Employment counseling and job training with paid work experience in the community
Adult Criminal Justice
Benefit-cost estimates updated December 2023. Literature review updated August 2016.

Current estimates replace old estimates. Numbers will change over time as a result of model inputs and monetization methods.

The WSIPP benefit-cost analysis examines, on an apples-to-apples basis, the monetary value of programs or policies to determine whether the benefits from the program exceed its costs. WSIPP's research approach to identifying evidence-based programs and policies has three main steps. First, we determine "what works" (and what does not work) to improve outcomes using a statistical technique called meta-analysis. Second, we calculate whether the benefits of a program exceed its costs. Third, we estimate the risk of investing in a program by testing the sensitivity of our results. For more detail on our methods, see our Technical Documentation.

Program Description: Employment counseling programs with job training teach skills necessary for seeking employment. These include both hard skills (e.g., job preparedness and skills training) and soft skills, (e.g., effective job searches, applications, and resumes). Some programs may also specifically address barriers to employment for convicted persons. The studies in this category differ from those in the "Employment counseling and job training in the community," as each program in this category also includes subsidized or transitional jobs to help participants transition to regular employment. For this broad grouping of studies, programs were delivered in the community after release from incarceration for a period of three to nine months.

Benefit-Cost Summary Statistics Per Participant

Benefits to:			
Taxpayers	$4,164	Benefit to cost ratio	$1.76
Participants	$4,475	Benefits minus costs	$4,776
Others	$4,494	Chance the program will produce	
Indirect	($2,031)	benefits greater than the costs	59%
Total benefits	$11,102		
Net program cost	($6,326)		
Benefits minus cost	$4,776		

The estimates shown are present value, life cycle benefits and costs. All dollars are expressed in the base year chosen for this analysis (2022). The chance the benefits exceed the costs are derived from a Monte Carlo risk analysis. The details on this, as well as the economic discount rates and other relevant parameters are described in our Technical Documentation.

Meta-Analysis of Program Effects

Outcomes measured	Treatment age	No. of effect sizes	Treatment N	Adjusted effect sizes and standard errors used in the benefit-cost analysis						Unadjusted effect size (random effects model)	
				First time ES is estimated			Second time ES is estimated				
				ES	SE	Age	ES	SE	Age	ES	p-value
Employment^^	31	3	1673	0.041	0.068	33	n/a	n/a	n/a	0.061	0.371
Earnings*	31	2	1457	0.121	0.090	32	0.000	0.018	33	0.121	0.180
Crime	31	10	5777	-0.076	0.036	33	-0.076	0.036	43	-0.087	0.035

^^WSIPP does not include this outcome when conducting benefit-cost analysis for this program.

*The effect size for this outcome indicates percentage change, not a standardized mean difference effect size.

Meta-analysis is a statistical method to combine the results from separate studies on a program, policy, or topic in order to estimate its effect on an outcome. WSIPP systematically evaluates all credible evaluations we can locate on each topic. The outcomes measured are the types of program impacts that were measured in the research literature (for example, crime or educational attainment). Treatment N represents the total number of individuals or units in the treatment group across the included studies.

An effect size (ES) is a standard metric that summarizes the degree to which a program or policy affects a measured outcome. If the effect size is positive, the outcome increases. If the effect size is negative, the outcome decreases.

Adjusted effect sizes are used to calculate the benefits from our benefit cost model. WSIPP may adjust effect sizes based on methodological characteristics of the study. For example, we may adjust effect sizes when a study has a weak research design or when the program developer is involved in the research. The magnitude of these adjustments varies depending on the topic area.

WSIPP may also adjust the second ES measurement. Research shows the magnitude of some effect sizes decrease over time. For those effect sizes, we estimate outcome-based adjustments which we apply between the first time ES is estimated and the second time ES is estimated. We also report the unadjusted effect size to show the effect sizes before any adjustments have been made. More details about these adjustments can be found in our Technical Documentation.

Detailed Monetary Benefit Estimates Per Participant

Affected outcome:	Resulting benefits:[1]	Benefits accrue to:				
		Taxpayers	Participants	Others[2]	Indirect[3]	Total
Crime	Criminal justice system	$2,264	$0	$4,494	$1,132	$7,890
Earnings	Labor market earnings	$1,900	$4,475	$0	$0	$6,375
Program cost	Adjustment for deadweight cost of program	$0	$0	$0	($3,163)	($3,163)
Totals		$4,164	$4,475	$4,494	($2,031)	$11,102

[1]In addition to the outcomes measured in the meta-analysis table, WSIPP measures benefits and costs estimated from other outcomes associated with those reported in the evaluation literature. For example, empirical research demonstrates that high school graduation leads to reduced crime. These associated measures provide a more complete picture of the detailed costs and benefits of the program.

[2]"Others" includes benefits to people other than taxpayers and participants. Depending on the program, it could include reductions in crime victimization, the economic benefits from a more educated workforce, and the benefits from employer-paid health insurance.

[3]"Indirect benefits" includes estimates of the net changes in the value of a statistical life and net changes in the deadweight costs of taxation.
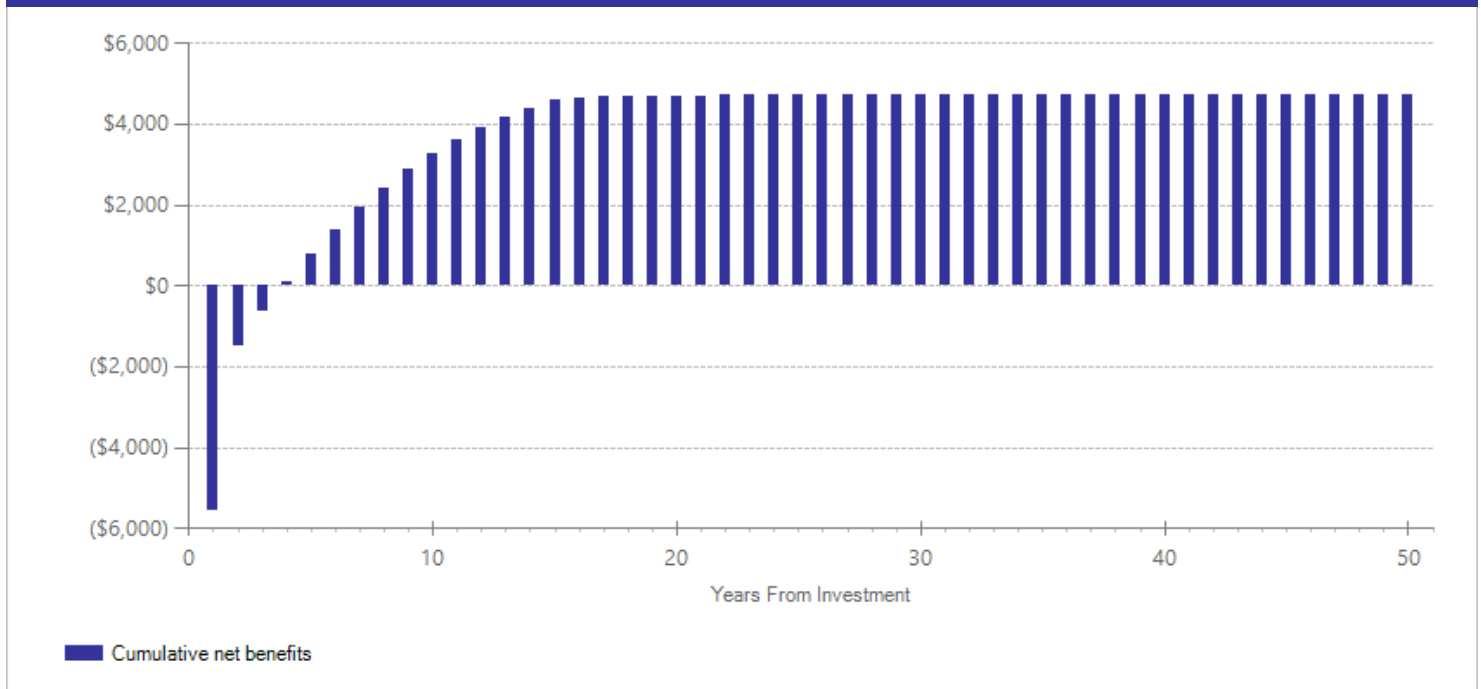
Detailed Annual Cost Estimates Per Participant

	Annual cost	Year dollars	Summary	
Program costs	$4,717	2007	Present value of net program costs (in 2022 dollars)	($6,326)
Comparison costs	$0	2007	Cost range (+ or -)	10%

Per-participant cost estimate, based on 6-month program duration, are from Cook, P. J., Kang, S., Braga, A. A., Ludwig, J., & O'Brien, M. E. (2015). An Experimental Evaluation of a Comprehensive Employment-Oriented Prisoner Re-entry Program. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology, 31*, 3, 355-382.
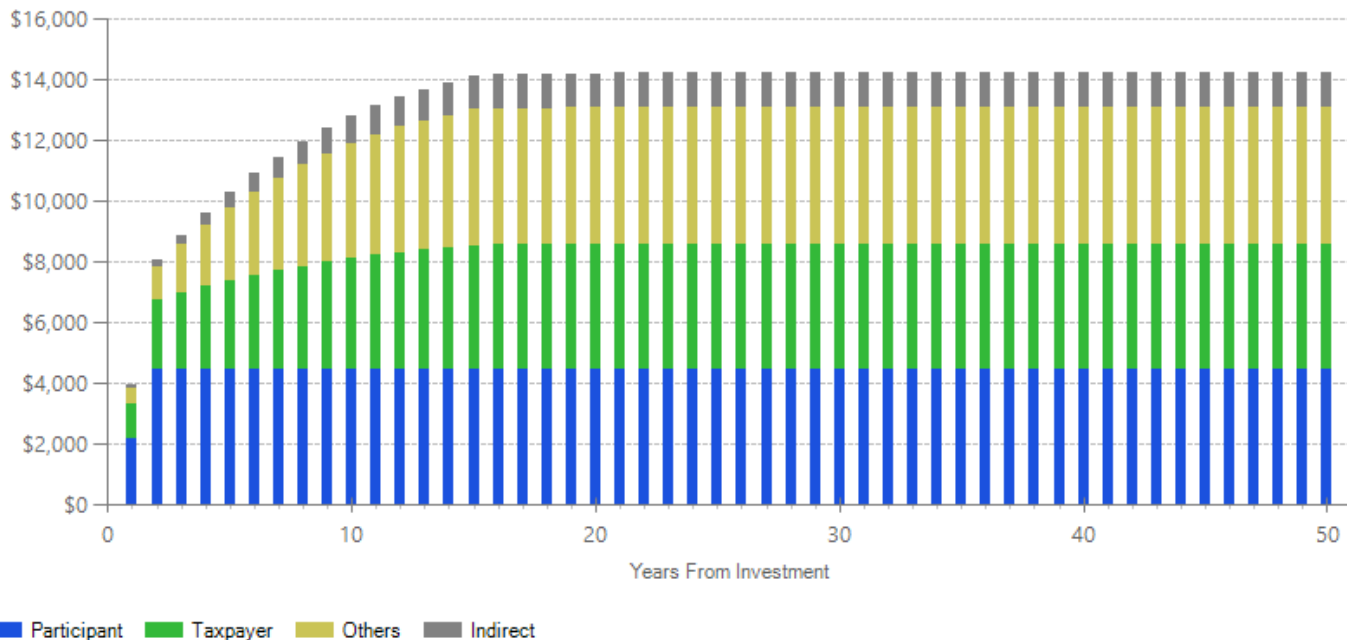
The figures shown are estimates of the costs to implement programs in Washington. The comparison group costs reflect either no treatment or treatment as usual, depending on how effect sizes were calculated in the meta-analysis. The cost range reported above reflects potential variation or uncertainty in the cost estimate; more detail can be found in our Technical Documentation.

Benefits Minus Costs Over Time (Cumulative Discounted Dollars)
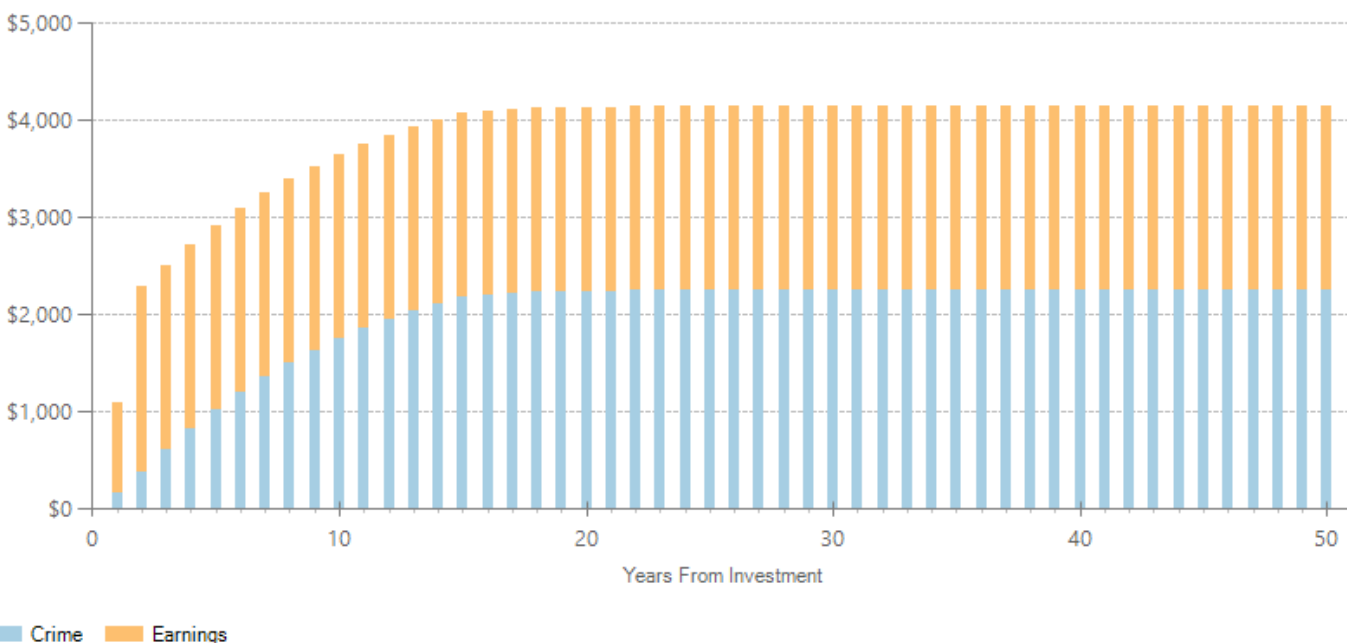

Cumulative net benefits

The graph above illustrates the estimated cumulative net benefits per-participant for the first fifty years beyond the initial investment in the program. We present these cash flows in discounted dollars. If the dollars are negative (bars below $0 line), the cumulative benefits do not outweigh the cost of the program up to that point in time. The program breaks even when the dollars reach $0. At this point, the total benefits to participants, taxpayers, and others, are equal to the cost of the program. If the dollars are above $0, the benefits of the program exceed the initial investment.

Benefits by Perspective Over Time (Cumulative Discounted Dollars)

The graph above illustrates the breakdown of the estimated cumulative benefits (not including program costs) per-participant for the first fifty years beyond the initial investment in the program. These cash flows provide a breakdown of the classification of dollars over time into four perspectives: taxpayer, participant, others, and indirect. "Taxpayers" includes expected savings to government and expected increases in tax revenue. "Participants" includes expected increases in earnings and expenditures for items such as health care and college tuition. "Others" includes benefits to people other than taxpayers and participants. Depending on the program, it could include reductions in crime victimization, the economic benefits from a more educated workforce, and the benefits from employer-paid health insurance. "Indirect benefits" includes estimates of the changes in the value of a statistical life and changes in the deadweight costs of taxation. If a section of the bar is below the $0 line, the program is creating a negative benefit, meaning a loss of value from that perspective.

Taxpayer Benefits by Source of Value Over Time (Cumulative Discounted Dollars)

The graph above focuses on the subset of estimated cumulative benefits that accrue to taxpayers. The cash flows are divided into the source of the value.

Citations Used in the Meta-Analysis

Berk, R.A., Lenihan, K.J., & Rossi, PH. (1980). Crime and poverty: Some experimental evidence from ex-offenders. *American Sociological Review, 45*(5), 766-786.

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Redcross, C., Bloom, D., Jacobs, E., Manno, M., Muller-Ravett, S., Seefeldt, K., . . . Zweig, J. (2010). *Work after prison: One-year findings from the Transitional Jobs Reentry Demonstration.* New York: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation.

Redcross, C., Millenky, M., Rudd, T., & Levshin, V. (2012). *More than a job: Final results from the Evaluation of the Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) Transitional Jobs Program.* OPRE Report 2011-18. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U. S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Uggen, C. (2000). Work as a turning point in the life course of criminals: A duration model of age, employment, and recidivism. *American Sociological Review, 65*(4), 529–546.

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