



District Attorney of  
New York County



CUNY INSTITUTE  
FOR STATE & LOCAL  
GOVERNANCE

August 8, 2016

The CUNY Institute for State and Local Governance (ISLG) appreciates your interest in the Request for Proposals (RFP) for Evaluation of College-in-Prison Reentry Initiative.

This addendum includes answers to questions, submitted via email to ISLG by July 29, 2016.

**ANSWERS TO APPLICANT QUESTIONS**  
**Evaluation of College-in-Prison Reentry Initiative**

**PROGRAM MODEL**

**QUESTION: What does the application and selection process for the college-in-prison program entail? Is this approach consistent across all participating sites? What criteria are used to select students into a college-in-prison program?**

**ANSWER:** Students will be subject to DOCCS' and each education provider's admissions processes. The Education Coordinator, a partnership between CUNY and SUNY, will liaise with DOCCS to identify inmates eligible for college instruction. Education providers have not yet been formally announced; therefore, admission and selection processes across participating sites have yet to be finalized. Education providers will be required to provide the evaluator with information regarding selection criteria and processes, as necessary for evaluation of the initiative.

Eligible students for the College-in-Prison Reentry Initiative include inmates in the eligible New York State facilities (as described in *Section IV* in the RFP), with a high school diploma or equivalent, and with an earliest possible release date (including conditional or open release) in 1.5 to 5.5 years. This range refers only to the amount of time from the present to an inmate's earliest possible release date. This does not refer to the total length of an inmate's sentence, which may be lengthier, but only that their estimated release date falls within the specified windows.

**QUESTION: What criteria are used for admitting students off the waitlist? When are students admitted off the waitlist (i.e., once a semester, once a year?) How large are the waitlists (or anticipated waitlists)?**

**ANSWER:** Criteria for admitting students from DOCCS' and/or a specific program's waitlist will be determined by funded education providers, the Education Coordinator and DOCCS. As students are released from prison, complete a program, or drop out, their program slots will be filled by students, including those from a waitlist, with earliest possible release dates of 1.5 years or more, focusing on a mixture of students who will not finish their degree programs in prison (with release dates in 1.5-2.5 years); who, upon release, will be close to finishing their degree programs (with release dates in 2.5-4.5 years); and who, upon release, will have finished their degree programs (with release dates in 4.5-5.5 years). Thus, the evaluation design should anticipate rolling eligibility windows rather than a single determination of eligibility at program commencement.

**QUESTION: What is the anticipated enrollment at each site? Overall?**

**ANSWER:** It is anticipated that the investment, through a combination of CJII and match funding, will serve approximately 300-500 students each year across sites, and approximately 600-1,000 students over five years across sites, reflecting both multi-year participation and some attrition each year due to research design (e.g., groups or cohorts), changes in students' desire or ability to participate in a program, and other logistical issues. Enrollment across sites will be finalized in contracts with education providers.

**QUESTION: Will the evaluator have any role in shaping the admission process, selection procedure, or other program features (in collaboration with relevant stakeholders)?**

**ANSWER:** Students will be subject to DOCCS' and each education provider's admissions processes. The Education Coordinator, a partnership between CUNY and SUNY, will liaise with DOCCS to identify inmates eligible for college instruction. Funded education providers, in collaboration with the Education Coordinator and DOCCS, are also responsible for shaping other program features. Proposed evaluation designs will be finalized with input from education providers, the Education Coordinator, DOCCS, ISLG, and the selected evaluator. In addition, ISLG will check in regularly with the Education Coordinator and education providers to assess program implementation and propose any changes necessary to program delivery. Similarly, the process evaluation conducted by the Evaluator may be used to adjust implementation of the initiative.

**QUESTION: Are the reentry services mentioned in the RFP referring to the pre-release planning and services for students while incarcerated, or services that students will utilize upon release? Are the selected sites expected to provide the reentry service (if it is the latter) or will that be the responsibility of a third-party organization?**

**ANSWER:** The reentry services mentioned in this RFP refer to both pre-release planning efforts and reentry services upon release. Grantees are required to work with DOCCS and the Education Coordinator, a partnership between CUNY and SUNY, to develop reentry support plans and provide transfer and enrollment support for participating students. Selected education providers may facilitate reentry support either directly or through outside service providers or other linkages. Following release, students would be eligible for funding generally available to students, including federal, state, local, and private sources. DANY and ISLG anticipate that future CJII funding opportunities may focus on other issues affecting public safety and fairness and efficiency in the justice system, including reentry services. All other current funding opportunities can be found [here](#), and the CJII strategic plan can be found [here](#).

### **EVALUATION DESIGN**

**QUESTION: The RFP mentions that randomization is not likely possible, is there a specific reason for this? Has randomization been ruled-out completely?**

**ANSWER:** Randomization will likely not be feasible for this evaluation design given the logistical constraints associated with providing instruction, including those related to security and capacity at specific DOCCS facilities; and objections to withholding program access due to ethical concerns among education providers. Applicants should propose research and analysis designs to account for selection bias.

**QUESTION: How will the evaluation be different for selected sites that are also a Second Chance Pell site? Will the evaluation be asked to make the distinction between the two or consider both funding streams when evaluating the project?**

**ANSWER:** Education providers are expected to provide a 1:1 match to any CJII funding. Students educated through the match will be included in the evaluation of this initiative as well, and the educational standards listed below must apply to courses offered through the match as well as those offered through CJII funding. Existing program funding, including Second Chance Pell funding, is eligible to be considered for match funding. Thus, the evaluation is anticipated to include some students supported by Pell funding in whole or in part. Education providers who have applied for and are selected for the Second Chance Pell Pilot Program are expected to articulate the purposes for which CJII and Pell funding each would be used.

Students supported solely by Second Chance Pell funding (i.e., who are not supported by CJII funding), and for whom Pell funding does not serve as a match to CJII funding, are not required to be included in the evaluation. However, such students could be included in the evaluation if they are enrolled in programs that otherwise meet the requirements of CJII funding, specifically enrollment in a credit-bearing, college-level program that leads to a bachelor's degree, associate's degree, or industry-recognized certificate and adheres to minimum curriculum and instruction standards approved by the Education Coordinator.

**QUESTION: Is the expectation of this evaluation to determine the benefits of higher education, the benefits of this initiative, or both?**

**ANSWER:** The purpose of this evaluation is to evaluate the College-in-Prison Reentry Initiative. The goals of the College-in-Prison Reentry Initiative are to 1) increase the availability of educational programming to inmates in select New York State prisons; 2) develop standards for prison education curricula and develop articulation and transfer agreements so that credits may be efficiently transferred across institutions to enable students to complete their degrees; and 3) develop reentry support plans for participants. This evaluation is expected to examine a) program effects for students with different types of profiles (e.g., risk, prior history, cohort, and likelihood of degree attainment); b) the effect of the programming on students'

recidivism for up to three years post release; and c) cost savings to the state. Thus, this evaluation is intended to better understand the benefits of college-level instruction meeting universal standards and supported by reentry planning for current and recent inmates in New York State DOCCS facilities.

**QUESTION: Should additional costs of delivering in-prison college education be considered when conducting the cost-benefit analysis (i.e., classroom usage, additional corrections staff)?**

**ANSWER:** Yes; any tangible and intangible costs and benefits should be assessed to quantify the short- and long-term economic impact of the program at the participant level as well as to the government. The cost-benefit analysis should capture marginal costs and benefits rather than average costs and benefits to avoid overstating the impacts of college-in-prison programs. The CBA should also monetize actual program impacts for participants with different lengths of program involvement.

## **DATA**

**QUESTION: The required evaluation will require cooperation from NYDOCCS and NY Department of Labor. Have the relevant stakeholders from NYDOCCS and NYDoL already agreed to participate and provide the data as described in the RFP?**

**ANSWER:** It is anticipated that relevant state agencies will provide data to support the College-in-Prison Reentry Initiative. ISLG has begun conversations with the relevant agencies and will make every effort to ensure that necessary data are made available for the evaluation.

**QUESTION: Will the evaluators have access to data for analysis off-site (not in NY)?**

**ANSWER:** Applicants need not be located or work primarily in New York State. Stored data, regardless of location, will be subject to the technical safeguards for the protection of personally identifiable information (PII) that are generally accepted as best practices in the industry. Data in electronic form shall be stored on secure computer hard-drives that require credentialed log-in for individual access. All access to such data shall be restricted to authorized users who have been authenticated through secure password and log-in.

**QUESTION: Can you please confirm that a NYSID and DIN, can be used to link college-in-prison program participant information to administrative records from the state?**

**ANSWER:** It is anticipated that participant level-IDs will be used to match data from different sources, including education providers and state agencies. ISLG anticipates matching sensitive data prior to disseminating data and data products to stakeholders in the College-in-Prison Reentry Initiative and its evaluation.

**QUESTION: It is likely that the research team will seek to collect survey and interview data from participants and staff. What, if any, additional processes must be established to facilitate this process?**

**ANSWER:** Any research designs and data collection procedures must be approved by ISLG and the institutional review boards (IRBs) of the evaluator and DOCCS; and developed in consultation with education providers, ISLG, the Education Coordinator, and DOCCS.

## **PUBLISHING**

**QUESTION: Will the evaluators have to execute separate agreements with relevant state agencies in order to conduct the evaluation and publish results in peer reviewed journals?**

**ANSWER:** ISLG is seeking applicants for the purposes set forth in the RFP for Evaluation of the College-in-Prison Reentry Initiative, including to produce a final, public report with full findings from process, outcome, and cost-benefit evaluations and recommendations for college-in-prison policy and practice (see

*Appendix 2. Deliverables* for more information). ISLG will negotiate data use agreements with relevant agencies, including procedures for commenting, reviewing, and/or approving material for publication. ISLG has already initiated these conversations with the relevant agencies, and they are ongoing.