California State Association of Counties

Support Hub for
Criminal Justice Programming

Program Inventory:
User Guide

Program Inventory User Guide

The Adult Criminal Justice Program Inventory (PI) is the first step in the process to populate the Adult Justice: Cost-Benefit model (AJ-CB) and is intended to provide jurisdictions with a snapshot of their currently funded adult criminal justice programs, including whether they are supported by evidence.[1] Information collected from the PI allows jurisdictions to see what they are buying, whether their programs have been evaluated, and, if so, how effective they are. Moreover, it can help inform budgeting decisions and prioritize evaluations of programs in the jurisdiction.

Exhibit 1. Adult Criminal Justice Program Inventory Template: Phase I

CSAC Program Inventory for Adult Criminal Justice Programs

Phase 1. Basic Program Information

Year of Program Information: _____

					Program Information				
Program Name	Program Description	Oversight Agency/Department	Average Duration of Program	Frequency or Intensity of the Program	Delivery Setting	Target Population	Criminogenic Needs Addressed	Annual Program Capacity	Number of Participants Served

The PI template is divided into three phases:
- Phase I: Gather basic program information
- Phase II: Match programs to the evidence-base and AJ-CB
- Phase III: Gather program expenditure information

We have found that a phased approach to the PI is preferable, as it provides counties with a more manageable way to gather information. Nevertheless, jurisdictions should feel free to tailor this approach, as appropriate, to suit their needs.

The following sections will walk through each of the phases, including what information they contain and recommendations on how to collect it.

Phase I: Gather Basic Program Information

The first phase of the PI requires counties to develop a comprehensive list of all the adult criminal justice programs they operate, along with some basic information about each. For the purposes of the PI, we define programs as "systematic activities that engage participants in order to achieve desired outcomes."

For example, a jurisdiction could include programs that address recidivism, life skills, substance abuse, and parenting skills.

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[1] Program Inventory Template.

Please note that wraparound services, resource centers or similar broad offerings of services are not considered programs for the purpose of the PI. Instead, the individual components (interventions) offered, such as individual counseling, substance abuse treatment, vocational education, and job readiness training, are considered programs. Thus, it is important to list each of them separately.

Phase I: Basic Program Information

In Phase I, counties should collect the following information for each adult criminal justice program offered to individuals on community supervision or held in the jail that seek to reduce recidivism:

- **Program Name**
- **Program Description**: Brief description of the program.
- **Oversight Agency/Department:** Agency or department that oversees the provision of the program (e.g. Department of Corrections).
- **Average Duration:** How long it typically takes for someone to complete the program (e.g. 6 months or 3 years).
- **Frequency/Intensity:** Number and duration of sessions or classes (e.g. 3 times per week for one hour).[2]
- **Delivery Setting:** Where the program is offered (e.g. in a facility or in the community).
- **Target Population:** Participants that the program targets (e.g. high-risk offenders, individuals with a history of substance abuse, and etc.).
- **Criminogenic Needs Addressed:** Risk factors that the program addresses (e.g. substance abuse).
- **Annual Capacity:** Maximum number of people the program could have theoretically served in the most recent year given current resources. This can be measured by counting the number of treatment slots that can be provided during a one-year period.
- **Number of Participants Served:** Number of participants served by the program (even those who did not complete it) in the most recent full year the program was offered. This can be thought of as the number of people or families, (depending on the program's unit of analysis) who entered or started the program in the most recent full year.

Capacity information can be particularly powerful for budgeting and administrative decisions. Jurisdictions that have captured such information in their program inventories have used it to identify effective, evidence-based programs that have trouble meeting participant needs and ineffective programs with more slots available than needed. They have then shifted funds accordingly.

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[2] Note that some programs have firm duration and frequency requirements (e.g. the program model requires that it last for 26 weeks and meet three times a week for one hour); however, others will not have precise information available. In the instance that a point estimate for duration and/or frequency is not available, we recommend asking someone close to the program for a professionally informed estimate of the average length of time that the program lasts or how frequently the program typically meets.

Approaches for Gathering Data

Analysts will need to work closely with the agencies that offer local adult criminal programs to ensure that they are correctly capturing all the information. This includes county agencies, as well as contracted community-based providers.

There are different approaches that can be used to gather program related data. Many counties have started with an online search of agency websites to identify publicly available program information. In those jurisdictions, the Phase I portion of the template is prepopulated with program names, descriptions, and other available information to simplify and reduce workload. After pre-populating, the Phase I portion is then sent to the agencies with a request to review and fill in information gaps. Some jurisdictions have enlisted the use of a data collection tool or survey which they send out to the various program providers.

Another common approach is to develop a Programs Working Group. The working group can help streamline the PI process and ensure information is being captured consistently across agencies within the jurisdiction. It should include staff who are knowledgeable about the programs offered by their agency. As the group starts to develop program expenditures (Phase III), budget analysts from each agency should be added.

Phase II: Match Programs to the Results First Clearinghouse Database and Adult Justice: Cost-Benefit Model

In the second phase, jurisdictions should match their programs to the evidence base. This an important component because it lets counties know if the programs they fund have an evidence base and, if so, how effective they are. The Results First Clearinghouse Database is an online resource that brings together information about the effectiveness of social policy programs from nine national clearinghouses. The clearinghouses rate dozens to hundreds of programs based on the findings of rigorous evaluations.[1]

The program name will automatically populate using the program name entered on the Phase I tab. Users will need to provide the following information:

- If there has been a local evaluation of the program;
- If the program matches to the Results First Clearinghouse Database; and
- If the program matches to the AJ-CB.

Local Evaluation

Counties will need to enter the following information about local evaluations of each adult criminal justice program in their jurisdiction:

- **Local Evaluation of Program:** Has the program been locally evaluated? Users should select Yes or No from the dropdown menu. If the program has been locally evaluated, users should provide a link to the study in the **Notes/Comments** section.

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[1] https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/data-visualizations/2015/results-first-clearinghouse-database

- **If Yes, is Evaluation an Impact Evaluation or Performance Monitoring:** If the program has been evaluated, users should indicate whether the evaluation was an impact evaluation or performance monitoring by selecting the appropriate response from the dropdown list.

Impact monitoring refers to an assessment of how the program affects outcomes (such as recidivism). Performance monitoring refers to monitoring and reporting on progress towards program goals. Performance monitoring provides a snapshot of what is occurring in the program, whereas an impact evaluation provides information about whether the program worked.

Results First Clearinghouse Database

Counties will also need to enter the following information for each adult criminal justice program in their jurisdiction:

- **Reviewed by Clearinghouse:** Does the program match any of the programs in the Results First Clearinghouse Database?[4] Select the appropriate response from the dropdown list. If the program does not match a program in the Clearinghouse Database, the remaining questions in this section (columns E, F, and G) can be skipped.
- **If Yes, Clearinghouse Program Name:** If the program matches a program from the Clearinghouse Database, type in the program name from the Clearinghouse Database.
- **If Yes, Clearinghouse Rating:** If the program matches a program from the Clearinghouse Database, select the appropriate rating and rating color from the dropdown list.
- **If Yes, Link to Program Page:** If the program matches a program from the Clearinghouse Database, provide a hyperlink to the Clearinghouse program page.

Adult Justice: Cost-Benefit Model (AJ-CB)

Counties will also need to enter the following information about whether each local program matches to the AJ-CB:

- **In Adult Justice: Cost-Benefit Model:** Does the local program match a program in the AJ-CB?[5] Select the appropriate response from the dropdown list.
- **If Yes, Program Name in Adult Justice: Cost-Benefit Model:** If the program matches a program in the AJ-CB, select the appropriate model program that the local program matches to from the dropdown list.

Phase III: Program Expenditure Information

The third phase of the program inventory process involves collecting program expenditure and cost information for each program listed in the program inventory. This information will allow counties to see how they are spending money and what percent of their programming budget goes towards programs with (or without) evidence.

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[4] Additional information about matching local programs to the Results First Clearinghouse Database can be found in Appendix I.
[5] Additional information about matching local programs to the AJ-CB can be found in Appendix II.

Similar to Phase II, the program name will automatically populate using the program name entered on the Phase I tab. Counties will need to enter the following information:

- **Annual Program Expenditures:** Total annual expenditures for the program from a recent year.
- **Annual Cost Per Participant:** Annual cost per participant to participate in the program.[6] This information is only needed for programs that are in the AJ-CB.
- **Year of Dollars:** List the year of the expenditure data used for the per participant cost estimate. This information is used by the model to convert the costs into base year values.
- **Description of How Program Costs Were Calculated:** Brief description of how program costs were calculated, including where the cost information came from, contact information for individual providing the information, costs included (e.g. the types of incremental/variable costs included in the calculation and any fixed costs that were included), and the actual calculation.

Budget staff from each agency that provides programming will need to provide information about the amount spent to operate each program. If agency budgets contain only aggregated information (e.g., one line item for *all* programs) and do not provide granular program budget data, counties will need to work with budget staff and possibly program staff to calculate a professionally informed estimate of how much is spent on each individual program. Please contact CSAC Consultants for assistance.

Once the Phase III information has been collected, it can be entered into the AJ-CB in the Inputs section of the model.[7]

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[6] See Appendix III for more information about how to calculate the per participant cost.
[7] For multiple programs that matched to a single program, jurisdictions will need to calculate a weighted average for the cost before entering any data into the model. Please see your technical assistance provider for more information.

Appendix I: Matching Programs to the Results First Clearinghouse Database

Since each clearinghouse uses its own terminology when rating programs, the database utilizes a color-coding system, which creates a common language that enables users to quickly see where each program falls on a spectrum from negative impact to positive impact (see Exhibit 2).

Exhibit 2. Results First Clearinghouse Database Rating Colors

Rating color	Broad definition
● Highest rated	The program had a positive impact based on the most rigorous evidence.
● Second-highest rated	The program had a positive impact based on high-quality evidence.
● Mixed effects	The program had inconsistent impacts based on high-quality evidence. That is, study findings showed a mix of positive impact, no impact, and/or negative impact.
● No effects	The program had no impact based on high-quality evidence. That is, there was no difference in outcomes between program participants and those in the comparison group.
● Negative effects	The program had a negative impact based on high-quality evidence.

The steps involved with matching programs to the Clearinghouse Database are as follows:

1. <u>Search for each program listed on the PI in the database.</u>
It is recommended that users begin by typing in the program's title or key words in the search bar. A dropdown menu will appear that auto-populates with up to 10 suggested programs which include the search term(s) in their titles. Users can then refine their search using the following filter options: Category, Setting, Clearinghouse, and Rating Color.

2. <u>Review the program's description and key details to determine whether it matches your program.</u>
Once a program in the database has been found that matches the program in the inventory, users will need to determine whether it is a valid match. To start with, users should review the program information displayed in the database regarding outcomes, target populations, settings, and ages. Users should then click "Learn more." This will take the user to the clearinghouse's specific program page, which contains more detailed information about the program and the evaluations reviewed by the clearinghouse which informed the rating. Counties should review all of this information carefully before deciding whether the program is the same as the one funded by your jurisdiction.

3. Add clearinghouse program name and rating to the Program Inventory.

Once users have matched a program to the database, they should include the program name as it is listed in the clearinghouse, a link to the program page, and the rating and/or color on Phase II of the PI template. If a program does not have a rating color, it is classified as having "insufficient evidence" and should be considered "not rated" for the purposes of the PI.[8]

In most cases, the clearinghouses rate programs similarly; however, in some cases clearinghouses will assign different ratings to the same program.[9] This is generally because the clearinghouses' methodologies differ slightly from one another, including the research base used to arrive at the rating. For instance, CrimeSolutions.gov reviews a maximum of three studies, while Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development reviews all studies available. In addition, a few clearinghouses base their assessments on outcomes of interest to them.

In cases where a jurisdiction's program has multiple and dissimilar clearinghouse ratings, counties should review the detailed information on each clearinghouse's program page to see if one is a better match (e.g., if one clearinghouse provides a description that is more fitting or if the clearinghouse study was based on a similar population to the one your program targets, performed in a location similar to your jurisdiction, etc.) and then use that rating. If this information doesn't resolve the situation, users will need to decide which rating they feel more comfortable assigning to their jurisdiction's program. For more information on choosing an appropriate rating for your jurisdiction, please contact your CSAC consultant.

Jurisdictions will likely be unable to match all programs to the database. Users should select 'No' to the questions "Reviewed by Clearinghouse" for each program that they are not able to match.

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[8] The database shows when a clearinghouse has reviewed a program and found that there is not enough rigorous research to determine the program's impact. While there is no information on the effectiveness of these programs, knowing that they have been reviewed and lack strong evidence is still valuable.

[9] Note that relatively few programs will have ratings that differ significantly. For more information, please see the Clearinghouse Database's FAQ.

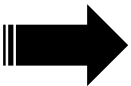# Appendix II: Matching Programs to the Adult Justice: Cost-Benefit Model

Users will need to determine which programs in their PI are in the AJ-CB. To do so, they should use the information collected in Phase I of the PI (name, description, duration, frequency, and etc.) and the Program Summaries.[10] The Program Summaries provide WSIPP's description of the program, as well as key outcome data from WSIPP's meta-analysis. Program summaries also contain additional information from the studies that WSIPP reviewed, including: a more detailed description of the program, characteristics of the providers, and a table with a brief explanation of the treatment groups and their corresponding treatment period/dosage.

To help with this process, please note the following, which is also illustrated in Exhibit 3:
- Programs listed on a jurisdiction's PI may match to a broader category. For example, Adult Basic Education can be matched to Correctional education (basic skills) in the AJ- CB.
- Multiple programs in a jurisdiction's inventory may be matched to a single larger program in the AJ-CB. This is because WSIPP may group similar programs together in the same review. For example, HOPE and Decide Your Time can be matched to "Swift, certain, and fair" supervision in the AJ-CB.
- Some programs may be rated in the clearinghouses but not match to anything in the AJ-CB. Adult boot camps fall into this category.
- Some programs may not be rated in the clearinghouses but will have a match in the AJ-CB. Relapse prevention group counseling falls into this category.

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[10] Program Summaries for Adult Criminal Justice.

Exhibit 3: Matching programs to the AJ-CB
(Example created for illustrative purposes only)

PROGRAM NAME	CLEARINGHOUSE RATING	matches to	PROGRAM IN BCA MODEL
Culinary certification program	Second highest rated	➡	Vocational education in prison
Welding certification program	Second highest rated		
Adult Basic Education in prison	Second highest rated	➡	Correctional education (basic skills)
Boot camp	No effects	X	No match
HOPE	Second highest rated	➡	"Swift, certain, and fair" supervision
Decide Your Time	No effects		
Parenting Inside Out	Highest rated	X	No match
AA/NA support groups	Second highest rated	➡	Outpatient/non-intensive drug treatment (incarceration)
Relapse prevention group counseling	Not rated		

Appendix III: Calculating the Annual Cost per Participant

The careful estimation of program costs is a crucial step for accurate benefit-cost analysis. As such, analysts should work closely with their technical assistance providers when determining these costs.

Analysts should generally use <u>marginal costs</u> to reflect the program cost.[11] Marginal costs are those that represent the agency cost of a small increase or decrease in program participation. Marginal costs may differ substantially from average costs. The average cost is generally the total aggregate program expenditure divided by the number of persons served.[12]

There are two methods to calculate the marginal cost of a program: bottom-up and top-down. As explained below, the bottom-up method is preferred to account for the activities, services, and front-line staff comprising the program. Nonetheless, the most appropriate method for each jurisdiction will depend on the type of data that is available.

Regardless of the method employed, analysts will need to request program-specific fiscal data from the agency that offers the program or use the Programs Working Group to gather and estimate costs. Note that agencies may contract some programs to outside service providers, in which case the contracted price will serve as the marginal cost per participant.

1. <u>Bottom-up method</u>
The bottom-up method identifies all the activities, service components, and personnel involved with directly carrying out the program to estimate a unit cost. This can be more difficult and time consuming than the top-down approach. However, if done properly, it will produce a more accurate estimate of the marginal cost for each program. To estimate the marginal cost using this method, users need to:
- Identify the average staff workload per individual in the program (e.g. how much time staff spend teaching basic adult education per program participant in a prison facility, how much time is spent teaching post-secondary education per program participant, and so on);
- Estimate the average salary, including benefits, of individuals involved in the provision of the program (e.g. the average salary of institutional education staff is "X");
- Gather information on per participant additional resources involved in the commission of the activity (e.g. the variable cost of any additional program resources); and
- Complete the cost calculation using the following formula: (Staff salary * Average workload per participant) + per participant variable program costs.

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[11] Average costs are appropriate if the jurisdiction wants to examine the return on the program as a whole, not just small changes in the population or for programs that have not been implemented.

[12] For the purposes of the AJ-CB, the use of average costs can be problematic because they commonly include administrative overhead and other fixed costs that do not change on an incremental basis. By contrast, the marginal cost represents the slight, incremental cost of adding a small number of people to or subtracting them from a program. However,

<u>Top-down method</u>
The top-down method simply divides program expenditures by the number of output units (i.e., program participants). It is often easier than the bottom-up method because it relies on aggregate fiscal data, which is often easy to obtain. However, if agency expenses are co-mingled (e.g. across multiple programs) or the expense categories cannot be disaggregated, then program costs may be over- or underestimated.

The first step in the top-down approach is to estimate the total variable cost from the total program expenditures:
- Isolate the expenditure lines related to the program. These include wages and benefits of staff working directly with program participants, training, materials, drug tests, and other direct services;
- Determine which, if any, categories are fixed; and
- Subtract the fixed costs from the total program expenditures.

The next step is to estimate the per-participant marginal cost using this value. The preferred approach is to use information on the actual amount of time each participant spent in the program during the selected year. This involves the following steps:
- Determine the actual number of days each participant spent in the program based on program participation start and end dates;
- Divide the total variable cost (calculated in step one) by the total number of program days; and
- Multiply the above value by the average duration in days.