

# Key Factors to Promote Successful Comprehensive Reentry Initiatives

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**COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS IS** in the early stages of its renaissance. Reawakened from the late 1970s through the 1990s of “nothing works” and zero tolerance for violators, and driven by political consensus that mass incarceration is a failed criminal justice response, community corrections is on a path of rediscovery and new learning. Since then, reentry has replaced revocation as the word du jour, backed up with a host of new innovations in supervising and rehabilitating offenders to reduce recidivism (e.g., validated, actuarial risk assessment tools; cognitive treatment programs; motivational interviewing). However, even with all of these new best practices and evidence-based advances in community corrections, there is a recognition that long-term successful reintegration will only take place when there is a coordinated and collaborative effort by all stakeholders working with justice-involved individuals in the community.

More and more, these collaborative efforts take the form of comprehensive or multi-faceted reentry initiatives that focus on strategic system-level change (e.g., National Institute of Corrections’ Transition from Prison to Community and Transition from Jail to Community; New York City Department of Probation’s Neighborhood Opportunity Network initiative; Community Oriented Correctional Health Services Model; Department of Justice’s Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative; and San Francisco’s Juvenile Collaborative Reentry Unit).

Decision making about reentry policies, practices, and procedures is no longer the

sole domain of criminal justice agencies, but now includes participation from a wide range of stakeholders. These include public, private, non-profit service providers, and support networks such as families, faith communities, and the communities where they live. Comprehensive reentry initiatives (CRIs) are perceived to have real value in developing a network of community-based organizations, public agencies, businesses, and community residents focused on connecting justice-involved individuals to opportunities, resources, and services.

True, community correctional agencies have always been charged with being the boundary spanners: “individuals who can facilitate communication across agencies and professions to coordinate policies and services” (Conly, 1999: 7). What has changed is the movement from coordinated services to a more comprehensive collaboration of community partners. Policy makers, theorists, and correctional managers are harking back to the days when the “community” in community corrections meant more than physically supervising in the community, but instead enlisting “the saving graces of the community itself” (Simon, 1993: 33).

Nowhere is this intrinsic belief in the healing nature of community more evident than in the community justice ideal. First articulated in 1998 by Clear and Karp, community justice has been variously described as a movement (Clear & Karp, 1998), a paradigm (McCold & Wachtel, 1998), a system (Maloney & Holcomb, 2001), a mission (Bazemore and

Schiff, 2001) and a strategy and philosophy (Clear, Hamilton, & Cadora, 2011). Numerous practices have been included under the community justice mantle, including community policing, community courts, community benefit programs, and a variety of restorative and reparative initiatives. At the core of these community justice approaches is a reorientation from a sole focus on individual cases to the pursuit of community-level outcomes through greater community engagement and stronger institutional collaboration and partnership.

In this article we describe key features of CRIs, their goals, and critical implementation indicators identified from the literature and experience that must be considered to ensure the short- and long-term success of high-quality multifaceted reentry initiatives. The factors will provide a roadmap to policy makers, program and initiative developers, and practitioners when they consider the time, resources, and engagement levels to successfully implement a new reentry initiative.

## Key Features of Comprehensive Reentry Initiatives

When one hears the word “comprehensive” one thinks of “all-encompassing.” Comprehensive reentry initiatives recognize that success can only occur when the criminal justice system, stakeholders, and the community interconnect to supervise, intervene, advocate, and refer for all or nearly all of the needs of men and women returning to the community after a period of incarceration. This is the antithesis of how reentry often occurs today,

which is characterized by fragmentation at the state, county, city, and community level (Burke, 2008; Cho, 2004; Rossman, 2002). A reentry program differs greatly from a CRI. For example, a reentry program may help the formerly incarcerated find employment, housing, and other services, including case management, and have a strong referral process. What is lacking, however, is a true partnership between community corrections and stakeholders for the development of effective and sustainable interventions.

While reentry programs operate within community contexts, CRIs seek dynamic and reflexive relationships with community institutions and individuals. Such relationships may not only help formerly incarcerated people reintegrate into local communities, but also have the potential to transform the community milieu. Important meso-level changes could include increases in collective efficacy and reductions in community conflict and tensions. Given the complexity of CRIs, careful attention to critical implementation issues is essential for success. Poor implementation of CRIs may lead to superficial and tokenistic community events and programming that is unresponsive to diverse community contexts. A lack of commitment to the implementation mechanics of Comprehensive Reentry Initiatives may intensify community divisions, engender disillusionment, and lead to reduced community participation in the future. Though no two CRIs are alike, we argue that more often than not they should adopt the following six key system- and community-changing characteristics:

#### *Unified Vision and Goals*

A clear unified vision and common goals are fundamental system-changing characteristics. Vision guides the organization toward where it needs to go. However, the vision must resonate with staff expected to implement it. It must communicate “an image of the future that draw others in” (Kouzes & Pozner, 2009: 21), reflecting shared aspirations and ideals. The vision promoted by CRIs, whether written down or not, articulates a future in the near term where change comes about because everyone is working together for the good of clients, ensuring that their needs are met, while public safety is maintained. The vision makes clear that one agency cannot do it alone, and that facilitating mutually beneficial partnerships is instrumental to the success of the initiative. Certainly most, if not all, of the stakeholders, including line staff, service providers,

leaders of community institutions, and community members will need to buy into the CRI’s vision. Such buy-in includes an understanding of why the initiative is needed, as well as how the vision is compatible with their own organizational and personal values and goals. Including key stakeholders in the early vision development process can engender sustainable commitment while ensuring that the direction of the CRI is community-informed rather than merely situated in the community. Such a shared vision embraces system-level change, not just individual-level change.

A clear and shared vision must be underpinned by specific, mutually agreed-upon goals, meaning the broad aims of the intervention (Welsh & Harris, 2013) and the steps along the path toward the vision. The goals identified by CRIs, whether reducing recidivism, increasing community collaborations and partnerships, or enhancing public safety, set the scene for the identification of measurable outcomes, a key ingredient for determining the degree to which the vision is being achieved. Given that goals emerge from a heavily charged political and funding-driven context, key stakeholders must be given the opportunity to influence the identification of CRI goals.

#### *Inclusivity*

Inclusiveness is a central component of CRIs. The belief is that justice-involved individuals should participate in decisions that address their needs. In the human services field there is an increasing awareness of the need to involve beneficiaries in the case management process (Summers, 2016). Enlisting justice-involved individuals in the design of individualized case plans helps them to take ownership of goals, increasing the potential for success. Such an approach is compatible with motivational interviewing approaches that seek to foster autonomous motivation for behavior change (Markland, Ryan, Tobin, & Rollnick, 2005).

Although engaging justice-involved individuals in identifying their own supervision goals is important, inclusivity encompasses all stakeholders and beneficiaries, including family, community members, community partners, nontraditional networks and private sector, media, and faith-based organizations. The engagement of all stakeholders and beneficiaries promotes a shared understanding that collective action is needed to resolve complex social problems. Only through working together can we achieve our goals.

Identifying which community

organizations and community members to invite to have a seat at the CRI planning table is difficult but not insurmountable. Having an open-door approach risks the team rapidly becoming unwieldy and unmanageable. Making a list of governmental, non-governmental, and community-based organizations in your area can be a good starting point (Mellow, Christensen, Warwick, & Buck Willison, 2013). Often, private sector leaders such as local business partners could also be included. Conducting a stakeholder analysis, which captures the historical context, political affiliations, and inherent rivalries of potential stakeholders, may be useful. The “institutional footprints” (Roche, 1998: 173) that organizations have left on the local community should also be considered. Including established, well-respected non-profit agencies is important, as these organizations are in a position to elicit interest in the reentry initiative, foster collaborative relationships, and drive a change agenda. Of course, there is an argument that a focus on established and well-respected agencies panders to the existing status quo and is antithetical to an approach which advocates for systemic change. Established players, however, can increase the perceived legitimacy of the CRI. It is critical, therefore, to set up mechanisms to facilitate external as well as internal feedback, so that voices not represented by the established agencies are heard.

#### *Creating Feedback Loops*

Feedback loops are another important component of any CRI. At the heart of the notion of feedback loops is the belief that criminal justice staff and the community can solve their own problems with the help of accurate information. For our purpose, feedback loops are provided to the CRI stakeholders to identify resistance to change and opportunities for learning and to embolden the path to success. Feedback loops can help nurture an organizational “culture of curiosity” (Raynor & Vanstone, 2001: 189), where employees seek to understand what works, for whom, and in what context. Such an iterative environment is essential for the development of evidence-based practices (Raynor, Ugwudike, & Vanstone, 2014).

The goal is to initiate feedback loops to help all the stakeholders successfully implement the initiative and share their experiences with implementation for the benefit of all. Lewin’s (1951) classic elements of a feedback loop are threefold: unfreeze—change—refreeze, though we can also refer to

it as action—information—reaction (Goetz, 2012). Perhaps the best-known adoption of a feedback loop in the criminal justice field is the widespread use of CompStat in policing, where crime responses are driven by comparative data analysis. Providing stakeholders with information about their actions in real time, giving them a chance to improve their interventions, allows them to effect positive outcomes. Furthermore, feedback loops ensure that key stakeholders are provided with up-to-date information on the initiative's progress. In CRIs feedback loops should be maintained by the constant monitoring of all controllable activities, including critical inputs, activities, and outputs, as well as immediate outcomes such as changes in knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions of clients, stakeholders, and the community at large. All agency staff must play a role in recording details of activities. A designated person or group, depending on the size of the agency, should then collate activity information. Suitable conduits for activity data include middle managers and monitoring and evaluation teams. Careful documentation of activities, listening tours, ongoing check-ins, client surveys, and staff and community forums can all provide opportunities to nurture organizational feedback loops. This feedback helps ensure that the participants can comprehend and articulate the benefits of the initiative and allows real-time adjustment to implementation to ensure that the goals of the CRI remain attainable.

### *Collaboration and Trust Building*

There is often confusion between the terms collaboration and coordination. Collaboration is a "cooperative venture based on shared power and authority...[and] it assumes power based on knowledge or expertise as opposed to power based on role or function" (Kraus, 1980: 12). Coordination, on the other hand, which is more commonly seen in reentry programs, is a "sequenced plan of action agreed to by all parties, delineating who will do what, when and for what duration" (Mellow et al., 2013). CRIs recognize that reintegration is a collective responsibility which requires a collaborative working relationship with public, private, non-profit service providers and the community when supporting people reentering the community.

Understanding that community problems, including recidivism, cannot be solved by policymakers or practitioners alone, CRI's goal is a participatory decision-making process where the community is mobilized to identify and

address its needs, and targeted interventions are driven by the needs of the community. As Petersilia (2003) notes, collaboration with the community enhances mechanisms of informal social control, such as the enforcing of norms in public spaces, that are an important predictor of disproportionate levels of crime experienced by different neighborhoods (Drakulich & Crutchfield, 2013). Each stakeholder brings an institutional knowledge, culture, and expertise to bear on the collective problem faced.

CRIs often formalize collaborative approaches through key stakeholder councils or committees. Such groups legitimize the initiative within the community through their involvement and support. Because all the stakeholders need to work together for the success of the initiative, trust is critically important. According to Cummings and Bromiley (1996), trust has three components. First, there must be a belief that the collaborator is making good-faith efforts to behave in accordance with any explicit or implicit commitments. Second, there must be honesty in preceding negotiations concerning the commitments. Third, collaborators must avoid taking advantage of each other even when the opportunity arises.

Trust influences goal setting, risk taking, information exchange, decision-making, partnerships, and collaboration. In fact, trust permeates the entire initiative. For example, for community supervision, trust is a critical component as employees are trusting the client to desist from further offending and address criminogenic risks, and the community is trusting probation and parole officers to effectively supervise and monitor the client—just as the court entrusted a common drunkard to John Augustus's care back in 1841. Stakeholders in CRIs trust one another to do their jobs, and recognize that all the stakeholders are capable of solving complex problems.

### *Strategically Long-term*

System change takes time and does not end when the funding runs out. CRIs have more than a multi-year horizon: They are engaged in a new way of doing business over the long term.

Petersilia (1990) reminds us that the criminal justice field is "littered with promising interventions" that ultimately failed (p. 126). Political pressure to respond swiftly to serious criminal events can lead to crime-control knee-jerk reactions driven by "bumper-sticker simplicity" (Benekos & Merlo, 1995: 3).

Repeated changes in agency direction and approach engendered through chasing the newest panacea pilot program can lead to jaded and demotivated staff. The arrival of new leaders determined to make their mark in a new administrative cycle can foster a "hunkering down" mentality among agency staff. The inclusive and collaborative approach nurtured by CRIs will help protect the initiative from the buffeting winds of political whim, ensuring that the change is both long-lasting and long-reaching.

### *Promote Evidence-Based Practices*

Clawson, Bogue, and Joplin (2005) outline eight interdependent evidence-based principles for effective interventions. These are (1) Assess Actuarial Risks/Needs; (2) Enhance Intrinsic Motivation; (3) Target Interventions (paying attention to the risk principle, the needs principle, the responsivity principle, and dosage); (4) Skill Train with Directed Practice; (5) Increase Positive Reinforcement; (6) Engage Ongoing Support in Natural Communities; (7) Measure Relevant Processes/Practices; and (8) Provide Measurement Feedback. Drawing heavily upon the Risk-Needs-Responsivity model of effective correctional treatment (Andrews, Bonta, & Hoge, 1990), the authors suggest that the move toward evidence-based practices should follow a developmental order, whereby certain steps should precede others. Thus, risk should be assessed before any other step in the evidence-based process, and motivation to change should be enhanced before providing targeted interventions.

Many CRIs are using risk assessment instruments as part of the supervision planning process, and providing basic training to staff to more effectively work with formerly incarcerated people's motivation. In our experience, criminal justice practitioners often criticize risk assessment for being "deficit-focused," preferring to direct attention to the bolstering of strengths and protective factors in clients' lives. Certainly, such a position is understandable, as it may serve to "invigorate clinicians who must otherwise toil, in a pessimistic culture" (Andrews, Bonta, & Wormith, 2011: 749). However, the expanded risk-needs-responsivity (RNR) model subsumes elements of Ward and Brown's (2004) "Good Lives Model" to include an assessment of the risks and strengths of justice-involved individuals, offering some solace to practitioners desirous of a holistic approach to rehabilitation. Regardless of whether risks alone or risks and strengths together are assessed, it is critical

that CRIs develop organizational capacity to measure and analyze processes and practices to assist in developing the initiative. An evidence-based organization is one that “uses data to drive decisions and develop innovative approaches to delivering services” (Ameen, Loeffler-Cobia, Clawson, & Guevara, 2010: 5). Using data to drive decision-making requires that pertinent data be regularly collected and analyzed in a rigorous and meaningful way.

## Core Components of CRI Implementation

Wandersman (2009) identifies four key components needed when tackling any social problem: (1) Valid Theory, (2) System/Resource Support, (3) Successful Policy, Programmatic, or Initiative Implementation, and (4) Valid Evaluation Designs. For the purpose of this discussion, let us assume that CRIs being implemented are theoretically valid and have the institutional backing and resources to support the initiative. Even when this is the case, most CRIs either fail or have only modest accomplishments. In our experience, CRIs often lack understanding of the critical indicators needed for their effective implementation, and are beset by weak evaluation designs. Compared to the excitement of developing a clear vision and eliciting the support of stakeholders, a focus on the intricacies of implementation and evaluation can be boring, and therefore it is unsurprising that this issue often receives limited attention. However, effective implementation and evaluation is critical to the long-term success of CRIs.

Implementation is defined as a “specified set of activities designed to put into practice an activity or program of known dimensions” (Fixsen et al., 2005: 5). Implementation experts posit that successful implementation requires the convergence of multi-level organizational conditions, specifically the interaction of influence factors (i.e., political, economic, and social forces) with organizational components (e.g., staff selection, administrative systems and support, organizational culture), and core implementation components (e.g., training, coaching, feedback, and performance measurement) (Berman & Fox, 2010; Fixsen, Naoom, Blase & Friedman, 2005; Vera, 2013). These researchers would suggest that differing levels of core and organizational components and influencing factors will determine if a CRI can complete all six stages of implementation (Fixsen et al., 2005). The six stages of implementation are:

1. Exploration and Adoption: Identifying the need for change, learning about possible interventions that may provide solutions, learning about what it takes to implement the innovation effectively, developing stakeholders and champions, assessing and creating readiness for change, and deciding to proceed (or not). (National Implementation Research Network (NIRN), 2016)
2. Installation: Establishing the resources needed to use an innovation and the resources required to implement the innovation as intended. (NIRN, 2016)
3. Initial Implementation: Practitioners and staff are attempting to use newly learned skills (e.g., the evidence-based program) in the context of a provider organization that is just learning how to change to accommodate and support the new ways of work. (NIRN, 2016)
4. Full Operation: The new ways of providing services are now the standard ways of work where practitioners and staff routinely provide high-quality services and the implementation supports are part of the way the provider organization carries out its work. (NIRN, 2016)
5. Innovation: Testing innovations or improvements once the initiative has been fully implemented.
6. Sustainability: Employs formal and informal mechanisms to ensure the changes in policy, procedures, and outcomes achieved by the initiative are retained over time. (TJC, 2013)

Clearly, successful CRI implementation will require careful attention. A critical step in this is to ensure that implementation tasks are purposeful and described in enough detail so that anyone engaged in the implementation process can identify the specific activities and their usefulness. Although many CRIs may value an organic approach to the development of the initiative, believing that such a model may be more responsive to local contexts and mirror the development of supportive relationships in the real world, unchecked organic development may lead to considerable vision drift. Clarity of purpose is a key precursor to measurability, and this requires a structured implementation process. Indeed, we would argue that over the long term structured implementation is more responsive to local contexts than an organic approach, as it is more likely to avoid mission-hijacking by the loudest voices amongst the stakeholders. Implementation outcomes must also be

monitored as the initiative is rolled out, allowing necessary fixes to ensure that the initiative stays on course.

## The Literature on Implementation

To better understand the key components needed for CRI implementation, we conducted an exploratory review of the following six documents:

1. Bechtel, K. A. (2011). The importance of implementation in corrections. *Corrections Today*, 73: 105-106.
2. Cissner, A. B., & Farole Jr., D. J. (2009). *Avoiding failures of implementation: Lessons from process evaluations*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Assistance.
3. Crime and Justice Institute (CJI) at Community Resources for Justice. (2009). *Implementing evidence-based policy and practice in community corrections*, 2nd ed. Washington, DC: National Institute of Corrections.
4. Hsia, H. M., & Beyer, M. (2000, March). System change through state challenge activities: Activities and products. OJJDP Juvenile Justice Bulletin.
5. Transition from Jail to Community (TJC). (2013). Transition from Jail to Community implementation roadmap. In Jeff Mellow, Gary Christensen, Kevin Warwick and Janeen Buck Willison, *Transition from Jail to Community online learning toolkit*. Washington: National Institute of Corrections.
6. Vera Institute of Justice. (2013). The potential of community corrections: To improve communities and reduce incarceration. New York, NY: Vera Institute of Justice.

The documents were chosen for their criminal justice implementation focus, with four focusing specifically on correctional initiatives. We began the process of identifying implementation indicators by listing the implementation tasks outlined in the documents. In all, we identified 86 implementation tasks, as shown in Table 1 on the next three pages.

**TABLE 1**  
**CRI implementation stages, themes, and tasks identified in the documents**

Implementation Factors	Author(s)
<i>Exploration and Adoption Stage</i>	
1. Identify skilled leaders and political champions	
▶ Find political champions	Cissner, A.B., & Farole, D.J. (2009)
▶ Identify or create executive leadership body to oversee and guide the initiative	TJC (2013)
▶ Skilled bold leaders	Vera Institute of Justice (2013)
2. Designate a change agent	
▶ Designate a project director	Cissner, A.B., & Farole, D.J. (2009)
▶ Formalize the initiative	TJC (2013)
3. Identify the targeted population and their needs	
▶ Identify the targeted population and their needs	Bechtel, K.A. (2011)
▶ Apply screening instrument to all jail entrants	TJC (2013)
▶ Apply risk/needs assessment instrument(s) to selected jail entrants	TJC (2013)
4. Identify what community resources and evidence-based programs are already available	
▶ Determine what community resources are already available	Bechtel, K.A. (2011)
▶ Identify evidence-based program characteristics to serve this population	Bechtel, K.A. (2011)
▶ Define scope and content of jail transition interventions currently in place	TJC (2013)
▶ Available programming that meets evidence-based standards	Vera Institute of Justice (2013)
5. Assess inter-, intra-agency, and community willingness for collaboration	
▶ Assessing community willingness for collaboration	Bechtel, K.A. (2011)
▶ Compatibility between implementation characteristics and the culture to support new interventions and the implementation process	Bechtel, K.A. (2011)
▶ Both top-down and bottom-up commitment	Hsia, H. M., & Beyer, M. (2000)
▶ Culture Change	Vera Institute of Justice (2013)
6. Identify quantifiable goals and objectives	
▶ Have a shared vision, identify program goals	Cissner, A.B., & Farole, D.J. (2009)
▶ Identify quantifiable objectives	Cissner, A.B., & Farole, D.J. (2009)
▶ Limit new projects to mission-related initiatives	Crime and Justice Institute (2009)
▶ "Big picture perspective"	Hsia, H. M., & Beyer, M. (2000)
<i>Installation Stage</i>	
1. Hire, train, and facilitate buy-in from staff	
▶ Hiring and training of staff	Bechtel, K.A. (2011)
▶ Think about how to facilitate buy-in from line staff	Cissner, A.B., & Farole, D.J. (2009)
▶ Focus on employee development, including awareness of research, skill development, and management of individual and organizational change processes, within the context of a complete training or human resource development program	Crime and Justice Institute (2009)
▶ Training for staff	Vera Institute of Justice (2013)
2. Establish and/or reform policies and procedures	
▶ Establishing policy and procedures	Bechtel, K.A. (2011)
▶ Formalize the program model	Cissner, A.B., & Farole, D.J. (2009)
▶ Reformation of policies and procedures	Hsia, H. M., & Beyer, M. (2000)
▶ Foster system culture that supports the change TJC implementation requires	TJC (2013)
▶ Create structure to plan and implement the jail transition strategy	TJC (2013)
3. Address initial and ongoing commitment of resources	
▶ Addressing initial and ongoing funding resources	Bechtel, K.A. (2011)
▶ Commitment of resources, particularly financial when at all possible	Hsia, H. M., & Beyer, M. (2000)

**TABLE 1 (cont.)**  
**CRI implementation stages, themes, and tasks identified in the documents**

Implementation Factors	Author(s)
<i>Installation Stage</i>	
4. Develop a communication framework, data sharing and referral process	
▶ Community preparation and referral process	Bechtel, K.A. (2011)
▶ Providing a communication framework	Bechtel, K.A. (2011)
▶ Develop information and data-sharing mechanisms	TJC (2013)
▶ Formalize initiative partnerships and processes	TJC (2013)
▶ Engage in public education and outreach around the jail transition effort	TJC (2013)
5. Collect data that focus on process and outcome measures	
▶ Establishment of data collection efforts that focus on process and outcome measures	Bechtel, K.A. (2011)
▶ Plan to collect data	Cissner, A.B., & Farole, D.J. (2009)
▶ Focus on data	Crime and Justice Institute (2009)
▶ Create initiative case flow model including all partners	TJC (2013)
▶ Create baseline data snapshot of the pre-initiative state of jail transition, to inform planning and against which to measure initiative progress	TJC (2013)
▶ Identify process measures and data sources	TJC (2013)
▶ Identify outcome measures and data sources	TJC (2013)
6. Collaborate with stakeholders and the community	
▶ Be strategic about when and how to engage stakeholders in the planning process	Cissner, A.B., & Farole, D.J. (2009)
▶ All relevant stakeholders must have a voice at the table	Crime and Justice Institute (2009)
▶ Interagency collaboration to coordinate planning and implement changes to impact systemic problems between various agencies;	Hsia, H. M., & Beyer, M. (2000)
▶ Solidify joint ownership of effort by broad stakeholder community	TJC (2013)
▶ Collaboration with key stakeholders	Vera Institute of Justice (2013)
<i>Initial Implementation Stage</i>	
1. Develop a structured format to increase implementation fidelity	
▶ Address change and focus on fidelity to minimize programmatic drift	Bechtel, K.A. (2011)
▶ Increase staff understanding and support	Bechtel, K.A. (2011)
▶ Promote adherence to the model	Bechtel, K.A. (2011)
▶ Develop a structured format for implementing the program model	Bechtel, K.A. (2011)
▶ The need for structure for collaboration	Crime and Justice Institute (2009)
▶ Identify and address data gaps	TJC (2013)
▶ Complete Triage Matrix	TJC (2013)
2. Collect and examine data to evaluate implementation	
▶ Identify process measures and examine data to evaluate implementation	Bechtel, K.A. (2011)
▶ Assess program of implementation processes using quantifiable data	Crime and Justice Institute (2009)
▶ Routinely measure employee practices (attitude, knowledge, and skills) that are considered related to outcomes	Crime and Justice Institute (2009)
▶ Regular data collection and ongoing meaningful use of such information	Hsia, H. M., & Beyer, M. (2000)
▶ Utilize data for the identification and analysis of jail transition problems and issues	TJC (2013)
3. Have realistic expectations	
▶ Be realistic	Cissner, A.B., & Farole, D.J. (2009)
▶ Beware the temptation to overestimate caseload volume	Cissner, A.B., & Farole, D.J. (2009)
▶ Adapt the program in response to early implementation experience	Cissner, A.B., & Farole, D.J. (2009)
▶ Realistic Expectations	Vera Institute of Justice (2013)

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**TABLE 1 (cont.)**  
**CRI implementation stages, themes, and tasks identified in the documents**

Implementation Factors	Author(s)
<i>Full Operation Stage</i>	
1. All areas of the program model are in place	Bechtel, K.A. (2011)
2. Fully trained staff	Bechtel, K.A. (2011)
3. Caseload sizes being met	Bechtel, K.A. (2011)
4. All groups and activities being conducted	
▶ All groups and activities being conducted	Bechtel, K.A. (2011)
▶ Deliver in-jail interventions to selected inmates	TJC (2013)
▶ Provide resource packets to all jail inmates upon release	TJC (2013)
▶ Deliver community interventions to selected releases	TJC (2013)
▶ Provide case management to selected jail entrants	TJC (2013)
▶ Provide mentors to selected jail entrants	TJC (2013)
5. Demonstration of a community referral process and collaboration with external partners	
▶ Demonstration of a community referral process and collaboration with external partners	Bechtel, K.A. (2011)
▶ Produce transition case plans for selected jail entrants	TJC (2013)
▶ Utilize high levels of data-driven advocacy and brokerage to enable appropriate community justice/correctional services	Crime and Justice Institute (2009)
6. Well-developed and practiced supervision	
▶ Well-developed and practiced supervision	Bechtel, K.A. (2011)
▶ Acknowledge and accommodate professional overrides with adequate accountability	Crime and Justice Institute (2009)
7. Internal quality assurance mechanisms including data reporting practices	
▶ Provide employee timely, relevant, and accurate feedback regarding performance related to outcomes	Crime and Justice Institute (2009)
▶ Internal quality assurance mechanisms including data reporting practices	Bechtel, K.A. (2011)
<i>Innovation Stage</i>	
1. Adaptable	
▶ Identifying if there are similar program models or targeted populations served with a differing modality, dosage, content, or structure that has been shown to have an effective impact	Bechtel, K.A. (2011)
▶ Be adaptive to changes in the environment, in the collaboration itself, and in the problem domain	Crime and Justice Institute (2009)
<i>Sustainability Stage</i>	
1. The program is introduced to both internal and external factors that could potentially elicit change or drift from the model	Bechtel, K.A. (2011)
2. Create sustainability plans	
▶ The collaboration identifies any of its vulnerabilities and/or adapts to them	Crime and Justice Institute (2009)
▶ Develop plan for ongoing self-evaluation of the initiative	TJC (2013)
▶ Create sustainability plan	TJC (2013)

Next, the 86 tasks were grouped together into 25 encompassing themes. For example, four documents discussed the task of interagency and stakeholder collaboration (Cissner & Farole, 2009; Hsia & Beyer, 2000; Transition from Jail to Community, 2013; and Vera Institute of Social Justice, 2013), which developed into the encompassing theme: “Collaborate with stakeholders and the community.” It should be noted that the language used to describe similar tasks varied from document to document, making it difficult at times to find appropriate thematic language inclusive enough to encompass all the task meanings. In addition, as noted in Appendix A, some of the implementation tasks were only identified in one document. When this occurred, the task was also used as the encompassing theme. The 25 themes were then classified under one of Fixsen et al.’s (2005) six implementation stages. The documents we reviewed identified more themes in the stages of Exploration/Adoption, Installation, Initial Implementation, and Full Operation than in the stages of Innovation and Sustainability (See Tables 2 and 3). Although our intent was not to use frequency counts of tasks or themes to make inferences about their importance,

this does suggest that these authors have given less thought to how to sustain an initiative over time.

### Discussion

This document review indicates the multiple tasks that must be implemented in any initiative. Our own experience indicates that CRIs do best successfully implementing key Exploration and Adoption factors. For example, developing the position of Director of a CRI, identifying a shared vision, and having a bold leader are precursors to any CRI. Initiative Installation, the second implementation stage, is also implemented with some success. Considerable efforts are often taken to strengthen organizational and employee capacities to ensure that the CRI becomes embedded in daily practices. Strategies adopted often include involving stakeholders in informational sessions, developing a criminal justice committee, and forming Improvement Teams. Training is often provided in principles of restorative justice, evidence-based work, and motivational interviewing. Additionally, collaboration with stakeholders often begins with the development of stakeholder groups and establishing a

strategic plan to guide the initiative.

Initial Implementation, the third stage, is often more difficult. The challenges include stakeholders working collaboratively, the development of a structured format to increase implementation fidelity, and collecting and examining data to evaluate implementation. In particular, data systems are often poorly designed and not integrated across justice and human service systems. The lack of structure often associated with CRIs is related to two contrasting schools of thought on how an initiative should grow and be harnessed: organic or structured (i.e., planned) change. Some practitioners believe that a more organic approach will increase buy-in of CRIs and promote new and innovative ideas coming from the stakeholders and the local communities. We advocate a more structured approach that includes developing a structured format for implementation and collecting data to evaluate CRI success. Though it seems simplistic, a consensus is needed on a number of issues, including, but not limited to, the number of stakeholder meetings that should be held per year, how recommendations will be implemented, how to identify which participants will complete various tasks, and developing key performance measurements.

Often implementation issues are subsumed under the catch-all term “process evaluation.” The purpose of process evaluation, as Kralstein (2011) reminds us, is “to document and explain the goals, key program elements and operations of a project” (1). Such attention to process fidelity can help us determine whether a program was implemented as it was intended (Stufflebeam, 1971) and can assist us when we seek to interpret impact assessments (Maxfield & Babbie, 2016). Although process evaluations and impact assessments should be conducted simultaneously (Maxfield & Babbie, 2016), often process evaluations are conducted in isolation from impact assessments and with limited attention to the actual mechanics of program implementation or research rigor. Often an organization may contract with external researchers to conduct a “process evaluation” because it is considered too soon after initial program rollout to consider impact and outcomes, but necessary to demonstrate that a research and evaluation component is valued, if not required, by external funders. Although external evaluators can be helpful in providing a broader “critical eye” on initiative development, process evaluation can and should be conducted by organizational staff, and should become part of everyday

**TABLE 2**  
Fixsen’s six implementation stages by implementation tasks identified in the documents

	Exploration & Adoption	Installation	Initial Implementation	Full Operation	Innovation	Sustainability	Total
Bechtel (2011)	5	6	5	7	1	1	25
Cissner & Farole (2009)	4	4	3	0	0	0	11
CJI (2009)	1	3	3	3	1	1	12
Hsia & Beyer (2000)	2	3	1	0	0	0	6
TJC (2013)	5	10	3	6	0	2	26
Vera (2013)	3	2	1	0	0	0	6
Totals	20	28	16	16	2	4	86

**TABLE 3**  
Fixsen’s six implementation stages by implementation tasks and themes identified in the documents

	Exploration & Adoption	Installation	Initial Implementation	Full Operation	Innovation	Sustainability	Total
Tasks	20	28	16	16	2	4	86
Themes	6	6	3	7	1	2	25

working practice. This way the process evaluation can drive program implementation, rather than becoming an unsatisfactory proxy for an outcome evaluation.

All too often, external process evaluations are completed through research that involves interviews with key stakeholders, focus groups with selected beneficiaries, observations of flagship activities, and a cursory review of agency materials. Although interviews, focus groups, observations, and material reviews can elicit useful information about the general direction and culture of the organizations considered, such work misses the opportunity to truly examine and learn from, at times, dirty implementation mechanics. For CRIs, which have multiple moving parts, the need for a rigorous and methodical evaluation of process is critical.

A rigorous process evaluation involves analysis of all stages of implementation. It includes documentation of inputs, activities, and outputs. Were resources available to deliver the intended activities? What activities were delivered to whom and in what dosage? Which stakeholders were represented, and what community agencies were visited? How many training sessions were delivered and what was learned? What steps have been taken to ensure retention of the training received? Certainly, interviews and focus groups can help us understand process, but they are particular approaches to uncovering information, and they are certainly not the process evaluation itself. Careful consideration should be given to who is interviewed and observed. Evaluators may wish to seek "maximum variation" in sampling to ensure heterogeneity of experiences, while allowing the uncovering of shared patterns that cut across all cases (Patton, 2002). Maintaining a sampling table where the differing work roles, hierarchical position, gender, length of service, and level of support for the initiative of participants are documented can help avoid sampling "drift" (Arcury & Quandt, 1999: 132). When analyzing the interview data, it is essential for all coders to adopt a rigorous coding strategy to ensure that identified themes emerge from the data rather than being imposed by the evaluator. Cherry-picked evidence of success does little to foster a culture of iterative implementation improvement.

Finally, due to funding and evaluation processes, more often than not the last three implementation stages (Full operation, Innovation, and Sustainability) are not adequately addressed. A fully operational

initiative normally takes a minimum of two to four years. By that time, all areas of the initiative are in place, the staff is fully trained, all groups and activities are being conducted, the CRI has implemented benchmarking across agencies and stakeholders, performance measurements are used, and internal quality assurance mechanisms are in place, including data reporting practices. A major concern from this point is sustainability. Both internal and external factors can potentially elicit change or fidelity drift. For example, often key champions of the initiative leave the agency or organization for another job or are promoted internally and are no longer actively involved in the initiative.

CRIs are brave endeavors. There is a need for criminal justice agencies working with formerly incarcerated individuals to move away from a silo culture and engage in meaningful ways with the local communities where the majority of the reentry populations lives. CRIs across the country have made considerable inroads into building service provider capacities, increasing opportunities for the reentry population, and securing a place at the table with key community leaders and organizations. As CRIs become more prevalent, there is a need to focus on the institutionalization of these initiatives. Such careful and detailed work includes developing information and data-sharing mechanisms, formalizing partnerships and processes, and collecting clear, standardized data on key process and outcome measures.

Standardization of procedures does not necessarily mean that innovative, localized responses to community needs cannot flourish. Standardization can ensure that the innovative responses are appropriately captured and assessed, ensuring that lessons are both learned and acted upon. Such a reflexive learning approach can lead to CRIs with stronger, sustainable, and meaningful impacts.

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