California State Association of Counties

Support Hub for Criminal Justice Programming

Program Inventory: Description & Overview

Program Inventory

The program inventory allows counties to track the range of investments in programs that are intended to reduce recidivism and serves as a baseline to compare against the evidence-based programs in the Results First Clearinghouse Database and Adult Justice: Cost-Benefit model (AJ-CB). The information collected for the program inventory will help the county match to their programs to the AJ-CB to conduct cost-benefit analysis on them.[1]

The process of developing the program inventory requires the county to develop a comprehensive list of all local criminal justice programs that are offered to justice system involved individuals. In addition to listing the name of each program, the inventory should include general information about the program (e.g., description, duration and frequency, oversight agency, capacity, and etc.), whether the program matches the evidence-base (e.g., rigorous local evaluations, national research evaluations, and whether the program is included in the AJ-CB) and program expenditures.

To create the program inventory, users will need to complete three steps: 1) Compile basic information about each adult criminal justice program offered to probationers and individuals held in the jail; 2) Match local criminal justice programs to the evidence-base and AJ-CB; and 3) Calculate program expenditures.

1. Compile Basic Program Information

The county should begin by compiling a list of all programs that are provided to probationers and individuals held in the jail which seek to reduce recidivism. For each program, the workgroup should include the following information:

- Program name;
- Brief description;
- Oversight agency or department;
- Average Duration (e.g. average length of the program);
- Frequency or intensity (e.g. how often the program meets and for how long);
- Delivery setting;
- Target participant population (e.g. substance abusers, high risk individuals, and etc.);
- Criminogenic needs addressed by the program;
- Annual program capacity (e.g. the maximum number of slots available for participants during a one-year period); and

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[1] Counties should use the Program Summaries for Adult Criminal Justice to help them determine if their local programs match the programs in the AJ-CB.

- Number of participants served in a recent year.

The data points above are listed and described in more detail in the Program Inventory Data Collection Template and Program Inventory User Guide.[2]

2. Match Local Criminal Justice Programs to the Results First Clearinghouse Database and AJ-CB

Match Local Programs to the Results First Clearinghouse Database

The second step in the program inventory process requires counties to determine the evidence-base for programs listed in the program inventory. For each program, the county will need to provide information about:
- Whether the program has been locally evaluated and, if so, the type of evaluation; and
- If the program has been reviewed by one of the clearinghouses in the Clearinghouse Database and, if so, the clearinghouse program name and rating.

After entering general information about local programs, the program workgroup should determine whether any programs have been locally evaluated to determine their impact on recidivism outcomes. If the program has been locally evaluated, the workgroup should work with your CSAC consultant to determine if the study was rigorous enough to include in the program inventory and AJ-CB.

In most instances there will not be local program evaluations and counties will need to use the [Results First Initiative's Clearinghouse Database](#) (Clearinghouse Database) to determine the evidence base of the program. The Clearinghouse Database is an online resource that includes information about the effectiveness of a number of social policy programs. The ratings are derived by nine national clearinghouses that conduct systematic research reviews to identify the effectiveness of different programs. To make it easier for users to interpret the ratings assigned by the clearinghouses, the Clearinghouse Database displays a color rating for each intervention that indicates where it falls on the spectrum of effectiveness, including: negative effects (red); no effects (gray); mixed effects (blue); second-highest rated (yellow); and highest rated (green).

Once programs have been matched to the evidence-base, the program inventory can be used to determine the baseline of current programming, identify gaps, and develop policy changes depending on the needs of the county.

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[2] Supporting materials for Phase I of the Program Inventory process include the [Program Inventory Template](#) and [Program Inventory User Guide](#).

Match Programs to the Adult Justice: Cost-Benefit Model

In order to determine the cost-benefit ratio of local programs, counties will need to match their programs to those included in the AJ-CB using the Adult Criminal Justice Program Summaries.[3] To determine the cost-benefit ratio of programs that are not included in the AJ-CB, the county must develop their own effect sizes which requires a rigorous local evaluation of the program. Please contact your CSAC consultant if you would like more information on program evaluation or how to calculate a program effect size.

To match county programs to the programs in the AJ-CB, the workgroup must review the details of each county program (e.g., program description, target participant population, duration, setting, and so on), compare local program information against the Adult Criminal Justice Program Summaries, and determine if the program is similar enough to one of the programs included in the summaries to match to the AJ-CB.

The Program Summaries provide information about the studies used to calculate the average effect size of each program in the model, including information about the participant population/s, duration of the program, and program providers.

Your CSAC consultant can assist with questions about program matching.

3. Calculate Program Expenditures

Finally, counties will need to determine program expenditures (for a recent year) for all programs in the program inventory. Program expenditure information is typically obtained through the agency or provider that offers the program.[4]

Estimate Program Participant Costs (for programs matched to the AJ-CB)

For each program matched to the AJ-CB, counties will need to estimate the annual per participant cost of program participation. Programs that have been matched to the AJ-CB (e.g., those programs that users selected "Yes" from the dropdown list in response to the question in Adult Justice: Cost-Benefit model, Column H, in Phase 2 of the Program Inventory) will automatically be shaded green in Phase 3 of the Program Inventory workbook to indicate that cost information will be needed.

Counties should use the marginal cost of program participation as it represents the direct expense of providing treatment to one additional client. Additionally, program costs should include any quality assurance or program model fidelity related costs. Administrative costs that change with the number of participants (e.g. training or printing of materials) *should* be included in the marginal cost calculation.

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[3] Program Summaries for Adult Criminal Justice document.
[4] Please note that *expenditure* information should be used as opposed to *budget* information.

Things to keep in mind when calculating the marginal cost of programming:
- Administrative costs, other than those that change with the addition (or subtraction) of a small number of participants, are typically excluded from marginal cost calculations.
- If programs are offered within a correctional facility or as part of the client's community supervision requirements, the costs of the facility or the supervision *should not* be included in the program costs.
- If an agency contracts with an outside treatment provider to provide the program, the contract price should serve as the marginal cost per participant.
- If there is variation in program cost (e.g. regionally or by treatment modality), users should use the weighted average from the range of participant costs.[5]

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[5] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weighted_arithmetic_mean#Basic_example