

# Incorporating Green Programming in Juvenile Justice Settings:

## Lessons Learned from OJJDP's Tribal Green Reentry Initiative

Authors: Christine Lindquist, Ada Pecos Melton, Tasseli McKay, and Rita Martinez  
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### The Green Reentry Initiative

From 2009 to 2014, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) funded demonstration grants to incorporate green technologies and environmentally sustainable activities in programs designed to help detained and reentering tribal youth successfully reintegrate into their communities and to prevent future criminal behavior among at-risk youth. Three American Indian Tribes received Tribal Juvenile Detention and Reentry Green Demonstration (“Green Reentry”) grants: the Hualapai Indian Tribe (AZ), the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (MS), and the Rosebud Sioux Tribe (SD). Throughout their grant periods the grantees received training and technical assistance from the Tribal Juvenile Detention and Reentry Resource and Technical Assistance Center, managed by the Education Development Center.

The Green Reentry programs combined conventional juvenile justice programming—such as individual assessments, reentry planning, education, and counseling—with green activities such as gardening and skill development in green technologies. In addition, the three programs incorporated traditional tribal culture through cultural education, community activities, and ceremonies.

- **The Rosebud Sioux Tribe’s (RST)** Green Reentry program was delivered primarily in the context of a day-reporting educational program at the RST juvenile detention center (Wanbli Wiconi Tipi), in which youth reported to the facility each weekday to participate in schoolwork and other programming. Green Reentry activities included gardening, beekeeping, and greenhouse construction and maintenance, complemented by a strong cultural component including culturally based counseling, Lakota language education, spiritual ceremonies, cultural excursions, community events, and service learning projects in the community. Youth sentenced to day report were the primary recipients of Green Reentry programming over the course of the grant; however, youth committed to the detention center did participate in some Green Reentry activities.
- **The Hualapai Indian Tribe’s** Green Reentry program served all youth who were adjudicated to the Hualapai Juvenile Detention and Rehabilitation Center (HJDRC), which included Hualapai youth and those placed at the HJDRC



This report highlights key considerations relevant to incorporating “green” activities in juvenile justice settings. The findings are of interest to those who work with justice-involved youth and are interested in incorporating gardening, greenhouses, and related activities. The findings are based on the Cross-Site Evaluation of OJJDP’s Green Reentry Program and are of particular relevance to practitioners who work with tribal youth. Because green activities offer a natural opportunity for tribal youth to reconnect with their traditional culture, many of the lessons in this report are relevant to a holistic approach in which green activities are complemented with cultural components.



by nearby tribal courts. Green Reentry activities included gardening and horticultural education, complemented by cultural activities such as native crafts, singing, and sweats. Youth who advanced to the highest behavioral status level participated in a number of additional activities such as greenhouse construction and maintenance, hydroponic gardening, beekeeping, and community service projects. Reentry planning and post-release follow-up were also provided to Hualapai youth, with some youth receiving apprenticeships or job placements with tribal departments. Gardening plots and greenhouses were located at the HJDRC and the local Boys and Girls Club, allowing youth to participate in the Green Reentry program while at the HJDRC and continue when they returned home.

- **The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians' (MBCI)** Green Reentry program was administered by the Division of Court Services and delivered primarily on the MBCI Justice Complex grounds, where a large garden plot and hoop house (with an aquaponics demonstration) were located. Youth sentenced to probation or under court supervision were the primary population served, with garden work used to fulfill community service requirements. Youth also participated in cultural crafts, attended community events, and participated in a number of field trips to engage in hands-on work with partner agencies, including agricultural demonstrations; workshops on solar panels, permaculture, and native forestry; and volunteer work at the elderly center. Youth committed to the MBCI juvenile detention center were in contact with Green Reentry staff but could not participate in program activities.

For detailed information about the Green Reentry initiative and each funded site, please see <http://www.rti.org/publications/abstract.cfm?pubid=20742>.

This report highlights the key lessons learned from the experiences of the three demonstration grantees, as documented by the cross-site evaluation led by RTI International and American Indian Development Associates (AIDA). These findings are based on four rounds of site visits conducted by the evaluation team to each site to document the evolution of the programs over the course of their grants. During each site visit, semi-structured interviews were conducted with program staff, organizational partners, youth participating in the programs, and their parents. In addition, focus groups were held with tribal elders (round 3 site visit) and parents (round 4 site visit). Overall, the perspectives of 77 staff and organizational partners, 56 youth, 58 parents, and 32 elders were captured throughout the evaluation.

For this analysis of lessons learned, the research team reviewed data by interviewee type (youth, parents, and staff/stakeholders), across sites and across data collection waves. Within text data from each type of interviewee, we compiled all instances of text that fell within the broad domain of interest (e.g., partnership challenges). For each broad domain, we identified analytic themes, or perspectives on the domain that commonly recurred among that particular type of interviewee. Finally, we looked across interviewee type to examine areas of convergence and divergence in analytic themes in each domain, as well as inductive insights that the evaluation team gleaned from considering the varied perspectives on a domain as a whole.

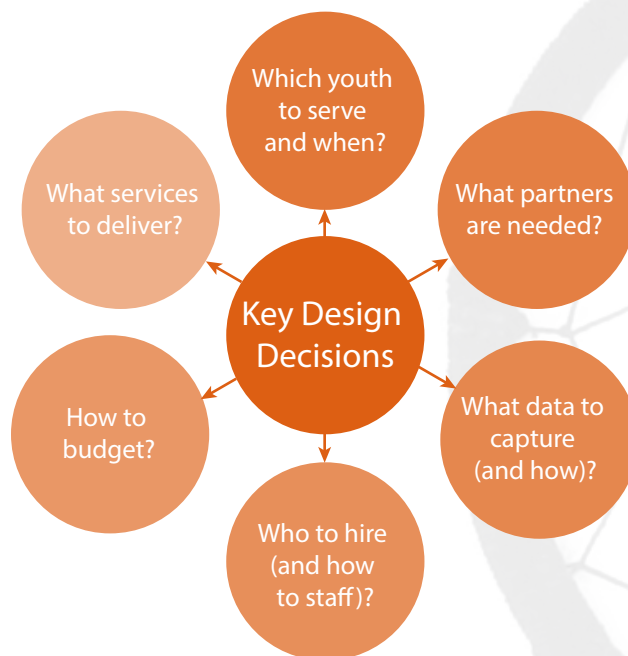


In addition to the implementation lessons highlighted in this report, the cross-site evaluation also included an outcome component, which was designed to document recidivism outcomes for youth who participated in Green Reentry programming. The outcome study revealed that fairly high proportions of Green Reentry youth in all three sites had a new detention center booking within 6 months of program enrollment and that within 24 months of program enrollment, over three-quarters of Green Reentry youth in each site had had a new detention center booking. However, in the two sites in which a comparison group was constructed for the purpose of determining whether recidivism was lower for Green Reentry youth than for youth who did not participate in the program, it appeared that, at least for new detention center bookings within 6 and 12 months, Green Reentry participants had *lower* levels of recidivism than comparable youth not enrolled in the programs. Although the outcome study findings should be interpreted with extreme caution due to extremely small sample sizes and other methodological limitations, these findings suggest that the Green Reentry programs may be a promising approach for lowering recidivism among justice-involved tribal youth. More details about the outcome study can be found in the final report from the cross-site evaluation (Lindquist, McKay, Herman Stahl, Pecos Melton, and Martinez, forthcoming).



## Lessons Learned on Program Design

Thoughtful planning is important for any program to be successful. For programs that involve implementing technically complex components and require bringing in many new organizational partners, planning is even more critical. The Green Reentry initiative was a novel approach and because the grantees had no previous experience with delivering green activities in juvenile justice settings, the programs were funded as demonstration grants and allowed a year of planning. All of the programs eventually became fully operational, but it took time to overcome the many challenges that were not anticipated during the design phase. As future program implementers design their programs, several lessons learned from the experiences of the Green Reentry grantees can be applied to make future programs as successful as possible. This report is organized by the major decisions that need to be made as future programs are designed and provides key considerations for each decision. Importantly, the decisions are closely interrelated. As such, they cannot be made one at a time but rather in conjunction with one another.



### Which youth should be served and when?

Ideally, decisions about which youth to serve could be made simply by identifying the youth who are likely to benefit the most from green programming. This might involve thinking about the population of youth at greatest risk for justice involvement (or continued involvement), who are currently underserved based on existing services, and for whom green activities would be particularly therapeutic or most likely to result in other benefits such as improvements in self-sufficiency or employability.

However, based on the experiences of the Green Reentry grantees, logistical considerations related to accessing different populations of justice-involved youth



The Green Reentry programs were all run by tribal criminal justice agencies. Future Green Reentry programs could presumably be run by other governmental agencies or community-based organizations. Although it is difficult to speculate about how easily non-justice agencies could access justice-involved youth for green programming, many of the lessons shared in this report should be relevant to future programs, regardless of which agency administers the program.





must be taken into consideration. One of the most important lessons learned from the experiences of the Green Reentry programs is that the decision **about which youth to serve and when (i.e., youth committed to a juvenile detention center vs. youth under community supervision) will heavily influence the type of green activities that can be done with them.** Inherently, most green activities need to be implemented in an outdoor setting. This is not the typical setting for program delivery in juvenile detention centers (JDCs) and, depending on a facility's layout, can introduce concerns about security risks. Indeed, such concerns prevented two Green Reentry grantees from being able to involve JDC youth in green programming to the extent originally envisioned (although one grantee did overcome this barrier late in the grant period). These grantees ended up serving youth under community supervision (including youth court-ordered to a day-report educational program in the JDC and youth serving probation sentences or under court supervision). Based on the evaluation's documentation of the experiences of grantees in working with both JDC and community-based youth, key considerations for both models are discussed in this section.

#### Considerations for Working with JDC Youth

The Green Reentry initiative was intended for youth being released from JDCs, and all three grantees had originally planned to work with this population. Among the perceived benefits of working with JDC youth were that engagement in green activities—working in a garden and caring for living things—would be therapeutic and that learning concrete skills such as horticultural techniques, solar panel installation, and greenhouse construction would make youth more employable and self-sufficient after release. Many staff from the two programs that worked with JDC youth felt that the JDC setting provided a good environment for green programming because of the highly structured environment and the fact that youth were removed from negative home environments and got plenty of sleep and food to eat. Additionally, starting reentry services while youth are still in detention was thought to help youth transition back into their homes, schools, and communities and to keep youth involved in community-based reentry programming.

However, the difficulty in successfully engaging JDC youth in green programming cannot be underestimated. Delivering green programming in JDCs can be very challenging because it requires access to outdoor programming space that meets security standards. For many programs, it will also require that staff from partner agencies be allowed to enter the facility to provide technical expertise or work directly with youth on various green projects. Finally, for programs that desire to supplement green programming with excursions into the community for service projects or cultural events, which many Green Reentry stakeholders perceived to have a tremendous impact on youth's success and the program's visibility, a mechanism that allows JDC youth to leave the facility temporarily is needed. Based on the experiences of the Green Reentry grantees, the following questions should be asked by future program developers seeking to work with JDC youth.

- **Do facility administrators support the program?** One of the most important lessons learned from the experiences of the Green Reentry grantees is that top-level support for green programming is absolutely essential for a program



Intra- or inter-agency agreements could be used as a strategy for formalizing arrangements to allow JDC youth to participate in green reentry programming. Although this strategy was not used by the Green Reentry grantees, such an arrangement could be beneficial in ensuring that all parties understand the agreement and mitigating the potentially adverse consequences of staff turnover.



to be able to access and fully work with JDC youth. As noted above, green-oriented programming is unique in several ways and requires a certain level of flexibility and acceptance of risk on the part of JDC administrators. If the facility administrators are not enthusiastic about the program, it is unlikely that the other obstacles discussed in this section can be overcome. In contrast, when top administrators support the program, not only can resolution on security-related questions be achieved more easily, but the attitudes of other JDC staff, whose assistance may be needed with certain tasks, are also more positive.

- **What outdoor space is available for green activities on JDC grounds?**

Future program implementers should examine the layout of the JDC under consideration and identify possible locations for green activities to be colocated. Based on the experiences of the Green Reentry programs, when gardens, greenhouses, and other components were established within the secured perimeter of the JDC (as opposed to on JDC grounds but outside the fence), security concerns on the part of JDC administrators were virtually eliminated. Central visibility also appeared to promote interest in the program among JDC staff not directly involved because they could see the activity progress over time and the enthusiasm of the youth as they worked. Further, depending on a given facility's layout, this central placement could prevent committed youth from being seen by community members, which could otherwise be a concern with a non-central location. In short, these experiences suggest that if future programs cannot place green activities within the secured perimeter of the JDC under consideration (and out of sight from community members), it simply may not be a feasible program setting. In such cases, it may be possible to locate the green activities on JDC grounds (outside of the secured area) and serve non-JDC youth, which is the model employed by MBCI. In addition, it may also be possible to bring JDC youth to the non-secure area if a mechanism such as temporary release is used (discussed below).

- **What mechanisms might allow JDC youth to participate in programming outside of the secured area?**

Based on the experiences of the Green Reentry grantees, it is likely that future programs working with JDC youth will want to involve these youth in activities that take place outside of the secured area of the JDC. This could include green activities located on JDC grounds but outside the fence (among the Green Reentry grantees, this most commonly involved beekeeping) or activities in the community, such as community service projects (e.g., cleaning up parks, painting over graffiti) or cultural events. These activities were strongly perceived as adding value to the Green Reentry programs because they enabled youth to give back to their communities and facilitated community awareness about the program. Therefore, future programs should consider whether the JDC or youth court has any mechanisms in place that could be used to allow JDC youth to go outside the secured portion of the JDC. Among the Green Reentry grantees, two mechanisms that were used were the behavioral classification system in the JDC and temporary releases issued by the court. The behavioral classification system in place in the HJDRC offers privileges to youth upon achieving the highest level and was used to allow Level 4 youth to participate in more advanced green activities located outside of the secured perimeter (e.g., beekeeping, greenhouse work, hydroponics, solar panel installation) and



Clearly, the support from the JDC administrator and youth court judge strongly influence how much can be done with JDC youth outside of the secure setting.

For mechanisms such as behavioral classification systems and temporary release to be used to allow JDC youth to participate in activities outside of the secured JDC perimeter, JDC administrators and judges must strongly believe that the benefits of incarcerated youth remaining connected and giving back to their communities outweigh the risk of the youth escaping. Among the Green Reentry sites that used these mechanisms, staff felt that the youth did not abuse the privileges they were granted due to two factors:

1. *The youth knew they would be found and given harsh sentences if they were to escape, and*
2. *They did not want to ruin the opportunity for others.*



to go into the community for cultural events and community service projects. RST used the temporary release mechanism as a strategy for achieving similar results. In this site, the youth court judge regularly issued temporary release orders for JDC youth to participate in beekeeping (located outside of the secured perimeter) and go into the community for service learning projects, cultural excursions, and community activities.

- **What will be required of JDC correctional officers, and can these tasks be written into their official job descriptions?** The Green Reentry grantees were often dependent on JDC officers to assist with after-hours and weekend tasks, given that most program staff worked 8-5 weekday positions, while gardening and other projects sometimes required after hours attention. Therefore, programs that are located in JDCs will need to think through which tasks may be required of correctional officers (as opposed to “program” staff; e.g., watering the garden on the weekend) and think about factors that might help or hinder their completion. Green Reentry stakeholders felt that understaffing and rotating shifts, which limit communication and create a lack of understanding about what needs to happen when shifts are switched, were problematic. However, the most consistent barrier to JDC officer involvement was the perception on the officers’ part that such tasks were not part of their job responsibilities. Although this obstacle is obviously associated with low officer support for the program and could hopefully be avoided with strong administrator buy-in and other strategies discussed in this section, future programs should consider modifying the official job descriptions of JDC officers to include tasks specific to green programming.
- **Will there consistently be enough JDC youth available for the program?** All three Green Reentry grantees saw a decrease in the number of youth sentenced to their tribal JDC over the course of their grants. This was mainly attributed to an increased emphasis on diversion and alternatives to incarceration for justice-involved youth. Therefore, it is important for future programs considering working with JDC youth to look at JDC admission/release data and consider factors that may influence those numbers going forward, such as diversion programs, changing judicial philosophies, and trends in youth crime. Projecting likely caseload is helpful for making decisions about whether a JDC under consideration is a feasible setting for the program and, if so, for making staffing and budgeting decisions.
- **Given school requirements, what hours are available for youth to participate in green activities?** Whether living in a JDC or in the community, youth are required to spend a certain number of hours in school. The Green Reentry grantees struggled not only with the limited amount of time that youth were available for programming, but also with the timing. The hours that youth were required to be in school were also the optimal times for some green activities (e.g., watering, volunteering with the elders at the elderly activity center). Therefore, future programs should make sure they understand what hours the target population is available for programming, to see if the program under consideration is feasible. As discussed later in this report, it may be necessary to design the program as an after-school program with many activities on weekends, which would require hiring staff willing to work nontraditional



Many tribal JDCs house youth from other reservations and therefore face additional considerations. Program staff will need to determine what agreements need to be put into place to work with these youth during and after release. If post-release work is envisioned, it will be important to identify the resources needed to work with youth from other tribes in their home communities after release.





schedules. Another strategy for overcoming limited availability of youth discussed later in this report is to seek school credit for at least some of the time spent in green programming.

- **Will community partners be able to enter the JDC to work with youth?** Due to the technically complex nature of many green activities, program staff will likely need to involve a variety of outside partners in specific green projects. When working with JDC youth, it will therefore be necessary to learn (in advance) about any security constraints or policies that must be accommodated to bring outside staff into the JDC to work with youth. For example, some tools or equipment common in green activities may be prohibited or need to be inventoried in advance. This was not a major problem for the Green Reentry grantees but is certainly an important planning consideration.
- **Is there a way for youth who are released from the JDC to continue their participation with green activities?** Many programs that serve JDC youth want to continue working with them after release. It is therefore important to consider—during the program design phase—what the options are for post-release work with youth. If a program is delivered in a JDC setting, it makes sense to look into whether youth can come back into the facility for program activities after their release. One of the Green Reentry programs allowed formerly incarcerated youth to come back into the JDC periodically to mentor current participants; however, JDCs do not typically allow detained youth to interact with non-detained youth. Further, if the green activities are located within the secured portion of the detention center, it is unlikely that released youth would be able to continue working on green projects at the JDC. Therefore, if a post-release component is a priority, future programs should look into whether there are existing opportunities for youth to continue their green involvement in the community, such as community gardens or greenhouses. Another possibility would be establishing a small garden or greenhouse at a community partner’s building, which was employed by the Hualapai program.



For future programs that want to keep youth voluntarily connected to the program after they are no longer required to participate, the most successful strategy identified by the Green Reentry grantees was to invite youth to participate in appealing events selected with their input and that reflect the youth’s interests. Stakeholders also recommended keeping an open line of communication by calling youth to see how they are doing, going to their houses, texting parents, using social media, and providing transportation for youth to get to activities. Good rapport between the Green Reentry staff and the youth and families was thought to be crucial for ongoing involvement.

### Considerations for Working with Community-Based Youth

Delivering green programming to community-based youth under criminal justice supervision (e.g., probation, court supervised diversion) offers some advantages over the JDC model. Green programming that is not located in a secure setting can be accessed much more readily by organizational partners, parents and volunteers, and youth. Because of the greater accessibility, such programs could have a larger network of volunteers or paid employees to assist with the around-the-clock, seven-days-a-week tasks associated with green activities (i.e., they would not be dependent on a small number of JDC staff). If grant funded, they could also be in a better position to sustain the green activities through a large network of volunteers after the funding ends. In addition, youth who begin participation in the program while under criminal justice supervision could easily continue their involvement with the green activities on a voluntary basis as long as they want.<sup>1</sup> Having past

<sup>1</sup> Many stakeholders interviewed for the evaluation felt that programs should be designed to work with youth even after they turn 18.



participants mentor current participants as they work together could be very positive for both groups.

However, as with JDC settings, several challenges unique to community settings for green programming must be anticipated. The following considerations should be explored by future programs considering working with community-based youth to make sure that this option is viable. Many of these considerations apply to future programs designed as reentry programs with both a JDC and post-release (community-based) component.<sup>2</sup>

- **What space is available to locate green activities?** Ideally, community-based programs could be located in a location that has suitable properties for gardening or other green activities under consideration (e.g., suitable soil, flat terrain, access to water), is easily accessible to both program staff and community members, and can be protected from vandalism by fences or lighting.<sup>3</sup> It would be particularly beneficial if the setting were one in which youth are already participating in related programming, such as the Boys and Girls Club or elderly center. Although the two Green Reentry programs that specifically targeted community-based youth under criminal justice supervision delivered most green activities on the grounds of the JDC, the decision about where to place green activities reflected the original intent to serve JDC youth. Future programs designed specifically to serve community-based youth would likely want to identify a program location that is not located in a justice setting.
- **How will youth be identified for participation, and what is their incentive?** Community-based programs will need to consider the specific target population of youth they plan to serve and figure out how to identify and recruit the youth for participation. The Green Reentry programs were all administered by criminal justice agencies and mandated participation for community-based youth who were either on probation or otherwise court-ordered. Future programs that do not mandate participation will need to consider other strategies for encouraging youth to participate, such as offering incentives (e.g., school credit, non-monetary rewards). In addition, future programs that are established as reentry programs, with a community-based (post-release) component, will need to consider whether there is a mechanism for court-ordering the community-based component. The one Green Reentry program that used this model struggled with low support from the courts and probation officers, which resulted in low post-release participation in programming. In general, among the Green Reentry grantees, court leverage and support from the probation department were perceived to be critical for mandating participation and enforcing compliance.

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<sup>2</sup> The model employed by the Hualapai program entailed establishing gardening plots and greenhouses both at the JDC and in a community-based location, to allow youth to continue their participation in green activities after release.

<sup>3</sup> The community greenhouse established in one Green Reentry site was a frequent target of vandalism. Future programs should consider how likely this problem will be in their communities and determine whether fences, shatterproof windows, and lighting will be needed.





- **Will there consistently be enough youth available for the program?** As when working in JDC settings, future programs considering working with community-based youth need to carefully project the number of youth in the target population who are likely to be available for programming. These projections are important to ensure that there are enough youth available to support the program, and for budgeting and staffing purposes. Among the Green Reentry grantees, some saw decreases in the number of youth sentenced to probation (or court ordered to a day report program) over the course of their grants, which limited the number of youth who could be enrolled. Therefore, future program implementers need to be aware of trends or initiatives in the community that could influence the numbers of youth under community supervision or who otherwise meet program eligibility criteria.
- **Is there a mechanism to provide transportation for youth to program activities?** Depending on the location of the program and characteristics of the community (e.g., availability of public transportation), programs serving community-based youth need to think about how program participants will be able to get to the program site. Among the Green Reentry grantees, transportation was such a barrier for the families that program staff ended up spending much more time picking up and returning youth than originally anticipated. If transportation had not been provided, it is questionable whether the community-based model would have worked.
- **Given school requirements, what hours are available for youth to participate in green activities?** As in JDC settings, when designing green programs for community-based youth, it is critical to make sure that the hours the youth will be available for programming will work. Once again, an after-school/weekend design might be the most feasible, provided that program staff can work evening and weekend hours. However, with this model, arrangements will need to be made to have basic maintenance tasks such as watering be filled during business hours.

### **What Organizational Partners Are Needed, and How Can They Be Engaged?**

Involving a network of organizational partners in programs for justice-involved youth is not unusual, given the high need for services among this population. But for programs that implement green activities, which require technical knowledge far above what is typical for justice department staff, selecting and retaining the proper organizational partners will require careful attention.

#### **Key Partners**

The Green Reentry grantees developed extensive partnership networks to design, implement, and sustain their programs. Based on their experiences, four key types of partnerships should be considered by future programs: government/juvenile justice partners, green partners, other local departments or programs, and community partners.



Type of Partner	Examples from OJJDP Grantees	Primary Partnership Role
Government/juvenile justice partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tribal council</li> <li>• Tribal youth courts</li> <li>• Tribal prosecutor's office</li> <li>• Probation</li> <li>• JDC administration</li> <li>• Law enforcement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Authorizing the program</li> <li>• Administering the program for justice-involved youth</li> <li>• Court-ordering participation and monitoring compliance</li> </ul>
Green partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local universities, including agricultural extension offices</li> <li>• Tribal departments with expertise (natural resources, forestry, solid waste)</li> <li>• Local agricultural programs (demonstration farms)</li> <li>• Local green technology businesses</li> <li>• Local master gardener volunteers</li> <li>• United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing substantive expertise for green projects</li> <li>• Providing labor, equipment, or supplies for green projects</li> <li>• Leading workshops and hands-on activities with youth</li> </ul>
Other local departments/programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tribal cultural department</li> <li>• County school district</li> <li>• Tribal department of education</li> <li>• Tribal department of behavioral health</li> <li>• Tribal child/family services department</li> <li>• Tribal employment &amp; vocational training department</li> <li>• Youth programs (Boys and Girls Club, suicide prevention, alcohol/drugs, apprenticeship)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leading cultural activities</li> <li>• Sharing information about school attendance/performance and negotiating school credit for program participation</li> <li>• Providing complementary services such as counseling, home investigations, employment, character-based education, substance abuse prevention</li> </ul>
Community partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents</li> <li>• Elders</li> <li>• Culturally knowledgeable community members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participating with youth in program activities</li> <li>• Leading cultural activities</li> <li>• Supporting youths' progress in program</li> </ul>



The Green Reentry programs were administered by tribal justice agencies with the support of tribal council and many justice partners. Having strong support from juvenile justice partners, particularly the courts, was necessary to get youth into the programs (i.e., sentencing them to participate and, for those who are released from JDCs, mandating post-release participation), reinforce participation, and, in some cases, mandate parental involvement. In addition, as discussed previously, support from JDC administrators was necessary to access JDC youth for green programming. For future programs, considerations about which justice partners to involve and the needed level of support from each will depend somewhat on the specific population of youth that will be served and whether their participation needs to be mandatory.

Green partners provided guidance on technically complex green activities (e.g., beekeeping, aquaponics) and worked directly with youth on activities in which program staff did not have expertise (e.g., solar panel installation). All three programs worked closely with their state university's agricultural extension office representative<sup>4</sup> and involved several tribal departments that brought specific expertise and resources. The MBCI program was extremely successful in identifying other partners that could expose youth to advanced green technologies and offer hands-on learning through agricultural projects.

The involvement of a variety of tribal and non-tribal departments/programs was also instrumental in providing direct services to youth that complemented green programming, particularly cultural activities, behavioral health counseling, and employment assistance. Partnerships with school districts were instrumental in facilitating communication about youth academic and behavioral progress and, although not accomplished among the Green Reentry grantees, could be leveraged by future programs to negotiate the receipt of school credit for green activities. Another partner that future programs should consider, if available, is transitional youth housing. None of the Green Reentry grantees had access to transitional housing for youth but all felt that this was a desperately needed service, given what they perceived as the extremely negative home environments to which many youth returned.

Finally, the Green Reentry programs partnered with parents, tribal elders, and culturally knowledgeable community members wherever possible. Although the grantees struggled to engage parents and elders, they strongly felt that these were important partners and that future programs should strive to involve them.

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<sup>4</sup>The Green Reentry grantees were required to have a university partner. After exploring several options, all three programs determined that their state agricultural extension officer had a sufficient level of expertise to fill this role. In addition to this partnership, the RST program also partnered with a local tribal university to provide lesson plans and expertise on gardening.







Based on the experiences of the Green Reentry grantees, key recommendations for voluntarily engaging parents in programming include\*:

- **Invest in extensive communication between staff and parents.** To fully engage parents, future programs should be prepared to make persistent and repeated contact with parents and guardians, ensure that parents receive frequent updates on their children's activities, educate parents about expectations and opportunities for them to participate, accommodate parents' schedules, be available to parents when needed, and cultivate positive, non-judgmental relationships.
- **Design the program as a whole-family approach that engages parents, siblings, and extended family members.** This includes strategies such as reaching out to adult family members that are key in youth's lives (e.g., grandparents, aunts, uncles, and other adult family members), making program events fun and kid-friendly, creating activities that are personally meaningful, and providing activities that are culturally meaningful.

\*For a detailed discussion of these approaches and other issues related to parent involvement in Green Reentry programs, please see [[http://www.rti.org/pubs/family\\_involvement.pdf](http://www.rti.org/pubs/family_involvement.pdf)].



Key recommendations for engaging elders include\*:

- **Bring youth to the elderly center for activities,** rather than expecting the elders to come to the program setting. Despite the limited hours that youth are available during the school day, this strategy was the most effective at actually connecting youth with elders among the Green Reentry sites. One program regularly brought youth and staff to the elderly center for talking circles and assistance with activities going on at the facility.
- **Show appreciation for elder participation.** Activities designed to build positive relationships between the green program and elderly center, such as sharing produce grown in the garden and cultural crafts made by the youth, and helping to serve meals to the elders, were perceived to be very beneficial. Elders suggested that such activities could be provided in exchange for storytelling nights or teaching a beading class. In addition, financial stipends or nonmonetary incentives such as gift baskets may also be effective at showing appreciation for their involvement. Many tribal elders face serious financial constraints, particularly those who are supporting their grandchildren or other family members, and should be honored for their time.
- To improve communication between elders and youth, **consider holding a preparatory class.** Stakeholders at one site felt that better preparation before elders and youth come together would greatly reduce communication barriers. Informing elders about the youth with whom they will be working (e.g., where they are with their cultural knowledge) so that they know where to start was suggested, along with training both youth and elders on listening skills.

\* For more about elder engagement in Green Reentry programs, please see [[http://www.rti.org/pubs/greenreentryevaluationbrief3\\_rev.pdf](http://www.rti.org/pubs/greenreentryevaluationbrief3_rev.pdf)].



## Strategies for Identifying and Retaining Partners

Based on the experiences of the Green Reentry grantees, several general recommendations can be made for future programs when recruiting partners.

- **Identify all possible community resources.** Early in the design phase, future programs should learn what resources are available in and near their communities. These resources could include governmental (both tribal and nontribal) as well non-governmental partners. Many existing programs that work with youth could be tapped as potential partners. Green partners could include any organization that provides services in the areas of horticulture, forestry, recycling, and green technologies. Green Reentry stakeholders felt that future program implementers should tap into all of the resources in their communities and go outside their communities when necessary.
- **Bring potential partners to the table during the planning process.** Green Reentry stakeholders consistently felt that weak partnerships could have been stronger if partners had been brought in while the program was first being designed. Being involved in planning creates a stronger sense of buy-in, allows for contributions from a broader set of partners (which results in a stronger program design), and creates a shared vision for the program.
- **Identify opportunities for resource sharing and reciprocal relationships.** When learning about the services and expertise of potential partners, future programs should also seek to learn what partners' needs are and whether there is anything the program can do for them. Several Green Reentry stakeholders felt that reciprocal partnerships, in which both partners benefited from the partnership, were more successful.
- **Formalize partnership agreements.** Once the partners have been selected, the arrangements should be formalized through some type of agreement (e.g., interagency agreement, memorandum of understanding). Ideally, the agreement will lay out the roles and expectations of each partner (e.g., attending advisory board meetings, providing a specific service role) and, given the turnover at partner agencies experienced by the Green Reentry grantees, a backup plan specifying who will be responsible if the main point of contact leaves the agency.
- **Provide training to non-justice partners.** Future programs should consider providing training to non-justice partners on working within a justice setting, particularly if the service delivery setting is the JDC. Although non-justice partners generally did not have difficulty working in justice settings, some service providers who worked with youth on green activities struggled to meet security requirements of JDCs (e.g., prohibitions against some tools or equipment, the need to have supplies inventoried in advance) and could have benefited from training on these requirements.

Once organizational partners have been recruited for participation, substantial time will need to be invested in maintaining their engagement over the course of the program. All of the Green Reentry grantees struggled with keeping partners interested and engaged in the program over time. Three recommendations for keeping partners engaged can be derived from the experiences of the Green Reentry programs:



Additional recommendations specific to programs that use an advisory board to provide guidance and oversight include:

- Consider incorporating advisory responsibility for green programming into existing boards with related goals and shared partners.
- Ensure that advisory board members are clear on the role of the board.
- Hold advisory board meetings regularly at a consistent time, not just during a crisis.
- Have advisory board members assume responsibility for action items rather than just providing guidance or listening to updates.
- Use a formal structure, such as agendas and meeting minutes, to maximize the time available and provide accountability for completing tasks.



- **Have a staff member skilled at project management be responsible for coordinating the involvement of partners.** Keeping partners engaged and coordinating their activities requires advance planning, follow through, and frequent communication (both formal and informal).
- **Maintain frequent and consistent communication** through regularly scheduled meetings and frequent, informal communication.
- Strive to **ensure that partnerships remain reciprocal** by looking for opportunities for the green program to “give back” to the partner organization.

### What Services to Deliver?

The process of deciding which services the program will deliver needs to begin early during the design phase because the desired services affect the types of partners that should be considered (and indeed, the services that can be delivered may be limited to those in which the partnership network has expertise). This section highlights factors that are important for future programs to consider when making decisions about green components. For the Green Reentry grantees, green activities included gardening, horticultural education, and greenhouse construction/maintenance as core activities in all sites, and other site-specific activities such as beekeeping, equine therapy, raising chickens, hydroponics, aquaponics, instruction in green technologies (e.g., solar panel installation, electric cars), recycling, and service learning.

When selecting specific green components to implement, future programs should think about the following considerations:

- **The technical complexity and expertise required.** Due to the technical knowledge required to successfully implement green activities, the projects that can be undertaken will depend on the expertise available to the program. Therefore, future programs need to make sure they have the expertise for each component under consideration. In addition, future programs can learn from the experiences of the Green Reentry grantees in terms of technical challenges likely to be encountered with several green components that may be under consideration (see sidebar). Proper planning (e.g., testing soil and water quality) can help some challenges be avoided. Other strategies for addressing challenges include networking with similar programs, using paid experts,<sup>5</sup> and consulting with green partners. However, even if future programs have substantial expertise available to them and plan extensively to avoid or overcome likely challenges, it is advisable that green activities be started on a small scale, with relatively basic projects. All of the Green Reentry programs began with simple projects such as gardens and then introduced more complex activities, such as greenhouses, beekeeping, and hydroponics.
- **The extent to which youth can be involved in the activity.** Because the ultimate goal of green-oriented youth programs is to use green activities to help youth make positive changes in their lives, it is critical to select hands-on activities that youth can be involved in from start to finish, as opposed to activities that need to be completed by highly skilled experts. The value of youth involvement was consistently identified by youth, parents, and Green Reentry staff and



Among the Green Reentry grantees, the most complex technical challenges pertained to the greenhouse component. **Greenhouse-related challenges** included difficulty with laying the foundation, construction problems (which can lead to insect infestation), determining the layout and design of interior, identifying a heat source, finding an appropriate pump for hydroponics, achieving proper water quality for aquaponics, vandalism of community-based greenhouses, and wind damage. **Gardening-related challenges** included weather (droughts, excessive rain, and early freezes), pests (insects and deer), difficulty with layouts (accessing plants), lack of a water source, poor soil quality, and sloped land. **Beekeeping-related challenges** included negotiating tribal approval, avoiding exposure for youth with bee allergies, and poor hive health due to pests and potential pesticide exposure.





stakeholders throughout the evaluation. Youth are much more engaged in hands-on activities (as opposed to classroom-based activities) and learn more by doing than hearing. Some Green Reentry staff observed that the youth listen and pay more attention when staff members show, as opposed to tell, them something. Staff also emphasized the need for selecting activities that teach the youth a skill or trade, such as construction skills and beekeeping, and allow them to assume high level responsibilities (as long as staff can attend to them while they are working). Some reflected that contemporary youth might relate better to technology-based green projects than gardening. Even if staff are not certain that a project is going to turn out perfectly due to limits in their own expertise (see sidebar), youth can learn from the challenges that arise. Other considerations for selecting green activities with an eye for youth engagement are: tailoring activities to their interests, making learning fun, understanding what level of knowledge they bring to the activity, and working on projects with small groups of youth.



One stakeholder noted that some program staff have a tendency to want to figure out the solution to a technical problem themselves and then teach it to the youth, but that technical challenges offer a perfect learning opportunity for the youth. “It’s like a science fair project. They are seeing what works and what doesn’t work – what parameters have to be constant for it to work.”

- **Whether youth can receive school credit for the activity.** As discussed previously, future programs are likely to encounter limited availability of youth during traditional instructional hours for extracurricular activities. Therefore, one recommendation for future programs is to attempt to establish an arrangement with the local school district such that school credit can be earned for some portion of time spent with green activities that have specific objectives related to a particular course (e.g., biology). The up-front work may be time-consuming for staff, however, as the lessons will need to meet many required criteria. One grantee attempted to find an age-appropriate and free curriculum for green lessons and was not successful.
- **Cost.** Most of the green activities implemented by the Green Reentry programs were done very inexpensively using materials and labor donated by partnering organizations. When selecting green activities, future programs should consider the cost implications of potential activities, including supplies, equipment, and the need for paid consultants. Both start-up and ongoing maintenance costs should be considered. Additional budgeting decisions are discussed later in this report.
- **Time/labor required.** The green projects undertaken by the Green Reentry grantees varied in terms of the amount of labor required, with most of the time investment in the start-up portion of the activity or during particularly intensive times (e.g., harvesting). Future programs should think carefully about the amount of time that each activity under consideration will take at the start-up and maintenance phases and make sure that they have sufficient youth and staff time to undertake such projects. In addition, given the seasonal nature of many projects (e.g., the near constant attention required during some phases), it is important to determine how necessary tasks will get completed when the youth are not available to help. Many programs struggled to complete green tasks due

<sup>5</sup> However, some grantees struggled with finding consultants with expertise in certain areas, such as equine therapy.



to both the limited availability of youth to work in the garden or greenhouse and the competing demands on staff time. If this is likely to be an issue with future programs, green components that require less labor may be more desirable. In addition, JDC-based programs should also consider the after-hours maintenance tasks associated with the projects under consideration that may need to be completed by JDC staff, given that the Green Reentry programs struggled with lack of cooperation on the part of detention center officers to complete such tasks. Green activities that are not dependent on detention center officers for success may be more desirable if support for the program is low.

- **Potential for sustainability.** Finally, green activities should be selected with an eye toward long-term sustainability. This is particularly true with grant-funded programs, when the end of the funding can mean the end of the program, but also applies to other threats to sustainability such as staff turnover or loss of organizational partners. Therefore, sustainability of the various components should be built into the program from the beginning. Although much of the cost of specific green activities is incurred up front (e.g., setting up beehives, building greenhouses), the experiences of the Green Reentry grantees suggests that projects often did not flourish past the start-up stage because insufficient time was dedicated to the ongoing maintenance. Therefore, future programs should consider the likelihood that green activities that can be tied into an existing infrastructure, such as community gardens or greenhouses at a vocational training center, may provide more certainty of long-term sustainability than start-up activities. Future green programs should look for opportunities to connect with such existing opportunities wherever possible. Programs that develop their own infrastructure should keep in mind that the necessary labor and materials needed to ensure the long-term continuity of the project must be planned well in advance.



In addition to promoting sustainability by selecting green activities that have the best prospects for long-term continuation, other sustainability strategies include developing policies that support different program components, building long-term maintenance efforts into specific job descriptions, and promoting community support for the program through community education and awareness. The Green Reentry grantees felt that the best strategies for increasing community awareness were highly visible activities such as bringing youth into the community and selling produce or traditional crafts made by the youth.

For tribal programs, it is critical to build the support of tribal council through early involvement, regular progress updates, and demonstrating the need for and benefits of the program. However, political tensions, turnover in council members, and budget shortfalls may hinder the ability of tribes to pick up the operating costs of programs started with other funding.





The Green Reentry grantees supplemented their green components with culturally based activities, which included culturally based counseling, healing and spiritual ceremonies, attendance at community cultural events, traditional crafts, language education, and excursions to cultural sites. Future programs serving tribal youth will likely be similarly interested in taking advantage of the natural connection between green activities and traditional tribal culture. Staff, youth, and parents strongly supported the cultural components that were incorporated into the Green Reentry programs and, for the most part, cultural components were implemented with few challenges. Hiring culturally knowledgeable program staff, leveraging cultural learning opportunities provided by the tribal cultural department, and working with elders at the elder activity center enhanced programs' ability to expose youth to a variety of cultural activities.

Grantees also invested a substantial amount of time in individual case management work with youth, which included needs assessments, reentry planning, post-release follow-up contact with youth and families, home visits, transporting youth to activities, and other one-on-one work with youth. Individual work with youth was perceived to be a critical component because it allowed for a more holistic approach to working with the youth on a variety of their needs (and building programming around their interests), facilitated the building of trusting relationships between staff and youth (as well as parents), and promoted long-term participation from youth.

## Who to Hire and How to Staff?

### Necessary Staff Skills

Future programs designed to incorporate green activities in juvenile justice settings will need to think carefully about how to staff their programs, including what characteristics to look for in program staff and what kind of staffing structure will be most successful. Programs such as the Green Reentry initiative require three broad sets of staff skills<sup>6</sup>:

- **Technical knowledge about the green activities to be implemented.** Even with strong organizational partners and the use of paid consultants to provide expertise in technically complex green activities, core program staff will be involved in much of the day-to-day work of implementing the program components. Therefore, program staff will need basic knowledge in gardening (e.g., soil quality, starting seedlings, planting techniques, disease/insect identification, mulching, harvesting), basic construction (for garden boxes, greenhouses, or beehives), or other activity-dependent topics.
- **Project management skills.** Any program requires basic administration skills such as budgeting, monitoring timelines, collecting data on enrollment and completion, communicating with organizational partners, leading advisory board meetings, monitoring progress, and fulfilling any reporting requirements. In addition to the overall program management, each green activity will require planning and constant monitoring, which can be very difficult with seasonally dependent tasks.

<sup>6</sup> In addition, when working in a juvenile justice setting, program staff must be able to pass any required background clearances.

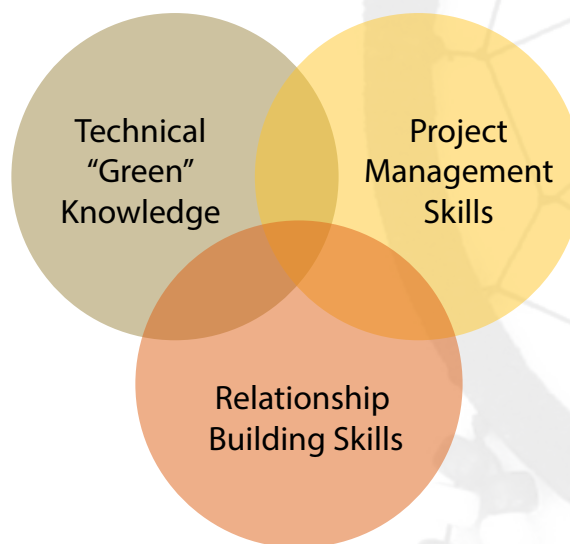




- **The ability to build strong relationships with youth.** To effectively engage youth in green programming, program staff must be people who sincerely care about the youth, are willing to advocate for them, are energetic, follow through on promises, and, most importantly, are able to genuinely connect with youth and build their trust (see sidebar). Program staff must also be able to build positive relationships with the parents. Many stakeholders interviewed for the Green Reentry evaluation felt that tribal members or Native people with strong connections to the community were best able to connect with youth and parents, as well as other community members.

In addition to these skills, for programs serving tribal youth and which desire to incorporate cultural components similar to the Green Reentry grantees, a fourth skill is required: **cultural knowledge**. All of the Green Reentry programs delivered many cultural activities based on the in-house expertise of program staff, such as teaching traditional crafts, leading sweats, and facilitating talking circles. Program staff who bring strong cultural knowledge are also well-positioned to connect with parents and elders (who may prefer to speak the traditional tribal language).

Based on the experiences of the Green Reentry grantees, who implemented their programs with a very small number of staff (1-3 grant-funded positions per site), an important lesson for future programs can be gleaned. **It is unlikely that future programs will be able to find staff members who have all (or even most) sets of required skills.** There is likely to be very little overlap in potential staff who have technical green knowledge, project management skills, and relationship building skills (see figure below).



In fact, there may be an inherent disconnect between project management skills, which require a deadline and advance planning orientation, and relationship building skills, which require an advocacy orientation and willingness to be available at all times. Having technical green expertise appears to be independent from the other sets of skills and, among the Green Reentry program staff, was either self-taught or based on childhood exposure to gardening. Cultural



Green Reentry stakeholders felt that trusting relationships with youth are built by listening to them, showing patience, being informal and relatable with them, treating them with respect, and maintaining their confidences (i.e., being an advocate for them rather than “narcing them out”). One respondent noted that it often takes time for youth to really open up, and that staff must not use it against them if they share emotionally sensitive information. Equally critical to building trust is following through on promises, given that many justice-involved youth have already had a lot of letdowns in their lives. Finally, Green Reentry stakeholders emphasized the need to provide youth with the positive attention, feedback, and love that is often missing from their lives.



knowledge is also fairly independent from the other sets of skills but may be associated with relationship building qualities given that staff who have a strong awareness of the traditional tribal culture may be able to relate better to youth and parents.

When hiring program staff, all three Green Reentry grantees tended to prioritize hiring tribal members with strong community connections and who had the skills necessary to build relationships with youth, as opposed to staff with technical green knowledge and/or project management skills. This approach worked well as long as there were other individuals in administrative positions who could fulfill many of the project management tasks and a strong partnership network for the provision of green expertise. It is important to note, however, that among the Green Reentry grantees, many green projects were not well planned and technical issues that arose after implementation took a very long time to resolve. In addition, partnerships that could have been leveraged to ensure the success of some projects were not fully taken advantage of due to lack of partnership coordination efforts.

In short, future program implementers should be aware that green projects require a lot of labor and diverse sets of skills to implement, yet such programs are likely to be run by a fairly small number of staff who are unlikely to bring all needed skills. This means that a plan must be developed for ensuring that the overall project is well-managed and that partnerships are fully leveraged. No single staffing “formula” for success is suggested based on the experiences of the Green Reentry grantees, but it is critical that someone skilled at project management be identified to serve the role of coordinating the various green projects and the organizational partnerships necessary for their success. A staff member already in a management position at the agency responsible for implementing the program could assume high-level coordination (and other administrative tasks), with the assistance of a more junior person skilled in administrative tasks (e.g., scheduling meetings, preparing agendas). The individual work with youth could be done by case managers who have the relationship building skills described above. The green technical expertise of organizational partnerships and paid consultants will need to supplement any deficiencies in staff expertise. In addition, future program implementers should take advantage of opportunities to improve staff (and partner) skills through trainings on green knowledge and project management skills (e.g., budgeting, using databases, facilitating collaboration among partners), because both of these sets of skills can be learned. The Green Reentry grantees greatly benefited from their access to trainings on a variety of green technologies delivered through webinars, peer-to-peer learning opportunities, and OJJDP grantee conferences; future program implementers will likely need to identify trainings offered by local universities and partner organizations.



Difficulty resolving technical challenges that arose was not solely due to lack of green expertise among program staff. The competing demands on staff time due to the lean staffing structures and need to juggle the intense individual work with youth, green projects, and reporting/grant management responsibilities left little time for resolving technical difficulties.

### Considerations for Staff Schedules

As noted previously, because of the requirement that youth be in school for much of the typical workday, future program implementers should consider structuring their programs as afterschool/weekend programs. This means that staff will need to be hired to work an alternative work schedule involving after school, evening, and weekend time. Some of the planning and administrative work will need to be



completed during typical business hours, particularly since those are the hours that most organizational partners will be working; however, the traditional 8-5 schedule does not seem effective for a youth program when youth are in school 8-3.

Another staffing consideration derived from the experiences of the Green Reentry grantees is that for programs working with community-based (as opposed to incarcerated) youth, considerable staff time will likely be required for transportation of youth to activities or for home visits. This is particularly the case when working with families on reservations, who often live in remote communities and lack transportation. In addition, if parental involvement is desired, future programs must be willing to make a substantial investment in gaining cooperation with parents (e.g., face-to-face contact, determining and assisting with the other needs of the family, providing childcare) to achieve this goal. To determine the amount of staff time required for transportation and parental involvement (which influences the number of staff to hire and their work schedules), future programs will need to factor in the size of the community and how geographically dispersed the youth are likely to be.

### Planning for Turnover

A final staffing consideration for future green-oriented programs is the need to plan for staff turnover. All three Green Reentry grantees suffered from key staff turnover at one point in their programs. This turnover, which was often accompanied by extended vacancies, caused two programs to stagnate significantly. Future programs are also likely to be affected by staff turnover, and it is important to establish a plan for ensuring that organizational partners remain involved with the program and that basic program components continue to operate in the event of key staff turnover. Cross-training of staff in the various management and technical tasks and the identification of backups to assume specific tasks in the event of turnover may be useful strategies for preparing for likely turnover.

### How to Budget?

Future program implementers will need to design their programs to be accomplished within the budget available and to accurately estimate the amount of money to allocate to staff salaries, paid consultants, travel, and materials/equipment.

Each Green Reentry grantee received approximately \$700,000 over a five-year<sup>7</sup> period. The grants were primarily used to fund 1-3 full-time positions at each site, with these staff members spending the majority of their time leading green projects and engaging in intense individual work with youth. Other than staffing, direct costs included:

- Travel, including required travel to OJJDP grantee conferences and regional peer-to-peer trainings, as well as local travel for transporting youth to activities
- Consultant costs (both fees and expenses) for needed expertise, which generally included beekeeping experts. Additional consultants with expertise in database development and greenhouse design/planning were also heavily utilized but were provided free of charge through the training and technical assistance contract.<sup>8</sup>



When asked to reflect on the relative value of each program component relative to its cost, the Green Reentry program directors generally felt that every component they implemented was worth the cost. Individual work with youth, which was definitely the most labor-intensive effort, was strongly felt to be worth the resources. Project directors noted that most green projects were done very inexpensively. In addition, the most substantial costs were incurred only once, such as in purchasing greenhouse materials, setting up the bee hives, and establishing gardens (labor and materials). Gardens were felt to be good foundational activities that yielded many benefits relative to the costs. Greenhouses were the most expensive and complex projects. They also tended to be underutilized after they were built, which led some project directors to recommend smaller and simpler designs.

Cultural components were extremely inexpensive to implement and were perceived as having tremendous value in facilitating cultural identity and increasing cultural knowledge.





- Equipment, including a truck purchased in one site and gardening equipment purchased in others
- Construction, which primarily included greenhouse construction
- Supplies, including garden/greenhouse supplies such as protective clothing, tools, hoses, seeds, fertilizer, pesticides, and hydroponics pumps; educational supplies such as curricula, textbooks, workbooks, and computer programs; beekeeping supplies; marketing supplies, including brochures and cameras; transportation costs, such as gas and vehicle repairs; and office supplies, such as computers, printers, postage, and copying
- Other costs, such as rental of equipment for site preparation.

In addition to the expenses covered by the grants, all three grantees benefited tremendously from in-kind labor and consultation provided by partner organizations. In addition, several partner organizations lent equipment and/or donated materials such as soil, trucks, and lumber to the program.

Several budgeting lessons can be drawn from the experiences of the Green Reentry grantees to achieve efficiencies of cost and facilitate accurate budgeting. Developing initial budgets that are as realistic as possible can help programs avoid the bureaucratic and time-consuming modification procedures that plagued the Green Reentry grantees.

- **Leverage organizational partnerships** to trade expertise and share labor, equipment, and materials with one another. Such relationships should be as reciprocal as possible to ensure sustained partner involvement over time.
- **Determine whether paid consultants will need to be involved.** If a particular area of expertise is not represented among staff or organizational partners, it may be necessary to hire an outside consultant.
- **Leverage the existing green infrastructure in a community** to avoid having to start up every project from scratch. Consider working with community gardens, greenhouses at vocational training centers, local green technology businesses, or other possibilities for allowing youth to participate in existing projects.
- For projects that are started specifically for a new program, **identify the labor, equipment, materials, and supplies that will be needed during the start-up phase and for ongoing maintenance.** It is often natural to focus on the start-up costs and overlook the labor and materials required for long-term sustainability (see sidebar).
- **Consider transportation needs.** Among the Green Reentry grantees, transportation costs—particularly for home visits with parents, transporting youth to and from the program setting, and field trips—ended up being much higher than originally anticipated. Future programs should consider likely



For particularly time-consuming projects that require year round planning and ongoing work, such as greenhouses, a full-time manager may be needed to ensure that the effort flourishes. Across all three Green Reentry programs, the greenhouses tended to be underutilized after the substantial investment was made to construct them, due to lack of staff time to devote to their ongoing operation. Future programs should design (and budget) their programs to ensure that sufficient time is dedicated to ongoing operation. If the budget is not sufficient to support this level of management, programs should look for opportunities to allow youth to work with greenhouses that are already in operation in their communities.

<sup>7</sup> The original grant period was four years, but the grantees received no-cost extensions for an additional year.

<sup>8</sup> The Green Reentry grantees also had access to trainings on a variety of green technologies delivered through webinars, peer-to-peer learning opportunities, and OJJDP grantee conferences.

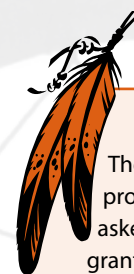


transportation needs and plan for the costs of vehicles (purchasing or leasing costs), as well as fuel, maintenance, and staff time spent on transportation.

- **Include sufficient training costs.** Program staff will likely need to participate in trainings to develop skills necessary for various green projects under consideration. Other trainings that may be of value include project management training and data collection and evaluation. These costs, including staff time, travel expenses, and training fees, should be budgeted.
- **Identify other materials and supplies.** Other costs not tied to specific green projects but that will likely be considered by future programs include educational curricula, incentives to facilitate elder and parent involvement, and marketing costs for activities designed to promote the program to the community.

Additional budget considerations pertain to the number of staff to hire. When making staffing decisions, future programs should factor in:

- **The desired intensity of the one-on-one work with youth, the degree of parental involvement sought, and the number of families to be served.** As described throughout this report, the Green Reentry grantees invested substantial staff time in individual work with youth, which was perceived to be critical for promoting youth engagement in the program and meeting the many needs of youth. Future programs with similar goals in mind should ensure that sufficient staff time is available for building relationships (and ideally, during the afterschool, evening, and weekend hours when youth are available). In addition, future programs seeking high levels of parental involvement will need to dedicate substantial staff time to engage parents through home visits, case planning, and family-focused activities. Transportation, child care, and incentives may also need to be budgeted to facilitate a whole-family approach. Ideally, budget inputs for the intensive work with families can be guided by data-driven projections of the likely number of youth to be served by the program.
- **The need for coordination/oversight of the overall program.** Make sure that sufficient time is allocated for overall project management, including coordinating with organizational partners, planning the various schedules, monitoring the budget and timeline, and fulfilling any reporting needs. Make sure that the long-term maintenance of each project and long-term sustainability is sufficiently budgeted.



The Green Reentry project directors were asked whether additional grant-funded staff positions would have allowed the program to serve more youth. While the answer was no, all program directors did identify staffing structures that might have made their programs more effective overall, such as having staff primarily work afterschool and weekend hours, having an assistant to help with administrative tasks, and providing training to enhance staff skills (e.g., green skills, the use of formal assessment tools, electronic data collection, grant reporting, and budgeting).

### How to Develop an Infrastructure for Capturing Data?

A final consideration for future green-oriented programs is ensuring that needed data are collected in a way that meets the monitoring and reporting needs of the program. The Green Reentry grantees benefited from a database developed by the training and technical assistance provider funded by OJJDP, which was designed to track services received by individual participants and facilitate required reporting. Future programs will need to determine whether an existing database can meet their needs for tracking and reporting. If not, this may be an area in which to bring in a paid consultant with expertise in database development.

For basic program documentation and reporting purposes, the following information should be collected in an electronic format and at the individual level



(i.e., captured for each youth who participates in the program):

- The youth’s name and basic characteristics such as program identifier (e.g., court record number, JDC number), date of birth, gender, parent/guardian name and contact information, and other youth characteristics of interest to the program (e.g., tribal affiliation, arrest/incarceration history, school status)
- The date of enrollment
- Basic “dosage” information about what program components each youth received (e.g., dates of participation, duration of participation, activities in which the youth participated).

Additional information may be important to collect for evaluation purposes, including outcomes that reflect the goals of the program. For justice-based programs, reductions in criminal behavior (e.g., new arrests, incarcerations, and probation violations) will likely be key outcomes. Other outcomes could include school performance (e.g., attendance, grades, credits earned, graduation rates), substance use, skills/vocational certifications earned, and employment.

## Conclusions

The lessons learned from the experiences of the Green Reentry grantees can greatly benefit future programs as they think about how to incorporate green programming in their work with justice-involved youth.

As demonstration grantees in an innovative area of programming that had not previously been attempted (the incorporation of green programming with youth involved in the tribal justice system), the Green Reentry grantees were extremely successful at implementing a diverse set of green projects and intensively serving youth. Despite encountering numerous implementation challenges, including technical challenges with green activities, staff turnover, and difficulty engaging parents and elders to the extent envisioned, all three programs became fully operational. Several successes were achieved by the grantees. Based on the opinions of staff, organizational partners, parents, and youth, the programs were very successful at developing strong relationships with youth, teaching them new skills, and exposing them to a new way of thinking. In addition, the programs built close networks among tribal agencies and youth-serving organizations on the reservations where they worked, with many staff and stakeholders feeling that service coordination for youth had improved as a result of their efforts. Increasing community awareness and support for their programs over time—achieved by a strong commitment to having youth give back to their communities, as well as the physical visibility of various green projects—was cited as another success of the Green Reentry programs. Finally, the gardens, greenhouses, and beehives developed through the Green Reentry initiative will provide an infrastructure for youth to engage in green activities in future years, even after the grants have ended

At the conclusion of their grant periods, Green Reentry staff and stakeholders strongly felt that the initiative had provided a great opportunity for their communities and that the effort was worth replicating in other communities. Stakeholders emphasized the need for future programs to be tailored to their



Given the increasing public support for sustainability principles, such as supporting locally grown food and using green building techniques, and the growing emphasis on healthful lifestyles, interest in green activities in other communities is likely to be strong. Future programs should capitalize on these trends and be innovative in identifying potential partners with interests that overlap. Many opportunities to involve youth in green-oriented programming, in addition to the gardening, greenhouse, and beekeeping activities which were the focus of the Green Reentry grantees, are likely to be available to youth in other communities going forward.





own community, noting that the form the program takes in a particular community could be very different and that it is important to question people in the community and listen to their ideas. They also advised future program implementers to set realistic, achievable goals and stay focused on the outcome that they really want to achieve. Persistence and creativity will clearly be needed for future programs to overcome implementation challenges that will undoubtedly arise. Finally, as conveyed by the key design considerations documented throughout this report, future program implementers will need to engage in careful planning to successfully design, implement, and sustain their programs.



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Throughout the course of the evaluation, youth, parents, staff, and organizational partners saw a lot of value from the way the Green Reentry programs exposed youth to new skills, promoted self-sufficiency, and fostered the passing on of cultural traditions. They also felt that being in nature and seeing the visible results of one's hard work was extremely impactful for youth. As noted by one stakeholder: "I still very much believe in it, it has tremendous benefits. Culturally there is something there with connecting with growth and life." Another stakeholder emphasized the positive role of the program in the youth's lives: "These kids, coming from poor environments, need help, need protective factors. The program adds a buffer and exposes them to positive adults, reinforces their thoughts about education, work ethic, and morality. I'd recommend this type of program to any group to buffer kids from the risks that they are exposed to."

