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Vocational & Life Skills

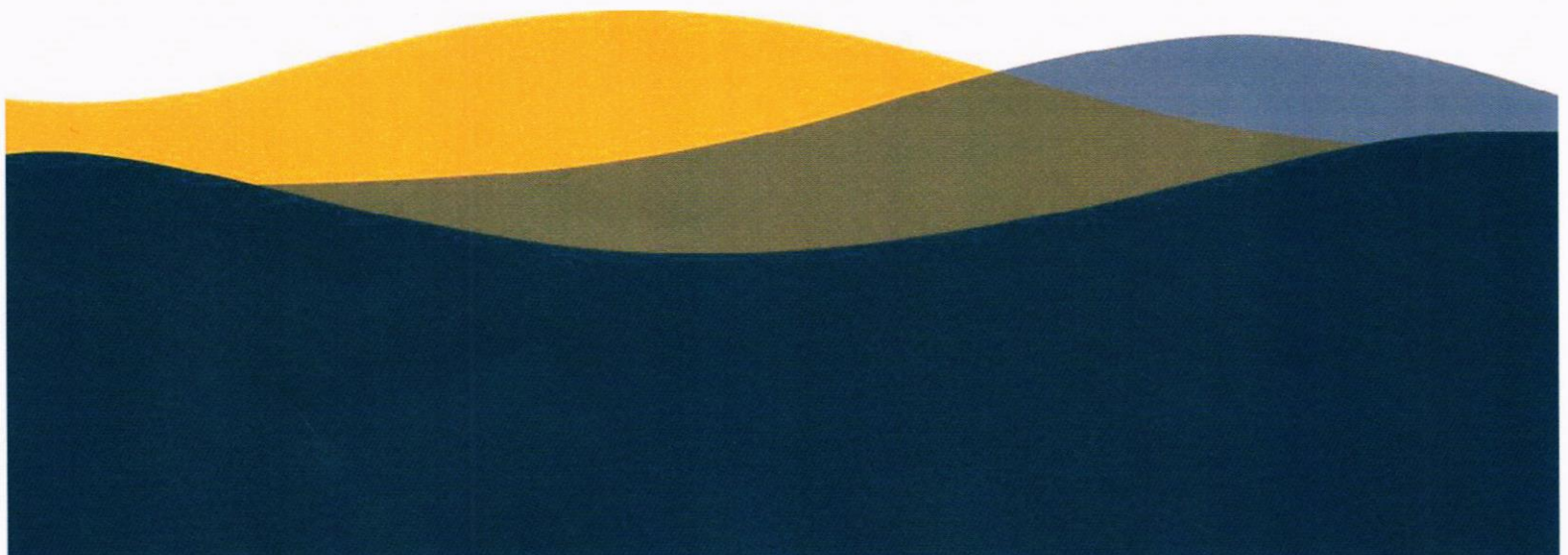
Quarterly Report – Grant Cycle Six, Quarter Two

October - December 2025

This report is generated by UNO-NCJR

for the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services (NDCS) Submitted by:

Steve Fannon, Assistant Deputy Director - Reentry



Vocational and Life Skills Quarterly Report

GRANT CYCLE SIX, QUARTER TWO

Katelynn Towne, Ph.D.

SENIOR RESEARCH SPECIALIST | NEBRASKA CENTER FOR JUSTICE RESEARCH

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Executive Summary

The Vocational and Life Skills (VLS) Program was created through Nebraska Legislative Bill 907 in 2014 to support individuals returning to the community after incarceration. The program funds organizations across Nebraska that provide services such as job training, education, mentoring, housing support, and life skills development to help individuals successfully transition back into their communities. The program is administered by the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services and evaluated by the Nebraska Center for Justice Research (NCJR). Questions on this report may be directed to senior research specialist, Dr. Katelynn Towne, at the Nebraska Center for Justice Research (ktowne@unomaha.edu).

This report provides information on:

- The organizations funded through the VLS program
- The number of individuals served during the quarter
- Program participation and completions
- The average cost to serve participants across programs
- How grant funding has been distributed and used

Program data is reported by service providers through the Nebraska Inmate Case Management System (NICaMS). Because this system is continuously updated, some numbers may change slightly as new information is entered or corrected.

Overall, this report provides a snapshot of how VLS funding is supporting services that help individuals build employment skills, access community resources, and work toward successful reentry. More information about the program offerings can be located in the [NDCS Opportunities for Change Catalog](#) that is updated annually. Additionally, updates on VLS programs and announcements can be found on the [NDCS Reentry Services page](#).

Report Definitions

Participants Served

This term refers to the number of unique individuals served through various VLS programs. A program participant is an individual who engaged with a program during the specified reporting period. Each person is counted once, regardless of how many times they participated in program activities.

Cost Per Participant

This metric represents the amount of VLS investment used to support each participant within a specific program. Programs may also have additional funding sources that contribute to participant support. Cost per participant is calculated by dividing the total reimbursements paid to the program to date by the total number of individuals served by that program during the reporting quarter.

Program Offering Participations

This term refers to the total number of engagements or interactions participants had with VLS programs. Unlike “Participants Served,” which counts unique individuals, this measure counts each instance of participation. As a result, the same individual may be counted multiple times if they take part in multiple program offerings.

Provider Descriptions

Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC)

ABC is part of a national company that provides trade-specific apprenticeship training and work-based learning opportunities for careers in the construction industry. ABC offers classes in correctional facilities and ABC facilities in Lincoln and Omaha.

Different Approach

Different Approach Sober Living aim is to provide a safe, supportive, and structured environment where individuals in recovery can rebuild their lives. Different Approach offers tailored approaches to recovery and empower residents to develop life skills needed to transition into substance-free living.

Mental Health Association (MHA)

MHA provides peer-run behavioral and "wrap-around" support services in Lincoln and Omaha. This holistic approach provides participants with access to services on an as-needed basis. Services include evidence-based programming and peer-group activities that are provided in residential and facility settings.

Metropolitan Community College (MCC)

MCC is a public education institution that supports the 180 Re-entry Assistance Program (180-RAP) to provide education and work readiness training both within prison and on the Omaha campus. MCC provides college courses, workshops, employment consultations, and a food pantry for those in need.

O.NE. Mentoring Academy

O.NE Mentoring Academy (O.M.A.) focuses on the mind, body, and soul, emphasizing a holistic approach to the self and the complexities of humanity. Its anger management program offers participants an eight-week course, meeting for 1.5 hours each week in small groups of six to ten participants, with the objective of fostering cognitive and behavioral change through anger management philosophy and techniques. The organization's cornerstone is its commitment to addressing issues of self-worth, stress, depression, and anxiety by utilizing psychotherapeutic methods and effective coping strategies.

Opening Doors

Opening Doors is a reentry program at the Center for People in Lincoln. Opening Doors offers career pathway courses, job search services, 1:1 coaching, 5 Keys classes, and volunteer opportunities for positive social engagement. Participants also receive career readiness training—including resume writing, cover letters, and mock interview support—while building cognitive, relational, and technical skills for successful reentry.

Reconnect, Inc.

ReConnect offers facility- and community-based programming that incorporates promising and best practices to support prosocial skill development for individuals who are incarcerated or living in the community. Community-based services include individual case management and support to address housing, employment, basic needs, and other factors impacting self-sufficiency and reentry success. Services are also available in Spanish.

RISE

RISE seeks to end cycles of incarceration by equipping currently and formerly incarcerated people with job readiness, reentry planning, and housing and employment pathways that help participants thrive in their communities.

The Work Lab

The Work Lab is a nonprofit organization that partners with local employers to support justice-involved individuals in sustaining long-term employment. The organization focuses on addressing practical and behavioral needs that may create challenges in the workplace, helping employees remain stable in their positions while strengthening the companies that hire them. Through individualized support and collaboration with businesses, The Work Lab works to improve retention and promote successful workforce reintegration.

Western Alternative Corrections, Inc. at Bristol Station

Bristol Station assists formerly incarcerated persons in transitioning into the community in a residential setting located in Hastings, NE. Participants have access to opportunities of self-discovery and are encouraged to develop sustainable pro-social routines.

Ybor – A Second Chance Kitchen

Ybor is a culinary reentry program that creates pathways to employment and advancement in the restaurant industry. Through partnerships with Southeast Community College and local restaurants, participants progress through a structured culinary pipeline: food safety certification, culinary fundamentals class, a pre-apprenticeship at Ybor's events, and ultimately full-time employment in a Lincoln restaurant while joining a registered apprenticeship through the U.S. Department of Labor. Ybor's mission is to deliver more than just job training—it's a pathway to careers, community, and confidence. Each phase of the program uses the dignity of work and the structure of a professional kitchen to help participants build pride, professionalism, and a sustainable future.

Participants Served

During Q2, partner programs served a total of **1,318 unique individuals, 1,277 of whom successfully completed programming** across all reporting organizations. **A total of 2,748 individuals were currently enrolled** from the quarter across participating organizations when this report was drafted. Participation varied by provider, with the largest enrollment reported by the Mental Health Association (MHA) and Metropolitan Community College (MCC), while several programs focused on smaller, targeted cohorts.

Program ¹	Currently Enrolled (Q2) ²	Successful Completions (Q2) ³	Total Participants (Q2) ⁴
Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC)	47	3	3
Different Approach	- ⁵	8	8
Mental Health Association (MHA)	2,401	255	261
Metropolitan Community College (MCC)	157	595	615
O.NE Mentoring Academy	-	-	-
Opening Doors	14	59	70
ReConnect, Inc.	107	267	279
RISE	207	205	210
The Work Lab	1	-	-
Western Alternative Corrections (WAC)	12	16	20
Ybor	11	75	75

¹ Participant data are unique to each program and participants may be active in multiple programs.

² A summation of individuals who are still progressing in VLS funded programming from the quarter.

³ A summation of individuals who successfully completed VLS funded programming during the quarter.

⁴ A summation of individuals who completed VLS funded programming during the quarter.

⁵ The “ - ” notes data that is not yet available to the evaluation team on the NiCaMS system.

Cost Per Participant

Program	Total Funds Awarded (GC6)	Total Participants (GC6) ⁶	Total Reimbursements at Q2 (GC6)	Average Cost Per Individual (GC6) ⁷
Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC)	\$740,000.00	65	\$222,507.17	\$3,423.19
Different Approach	\$197,100.00	9	\$49,275.00	\$5,475.00
Mental Health Association (MHA)	\$1,250,000.00	523	\$284,649.00	\$544.26
Metropolitan Community College (MCC)	\$1,564,600.00	968	\$337,166.55	\$348.31
O.NE Mentoring Academy	\$61,706.46	-	\$ 0.00	-
Opening Doors	\$972,752.00	165	\$108,833.40	\$659.60
ReConnect, Inc.	\$600,000.00	372	\$150,000.00	\$403.23
RISE	\$500,000.00	275	\$142,479.39	\$518.11
The Work Lab	\$30,000.00	-	\$3,720.00	-
Western Alternative Corrections (WAC)	\$730,000.00	40	\$228,600.00	\$5,715.00
Ybor	\$353,841.54	153	\$88,460.40	\$578.17
Total	\$7,000,000.00	2,570	\$1,615,690.91	\$628.67

⁶ A summation of individuals who participated in VLS funded programming since the grant cycle started.

⁷ Grant cycle reimbursement costs divided by the summation of individuals who participated in programming excluding active enrollments.

Program Offering Participations

VLS *Program offerings* were developed for each grantee, so the evaluation may describe programming components. Each grantee provides different services; thus, each has a unique catalogue of offerings. Some participants may only need one offering while others may receive multiple. The program offering status describes how participants are or have participated in programming.

Program offering participations for grant cycle six, quarter two (October 2025 – December 2025) are presented below. Program staff work with each participant to develop an individualized plan of programming unique to their needs. Many participants are involved in multiple program offerings at each program, and some offerings available are not suitable for each participant. Some may only complete one program offering, while others may participate in multiple offerings either back-to-back or simultaneously.

A description of all funded program offerings is provided in Appendix A of this report. The variety in program offerings has changed over the years and will continue to change to meet the needs of the population. Therefore, some of the data presented will not match exactly with previous quarterly reports on program offerings.

Associated Builders and Contractors Participations

There are **77** active participations in Associated Builders and Contractor's program offerings from this quarter. Quarter completions are provided across the offerings in the table below.

Program Offering	Satisfactory Completion	Terminated from Program	Withdrawn from Program	Total
Core	3	0	0	3
Total	3	0	3	3

Different Approach Participations

There are no active participations in Different Approach's program offerings from this quarter. Quarter completions are provided across the offerings in the table below.

Program Offering	Satisfactory Completion	Terminated from Program	Withdrawn from Program	Total
Case Management and Goal Setting	5	0	0	5
Community Partnerships	2	0	0	2
Employment and Education Support	1	0	0	1
Family and Social Support	3	0	0	3
Housing Continuity Planning	2	0	0	2
Justice System Collaboration	7	0	0	7
Life Skills Development	2	0	0	2
Orientation to Services	4	0	0	4
Peer Support and Mentorship	5	0	0	5
Recovery Support Services	1	0	0	1
Sober Housing Assistance	3	4	1	8
Well-being and Health Support	1	0	0	1
Total	36	4	1	41

Mental Health Association Participations

There are **2,613** active participations in Mental Health Association's program offerings from this quarter. Quarter completions are provided across the offerings in the table below.

Program Offering	Satisfactory Completion	Terminated from Program	Withdrawn from Program	Total
CARES	34	0	0	34
Green House	0	1	0	1
HONU	14	3	0	17
Hope	36	0	0	36
Intentional Peer Support (Specialist)	1	1	4	6
Peer Prevention Group	163	0	0	163
Rent Wise	9	0	0	9
Terrapin	5	0	0	5
Total	263	5	4	271

Metropolitan Community College Participations

There are **157** active participations in Metropolitan Community College's program offerings from this quarter. Quarter completions are provided across the offerings in the table below.

Program Offering	Satisfactory Completion	Terminated from Program	Withdrawn from Program	Total
Employment Readiness	47	0	0	47
Forklift Certification	55	0	0	55
Four-Week Workshop	11	0	0	11
Long-Term Relief Group	48	0	0	48
MCC Credit Course	180	0	26	206
National Career Readiness Certificate	122	0	0	122
Non-Credit Workshop	161	0	0	161
OSHA	2	0	0	2
Orientation	244	0	0	244
Trauma Informed Peer Support	207	0	0	207
Total	1,077	0	26	1,103

O.NE Mentoring Academy Participations

Data is not available in NICaMS for this program at this time.

Opening Doors Participations

There are **14** active participations in Opening Door's program offerings from this quarter. Quarter completions are provided across the offerings in the table below.

Program Offering	Satisfactory Completion	Terminated from Program	Withdrawn from Program	Total
Career Connection	11	0	0	11
Center Core Competencies	8	0	1	9
Computer/Administrative Skills	92	1	8	101
Other	7	0	0	7
Reentry Reality	12	0	9	21
Warehouse/Manufacturing Logistics	15	0	2	17
Total	145	1	20	166

ReConnect, Inc. Participations

There are **108** active participations in ReConnect's program offerings from this quarter. Quarter completions are provided across the offerings in the table below.

Program Offering	Satisfactory Completion	Terminated from Program	Withdrawn from Program	Total
Career Prep	1	0	0	1
Final Number	36	0	0	36
Final Number 2.0 Independent Learning	10	0	0	10
GPS (self-paced)	19	0	1	20
KEYS 1	66	0	3	69
KEYS 2	49	0	0	49
Post-Release Reentry Support	85	0	0	85
Right Start	1	0	0	1
Right Start 2.0	45	0	1	46
Success Prep	41	0	9	50
Success Prep-Bloom	8	0	0	8
Total	361	0	14	375

RISE Participations

There are **207** active participations in RISE's program offerings from this quarter. Quarter completions are provided across the offerings in the table below.

Program Offering	Satisfactory Completion	Terminated from Program	Withdrawn from Program	Total
Crisis Intervention	7	0	0	7
Emotional Support	655	0	0	655
Employment Assistance	68	0	0	68
Financial Assistance	20	0	0	20
Housing Assistance	24	0	0	24
Parole/Probation/Supervised Release Support	28	0	0	28
Reentry Planning	76	0	0	76
Reentry Services and Support	19	1	12	32
Substance Use Assistance	2	0	0	2
Transportation Assistance	57	0	0	57
Total	956	1	12	969

The Work Lab Participations

There is **1** active participation in the Work Lab's program offerings from this quarter. Quarter completions for this program are not available at this time.

Western Alternative Corrections Participations

There are **83** active participations in Bristol Station's program offerings from this quarter. Quarter completions are provided across the offerings in the table below.

Program Offering	Satisfactory Completion	Terminated from Program	Withdrawn from Program	Total
Conflict Resolution	3	4	4	11
Dress for Success	3	4	4	11
Employment Readiness	4	0	0	4
Employment Retention	2	3	2	7
Family Ties	0	1	0	1
Getting Back on Track	2	0	0	2
Interviewing Skills	3	4	4	11
Job Coaching	1	1	2	4
MRT	0	2	0	2
Money Management	2	0	2	4
Peer Relationships	2	0	0	2
Personal Growth/Family Reunification	1	0	0	1
Relapse Prevention Group	4	2	3	9
Residential Case Management	3	4	3	10
Residential Reentry	3	4	4	11
Responsible Thinking	1	0	0	1
Self-Control	4	0	1	5
Social Values	1	0	0	1
Transitional Skills	2	0	0	2
Victim Awareness	5	0	0	5
Total	46	29	29	104

Ybor Participations

There are **14** active participations in Ybor's program offerings from this quarter. Quarter completions are provided across the offerings in the table below.

Program Offering	Satisfactory Completion	Terminated from Program	Withdrawn from Program	Total
Apprenticeship	0	0	1	1
Food Handlers Permit Classes	68	0	0	68
Intro to Culinary Fundamentals Class at SCC	7	0	1	8
Total	75	0	2	77