

WIFI AND TECH AT THE ACI

The Governor proposes to use \$3.1 million in federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) State Fiscal Recovery Funds (SFRF) in FY2023, and \$50,000 each year from FY2024 through FY2027, to install WIFI and technology throughout the ACI.

Currently, there is no WIFI in any housing modules within the Department of Corrections. The Department would like to install WIFI in these areas to automate administrative and uniform staff processes and allow for the replacement, use, and maximization of newly acquired and existing hardware and software as well as to improve and expand programming for inmates in the areas of education and telemedicine.

The installation of WIFI would also allow for newly acquired tablets and iPads to be used within the building to automate administrative staff work. The Department would like to setup the WIFI access to the education network for the classrooms and modules which would allow the offenders to access programs, self-help, college courses, etc. WIFI will also allow the Department to replace outdated software and replace manual information logging that is currently done by Correctional Officers.

Key components of the proposal include (quoted directly from budget documents):

- **U.S. Treasury Eligibility Category:** Economic and Workforce Development
- **Equity Components:**
 - **Population:** The Rhode Island Department of Corrections (RIDOC) is a unified correctional system that encompasses all offenders regardless of status, crime, or sentence. RIDOC oversees all awaiting trial offenders, all sentenced offenders and all adult probation and parolees. There are no county jails in Rhode Island therefore even low level, non-violent crimes and short sentence offenders are housed at the state correctional facilities.

In CY 2020, there were 6,147 people released from RIDOC facilities representing 8,987 release events.

- Twenty-nine percent (29%) of men and thirty-eight percent (38%) of women were committed for non-violent offenses.
- Forty-nine percent (49%) of those committed and released were white, twenty-five percent (25%) black; twenty-two percent (22%) Hispanic.
- Fifty-seven percent (57.2%) were released to core urban communities in Rhode Island (Woonsocket, Pawtucket, Providence, Cranston, Warwick, and West Warwick)
- 55% of both males and females are parents with an average of 2 children
- 35% of males have less than a 12th grade education
- 51% of men and 66% of women were unemployed at the time they became incarcerated.

The incarcerated population and the state would benefit from this proposal. With WIFI installed at the ACI, inmates would have access to self-help materials, college courses, and educational materials that can better prepare them for life after release, potentially reducing recidivism rates.

- **Awareness:** Rhode Island has been engaged in meaningful criminal justice reform work since the early days of Governor Raimondo's tenure, and additional programmatic and practical changes are on the horizon. A strategic investment of funding now to support racial equity in the system will enable Rhode Island to begin to right the wrongs of implicit bias in the justice system and introduce transformative reforms that will meaningfully improve the lives of Black communities and communities of color statewide. Investing in this partnership will support justice reform and racial equity in the justice system in our state in the short term and in the entire country in the years to come.

- **Access and Distribution:** The Department received funding of approximately \$700K from the CARES Act to purchase computer equipment for telework, telemedicine, video court, and education. With these funds, the Department purchased smartboards to provide video court, education, and telemedicine within the secured facilities. However, these laptops must either be hardwired or require a hotspot to obtain WIFI access. Incarcerated individuals can purchase tablets through Keefe Commissary which have educational and mental health information but cannot use these laptops for this purpose. The incarcerated individual can only download music, but it must be done within a close proximity of the kiosk. It is the goal of the Department to provide WIFI access to offer more programming to assist with the rehabilitation of the individual.
- **Outcomes:** Historically, close to 95% of the incarcerated will be released back into the community, and over 57% could be released in fewer than two years. Therefore, it is essential that high-quality career and education pathways are provided at the Dept. Of Corrections. In a 2013 report, Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce projected that by 2020, 71% of Rhode Island jobs would require postsecondary certification, degrees, and credentials. While the state continues to work toward that goal, completion rates among the formerly incarcerated require special attention. Nationally, incarcerated individuals (15%) are three times less likely than the general public (45%) to have earned a postsecondary certificate or degree. As a result, upon reentry, formerly incarcerated adults work fewer hours and at a lower wage than average workers. Access to WIFI within facilities would provide computer literacy, meaningful certificate-granting learning opportunities, and flexibility required to meet the needs of a 21st century workforce that has historically been shut out of opportunities.
- **Performance Metrics:** Monitor the following:

With WIFI installed in the buildings, RIDOC will no longer use paper logbooks and store them for potential litigation. The new web-based logbook system allows users to look up any information via search of the application for any date, time, building etc. The application also prints out a report if needed for court purposes. Transitioning from paper to web-based logbooks has been the Director's Initiative for a while because looking for the logbooks is a very tedious and time-consuming task. A web-based application would produce logbook information immediately and as make it easier for the officers and Lieutenants to record information via computer. Making more programs available for the offenders, the Rehab Services unit can see what is working for offenders and what is not.

The WIFI project will be tracked via RIDOC Project Management. Within the plan, there will be specific milestones that need to be met. This will be how RIDOC tracks the project moving forward. Once the WIFI has been installed, metrics can be tracked via how programs are running, are they effective specifically on the Education side.

- Automatically generate key metrics such as admissions, releases, reincarceration, revocations, violations, disciplinary infractions, etc. and provide these metrics to leadership via a live dashboard
- Automatically generate the data needed for RIDOC's three-year recidivism report and other external-facing reports
- Generate alerts when key metrics deviate from course using anomaly detection to allow for immediate course-correction
- Evaluate one or more of the 2017 JRI programs using a cost-benefit framework and publish results to an externally facing dashboard
- Conduct evaluations of any and all new criminal justice reforms (including, potentially, the movement of discharge planning in-house and the development of an apprenticeship program, both of which were included in the Governor's FY 2021 budget) in order to generate insights about program efficacy and prioritize resource allocation to evidence-based programming

- Link data from the new probation and parole case management system with facilities and programming data, allowing for long-term tracking of justice-involved people as they move through the system
- Offer probation and parole officers a centralized way to prioritize supervision among people on their caseloads by tracking performance of people on supervision and progress against goals over time

In the short term, the initiative will be considered successful if there is a marked improvement in the data insights available to RIDOC leadership. If all solutions and tools are provided to RIDOC's expectations, the initiative will be preliminarily considered successful.