

Ensuring Economic Security for Women

Integrated pre and post release educational and supportive services for women
at the Maine Correctional Facility at Windham.

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Abstract

The title of this project is Ensuring the Economic Security of Women (EESW). The target population for EESW is women incarcerated at the Maine Correctional Center in Windham; this number totaled 129 as of July 2007. This project specifically targeted those women living in the Women's Unit that are within 6 months of their release date.

The intention of EESW was to increase the number of women released from the Maine Correctional Center that are gainfully employed, as well as to increase their ability to save money, acquire assets and build wealth. By doing this, EESW will ultimately improve the financial status of women released from the Maine Correctional Facility, thereby reducing their likelihood of recidivism. To achieve this, EESW endeavored to increase: the number of employers willing to hire formerly incarcerated women; the knowledge of employment opportunities for women; and the number of pre-release job acquisition and retention skills trainings available to women. The project also intended to increase the number of supports available to assist women in maintaining gainful employment, the number of pre-release financial literacy training programs and asset accumulation resources available to women post release.

The problem that EESW intended to address is the high incidence of women released from Maine Correctional Center at Windham that have difficulty finding work that provides a livable wage and economic security. The effect of this problem is that a high percentage of women released from the Maine Correctional Center live financially unstable lives. The causes of the problem are the lack of focused pre-release employment and financial literacy skills development, the lack of post-release community support, and discrimination by employers based on women's history.

In order to address this problem, its causes and effects, EESW facilitated the following activities: hosting an annual job fair inside the prison; researching and compiling a job opportunities manual for women; hosting training workshops focused on job readiness and

financial literacy; and, advocating for the inclusion of women ex-offenders as a special population for outreach within existing community-based service programs.

Volunteers of America Northern New England led this effort, and began formal project implementation in June 2007.

I. Community Context

Community Profile

Maine is a beautiful state with a diverse geographical landscape, miles of coastline and forested inlands, sparsely populated by year-round residents and heavily traveled by tourists. Its geography defines its people; its weather defines the collective lifestyle. Maine has a proud tradition of independent thinkers, innovative and entrepreneurial creators and strong and hearty workers. Maine is a place where a woman can be the first female elected to both the US House and Senate, or both the best swordfish captain on the east coast and a best-selling author. Maine breeds a strong sense of community, at the same time demands from its citizens a pride in self-reliance that can breed a sense of isolation. Maine is more than a place to live, it is a force to be reckoned with. It is important to understand the distinct culture that is Maine, because it is by mobilizing the unique strengths of this community that will ensure success for the women released from the Maine Correctional Center.

The population in the state of Maine over 16 is 1,321,574. (US Census Data, 2006). 5.3 % of the population is under 5, 78.7 % is over 18, and 14.6% is over 65. (US Census Data, 2006).

Maine covers 35,387 square miles and is the 39th largest state in the United States. (Netstate, n.d.). Nearly 90% of the land in Maine is covered by forests. (Netstate, n.d.). The majority of the population is concentrated in the southern coastal regions of the state. The three most populated towns are Portland, Lewiston and Bangor; the capital of the state is Augusta. (US Census Data, 2006).

There are 706,269 people in the labor force in the State; 317,328 of these are females. (US Census Data, 2006). The median age is 41, 51.2% of the population is female, 48.8% is male and the per capita income is \$23,226. (US Census Data, 2006). Although there are slightly more females than males in the general population, there are disproportionately less females in the labor force. 12.9% of the population live below the poverty line and 5.6% of people are unemployed. (US Census Data, 2006).

Compared to the national average, Maine had fewer persons in the labor force without a high school diploma, but also had a lower percentage in the labor force with a bachelor's degree or higher. (Maine Department of Labor, 2003). It is anticipated that the number of jobs requiring post-secondary education will rise by 16 percent between 2002 and 2012. (Maine Department of Labor, 2003). In order to remain in the competitive workforce and to access higher than average wages, it will become necessary for Mainers without an advanced degree to consider furthering their education.

Economic development is the current Governor's top priority. As part of his strategic plan to bolster the economy, Governor John Baldacci has promoted a focus on the major economic drivers in the state: forest industries, marine industries, niche and precision manufacturing, tourism (considered "mature industries"), and biotech and biomedical research, financial services and radio frequency identification (considered "emerging industries"). In addition to a clear focus on these industries, the Governor is supporting a focus on investing in Maine people via advanced education, and focus on building infrastructure including: telecommunications, waterfront facilities, transportation and research and development. (The Maine Department of Economic and Community Development, 2004).

Community Needs Assessment

Among those families and individuals whose income in the past 12 months was below the poverty level, 29.7% were females in households with no husband present and among those, 38.8% had related children under the age of 18 and 62.2% had related children under the age of 5 years only. (US Census Data, 2006).

According to research done by the Maine Women's Policy Center (2005), Maine women made, on average, 77 cents for every dollar earned by a man. Nationally, 60% of women work and women earn 78% of what men do. Low wages cause female-headed households to suffer more than they do men. The study goes on to note that in 2000, almost 55% of Maine's households headed by single women with children under five were living at or below federal poverty threshold. (Maine Women's Police Center, 2005).

As part of a recently launched two-year initiative to focus on economic security for women, the Maine Women's Fund compiled and reported the following data as it relates to the current economic picture of women in Maine:

“Unfortunately, women are disproportionately impacted by poverty, low-paying jobs, and jobs that do not offer benefits, like paid sick time or health insurance. Women are disproportionately vulnerable to poor economic health because: Women make up 51.8% of all unemployed persons in Maine; Women comprise 60% of all part time employees and are concentrated in average to low-income sectors; 64% of female headed households are asset poor; and, less than 50% of women in ME possess a college degree, high school attrition for girls is stuck at 80%, and only 70% of girls consider secondary education.” (2007, para. 4).

As is illustrated, the economic climate in Maine poses enough challenges to female individuals without adding former felon to the list. The reality of the economic forecast for women with a record of incarceration is harsh.

According to data available through the Volunteers of America Transition and Reunification Program at Windham, of the 133 women involved in the program from three distinct cohorts (2002, 2003 and 2005), only 57% had their high school diploma. According to data from these same cohorts, 89 women were employed 3 years prior to conviction, 28 were not employed and 9 were on SSI (B. Fortuin, unpublished research, 2007).

Project Target Community

This Project focused on female offenders housed at The Maine Correctional Center at Windham¹. Windham is a medium/minimum security facility which houses both male and female prisoners; the population of the prison as of July 2007 was 596 males and 129 females (Maine Department of Corrections, 2007).

¹ For this project, we will refer to this facility as Windham.

Windham was established in 1919. It was originally a facility for men; in 1976 women were moved to the facility and a multipurpose housing unit opened in 1989 (Maine Department of Corrections, 2007). A new Women's Unit – which has the capacity to serve 70 inmates – opened in 2002 (Maine Department of Corrections, 2007).

This project focused on the Women's Unit at Windham, which is a separate facility on the grounds of the Correctional Center. The Women's Unit was built to accommodate the needs of women, and with the expressed intention of providing an environment for women that accommodates their specific needs. This is the only women's correctional facility in the State. The Unit was built and allows for no interaction between the male and female prisoners (Fortuin, personal communication, November 3, 2006). Prior to its existence, women and men were housed together; marriages, pregnancies and arguments among women were commonplace. Since the Women's Unit has been in existence (5 years), there has been only one "disruption" between women (Fortuin personal communication, November 3, 2006). Unfortunately, due to limited capacity within the specialized Women's Unit, not all women incarcerated at the Maine Correctional Center can reside in the Women's Unit (Fortuin, personal communication, November 3, 2006). Being housed at the Women's Unit is considered a privilege which a woman has to earn upon entering the Maine Correctional Center; conditions at the original prison are much harsher for women and the tension between men and women that existed prior to the building of the Women's Unit persist for those women who have not earned residency at the Women's Unit (Fortuin, personal communication, November 3, 2006).

The mission of the Women's Unit is "to provide incarcerated women with a gender-responsive relational community" (Maine Department of Corrections, 2007). Staff recognize that women in their facility have life experiences that subjugate their feelings of effectiveness and self-worth and therefore strive to provide direction and motivation to encourage positive growth (Maine Department of Corrections, 2007). Their model provides opportunities for work, activities and interpersonal experiences to facilitate reintegration into community, places of employment and families (Maine Department of Corrections, 2007).

Current transition planning for women being released into the community includes pre and post release case management services provided by Volunteers of America Northern New England, as contracted by the Maine Department of Corrections. As part of these services, staff provide case management services and assist in coordinating courses, counseling and job coaching within the prison setting.

While Maine's female prisoner population is the one of the lowest in the nation, second behind New Hampshire at a rate of 18 per 100,000 residents, Maine was one of the eleven states to experience an average increase of female incarcerated inmates of more than 10 percent between 1995 and 2004 at 14.8 percent (M. Rubin, 2006).

At the same time, Maine has one of the lowest percentages of corrections expenditures in the nation (M. Rubin, 2006). In 2004, corrections expenditures represent only 1.9 percent of all expenditures in the state. This figure is sixth lowest in the nation (M. Rubin, 2006).

Many Mainer's struggle to make ends meet in the best of economic times. For women that are released back into the community after having been incarcerated, this struggle is seemingly insurmountable. While the transition and reunification services at Windham provide opportunities for women to improve themselves while in prison, and assists them to reintegrate into the community post release, the reality is that Maine spends less on its corrections programs than 44 other states (M. Rubin, 2006). This means that not only do women have a harsh economic climate to enter once released from prison, but due to lack of resources from the State, they have less opportunities within prison to prepare for such a transition. These stressors contribute to the potential inability of former female felons to reintegrate back into society and the economy.

II. Problem Analysis

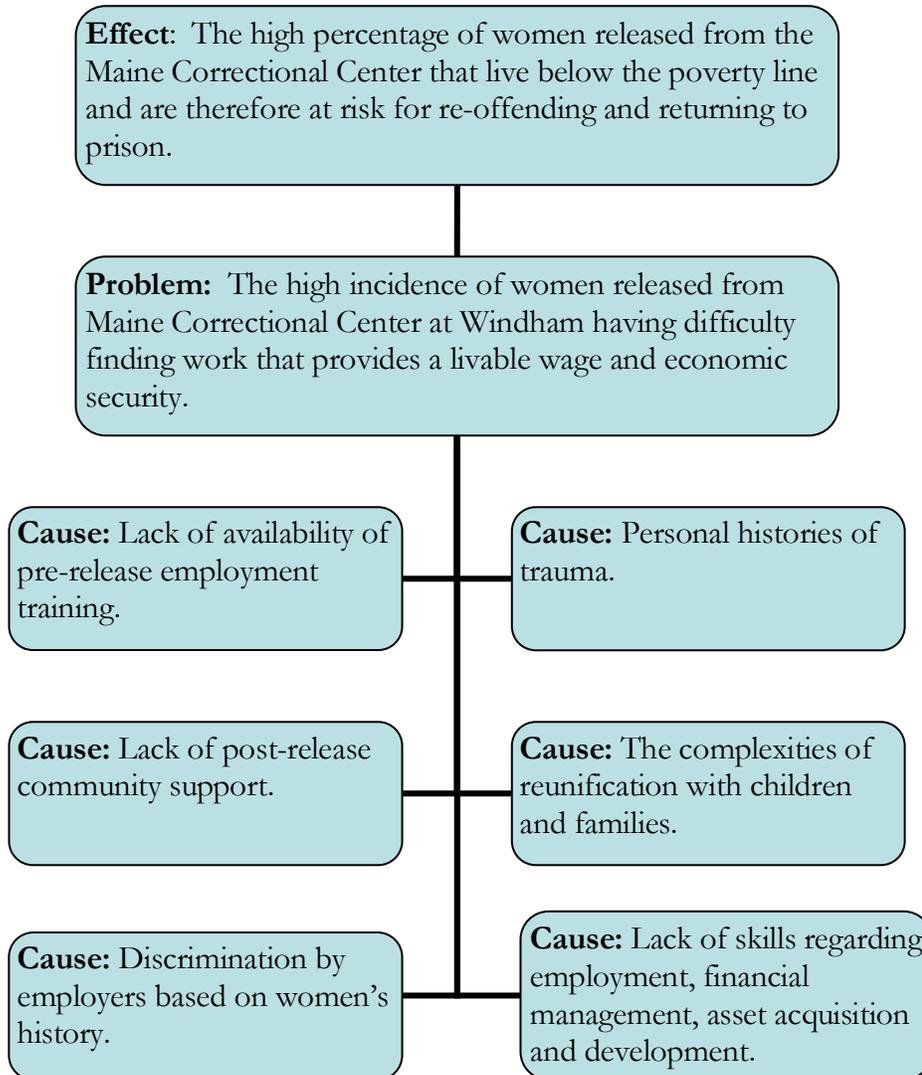
Problem Statement:

The problem that Ensuring Economic Security for Women (EESW) project addresses is the high incidence of women released from Maine Correctional Center at Windham having difficulty finding work that provides a livable wage and economic security. According to data collected by the Volunteers of America Northern New England Transition and Reunification Program (unpublished research, 2007) 58 of 167 women (35%) reported they had jobs lined up upon release from prison, 27 women reported being on disability and therefore unable to work, and the remaining 82 women (49%) did not have a job arranged upon release from prison.

The effect of this problem is that a high percentage of women released from the Maine Correctional Center to Androscoggin County live below the poverty line and are therefore at risk for re-offending and returning to prison.

The causes of this problem are lack of skills, knowledge and awareness regarding employment, financial management, asset acquisition and development. Additional causes of the problem are the unavailability of resources in the form of lack of focused pre-release employment and financial literacy skills development, the lack of post-release community support, and discrimination by employers based on women's history. According to Ms Betty Fortuin, the Director of Transition and Reunification Program at Volunteers of America, the reason women have a difficult time securing employment upon release from prison are complex and multi-layered, including lack of skills training and education, societal biases against female felons and lack of integrated support once women are back in the community (Personal communication, February 8, 2007). Further, Fortuin points out that family dynamics, personal histories of trauma and the complexities of reunification with children and families create barriers that make maintaining employment much more difficult for women than for men (Personal communication, November 13, 2006).

The Problem Tree below provides a diagram of the problem EESW addresses, the causes and effects of that problem.



Project Description:

The project provides integrated pre-release and post release services to women at Maine Correctional Center, specifically those within 6 months of release. The purpose of these specific services is to improve the economic conditions of these women by focusing on job acquisition and retention skills, financial literacy and asset development. The goal of the project is to assist women to successfully transition back into the community following

incarceration by providing services to enhance individual skill sets while they are incarcerated coupled with access to resources and supportive community-based services once they are back in the community. In addition, the project provides advocacy for formerly incarcerated women to assist them in finding meaningful work that provides a livable wage with employers in their community.

III. Literature Review

Literature on problem, causes and effects

The numbers are staggering; more than 600,000 people are released from prison each year. The challenges facing former offenders reentering communities are numerous; one of the most difficult of which is finding stable work that provides a livable wage (Bloom, 2006). This challenge is made more complicated when considering that a large number of former offenders have low levels education and work experience, not to mention health-related problems and personal characteristics that make employability difficult. When one considers that the current labor market is disposed to individuals with postsecondary education, and given that 40 percent of inmates in state and federal prisons have neither a high school diploma nor a GED, the barriers formerly incarcerated individuals finding gainful employment are tremendous (Bloom, 2006). In fact, a survey of male prisoners returning to Chicago revealed that only 44 percent said they had worked for at least a week in the first four to eight months following their release from prison, and many of those who worked did not work full time (Bloom, 2006). Finally, as if to seal the deal, there are a number of occupations from which convicted felons are literally barred (Bloom, 2006). Ex-offenders seeking employment to better themselves and their families face a brick wall reinforced by the CORI (Criminal Offender Record Information), which increases the frustration of reintegration and increases the likelihood of recidivism (T. Whyte, 2007). Considering the complexity of these challenges, it is not surprising to learn that earnings are lower for individuals who have spent time in prison than for individuals who have not (Bloom, 2006).

Data suggests that finding a job is the highest priority for prisoners upon release (Bloom, 2006). As stated above, myriad complications conspire to make finding and maintaining employment a seemingly insurmountable hurdle: substance abuse; physical and/or mental health related conditions; fractured social networks; and the lack of child care, transportation and housing (Bloom, et al, 2003). These barriers are not merely inconveniences; recently released prisoners need employment to achieve self-sufficiency and to reduce their chances of

future involvement in criminal activity. Research demonstrates a link between employment for formerly incarcerated individuals and recidivism: without a steady source of income from employment, ex offenders are more likely to return to crime to financially support themselves and their families. In addition to income, work provides a routine, a social network, behavioral norms and expectations from employers, and a role in society, all of which aid in reducing factors leading to recidivism. In fact, research shows that the higher quality the jobs -- in terms of pay and viable career opportunities -- the less likely a former offender is to recidivate (L. McKean, C. Ransford, 2004).

For years, the needs of men and women in correctional facilities were addressed without regard to gender differences (National Institute of Justice, 2005). With the increase in the number of female entering correctional settings in the 1990's, researchers began to look at the specific needs of women as they relate to rehabilitation and community reintegration post release (National Institute of Justice, 2005). Previously, female inmates were offered programs that were developed for men and then simply applied to women (National Institute of Justice, 2005). What programs were developed for women focused on stereotypical (read: low paying) female occupations (National Institute of Justice, 2005).

Recent research has established that women offenders differ from male offenders in a number of significant ways - physically, socially, emotionally and psychologically (B. Bloom, S. Covington, B. Owen, 2003). The paths that lead women to crime differ from those paths taken by men; research shows that for women, the path that leads to crime is more likely chosen based on survival – from abuse and poverty - and substance abuse (Bloom, et al, 2003). Women's personal histories, including their caretaking roles, past physical and/or sexual abuse, and physical and mental health needs are distinct from those of men, and of significance when addressing rehabilitation and post release community reintegration (Bloom, et al, 2003). In research focused on male and female probationers, it was found that 40 percent of women reported having been abused at some point in their lives, compared to 9 percent of men (Bloom, et al, 2003). And women are more likely to be primary caretakers than men; research shows that 65 percent of women in state prisons and 59 percent of women in federal prisons have, on average, two minor children (Bloom, et al, 2003).

In addition to personal histories, economic stressors place women in a risk category significantly different than that of men (Bloom, et al, 2003). Women's work histories place them in a less advantageous position for securing viable employment once released from prison: In a 1998 study, approximately 40 percent of women in state prisons reported they were employed full time at time of arrest as compared to 60 percent of males (Bloom, et al, 2003). And these jobs were low wage entry level positions with little opportunity for growth (Bloom, et al, 2003). Consider that two thirds of women reported they never held a job that paid more than \$6.50 per hour; if women were involved in vocational training prior to incarceration, it was likely to be training focused on traditionally female jobs (Bloom, et al, 2003). In addition to sporadic employment histories which undoubtedly effect post release employment opportunities, female offenders have a history of low educational attainment; considering that as of 1996 only 52 percent of correctional facilities offer postsecondary education, those opportunities will not be enhanced by incarceration (Bloom, et al, 2003).

The differences between men and women relate to the types of crimes committed as well: women are less likely to be convicted of violent crimes and pose less of a threat to the community (National Institute of Justice, 2005). Women are more likely than men to have been convicted of crimes involving drugs or property (Bloom, et al, 2003). And, often, their property offenses are economically driven, i.e., motivated by poverty (Bloom, et al, 2003). For some women, poverty coupled with no opportunities to alter the cycle may actually make crime a reasonable choice (Bloom, et al, 2003).

Currently, women represent a considerable proportion of all offenders under criminal justice supervision. In 2001, female offenders made up 12 percent of all offenders (Bloom, 2006). With the number of women in the criminal justice system rising, researchers point to the lack of adequate economic and social supports as key factors affecting this trend (Bloom, 2006). Evidence supports the theory that crime is linked to unemployment, low earnings or job instability (Bloom, 2006). One of the most compelling findings of research suggests that employment may diminish the motivation to commit crimes and may link formerly

incarcerated individuals with social networks that can act as a disincentive to crime (Bloom, 2006).

Despite the fact that research has shown that men and women have differing needs, programming in correctional settings has historically not only ignored these differences, but has reinforced them through a segregation of services that exacerbates the disadvantages of women rather than reducing or ameliorating them (Bloom, et al, 2003). Women are not given equal opportunity to engage in work programs while incarcerated, vocational training has been focused on traditionally female occupations, and educational opportunities have been limited (Bloom, et al, 2003).

With respect to services provided post release, women's specific needs carry forward into the community as well. Discrimination based on gender in the workplace is frequent enough; this is multiplied when the woman seeking a job has a criminal record (National Partnership on Women and Families, ND). Additionally, women will often have to reestablish relationships with children once they are back in the community, with limited means for child care (Bloom, et al, 2003). They will have to secure specialized training in order to obtain work that pays a wage that will enable them to support their children, and they will require employment that provides health care (Bloom, et al, 2003). Women will most likely need public assistance to survive initially, and programs for which they are eligible are embedded in systems that are so complicated, they require trained professionals to navigate (Bloom, et al, 2003). These systems include substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment, housing, child welfare and employment (Bloom, et al, 2003). Finally, potential conflict exists when community corrections programs do not successfully integrate with community treatment programs; in some situations, the goals of each service system are not only difficult to meld, but are at odds (Bloom, et al, 2003).

These realities underscore the need for specialized gender specific employment focused programming for women; if it is difficult for men to find employment and the majority of

them were employed prior to incarceration, it is not surprising that the challenge is much greater for women (Bloom, 2006).

Literature on solutions:

Because of the growth of women in correctional settings – the total number of women “under correctional control” increased 81 percent between 1990 and 2000, while the number of men increased 45 percent (Bloom, et al, 2003, p. 1) – the distinct needs of women cannot be overlooked any longer. Despite the challenges outlined above, evidence supports specific types of programming which are successful in helping women to successfully transition back into the community (Bloom, et al, 2003). These include: gender specific programming in prison that provides for job training and education; and, integrated pre and post release services (Bloom, et al, 2003). By being cognizant of the different needs of women in the correctional setting and post release, and designing and implementing programs that address the specific needs of female inmates, factors related to successful reentry into the community following incarceration can be identified and addressed. And if women are to be successful in the community post release, research points to the necessity of programs focused on improving their chances of socioeconomic success while in prison and access to coordinated support services once back in the community (Bloom, et al, 2003). As well, both social and material realities have to be addressed; family relations, including reestablishment of relationships with children, and economic factors have to be addressed (Bloom, et al, 2003). In order to improve outcomes for women being released from correctional facilities, women need to be prepared to support themselves and their children through education and job training, offered both in prison and in the community for women once released (Bloom, et al, 2003).

Community support is essential to the successful outcomes for women reentering the community. In addition to overcoming negative stereotypes and biases, women must navigate a fragmented service delivery system, and a number of separate agencies, many of whom do not communicate among each other (Bloom, et al, 2003). Accessing services becomes a full-time job, leaving little time for women to pursue legitimate employment (Bloom, et al, 2003). Research shows there is a need for wrap around services – centered on a holistic plan that provides for coordinated services among agencies with which she is involved (Bloom, et al,

2003). Agencies have to work in partnership with each other to provide these services, and be sensitive to the myriad and compounding difficulties women reentering the community from prison must face (Bloom, et al, 2003).

The lack of financial management skills presents another barrier to successful reentry for women. Establishing financial stability poses challenges for former inmates (Spencer, 2006). Financial literacy training offered to inmates in the correctional facility prior to release has been shown to assist male ex-offenders to manage their family's finances, build assets and create their own opportunities (Spencer, 2006). Because the need for financial stability is just as great for a women reintegrating into her community, these skills would benefit women prisoners as well.

In a study of women in London, respondents were asked for their opinions on how prison could better prepare them for release (B. Hamlyn, D. Lewis, 2000). Their responses indicated a need for assistance in finding work and better training in job-seeking skills while in prison, specifically those focused on interview and application skills, and how to look for work (Hamlyn, et al, 2000). This points to the need for training that is focused on employability skills – including the development of positive work habits – versus training this is focused on the development of specific job skills (Hamlyn, et al, 2000). Interestingly and importantly, research of male ex offenders has shown that employment skills training received in the community are more effective in assisting a former felon to secure employment than training that is offered while a person imprisoned (Hamlyn, et al, 2000). It is recommended that post release employment skills training be provided for formerly incarcerated women (C. Gillis, 2006). This underscores the need for comprehensive support services for women once they are released into the community (Bloom, et al, 2003).

Finally, research shows that development of community business partners will assist in redressing discriminatory attitudes on the part of employers when confronted with the opportunity to hire a female ex offender (C. Gillis, 2006). Such partnerships would potentially provide long-term opportunities, and advanced skills development focused on a variety of

aspects of business, from marketing to administration to management (C. Gillis, 2006). These partnerships would open doors for women longer term and would provide for broader employment potentials within any given industry, thus overcoming the one-dimensional dead end road of low wage jobs (C. Gillis, 2006).

IV. Project Design/Logic Model

The ultimate objective of EESW is to reduce recidivism among women released from the Maine Correctional Facility at Windham. The theory of change for EESW is predicated on the belief that improving the financial status of women released from the Maine Correctional Facility will reduce the likelihood of these women re-offending and returning to prison. Furthermore, the project's theory of change is based on the notion that increasing the employment status of these women, increasing their ability to save money and to acquire assets and build wealth will lead to their improved financial status and therefore, a decrease in their recidivism.

In order to increase the number of women that are gainfully employed post release, EESW endeavored to: increase the number of employers willing to hire ex-offenders; increase the knowledge of employment opportunities for women by women; and, increase pre-release job acquisition and retention skills training. EESW planned to host an annual Job Fairs at Windham, to which at least 10 employers from across the state participate and from which at least 25% of the women who attend the Job Fair and who are within 3 months of release would receive employment by employers participating in the Job Fair. EESW also planned to create a Job Resource Manual for women that is updated regularly to include potential businesses in the community who will consider female ex-offenders for open job opportunities. Finally, EESW planned to offer employment training workshops for women, in which 90% of women within 6 months of release from Windham would participate.

EESW believed that while many women may put their best foot forward in a workplace (once that hard-to-find job is assured) and therefore receive a regular paycheck, this may not be enough to ensure their financial security. The ability of women to save money will enable them to weather unexpected storms, and they will be less likely to turn to illegal means to secure financial resources. To help women achieve this level of financial security, EESW planned to assist women in increasing their ability to save money by increasing the number of community-based supports available to assist them in maintaining gainful employment, and

increase pre-release financial literacy training programs. EESW planned to ensure that there was a 50% increase in support services offered to women in the three cities/towns (Bangor, Portland and Lewiston) to which most women released from Windham return. In addition, EESW planned to offer financial literacy training programs in the Correctional Facility in which 75% of women within 6 months of release participate.

The third step to ensuring financial stability is the investment of saved money into assets that build wealth over time. While earning money ensures a person will be able to survive day to day, and saving money ensures a person will be able to manage unexpected expenses, building assets enables a person to financial contribute to and benefit from local and regional economy (via homeownership, business creation or higher education), and thus secure their stability (financial and otherwise) into the future. EESW planned to assist women in acquiring assets and building wealth by increasing the number of asset accumulation resources available to women post-release; EESW planned to accomplish this through outreach efforts targeted at the top two organizations in the state providing such services to Maine residents. EESW planned to advocate for the redesigning of such programs to include focusing on female ex-offenders.

The outcomes discussed above and their connections to each other are outlined in the project's Logic Model found on the following page. This Logic Model provides the framework within which the work of EESW was conducted.

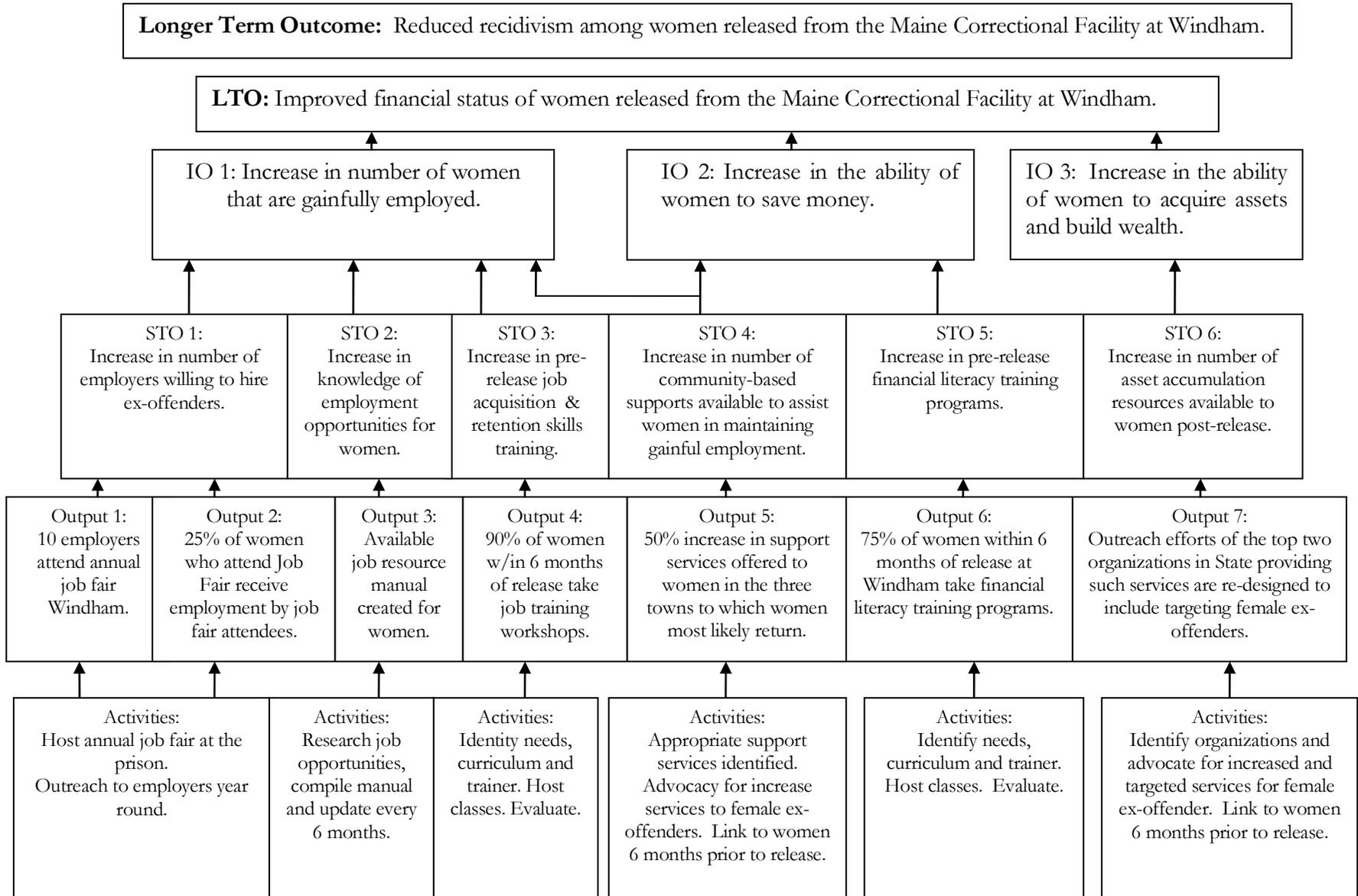
The longer term outcome of EESW is the reduced recidivism among women released from the Maine Correctional Facility at Windham. EESW staff believe that improving the financial status of women released from this facility will lead to reduced recidivism and this, therefore is the long term outcome of the project. In order to reach this outcome, EESW staff believed the project needed to meet the following intermediate outcomes: increasing the ability of women to become gainfully employed, to save money and to acquire assets and build wealth. To reach these outcomes, EESW staff believed the project needed to increase: the number of employers willing to hire ex-offenders; the knowledge of employment opportunities among women; pre-release job acquisition skills; the number of community-based supports available

to women post-release; the number of pre-release financial literacy programs; and, the number of asset accumulation resources available to women.

In order to reach those short term outcomes, EESW defined and outlined the necessary outputs as follows: 10 employers in attendance at a job fair at Windham; 25% of those women receive employment by attending employers; staff create a job resource manual for women; 90% of women take job training workshops within 6 months of release and 75% of women take financial literacy courses within that same time frame; there is a 50% increase in support services for women in the community; and, the top two organizations in the State providing financial literacy and asset development services are re-designed to include former female inmates.

Finally, EESW staff devised activities that would lead to these particular outputs. These activities include: hosting an annual job fair at Windham; researching job opportunities and compiling and updating a resource manual; identifying the needs of women with regard to job training and financial literacy; identifying appropriate support services for women; advocating for increased services to women from among these support services; and, linking women to these services within 6 months of their release from prison.

Project Logic Model



V. Methodology and Implementation Plan

Project Beneficiaries

This project intended to benefit women incarcerated at the Maine Correctional Facility, Windham and those recently released from the Maine Correctional Facility, Windham to towns/cities in Maine. The Maine Correctional Center is a medium/minimum security facility which houses both male and female prisoners; the population of the prison as of July 2007 was 596 males and 129 females (Maine Department of Corrections, 2007).

The mission of the Women's Unit is "to provide incarcerated women with a gender-responsive relational community" (Maine Department of Corrections, 2007). Staff recognize that women in their facility have life experiences that subjugate their feelings of effectiveness and self-worth and therefore strive to provide direction and motivation to encourage positive growth (Maine Department of Corrections, 2007). Their model provides opportunities for work, activities and interpersonal experiences to facilitate reintegration into community, places of employment and families (Maine Department of Corrections, 2007).

Current transition planning for women being released into the community includes pre and post release case management services provided by Volunteers of America Northern New England, as contracted by the Maine Department of Corrections.

Host Organization/Group

The group who organized this project is a group of staff members at Volunteers of America Northern New England (VOANNE), which is an affiliate of Volunteers of America, a national human service organization dedicated to helping those in need rebuild their lives and reach their full potential. VOANNE serves Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont. It is guided by its own board of directors and is a 501(c) (3) organization.

The vision of VOANNE is to provide individuals and families in need, funding sources, and the community with cost effective, compassionate, safe, high quality services that promote personal enhancement and family growth and meet acceptable professional and ethical

standards in the areas of housing, corrections, youth and family services, and related initiatives.

The roots of VOA in New England date back to the Ladies Sewing Club in 1921 and a summer camp in the 1930s. By the 1960s, these activities had ceased. In 1992, Volunteers of America reestablished a program in Northern New England and the organization has enjoyed tremendous success since then. Starting with just one person in 1992, the staff has now grown to nearly 150. Likewise, revenues grew steadily from just over \$100,000 in 1994, to over \$7 million in 2007.

Each year, Volunteers of America Northern New England provides services to over 8000 people in five key areas: affordable housing; community corrections and transitional services for youth and adults; an innovative summer camp for some Maine's most at-risk fifth and sixth graders; residential support for individuals with mental illness; and crime prevention and community revitalization initiatives. These programs are operated in over 20 different locations in Maine and New Hampshire. The organization is funded mainly by state, federal, and local municipalities, as well as with donations and grants from individuals, corporations, and foundations.

With regard to services provided to incarcerated or formerly incarcerated individuals, VOANNE provides a range of services to provide youth and adults who have had encounters with the criminal justice system to reduce the chance of re-offending, to set goals for future success, and to give alternatives to traditional incarceration. The Community Corrections Transition & Reunification Program focuses solely on release planning for the treatment and care of adult offenders incarcerated at the Maine Correctional Center in Windham. An integrated approach to the practice of intensive case management is used to assess the individual needs and level of risk involved in planning for a successful transition and reunification into the family and community. In 2006, Volunteers of America Northern New England provided services to 93 individuals through this program.

Project Staff

EESW primary project staff work for Volunteers of America Northern New England and include: Director of Community Engagement, Jennifer Goldman; Director of the Transition and Reunification Program, Betty Fortuin; and, Patricia Kimball, EESW Proposal author and the Director of Community Development. In addition, EESW was supported by Bowdoin College Community Matters Fellow.

Other Stakeholders

Stakeholders for this project include: Becky Boober, Maine Reentry Network, Department of Corrections; Maine Chief's of Police; Maine Sheriff's Association; Allyson Stone, Executive Director, Empower Lewiston; Denise Lord, Assistant Commissioner, Maine Department of Corrections; Caroline May, Regional Training Director, Women, Work and Community; Maine Chamber of Commerce; Maine Bankers Association; Jim Howard, Deputy Superintendent of Programs, Maine Correctional Center; Chris Kelley, Women's Center Manager, Maine Correctional Center; Maine Adult Correctional Educational Association; Susie Dorn, Director of Service Learning, Bowdoin College; Sunshine Foundation; Florence Young, Casey Family Services; Maine Career Centers; Maine Women's Fund.

Roles, Tasks and Responsibilities

The following is an outline of the Roles, Tasks and Responsibilities of everyone involved in EESW.

Project Staff:

Jennifer Goldman, Director of Community Engagement, Volunteers of America Northern New England. The role of Ms Goldman was to oversee the outreach and development of university/college partnerships and business partnerships which are necessary to the success of EESW. In this role, Goldman secured service learning fellows from Bowdoin College and will endeavor to engage other university and college teaching faculty and students to fill a variety of roles to maintain, enhance and expand this project. Goldman was responsible for supervising the Bowdoin College Fellow, in partnership with Kimball. In addition, Goldman worked with

a variety of local, regional and statewide businesses to promote their participation in this project.

Betty Fortuin, Director of Transition and Reunification Program, Volunteers of America Northern New England. Fortuin played the key role in linking the women inmates at Windham to the services and programs offered by EESW. Because Fortuin works on-site at the prison and has in-depth knowledge of the women and their unique challenges, needs and strengths, she becomes the linchpin for this project. Fortuin worked with staff at the prison to ensure logistical program needs are met, she worked with the women to ensure their participation in the program, and she worked with key stakeholders as an advocate for the needs of the women in the prison. She was responsible for ensuring that the needs of the women were understood and addressed by the stakeholders of this project.

Patricia Kimball, Director of Community Development, Volunteers of America Northern New England. The role of Kimball in this project was to work with the community-based organizations, including members of the three county-wide Weed & Seed sites in Maine, to ensure their participation and cooperation of this project. She was responsible for advocating for this project to be included in financial literacy curricula developed by community-based organizations; she publicized the program to key stakeholders and potential project partners to ensure their ongoing and continued support of the project; she linked project staff (including the Bowdoin Community Matters Fellow) with key stakeholders; she sought funding in partnership with Goldman and Fortuin to continue and expand this project; and, she developed monitoring and evaluation tools to ensure outcomes are measured and publicized. She was responsible for supervising the Bowdoin College Fellow, in partnership with the Director of Community Engagement.

Bowdoin College Community Matters Fellow: This student was responsible for developing and implementing an annual job fair at Windham; for assisting in the collection and analysis of key outcome data; and for writing up and publicizing the results of the annual job fair.

Project Beneficiaries:

The role and responsibilities of the project beneficiaries were to actively engage in the services and activities developed and implemented by EESW and to communicate challenges and successes to project staff. The tasks of project beneficiaries were to accept services that are needed and desired, participate regularly in services and activities, communicate successes and challenges to service providers, and participate in project evaluation.

Key Stakeholders:

Maine Reentry Network: The role and responsibility of this group was to ensure that employment training and financial literacy training is a part of the agenda of the work of reentry professionals in the State of Maine, both pre and post release. The role of the group was to “make room at the table” of reentry for EESW and to ensure the goals of the project were shared across disciplines and integrated into the broader reentry work being done in the state.

Maine Department of Corrections: The role and responsibility of the Maine Department of Corrections (DOC) was to support this project both within the facility and within the broader community and to work with project staff to identify pieces of the project that are replicable in other correctional facilities within the state. In addition, it was the responsibility of the Department of Corrections to publicize the work done as a result of this project with others in the DOC community.

Maine Chamber of Commerce: The role of the Maine Chamber of Commerce was to support the efforts of the project to find women employment, to outreach to its members and advocate on behalf of the clientele of this project and to encourage the participation of its members in all relevant aspects of this project.

Women, Work and Community: The role of this organization was to provide financial literacy training and support within the facility and to ensure it is provided to female ex-offenders out in the community once the women are released. The role of this organization was also to connect women who qualify with Family Development Accounts and to provide support

groups and guidance regarding job acquisition and retention once the women are released back into the community.

Maine Bankers Association: The role of this association was much the same as that of the Maine Chamber of Commerce, focused instead of financial literacy, banking and loan funds.

Bowdoin College: The role of this organization was to provide student fellows to work on this project through its Community Matters program, to assist with linking students to service learning projects focused on matters relevant to this project, to provide statistical analysis support to project staff, and to advocate for the inclusion of topics related to women and incarceration in appropriate classroom lectures.

Maine Women's Fund: The role of this organization was to provide funding support to this project through their newly launched Women's Economic Security Project.

Sunshine Foundation: The role of this organization was to provide scholarships to women who show promise and commitment to furthering their education pre and post release.

Casey Family Services: The role of this organization was to advocate for the inclusion of women ex-offenders as a special target of outreach for statewide Earned Income Tax Credit campaigns, which this organization assists in developing and maintaining across the state.

Maine Career Centers: The role of this organization was to ensure that support is offered for women ex-offenders at every career center within the state, and to participate in the annual job fair and pre and post release training sessions.

Maine Adult Correctional Educational Association: The role of this organization was to recognize the special needs and barriers women face to furthering their education pre and post release and to develop gender specific options for women in order to enhance their educational options.

Women's Unit – Maine Correctional Center, Windham: The role of this organization was to provide the logistical (space, equipment, time) and on-site staff support for programming that is part of this project. This was the most critical piece of support for the success of EESW.

Gant Charts

Short Term Outcome 1: Increase in number of employers willing to hire ex-offenders. Short Term Outcome 2: Increase in knowledge of employment opportunities for women.																					
Activities	Month																				Outcomes/ Outputs
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
Contact Employers	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█												10 Employers attend First Ever Job Fair at women's center at prison. 30 inmates attend job fair. 25% of women who attend job fair and are released w/in 3 months of job fair receive employment by attendees at job fair. Available Job Resource Manual created.
Set up Job Fair										█	█	█									
Schedule preparation classes										█	█	█									
Hold preparation classes													█	█	█	█					
Hold Job Fair																	█				
Create How To Manual for future job fairs.																		█			
Track number of women who gain employment from attendees at Job Fair																		█	█	█	

Short Term Outcome 3: Increase in pre-release job acquisition and retention skills training.
Short Term Outcome 5: Increase in pre-release financial literacy training programs.
Short Term Outcome 4: Increase in number of community-based supports available to assist women in maintaining gainful employment.

Activities	Month																				Outcomes/ Outputs
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
Find funding for employment and financial literacy classes at Windham.																					90% of women w/in 6 months of release take job training workshops.
Partner with Women, Work & Community to conduct classes.																					
Create data collection systems.																					50% increase in support services offered to women in the three cities/towns to which women most likely return.
Hold classes.																					
Track success of women who took classes post release.																					
Identify current programs offering support to female ex-offenders.																					75% of women within 6 months of release at Windham take financial literacy training programs.
Identify current programs that are NOT offering support to female ex-offenders.																					
Conduct outreach and education campaign to increase support services these organizations.																					

Short Term Outcome 6: Increase in number of asset accumulation resources available to women post-release.

Activities	Month																				Outcomes/ Outputs
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
Identify top five organizations in the state that have greatest capacity to offer asset accumulation resources.																					Outreach efforts of the top two organizations in State providing such services are re-designed to include targeting female ex-offenders.
Conduct outreach and education campaign to advocate for them to re-design their service delivery to include focusing on female ex-offenders.																					
Create venues through which women can access services.																					
Track participation by women.																					

Budget Detail

The implementation of EESW activities required inputs and resources that amount to \$43,799.

The budget is broken down on the tables on the following pages.

Detail		Computation	Sub Totals ²	Total
Personnel ³				
A	Director of Community Engagement	5% of FTE	\$2250	
B	Director of Transition and Reunification	10% of FTE	\$4500	
C	Director of Community Development	5% of FTE	\$2250	
D	Sub Total		\$9,000	
E	Fringe Benefit @ 37% of Row C	FICA @ 7.7% Unemployment @ 3.8% Pension @ 7.0% Medical @ 18.5%	\$3330	
F	Personnel Subtotal			\$12,330
Contracts and Consultants				
G	Women, Work & Community Educator	\$40/hr x 10 hrs/wk x 52 weeks	\$20,800	
H	Consultants and Contracts Subtotal			\$20,800
Travel				
I	Mileage for project staff to and from meetings and prison	.38 cents/mile x 50 miles/wk x 52 weeks	\$988	
	Travel Subtotal			\$988
Supplies				
J	General Office supplies	\$50 per month x 12 months	\$600	
K	Printing marketing materials.	\$200 month x 12 months	\$2400	
	Supplies Subtotal			\$3000
L	Project Subtotal			\$37,118
M	Indirect Overhead	18% of Line L.		\$6681
	Grand Total			<u>\$43,799</u>

Budget Summary

Item	Percent	Total
Personnel (wage and fringe)	28%	\$12,330
Contracts and Consultants	47%	\$20,800
Travel	2%	\$988
Supplies	8%	\$3000
Indirect Overhead	15%	\$6681
	100%	\$43,799

² Because funding is only available for one year, costs for the project are calculated for this one year period.

³ Assuming annual salaries for each of \$45,000.

VI. Monitoring Plan

Indicators

The key to the success of EESW was the careful monitoring of activities that were intended to lead to the seven Outputs outlined on the Logic Model. These Outputs were considered indicators or benchmarks for the purposes of this project, and included:

Output 1: Ten employers attend annual Job Fair at the Women's Unit at the Maine Correctional Center, Windham.

Output 2: Twenty five percent of women who attend Job Fair and who are within 3 months of release obtain jobs from employers who participated in Job Fair.

Output 3: Available job resource manual created for women pre and post release from Maine Correctional Facility, Windham.

Output 4: Ninety percent of women within 6 months of release participate in job training workshops.

Output 5: Fifty percent increase in support of support services offered to women in the three cities/towns to which women released from prison most often go.

Output 6: Seventy five percent of women within 6 months of release at Windham take financial literacy training programs.

Output 7: Outreach efforts of the top two organizations in State providing such services are re-designed to include targeting female ex-offenders.

The implementation and completion of activities that led to these outputs were monitored by the Project Staff, with each of the three staff members taking on specific outcomes to monitor. The monitoring of this project was considered a very important component of project implementation, as future funding opportunities and increased involvement and support from the Department of Corrections and the Maine Chamber of Commerce are key to the sustainability of this project. Therefore, it was critical that EESW has consistent, timely and ongoing systems of monitoring in place prior to full project implementation.

Methods, Tools, Forms

The reality of workplace structure and organization made the monitoring of this project a challenge. Two staff persons work out of the administrative offices of Volunteers of America

in Brunswick (Goldman and Kimball). Fortuin, the Director of Transition and Reunification, works part time at the prison, which is an hour southwest of Brunswick. Because the work of all three staff persons takes them across the state in different directions, it was unrealistic to schedule regular meeting times more than quarterly to review progress toward outcomes. Therefore, communication and tracking was led by Kimball, with input and data provided remotely by Goldman and Fortuin. For the purposes of maintaining a regular flow of communication and input, monitoring was done monthly, although it was understood by members of the Project Staff that there may not be progress to report each month.

Output 1 was be monitored by Goldman. Work toward this output intensified in the 3 months leading up to the Job Fair, but was ongoing during the rest of the year to ensure continued support and to expand involvement by new businesses and employers.

Output 2, 4 and 6 was monitored by Fortuin, with assistance from her staff at the prison. This monitoring was done monthly and Kimball initiated the communication of such data monthly, and used the data to reinforce the success of the project by publicizing such success through internal newsletters and email alerts.

Output 3, 5 and 7 will be monitored by Kimball and reported to other Project Staff monthly. It was understood that because these activities presuppose outcomes that are longer term in nature, there was not always updated data to report monthly. However, as stated earlier, because it was important to maintain the continuing nature of this project via ongoing communication, project staff attempted to use a monthly monitoring system to facilitate such communication.

The monitoring form (called Activity Progress Report) was reviewed for completeness and accuracy, and data was compiled quarterly into a consolidated form (called Consolidated Activity Report), which included all outputs of the projects, whether currently being implemented or not. This consolidated form was by Kimball and forwarded along to project staff, as appropriate. The consolidated form concentrated on progress toward achieving the 7 EESW outputs, and reinforced the integrated nature of such outputs as necessary to the success of the entire project. One drawback of having individuals responsible for monitoring

individual outcomes and not holding regular monthly meetings regarding the project itself was the potential for the outcomes to be seen as ends in and of themselves. For example, the Job Fair was a means to an end; it was one activity that is necessary to achieve the outcomes of the project, but not the only activity. The monitoring reports were intended to provide staff with a method to ensure ongoing communication and input on the various activities necessary to reach long term, intermediate and long term outcomes of this important project.

EESW called the monitoring form an Activity Progress Report, in order to ease the anxiety that can be caused by the idea of monitoring activities. Based on previous experiences, project planners believed the way this process was presented (including the language used) was be very important to the success of this project. Information withheld because people felt as though they were being “monitored” was information lost. The three staff persons responsible for this project were peers (meaning no one person was in a position of authority over the other) and therefore there was no basis for one person monitoring the activities of another. It was important that the monitoring activities be seen as information sharing on activities in order to respect the peer-to-peer relationships of Project Staff and to ensure all data was communicated and exchanged.

The Activity Progress Report included the following components: Activities, Start Date, Anticipated End Date, Status (on schedule or not), Discussion of Challenges that have impacted Status, Additional Assistance needed, Alternative Action (as appropriate) and Output. In addition, the report asked for the names of the persons/agencies involved in the completion of the activity and the “owner” of the report. The Activity Progress Report included both qualitative elements (i.e., Discussion of Challenges) and quantitative elements (i.e., percentage in increase of services to date).

The Consolidated Progress Report included all of these elements but in a way that allowed committee members to focus on higher level project progress and focus discussion on challenges and assistance needed in order to mobilize the collective resources of project stakeholders. The consolidated report ensured that information was presented in a cohesive and integrated manner for ease of digestion and discussion and to reinforce the necessity of addressing all components of the project in order to reach longer term outcomes.

Team/Tasks

As stated above, Project Staff were responsible for collecting the Activity Progress Report for their particular output areas. The “owners” of the Outputs were responsible for collecting the information from their staff, community partners or agency colleagues and submitting these to the group for review and discussion.

Kimball was responsible for consolidating information provided by Project Staff and for redistributing a report on the progress of EESW to appropriate parties.

Schedule

As stated earlier, it was intended that reports would be shared and reviewed monthly via email. Because this report acted as a “check in” among Project Staff who will not be able to meet on a monthly basis to evolve this project, EESW staff felt it would be important to have a regular and therefore anticipated “due date” for such reports. Kimball was responsible for initiating this monitoring, with agreement about due date decided upon by the group.

I. Evaluation Plan

Evaluation variables and indicators

ESSW will evaluate the following indicators, as related to long term, intermediate and short term outcomes:

Long Term Outcome 1: Reduced recidivism among women released from the Maine Correctional Facility at Windham.

Indicator: Number of women who re-offend and return to prison within one year of leaving the Maine Correctional Facility at Windham.

Long Term Outcome 2: Improved financial status of women released from the Maine Correctional Facility at Windham.

Indicator: Number of women that maintain work at jobs that pay higher than minimum wage after 1 year of release from Maine Correctional Facility.

Intermediate Outcome 1: Increase in the number of women that are gainfully employed.

Indicator(s): Number of women that obtain work within 6 months of release from Maine Correctional Facility at jobs that pay higher than the minimum wage.

Intermediate Outcome 2: Increase in the ability of women to save money.

Indicators: Number of women that open savings accounts within 1 year of release from prison.

Intermediate Outcome 3: Increase in the ability of women to acquire assets and build wealth;

Indicator: Number of women who have purchased a home, started a business or gone back to school with the assets from any form of financial savings program within 2 years of release from prison.

Short Term Outcome 1: Increase in the number of employers who are willing to hire ex-offenders.

Indicators: The number of employers who attend the annual Job Fair at Windham that report on post Job Fair survey that they are more willing to hire to ex-offenders than before participating in Job Fair.

Short Term Outcome 2: Increase in knowledge of employment opportunities for women.

Indicator(s): Number of women who participate in Job Fair; number of women who attend employment training programs while at Windham.

Short Term Outcome 3: Increase in pre-release job acquisition and job retention skills training.

Indicator: Number of women who participate in training classes at Windham who score higher on a post test than they did on pre test.

Short Term Outcome 4: Increase in number of community-based supports available to assist women in maintaining gainful employment.

Indicator: Number of community-based support organizations in Lewiston, Bangor and Portland that incorporate former female offenders within their target populations for outreach within 1 month of their release from prison.

Short Term Outcome 5: Increase in pre-release financial literacy training programs.

Indicator(s): Number of women who participate in training classes at Windham who score higher on a post test than they did on pre test.

Short Term Outcome 6: Increase in number of asset accumulation resources available to women post-release.

Indicator(s): Number of asset accumulation resources that incorporate former female offenders within their target populations for outreach within 1 month of their release from prison.

Data gathering methods, tools, forms

Data related to specific outcomes will be gathered by the following methods and the following sources:

- Long Term Outcome 1: Review of Maine Department of Corrections data.

- Long Term Outcome 2: Interviews with women.
- Intermediate Outcome 1: Interviews with women.
- Intermediate Outcome 2: Interviews with women.
- Intermediate Outcome 3: Interviews with women.
- Short Term Outcome 1: Participant surveys.
- Short Term Outcome 2: Participant surveys.
- Short Term Outcome 3: Review of pre and post score data.
- Short Term Outcome 4: Interviews with key contacts at specified organizations, including (but not limited to) Casey Family Services and Women, Work and Community.
- Short Term Outcome 5: Review of pre and post score data.
- Short Term Outcome 6: Interviews with key contacts at specified organizations, including (but not limited to) Casey Family Services and Women, Work and Community.

Data analysis

Data that is gathered as outlined above will be analyzed using appropriate methods.

Long Term Outcome 1: EESW staff will review rates of recidivism among women who have been involved in services offered by our project and compare these to women who have not to determine the impact of our project.

Long Term Outcome 2: EESW staff will interview a sample of women one year after release from prison to determine if they are working at jobs that pay higher than minimum wage and compare those that received services through our project to those who did not to determine the impact of our project on participants.

Intermediate Outcome 1: Same analysis as Long Term Outcome 1.

Intermediate Outcome 2: Same analysis as Long Term Outcome 1.

Intermediate Outcome 3: Same analysis as Long Term Outcome 1.

Short Term Outcome 1: EESW staff will review surveys to determine what percentage of employers reported an attitude change as a result of their attendance at the Job Fair.

Short Term Outcome 2: EESW staff will review surveys of women who attend Job Fair and employment programs to determine whether their knowledge base increased as a result of this intervention.

Short Term Outcome 3: Staff will compare pre and post test to determine whether their knowledge base increased as a result of these classes.

Short Term Outcome 4: Staff will interview key contacts within specific organizations to determine whether they have incorporated former female offenders within their target population.

Short Term Outcome 5: Staff will compare pre and post test to determine whether their knowledge base increased as a result of these classes.

Short Term Outcome 6: Staff will interview key contacts within specific organizations to determine whether they have incorporated former female offenders within their target population.

Conclusions from the analysis of the data gathered as outlined above will be shared with staff at Volunteers of America Northern New England, attendees of the Job Fair, women at Windham, the Maine Department of Corrections, the Maine Chamber of Commerce and the Governor through annual reports.

Evaluation team/tasks

Kimball will collect data regarding Job Fair attendees (employers). She will survey these employers on a semi-annual basis to determine whether they have hired any former felons from the Women's Unit at Windham.

Kimball will collect data regarding community-based agencies and financial institutions regarding the number of services and supports offered to women post release.

Kimball and Goldman will work with university/college partners to complete evaluations post release.

Kimball, Fortuin and Goldman work with on-site program providers to ensure appropriate pre and post tests are given and scored and those results are shared with Project Staff.

Evaluation schedule

The following is an outline of the schedule of the evaluation plan EESW will implement:

- Base line data related to current inmates and their release dates will be gathered to ensure EESW staff have a specific group of women to follow. Beginning data for full evaluation will be collected for tracking starting January 1, 2008. Data will be tracked for each woman for once every six months for 3 years following release from Windham.
- Preliminary data will be gathered as well regarding the policies of companies attending the Job Fair on hiring former felons. Data related to policies will then be checked one year later.
- Baseline for recidivism rates will be measured beginning January 1, 2008 and will be measured annually.
- Baseline data will be gathered for community-based agencies and financial institutions offering services and targeted outreach to the former female felon population beginning January 1, 2008 and will be measured by survey annually.
- Attendance records collected at events, activities, services EESW implements will be collected and analyzed as the events are held.
- Pre and post tests will be administered prior to the workshop being held and at the end of the workshop.
- Post Job Fair surveys with participating employers will be administered 6 months after the Job Fair.

VIII. Sustainability Plan

Sustainability of project activities and resources

The ultimate goal of EESW was to institutionalize a series of activities that lead to increased ongoing support and education for women pre and post release from the Women's Unit at Windham. Because this project involves a number of community and institutional stakeholders – including local businesses and the Maine Department of Corrections – effort was put on deeply engaging both these players in the process for project implementation and for sharing in the spotlight of our anticipated success. In this way, EESW attempted to secure buy-in from those agencies who will ultimately decide whether or not this project “has legs” and will persist in the future. Therefore, in addition to focusing on specific service provision (vis-à-vis classes for women at the prison), EESW more heavily emphasized the engagement of businesses and department heads within the Maine Department of Corrections as critical components to the sustainability of this project.

EESW was fortunate to be partners with the Maine Women's Fund, who had recently chosen women's economic security as their area of focus (in terms of resources and research) for the next two years. In order to sustain some of the project activities, EESW planned to apply for funds through this organization during Winter 2008. Goldman is the a member of the Maine Women's Fund Board and Fortuin was chosen as a finalist for the annual Maine Women's Fund award in October 2007. These connections better enable EESW to compete for funds in a tight financial climate.

Sustainability of benefits

Part of the broader vision of this project was to change the way society in general views formerly incarcerated women. EESW believed that if perspectives about the worth and value of these women could be altered, however slightly, the overall effect for communities in Maine would be huge. Not just for the sake of bettering the lives of these individuals, but for the betterment of their children and the quality of life in all Maine communities. Women who have been incarcerated and find employment and build assets and create wealth upon release from prison become engaged in their local communities, contribute to the local economy and

are less likely to end up back in prison. Ensuring the economic security for ex-offenders is not only a good thing to do, it is a necessary project to ensuring safer, healthier and more financially robust families and communities. By inviting local businesses to be partners in this important project, EESW set the stage for “perspective evolution” among the economic players in Maine. Once the perspectives of businesses that participate in EESW have been changed, the change will not be undone. And further, these businesses share their experiences and their perspectives and new partners will emerge. Ultimately, EESW planned to grow a community of businesses that embraces former offenders and gives them equal chance at a life after prison. From this, EESW believed the benefit of this project would be sustained indefinitely.

IX. Conclusions and Recommendations

Results

The following section outlines the results of EESW, and offers analysis and recommendations for the expansion and/or replication of this project.

As was outlined in the Logic Model in Section IV of this document, the long term outcome of EESW is to reduced recidivism among women released from the Maine Correctional Facility at Windham by offering opportunities for these women to improve their financial status. Toward this end, EESW developed, organized and implemented a number of activities that led to the completion of the Short Term Outcomes, as indicated below.

On Short Term Outcome 1 and 2:

- Increase in number of employers willing to hire ex-offenders.
- Increase in knowledge of employment opportunities for women.

Output: Ten employers attend annual Job Fair at Windham.

Achievements: In August of 2007, EESW organizers held the first ever Job Fair for women at the Maine Correctional Facility. Fourteen potential employers attended the Job Fair, exceeding the team's target output of ten.

The Job Fair was attended by 65 (85%) of the women at the facility, as well as representatives from the Maine Department of Corrections. One inmate noted that in the twenty years she has been incarcerated, she has never seen such an event at the facility.

In a post interview survey done by a group of students at the University of Maine at Presque Isle with women who attended the Job Fair and now reside at the pre-release facility for women in Bangor, 3 women noted that the job fair at Windham motivated them to start a job search, one women was surprised at the turnout of employers, one women noted it was a "good chance to show that we are regular women" and finally, a woman noted it was positive

that there were high end employers in attendance, such as L.L. Bean and the Portland Press Herald (unpublished research, University of Maine at Presque Isle, 2008).

Challenges: EESW learned it was very time-consuming to organize such an event, given the preconceived notions of the majority of the employers about incarcerated individuals the subsequent resistance of employers to get involved. Staff underestimated the magnitude of this barrier and did not have the capacity within existing staff to overcome it. Fortunately, EESW organizers were granted a student fellow from Bowdoin College for 10 weeks during the summer of 2007, whose primary job was to organize this Job Fair. She spent numerous hours contacting employers across the state to secure their attendance and while she was met with resistance the majority of the time, she did manage to secure the attendance of 14 employers at the Job Fair. Based on this experience, EESW staff realized the necessity of having one dedicated person assigned to organize this event. Fortunately, due to the extensive contacts made by the student during her tenure with Volunteers of America Northern New England and feedback from those employers who attended, EESW feels confident the Job Fair will be more easily replicated at Windham next summer and other facilities around the state in the future.

Learnings: In doing subsequent outreach to other colleges and universities, EESW organizers have discovered a strong interest on the part of these institutions to assist in the development and implementation of job fairs in correctional settings. EESW is currently working with students at the University of Maine at Presque Isle to host the Job Fair at the Bangor Pre-Release facility this summer. In order to sustain the Job Fair portion of this project and to expand advocacy efforts to a broader group of potential stakeholders, EESW staff endeavor to approach colleges and universities from across the state to develop a statewide project to host Job Fairs within all correctional facilities throughout the state. EESW anticipates this work to be done within the next 18 months.

Additionally, EESW organizers were asked to speak to a group of Volunteer Coordinators who work at Volunteers of America from across the country about the Job Fair, with the goal of encouraging the replication of this activity in other geographic regions. To date, one

affiliate, in Washington State, has committed to hosting a Job Fair using the model EESW piloted in Maine.

In addition to attendance by employers, the Job Fair was also attended by representatives from the Maine Department of Corrections (DOC). Subsequently, they featured this event in their statewide newsletter titled “DOC Talk” and expressed an interest in working with EESW to replicate the Job Fair in their institutions across the state. To date, two facilities within the state have or are planning to host a Job Fair; the Pre-Release facility for women in Bangor and Two Bridges Regional Jail in Wiscasset.

Finally, following the Job Fair, EESW staff met with two participating employers, and spoke informally to additional employers, all of whom expressed not only an interest in attending future Job Fairs, but also offered to assist EESW staff in recruiting additional employers to participate.

Output: Twenty five percent of women who attend the Job Fair receive employment by Job Fair attendees.

Achievements: Six women received jobs – two from L.L. Bean and four from Cianbro Construction. DOC staff report that 75% of the prison inmates attended the job fair: this number (six) is less than 25% of the women who did attend. Therefore, EESW partially met this output.

Challenges: In an attempt to lessen the barriers to participation in the Job Fair by the women at Windham, EESW staff did not ask women to register or note their attendance at the fair. Therefore, staff does not have an exact accounting as to how many women actually attended the fair, although DOC staff report, based on their observations, that 75% of the women were in attendance.

Learnings: What is important to note about these employment placements received by the women as a result of the Job Fair – in particular L.L. Bean – is that they represent a change in perspective on behalf of the employers. Prior to attending this Job Fair, L.L. Bean had stated

they would not hire formerly incarcerated individuals (personal communication, Goldman; once having attended the Job Fair and meeting the women firsthand, L.L. Bean expressed a willingness to give these women a chance by hiring two employees for seasonal employment. Cianbro Construction, following the Job Fair and one-on-one follow up meeting first between EESW staff and the Human Resources representative (who attended the Job Fair) and subsequently with the Director of the Cianbro Institute, has offered to “hire all of the women that are released from Windham.” (Goldman, personal communication, February 2008). These are permanent, skilled labor positions offering higher than average starting wages, benefits and opportunities for advancement. While it is not realistic that all women released from Windham will qualify or desire a job at Cianbro, the commitment from the company to partner with our organization to assist in transitioning women from Windham to positions within their organization is a result of their experience at the Job Fair.

Output: Available job resource manual created for women.

Achievements: EESW staff did not create a job resource manual as originally intended.

Challenges: EESW staff expected that the student intern would have been able to at least begin this manual during her tenure with Volunteers of America during the summer of 2007. Because the organizing of the Job Fair was more time-intensive than staff expected, the student did not have adequate time to attend to this output. Additionally, EESW staff did not have time to put this manual together.

Learnings: Staff learned that the personal one-on-one contact with potential employers across the state was the most effective outreach and advocacy strategy to assist in linking women with jobs post release. While a manual may be helpful to women, the reality is that a more effective use of time for staff was to identify allies within specific organizations and spend the time nurturing those relationships versus casting a wide net to find employers to fill a manual.

On Short Term Outcome 3:

- Increase in pre-release job acquisition and retention skills training.

Output: Ninety percent of women take job training workshops within 6 months of release.

Achievements: As part of the preparation for the Job Fair, the student fellow set up two resume writing and interview preparation classes at the prison, accessing teachers and staff at Bowdoin College to teach these courses. The student reported that classes were well received by the women, and while the staff and teachers are not available during the school year to offer such assistance, they are willing to go back to the prison in the summer of 2008 to offer and expand these classes.

EESW did not fully achieve the output of originally anticipated.

Challenges: While staff had anticipated being able to hold a series of classes prior to the Job Fair, due to limited time and capacity and the time-intensive nature of organizing the Job Fair itself, the student did not have adequate time to prepare more classes.

As well, because the neither the student nor the teachers recorded names of women who attended the classes, EESW staff are not able to follow up with the women to measure the impact of these trainings.

Finally, Volunteers of America received a large grant from the Department of Corrections to set up and manage a pre-release facility in the City of Bangor. This facility will house 38 women transitioning back into the community from Windham. This project was unexpected and Volunteers of America was given a short amount of time to start up the facility, therefore, staff from Windham were fully engaged in the opening of this facility, and certain plans for EESW were put on hold.

Learnings: Because EESW focused efforts on community engagement work – reaching out to potential employers and replicating Job Fairs in partnership with University/Colleges across the state – staff have not concentrated resources on classes within the facility. EESW underestimated the logistical difficulty of coordinating classes within the prison from the outside.

On Short Term Outcome 4 and 6:

- Increase in number of community-based supports available to assist women in maintaining gainful employment.
- Increase in number of asset accumulation resources available to women post-release.

Output: 50% increase in support services offered to women in the three towns to which women most likely return.

Achievements: Volunteers of America received a \$5000 grant from Casey Family Services to jump start a community loan fund in Lewiston to help people access resources – specifically dentures – to overcome barriers to employment. While there is no guarantee this will assist women recently released from prison, they will certainly be among the populations to which staff market. The additional support service will be available to equally assist women being released from prison as it will with any other population.

EESW staff continues to work with Casey Family Services to identify resources for women transitioning back into the community from prison. One such resource is offering Volunteer Income Tax Assistance within the prison. EESW staff participated in a conference call to learn from such efforts underway in Rhode Island. Resistance from Windham (lack of understanding of value of program and applicability of benefits to this particular population) and unanticipated difficulty recruiting volunteers this year (statewide phenomenon) for the general EITC campaign has moved this project to a possibility for next year.

While EESW staff has begun to link existing services to the special population of women, this output was not achieved fully.

Challenges: The challenges of managing multiple relationships with community-based organizations, all of whom have their own agenda and priorities, in an effort to advocate for women transitioning back into the community from prison required more time originally anticipated.

Learnings: As was the case with employers, EESW staff learned that the best strategy for increasing services to women was to identify a few strong allies within organizations and focus on developing long term relationships with these individuals and the organizations in order to advocate for increased services to women. A broad based strategy may look good on paper, but the likelihood of organizations following through on their promise to serve women transitioning back into the community without the intensive connection with both individuals from EESW and women from the prison is minimal. Ultimately, EESW staff learned that advocating for women transitioning back into the community requires personal connections and strategy of partnership, which is time intensive.

Output: Outreach efforts of the top two organizations in State providing such services are re-designed to include targeting female ex-offenders.

Achievements: As discussed above, the committee leading the loan fund to assist low income individuals in overcoming barriers to employment will include in their target population former female incarcerated individuals in their target population. While the committee will not recruit solely from this population, advocacy on behalf of EESW staff has ensured that women will be included in the outreach and marketing efforts for this program. Additionally, while not implemented this tax year, EESW staff have researched and paved the way for future Earned Income Tax Credit programs to include female inmates (those recently incarcerated at Windham and those transferred to the pre-release facility in Bangor). Based on the heightened awareness of participants in these two programs, EESW did achieve this outcome.

Challenges: As noted earlier, EESW staff found it difficult to incorporate traditionally community-based programs in the prison setting, primarily because of the logistical difficulties of getting into the prison to offer such programs. There was willingness on behalf of prison staff to entertain such programs, but it was logistically difficult, given the time constraints and geographic distance, to integrate these programs into prison programs.

Learnings: EESW learned that advocacy for increased services within the prison setting is a necessary (and longer term) process before actual implementation can take place. In addition,

connection to the broad base of stakeholders is more difficult and time-consuming than originally anticipated. While EESW staff anticipated support from the Maine Reentry Network as a method for meeting this outcome, these kinds of networks are harder to infiltrate than originally anticipated.

On Short Term Outcome 5:

- Increase in pre-release financial literacy training programs.

Output: 75% of women within 6 months of release at Windham take financial literacy training programs.

Achievements: EESW has not met this output. The project has recruited a volunteer who will begin teaching a Volunteers of America curriculum based financial literacy program called “Earn and Learn”, but it will not reach 75% of the women within 6 months of release by the writing of this document.

Challenges: Once again, the realities of time and the logistical difficulties of arranging activities at the correctional facility from administrative offices of Volunteers of America in Brunswick made it difficult to arrange the activities needed to meet this objective within our intended time frame.

Learnings: EESW staff had the opportunity and intention of applying for a grant through the State Department of Treasury to fund financial literacy classes at Windham. However, staff realized that funding these activities through a grant would engender dependency on outside grant funds and long term, EESW would not be able to sustain these classes. Fortunately, a volunteer to teach the skills using in-house curriculum was found and depending upon the success of the class, staff can hope to sustain these classes into the future.

Prospects of Attaining Intermediate and Long-Term Outcomes: Despite the challenges – primarily logistical ones – EESW staff believe that the project is on its way toward the attainment of intermediate and long-term outcomes. With the attainment of a host of short-term outcomes, most directly through the hosting of the job fair at Windham and the subsequent support for and interest in future job fairs, EESW staff feel assured that impact will be made on the financial well being of female inmates transitioning back into the community from correctional settings. The reality is that these outcomes will be longer term and require the commitment of available staff and the access of additional resources allocated to this effort. Staff believe that while this project was much more labor intensive and complicated logistically to implement, given adequate resources and the support of our host organization to continue such work, EESW will continue to pave the way for attaining the intermediate and long-term outcomes of this project.

Sustainability and Replication: EESW staff believe this project has a strong chance of sustainability and replication, and indeed have begun the work toward this end. The connections that staff have made with faculty and staff at various universities and colleges in the state, as well as the national connections of Volunteers of America Northern New England staff with other Volunteers of America affiliates across the country provide staff with venues through which sustainability and replication of the model will be made possible. EESW staff learned through the established relationship with Bowdoin College, and the student fellowship staff were able to secure for the summer of 2007, that the job fair and preceding (and possible subsequent) skills development classes for women within correctional settings are positive and effective initiatives for students, faculty and staff to undertake and there is much interest on the part of universities and colleges to take the lead in developing (based on the Job Fair model executed at Windham) and implementing such activities in correctional settings across the state. Additionally, because a number of Volunteers of America affiliates from across the country work with incarcerated individuals, the opportunity to encourage replication of the job fair model can be facilitated through our already existing networks nationwide.

Finally, EESW staff feel bolstered by the enthusiasm on the part of employers who participated in the initial job fair. Their willingness to explore deeper partnerships with

Volunteers of America Northern New England to enhance the benefits (employability) to women transitioning back into the community provides assurances to the sustainability and replication of this project.

In order to ensure ongoing support for this project, which is necessary for its long term viability, EESW staff need to continue the work of advocacy and outreach to engage more employers and nontraditional partners, thus paving the way for the success of women transitioning back into the community now and in the future. This advocacy will have long term benefits as EESW staff have seen the effect of the stories told by past participants in this project. Organizations have begun to address changing their policies (L.L. Bean) to enable their companies hiring of former felons, while other organizations have enthusiastically promised the doors for a number of employment opportunities will be opened for formerly incarcerated women.

Finally, due to the success of this project, EESW staff have approached potential funding partners, such as Bangor Savings, who has agreed to consider funding initiatives to assist women in their quest for financial stability following incarceration in the future.

Personal Thoughts: From a practitioner's standpoint, most especially when viewing this project from the perspective of increased understanding for and tolerance of the financial plight of facing recently transitioned female felons, this project was incredibly encouraging. This project began with an idea, and the initial road to making this idea reality was definitely challenging and discouraging. The author recalls her conversations with the student intern who was tasked with identifying initial employers to attend the first job fair. The student came to the author's office frustrated and discouraged after spending hours attempting to recruit attendees to the job fair. She could not fathom how EESW would recruit ten employers to attend the job fair, based on the resistance she had encountered thus far. She ran through list after list of potential employers and in addition to few call backs, she was met with outright rejection. She admitted she felt the job was impossible.

The author and student worked together to reframe the expectations for this project, emphasizing the importance of the outreach work as a way to begin the process of broad

based awareness building. The student and author altered their expectations in terms of the actual employers EESW might actually secure, and agreed to view success from a different perspective. The more employers EESW was able to reach, the more opportunities staff had to tell the story of the challenges female offenders face once they return to their communities. Staff were originally “pitching” the Job Fair as a way to assist employers in finding willing employees to fill their labor needs. This was not a successful approach, as it began to feel as though EESW was seeking employers whose jobs were ones that were hard to fill from the traditional labor market. In this way, the project was degrading the value of the women for which it purported to advocate. In essence, the message our project was sending was “these are people who will take any job, so grab them while you can.” Once staff changed this approach, and focused more on the idea of true advocacy – speaking to the community mindedness of many employers and calling on them to give back to the community by taking a second look at the capacity of such women to contribute to the labor market – the project had much more success. If staff could tell that story successfully, they were connecting on a much deeper level to the humanity of these employers; staff spoke to their needs as individuals to give back to their community by welcoming women who had a criminal history and innumerable hurdles to overcome as they made their way in the world post incarceration. The end result was less important than the process and in this way, each phone call provided staff with the opportunity to open the minds of yet one more employer. As it turned out, once EESSW partners refocused their energy on the potential of advocacy, they were much more successful precisely because their approach was less about what they wanted from the employer and more about what they were providing them in terms of education and insight. And they responded in spades.

The author has been working in the nonprofit setting for 20 years and this project stands out as one of the most rewarding experiences of her career. The enthusiasm of the employers who attended the job fair; the “aha” moments she saw countless times during the course of the day when employers faced these women and realized they were struggling but capable human beings was incredibly rewarding. As a practitioner, the author learned a lot about the personal and systemic challenges facing former female offenders and faced her own prejudice about people who commit crimes and survive incarceration just to be “transitioned” into a world that is less accepting than the correctional institution itself. And while the author had always

espoused the importance of advocacy to ensure long term and broad based change for marginalized populations, through this project, she learned first hand the absolute necessity – albeit it time consuming and long term – of this type of work to ensuring successful community development.