BUILDING WORKFORCE READINESS AND COLLEGE PATHWAYS IN MULTIPLE FACILITY SETTINGS

SERVING STUDENTS IN: CDCR **ON CAMPUS** **JUVENILE FACILITIES** **COUNTY JAILS** **FED PRISONS**

VISION 2030 ALIGNMENT: **EQUITY IN SUCCESS**

COLLEGE HIGHLIGHTED: Victor Valley College

PROGRAM LEVEL: LAUNCHING EMERGING DEVELOPING INSTITUTIONALIZED **ALL PROGRAMS**

CHALLENGE AND OPPORTUNITY

Workforce readiness is a central priority in Vision 2030 and is particularly important for the Rising Scholars student population. Students held or supervised across the High Desert region were pursuing workforce-relevant education and a credible path to employment that the local landscape did not yet make available to them. Adults at the Federal Correctional Complex in Victorville, women approved for furlough, youth in the county detention facility, and people on parole and probation were reaching for credentials they could carry directly into the labor market and for a first authentic encounter with college. Victor Valley College treated that pursuit as an academic obligation and designed CTE infrastructure that reaches students where they are held or supervised, rather than waiting for them to arrive on a traditional campus.

GOALS/OBJECTIVES

- Students pursue industry-recognized, stackable CTE credentials and demonstrated employment readiness
- Students gain access to recognized credentials, a relationship with an established training provider, and an introduction to college that plants the seed for continued enrollment and matriculation once they transition out.

MEASURE OF SUCCESS

- # of students leaving incarceration with portable credentials and employment readiness rather than a gap in their record
- # of students utilizing counseling, wrap-around support, and a structured route matriculate into college
- Registration, units attempted and completed, success rates, growth in justice-impacted student population

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METHODOLOGY/ROAD MAP

PURPOSE

Victor Valley College's Justice-Involved Education model demonstrates how colleges can build a coordinated Career Technical Education (CTE) pathway that serves students in correctional, detention, supervised release, and reentry settings. The following roadmap outlines the key steps, roles, and conditions needed for colleges seeking to replicate or adapt this practice.

ANTICIPATED CHALLENGES

Implementing CTE programming for justice-involved students requires colleges to navigate multiple systems that were not originally designed to work together. Colleges should anticipate the following challenges:

- **Building Instutional Alignment:** Grants and funding to support justice-impacted student often operate independently. Intentional coordination is necessary to avoid fragmented services and inconsistent support.
- **Navigating Complex Partnerships:** Correctional facilities, probation departments, parole agencies, and community-based organizations each operate under different policies, timelines, and priorities. Developing trust and shared expectations takes time and requires ongoing relationship management.
- **Balancing Growth and Quality:** The desire to expand quickly can outpace infrastructure and staffing. Colleges may be tempted to launch multiple programs simultaneously, but doing so can affect program quality, consistency, and student outcomes.

- **Student Transition Challenges:** Students moving from incarceration or supervision into the community often face competing demands related to housing, employment, transportation, family responsibilities, and compliance requirements. Programs must be designed with these realities in mind.

STEPS TO IMPLEMENT/ PROCESS

Phase 1: Assess Need and Identify Target Populations

1. Conduct an assessment of justice-involved populations in the college's service area.
2. Identify correctional facilities, detention centers, furlough programs, probation departments, parole offices, and reentry organizations serving those populations.
3. Determine workforce needs within the region and align potential CTE offerings to local industry demand.
4. Identify educational gaps and barriers preventing justice-involved individuals from accessing college and workforce training.

Deliverable: Needs assessment and target population profile.

Phase 2: Build Partnerships and Formalize Relationships

1. Establish relationships with facility leadership and community supervision agencies.
2. Identify shared goals, such as increasing workforce participation and improving educational access.
3. Define roles, expectations, communication protocols, and operational processes.
4. Create regular coordination structures, such as standing partner meetings and implementation teams.

Deliverable: Partnership agreements and recurring coordination meetings

Phase 3: Create Internal Infrastructure

1. Designate a program manager or lead coordinator to serve as the primary liaison between the college and external partners.
2. Build a cross-functional implementation team that includes:
    - Admissions and Records
    - Counseling
    - Financial Aid
    - Academic Affairs
    - Workforce Development
    - Career Services
    - Fiscal and Payroll staff
    - Institutional Leadership
3. Centralize responsibility for justice-involved education whenever possible to reduce silos and improve accountability.
4. Develop procedures for enrollment, registration, instructional delivery, student support, and data collection.

Deliverable: Centralized organizational structure and operating procedures.

Phase 4: Launch Educational Pathways

1. Select workforce-aligned programs that lead to industry-recognized credentials.
2. Develop stackable pathways that allow students to progress from foundational skills to advanced training.
3. Incorporate bridge programming such as:
    - GED preparation
    - Digital literacy
    - College readiness
    - Career exploration
4. Ensure students receive exposure to college expectations, terminology, and support services.

Deliverable: Credential pathways mapped from entry through employment and further education.

Phase 5: Integrate Student Supports

- Provide dedicated counseling and educational planning.
- Connect students to financial aid, enrollment assistance, and academic support services.
- Establish priority registration or transition support for students entering the college after release.
- Develop referral pathways to housing, transportation, benefits, and social services providers.

Deliverable: Comprehensive support model and transition plan.

Phase 6: Strengthen Workforce and Employment Connections

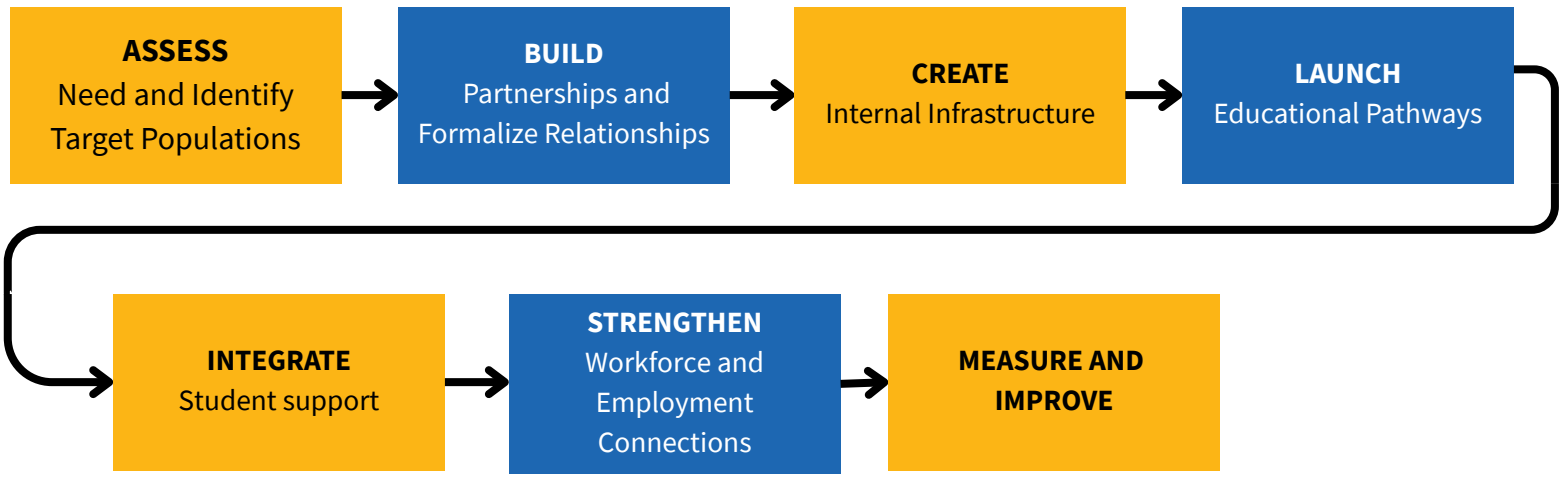
1. Engage employers early in program design.
2. Align curriculum with regional labor market needs.
3. Develop internship, apprenticeship, and work-based learning opportunities where feasible.
4. Expand career services specifically for justice-involved students.
5. Establish employer education efforts to increase awareness of available talent and credentials.

Deliverable: Employer engagement strategy and employment placement process.

Phase 7: Measure and Improve

1. Track student participation and outcomes.
2. Monitor:
    - Enrollment
    - Registration
    - Units attempted
    - Units completed
    - Course success rates
    - Credential attainment
    - Employment outcomes after release or graduation
    - Continued college enrollment
3. Review outcomes regularly with partners.
4. Refine programs based on student feedback and performance data.

Deliverable: Continuous improvement framework.



Reimagining Higher Education Pathways for Rising Scholars Presentation at March 2026 RSN Convening

KEY PARTNERS/ ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

ROLE	PRIMARY RESPONSBILITIES
Program Manager/Coordinator	Serves as primary liaison with facilities and community partners; oversees implementation; coordinates internal departments; monitors progress.
Dean/Executive Sponsor	Provides strategic oversight, removes institutional barriers, and secures resources.
Admissions & Records	Supports enrollment, registration, and student records processes.
Counselors	Develop education plans, provide transition support, and connect students to services.
Financial Aid Staff	Guide students through aid eligibility and application processes.
Workforce Development & Career Services	Connect students to jobs, employer partnerships, apprenticeships, internships, and career readiness services.
Faculty	Deliver instruction, support student success, and participate in professional development related to justice-involved populations.
Correctional/Facility Partners	Provide access, coordinate logistics, support student participation, and align operational requirements.
Probation, Parole, and Reentry Partners	Support student transition, referral processes, case coordination, and access to community resources.
Community-Based Organizations	Provide housing, transportation, employment, and wrap-around services.
Employers	Offer industry insight, employment opportunities, and workforce advancement pathways.

SUSTAINABILITY

Long-term success depends on moving beyond grant-funded pilot efforts and embedding the work into institutional operations.

Institutionalization

- Establish a centralized Justice-Involved Education function or department.
- Include justice-involved education within the college's strategic priorities.
- Build responsibility into permanent positions rather than relying solely on temporary funding.

Resource Development

- Pursue state, federal, and philanthropic funding opportunities.
- Leverage workforce development investments.
- Demonstrate outcomes to support continued resource allocation.

Workforce and Community Partnerships

- Maintain reciprocal relationships where all partners see value from participation.
- Expand employer networks to strengthen post-completion employment opportunities.
- Continue engagement with housing, reentry, and supportive-service providers.

Continuous Capacity Building

- Develop faculty and manager toolkits.
- Provide ongoing professional development.
- Document lessons learned, processes, and implementation practices.

KEY IMPLEMENTATION PRINCIPLE

The college is best poised to serve as the connector and coordinator. Successful programs do not happen because systems naturally align; they happen because colleges intentionally build the bridges among students, facilities, employers, community organizations, and internal departments. Sustainable impact requires strong partnerships, centralized coordination, disciplined implementation, and a relentless focus on helping students move from credential attainment to meaningful employment and continued education.