

Building a High-Quality Correctional Workforce

Identifying Challenges and Needs

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Key Findings

An expert panel of correctional administrators and researchers identified the following high-priority needs for developing a high-quality correctional workforce:

- A shift in orientation from punishment and surveillance to a human-services approach could enhance the corrections sector's ability to recruit new talent.
- Competency standards are required to improve the level of staff professionalism and should be the basis of performance evaluation.
- There is a need to assess the impact that inadequate funding for training can have on workforce issues and sector outcomes.
- Minimum standards are required to ensure that training curricula are adequate, consistent, relevant, realistic, and delivered in an effective manner.
- There is a need for standards to control excessive workloads, which can lead to both staff turnover and inadequate mission performance.
- There is a need to promote best practices proven to influence the factors related to turnover intention.
- The sector should develop best practices for line staff to assume more decisionmaking authority and to participate more in policy discussions.
- The sector should place greater emphasis on developing future leaders.
- Supervisors require better training; they are key to line-staff development.

On behalf of the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), the RAND Corporation manages the Priority Criminal Justice Needs Initiative and has been tasked with identifying and prioritizing the most-critical technology, policy, and practice needs of the criminal justice system. This report, informed by a panel of experts, focuses on the challenges and opportunities related to building and maintaining a high-quality correctional workforce.

The U.S. corrections sector is a critical component of the criminal justice system, charged with managing offenders and defendants confined in prison or jails, as well as those released into the community on probation and parole. The business of corrections is complex. Correctional staff, both within institutions and in the community, must protect the public from individuals accused or convicted of crimes, some of whom are dangerous. However, staff must also prepare those under correctional control for successful, law-abiding lives in the community and support these individuals through the reentry process. The larger public safety mission, therefore, is accomplished not only by separating and monitoring these individuals, but also through interpersonal contact, positive relationships, and support of the behavioral change process toward a crime-free life.

As a result, corrections is fundamentally a “people profession.” At its essence, the work of the sector, whether performed in institutional or community settings, can be described as “humans supervising other humans.” Correctional staff are in a unique position to have a significant impact not only on the lives of the offenders with whom they interact and those offenders' chances for successful outcomes but also on the larger communities where these individuals reside or to which they will return upon release. Given these complexities, it is impossible to overstate the importance of building a high-quality correctional workforce. However, attracting and retaining qualified staff has historically been a difficult task, particularly in institutional corrections. Although corrections work can be a reward-

ing career, it is not the first choice for many people. A variety of factors can deter individuals from entering or remaining in the field of corrections. For example, the work is inherently dangerous because of the characteristics of the offender population. Beyond the risk of physical injury, there are extraordinary stressors associated with corrections work that can seriously affect the well-being of staff. Work environments, particularly in institutional settings, can be physically harsh. Many agencies operate in a paramilitary structure, which is inflexible by nature. Workloads can be overwhelming because of increasing demands, limited resources, and difficulties maintaining sufficient staffing levels; in institutions, mandatory overtime is common. In many states, corrections compensation is simply not competitive with that for occupations in other industries. Finally, the field is challenged by the reality that the public does not consider corrections to be a high-status occupation.

These internal factors have been consistent over time, but recent economic, societal, and demographic changes affecting the larger workforce have exacerbated many of these difficulties. A combination of factors has come together in a way that benefits employees, creating increased competition for talent. For example, the unemployment rate in the United States is at its lowest point since 2001 (Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS], 2017b), and a smaller percentage of Americans are participating in the labor force, in part because of the retirement of baby boomers in large numbers. With fewer candidates available, it has become more difficult for organizations to find and keep high-quality employees. Indeed, a 2016 survey found that 68 percent of human resources professionals reported difficulty recruiting for full-time positions, up from 50 percent in 2013 (Society for Human Resource Management, 2016). In this environment, the best employees not only hold greater power to choose where they work but, once hired, also have greater flexibility to leave for better opportunities. As a result, the overall turnover rate has been increasing, driven in large part by millennials, who account for 34 percent of the workforce and change jobs at a rate more than three times that of nonmillennials (Adkins, 2016). Turnover is expensive, and it is estimated that millennial turnover alone costs the U.S. economy more than \$30 billion annually. These costs will grow significantly as millennials are projected to make up 75 percent of the workforce by 2025 (Dews, 2014).

The dynamics driving the general job market exacerbate the corrections sector's challenges in building and maintaining its workforce. The extent to which these challenges affect an individual correctional agency's ability to recruit and retain its

workforce can vary; however, there are overarching issues that all agencies face to one degree or another. In order for the sector to perform its important mission, it must critically evaluate current human resources strategies and practices and make the necessary adjustments to allow the sector to compete for the best talent, both now and in the future.

As part of a multiyear research effort sponsored by and supporting NIJ, the Priority Criminal Justice Needs Initiative has focused on identifying innovations in technology, policy, and practice that would be beneficial to the criminal justice sector. In light of the importance of the correctional workforce to public safety, this project sought to better understand the contributing factors and identify the key needs associated with building a high-quality correctional workforce.

METHODOLOGY

To explore the complex issues related to the correctional workforce, NIJ tasked RAND and the University of Denver to assemble an expert panel of correctional administrators, representatives from professional associations, and researchers. The major task was to frame a research agenda focused on achieving a better understanding of the challenges associated with building a high-quality workforce and on the development of research needs, strategies, and tools to address these challenges. The team identified a pool of candidate panelists through review of published documents and recommendations from various organizations. Potential panelists were identified with a focus on experience and expertise in jails, prisons, probation, and parole because each segment of the sector faces slightly different challenges. Furthermore, the research team sought representation from different geographic regions and types of organizations (e.g., state, county, private) and ultimately convened a panel of 13 participants. The list of panelists and their organizations is provided in the box.

Each panelist was asked to complete a pre-workshop questionnaire on six major facets of the workforce cycle (recruitment, selection, onboarding, retention, leadership development, and misconduct) prior to convening. Each facet was framed as follows:

- **recruitment:** factors that affect an agency's ability to attract a sufficient pool of quality candidates, the realities of corrections work (e.g., work hours, environment, compensation), and the strategies required to find candidates who meet the existing and future needs of the organization

- **selection:** standards and processes that support good hiring decisions, including a variety of objective and subjective pre-hire tactics (e.g., interviews, tests, assessments, background investigations)
- **onboarding:** processes to acclimate new staff to the organization and initial job training to prepare them for their new duties
- **retention:** issues, processes, and strategies that either promote or hinder an agency’s ability to retain quality staff, such as organizational culture; ongoing feedback and recognition; training and development; promotional opportunities; and measures to address staff safety, health, wellness, and morale
- **leadership development:** processes and systems to identify, nurture, and train future leaders
- **misconduct:** processes and systems to address inappropriate or substandard staff behaviors.

The first part of the questionnaire was structured to gather input on how the panelists prioritized each facet. Panelists were asked to consider the issues associated with each facet and then rank them on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 representing “low importance” and 5 representing “high importance.”¹ The results of that prioritization are presented in Figure 1.

The second part of the questionnaire asked panelists to identify specific challenges or obstacles faced by corrections agencies with respect to each of the major facets of the workforce cycle. Panelists also had the opportunity to identify issues that did not necessarily fit into the provided framework. The research team used this input to guide workshop discussions.

Panelists were brought together for a two-day workshop. During the morning of the first day, project staff outlined the goals of the workshop and presented the results from the pre-workshop questionnaire. Next, project staff used a structured brainstorming approach that allowed panelists to identify problems or opportunities and suggest corresponding “needs.” *Need* is a term used in our work for a specific requirement, tied to either solving a problem or taking advantage of an opportunity for better performance in the justice system, which would help the U.S. corrections sector to better address its workforce issues. The panelists discussed one major facet of the workforce

¹One invited panelist completed the pre-workshop assessment but was unable to attend the workshop, accounting for the discrepancy between the number of panelists listed earlier and the number of responses in Figure 1.

Panel Members

Jamie Lynn Clayton

Imperial County Sheriff’s Office

Deena Corso

Multnomah County Department of Community Justice

Veronica Cunningham

American Probation and Parole Association

Doug Dretke

Correctional Management Institute of Texas

Frank Ferdik

University of West Florida

Leighton Iles

Tarrant County Community Supervision and Corrections Department

Eric Lambert

University of Mississippi

Kellie McAfee

American Correctional Association

Michael Nail

Georgia Department of Community Supervision

Carl Nink

Management and Training Corporation (retired)

Tom Roy

Minnesota Department of Corrections

Jeanne Stinchcomb

Florida Atlantic University

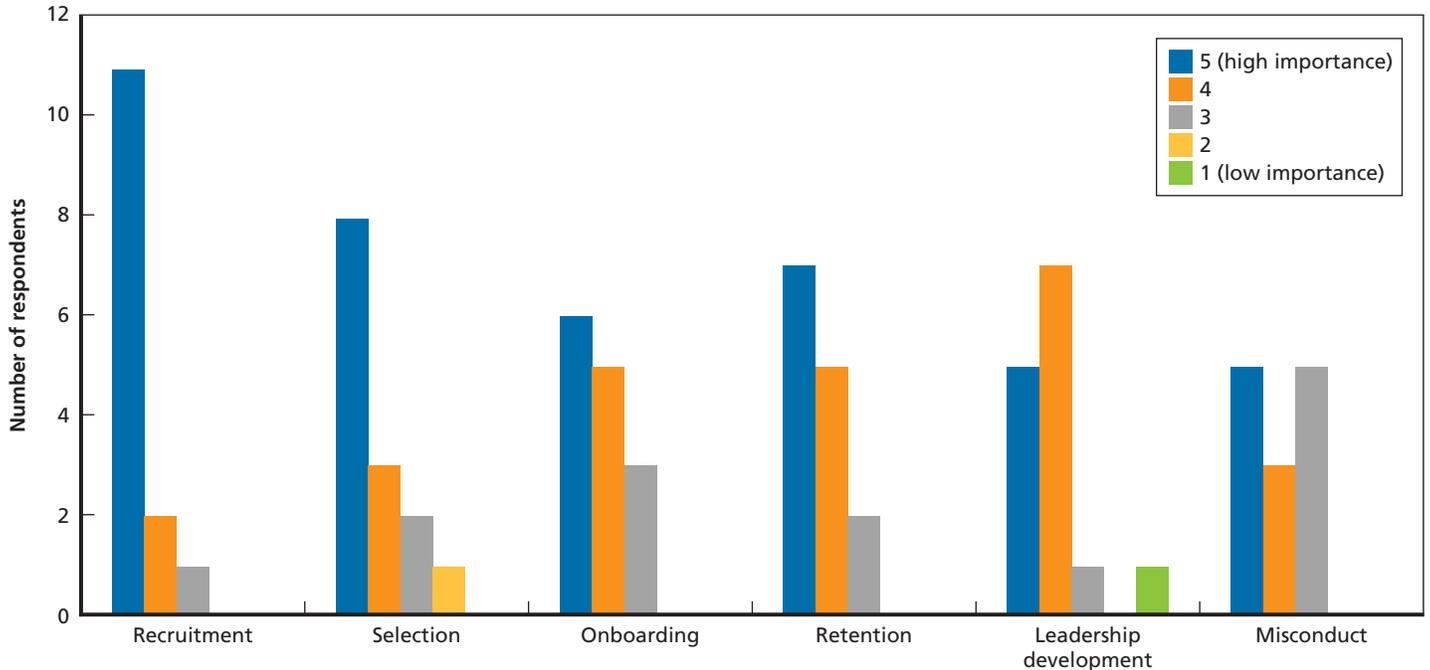
Mary Stohr

Washington State University

at a time. A sequential approach was taken to estimate a corrections staff member’s life cycle within an agency. Project staff began with challenges related to recruitment, then moved on to selection, onboarding, retention, and leadership development. The panelists addressed the misconduct theme last. Misconduct is markedly different from the other themes because it is not a distinct stage of the workforce process; rather, it is a behavior that can be influenced by deficiencies elsewhere in the process.

As expected, it quickly became apparent during panel discussions that these facets are highly interconnected. For example, many of the challenges that affect recruitment also play a role in retention. Agencies that find recruitment to be

Figure 1. Pre-Workshop Assessment of the Importance of Workforce Issues



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challenging also might have large numbers of vacancies, which can lead to unsafe work conditions and diminished performance capacity. Such agencies could be compelled to adjust their selection criteria in order to widen their candidate pools. Similarly, pressure to get new staff on a post or assigned to a caseload can force agencies to abbreviate onboarding processes (e.g., shorten the length of academy training), which could put new staff in positions before they are adequately prepared. Staff who are underqualified or inadequately trained could be more likely to engage in inappropriate behavior, underperform, or

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leave because they lack engagement. The resulting high rates of turnover or substandard performance not only amplify the need for greater recruitment efforts but also deplete the pool of experienced staff ready for consideration for leadership positions. Ultimately, these factors undermine the sector's ability to perform its mission and feed negative perceptions about effectiveness and legitimacy, affecting how individuals view a potential career in corrections (i.e., the future candidate pool).

The panel produced an initial list of 78 needs. To provide structure to this large set of identified needs, project staff used a variant of the Delphi Method (RAND Corporation, undated), an approach in which members of the group provide rankings on the needs individually, then discuss the results as a group, and then have the opportunity to individually rerank the needs in light of the group discussion.

Panel members first individually and then collaboratively ranked each need based on its expected benefit (how important they thought it was for the need to be met) and two measures of the probability of success of actually meeting the need (technical and operational feasibility).

During the second round of the process, to highlight areas of consensus and disagreement, project staff presented to the panel the distributions of the initial scores that each need received for importance and probability of success. For needs for which there was significant disagreement, there were brief comments from panel members regarding why they might have rated the need higher or lower than others in the group. The

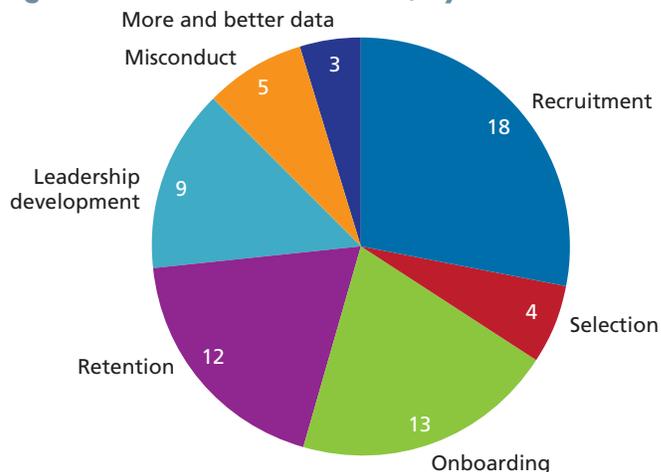
goal of the discussion was to identify areas in which differences in interpretation or information might have led panelists to rate a need differently (and, if those differences could be resolved, move the group toward consensus). There was no requirement that the group reach consensus, reflecting the understanding that there could be differences in perceived value or likelihood of success across panelists. At this point, the panelists were given the opportunity to adjust their scores based on the amount of agreement in the first round and the discussion about the reasons panelists gave for their choices.

After the workshop, the participants' ratings were multiplied to produce an expected-value score, reflecting the value of meeting the need weighted by the likelihood of doing so successfully. The participants' first-round scores were used to cluster the needs into three tiers, from the highest-scoring needs (Tier 1) to the lowest (Tier 3). The clustering algorithm identified the best splits between the three groups of needs, where *best* was defined mathematically, minimizing differences between different assignments of needs to the groups. The second-round results were applied to raise or lower the expected-value scores for each need from the first round (weighted by the number of participants who had rated it, because not all did so for each need) and, in some cases, the change in scoring changed the tier to which the need was assigned. A more detailed discussion of the methodology is available in the appendix to this report.

This process produced a prioritized list of needs for research, broken into groups from high to low priority. In the final analysis, some needs were so closely related that they warranted consolidation; therefore, these needs were combined and retained the highest assigned tier of their component needs. This consolidation resulted in 64 final needs. (See Figure 2 for a breakdown of these needs by theme and Table 1 for the top-tier needs across all themes.)

We acknowledge that the needs identified and the priorities assigned to them are—as with any subjective assessment involving a limited number of participants—reflective of the views of members of the panel. Although project staff sought to include a broadly representative group of panelists, it is likely that a different group would produce somewhat different results. Furthermore, although project staff consulted the correctional workforce literature, the intent was to explore the issues raised by the panelists and to put the identified needs into better context. A comprehensive workforce development literature review and a discussion of effective strategies across various industry sectors were beyond the scope of this effort.

Figure 2. Breakdown of Needs, by Area



NOTE: "More and better data" is a theme that emerged from the panel discussion and was not originally tied to the workshop structure. Also, three needs were identified that apply to multiple stages of the workforce process.

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RECRUITMENT

For the purposes of our panel discussions, *recruitment* was defined as the process of attracting qualified candidates who can meet the current and future needs of the sector. Discussions focused primarily on recruitment of line staff (i.e., corrections officers in institutional settings and probation and parole officers in community supervision agencies). That said, it is important to recognize that many of the issues and challenges discussed apply to other agency staff, particularly medical, psychiatric, and information technology professionals. Indeed, agencies might find it more difficult to recruit these individuals because they are generally in high demand. Furthermore, the skills possessed by these professionals are more readily transferable to other sectors than those of line staff.

Recruiting qualified staff, particularly corrections officers, has been historically difficult and remains a critical challenge for administrators today (Association of State Correctional Administrators, 2017a). As discussed above, the demands of the occupation can reduce the occupation's attractiveness to potential staff. Corrections is stressful and sometimes dangerous work, and it offers considerably less compensation and prestige than similar occupations, such as law enforcement. These factors, when combined with a generally improving economy, have made it difficult to attract candidates. For example, in some states, corrections officer vacancy rates can exceed 45 percent

Table 1. Top-Tier Needs

Problem or Opportunity	Associated Need
The role of corrections staff, particularly in institutions, is generally viewed to be custodial or surveillance-oriented, which limits the sector's ability to attract new talent.	Research the implications that a human-services approach and culture would have on recruitment.
Increasingly, new generations of employees have expectations that they will be able to actively participate in policy- and decisionmaking.	Develop best practices for pushing decisionmaking authority down to the lowest level.
The general level of professionalism in the correctional workforce is relatively low, particularly among corrections officers.	Reevaluate or create competency standards for various correctional positions.
Correctional agencies do not place sufficient emphasis on leadership and management training.	Evaluate and promote best practices for leadership development within the sector.
Existing resources that support leadership development are often out of date (e.g., the National Institute of Corrections [NIC] last published <i>Correctional Leadership Competencies for the 21st Century</i> in 2006 [Campbell et al., 2006]).	Reevaluate and update these resources as necessary.
The staff evaluation processes used by most agencies do not focus on the most-important competencies.	Examine the most-appropriate performance measures by which to evaluate each position.
After dedicating significant resources to recruit and train staff, agencies often fail to recognize the value of retaining staff.	Promote evidence-based best practices proven to improve job satisfaction, engagement, and other factors related to low turnover intention.
Excessive workloads and high inmate-to-officer ratios are related to a variety of negative outcomes and can hinder an organization's ability to retain staff.	Assess and validate existing standards for staffing ratios and examine such strategies as capped caseloads to allow agencies to meet these standards.
Funding levels dedicated to educating and training the correctional workforce lag behind those for other comparable fields, most notably law enforcement.	Assess the impact of inadequate training funding on the sector's ability to accomplish its mission.
Training is often impractical and unrealistic, and there is incongruity between how officers are trained and what they will experience on the job.	Assess and validate the evidence behind the various training methods and curricula in use, as well as the timing of delivery.
There is significant variation in the curricula and approaches agencies use to train and educate the correctional workforce as well as the duration of preparation before assignment.	Develop minimum national standards for correctional professional education and training, including curriculum and training hours.
Line and mid-level supervisors generally lack the skills needed to mentor new staff effectively.	Assess the adequacy of training for new supervisors and develop strategies for improvement.
The sector lacks a coherent vision. Because agencies operate in a rapidly shifting environment, they are struggling to keep pace both in general and with respect to their workforces in particular.	Develop a national vision and strategy for corrections, similar to those developed for other criminal justice sectors.

(Lyman, 2017).² The challenges associated with recruiting talent to the sector were identified as the most important workforce issue in the pre-workshop questionnaire. Not surprisingly, this topic generated the most discussion during the workshop,

² Vacancy rates are typically calculated based on the number of unfilled positions derived through staffing analyses that consider a variety of factors (e.g., security level of an institution; number or classification of inmates; physical plant; security capabilities; inmate movement; programming needs; and statutory, contractual, or agency policy requirements).

as well as the largest number of individual needs (18) (see Table 3 at the end of this section).

Public Image of the Sector

Research has documented that the public views corrections work—and particularly the role of the corrections officer—as undesirable (Vickovic, Griffin, and Fradella, 2013), and the sector has historically preferred to operate out of the spotlight, sharing little directly with the public. Much of the information the public receives is therefore filtered through the media;

Negative media attention influences the public’s perception of the corrections sector and those who work within it, which can be a serious impediment in efforts to recruit quality staff.

however, portrayals are not always accurate. For example, an ethnographic content analysis of articles from major U.S. newspapers revealed that corrections officers and the jobs they perform were portrayed negatively in close to 80 percent of the sample (Vickovic, Griffin, and Fradella, 2013). Less than 7 percent of the articles were classified as positive, with the remainder deemed neutral. More than half of the negative articles reported on some form of staff misconduct, including sexual assaults, inappropriate relationships, introduction of contraband, use of excessive force, incompetence, or arrest for a non–job-related crime. According to the panelists, negative media attention influences the public’s perception of the corrections sector and those who work within it, which can be a serious impediment in efforts to recruit quality staff.

Other metrics, such as surveys measuring Americans’ perceptions of occupational prestige, also demonstrate the public’s

low view of corrections work, particularly in comparison with other public safety jobs, such as firefighting and law enforcement (Table 2).

The panelists identified needs aimed at changing perceptions of the sector. Two needs addressed the sector’s historical reticence to share information with the public. The panelists reported that, to begin to change perceptions, the sector must actively communicate with both the media and the public. For many decades, agencies have adopted a “no news is good news” stance with respect to the media. Furthermore, there has been very little effort to share (nonsensitive) information with the public about policy; the challenges faced; and, most importantly, how the sector and its staff have a positive impact on their charges, the community, and public safety every day.

The panelists recognized that resources exist (provided through NIC and others) to assist agencies in developing posi-

Table 2. Selected Measures of Occupational Prestige

Occupation	Ranking Value ^a
Highest ranking	
Surgeon	7.7
Other public safety	
Police officer	6.0
Firefighter	5.7
Probation/parole officer	
Human resources consultant	5.4
Social worker (including probation and parole officers)	5.3
Corporate meeting planner	5.2
Corrections officer	
Government meat inspector	4.3
Prison guard ^b	4.2
Construction laborer	4.1
Lowest ranking	
Street drug dealer	1.9

SOURCE: Rankings from Smith and Son, 2014, pp. 12–31.

^a Respondents were asked to create an “occupational prestige ladder” by assigning each occupation to one of nine “boxes.” A ranking of 1 reflects the bottom of the prestige ladder (least prestigious), whereas a ranking of 9 reflects the top (most prestigious).

^b Prison guard, as opposed to the preferred “corrections officer,” is the terminology used in the General Social Survey.

tive relationships with the media. However, they identified the need to continuously update these resources and reinforce the benefits of these relationships. Furthermore, the sector must understand that public perception affects how potential employees view corrections as a career field. The panelists, therefore, suggested developing a national, online clearinghouse to ensure wider dissemination of positive stories and successes. Focused attention on the important work of the sector, specifically on how it protects the public, improves offender outcomes, and restores communities, would help present a more balanced narrative and potentially attract a larger pool of talent. According to the panelists, the entertainment industry also plays an important role in shaping public perceptions of the sector. One of the prevailing negative stereotypes in popular culture is that of the brutal institution where the inmates are victims of incompetent, corrupt, and abusive staff. One of the most popular prison movies of all time, *The Shawshank Redemption*, follows this pattern (Cecil, 2017). Reality television programs, such as *Lockup*, also shape public perception. Rather than an unbiased view of institutions, *Lockup* presents what Cecil and Leitner (2009) describe as a “highly edited version of reality,” which contributes to a misunderstanding of the sector. The panelists reported that the perpetuation of these negative stereotypes undermines the sector and its ability to recruit new talent. They therefore identified a need for the development of best practices for such stakeholders as the major professional associations to take an active role in influencing how the entertainment industry portrays the sector and its staff.

Need for a Clear Vision and Purpose

Although the panelists agreed that recruitment efforts would benefit from a better public image, they also recognized that these perceptions exist, in part, because of actual deficiencies that plague the sector. The panelists noted that, in this era of criminal justice reform, the operating environment can change rapidly and that the sector is failing to keep pace on many fronts. They also agreed that the sector lacks both a common mission and agreement on how to accomplish the mission, which further exacerbates this challenge. For example, there is great disparity in the extent to which agencies emphasize offender behavioral change objectives when compared with those related to surveillance and accountability. The panelists discussed the need for the development of a national vision for the future of the corrections sector similar to those of other criminal justice sectors. Panelists anticipated that two aspects

of this proposed national vision would be particularly important with respect to recruitment. The first would be a common vision for organizational objectives and the realignment of staff roles to support these objectives. This process would help the sector anticipate the competencies needed in the future and allow agencies to modify recruitment strategies accordingly. The second would be a stronger emphasis on and support of the implementation of evidence-based practices proven to produce positive outcomes. According to the panelists, better outcomes can provide many benefits (including enhanced public safety, legitimacy, and public trust) but can also help change perceptions about the value of the sector and the attractiveness of a career in corrections.

Improving Staff Competencies

With respect to staff competencies, the panelists reported that the sector suffers from a lack of professionalization and that this condition is most evident among corrections officers. The panelists stated that there is a need for the sector to reevaluate existing or create new competency standards for the spectrum of correctional positions and to recruit accordingly. To this end, better educational preparation could be needed. For corrections officers, pre-employment educational requirements remain minimal; virtually all states require only a high school diploma or the equivalent. In some states, even these requirements can be replaced with work experience. Michigan is the only state that currently requires some higher education, although this can be waived with work experience or military service (“Correctional Officer Education and Training,” 2013). Interestingly, some states have modified educational requirements based, in part, on the labor market. For example, in 1987, the Colorado Department of Corrections began to require a two-year college degree, only to eliminate that requirement ten years later (Jones, 2017).

Although probation and parole officer positions typically require a bachelor’s degree, panelists reported that the criminal justice programs at U.S. educational institutions are not adequately preparing students to step into the probation and parole officer roles. Echoing concerns raised at an NIC Urban Chiefs Network meeting in 2012 (Garland and Matz, 2017), panelists identified several gaps between typical curricula and the needs of the field. Most notably, criminal justice students require better preparation and knowledge of the foundations of evidence-based practices and programming and treatment approaches for correctional clients. The panelists reported believing that NIC’s

efforts to bridge these gaps are critical and should continue, but they also acknowledged that significant changes in academic programming will not occur quickly. Given the current gap, the panelists recommended that agencies reevaluate their recruitment strategies for probation and parole officer positions. Panelists suggested that, rather than focusing on a particular level of education (e.g., a bachelor's degree), agencies should place greater emphasis on the desired competencies for the position or, at a minimum, exposure to the foundational concepts should support competency development.

Of course, the obvious dilemma is how agencies can be more selective when many already struggle to attract enough candidates. Focusing on the corrections officer position, the panelists concluded that progress might depend on the sector's ability to redefine both the role of the corrections officer and the institution itself. According to the panelists, most institutions operate in a manner that emphasizes public safety objectives (custody and control) over offender behavioral change and returning better citizens to the community (rehabilitation). Although these objectives are not mutually exclusive, the focus on security reinforces the view that the role of the corrections officer remains primarily custodial in nature. There is, however, a gradually increasing understanding that corrections officers, much like their counterparts in community supervision, can simultaneously provide security or public safety and serve as change agents and positive role models. The panelists noted that, until this approach becomes the norm and public perceptions subsequently change, the pool of talent attracted to the corrections officer position will be inevitably limited. Positions in agencies that emphasize evidence-based programming and recognize and leverage the potential of corrections officers as key components of the behavioral change process could be more attractive to a wider group of candidates, allowing agencies to enforce competency standards. The panelists called for research to determine the impact of these strategies on recruitment efforts.

Adapting to the Needs of Younger Generations

The panelists discussed other changes to the nature of corrections work that can improve the sector's ability to attract new talent. They noted that younger generations are coming to the workplace with the expectation that they will be active participants in policy- and decisionmaking discussions. These expectations do not necessarily mesh well with the realities of correc-

tions work because many agencies operate using a paramilitary structure. Indeed, in a recent survey, approximately 55 percent of corrections officers reported believing that they have little or no say over what happens in their job and lack input on decisions that affect them (Bonner, 2017). However, the panelists reported, if the sector hopes to compete with other industries for young talent, it will need to reexamine traditional operating assumptions. The panelists called for the development of best practices for pushing decisionmaking authority down to the lowest possible level (i.e., where the work is done). Such a shift depends heavily on selecting the right individuals and training them well, although beginning to make this change could help attract the type of staff needed to implement it successfully.

Compensation

In favorable economic times, job-seekers can be more selective about where they choose to work, and one criterion considered in that decision is compensation. Unfortunately, as the panelists noted, the sector offers relatively low salaries, which can hinder efforts to attract quality talent. The annual mean wage for correctional officers is \$47,600 (Figure 3) and \$56,630 for probation and parole officers (Figure 4).

Panelists reported that these wages are not competitive compared with those for other criminal justice occupations and with occupations in general. For example, police officers earn a mean salary of \$64,490 (BLS, 2017a).

Although the mean salary data for occupations provide important insight in terms of earning potential, candidates considering entering the sector are more likely to be interested in starting salaries. Across the United States, there is considerable variation from jurisdiction to jurisdiction in correctional starting compensation. For example, corrections officers in California earn approximately \$42,000 upon hire (California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, undated). The same position in Mississippi pays just over \$22,000, which—if it was the sole source of support for a family of three—would qualify a corrections officer's family for food stamps (Mitchell, 2014). Similarly, new parole officers in New Jersey receive \$57,000 annually, whereas their counterparts in Louisiana earn just over \$30,000 (New Jersey Civil Service Commission, 2016; Rico, 2017). Compensation rates are based on such factors as geographic location and cost of living; however, some correctional agencies struggle to be competitive with other sectors even in their states. In Florida, for example, trainee corrections officers receive a salary of just over \$28,000. The secretary of

the Florida Department of Corrections has commented that, at that rate, the agency is competing for talent with retailers, such as Walmart, rather than other law enforcement agencies (Neuhaus, 2017). In other states, particularly those that produce oil and natural gas, there can be a large disparity in compensation between corrections work and other, less skilled occupations. For example, during boom times in Texas, a truck driver hauling water used in the fracking process can earn about \$78,000 per year, whereas an entry-level corrections officer makes about \$32,000 in the same state and period (Grissom, 2014).

Inadequate compensation clearly has an impact on the sector's ability to attract talent, but there can be longer-term ramifications as well. College students majoring in criminal justice or social work—areas that are most aligned with corrections-related careers—can expect to earn among the lowest salaries of all graduates (see Figure 5). Faced with this reality, high school students with college aspirations (and considering eventual repayment of student loans) could be dissuaded from careers in corrections. This is a particular concern for probation and parole officer recruitment because these positions typically require an undergraduate degree.

Although corrections is an unlikely field of endeavor for those seeking wealth, the panelists reported that adequate compensation is critical to attracting quality staff. They identified the need for examination of the appropriate demand signal for compensation (i.e., the level of salary required for the sector to compete for candidates with the desired qualifications). The panelists understood that the actual level of compensation would vary across position, agency, and geographic area and proposed the establishment of a federal minimum wage for correctional occupations that organizations can exceed, as appropriate.

Retirement benefits are another important aspect of compensation. Historically, relatively generous packages have been one of the more attractive benefits of a career in corrections. Retirement plans in most states were designed to provide normal benefits at younger ages and fewer years of service than plans for general state employees because of the physically and psychologically demanding nature of the job. Before the Great Recession of 2008, it was not uncommon for corrections officers to qualify for full retirement benefits at age 50 with 20 years of service (Snell, 2012). Since then, nearly every state has made significant adjustments to its retirement programs (Brainard and Brown, 2016), such as increasing employee contribution rates, which has had the immediate effect of

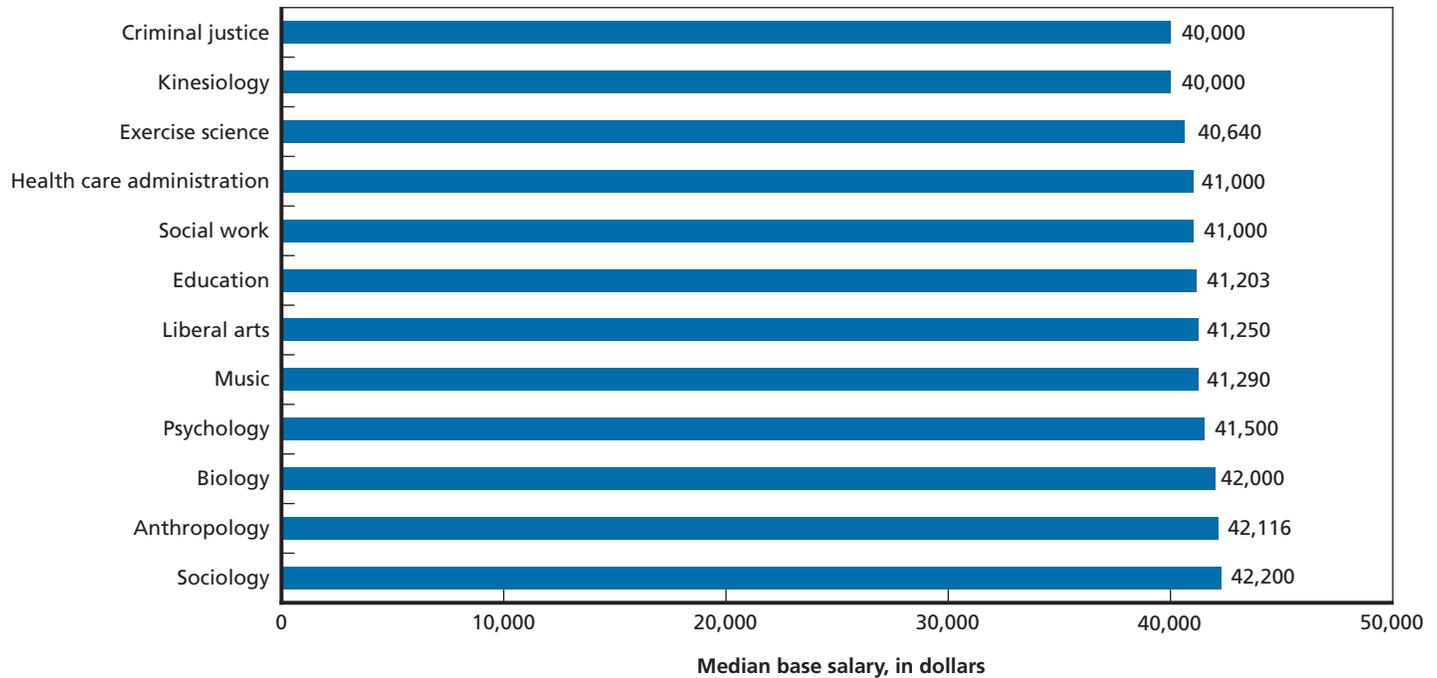
lowering take-home pay and increasing both the minimum age and the number of service years required to achieve retirement eligibility. These changes could make a career in corrections less attractive and, as a result, further depress recruitment. Furthermore, the panelists noted that, because millennials are changing jobs much more frequently than previous generations have, it is likely that this group of individuals assigns less value to the retirement benefits tied to long tenure with a single employer. The panelists proposed assessments of the feasibility of alternative (e.g., portable) retirement benefit models specifically targeted to the needs of current and future generations.

Work Environment Enhancements

Improvements in compensation packages, although necessary, are essentially beyond an agency's direct control. That said, agencies can influence other aspects of the work environment to make careers in corrections more attractive. According to the panelists, for example, the location of the workplace can play an important role in recruitment efforts. Many state prisons are located in sparsely populated rural areas. Small and rural counties typically operate a jail and one or more community supervision agencies. Attracting quality staff to work in these settings can be challenging: Smaller populations can equate to a reduced pool of qualified candidates in the immediate geographical area, and long-distance commutes could deter other candidates from applying for a position. Even in cases in which individuals were willing to relocate, housing can be scarce. Urban workplaces, the panelists noted, can present a different dilemma. Although these settings often provide access to a wider pool of qualified candidates, these individuals will likely desire more compensation to offset higher costs of living and, as discussed above, corrections agencies are often at a competitive disadvantage with respect to compensation. The

High school students with college aspirations (and considering eventual repayment of student loans) could be dissuaded from careers in corrections.

Figure 5. Median Base Salaries of the Lowest-Paying U.S. College Majors in 2017



SOURCE: Statista, 2017.

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panelists reported believing that creative incentives—such as free or subsidized transportation, daycare, or housing—could make positions more attractive and called for examination of the costs and benefits of such strategies.

Many job-seekers value opportunities that allow flexible work hours, and the panelists suggested that the sector should explore the viability of this approach. The panelists acknowledged that this might not be feasible in prisons and jails, which require fixed schedules to ensure staff coverage of numerous posts. However, this approach could work well in community supervision agencies. Historically, probation and parole officers have worked a 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday schedule based in central offices; however, the panelists noted, greater flexibility could have benefits for both the agency and the employee. Many agencies are striving to develop stronger and more-positive relationships with offenders and the communities where they reside. Allowing staff to set their own hours and work primarily in the field could provide better access to offenders and communities. This strategy would offer the flexibility that so many staff desire, in addition to the potential for increased productivity. Panelists called for assessment of the costs and benefits of flexible work schedules and remote work and the impact this approach could have on recruitment efforts.

The panelists noted that increased flexibility in the structure of correctional positions could also make it easier to recruit talent. For example, most agencies tend to hire line staff as

full-time employees and provide them with the same training and charge them with the same duties. At the outset, these officers are generally interchangeable, although they can develop specialties later in their tenure. The panelists reported that this rigidity might not be attractive to younger generations and called for assessments of the costs and benefits of developing more part-time and paraprofessional positions that specialize in certain aspects of the job (e.g., restitution collections or inmate transportation). This approach could attract a wider pool of candidates who are interested in certain aspects of the job or who simply prefer the flexibility of part-time employment.

Influence of Organized Labor

Organized labor can inadvertently impede the sector's ability to recruit new talent, according to the panelists. Many employees have joined national unions or state associations to negotiate compensation, benefits, and protections (Kirchhoff, 2010). Panelists noted that standard organized labor practices typically favor tenured members at the expense of new hires. For example, most collective bargaining agreements ensure that existing staff have priority over new hires with respect to desired posts and schedules. The panelists recognized the importance of rewarding staff for their service, but they also acknowledged that the status quo presents obstacles to new or innovative approaches that can make a career in corrections

Table 3. Needs Identified Related to Recruitment

Tier	Problem or Opportunity	Associated Need
1	<p>The role of corrections staff, particularly in institutions, is generally viewed to be custodial or surveillance-oriented, which limits the sector’s ability to attract new talent.</p> <p>Increasingly, new generations of employees have expectations that they will be able to actively participate in policy- and decisionmaking.</p> <p>The general level of professionalism in the correctional workforce is relatively low, particularly among corrections officers.</p> <p>The sector lacks a coherent vision. Because agencies operate in a rapidly shifting environment, they are struggling to keep pace both in general and with respect to their workforces in particular.</p>	<p>Research the implications that a human-services approach and culture would have on recruitment.</p> <p>Develop best practices for pushing decisionmaking authority down to the lowest level.</p> <p>Reevaluate or create competency standards for various correctional positions.</p> <p>Develop a national vision and strategy for corrections, similar to those developed for other criminal justice sectors.</p>
2	<p>Some agencies find it challenging to attract the gender and ethnic diversity needed to build effective relationships between the workforce and those under supervision.</p> <p>Low entry salaries hinder recruitment efforts.</p> <p>Corrections agencies typically keep a low public profile, which can hurt recruitment efforts.</p> <p>The important work that corrections staff members accomplish each day is not publicized and is therefore overshadowed by negative media attention.</p>	<p>Assess the benefits and risks of cultural enticements and other incentives to attract targeted groups.</p> <p>Examine the appropriate demand signal for the workforce (i.e., the level of compensation required to attract the desired candidates).</p> <p>Update and promulgate existing programs developed to support positive relationships with media outlets.</p> <p>Develop a national clearinghouse to ensure wider dissemination of positive stories and successes.</p>
3	<p>The siting of correctional institutions (e.g., in expensive urban areas and remote rural areas) can negatively affect recruitment efforts.</p> <p>The entertainment industry shapes public perception of corrections through fictional or “reality TV” productions, but the image portrayed is often negative and inaccurate.</p> <p>Many agencies are passive in their recruitment efforts.</p> <p>Union contracts are structured to benefit tenured staff and can present barriers to innovative strategies that can make corrections work more attractive to new candidates.</p> <p>The retirement benefit structure that attracted previous generations to correctional work might not be important to new hires.</p> <p>Most agencies fail to leverage modern hiring platforms to simultaneously post opportunities to multiple online job boards.</p> <p>The application process can be extremely cumbersome, discouraging potential candidates from contacting multiple agencies.</p>	<p>Examine the costs, benefits, and efficacy of providing such incentives as transportation and housing assistance.</p> <p>Develop best practices for industry associations (e.g., the American Probation and Parole Association, the American Correctional Association, the American Jail Association) to take an active role and engage entertainment producers to facilitate more-balanced and more-positive portrayals.</p> <p>Identify and promulgate best practices for the development of proactive, continuous recruitment strategies.</p> <p>Examine collective bargaining agreements to ensure that there is a balance between protecting existing staff and attracting recruits.</p> <p>Assess the feasibility of creating different retirement benefit models targeted to the needs of current and future generations.</p> <p>Assess the costs and benefits of migrating from jurisdiction-based processes to commercial platforms.</p> <p>Develop a common application system and supporting information management system that allows candidates to submit one application viewable by multiple agencies.</p>

Table 3—Continued

<p>Correctional agencies do not optimize the use of paraprofessional or part-time staff to perform lower-level work functions.</p> <p>Work schedules for corrections staff are typically inflexible, which can make these jobs less desirable.</p> <p>Undergraduate and graduate degree programs are not well-matched to the job functions within the sector.</p>	<p>Examine the feasibility and benefits of developing paraprofessional positions and expanding part-time opportunities.</p> <p>Assess the costs and benefits of flexible work schedules and the impact on recruitment.</p> <p>Reevaluate educational requirements for positions and promote greater focus on the competencies desired versus a particular level of education.</p>
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more attractive to potential employees who are looking for work/life balance and are not willing to “pay their dues” over an extended period of time. The panelists therefore called for an examination of collective bargaining agreements to determine a balance that is both respectful of the service of existing staff and responsive to the needs of recruits.

Recruitment Processes

The panelists identified needs related to perceived deficiencies in the sector’s recruitment processes. They reported that the sector is generally passive and ineffective in recruitment efforts and articulated the need to identify and promulgate best practices for proactive and ongoing strategies. Panelists stressed that agencies should consider hiring professional recruiters rather than using existing corrections staff, as is common practice. Professional recruiters have the skills and knowledge to perform the task, and they understand how to leverage current technology, such as social networking, to reach job-seekers. Technological innovations have streamlined the recruitment process in many industries, but, the panelists suggested, the corrections sector is not capitalizing on these innovations. Panelists recommended an assessment of the costs and benefits of migrating jurisdiction-based hiring platforms to commercial platforms that allow organizations to post opportunities simultaneously to multiple online job boards. Another recommendation called for collaboration among multiple correctional agencies to develop a common, computer-based application system that would allow candidates to apply simultaneously for positions across jurisdictions rather than one at a time, as is the current norm. The result would be somewhat analogous to the college common application system, which a high school senior can use to apply to more than 700 colleges using one online application. Finally, the panelists articulated that the corrections workforce should ideally reflect the demographic characteristics of the increasingly diverse offender population, noting that a better match between offenders and staff can be an important

element in establishing effective relationships that can lead to better outcomes. In some geographic areas, the majority of qualified applicants do not share the demographic characteristics of the offender population they will be serving, which can impede their effectiveness once hired. The panelists discussed ways of reaching a more diverse application pool through such strategies as leveraging U.S. census data linked with Zip Code to ensure broad awareness of job opportunities. Ultimately, the panelists articulated the need to assess the benefits and risks of strategies to reach particular candidates in an effort to diversify the pool of potential hires and to identify possible incentives to encourage these individuals to apply for positions. They noted that this approach might be in conflict with current civil service laws that already allow preference to certain groups, such as veterans.

SELECTION

Selection refers to the minimum eligibility criterion that agencies require for specific positions, as well as the screening, background investigations, testing, and assessments conducted to ensure appropriate hiring decisions. The panelists discussed a variety of challenges and identified four needs that would help improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the selection process (Table 5).

Screening Processes

Every organization uses some form of screening criterion to vet job candidates, but, according to the panelists, many of the criteria used by correctional agencies are not evidence-based and can unnecessarily limit the candidate pool. Psychological testing, personality profiling, physical fitness assessments, financial stability investigations, age restrictions (minimum and maximum), and social media activity reviews were among the screens that were specifically identified as commonly used,

yet have questionable efficacy. Although the panelists acknowledged the importance of properly vetting candidates, they also reported that many current processes seem arbitrary or perhaps are simply perpetuated by custom. The panelists therefore called for research to identify the factors most aligned with or predictive of success on the job. The panelists also noted that objective analyses are required to determine the return on investment for each screen, considering predictive value, the cost of administration, and the impact on the length of the hiring process. The resulting data could lead to evidence-based selection criteria that would support better hiring decisions. Furthermore, by eliminating screens that fail to demonstrate efficacy, agencies could potentially widen the candidate pool.

Reducing Time to Hire

A related benefit could be a reduction in the timeline from application to hire, the current length of which the panelists identified as a factor that can impede an agency's ability to maintain staffing levels. Indeed, the average hiring timeline for government positions can be up to five times that of other sectors (see Table 4). Individuals looking for work, particularly those for whom corrections is not the career field of first choice, might not have the time or perseverance to wade through the process from application to a hiring decision. Inefficient or unnecessarily rigid selection processes can extend the hiring timeline and might cause candidates to take more immediate job offers, which undermines recruitment efforts. The panelists recommended an evaluation studying the risks and benefits of eliminating or delaying certain aspects of the vetting process to determine whether the hiring process could be streamlined with minimal impact on the quality of candidate selection. Some agencies are already taking these steps with success. For example, the Arizona Department of Corrections was able to reduce hiring time for correctional officers from 120 days to

39 days by eliminating wasteful processes, most notably checking candidate references (personal communication with Ryan Allison, Arizona Department of Corrections, 2017). Although this represents great improvement, the timeline is still longer than for other occupations. Some of the challenges identified are information technology–related because many agencies struggle with outdated systems. Panelists noted the need to examine the costs and benefits of upgrading these systems in an effort to streamline the overall process to shorten the period between application and hire.

Eliminating Barriers to Employment

Finally, the panelists discussed common barriers to employment based on criminal history or prior drug use and determined that these policies should be reexamined. For example, many agencies disqualify formerly incarcerated persons from employment, and some will not consider anyone with a conviction for a drug-related offense regardless of the severity of the crime, the sentence imposed, or the amount of time the person has since remained crime-free. The panelists suggested that these restrictions might be overly broad and perhaps disingenuous in light of the criminal justice system's current focus on supporting offender reentry. Research has linked steady employment with reduced recidivism, but there is ample evidence suggesting that those with criminal convictions have difficulty finding jobs (Christman and Natividad Rodriguez, 2016). Clearly, an agency should not ignore a candidate's criminal past. However, the panelists recommended research evaluating the risks and benefits of hiring these individuals, and perhaps case-by-case hiring decisions would be more useful than blanket restrictions. The hiring of formerly incarcerated persons to work in corrections is rare but not unprecedented. For example, in a decision not without controversy, the South Dakota Department of Corrections recently hired a former inmate to work as a mentor

Inefficient or unnecessarily rigid selection processes can extend the hiring timeline and might cause candidates to take more immediate job offers, which undermines recruitment efforts.

Table 4. Average Length of the Interview Process

Industry	Average Length of Interview Process, in Days
Government	53.8
Aerospace and defense	32.6
Nonprofit	25.2
Manufacturing	24.6
Construction	19.3
Private security	11.6
Restaurants and bars	10.2

SOURCE: Chamberlain (2017), based on anonymous interview reviews submitted to glassdoor.com between January 1, 2017, and June 13, 2017.

Table 5. Needs Identified Related to Selection

Tier	Problem or Opportunity	Associated Need
2	Some screening criteria for corrections staff (e.g., physical fitness, psychological testing, age restrictions, social media account review) are not necessarily evidence-based.	Conduct research to identify the factors that have predictive value in determining success on the job. Assess the return on investment and unintended consequences of dedicating resources to ineffective processes.
3	The timeline between candidates' applications and start dates is too long, causing many recruits to drop out of consideration. Corrections agencies often have not kept pace with information technology efficiencies that could shorten the selection process. Traditional selection criteria could unnecessarily eliminate interested candidates from consideration for correctional positions.	Evaluate the risks and benefits of eliminating or delaying some steps in the selection process (e.g., psychological interviews, financial stability investigations). Assess the costs and benefits of leveraging information technology to streamline the selection process. Examine the risks and benefits of removing restrictions against individuals with criminal records and substance abuse histories working in correctional positions.

NOTE: No Tier 1 needs were identified in this category.

to those currently held in restrictive housing (Hult, 2016). The panelists reported that opening opportunities to very carefully selected ex-offenders would not only increase the candidate pool—by some estimates, one-third of the adult, working-age population has some type of criminal record (Friedman, 2015)—but also demonstrate meaningful commitment to helping these individuals succeed.

ONBOARDING

Onboarding, which consists of the processes used to orient and train new staff, was discussed at length and resulted in 13 identified needs (Table 6).

Basic Training

According to the panelists, one of the major challenges facing the corrections sector is that, in general, staff do not receive adequate training prior to assignment. Funding is a key factor: Panelists reported that the sector as a whole lags behind such fields as law enforcement with respect to budgetary allocations for training. At the agency level, most lack the resources to provide the quality and amount of training really required to prepare new staff to perform well. The panelists noted that all agencies continuously seek additional funding to support their operations; however, these efforts might be more successful if there were better data to help justify the requests. In this case, the panelists called for objective assessments to quantify the impact that funding shortfalls can have on key outcomes. For example, legislatures might be more receptive to increasing agency funding if analyses demonstrate a correlation between inadequate training and such factors as offender recidivism, use of force, escapes, lawsuits, and staff misconduct. Similarly, the

panelists noted, younger generations of staff greatly value self-improvement through training opportunities, and assessments could reveal that investments in this area can pay off if those training opportunities lead to increased job satisfaction and reduced turnover.

A challenge somewhat related to these resource issues is the wide jurisdictional variation in terms of the amount and quality of training that correctional staff receive prior to their first assignment. This is perhaps not surprising, given that each state generally sets its own standards and each agency must operate within its unique resource constraints. The problem, according to the panelists, is that many new hires coming into the sector are ill-prepared for the requirements of corrections jobs. For example, most states provide corrections officers with anywhere from six to 16 weeks of training, which is not enough time to prepare staff properly, according to the panelists. As an example, panelists cited the Norwegian Correctional Service, which provides two years of training in such areas as psychology, criminology, law, human rights, and ethics prior to assignment in a facility. In an extreme contrast, new correctional officers in North Carolina currently receive only one week of orientation before assignment to a facility. Many new officers are on the job for several months before they are able to participate in the standard four-week basic training course (Alexander and Off, 2017b). Although this is an anomaly, the example highlights the pressure that some agencies face to get new staff into posts as quickly as possible in order to relieve workforce shortages. The panelists acknowledged that a two-year academy would be cost-prohibitive for most agencies in this country, but improvements are required. As a step in the right direction, the panelists suggested, minimum national standards should be established and enforced on the quality and amount of training that corrections staff receive prior to assignment, which would both provide a common baseline for competencies and contribute to professionalizing the sector.

Offsetting the Costs of Training

As noted previously, the costs of training new staff and the urgency to get these individuals on the job as quickly as possible can shorten the training pipeline. To offset some of these challenges, the panelists recommended, individuals should be allowed access to some training components at the pre-hire stage by (1) having agencies work more closely with local educational institutions (e.g., community colleges) to offer internships that include some elements of basic training to individu-

als interested in careers in corrections, and (2) delivering the significant portion of training content that is knowledge-based through low-cost, self-paced educational platforms. The panelists reported believing that these approaches could alleviate some of the post-hire burden on the agency. A related benefit of these approaches is that, through this early exposure, some individuals might come to realize that they are not well-suited for a career in corrections. Making that identification at the pre-hire stage could save resources for the agencies (e.g., by avoiding training staff members who then quickly exit the field) and benefit the individuals involved.

The panelists recognized that training new staff is a significant expense. For example, the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections has estimated that the cost to train a parole officer is \$16,000 (Stinchcomb, McCampbell, and Layman, 2006). Panelists discussed ways to mitigate the risks associated with this level of investment in light of the fact that a significant portion of new hires might not remain with an agency for long. They recommended research to study the costs, risks, and benefits of distributing some aspects of academy training over the first several years of employment. For example, if there are certain elements of basic training that could be deferred until a later date without sacrificing performance, the potential investment loss associated with staff departure could be mitigated. Panelists stressed that they were not arguing for less training, merely for an examination of approaches that could protect their investment without negative consequences to their mission.

Training Models

Needs arising from the discussion focused on the efficacy of the training methods currently used by correctional agencies. These agencies employ a variety of training delivery methods and modalities, such as lecture-style instruction, experiential learning, role-playing, and video or computer-based approaches. However, panelists identified as a challenge the lack of evidence on the effectiveness of these methods. The panelists called for research to identify the most-appropriate training methods based on the specific learning objective (e.g., knowledge transfer versus skill development). The panelists reported that the sector is generally at a disadvantage with respect to leveraging emerging technology. For example, new computer-based training technologies, such as virtual reality, have been used by the U.S. military for years and are becoming more widely used by private companies, such as Walmart and UPS

Table 6. Needs Identified Related to Onboarding

Tier	Problem or Opportunity	Associated Need
1	<p>Funding levels dedicated to educating and training the correctional workforce lag behind those for other comparable fields, most notably law enforcement.</p> <p>There is significant variation in the curricula and approaches agencies use to train and educate the correctional workforce, as well as the duration of preparation before assignment.</p> <p>Training is often impractical and unrealistic, and there is incongruity between how officers are trained and what they will experience on the job.</p>	<p>Assess the impact of inadequate training funding on the sector's ability to accomplish its mission.</p> <p>Develop minimum national standards for correctional professional education and training, including curriculum and training hours.</p> <p>Assess and validate the evidence behind the various training methods and curricula in use, as well as the timing of delivery.</p>
2	<p>The training methods used by correctional agencies are not necessarily evidence-based.</p> <p>Correctional agencies lag behind other industries in the use of new training technologies.</p> <p>The work culture in correctional agencies can be complex, and new staff are often not adequately prepared for the challenges they will face.</p> <p>Younger generations typically value self-improvement through relevant training opportunities.</p> <p>Traditional training models are inflexible and consume resources unnecessarily.</p>	<p>Research the effectiveness of various models (e.g., lecture, experiential, role-play, computer-based).</p> <p>Assess the costs and benefits of such innovations as virtual and augmented reality.</p> <p>Develop training content focused on helping new hires navigate the environment.</p> <p>Assess the costs and benefits of making training more available.</p> <p>Evaluate other models, which divide training into mandatory modules (for core competencies) and optional modules (which staff can select based on interests and desired career goals).</p>
3	<p>High turnover rates are a burden to correctional agencies in many ways, particularly with regard to the cost to fully train staff who might leave after a few years.</p> <p>Agencies lack the information needed to procure video or computer-based training programs and services.</p> <p>Online training resources are often too costly for smaller agencies.</p> <p>Funding limitations can result in a training pipeline that is too short to ensure that corrections officers are prepared to start work.</p> <p>High turnover rates make it difficult for new hires to assimilate into the workforce because veterans tend to "stick together."</p>	<p>Research the costs, risks, and benefits of distributing some aspects of "academy" training over the first several years of employment.</p> <p>Create standards that will allow agencies to effectively compare and select among competing products.</p> <p>Encourage government and industry organizations to invest in training platforms and develop content that agencies can access at little or no cost.</p> <p>Explore the viability of providing selected training at the pre-hire stage through internships and blended or self-paced learning.</p> <p>Develop best practices and supervision strategies to better integrate new hires into the work environment.</p>

(Goldstein, 2017), but are not yet applied in corrections. The panelists recommended assessments of the costs and benefits of recent innovations, such as virtual and augmented reality, to support future investments in this area. Furthermore, the panelists called for the development of technical standards in this area, which would assist agencies as they evaluate competing commercial products.

Online training, to replace or complement some instruction traditionally provided in person, could be a cost-effective strategy. However, this approach might be beyond reach for smaller agencies. To help meet the needs of these agencies, the panelists said, government and industry organizations should

invest in training platforms and develop content that could be broadly offered at no cost.

With respect to training content, panelists articulated that there is often a divergence between how staff are trained and what actually occurs in the workplace. The panelists reported that this can occur because of lack of trust in staff to use judgment to make appropriate decisions. The result is that most training tends to be framed in absolutes while being effective in the field requires navigating numerous shades of gray. Staff must therefore learn to address these situations without the benefit of the preparation that more-realistic training could provide. For example, new corrections officers are instructed to

not fraternize with inmates at all, but, while on the job, they might observe an administrator showing friendliness to an inmate by asking about his family. According to the panelists, officers are generally not trusted to develop prosocial relationships while avoiding inappropriate relationships, so training tends to be skewed toward the hard line. Furthermore, some traditional training components (e.g., marching in cadence) might not be aligned with the requirements of the modern correctional officer position. The panelists called for research to assess the extent to which the training provided to new staff is relevant, realistic, and tied to core competencies. There is also a need for research to help determine the optimal timing for the delivery of training (i.e., when staff should receive particular training).

The panelists noted that the training models used by many correctional agencies are rigid and can unnecessarily consume resources. They identified the need to evaluate alternative models that allow for greater flexibility and customization based on the goals of individual staff. The panelists recommended examining a bifurcated model consisting of mandatory and optional training. In this approach, every officer would be required to receive training on only “core content”—that is, knowledge and skills directly aligned with the competencies of his or her position. Staff would also have access to elective training content based on their interests and career goals. In this way, the expense of training would be limited to what officers need or desire.

Bringing Staff into the Fold

Two additional needs were associated with the challenges of assimilating new staff into the correctional workforce, particularly in institutional corrections. Corrections officers operate in unique environments. They generally work in stressful conditions, are exposed to the threat of physical violence and other forms of trauma, and must rely on coworkers for support and personal safety. For new staff, learning how to navigate the culture of a correctional facility can be as important as knowing how to do the job itself. The panelists reported that new hires need better preparation for these challenges and called on agencies to examine and improve their organizational cultures while providing better training and support to these individuals. Panelists identified a particular organizational dynamic that can hamper the onboarding process. They noted that veteran corrections officers tend to associate with each other and are often hesitant to engage with new officers who might

not be long for the job. Indeed, in some states, almost 50 percent of officers quit during the first year (Jenkins, 2014), so it is perhaps understandable that veterans might be reluctant to develop relationships with or seek to mentor new hires. That said, panelists articulated that it is critically important that new staff have a strong support system and not feel isolated. To help address this issue, panelists said, agencies should develop best practices and supervision strategies to integrate new hires into the workplace, and they particularly noted the role of the field training officer as one of the most important elements in the onboarding process.

RETENTION

Once corrections staff are hired, it can be difficult to retain them. Annual turnover among corrections officers averages around 20 percent nationwide (Matz et al., 2013). However, some states have reported turnover rates as high as 53 percent (Association of State Correctional Administrators, 2017b). Community supervision agencies are not immune to turnover problems. Although national data are scarce, turnover rates as high as 30 percent have been documented in Florida (Simmons, Cochran, and Blount, 1997). More recently, the turnover rate among first-year probation officers in Louisiana was 42 percent (Rico, 2017). The national turnover rate among law enforcement officers is less than 11 percent (Wareham, Smith, and Lambert, 2015).

Excessive staff turnover is a challenge for the sector in a variety of ways. For example, when agencies operate at less than capacity, staff turnover can compromise mission performance and, ultimately, public safety. Turnover is also a challenge in terms of direct and indirect costs. Direct costs include overtime expenses to cover posts, as well as the efforts to recruit, select, and train new staff. Indirect costs can include additional stress on the remaining workforce to pick up the slack, decreased morale, and loss of seasoned talent (Leip and Stinchcomb, 2013). Furthermore, when turnover leads to staffing shortages, both staff and inmates are more vulnerable to physical assaults (Bauerlein and Calvert, 2017).

The panelists identified 12 needs related to retention (Table 7), noting that, although turnover is a significant problem facing the sector, agencies in general are not dedicating the same level of resources or attention to retaining staff that they do for recruitment. The most-effective recruiting efforts can bring talented individuals to the agency, and many of these

strategies have a role in preventing turnover, but maintaining a high-quality workforce requires long-term commitment to organizational issues that affect job satisfaction and improve retention (Stinchcomb, McCampbell, and Layman, 2006). The panelists called for the promotion of evidence-based practices that can improve job satisfaction, engagement, and other factors related to low turnover intention. The panelists noted that investments in recruiting and training are inevitably wasted if agencies fail to focus on the factors that make staff want to stay.

Stressors

Stressors associated with corrections work were cited by the panelists as critical factors in staff turnover. These stressors, found in both institutional and community-based settings, are significant and can be potentially life-threatening. Ultimately, these stressors not only put individual staff at risk but also have a cumulative impact, hampering the sector's overall ability to perform its mission. Stressors can be organizational (e.g., role conflict) or operational (e.g., mandatory overtime) and often result in burnout. Direct or vicarious trauma is increasingly being recognized as an important source of stress in the correctional workplace (Lewis, 2013; Spinaris, 2013). Panelists acknowledged an increasing focus on the occupational stressors experienced by corrections staff and the impact these stressors have on turnover, but they reported that more work on these topics is required. For example, the panelists called for further examination of the costs and benefits of existing interventions, development of new strategies, and exploration of technological innovations to monitor and manage job-related stress.

Concerns about personal safety can influence turnover, according to the panelists. For example, between 57 and 73 percent of corrections officers surveyed perceived a moder-

ate to high degree of risk of victimization by inmates (Gordon, Proulx, and Grant, 2013). This perception of risk is borne out by the data; of all U.S. workers, corrections officers have one of the highest rates of nonfatal, work-related injuries (Konda et al., 2013), many of which are the result of assaults. Concerns about physical safety, if not actual injuries sustained, can lead to stress (Cullen et al., 1985), which is linked to turnover intention among corrections staff (Lambert, Hogan, and Altheimer, 2010). To support a safer work environment and improve retention, the panelists said, agencies should evaluate the effectiveness of existing officer safety tools and techniques, including self-defense training and situational awareness and personal protection technologies.

Workload Implications

Staff perceptions of workload can also be a stressor that negatively affects job satisfaction and ultimately retention, according to the panelists. Chronically underresourced agencies inevitably burden their staff through excessive workloads. This condition can result in role overload, which occurs when staff are overwhelmed by the demands of the job. For community supervision staff, this typically takes the form of high, and often unmanageable, numbers of cases. In institutional settings, understaffing and high inmate-to-officer ratios can lead to a variety of negative outcomes. In either situation, mission performance suffers, but the overload experienced can increase staff stress levels, which can lead to turnover (Simmons, Cochran, and Blount, 1997; Moon and Maxwell, 2004).

Panelists identified several needs in this area. Although they recognized that the determination of a single, appropriate staffing ratio for institutions or for probation and parole officer caseloads would be challenging, they called for an assessment and validation of existing standards. For institutions, this process should take into account a variety of factors, including the architectural design, security level, rated capacity, and technology infrastructure of the facility. In community supervision, the number of cases assigned to a probation or parole officer is only part of the analysis. Officer workload, which is highly influenced by the risk and need levels of the individuals on the caseload, is also key to the equation. Perhaps more importantly, once these standards are established and fine-tuned, there is a need to identify promising strategies that will allow agencies to meet these standards. The panelists noted that, in several states, legislatures have established maximum caseload sizes to help ensure that probation and parole officers have the bandwidth

Maintaining a high-quality workforce requires long-term commitment to organizational issues that affect job satisfaction and improve retention.

to perform their duties (Reagan, 2015). The panelists suggested research to determine the costs and benefits of “capped” caseloads and whether these approaches have any impact on retention.

Interestingly, panelists noted that staff might also experience stress when their workloads are minimal or their work is simply not challenging. This lack of stimulation is known as *role underload* and can lead to boredom or perhaps burnout, which can also negatively influence retention efforts (Lambert, Hogan, Dial, et al., 2012). Panelists called for further research to examine the impact of underutilization on staff retention.

Job Satisfaction

The panelists identified a tension between the traditional paramilitary structure of most correctional agencies and the desire of staff to participate in policy discussions and decision-making. There is evidence of the impact that participation in decisionmaking has on job stress in corrections. For example, Stohr, Lovrich, and Wilson (1994) found that lack of participation in decisionmaking increased the stress levels of jail staff. Conversely, employee participation in decisionmaking was linked to lower levels of work stress (Slate, Vogel, and Johnson, 2001). The panelists called for the development of best practices for participatory councils and other strategies to engage staff and evaluations of the impact of these interventions on staff retention.

Job satisfaction is a well-documented predictor of turnover in corrections (Lambert, 2001; Udechukwu et al., 2007), and the panelists discussed various aspects of this issue. For example, the panelists noted that agencies tend to assign staff to singular assignments (e.g., the same post month after month or a standard caseload), which can lead to dissatisfaction. They thus recommended assessments of the costs and benefits of professional development programs that offer staff the opportunity to rotate assignments and temporarily work outside their official classifications. These programs can help staff avoid stagnation and complacency, learn and appreciate other aspects of agency operations, and develop and practice new skills that can enhance their chances of future promotion.

The panelists also discussed the relationship between staff assignments and retention. Although not every agency has the luxury to match an officer to a particular post, facility, or caseload, the panelists reported that, to the extent possible, such a strategy could greatly improve job satisfaction, which could result in reduced turnover. For example, every institution

develops its own culture over time, and staff with certain personality types can thrive in some settings but be miserable in others. In community corrections, Stinchcomb, McCampbell, and Layman (2006) related an example of a probation officer who was not performing up to standards with respect to case management functions. Rather than dismiss the officer, the agency chose to leverage his strengths. The agency removed the officer’s caseload responsibilities and created the new position of “sanctions officer.” In this role, the officer’s primary functions focused on surveillance and monitoring of offenders on other officers’ caseloads. The officer excelled in his new role, and the other officers benefited from being relieved of monitoring duties. The panelists identified the need for the development of best practices to support better matching of individual staff to job posts and settings in order to improve satisfaction.

Importance of Supervisors

Relationship dynamics between staff and their immediate supervisors are key to retention efforts, the panelists noted. Although many factors are involved in individuals’ decisions, research indicates that supervisors play an important role in job satisfaction and, therefore, retention. For example, studies have linked inadequate supervisory support (Maahs and Pratt, 2001) and dissatisfaction with supervisors (Stohr, Self, and Lovrich, 1992) with negative attitudes and turnover intention. Furthermore, corrections officers who do not feel supported by their supervisors might be more likely to have attitudes that are conducive to institutional deviance (Worley and Worley, 2013). The panelists called for further research to determine the prevalence of ineffective—or poorly trained—supervisors in the sector, as well as to study the impact that the quality of supervision has on retention outcomes.

Improving the Work Environment

The panelists also reported that changes in the work environment could improve retention efforts. For example, most corrections officers work in secure areas with limited opportunity to move around or spend time outdoors. Furthermore, many older institutions lack adequate natural lighting and efficient heating or cooling and ventilation systems and can be very noisy. These harsh physical conditions can be a stressor on staff, and panelists called for the development and dissemination of best practices that agencies can employ to improve conditions. For example, they discussed the need to leverage ergonomics

Table 7. Needs Identified Related to Retention

Tier	Problem or Opportunity	Associated Need
1	<p>After dedicating significant resources to recruit and train staff, agencies often fail to recognize the value of retaining them.</p> <p>Excessive workloads and high inmate-to-officer ratios are related to a variety of negative outcomes and can hinder an organization's ability to retain staff.</p>	<p>Promote evidence-based best practices proven to improve job satisfaction, engagement, and other factors related to low turnover intention.</p> <p>Assess and validate existing standards for staffing ratios, and examine such strategies as capped caseloads to allow agencies to meet these standards.</p>
2	<p>Increasingly, staff have an expectation that they will be able to participate in agency policy and decisionmaking, particularly with respect to issues that affect their daily work experience.</p> <p>Poor supervisors have a negative impact on staff retention, but the magnitude is unknown.</p> <p>Adverse work conditions can have a negative impact on staff retention.</p> <p>Singular focus on one job assignment can lead to dissatisfaction and ultimately turnover.</p> <p>Younger generations of workers are more apt to "job-hop," or frequently change organizations, than previous generations are.</p>	<p>Develop best practices for "participatory councils," and evaluate the impact that these interventions have on staff retention.</p> <p>Conduct research to quantify the prevalence of ineffective supervision and its impact on turnover.</p> <p>Develop best practices with respect to the measures agencies can take to improve conditions (e.g., remote working where possible, improved ergonomics).</p> <p>Assess the costs and benefits of professional development programs that offer rotations to other assignments, allowing staff to expand their skills.</p> <p>Research these generational shifts and how they apply to the corrections sector, and determine what strategies can reduce turnover.</p>
3	<p>Stress is very common in corrections work and, if not properly managed, can lead to burnout and turnover.</p> <p>Safety concerns have an impact on corrections staff and turnover intention.</p> <p>A poor fit between a new hire and the job post and office or institution can negatively affect retention.</p> <p>Some agencies have age restrictions on staff (i.e., mandatory retirement), which affect their ability to retain a qualified workforce.</p> <p>Staff who are not challenged in their work or those with inadequate workloads are also stressed.</p>	<p>Assess the costs and benefits of various interventions (including training and support to families) and technological approaches to monitor and manage job-related stress.</p> <p>Assess the efficacy, costs, and benefits of existing self-defense training, as well as technologies that support situational awareness and personal protection.</p> <p>Develop best practices to support better matching of new staff to job posts and settings.</p> <p>Reevaluate the costs and benefits of such restrictions.</p> <p>Assess the effects of staff underutilization on retention.</p>

to make the workplace more comfortable. They also emphasized that managers should take a more active role in looking for opportunities to improve work conditions (e.g., something as simple as recognizing that an officer manning an outdoor post lacks adequate shelter). Work conditions are not nearly as challenging for probation and parole officers, but the panelists recognized that increased flexibility in terms of where work is performed could boost retention efforts. Currently, most probation and parole agencies require staff to report to and work out of an office. The panelists called for the development of best practices for probation and parole officers to work remotely, arguing that positioning officers in the field (with appropri-

ate technology support) could have benefits to the employee in terms of increased flexibility and independence and to the agency in terms of increased productivity and reduced infrastructure and overhead costs.

Reconsidering Age Restrictions

In some jurisdictions, mandatory retirement provisions can also inadvertently impede an agency's ability to retain staff who might otherwise choose to remain on duty. For example, the mandatory retirement age is 57 for federal law enforcement officers, including probation, pretrial, and corrections officers

(5 U.S.C. § 8335). The Massachusetts Department of Corrections requires separation at age 65 (Massachusetts Public Employee Retirement Administration Commission, 2017). These policies, according to the panelists, might be outdated and should be reevaluated. Rather than using a fixed age, “fit-for-duty” assessments might be a better way to determine whether staff can continue to perform the requisite duties. This issue will become increasingly salient as the general population ages and, as a result, works longer. Indeed, BLS reports that the labor force participation rate for the 65-and-older age group is projected to increase from 19.3 percent in 2016 to 21.8 percent by 2024 (BLS, 2017c). Although mandatory retirement is not usually considered within the scope of the larger issue of retention, these policies can result in the unnecessary loss of seasoned staff and exacerbate the challenge of maintaining adequate staffing levels.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Developing the next generation of leaders is critical in any industry, but the corrections sector faces particular challenges. To be effective, correctional supervisors, managers, and administrators must master a wide-ranging set of skills. Beyond the responsibility to achieve the sector’s core mission set, they also have to perform administrative functions, such as setting budgets and priorities and engaging with external entities, such as legislatures, offender advocacy groups, and community organizations (Stinchcomb, Smith, et al., 2011). These leaders must also effectively develop and nurture staff. As previously noted, lack of training and skill in this area negatively affect retention efforts. In light of the sector’s complexity, the skills of corrections leaders are critical.

The panelists noted that the sector is falling short in several areas and identified nine needs that should be addressed (Table 8). Overall, the panelists reported, the sector does not place sufficient emphasis on identifying promising staff and preparing them for leadership roles. Several factors can contribute to this challenge. For example, correctional agencies often

operate in crisis mode—they tend to be perpetually underfunded, overworked, and subject to intense public scrutiny. Furthermore, turnover among key agency executives can undermine continuity and strategic management efforts. Indeed, the average tenure of a state department of corrections head is less than four years (Innes, 2015). In this context, it is not surprising that leadership development objectives, though critically important, can fall to the wayside. Although this could be true of the sector as a whole, the panelists noted that some agencies might be achieving greater success. The panelists, therefore, called for the evaluation and promotion of best practices for leadership development to serve as guidance for agencies that struggle in this area.

Identifying Leaders

In response to the challenge of cultivating a leadership pipeline, the panelists suggested, agencies should start identifying and grooming staff for promotional opportunities when they first join the organization. This approach does have risks, however: The panelists recognized that selecting individuals for grooming opportunities could create tension in the workplace among those who are not selected. To combat this, staff must perceive the process to be fair. Panelists suggested that agencies clearly specify the training, experience, education requirements, and competencies desired by the agency to promote transparency. Furthermore, agencies should make their staff aware of internal professional development opportunities or those with professional associations or other external groups. The panelists stressed that, although the sector can improve the way it prepares staff for leadership roles, an equal burden remains with the individual—each has a personal responsibility for one’s own development and advancement.

The panelists noted other challenges with respect to the way agencies currently identify staff for promotion. Although resources funded through such organizations as NIC and the Bureau of Justice Assistance identify core competencies for correctional leaders (Stinchcomb, Smith, et al., 2011; Campbell et al., 2006), the panelists reported that the selection processes

[Mandatory retirement] policies can result in the unnecessary loss of seasoned staff and exacerbate the challenge of maintaining adequate staffing levels.

used by many agencies fail to emphasize these competencies. For example, in some jurisdictions, staff must score well on a promotional examination to qualify for advancement. In many cases, the panelists reported, such tests are an inadequate determinant of readiness for a supervisory position. Similarly, there can be a tendency to promote someone based on how well he or she is performing in their current job, with little consideration given to whether that person would succeed in a different role with new demands.

Furthermore, panelists noted that performance evaluation processes, which provide critical input into promotional decisions, are too focused on administrative issues and not focused enough on performance. They reported that evaluation processes should instead center on the core competencies for each position or role. To assist the sector in making this shift, panelists said, research should examine and identify the most-appropriate performance measures for each position, which would provide an agency with a starting point for developing measures that reflect its unique needs.

Preparing Leaders

According to the panelists, the sector's shortfalls in preparing new leaders mean that newly promoted staff must learn their new roles on the job, which can be detrimental to both the individual and the agency. For example, one study found that 90 percent of new wardens did not receive any orientation related to assuming their positions (McCampbell, Hall, and Layman, 2002). The panelists identified the need for an assessment of the adequacy of training for new supervisors and the

[Panelists suggested establishing] a national correctional academy that would provide high-quality, standardized management-level training to staff from agencies across the country.

development of strategies for overall improvement. One such approach, promoted by the panelists, is the establishment of a national correctional academy that would provide high-quality, standardized management-level training to staff from agencies across the country. The general concept was first introduced by Chief Justice Warren Burger, and his efforts helped lead to the creation of NIC in 1974 (Jacobs and Cooperman, 2012). Although NIC and other organizations are providing some degree of management training for the sector, there remains no national institution to identify needs, develop curricula, and deliver training to a large number of staff. The panelists noted that, despite the fact that the United States spends more than \$71 billion on corrections each year (Stullich, Morgan, and Schak, 2016), there is very little investment in training corrections leaders on a national level. By way of comparison, the NIC Training Academy has an annual budget of approximately \$2.5 million, whereas the Federal Bureau of Investigation's National Academy has \$75 million per year (Jacobs and Cooperman, 2012). The panelists reported that the corrections sector needs a national academy similar in structure and support to the Federal Bureau of Investigation Academy and to American military graduate colleges. Panelists cited these examples as well-funded leadership institutions that raise the level of competence and professionalism in their respective areas.

Disincentives to Promotion

Finally, the panelists discussed a variety of factors that can deter the best and brightest from pursuing leadership roles. Some disincentives are particular to institutional corrections and the requirement to staff facilities on an ongoing basis. Difficulties maintaining adequate staffing can lead to overtime, which can significantly increase officer compensation. As a result, officers can easily double their base salaries by working overtime. These officers can become the highest-paid employees in an institution, outearning middle and upper management, including the warden or superintendent, who are typically ineligible for overtime pay. This can create a significant financial disincentive to seeking promotion. With the loss of overtime pay, some staff effectively take a pay cut when they assume the increased responsibilities that come with new positions. As talented staff forgo promotional opportunities, less qualified staff can fill management positions, which can create other problems for the agency. Furthermore, the structure of government pensions in some jurisdictions is such that, as officers are promoted

Table 8. Needs Identified Related to Leadership Development

Tier	Problem or Opportunity	Associated Need
1	<p>Correctional agencies do not place sufficient emphasis on leadership and management training.</p> <p>Existing resources that support leadership development are often out of date (e.g., NIC last published <i>Correctional Leadership Competencies for the 21st Century</i> in 2006 [Campbell et al., 2006]).</p> <p>The staff evaluation processes used by most agencies do not focus on the most-important competencies.</p> <p>Line and mid-level supervisors lack the skills needed to mentor new hires effectively.</p>	<p>Evaluate and promote best practices for leadership development within the sector.</p> <p>Reevaluate and update these resources as necessary.</p> <p>Examine the most-appropriate performance measures by which to evaluate each position.</p> <p>Assess the adequacy of training for new supervisors and develop strategies for improvement.</p>
2	<p>There is great discrepancy in the quality and amount of training new correctional managers receive, but, in general, the preparation is inadequate.</p> <p>Correctional agencies are often passive or reactive with respect to preparing staff for promotion and leadership opportunities, often waiting until reassignment is urgently needed.</p> <p>Newly promoted supervisors often receive inadequate training on managing staff.</p>	<p>Develop a national correctional academy for management-level training.</p> <p>Assess the prevalence of this organizational characteristic, and develop best practices to support continuous readiness activities well before they are needed.</p> <p>Investigate the efficacy of relatively quick and accessible options, such as the <i>One Minute Manager</i> series.</p>
3	<p>There are inherent disincentives for promotion in institutional corrections (e.g., less overtime, reduced retirement benefits).</p> <p>There are inherent disincentives for promotion in community corrections (e.g., perception that supervisory positions require them to be “tied to the office” in contrast with line staff, who have more freedom and flexibility out in the field).</p>	<p>Examine these disincentives to determine the scope of the problem and their impact on the organization’s ability to develop leaders.</p> <p>Examine these disincentives to determine the scope of the problem and their impact on the organization’s ability to develop leaders.</p>

and have less direct contact with inmates (and therefore less potential for injury), their retirement benefits are reduced. These factors can deter staff from seeking advancement and, in some cases, have prompted senior staff to request voluntary demotions to improve their compensation and benefit packages (Lord, 2012).

These particular issues are not as prevalent in community corrections, in which overtime is typically not mandatory, although supervisors do give up the ability to earn overtime pay. Panelists highlighted other disincentives for probation and parole officers to seek advancement. For example, supervisors are often relegated to the office and lose the independence and flexibility that comes with fieldwork. In addition, supervisors spend much more time on administrative functions and less time interacting directly with offenders, the latter being central to the reason many officers enter the field. To address these needs, panelists said, agencies should examine these and other perceived disincentives to promotion to determine the scope of the problem, its impact on an organization’s ability to develop

leaders, and identification of potential strategies to remove barriers.

MISCONDUCT

Although the majority of corrections staff are dedicated to their missions and carry out their roles and duties ethically and faithfully, criminal and unethical behavior of a subset of the sector’s membership is an unfortunate reality (Worley and Worley, 2013). Misconduct can occur at any level within an agency and can take a variety of forms, including inappropriate relationships with offenders, brutality, neglect, introduction of contraband, and financial malfeasance. The actions of this small subset tarnish the reputation of the sector as a whole. The consequences are significant, particularly when high-profile cases make headlines.

During discussions, the panelists identified five needs related to addressing staff misconduct (Table 9).

An agency with a culture that not only supports and rewards positive behavior but also encourages the reporting of misconduct when it occurs is likely to have fewer and less significant problems than an agency without this type of culture.

Pre-Hire Screening

Although misconduct will always be present to some degree, these behaviors are generally symptomatic of larger workforce problems that agencies must address in each stage of the process (recruitment, selection, onboarding, retention, and leadership development). The greatest opportunities exist, of course, before an individual is hired. Panelists noted that a recruitment strategy focused on identifying individuals with the desired competencies and evidence-based selection criteria and screening tools designed to weed out candidates likely to struggle are key. In an extreme but illustrative example, an investigation of a corrections officer convicted of committing felony larceny in the course of her duties revealed that the officer had at least 20

misdemeanor convictions *prior* to being hired (Alexander and Off, 2017a).

Ethics Training

After hire, adequate initial and ongoing training is critical. Panelists noted wide variation in the manner in which agencies provide ethics training to staff, and, therefore, some staff could be inadequately prepared to identify and avoid compromising situations. To address this issue, panelists said, agencies should develop best practices for ethics and related training, which would prepare staff to protect themselves from criminal and civil liability. Panelists also discussed the wide variation in how agencies respond to incidents of misconduct and identified the need for national standards on policy and appropriate interventions.

Organizational Culture

Panelists also discussed the importance of agency organizational culture. They reported that an agency with a culture that not only supports and rewards positive behavior but also encourages the reporting of misconduct when it occurs is likely to have fewer and less significant problems than an agency without this type of culture. Staff must be encouraged to hold each other accountable and must feel that management is truly receptive to negative reports and willing to address problems directly.

Panelists also considered the underlying causes of staff misconduct. Studies have shed some light on the issue. For example, research has indicated that officers who do not feel supported by their supervisors might be more likely to have attitudes that are conducive to institutional deviance (Worley

Table 9. Needs Identified Related to Misconduct

Tier	Problem or Opportunity	Associated Need
2	There is insufficient evidence regarding the causality behind staff misconduct. Existing staff accountability systems do not adequately prevent or detect staff misconduct.	Research the root causes of misconduct so that appropriate interventions can be developed and implemented. Develop best practices for ensuring staff accountability (e.g., offender and staff exit interview reporting).
3	Staff misconduct can result in turnover; however, technology can promote accountability. There is significant variation in policy approaches to ethics training and response to misconduct. Corrections staff are not sufficiently aware of the legal liabilities associated with their actions or inactions.	Evaluate the risks, costs, and benefits of staff use of body cameras to prevent and detect misconduct. Develop minimum national standards for policy, practice, and appropriate response. Identify best practices for training staff to protect themselves from criminal and civil liability.

NOTE: No Tier 1 needs were identified in this category.

and Worley, 2013). High levels of job stress and burnout can be a factor. Officers who experience these symptoms have not only the potential for decreased organizational commitment but also for increased counterproductive attitudes and behaviors that can manifest in misconduct (Finney et al., 2013). Although research can identify some correlates, the panelists called for further inquiry into the underlying causes of staff misconduct, which would inform the development of effective interventions.

Accountability

Finally, panelists identified the need for improved accountability systems bolstered by technology. For example, they cited body cameras as one tool that, if introduced and implemented effectively, could enhance transparency and positively influence staff behavior. Panelists also discussed strategies to improve the detection of misconduct, if only after the fact. They identified the need to develop best practices for such processes as exit interviews with staff and offenders because, in light of their pending separation, they might be more likely to report misconduct they have witnessed.

MORE AND BETTER DATA

As panelists discussed the challenges related to the corrections workforce, a theme that was not tied to the workshop structure based on workforce stages emerged: the sector's need for more and better data on workforce-related issues. Three needs were identified that apply to multiple stages of the workforce process (Table 10). Before a problem can be addressed properly, it first must be understood as well as possible. Therefore, it is neces-

sary to gather and analyze relevant data on underlying issues and contributing factors, which can inform the development of targeted interventions.

The panelists reported that there is a scarcity of national data across the various components of the corrections sector. For example, although the Association of State Correctional Administrators conducts periodic surveys on turnover and vacancy rates among corrections officers in state departments of correction, and BLS provides data on average salaries for various correctional positions, there is little information available for county jail and probation and parole staff. Standardized, national data are needed so that agencies can benchmark and sector trends can be more easily identified. The panelists called for the collection of more-comprehensive employment data, which would be analyzed and disseminated on an annual basis.

The panelists discussed the generational differences in the workforce and the need to better understand, attract, and retain newer generations (millennials and Generation Z'ers) to careers in corrections. As the panelists considered the characteristics generally assigned to these groups, (e.g., strong desire for work/life balance, need for flexible schedules, distaste for hierarchical organizations), they noted conflict with the traditional structure of corrections work. The panelists called for research that seeks to quantify this apparent dissonance and measures the impact of the current organizational environment on the ability to recruit and retain talent.

Finally, although considerable research has been conducted on turnover intention among corrections staff, panelists reported that more data are needed on why individuals are initially attracted to correctional careers, why they choose to separate at various intervals, and what types of opportunities they leave to pursue. These data, the panelists believed, could

Table 10. Needs Identified Related to More and Better Data

Tier	Problem or Opportunity	Associated Need
2	<p>Statistics on the correctional workforce (e.g., salary data, vacancy rates, turnover rates) are stored in separate silos and are difficult to locate and perform comparative analyses on because of the lack of standard definitions of terms.</p> <p>Insufficient data exist on the reasons that corrections staff originally apply for positions and why they eventually choose to separate.</p> <p>Generational research suggests that the traditional characteristics of the corrections sector (e.g., hierarchical structure, lack of technology, lack of flexibility, inability to participate in decisionmaking) might be in conflict with the needs of many younger workers.</p>	<p>Create processes for annual reports that reflect the state of the entire correctional workforce.</p> <p>Conduct multijurisdictional, longitudinal research using entry and exit interviews to gain insight and to guide agency recruitment and retention strategies.</p> <p>Conduct research on the impact of the traditional correctional workplace environment on the sector's ability to recruit new talent.</p>

NOTE: No Tier 1 needs were identified in this category.

help agencies better craft their recruitment and retention strategies.

CONCLUSION

The corrections sector has an enormous and complex responsibility for public safety. The sector is charged with protecting the public, but, at the same time, it must also prepare those under correctional control for successful, law-abiding lives in the community. Corrections staff, both in institutions and in the community, are essential to this mission. For the sector to operate at its best and produce the type of outcomes that society expects, it is critically important for the sector to develop a high-quality workforce.

The panelists discussed a wide range of issues and identified a multitude of needs that, if addressed, could help build a quality workforce now and into the future. From them, 13 needs clustered as the top priorities of the panel. Within this grouping of top-priority needs, five overarching themes emerged.

Clarify the Mission of the Sector

Two top-tier needs related to changes required on the macro level. The panelists reported that the sector operates in a rapidly changing environment and would benefit from a clear, cohesive and common vision for the future. This vision can help provide a road map for agencies with respect to workforce requirements to accomplish their mission. Overall, the panelists noted, institutional corrections generally prioritizes its custodial or surveillance objectives over its behavioral change objectives. Panelists theorized that a shift in orientation might be key to reverse the long-standing difficulties the sector has faced in recruiting talent to corrections officer positions. They called for research to determine whether a shift toward an increased human-services role, along with a corresponding change in the competencies sought, would help the sector recruit a broader base of new talent.

Improve Staff Competencies

The corrections sector currently suffers from low levels of professionalism, according to the panelists. This condition is most evident in corrections officers. The panelists called for the reevaluation of existing or the creation of new competency

standards for various correctional positions. These competencies should be better aligned with the sector's vision. Furthermore, agency processes for evaluating staff performance should be focused on these competencies, which they do not necessarily do at this point.

Better Prepare Staff

Three of the top-tier needs related to perceived deficiencies in the training and preparation of new staff. Overall, the panelists articulated, the level of funding dedicated to training is insufficient, particularly when compared with that in other criminal justice professions. In response, the panelists called for an assessment of the relationships between funding levels, standard training, and key outcomes. The panelists also noted that the significant jurisdictional variations in the curricula (content and length) and training modalities yield uneven training across the sector. As a result, the panelists said, agencies identified the need to assess and validate the training approaches used by the sector and to develop national curriculum standards for correctional education.

Improve Work Environment and Conditions

The panelists identified three top-tier needs intended to improve the work experience, which should positively affect staff retention. Validated workload standards and ratios—coupled with strategies to allow agencies to meet them—are needed to ensure that staff can function in a safe environment with adequate bandwidth to fulfill their responsibilities and without undue stress. Finally, the panelists reported that younger generations of employees are most attracted to positions that allow them to actively participate in decisionmaking processes, particularly with respect to issues that directly affect them. The panelists recognized that traditional operating structures do not mesh well with this desire and called for the development of best practices for pushing decisionmaking authority down to the lowest possible levels.

Develop Future Leaders

Leadership development is critical to all organizations, but, the panelists reported, the sector generally does a poor job preparing staff for supervisory and management roles. Three top-tier needs fell into this theme. The panelists called for the creation and promotion of best practices for leadership development.

The panelists also recommended assessments of the adequacy of training for new supervisors, the development of strategies for improvement, and the compilation of best practices for leadership development. Finally, the panelists noted that, although resources exist, such as the *Correctional Leadership Competencies for the 21st Century* report (Campbell et al., 2006), there is a need for publishers to review and revise these documents in order to maintain relevance.

Final Thought

The mission of the corrections sector is, to be certain, challenging and complex under the best of conditions. Human capital is critical to this mission. That the sector struggles to recruit, prepare, and retain talent only makes it more difficult to achieve its public safety objectives. The needs identified in this report can, if met, help to address this challenge and reinforce the ability of the sector to meet the goals society depends on it to achieve.

APPENDIX. TECHNICAL METHODS

This appendix presents additional detail on the panel process, needs identification, and prioritization carried out to develop the research agenda presented in the report. The overall approach and methodology is similar to other research conducted under the PCJNI. As a result, the text in this appendix draws heavily on similar descriptions in Hollywood, Boon, et al. (2015); Hollywood, Woods, et al. (2015); Jackson et al. (2015); and other PCJNI efforts (RAND Corporation, undated).

Pre-Workshop Activities

University of Denver staff recruited the panel members by extending invitations to subject-matter experts identified

through existing professional and social networks and by reviewing literature published on the topic. Those who accepted the invitations were provided with read-ahead materials and were given an opportunity to identify the issues and topics that they felt would be important to discuss during the workshop. Prior to the workshop, the 13 selected individuals responded with feedback regarding the topics they deemed worthy of further discussion. A summary of the feedback is discussed in the “Methodology” section of the main report.

During the workshop, participants collectively reviewed the list of “pain points” and issues that they provided prior to the workshop. While conducting this review, they suggested additional areas worthy of research or investment. These areas were recorded by the facilitators and ultimately became the problems or opportunities and needs that were prioritized by the panelists. Workshop participants also considered whether there were areas that were not included in the existing list and suggested new ones. The basic outline for each day is provided in Table A.1.

Prioritization of Needs

To develop and prioritize a list of technology and policy areas that are likely to benefit from research and development investment, the panelists discussed and refined issues and problems in each category and identified potential needs (e.g., solutions) that could address each of them. Once the group had compiled and refined its list of issues and needs, the issues and needs were converted into a web-based Delphi instrument (using the Qualtrics online survey service).

Each panelist was asked to use the instrument to individually score each issue and its associated need using a 1-to-9 scale for the following dimensions: (1) importance, (2) technical feasibility, and (3) operational feasibility. For the importance dimension, participants were instructed that 1 was a “low” score and 9 was a “high” score. Participants were also told to score that importance dimension with a 1 if the solution would

Table A.1 Workshop Agenda

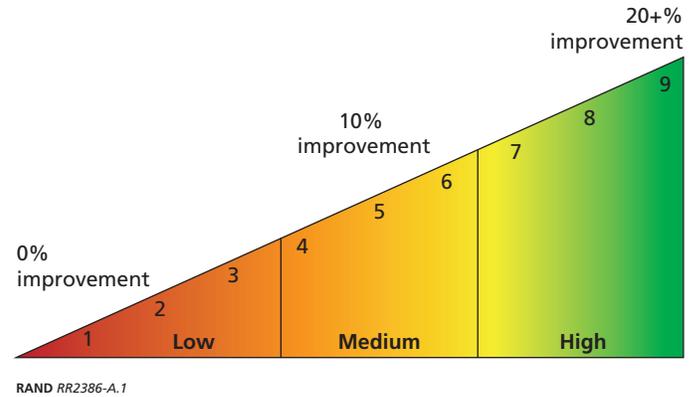
Day 1		Day 2	
8:30	Welcome and Introductions	8:30	Needs Discussion
9:30	Needs Discussion	10:30	Review and Final Brainstorming
11:30	Lunch	11:30	Working Lunch
1:00	Needs Discussion	12:00	Prioritize Needs
5:00	Adjourn	1:30	Wrap-Up and Next Steps
		2:00	Adjourn

have little or no impact on the problem and with a 9 if the solution would reduce the impact of the problem by at least 20 to 30 percent. Figure A.1 is the visual that was presented to the participants to guide their responses for the importance rating. The technical feasibility dimension represents the participants' assessment of how hard the need would be to address, shown as a probability of technical success from 10 percent (1 on the rating scale) to 90 percent (9 on the rating scale). Operational feasibility assumes that the “technology” has been created and asks participants to estimate how likely it would be that the solution would be operationalized or adopted and is framed as a probability from 10 percent to 90 percent.

When the first Delphi round was completed, the panelists' responses and comments were anonymously collected and summarized. The summary contained a “kernel density” distribution figure (an example kernel density figure is provided as Figure A.2) and the panel's comments for each issue and need. This summary was used to facilitate discussion among the panelists for the needs that had the most disagreement, either in the area of payoff or in the probability of success. The purpose of the discussion was to encourage the panelists to discuss their differences and to attempt to move toward consensus. During each discussion, panelists were asked to return to the Delphi tool to provide a second round of responses while keeping the group's collective response and any discussion in mind.

Figure A.2 is an example of one of the questions presented to the group prior to providing their second-round answers. Once the round 2 responses were collected, they were ranked by calculating an expected value using the method outlined in Jackson et al. (2015). Specifically, for each question, the payoff, technical, and operational feasibilities

Figure A.1. Guide for Selecting Payoff Dimensions

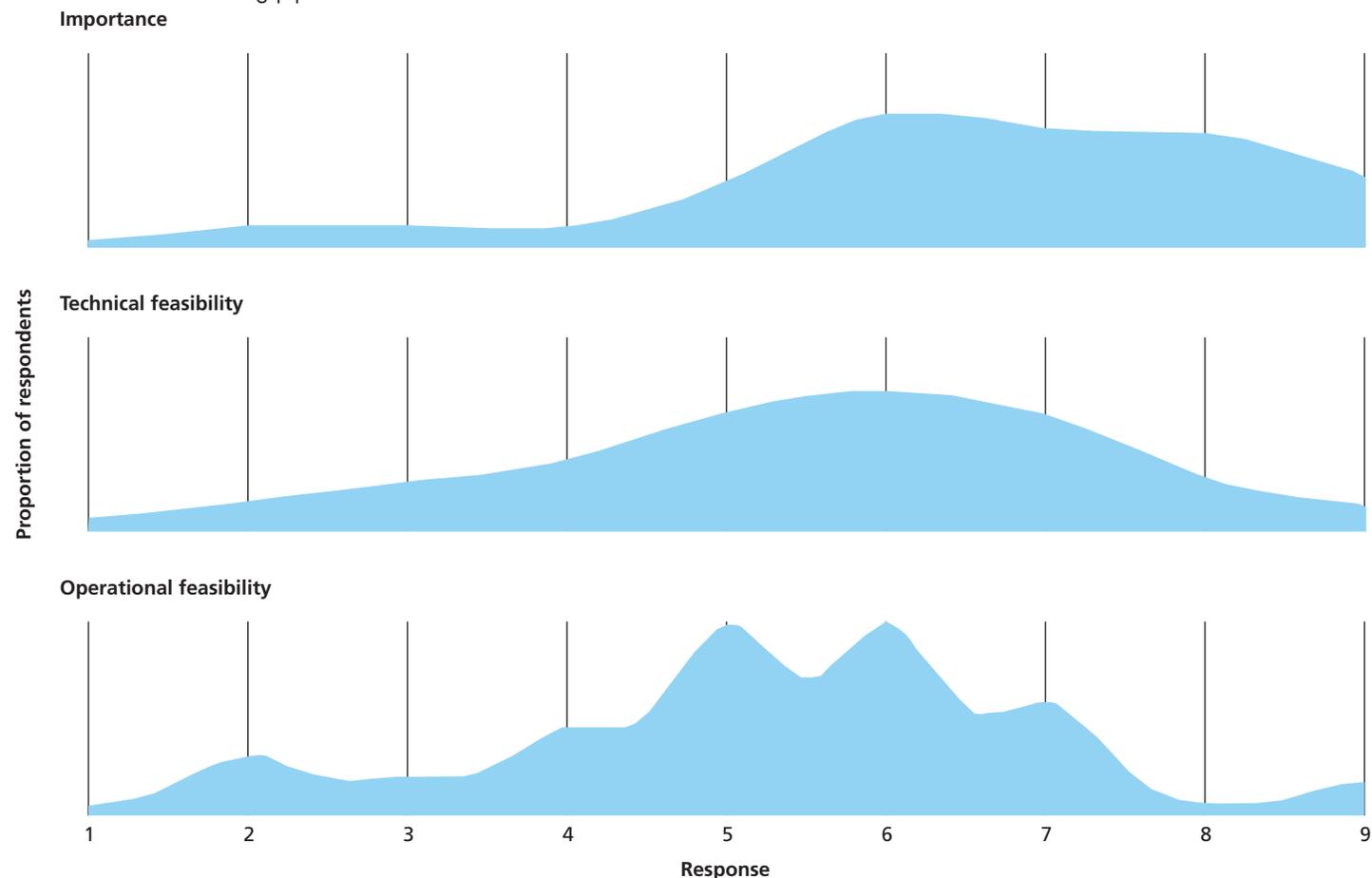


were multiplied together, and the median of that product represented the overall priority for that item. Then, the resulting prioritization scores were clustered using a hierarchical clustering algorithm. The algorithm was the “ward.D” spherical algorithm from the “stats” library in the R statistical package, version 3.4.1. We prefer it to minimize within-cluster variance when determining the breaks between tiers. The choice of three tiers is arbitrary but was made in part to remain consistent across the set of technology workshops conducted for NIJ as a part of the PCJNI effort. Also, the choice of three tiers represents a manageable system for policymakers. Specifically, the top tier consists of the priorities that should be the primary policymaking focus, the middle tier should be examined closely, and the final tier is probably not worth much attention in the near term. Figure A.3 shows the distribution of the needs by the expected-value score. The height of a bar indicates the number of needs that had that score and the color of a bar indicates the tier to which the need was ultimately assigned by the clustering algorithm.

Figure A.2. Example Post-Round 1 Delphi Summary

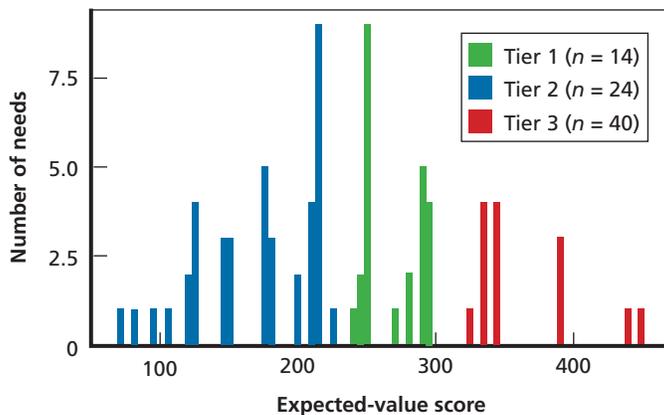
Problem or opportunity: Training pipelines are too short to ensure that corrections officers are ready to start work.

Associated need: Integrate onboarding training with local education programs (e.g., as internships) to reduce the length and cost of the education and training pipeline.



RAND RR2386-A.2

Figure A.3. Distribution of the Clustered Needs Following Round 2



RAND RR2386-A.3

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About This Report

On behalf of the U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice (NIJ), the RAND Corporation, in partnership with the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), RTI International, and the University of Denver, is carrying out a research effort to assess and prioritize technology and related needs across the criminal justice community. This initiative is a component of the National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center (NLECTC) System and is intended to support innovation within the criminal justice enterprise. For more information about the NLECTC Priority Criminal Justice Needs Initiative, see www.rand.org/jie/justice-policy/projects/priority-criminal-justice-needs.

This report is one product of that effort. It presents the results of an expert panel discussion focused on identifying and prioritizing ways to address workforce concerns in the corrections sector. This report and the results it presents should be of interest to planners from corrections agencies, research and operational criminal justice agencies at the federal level, private-sector technology providers, and policymakers active in the criminal justice field. Mentions of products do not represent approval or endorsement by NIJ or the RAND Corporation.



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