



NCWORKS WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT BOARD

AUGUST 2025

MIDTERM EVALUATION REPORT REENTRY EMPOWERMENT AND WORKFORCE INTEGRATION (REWI) INITIATIVE

PREPARED BY

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Executive Summary

In 2024, the Local Innovation Fund awarded up to \$125,000 to support reentry-focused innovation. The Reentry Empowerment and Workforce Integration (REWI) Initiative, led by the Piedmont Triad Regional Workforce Development Board (PTRWDB), is designed to improve career navigation, service coordination, and equitable access to employment pathways for justice-involved individuals. The project centers on strengthening staff capacity at NCWorks Career Centers and community agencies, expanding partnerships, and integrating new digital tools that increase employer engagement and support job seekers facing systemic barriers due to past convictions. REWI also promotes a regional approach to reentry support by convening local leaders across multiple counties to align practices and scale innovations that contribute to more equitable labor force participation.

Our evaluation, initiated in May 2024, uses Outcome Mapping as its primary methodology, supported by a participatory and equity-centered approach. The framework focuses on assessing emerging contributions to systems change, cross-site alignment, and longer-term sustainability. At midterm, data collection is still in early stages, but the groundwork has been laid for robust end-of-project findings.

Key Findings

- **Cross-Sector Collaboration Is Underway** - Planning meetings and quarterly convenings show evidence of engagement from multiple counties, career centers, and justice-aligned organizations. The evaluation team observed that leaders are actively working toward shared goals around service integration and identifying models of employer engagement that can be replicated across sites.
- **Infrastructure Building is a Core Focus** - The REWI initiative is investing heavily in foundational components such as stakeholder training, development of data dashboards, and cross-site referral protocols. While few outcomes can yet be measured, these efforts demonstrate the initiative's emphasis on sustainable change over quick wins.
- **Shared Understanding of the Model Still Emerging** - Early meetings surfaced the need for clearer articulation of the REWI model across partners and counties. Without a common definition of what successful REWI implementation entails, there is variation in interpretation that could affect consistency in rollout and service delivery.

Evaluation Limitations and Strategic Direction

Time remains the primary limitation of this evaluation. Although REWI activities launched in 2024, the external evaluation did not begin until mid-2025, limiting the availability of early implementation data. Furthermore, many project components—such as staff training, referral infrastructure, and community engagement—are still in development or only recently launched. As a result, this midterm report focuses on formative observations, pending the availability of post-training, post-placement, and long-term reentry outcome data in the final evaluation phase.

To support progress in the second half of the project, the evaluation team recommends:

- **Strengthening partner alignment early**, through shared documentation and training on the REWI model.
- **Expanding support for technical assistance recipients**, especially in underrepresented counties.
- **Prioritizing early tracking of participant, employer, and digital tool engagement**, even before summative data becomes available.

These steps will ensure the initiative is positioned to meet its goals and produce strong evidence of impact in the final report.

1. Introduction

In 2024, the Commission awarded funds to the Piedmont Triad Regional Workforce Development Board to serve as an implementation grant to fund the team's Reentry Empowerment and Workforce Integration (REWI) Initiative. Through this effort, the Piedmont Triad WDB seeks to strengthen the region's network of career navigation services for the justice-involved population, while also raising awareness among employers about the positive impact of inclusive hiring practices. Through REWI, Piedmont Triad Regional WDB plans to provide training for staff at NCWorks Career Centers and other community agencies to enhance professionals' understanding of how various programs and services can work together to meet the needs of people whose past criminal records create barriers to education and employment. The initiative will also promote coordination and connectivity among partners, share best practices, and engage with local employers.

1.1 Evaluation Context, Purpose, and Scope

As stated in the Commission's Service Quote Request....

The NCWorks Commission, Local Innovation Committee, (a department within the North Carolina Division of Workforce Solutions) is seeking a Vendor to perform the services of a 3rd Party Evaluator. This Evaluator shall review the work done with the money that Piedmont Triad Regional WDB received and determine if the funds used did in-fact improve the employment services that are being offered in the area of North Carolina where Piedmont Triad Regional WDB operates. Required site visits shall be used to discuss services provided and outcomes achieved to gather data for reporting purposes. The 3rd Party Evaluator shall also attend presentations provided by the grantee to gather data for reports.

The scope of the external evaluation is four-fold: (1) to address the extent to which the REWI program is meeting stated outcomes; (2) to identify challenges and suggest solutions around these challenges; (3) to search for statistical correlations between program components and outcomes; and (4) to strengthen capacity and develop evaluation tools and mechanisms that are able to be internally sustained beyond the time the external evaluation team is involved.

1.2 Evaluation Methodology

Our evaluation methodology for this impact evaluation primarily follows an Outcome Mapping approach, designed to explore and clarify the program's theory of change. This approach enables us to systematically gather data on immediate, foundational changes that serve as precursors to more transformative impacts, while also assessing the program's contributions to the broader goals and outcomes of its stakeholders.

Additionally, our methodology incorporates a participatory and empowering approach, engaging the REWI leaders in the decision-making processes of the evaluation. This involvement not only enriches the evaluation with insights from project leaders but also builds their capacity for ongoing monitoring and assessment, potentially reducing the need for future external evaluation resources from the NCWorks Commission.

The REWI evaluation is led by Dawayne Whittington, with Kelly Fraidenburg (Research Associate II) serving as the primary support. Together, they form a senior-junior evaluation team responsible for designing and implementing the evaluation strategy, collecting and analyzing data, and communicating findings to stakeholders. Their collaborative approach ensures both rigor and responsiveness in capturing the early progress and implementation of the REWI initiative.

2. Background

2.1 Building Hope Goals, Activities, and Audiences

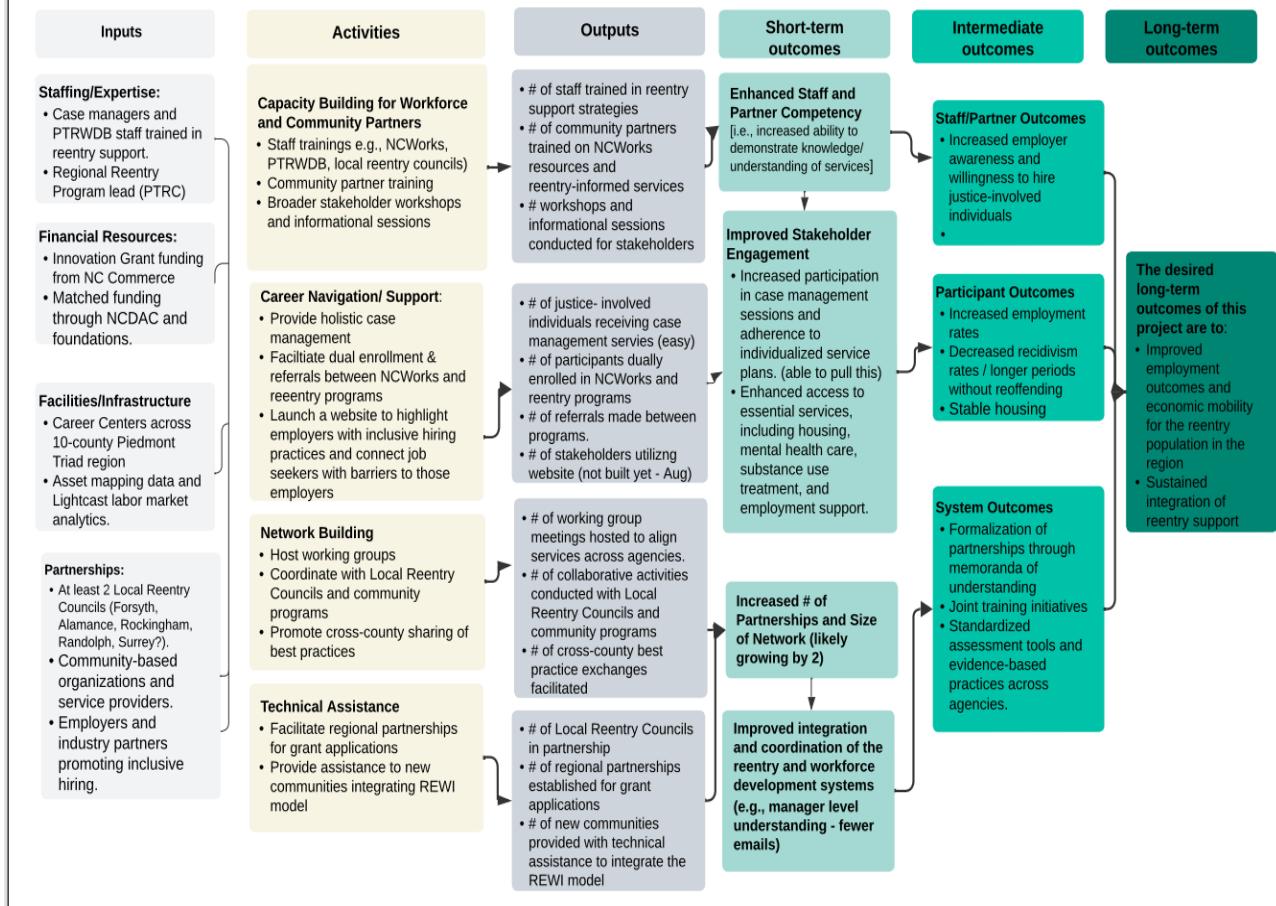
As stated on NC Department of Commerce's [website](#):

Piedmont Triad Regional Workforce Development Board's Reentry Empowerment and Workforce Integration (REWI) Initiative seeks to strengthen the region's network of career navigation services for the justice-involved population, while also raising awareness among employers about the positive impact of inclusive hiring practices. Through REWI, Piedmont Triad Regional WDB plans to provide training for staff at NCWorks Career Centers and other community agencies to enhance professionals' understanding of how various programs and services can work together to meet the needs of people whose past criminal records create barriers to education and employment. The initiative will also promote coordination and connectivity among partners, share best practices, and engage with local employers.

As part of the external evaluation team, our work began with drafting an evaluation logic model to provide a foundational structure for assessing the REWI program. This initial phase focused on mapping the inputs, activities, outputs, and anticipated outcomes of the program, setting the stage for a focused evaluation strategy. [A current version of the logic model is pasted below and also viewable at a larger scale at this link.](#)

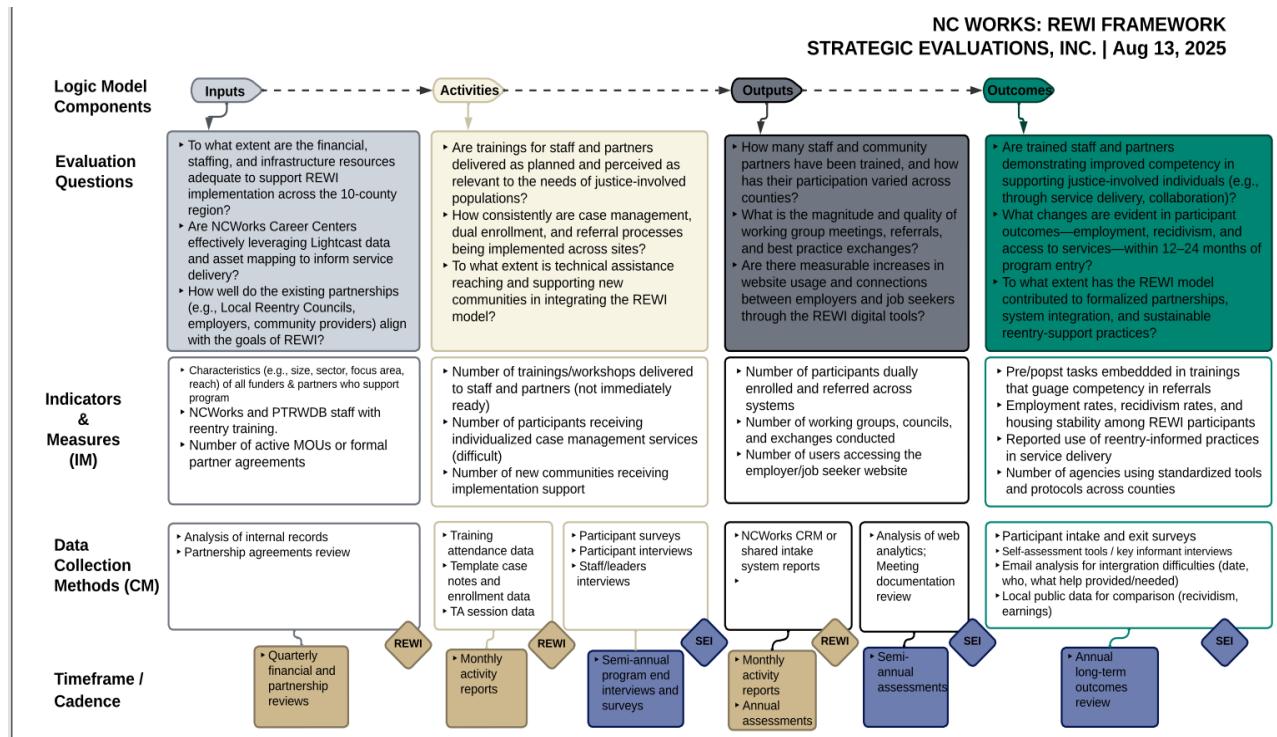
NC WORKS: REWI LOGIC MODEL

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3. Evaluation Questions

Following the development of the logic model, the external evaluation team developed a broader evaluation framework. This framework incorporates key evaluation questions for each logic model component that serve as guides for the data collection and analysis. [Similarly, a current version of the evaluation framework is pasted below and also viewable at a larger scale via this link.](#)



The evaluation questions for each section are aligned with the logic model components based on the provided framework and are presented below, as well as in the figure above.

3.1 Evaluation Questions Aligned with Inputs

- To what extent are the **financial, staffing, and infrastructure resources** adequate to support REWI implementation across the 10-county region?
- Are NCWorks Career Centers effectively leveraging **Lightcast data and asset mapping** to inform service delivery?
- How well do the **existing partnerships** (e.g., Local Reentry Councils, employers, community providers) align with the goals of REWI?

3.2 Evaluation Questions Aligned with Activities

- Are **trainings** for staff and partners delivered as planned and perceived as relevant to the needs of justice-involved populations?
- How consistently are **case management, dual enrollment, and referral processes** being implemented across sites?
- To what extent is **technical assistance** reaching and supporting new communities in integrating the REWI model?

3.3 Evaluation Questions Aligned with Outputs

- How many **staff and community partners have been trained**, and how has their participation varied across counties?
- What is the **magnitude and quality of working group meetings**, referrals, and best practice exchanges?
- Are there **measurable increases in website usage** and connections between employers and job seekers through the REWI digital tools?

3.4 Evaluation Questions Aligned with Outcomes

- Are trained **staff and partners demonstrating improved competency** in supporting justice-involved individuals (e.g., through service delivery, collaboration)?
- What changes are evident in **participant outcomes** - employment, recidivism, and access to services - within 12-24 months of program entry?
- To what extent has the REWI model contributed to **formalized partnerships, system integration, and sustainable reentry-support** practices?

4. Methodology

Within the evaluation framework, we also specified indicators and measures for each evaluation question, outlined appropriate data collection methods, recommended times and cadence for data collection activities, and clarified responsibilities between the internal program leaders and our external team. To refine these elements, we held a one-hour work session with project leaders on June 12, 2025. During the work session, both teams collaborated to adjust the evaluation questions to ensure alignment with program goals and operational context. Lastly, the team discussed feasibility and agreed on the timing, and responsible party for each data collection effort. Below are additional details on the methodology that will guide the approach for evaluating the program's progress and impacts.

4.1 Sampling Strategy and Priorities

In our role as external evaluators for the REWI Initiative, we have prioritized an inclusive sampling approach that captures insights from the program's key stakeholder groups. Our strategy is grounded in the principle of full representation, aiming to reflect the perspectives of all individuals who have directly engaged with program components. Given the initiative's scale, this includes program participants, project staff, and organizational leaders, with an emphasis on those most recently involved in program delivery and post-release support activities.

While the plan is to gather input from all directly involved individuals, one anticipated gap is the absence of independently collected feedback from training facilitators. Their perspectives may offer important context on participant skill development and engagement. Although no modifications have been made to the sampling plan thus far, we are considering whether to incorporate facilitator insights in future phases—pending available resources and the degree to which training outcomes emerge as key indicators of success.

4.2 Data Collection Methods & Sources

The REWI evaluation plan outlines a multi-method approach designed to gather rich, context-specific data from various program stakeholders. These planned data collection activities will enable both formative insights and summative evaluation of implementation quality, stakeholder engagement, and participant outcomes. The methods reflect a balance of quantitative indicators and qualitative perspectives, with instruments adapted to the unique needs of justice-involved populations and the systems that support them.

- **Internal Program Documentation:** Regular review of administrative records, meeting notes, and monthly activity reports will provide insight into program implementation, coordination efforts, and alignment with REWI goals.
- **Partnership Agreements and MOU Analysis:** Formal documents with Local Reentry Councils, community partners, and employers will be reviewed to assess partnership scope, sustainability, and integration.
- **Participant Intake and Exit Surveys:** Structured surveys are planned to assess participant needs, confidence, employment status, and satisfaction with services at multiple timepoints.
- **Staff and Partner Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews with NCWorks and PTRWDB staff, reentry program leads, and community partners will offer perspectives on implementation challenges, training relevance, and system coordination.
- **Participant Interviews:** Interviews with REWI participants are planned to explore their experiences with case management, training, employment access, and barriers to stability.
- **Self-Assessments and Pre/Post Training Reflections:** These tools will be embedded within staff and partner trainings to assess changes in reentry-related competencies, service delivery confidence, and perceived preparedness.
- **Referral and Enrollment Data:** Case management notes and dual-enrollment records will be analyzed to understand coordination across agencies and participant movement through the system.
- **Technical Assistance (TA) Session Logs:** Documentation of TA activities will be reviewed to evaluate REWI's role in expanding capacity in new communities and facilitating systems integration.
- **Email Analysis for Systems Integration:** Select email records will be reviewed to identify coordination patterns, information gaps, and bottlenecks across agencies.
- **Website Analytics:** As REWI's online tool is launched, web usage data will be collected to evaluate engagement by employers and job seekers navigating inclusive hiring pathways.
- **Public Datasets:** Local data on recidivism, employment rates, and housing stability will be used to contextualize program outcomes and explore comparative trends.

4.3 Data Analysis Techniques

The analysis plan for this evaluation is structured to generate clear insights into program performance while highlighting opportunities for refinement across key outcome areas.

- **Quantitative Methods:** Numeric data from surveys and administrative records will be analyzed to determine participant outcomes such as employment status, earnings progression, and retention rates. Both descriptive summaries and statistical tests will be used to identify trends and assess whether changes over time are statistically meaningful across participant groups.
- **Qualitative Analysis:** Interview transcripts from participants, staff, and partners will be examined through thematic coding to surface patterns in lived experiences, implementation challenges, and areas for program improvement. This approach ensures that feedback—particularly around service quality and participant support—is meaningfully integrated into the evaluation narrative.
- **Comparative Review:** Survey and administrative data will be examined longitudinally to track shifts in outcomes like job placement and employer engagement. Where possible, REWI participant trends will be contextualized using local benchmarks and regional data on employment, housing stability, and recidivism to better understand the program's broader community-level contributions.

5. Findings

To date, our evaluation efforts have primarily focused on early-stage activities, including collaborative development of the REWI logic model and evaluation framework. In addition to these planning meetings, we have begun reviewing initial program documents to inform our understanding of implementation progress and emerging areas for data collection. Specifically, we examined the *REWI Progress Slides (August 2025)* and the *NC Commerce Reentry Initiative Report (June 2025)* as part of our background research. While these materials do not yet provide sufficient data to answer REWI's summative evaluation questions, they offer useful context about local activities and may serve as comparative data points in future reporting phases.

What follows is a summary of key findings organized by logic model components and linked to the relevant evaluation questions. Most questions are summative in nature, so we use this section to outline the evaluation team's approach for answering them in the future, along with any early observations from the documentation reviewed thus far.

5.1 Findings Aligned with Inputs

Question: *To what extent are the financial, staffing, and infrastructure resources adequate to support REWI implementation across the 10-county region?*

- **Answer:**

- No formal data has yet been collected to assess adequacy. However, the logic model lists key inputs including innovation grant funds, career center infrastructure, and reentry-trained staff, which are expected to support delivery across the Piedmont Triad region.
- The program is supported by dedicated staff from the PTRC workforce team and reentry councils. Staff are tasked with service coordination, employer engagement, and data tracking, as discussed in planning meetings, but further documentation is pending.

Question: *What are the characteristics (e.g., size, sector, focus area, reach) of all funders and partners who support the program?*

- **Answer:**

Funders:

- **NC Commerce Innovation Grant**, which serves as the primary funding source for the REWI initiative.
- **North Carolina Department of Adult Correction (NCDAC)**, which provides matching funds to support staff salaries and benefits.
- **Foundation support** has been leveraged to match outreach expenses for reentry partnership events

Partners:

- Partner organizations vary in **sector and scope**, with some being county-level service providers and others supporting region-wide initiatives through shared learning, grant coordination, and collective technical assistance.
- **Case management and navigation services**, including NCWorks and Local Reentry Councils (LRCs) in Forsyth and Alamance counties.
- **Employer engagement**, through development of digital business engagement tools and convenings to assess and promote inclusive hiring practices.
- **Community-based organizations** involved in housing, transportation, education, mental health, and other supportive services.
- **Justice system stakeholders**, such as corrections staff and reentry councils, who facilitate pre- and post-release coordination.
- **Local and regional collaboratives**, including economic development entities and cross-county workforce boards, providing strategic alignment across the 10-county Piedmont Triad Region

Question: *How well do the existing partnerships align with the goals of REWI?*

- **Answer:**

- **High Alignment with Reentry Goals:** REWI's existing partnerships strongly align with its core goals of supporting justice-involved individuals through coordinated, holistic, and sustainable reentry pathways. Partnerships span correctional agencies, workforce development boards, and community-based providers, reflecting REWI's emphasis on cross-sector collaboration to address employment, housing, and social service needs.
- **Formalization of Partner Roles:** REWI has developed Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with Local Reentry Councils (LRCs), Local Workforce Development Boards, and the NC Department of Adult Correction. These MOUs clearly outline each partner's contributions to case management, navigation, and referral coordination—key activities identified in the logic model's core strategies.
- **Region-Wide and Local Engagement:** Partners operate at both county and regional levels, which enables REWI to meet its goal of systems-level change across the Piedmont Triad. For example, engagement with the Forsyth and Alamance LRCs ensures local responsiveness, while REWI's participation in regional and statewide coalitions extends its reach and policy alignment.
- **Shared Learning and Technical Support:** REWI's model includes regional convenings and shared learning among partner sites, directly supporting its goal of building partner capacity and improving system-level coordination
- **Early Momentum with Employers:** While employer engagement is still developing, existing efforts—including the Employer Engagement Tool and regional convenings—demonstrate early alignment with REWI's goal to expand inclusive employment opportunities.

5.2 Findings Aligned with Activities

Question: *Are trainings for staff and partners delivered as planned and perceived as relevant to the needs of justice-involved populations?*

- **Answer:**

- The REWI proposal commits to providing high-quality training for case managers, mentors, and peer support specialists that addresses the unique barriers faced by justice-involved individuals .
- The April 2025 meeting with the evaluation team confirmed that the first training had already occurred and that feedback from participants was being collected to assess relevance and quality.
- The training content includes trauma-informed care, motivational interviewing, and legal barriers to employment—all topics highly relevant to REWI's target population .
- Additional trainings were planned for summer 2025, indicating continued investment in skill-building for REWI personnel and partners .

Question: *How consistently are case management, dual enrollment, and referral processes being implemented across sites?*

- **Answer:**

- The REWI team's proposal outlines a case management model involving weekly check-ins, Individual Development Plans (IDPs), and ongoing support aligned with participant goals .
- However, implementation consistency across partner sites has not yet been fully documented or analyzed, as current evaluation activities are still in early stages.
- The June 2025 evaluation team meeting confirmed that as of that time, site-to-site variation in these processes had not yet been systematically captured or evaluated.

Question: *To what extent is technical assistance reaching and supporting new communities in integrating the REWI model?*

- **Answer:**

- The grant proposal discusses plans for scaling the REWI model across the Piedmont Triad region through technical assistance and dissemination .
- The April and May 2025 evaluation meetings indicate that technical assistance is currently being offered via peer calls, strategy meetings, and shared training tools, but documentation of reach and uptake in “new communities” has not yet been aggregated .
- The evaluation team is planning to develop tracking mechanisms to assess which communities are engaging with TA and how that affects local implementation, but this has not yet occurred as of June 2025 .

5.3 Findings Aligned with Outputs

Question: *How many staff and community partners have been trained, and how has their participation varied across counties?*

- **Answer:**

- At the time of this report, the program served individuals within the pilot phase of their work.
- Participants are all justice-involved adults who were reentering the workforce and participated in job readiness and internship activities.
- Characteristics including gender, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic background are not yet systematically reported, but future data collection will focus on disaggregated participant profiles.

Question: *What is the magnitude and quality of working group meetings, referrals, and best practice exchanges?*

- **Answer:**

- No official working group meetings have been documented by the external evaluation team to date.
- While planning meetings among program leaders and the evaluation team have occurred, these are distinct from formal working groups intended to promote cross-site collaboration and peer exchange.
- No records or data on referral processes (volume, type, or destinations) have been made available at this stage.
- Similarly, no structured best practice exchanges have been reported; however, leaders have expressed plans to foster such exchanges once more sites reach implementation readiness.
- This evaluation question remains unanswered at the current stage, pending future activities and documentation.

Question: *Are there measurable increases in website usage and connections between employers and job seekers through the REWI digital tools?*

- **Answer:**

- No quantitative data on website usage or metrics indicating increases in digital engagement have been provided to date.
- No records have been shared documenting employer-jobseeker connections facilitated by REWI's digital tools.
- While early planning discussions referenced the development of digital platforms and tools, no usage statistics or connection outcomes have yet been shared or observed.
- As a result, this evaluation question remains unanswered based on current documentation and data access.

5.4 Findings Aligned with Outcomes

Question: *Are trained staff and partners demonstrating improved competency in supporting justice-involved individuals (e.g., through service delivery, collaboration)?*

- **Answer:**

- At this stage of the evaluation, no post-training data have been provided to assess staff or partner competencies.
- While planning documents reference the intention to build capacity across REWI sites, including via technical assistance and shared tools, no metrics, reflections, or assessments have been collected that allow for an appraisal of skill gains or improved practices among staff and partners.
- As implementation progresses, competency-related data will be needed to assess this outcome.

Question: *What changes are evident in participant outcomes—employment, recidivism, and access to services—within 12–24 months of program entry?*

- **Answer:**

- This question cannot yet be answered, as the timeline for participants to reach the 12–24 month mark has not elapsed.
- No baseline participant data or outcome tracking documentation (employment placement, recidivism status, or service referrals) has been made available to date.
- As longitudinal data are collected, particularly through case management systems and alumni follow-up, the evaluation will return to this question with more robust evidence.

Question: *To what extent has the REWI model contributed to formalized partnerships, system integration, and sustainable reentry-support practices?*

- **Answer:**

- *While there is early evidence of collaborative infrastructure building (e.g., regional planning meetings, partner onboarding, and technical assistance plans), no documentation has been provided confirming formalized agreements, integrated service delivery models, or sustained funding plans.*
- *It is too early in the REWI program cycle to observe systems-level change or policy outcomes.*
- *Future data collection will need to include administrative documents and partner interviews to explore this question more fully at the final evaluation stage.*

6. Conclusions

The REWI initiative is still in its early stages, and while foundational infrastructure is being established—including the development of logic models, digital tools, and multi-county planning meetings—data on program outcomes remain unavailable.

Initial planning activities, technical assistance efforts, and staffing investments signal alignment with REWI's goals, yet core services like participant case management, dual enrollment, and employment matching are still being rolled out.

To date, no participant-level data or outcome indicators (e.g., employment, recidivism, or service access) have been collected, and implementation varies across sites. Continued tracking of partnership development, training delivery, and system-building efforts will be essential to evaluating the model's full impact at a later phase.

7. Recommendations

7.1 Participant Recommendations

[None collected to date by the external evaluation team]

7.2 Evaluator Recommendations

The recommendations below are provided by the external evaluation team based on preliminary observations, review of planning documents, and experience with similar reentry workforce initiatives. These are intended to support continued implementation and ensure alignment between REWI's goals and its emerging infrastructure.

➤ **Prioritize Consistent Implementation of Core Service**

Ensure that case management, referral, and dual enrollment processes are operational across all sites. Developing a shared checklist or implementation protocol can help clarify expectations, support fidelity, and reduce variability across counties.

➤ **Expand Documentation and Data Collection Infrastructure**

Given the importance of capturing early indicators, it is critical to establish systematic documentation of partnership meetings, working groups, and outreach events. A shared tracking template or integrated CRM platform could support consistent data flow and facilitate future outcome assessments.

➤ **Accelerate Use and Testing of Digital Tools**

Begin piloting the REWI website and digital tools with a subset of employers and job seekers to test usability and identify gaps. Gathering feedback from early users will allow for responsive updates and build a stronger foundation for broader rollout.

➤ **Clarify Definitions and Criteria Across Key Activities**

Define what counts as "training," "technical assistance," and "engaged partners" to ensure consistent reporting and shared understanding. These definitions will be essential when monitoring progress and translating planning activities into measurable outputs.

➤ **Maintain Momentum in Cross-Sector Collaboration**

As REWI aims to promote system integration, sustaining regular communication among partners across counties is vital. Formalizing this structure—such as through a quarterly cross-county convening or digital collaboration hub—can ensure that promising practices are shared and system-level strategies continue to evolve.

8. Lessons Learned

The lessons learned were developed by synthesizing planning documents, meeting summaries from April to June 2025, and initial reflections from the REWI leadership team. These insights emerged through a combination of document review, pattern recognition, and cross-referencing with the program's intended logic model and goals. Below is a breakdown of the process:

- **Clarifying Definitions and Documentation Requirements:** Across meetings and framework reviews, it became clear that terms like “training,” “technical assistance,” and “engaged partner” were interpreted differently by stakeholders. Without shared definitions, tracking progress and identifying gaps becomes difficult. This led to the second lesson: programs should co-develop working definitions and documentation templates early on to ensure consistent understanding and reporting.
- **Building in Iterative Feedback Loops with Partners:** Meetings between the evaluation team and the REWI leader suggest that there may be strong interest in capturing employer feedback and using it to refine the model. However, few systems are currently in place for doing so. This yielded another lesson that is likely key for the future: building feedback loops into early pilot phases—including for digital tools and training—can accelerate learning and responsiveness before full rollout.
- **Getting everyone on the same page early helps make sure each site understands and uses the core parts of the program the same way:** Across all three evaluation meetings, the REWI team highlighted that the concepts of “case management” and “dual enrollment” were being interpreted and implemented differently across counties. This variation prompted internal conversations about standardizing definitions and ensuring shared expectations across sites. Without a unified understanding of key program components, it becomes difficult to ensure fidelity in implementation or accurately assess outcomes. This lesson underscores the need to establish common frameworks early—especially when delivering programs across multiple counties or partner organizations.

9. Limitations

9.1 Limitations due to Time

A key limitation in this evaluation is the early stage of implementation at the time of mid-term data collection. Although the REWI program launched in early 2025, many activities and program components were still in early development or just beginning rollout during the spring and summer. As such, limited outcome data exists, and several evaluation questions remain unanswerable until additional implementation has occurred. Our evaluation team joined early in the project cycle, but the timing of site onboarding and activity sequencing has affected the volume and maturity of available data. This constrains the extent to which summative conclusions can be drawn at this stage.

9.2 Limitations due to Evaluation Process

The REWI team and evaluators have intentionally adopted a collaborative, co-constructed approach to designing the evaluation framework and logic model. While this has helped ensure relevance and buy-in from regional partners, it has required significant upfront investment in planning and shared understanding. As a result, early evaluation activity focused heavily on

infrastructure-building, leaving limited time for data collection ahead of this mid-term reporting period. We also note that certain materials—such as digital system access, internal program documents, and visuals—were not yet fully available for analysis or inclusion in this report. However, foundational agreements and planning processes are now in place to facilitate deeper data access and reporting in the final evaluation.

About the Evaluation Partner

Strategic Evaluations, Inc. (SEI) has served as the external evaluator for the NCWorks Commission’s Workforce Development Board (WDB) Local Innovation Committee since May 2024. SEI is a HUB-certified, minority-owned evaluation firm based in Durham, North Carolina, with more than two decades of experience supporting organizations in designing and sustaining high-impact STEMM and workforce programs. Our current evaluation portfolio for the NCWorks Local Innovation grants includes three initiatives: the OPT-IN and J.E.T. programs, the Building HOPE initiative, and the Reentry Empowerment and Workforce Integration (REWI) project. Each initiative focuses on expanding access to education, employment, and reentry support for historically marginalized populations across North Carolina. Our team specializes in implementing rigorous, equity-centered evaluation strategies tailored to complex, multi-site training and workforce development efforts. These projects span a wide range of institutional settings—from small nonprofits to regional coalitions—and aim to increase economic mobility through targeted partnerships, culturally relevant programming, and data-driven decision-making.