



Huey & Angelina Wilson Foundation

Prison Reentry Initiative Guidelines

Spurred by the knowledge that Louisiana has the highest prison recidivism rate in the country, the Huey and Angelina Wilson Foundation has established a multi-year Prison Reentry Initiative, beginning January 2016. Its aim is to support each of the 10 parishes in the Greater Baton Rouge area to create a continuum of care that fully prepares incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals for successful reentry. The intent is to create a dramatic reduction in the percentage of formerly incarcerated residents who return to prison and to increase the cost-savings in the community associated with successful reintegration.

Louisiana's incarceration rate ranks first in the nation per capita; approximately 17,000 individuals are incarcerated each year. One in 26 Louisiana adults is under correctional supervision, compared to 1 in 31 nationally, according to the PEW Center. At an annual cost of \$17,486 per inmate, incarceration costs Louisiana taxpayers nearly \$700 million each year. Reducing the number of people who return to prison benefits everyone in our community.

Of those incarcerated, Louisiana will release 18,000 individuals over the course of a year; approximately 14,000 people will be released from local jails and parish detention centers, while 4,000 people will leave state prisons. These men and women need social and structural supports to bridge their transition back into society, or else they risk becoming part of the 34.8 percent (or 7,820 people annually) who will return to prison within three years of their exit.

While there are significant efforts to assist individuals reentering society, gaps have been identified in the support for these services, their capacity, and the availability of quality reentry services within the corrections system and in individual parishes. A variety of faith-based organizations in their local parishes currently partner with a prison or a local jail in their respective geographic areas to provide some or all of the reentry programs and services available. These services include education, job readiness, life skills training, financial literacy, parenting and family reunification.

In addition to supporting programmatic efforts, the Reentry Initiative seeks to build the capacity of reentry service providers and enable policy change to create a stronger system of support for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals. A challenge across the area is that each set of parish stakeholders has different philosophies and practices to manage prison reentry. These varied approaches and thinking represent an opportunity for both learning and stronger results through increased program quality and collaboration. Shared learning will promote a continuum of support that engages incarcerated individuals earlier in the process and stays with individuals longer after they are released to ensure their ongoing stability. Increased collaboration will create shared assessment criteria



and data-use across the system to make informed decisions and change practices and policies that unintentionally increase recidivism.

Our Approach

The Huey and Angelina Wilson Foundation will make three types of investments within this Initiative: Direct Service (program support), Capacity Building & Collaboration, and Systems Change.

1. **Direct Service (Program Support):** Projects selected for direct service investments will answer the question; *what positive gains will occur for individual participants or communities?* Projects include new or existing programs that work directly with incarcerated or formally incarcerated individuals, employers, or community members to achieve results.
2. **Capacity & Collaboration Building:** Projects selected for capacity and collaboration building investments will answer the question; *how will your organization and/or other organizations be different and what will this enable you and/or them to do better? How will collaboration improve effectiveness or efficiency while improving results for incarcerated and formally incarcerated individuals' lives?* Projects include efforts that strengthen the existing capacity and/or collaboration of reentry organizations to achieve results.
3. **Systems Change:** Projects selected for systems change investments will answer the question; *how will your work inform change on a macro-level, including influencing policy or changing service provider practices?* Projects include awareness efforts, research and advocacy efforts that lead to positive changes by state and local lawmakers including district attorneys, judges, sheriffs, wardens, and probation and parole officers.



Our Focus

We are seeking to support efforts that focus in one or more of these areas:

- Increasing the **awareness and education** not only of the incarcerated and formerly incarcerated but also of district attorneys, sheriffs, wardens, probation and parole officers, employers and community members to support positive reentry;
- Building the **capacity and collaboration** between and among prison, probation and parole staff; reentry service providers; faith-based providers; volunteer mentors; and health and mental health care workers to increase the quality and availability of reentry supports and services; and
- Facilitating **policy and practice changes** by district attorneys, judges, sheriffs, wardens, state lawmakers and employers to support positive reentry.

I. Awareness & Education

For a variety of reasons, there are widely varying viewpoints from community members, service providers and corrections experts on prison reentry best practices across the 10 parishes. Some view the formerly incarcerated as dangerous and unproductive members of society. Community members and employers are unaware of the number of formerly incarcerated citizens living in their area, their potential as loyal, reliable and valuable employees, and the isolation experienced when entering society again. High incarceration rates also lead to high expenditures supporting prison operations. The underlying issue we hope to address is the need for formerly incarcerated individuals to have a second chance at creating a life after completing their sentence. The Foundation looks to support raising the awareness of community members about the need for safely reducing the recidivism rate through quality best practices.

Results we seek from these investments include:

- ***Increases in the number of Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Individuals*** who know about and choose to participate in reentry programs;
- ***Increases in the number of District Attorneys, Judges, Sheriffs, Wardens, and Probation and Parole Officers*** that agree to change priorities from “hard on crime” to “smart on crime”;
- ***Increases in the number of Community Members*** that accept the formerly incarcerated as productive community members and neighbors and vote for policy makers that support quality reentry; and



- ***Increases in the number of Employers*** that hire formerly incarcerated individuals for their business.

Projects we may support include: education, job readiness, life and soft skills, parenting skills, family reunification, faith-based support, mentoring, employment, health services, convening, community forums, volunteer mentorship, pilot programs, awareness campaigns, success stories, data sharing, advocacy, and legislative policy changes. At the same time, we are open to other approaches that are able to achieve the results we seek from our investments.

II. Capacity & Collaboration

The Greater Baton Rouge area is struggling to provide, expand and sustain high-quality reentry services. A number of factors, including a limited availability of trained service providers, varied resources with little or no services available during early incarceration, and lack of a coordinated continuum of care, all contribute to a high recidivism rate. Best practices are available, yet many organizations do not have the support required to integrate them into their own work. In select parishes, programs work well but are they not able to serve a large enough number of people to make a significant impact. The Foundation looks to support reentry delivery agents to increase their capacity, quality and collaboration in order to create a strong continuum of care. This new capacity and collaboration is intended to increase the efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of these organizations while increasing successful reentry for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals.

Results we seek from these investments include:

Prison, Probation and Parole staff, Reentry Service Providers, Faith-Based Providers, Volunteer Mentors, and Health and Mental Health Providers:

- have the capacity and resources to support quality reentry and apply best practices; and
- collaborate with one another to create a seamless continuum of high-quality reentry support.

Projects we may support include: training, convening, professional development, shared assessments, technology solutions, and best practice pilot projects. At the same time, we are open to other approaches that are able to achieve the results we seek from our investments.

III. Policy & Practice Change

Lawmakers play a significant role in successful reentry. Local and state laws, policies and practices within law enforcement need to be changed to assist reentry providers and incarcerated and formerly



incarcerated individuals in creating stable lives after leaving prison. The Foundation looks to support policy and practice changes aimed at alternative sentencing, early reentry services and data sharing.

Results we seek from these investments include:

- **District Attorneys and Judges** use alternative responses for lower-level offenses, apply structured sentencing best practices, and share data in a consistent way;
- **Sheriffs and Wardens** allocate knowledgeable staff to apply reentry best practices and agree to collect data in a consistent way;
- **State lawmakers** promote effective legislation and legislative reform that supports positive reentry outcomes; and
- **Employers** understand the benefits to their business of hiring the formerly incarcerated.

Projects we may support include: education, convening, pilot programs, awareness campaigns, success stories, data-sharing, advocacy, and legislative policy changes. At the same time, we are open to other approaches that are able to achieve the results we seek from our investments.

Our Operating Principles

We define ourselves as investors and are interested in creating the highest possible levels of human gain for the grant dollars we have available. Given this focus, the Huey and Angelina Wilson Foundation reviews each proposal with respect to available funds and responses to three overarching questions:

1. What will be the results from this project and how will we know when those results have been achieved? Results are defined as the positive changes in behaviors and/or conditions in stakeholders that will be achieved through the project.

2. How likely is it that the results can be achieved? Our assessment will be based on factors such as past result successes of the organization and its programs, validity of the proposed program approach, organizational capability and key personnel leading the project.

3. Is this the best possible use of the Huey and Angelina Wilson Foundation funds given other opportunities before us? We consider the cost relative to the gain, looking for projects that increase collaboration, quality and systemic change, and opportunities for replication to other organizations and parishes. When reviewing proposals we will look at the use of all monies going into a project or program not just dollars contributed by the Foundation, as well as the sustainability of the work.



In making investment determinations, the Huey and Angelina Wilson Foundation will look for projects with the following characteristics:

- Projects designed to produce and verify specific changes in systems, organizations and participants that directly contribute to the Foundation results we seek in the respective focus areas;
- Projects that achieve more than one Prison Reentry Initiative result;
- Projects that can be effectively implemented and ultimately continued without our funding;
- Projects that are replicable and can be shared with other organizations looking to produce similar results; and
- Projects that use evidence-based practices and strategies and/or offer clear results.

While the projects to be supported by this Initiative should be long-term in nature, investments will be made in one-year increments. Partners will be expected to report on progress and participate in learning sessions quarterly. Opportunities for additional support will be provided to partners who make meaningful progress toward the Prison Reentry Initiative's results.

At this time the Huey and Angelina Wilson Foundation is seeking applications within our Prison Reentry Initiative. Please review the results we seek and examples of the investments we make to determine how your project aligns with the Prison Reentry Initiative guidelines.