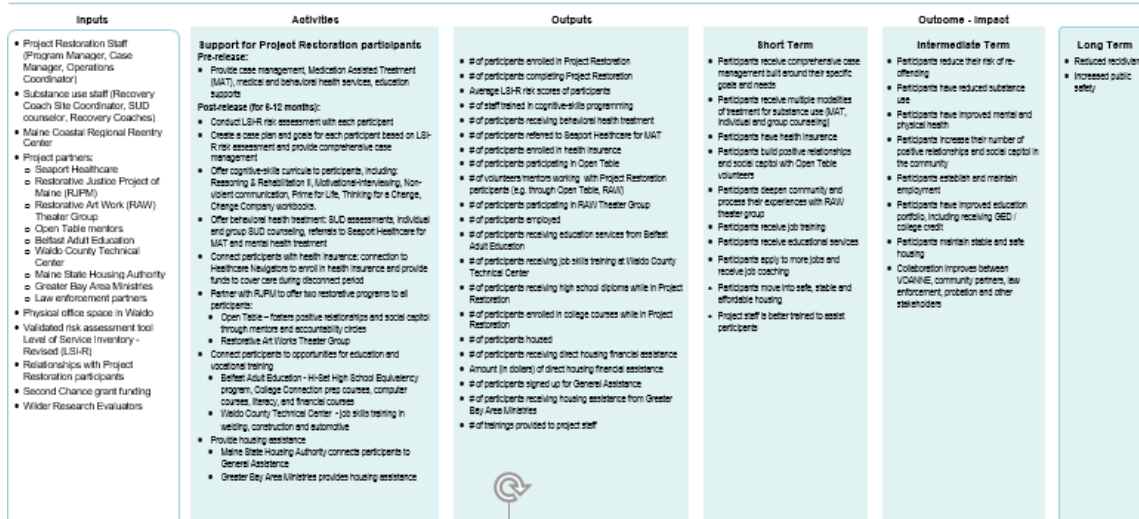
Wilder Research, January 2022

Note. This protocol was developed as part of project funded by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2020-CY-BX-0022)

C. Logic model

VOANNE Project Restoration 2nd Chance Grant Logic Model

Purpose: Provide seamless and comprehensive reentry services to men and women re-entering two of Maine's rural counties (Waldo and Knox) to improve housing, employment, educational, and substance use outcomes for project participants, and ultimately increase public safety and reduce recidivism.



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Wilder Research, a division of Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, is a nationally respected nonprofit research and evaluation group. For more than 100 years, Wilder Research has gathered and interpreted facts and trends to help families and communities thrive, get at the core of community concerns, and uncover issues that are overlooked or poorly understood.

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