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The Green Corrections Project

Action Plans and Lessons Learned

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Project Overview

The Green Corrections project, funded by the National Institute of Corrections (NIC), was a three-phase project with the following objectives:

- Understand the green corrections landscape and report details in a comprehensive white paper titled *The Greening of Corrections: Creating a Sustainable System*
- Disseminate *The Greening of Corrections* report
- Develop a green corrections community of practice
- Provide green corrections technical assistance to states

FHI 360 was commissioned to coordinate and lead the three phases of the project, with the support of technical experts, NIC, and select states.

The Greening of Corrections: Building a Sustainable System Publication and Dissemination

The first and second phases of the project consisted of developing and disseminating a comprehensive white paper entitled *The Greening of Corrections: Creating a Sustainable System*, which focused on:

- 1) Identifying green-collar job readiness programs and jobs that provide viable, quality employment opportunities in the green economy for individuals in correctional facilities and those reentering communities
- 2) Making prison industry products, jobs, and services more environmentally friendly
- 3) Building or transforming correctional agencies into self-sustaining innovative facilities

In March 2011, NIC released *The Greening of Corrections*. The document served “as a starting point for the corrections field by providing both a general understanding of sustainability practices and principles and by identifying examples of innovative and practical applications of operations, programs, and management strategies for self-sustaining facilities.” It included five sections addressing:

- 1) Greening of correctional facilities
- 2) Educating and training inmates
- 3) Correctional industries

- 4) Green reentry programs
- 5) Recommendations to build a framework for green programming and practices within the confines of the correctional system

The white paper can be accessed at <http://nicic.gov/greencorrections>.

Develop a Community of Practice and Provide Technical Assistance to States

The third phase of the project focused on helping states implement the practices described in the white paper. Building on the foundational knowledge of The Greening of Corrections, the overarching objectives of the technical assistance effort was to:

- 1) Build the capacity of state correctional agencies to become self-sustaining, innovative facilities, which would include helping them help inmates gain the requisite skills and competencies needed for viable, quality jobs in the emerging green economy
- 2) Provide state agencies with access to experts in the field to advance their sustainability efforts
- 3) Establish a small community of practice to create a peer learning exchange among state correctional agencies
- 4) Capture the knowledge of the technical assistance process and lessons learned to advance the field

Application Process

To accomplish the goals of the green corrections project, NIC and the FHI 360 team developed a competitive application process to identify three states to receive technical assistance. The technical assistance would consist of hiring subject matter experts and convening a strategic action plan meeting to develop a strategy for applying principles from the white paper to the development of green corrections programs in the selected states. In particular, the technical assistance would focus on areas such as resource and energy consumption, operations, management, maintenance of prisons, and education and training programs for inmates.

The three state agencies selected for the targeted technical assistance were Maryland, Minnesota, and Washington.

Technical Assistance in Each State

Each state elected to address a different technical assistance need for their strategic action plan session.

Maryland

The Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services sought to focus the Maryland Correctional Services leadership team on expanding its vision for sustainability programs. Specifically, the meeting would help participants:

- 1) Learn about and share the wide range of green practices currently in place
- 2) Learn from the state of Washington's existing sustainability plan and practices
- 3) Identify opportunities for increased and improved green practices through strategic action steps

Stakeholders engaged in the meeting represented all key operational programs addressing issues including recycling, region maintenance, capital construction, facilities design, energy performance, public safety works (community crews program), correctional enterprises, and programs and services.

Maryland Correctional Services identified existing green practices ranging from Governor-mandated energy savings programs to pre-release work crew programs to cost-saving operational practices. Specifically, the Governor's executive orders, legislation, and agency rulemaking has set numerous standards for energy efficient construction and building operations. For example, all new construction by the state of Maryland must meet a U.S. Green Building Council Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Silver rating. The state also requires that all agencies input energy consumption information in the EM-Power Maryland Energy Database. Agencies are required to track energy use and implement energy saving practices. Maryland Correctional Services used Energy Performance Contracts to meet increasing requirements for energy savings, which also

resulted in savings on energy consumption. Energy production also became of increasing interest to operations, as new contracts to implement biofuels programs and solar panel projects were underway at the time of project development.

After review of energy savings programs, operational practices and public works programs, Maryland Correctional Services staff realized the department had extensive green programming activities; however, these activities were not integrated into a single program or strategic plan.

To gain a stronger understanding of how to develop a cohesive green program, David Bezanson, Assistant Secretary of Capital Programs, and Rick Weinbrenner, Hagerstown Regional Maintenance Chief, visited Washington state and its department of corrections. As part of their visit, they visited the Stafford Creek Correctional Center and participated in the Washington State Department of Corrections strategic action planning meeting. Assistant Secretary Bezanson describes the site visit as “an inspiration for our staff.” The firsthand experience of staff helped gain buy-in from the larger group—from operations, construction, maintenance, environmental safety and public safety works—to be actively engaged in the strategic action planning meeting on October 12, 2012.

On October 12, 2012, Maryland Correctional Services convened a group of stakeholders representing recycling, region maintenance, capital construction, facilities design, energy performance, public safety works (community crews program), correctional enterprises, and programs and services to help expand its vision for sustainability programs, also known as green programs and practices.

The meeting commenced with presentations from each group about their existing green and sustainability practices, followed by a presentation about the cohesive sustainability program in Washington state by Dan Pacholke, Director of Prisons at the Washington Department of Corrections, and concluded with a discussion of opportunities, costs and action steps for implementing a vision for sustainability in the State of Maryland.

The strategic action planning meeting concluded with a set of action steps. The three actions steps consisted of the following:

- 1) Complete a written Sustainability Policy that drives correctional operations
- 2) Expand recycling and composting programs to reduce waste hauling costs and encourage savings
- 3) Work more closely with higher education (seek more science grant funding to train inmates)

Minnesota

The Minnesota Department of Corrections Educational Services sought to learn about how to incorporate green skills training into their existing carpentry and cabinetmaking courses, add industry-recognized credentials to their existing program, and consider a method for adding green components to additional training programs in the future.

On November 1 and 2, 2012, the Minnesota Department of Corrections Educational Services brought together a group of stakeholders consisting of carpentry and cabinet making instructors, education administrators, Minnesota Correctional Industries, job placement staff, and the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development. The group sought to learn about how to incorporate green skills training into existing carpentry and cabinetmaking courses, add industry-recognized credentials to their existing program, and consider a method for adding green components to additional training programs in the future. Technical experts Randy Grissom of Santa Fe Community College and Marcia Wilson of Los Angeles Trade Technical College helped guide the process.

The technical experts, Randy Grissom and Marcia Wilson, guided Minnesota Educational Services and their partners through an internal and external factors scan. Following scanning exercises, the group mapped out the carpentry and cabinetmaking programs and identified the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) that should be supplemented to create green programs. Throughout the meeting, the technical experts added their personnel knowledge, shared their community colleges curriculums, and provided tips on how to integrate green components. Michelle Fox, U.S. Department of Energy, also provided a tour of the National Training & Education Resource (NTER). Following the scans, review of programs, and identification of KSAs, the group developed action steps to move forward.

Washington

The Washington Department of Corrections elected to hold two 1-day meetings addressing different topics, rather than a 2-day meeting addressing a single topic. The Washington Department of Corrections addressed challenges related to procurement of green and sustainable goods and focused on the development of a “sustainability primer” for new employees and inmates to help build understanding and buy-in to sustainability practices. Alicia Culver of the Responsible Purchasing Network led the group through a process to develop policies and procedures for green purchases. The second meeting focused on developing a “sustainability primer” for new employees and current staff and inmates to help build understanding and buy-in to sustainability practices. Jennifer Webster, a curriculum development expert, led the session to begin to build the framework for the curriculum.

Green Procurement

The sustainable procurement session started with a presentation by Alicia Culver about the central elements of sustainable purchasing. For example, Ms. Culver described green products as comprising or exhibiting:

- High recycled product content (post-consumer)
- Closed-loop manufacturing (all products are entirely re-used; i.e. recycled carpeting from old carpets)
- Local manufacturing
- Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) (take-back program)
- Less energy in production, transportation, and use (uses less energy during its lifecycle)
- No unnecessary packaging (and recyclable, compostable packaging)
- Low volatile organic compounds, low toxicity overall
- Manufacturing with recycled content
- High energy efficiency
- Durability and design that is long lasting
- Recyclability or compostability (in your program)
- Manufacturing from renewable resources (i.e. bio-based materials)
- Less toxicity than conventional goods
- Safe management at the end of its life

Culver also described the purpose and benefits of green and sustainable purchasing, while highlighting challenges to the green procurement process. In particular, one challenge is green washing and use of products that claim to be green but have no environmental benefits. This can be difficult to describe in procurement procedures. Utilizing third party certifications defined in a procurement policy with set standards, such as percent of post-consumer waste, can help ensure procured products are actually green and sustainable.

The group established the following action steps for green procurement:

- 1) Develop administrative guidelines and a statement of purpose
- 2) Prioritize processes (What are the most important and impactful products to green first?)
- 3) Establish a baseline, evaluate it, and report on it based on by-product category (may be part of prioritization process; may ask that vendors report baseline and usage numbers)
- 4) Establish reporting procedure (part of #3)
- 5) Develop a communication tool
- 6) Consider holding a meeting with the Washington Department of Enterprise Services, ask the Department of Ecology to participate in the meeting, and ask for changes to procurement policies

Sustainability Primer Meeting

The sustainability primer meeting started by defining the goals of the curriculum. Specifically, the group sought to “[o]rient inmates, officers, and staff to sustainability and how it applies to living in a prison facility. The primer should inform knowledge of sustainability practices on a daily basis. Use of the primer as an orientation is dependent on location.”¹ Curriculum design expert Jennifer Webster then guided the group through a series of exercises to identify primer topics and methods of delivery. The group identified four pieces of knowledge or information that individuals must learn from the primer. Specifically, the primer should help individuals learn to:

- Become awareness of sustainability and best practices
- Understand what the institution is already doing
- Understand “why” sustainable living is important
- Apply sustainable practices in daily activities

The group established the following action steps for the sustainability primer:

- Develop a facilitator guide, participant guide and PowerPoint presentation
- Review and modify curriculum
- Pilot the sustainability primer at 4-5 prisons
- Explore opportunities to create a video to provide the training

Endnotes

1. FHI 360. Davison, Stephanie (Project Coordinator) Meeting Notes. Sustainability Primer Meeting. Page 1. July 11, 2012

About the Author

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