

Guidance on the Planning Process in Connection with Applying for Second Chance Act Funding
Section 101: State and Local Government Grants

Annie E. Casey Foundation
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What this guidance offers

This guidance provides a framework to do the planning activities necessary to complete the application and 5-year strategic reentry plan required to secure funding under the Section 101 of the [Second Chance Act of 2007](#). **The deadline for submitting applications is April 20, 2009** and the Department of Justice urges applicants to file their applications 72 hours prior to that to ensure confirmation / validation of the filing.

This guidance offers a way to organize the work to meet the deadline.

The process can be as important as the final plan

Applicants for federal grant often focus only on developing the proposal to be submitted. This approach can miss the opportunity that the **process** of developing the proposal provides. During planning, participants can learn a great deal from each other through ongoing analysis, reflection, discussion, and debates around issues and goals of the project. The dialog among colleagues initiated during the planning process can sensitize people to understanding the issues and challenges of the project and build a team that can sustain progress and results.

This guidance offers an approach to build a team that will create a viable proposal and plan that achieve the reentry outcomes the Act requires.

STEP ONE. Secure the commitment to apply for funds.

The **chief executive officer must commit to apply for the grant funds**. That person (governor, mayor, county board president, etc.) must ultimately sign-off on the application.

The applicant must register at www.grants.gov and secure a confirmation of registration, user name and password. This can take a few weeks to go through, so do it right away. Registration must be renewed annually, so if the applicant is already registered, renewal may be necessary. Instructions about registration is on page 1 (PDF page 13) of the Section 101 solicitation.

STEP TWO. Designate a lead person responsible for putting plan together. This person might be the existing reentry coordinator, a policy person in the chief executive's office or a person outside government who has been leading reentry or related work. The chief executive or chief of staff should designate the individual.

STEP THREE. Bring localities and the state together for collaboration.

The Second Chance Act allows both states and local government to apply for funds. In some states, it may be that no cities want to apply. In others, the state may not want to apply and will leave it up to the cities.

We believe a better case for funding is made when jurisdictions collaborate in a project. The Act requires cooperation and collaboration that not only would include state and local corrections but state and local agencies (e.g., human services, workforce, health, alcohol and substance abuse) that provide services to people coming home from prisons and jails.

In addition, the Act gives priority to applications that focus the funded activities on a specific area (e.g., neighborhood or census tract) where a disproportionate share of people is returning home after prison or jail, which in most states will be in one or more cities. Thus, if a state applies, local cooperation will be critical to creating a neighborhood-specific plan.

One of the first steps that the lead person might take is to determine whether other jurisdictions in the state are applying and bringing those jurisdictions together for purposes of collaboration.

The state can reach out to the city to start this process of required collaboration or the city can reach out to the state. Once this communication begins, the two might call upon an independent convener / facilitator who is employed by neither to begin the discussion.

The goal should be to decide on the entity that has the strongest infrastructure and greatest capacity to lead the work under the grant. To answer this question, the two entities might discuss the following [these questions are important to explore even if there are no competing jurisdictions for funding]:

- **Reentry task force:** Does the state already have a reentry task force – does it include city representatives?
- Does the city already have a reentry task force – does it include key state agency representatives?
- **Reentry coordinator:** Do either or both entities already have a designated reentry coordinator?
- **Reentry programming:** What is the nature of the reentry programming, services and activities of each?
- **Funding:** What are each jurisdiction’s current funding commitments for reentry programming?
- **Policy:** Has either jurisdiction advanced a policy agenda to support successful reentry outcomes?
- **Previous federal funding:** Has either or both entities previously secured a federal grant for reentry-related activities?
- **Reentry plan:** Has either or both entities already developed a reentry strategic plan? What is the status of the plan? What were the strategies under the plan and what outcomes have been achieved under it?
- **Political leadership:** Has the chief executive officer of either or both entities lifted up reentry as an important issue, spoken out about it, spearheaded any initiatives or personally engaged new partners? Have other (state / local) elected officials assumed leadership on reentry issues? Are these political leaders supporting the application for funds? If not, can they be brought into the process?

STEP FOUR. Develop the planning team. From among the Act’s list of required types of participants, identify

Section 1 of the Casey guidance on “How to Secure Funding under the Second Chance Act” lays out the Act’s requirements regarding who must be involved in the planning process and makes additional suggestions about participants.

the specific people that are needed and are likely participants and determine their willingness to participate.

STEP FIVE: Prepare for the first meeting.

The following materials would be helpful for the team members to review before the first meeting:

- Any existing strategic reentry plan(s) – city and state
- Reentry studies, maps or evaluations of programs specific to your jurisdiction
- Local and state corrections budget priorities
- Other state /local organizational mandates and mission statements that impact reentry
- Data on crime, incarceration and recidivism over time.
- Local polling data on crime and rehabilitation.
- Other documents and materials that are relevant to this effort

STEP SIX: Determine the plan approval process. The coordinator and planning team will be developing the plan, but for the chief executive officer to sign-off on it, there necessarily will be an approval process. Find out what is going to be required and how long it will take (and build in time for any required changes in the application and plan).

STEP SEVEN: Develop the planning timetable. This is important for two reasons: (1) the timetable will help the committee and team meet the application deadline, and (2) the participants need to know the time commitment required of them.

- Work back from due date
- List key activities and tasks
- Determine what resources are needed to complete the effort
- Determine future meeting frequency and dates
- Determine the venue(s) for meetings and if there is an appropriate budget for amenities such as food service
- Develop a schedule and establish benchmark dates for completing the plan

STEP EIGHT: Schedule a kick-off meeting.

- Establish the ground rules – the decision-making process that will be employed.
- Identify any roadblocks or barriers to developing the plan and identify strategies for overcoming them.
- Create review process to keep stakeholders engaged and to establish consensus.

STEP NINE: Discuss developing a strategy to reduce recidivism by 50% within 5 years.

This is the core outcome of the Second Chance Act grants. The following questions may help in guiding this discussion:

Background questions

- What is the baseline data on recidivism? What does it say? How do you understand the trends it shows? What is the story behind these numbers – what is contributing to the conditions they represent?
- What does the data indicate about the approaches (if any) that have been tried to reduce recidivism (what are they)? Or are these approaches working but for too few?
- What are the current investments (city and state) focused on reducing recidivism? What kinds of results have been obtained from these investments?
- What are the gaps – the investments and strategies that have not been pursued? Why have they not? What have been the impediments to their pursuit (money, interest, public disfavor, political opposition, lack of political will?)

Questions for developing a strategy to reach the result of reduced recidivism.

- What needs to be done differently to change the recidivism results? For what group of people? People returning from jail, from prison, from juvenile facilities, from all three? (*priority consideration* is given to applications that focus on “high risk offenders” identified by a validate assessment tool). NOTE: You may need additional more specific data on recidivism and other measures relative to this population in order to establish the baseline.
- Where should we focus our efforts? In what neighborhood? (*priority consideration* is given to applications that focus on a specific site)
- What strategies are powerful enough to change the results? What do we know from, evidence, practice and experience?

“Powerful” includes ...

- Reach – Would it reach the population we are targeting?
- Sufficient Numbers – Would it have the level of scale to reach a sufficient number of individuals and families to demonstrate improved results?
- Probability of success – Does it have “good enough” evidence that we can expect success?
- Fits in the targeted community – Will the community value and support it?
- Capacity – Do we have the leadership, knowledge, partnerships and structure to carry it off?
- Resources – Do we have or can get the resources (required matching funds) needed?
- What actions are we going to propose?
- What can each agency and person contribute to this strategy?
- Who are the implementation partners necessary to put the strategies in place to succeed? Who can we recruit to help move the work forward?
- How can we measure reduced recidivism in the short term and in the long term? Who can help us with this? What other indicators can we use (short and long term) to gauge our progress?
- How will we build accountability into the plan? (The plan should specify who is responsible for achieving each result. Dates (the required implementation schedule) should be set for completion of each result, as well.

STEP TEN: Establish working committees. Within the broad team, establish planning committees that are able to effectively identify the issues, develop practical solutions, and create clear objectives in response to the various requirements of the Act.

Define and assign roles and responsibilities for completing the strategic planning process. The application and plan that must be submitted for funding can be organized in the following clusters, each of which could be addressed by a subcommittee responsible for addressing those issues:

- Identification of the site (e.g., neighborhood or census tract) where the funded activities will be focused.
- Identification of the assessment tool to focus on “high-risk offenders”
- Outline of strategy and to reduce recidivism, referring back to the seven types of strategies and activities that can be funded
- Review of community supervision policies
- Plan for the analysis of government-created hurdles to reintegration
- Plan for delineating roles and responsibilities of partners
- Budget and identification of sources and amounts and types of matching funds
- Identification of progress measures, the methodology that will be used to measure progress and how progress will be reported
- Development of plan’s implementation schedule

STEP ELEVEN: Develop a process for reviewing and approving subcommittee recommendations.

Each subcommittee charged with developing an aspect of the application and plan should circulate its recommendations to the full team prior to the second team meeting and report on its progress at the meeting.

The team needs to adopt each of these elements and in adopting them, make sure they do not contradict one another and create a seamless whole.

Return to the questions in STEP NINE and ask whether the objectives are being achieved by the plan thus far. If not, what needs to be changed and how?

STEP TWELVE: Cohere all elements into the final application. The team leaders or his or her designate must pull all the adopted elements together to draft the final application and plan. This should then be circulated to the team for final adoption at its next meeting.

STEP THIRTEEN: Submit to chief executive. Submit the approved plan to the chief executive officer for his or who final approval and sign-off (cover letter). Make any changes required for that approval.

STEP FOURTEEN: Reconvene the planning group. Develop a review and monitoring process and decide how often the team will reconvene to discuss the progress being made.

- Provide for course corrections. Establish a method of monitoring for the plan and how ongoing feedback will be incorporated into the process – adjustments of strategy, priorities, investments.
- Identify those responsible for monitoring progress.
- Regularly track the results and metrics to assess progress.
- Develop reporting mechanisms for reports to the planning team, the chief executive and the Justice Department.

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