

**Project Offender Work and Education Ready
(POWER)**

Designing a workforce education and training program that reduces
recidivism, addresses the needs of Montana offenders, and meets
local labor demands

Prepared for the Montana Correctional Enterprises Advisory Council,
Montana Department of Corrections Management Team, and
the Montana Prison Issues Board

by

Donci Bardash, Federal Grants Coordinator
Montana Department of Corrections



Purpose

Now's the time to explore the *full potential* of Montana's workforce education and training program as a new 3-year grant application is developed for the US Department of Education's Youthful Offenders Grant (CFDA 84.331A). Let's think BIG and BOLD!

Background

Since 2003, the Montana Department of Corrections has received \$403,054 in federal funding through the Youthful Offenders grant, yet has struggled to utilize funding for promising, proven programs. Of the funds that are from closed grants (\$266,756), \$105,534 of unspent funds (or 39.6% of total awards) were reverted back to US Department of Education.

	<u>Total Award</u>	<u>Funds Reverted</u>
2008 Award	\$65,981	Open
2007 Award	\$70,317	Open
2006 Award	\$67,453	\$39,299
2005 Award	\$74,061	\$66,235
2004 Award	\$51,941	\$0
2003 Award	\$10,303	\$0
Total	\$403,054	\$105,534

You are taking people who are using tax dollars, and you're converting them to people who are paying tax dollars. Criminal justice policy is economic policy.

John Nally, Director of Education
Indiana Dept of Corrections

Due to a number of contributing factors including a decentralized education department, unclear long-term vision, and turn-over of grant management staff, the agency has taken a reactionary approach of grant management and design rather than a proactive approach rooted in evidence-based practices and the agency's mission.

In 2007, Montana Correctional Enterprises (MCE), under Gayle Lambert's leadership, took the agency's Youthful Offenders grant program under its wing. Since then, funds have supported two projects: (1) independent study through Ohio University, and (2) Training Offenders for

If you can see the worth in everyone and understand and try to help them, they will succeed.

Aaron Scott
MCE participant, offender

Transition (TOT) through Montana State University-Billings, College of Professional Studies. Under MCE administration, fewer grant funds have been reverted and more offenders have participated in the program.

In the spring of 2009, the US Department of Education will post a grant solicitation, reflecting federal program revisions driven by the recently adopted 2008 Higher Education Amendment. In preparation for the anticipated solicitation, the Montana Department of Corrections (DOC) seeks direction from the MCE Advisory Council, DOC Management Team, and Prison Issues Board on the scope of the program. Recommendations will provide the basis for the agency's 2009 application.

Overview of Grant

The Montana Department of Corrections receives a formula grant from the US Department of Education for incarcerated youth offenders. The objective of this grant is to assist and encourage incarcerated youths to acquire educational and job skills through the pursuit of post-secondary education certificates, Associate of arts degrees, and bachelor degrees through an accredited



program. Up to \$1500 is available annually per offender for tuition and essential supplies. An additional \$300 is available annually for related services such as life skills, parenting, or career counseling. Offenders must enroll during incarceration and may continue through probation and/or parole. Priority is given to offenders who are pursuing a certificate, Associate's or bachelor's degree. Guidance can be found at <http://www.ed.gov/programs/transitiontraining/index.html>.

Current funding for The Montana Department of Corrections is:

Award Date	Federal Amount	De-obligation Date
7/1/2007	\$70,317.00	9/30/2009
7/1/2008	\$65,981.00	9/30/2010

Effective July 2009, the grant will expand to cover offenders 35 years of age and under, however an exclusion will be added for sexual and violent offenders. This will increase the number of eligible offenders to approximately 1,300. Further emphasis may be placed on credit and certificate programs. In addition, the annual tuition allotment will increase to \$3,000 per offender. Grant awards are not expected to increase. See Figure Two of appendix for further detail.

Moving Forward

DOC should consider many issues when designing a workforce education and training program. The ultimate goals of the program should be to increase an offender’s chance of securing stable employment in the community upon release, which will reduce recidivism, address the needs of Montana offenders, improve the community, protect public safety, and meet local labor demands.

Vision

It’s imperative to start any project with a vision. According to Bradford and Duncan, “a ***Vision statement*** outlines what the organization wants to be. It concentrates on the future. It is a source of inspiration. It provides clear decision-making criteria.”¹

Recommendation: Adopt a vision statement for POWER.

Example- By providing meaningful workforce training and education through community partnerships, POWER will demonstrate that offenders can succeed in their communities upon release. By gaining work skills and education while incarcerated, offenders will be able to secure steady employment that provides a living wage, contribute to the local economy, increase self-esteem, and decrease recidivism.

Selecting Areas of Study and Project Scope

The US Department of Education has collected promising practices from several states on how Youthful Offender grant funds are used. The majority of state programs are a collaboration between a corrections department and community colleges. The following recommendations represent a portion of those highlighted in the report.

Committed to open access, community colleges are a natural partner for prisons needing support in providing correctional education.

“Prison and Community College Partnerships”
US Dept of Education



Areas of Study

Areas of study should be thoughtfully planned. If offenders gain education and training for a career in need, they will be more likely to secure stable employment upon reentry to the community. This will also provide an employment pool to local communities, bringing benefit to local businesses and a community at-large. The report also found that “inmates were more likely to participate in programs if they believed their participation could help them secure employment after release.”²

Recommendation: Narrow courses of study to correspond with Montana job projections.						
Short-term On-the-Job Training		Moderate-term On-the-Job Training		Long-term On-the-Job Training	Vocational Training	Associate’s Degree
Retail	Housecleaner	Truck driver	Painter	Carpenter	Auto technician	RN
Childcare	Nurse aid	Bookkeeping	Assembler	Electrician	Hairdresser	Computer support
Cashier	Office clerk	Admin assistant	Cement	Plumber	Real estate agent	
Waitress	Cook	Construction laborer		Welder	LPN	
Janitor	Teller	Customer service	Maintenance	Cabinetmaker	Fitness trainer	
Landscaping	Hotel/motel clerk	Social service			Addictions	
Food prep	Laborer	Construction equipment operator			Counselor	

Montana Job Projections^{3, 4}

In an effort to increase an offender’s ability to obtain a living wage upon reentry, New Mexico has limited program areas to those that lead to a career with an average wage of at least \$9.00 per hour. The following table excludes jobs earning less than \$8.00 per hour.

Recommendation: Further narrow courses of study to jobs with potential to earn a “living wage.”						
Short-term On-the-Job Training		Moderate-term On-the-Job Training		Long-term On-the-Job Training	Vocational Training	Associate’s Degree
Retail	Housecleaner	Truck driver	Painter	Carpenter	Auto technician	RN
Childcare	Nurse aid	Bookkeeping	Assembler	Electrician	Hairdresser	Computer support
Cashier	Office clerk	Admin assistant	Cement	Plumber	Real estate agent	
Waitress	Laborer	Construction laborer		Welder	LPN	
Janitor	Teller	Customer service	Maintenance	Cabinetmaker	Fitness trainer	
Landscaping	Hotel/motel clerk	Social service		Cook	Addictions	
Food prep		Construction equipment operator			Counselor	

Montana Job Projections⁵

Many careers, such as teaching or accounting, may exclude offenders from employment. For this reason, it is important to consider the characteristics of Montana offenders and their crimes.

Montana male and female offenders are likely to have offenses that are drug (including alcohol) and/or theft- related.⁶

Utmost attention should be given to increasing employability after release. It’s the closest thing to a magic bullet against recidivism, not just because of providing a legal income. It changes a prisoner’s entire psyche and outlook. It’s the linchpin to offering perceived control of one’s life and restored respect from one’s loved ones.

Judy, inmate at Virginia Correctional Center for Women



Additionally, a handful of vocational and certificate programs exclude those with a felony conviction from licensure.⁷ These include but are not limited to the fields of healthcare and childcare.⁸

Recommendation: Further narrow courses of study based on offenses.						
Short-term On-the-Job Training		Moderate-term On-the-Job Training		Long-term On-the-Job Training	Vocational Training	Associate's Degree
Retail	Nurse-aid	Truck driver	Painter	Carpenter	Auto technician	RN
Office clerk	Laborer	Bookkeeping	Assembler	Electrician	Hairdresser	Computer support
Janitor	Teller	Admin assistant	Cement	Plumber	Real estate agent	
Landscaping		Construction laborer	Maintenance	Welder	LPN	
		Customer service	Social service	Cabinetmaker	Fitness trainer	
		Construction equipment operator		Cook	Addictions	
					Counselor	

Scope of Program

Where applicable, grant funds should be used equitably among qualifying offenders. Though offenders in boot camps and treatment programs may qualify for the program, treatment must be the primary focus.

Recommendation: Limit POWER to offenders housed at Montana State Prison, Montana Women's Prison, regional prisons, and prerelease centers. Participating offenders may complete their course of study if released to probation or parole during course term.

Aligning RFP Scoring Criteria with Promising Practices

Course Length

Many environmental factors contribute to a decrease in program completion, such as facility transfers, length of stay, and lack of positive reinforcement. To overcome these barriers, Virginia has explored “mini-semesters” offered during traditional school breaks. The program is compacted so that a full semester course can be completed in weeks.

Wisconsin breaks down courses into mini-courses. At the completion of each milestone, students receive an unofficial certificate. Once the series is complete, an official certificate with credit is given. The milestone certificates offer positive reinforcement.⁹

Recommendation: Give preference to short-term training and education programs (or tiered approaches) over long-term programs.

Use of Technology

Interruption of coursework could be avoided by the use of technology. If live video-based conference capabilities (or closed-circuit Internet connections) were available at all Montana facilities, students would be more likely to continue their studies after transfer. Offenders from all facilities could participate in a live course, likely increasing the scope of offered courses.

Also, remote instruction may be more appealing to community colleges and universities. Remote instruction may increase offender participation, provide equal access to offenders at various



facilities, and decrease costs. Currently, offenders housed in Montana regional prisons are underrepresented in the Youthful Offenders grant programs.

Further, grant guidance states, “State correctional education agencies and cooperating institutions shall, to the extent practicable, use high-tech applications in developing programs to meet the requirements and goals of this section.”¹⁰

Work Opportunities
Recommendation: Provide instruction over video conference or through closed-circuit internet.
Though closed-circuit internet connections may not be feasible in Montana correctional facilities, video conferencing capabilities such as VisionNet and MetNet are available in state and regional prisons.

Offenders, especially those housed in Montana State Prison, have many opportunities for work. Aligning courses of study with existing work opportunities will strengthen the impact of workplace training and education.

The trick is to give inmates the opportunity to apply their skills; otherwise there’s a degradation of those skills.

Education specialist,
North Carolina Division of Prisons

Work ethic- going to work at 7 in the morning and getting off at 4 in the afternoon...it’s important to a lot of guys in the institutions to understand that. So, when they come back into society they can continue on with that ethic.

Ken Miller,
MCE participant, offender

Special Considerations for Prerelease Centers

Offenders housed at prerelease centers may earn passes to enter the community. For this reason, prerelease centers should be given flexibility to allow some offenders to access courses on-campus as an incentive. This will allow an offender to complete a course of study that requires in-person instruction such as labs.

Recommendation: Provide each prerelease center with an annual scholarship fund that can offset the cost of tuition. Payments should be made directly to the qualifying educational institution upon invoice per grant guidelines. Areas of study must correspond to POWER.

Addressing Disparities

Race

In a recent study, Conley and Schantz found that in Montana the “only thing that significantly predicts recidivism is being Native American.” Native Americans are twice as likely than their non-native peers to recidivate.¹¹ With the ultimate goal of reducing recidivism, the POWER should assess specific needs for workplace training and education for Native American offenders.

Recommendation: When awarding contracts to educational institutions, applications should be judged on the ability to provide culturally-competent instruction and programming.

Gender



Female offenders have unique needs and interests related to job training, therefore it is critical to provide gender-specific programming. Women are more likely to have had low-wage jobs prior to their offense and are less likely to have had vocational training. Additionally, women are more-likely to have experienced trauma and abuse. Upon re-entry, the success of women and their families is strongly related to socio-economic status.¹²

When considering vocational tracks, it is essential to provide women with choices that also provide potential for a living wage, including non-traditional work. While some female offenders may thrive in a non-traditional work environment, others may need more preparation. For these reasons, non-traditional work training for women should be encouraged but include a discussion regarding internal and external barriers during the beginning of the program to increase chances of success.¹³

Recommendation: Provide gender-specific tracks of study that provide women offenders with choices to meet their needs as well as tools to overcome barriers to non-traditional careers.

Related Services

According to the grant, an addition \$300 per inmate per year can be used for related services such as life skills, parenting courses, substance-abuse treatment, and resume-building. Because many prisons and pre-release centers already have an active treatment and life skills component, grant funds should be used to expand and compliment services. Funds may only be used to compliment educational services used by a grant participant. They may not be accessed without prior enrollment in the program.

The Montana Department of Corrections has recently implemented the PX2 program for youth offenders designed by the Pacific Institute. A recent evaluation of a similar program, as it was implemented in the California Department of Corrections, shows that one year recidivism rates for participating offenders were reduced by approximately 50%.¹⁴ Similarly, University of Montana- Billings provides a comparable program called *Achieve Global*.

Recommendation: Utilize “Relate Services” funds to support evidence-based life skills training such as the Employment Continuum Program offered by the Pacific Institute.

Closing

The Montana Department of Corrections looks forward to designing an effective workforce training and education program using funds from the federal Youthful Offenders grant. In summary, the characteristics of an effective program would 1) provide offenders with job-related skills, 2) align areas of study with local labor data, 3) incorporate technological delivery systems to increase access and decrease costs, and 4) address local needs such as disparities in recidivism, all in an effort to reduce recidivism and help offender thrive upon reentry.

Though work is a core component of successful reentry, it cannot ensure success alone. Programs like POWER should be complimented by other reentry services that have been instrumental in decreasing recidivism rate. Those include but are not limited to: access to



affordable, safe housing; continued medical treatment (including mental health and substance abuse); family services; financial literacy, and life skills.

Figure One: Summary Recommendations

Recommendation	Timeline	Who
1. Adopt a vision statement for POWER	Jan 2009	DOC Management Team, Prison Issues Board, MCE Advisory Council
2. Identify tracks of study by: a. Narrowing courses to Montana job projections b. Further eliminate careers without a living wage c. Consider characteristics of offenses and career	Feb 2009	<u>Proposal</u> : DOC, Federal Grants Coordinator <u>Input</u> : MCE Advisory Council, DOC Management Team <u>Authority</u> : DOC Management Team
3. Develop Scoring Criteria a. Give preference to short-term and tiered approaches b. Encourage the use of technology such as video conferencing and internet-based instruction c. Coordinate/ compliment prison-based work opportunities with tracks of study d. Consider disparities in recidivism rates	March 2009	DOC: Federal Grants Coordinator, Contract Specialist
4. Post an RFP for FY08-09 Grant (1 year)	March 2009	DOC
5. Score proposals and award contract(s)	May 2009	DOC, representatives from participating facilities
6. Implement POWER	May-Sep 2009	Contractor
7. Assessment and Adjustments	Oct 2009	DOC, Federal Grants Coordinator
8. Post RFP for FY09-FY11 Grant (3 Years)	Dec 2009	DOC
9. Award Contract	Feb 2010	DOC
10. Implement POWER	Feb-Sep 2012	Contractor



Figure Two: Federal Grant Requirements

	Current	Effective July 2009
Age	25 or under	35 or under
Conviction	No limits	Has not been convicted of “ criminal offense against a minor, ” “ sexually violent offense, ” or “ murder. ”
Facility	Services must start while incarcerated in MSP, MWP, Regional Prison (Crossroads, GF, Glendive), or a Pre-release Center (Missoula, Helena, Butte, Bozeman, Billings, Great Falls), but may continue through parole.	Services must start while incarcerated in MSP, MWP, Regional Prison (Crossroads, GF, Glendive), or a Pre-release Center (Missoula, Helena, Butte, Bozeman, Billings, Great Falls), but may continue for up to two years after confinement and through parole.
Time until release	Eligible to be released within 5 years (including a youth offender who is eligible for parole within such time).	Eligible to be released within 7 years (including a youth offender who is eligible for parole within such time).
Tuition	\$1,500 per year per student for tuition, books and essential materials for: remedial education for those with GED/high school education (limited to one year), postsecondary education certificate (limited to five years), or associate’s or bachelor’s degree (limited to five years).	\$3,000 per year per student for tuition, books and essential materials for: remedial education for those with GED/high school education (limited to two years), postsecondary education certificate (limited to seven years), or associate’s or bachelor’s degree (limited to seven years).
Related services	An additional \$300 is available per year per student for related services such as career development, counseling, parenting skills, and other life skills.	An additional \$300 is available per year per student for related services such as career development, counseling, parenting skills, and other life skills.
Data collection	Program completion, knowledge and skill attainment, success in employment (job retention/advancement), recidivism.	Program completion, knowledge and skill attainment, success in employment (job retention/advancement), recidivism. Reported annually in progress report.
Timeline	Current through June 30, 2009	July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2014



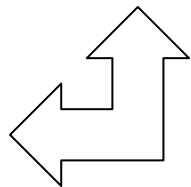
Figure Three: Eligible Offenders using 2009 Requirements
 MT DOC, 10/7/2008 snapshot

Facility	Female	Male	Total
CCC	0	201	201
DCCF	0	88	88
GFRP	0	56	56
MSP	0	466	466
MWP	81	0	81
Billings PRC	0	86	86
Bozeman PRC	0	17	17
Butte PRC	14	76	90
Great Falls PRC	16	87	103
Helena PRC	0	54	54
Missoula PRC	5	38	43
Passages PRC	28	0	38
Total	154	1169	1323

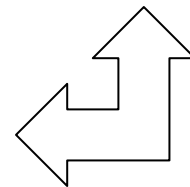


Figure Four: Likely Tracks of Study

Track	Office Professions	Business Technology	Construction Technology	Construction Technology
Term	1 Year Certificate	2 Year A.A.S.	1 Year Certificate	2 Year A.A.S.
Course	English Composition Business Math Document Processing Keyboard Office Procedures Spreadsheets Human Resources	1 yr certificate plus: Marketing Accounting Intro to Business Office Procedures Presentations Databases Management	Site Preparation Floor and Walls Roofing and Stairs Drafting and Blueprint Window, Doors Insulation Drywall Cabinetry Technical Math	1 yr certificate plus: Welding Wiring Decks, patios Masonry CAD Business Management
Jobs (Avg Income)	Office Clerk (\$9.50) Receptionist (\$9.57) Cust. Service (\$11.05)	Admin Asst (\$13.00) Sales (\$16.72)	Construction Laborer (\$9.88- 11.47) Carpenter Helper (\$11.55) Painter (\$13.44) Maintenance/repair (\$14.23) Cabinet Maker (\$12.72)	Construction Laborer (\$9.88- 11.47) Cement Mason (\$14.01) Welder (\$13.66) Plumber, pipefitter (\$21.50)
Delivery	Video conference In-person	Video conference In-person	Primarily in-person	Primarily in-person
Pros	Most facilities have computer access	Most facilities have computer access Marketing components could assist MCE	Some MCE work opportunities Requested by regional prison staff	Some MCE work opportunities Requested by regional prison staff
Cons	Some facilities have no computer access Some classes may be similar to what is currently offered	Some facilities have no computer access Some classes may be similar to what is currently offered	Facility limitations, equipment Some classes may be similar to what is currently offered	Facility limitations, equipment Some classes may be similar to what is currently offered



Same track takes basic to advanced



Same track takes basic to advanced



Figure Four: Likely Tracks of Study, cont.

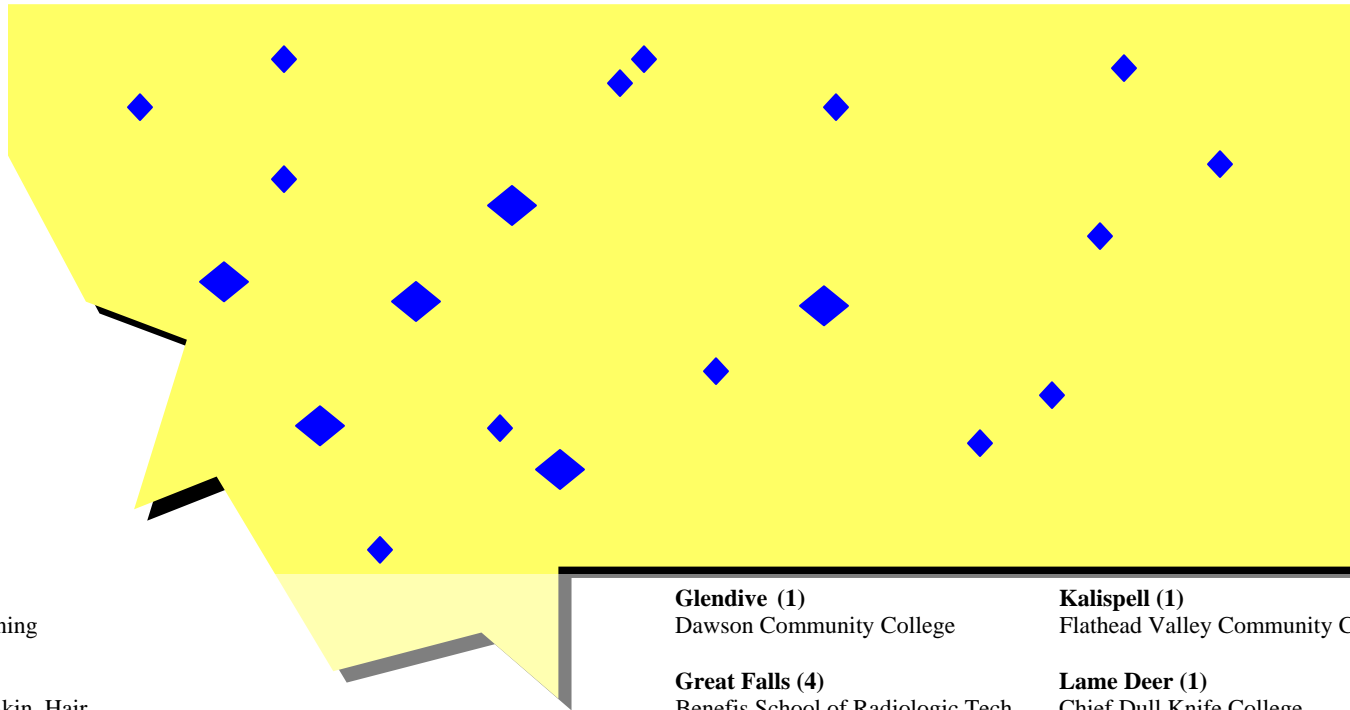
Track	Hair, Cosmetology	Auto Tech	Addiction Counselor	College Prep/ Remediation
Term	1-2 yrs Certificate	2 Yr AAS	2 Yr AAS	1-2 years
Course	English Composition Business Math Document Processing Keyboard Office Procedures Spreadsheets Human Resources	Shop Safety Electrical/Electronic Systems Manual Drive Trains Technical Math Heating and Air Engines	Addiction Theory Pharmacology Cultural and Clinical Issues Psychology Counseling Documentations	Basic Skills: Reading Writing Math
Jobs (Avg Income)	Hairdresser (\$8.68)	Auto-body Repair (\$14.51) Auto Tech (\$14.62)	Clinical Asst (\$8.06+) Licensd Counselor Social Worker (\$12.00 +)	
Delivery	Video conference In-person	Primarily in-person	Mostly distance learning	Video conference In-person
Pros	Flexible work schedule	Promising career with living wage	Participants can complete AA, needed prior to licensure. May work as asst. without licensure.	Prepares offenders for post-secondary education Improves literacy Improves basic math skills
Cons	Some facilities have no access to supplies Relatively low wage with low potential for raises, with except of owner-operated business.	Some facilities have no access to equipment May duplicate some of MCE training	Must complete the program once released, including clinical practice and state exam for licensure.	



Figure Five: Qualifying Postsecondary Institutions

Source: US Dept of Education

[Http://ope.ed.gov/accreditation/Search.aspx](http://ope.ed.gov/accreditation/Search.aspx)



Belgrade (1)
Dale Carnegie Training

Billings (6)
Academy of Nail, Skin, Hair
Dale Carnegie Training
MSU-Billings
Rocky Mountain College
Sage Technical Services
The College of Coiffure Art

Box Elder (1)
Stone Child College

Bozeman (1)
Academy of Cosmetology
Health Works Institute
MSU-Bozeman

Browning (1)
Blackfeet Community College

Butte (3)
Butte Academy of Beauty Culture
MT Tech- UM
MT Tech- COT

Crow Agency (1)
Little Big Horn College

Dillon (1)
UM- Western

Glendive (1)
Dawson Community College

Great Falls (4)
Benefis School of Radiologic Tech
Dahls College of Beauty
MSU-COT
University of Great Falls

Harlem (1)
Fort Belknap College

Havre (1)
MSU-Northern

Helena (3)
Big Sky Somatic Institute
Carroll College
UM- Helena COT

Kalispell (1)
Flathead Valley Community College

Lame Deer (1)
Chief Dull Knife College

Livingston (1)
Caspari Montessori Institute Int'l

Miles City (1)
Miles Community College

Missoula (2)
Modern Beauty School
UM

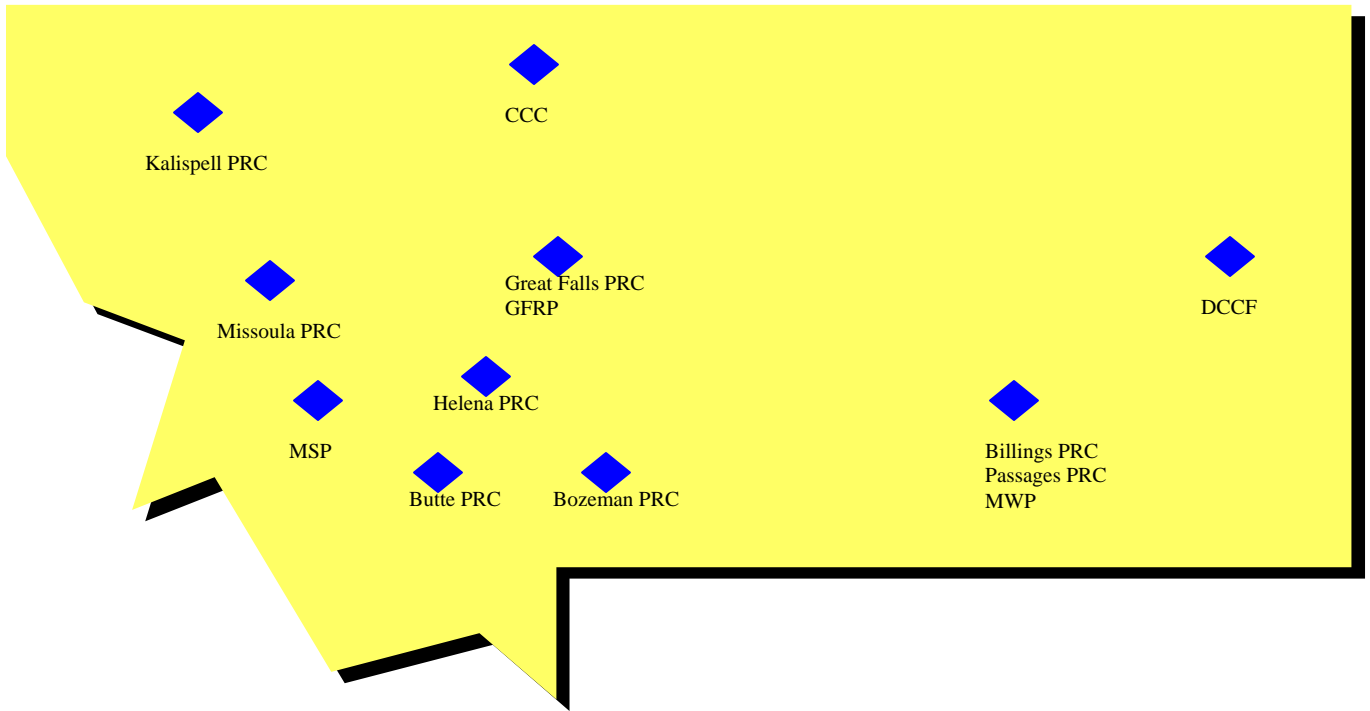
Pablo (1)
Salish Kootenai College

Poplar (1)
Fort Peck Community College



The Montana Department of Corrections enhances public safety, promotes positive change in offender behavior, reintegrates offenders into the community and supports victims of crime.

Figure Six: Participating DOC Facilities



¹ Bradford and Duncan, *Simplified Strategic Planning*, (Chandler House, 2000)

² US General Accounting Office (1993). *Federal prisons: Inmate and staff views on education and work training programs*. Washington, DC

³ Montana Department of Labor and Industry. *Montana Job Projections: 2004-1014* (limiting to jobs with growth of approximately 50 openings annual)

⁴ Licensed addictions counselors are not tracked in Montana’s labor projections. This career was added based on “New Academic Program Proposal Summary” (Item 126-201-R0305) presented at the Montana Board of Regents. <http://mus.edu/board/meetings/Archives/ITEM126-201-R0305SUM.pdf>

⁵ Montana Department of Labor and Industry. *Montana Job Projections: 2004-1014* (limiting to \$8.00 per hour)

⁶ Montana Department of Corrections. *2006 Biennial Report ACIS/PRO-Files* data extracted 10/24/2006

⁷ Mission Valley One Stop Workforce Center, <http://wsd.dli.mt.gov/local/polson/documents/ExOffenderTips.pdf>

⁸ Quality Assurance Division, Department of Public Health and Human Services, <http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/qad/certndex.shtml>

⁹ US Department of Education (2008). *Prison and Community Partnerships* (advanced copy)

¹⁰ 1998 Amendments to the Higher Education Act of 1965. P.L. 105-244, SEC. 821. GRANTS TO STATES FOR WORKPLACE AND COMMUNITY TRANSITION TRAINING FOR INCARCERATED YOUTH OFFENDERS

¹¹ Conley, Timothy, Shantz, David. (2006) *Predicting and reducing recidivism: Factors contributing to recidivism in the State of Montana pre-release center population and the issue of measurement*

¹² *Gender Responsive Strategies: Research, Practice, and Guiding Principles for Women Offenders*

¹³ Vermont Works for Women. (2008) *Identifying Barriers to Non-traditional Employment* (Draft)

¹⁴ Zhang, S.X, Roberts, R.E.L, Callahan, V. (2003) *An Evaluation of the California Preventing Parolee Crime Program*. San Marcos, CA (CSUSM).

