



## The Multi-site Evaluation of the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative

### Sustainability of SVORI Programs

By Christine Lindquist, RTI International

December 2005

In 2003, the US DOJ, DOL, ED, DHUD, and DHHS funded 69 grantees to implement reentry programs for prisoners. The SVORI funding supports 89 programs nationwide that are currently being evaluated by RTI International and the Urban Institute.

This *Reentry Research in Action* brief focuses on the sustainability of SVORI efforts, including specific sustainability strategies and continuation plans, as well as changes in interagency collaboration influenced by SVORI.

Grantees funded under the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative (SVORI) were charged with planning, implementing, and developing a sustainability plan for their programs over a 3-year award period. This report outlines sustainability efforts and specific continuation plans among the SVORI programs and summarizes key factors related to sustainability such as interagency collaboration, political climate, and attitudes about continuation. The findings are based on a survey of the program directors for all 89 SVORI programs.<sup>1</sup>

As of June 2005, the vast majority (89%) of SVORI program directors indicated that they planned to continue or expand their programs once SVORI funding ends. However, only 15% of the programs that expect to continue or expand SVORI reported having sufficient funds to operate at the current level, and over half (58%) reported that continuation would require additional Federal funds.

Almost all (95%) of the program directors that plan to continue or expand their initiatives reported that they are currently working on ways to sustain the initiative beyond the grant period. Specific strategies that the programs expecting to continue or expand SVORI have used or are planning to use are presented in Exhibit 1. As evident in the exhibit, nearly all programs are pursuing (or planning to pursue) federal or state funding. Communication and dissemination efforts are also commonly used sustainability strategies among the SVORI programs.

One factor that may influence the likelihood of sustainability is the continued collaboration among SVORI partner agencies. Virtually all programs reported an increase in communication since SVORI began, including telephone or e-mail contact among the agencies (93%), inter-agency contact to facilitate referrals for offenders (90%), meetings among the agencies to discuss the quality and content of services (85%), meetings among the agencies to discuss services for individual offenders (82%), and meetings among the agencies to strategize about the implementation of approaches to serve offenders (79%). Improved communication and information sharing among partnering agencies appear to be near universal consequences of SVORI. Virtually all program directors indicated that communication (94%) and information sharing about specific offenders (93%) across partnering agencies have improved as a result of SVORI. According to the program directors, shared goals and visions of reentry among partnering agencies increased as a result of SVORI funding, which should be instrumental in sustained collaboration.

Exhibit 1. Specific Sustainability Strategies	Programs (%)
Pursue additional federal funding	90%
Communicate with policy makers about the program	89%
Pursue additional state funding	87%
Develop printed materials to convey information about the program	83%
Work with the media (press releases, interviews, etc.)	75%
Conduct a local evaluation	74%
Pursue additional funding from local sources	70%
Reallocate resources within the current agency	67%
Reallocate resources across the partnering agencies	58%
Develop a website to convey information about the program	51%
Pursue additional funding from other sources	39%

<sup>1</sup> The 69 SVORI grantees are operating a total of 89 distinct programs. The multi-site evaluation describes characteristics at the program level rather than the grantee level.

**Strong Support for SVORI**

Not surprisingly, nearly all program directors reported extremely positive attitudes toward SVORI—more than 90% of the program directors agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements:

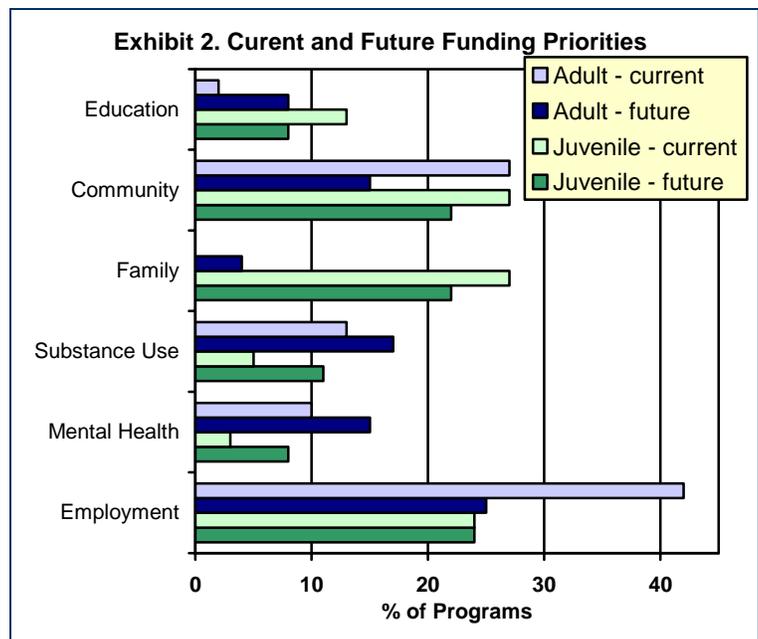
- SVORI is worth continuing (94%)
- Reentry programming is better off now than it was before SVORI (92%)
- SVORI is helpful to the current target population (98%)
- SVORI would be helpful to all returning offenders (94%)

program directors reported they were *currently* focusing, as well as the *future* areas on which they would focus if they were to be given additional funds. We report the programmatic priorities of adult and juvenile programs separately. As shown in the exhibit, directors of adult programs appear likely to continue prioritizing employment services (followed by community integration), although future funds would also make substance use and mental health more of a priority than they currently are. Among juvenile programs, community integration, family support/reunification, and employment would likely continue being prioritized, followed by a slightly increased prioritization on substance use.

This report has conveyed a widespread intention to continue or expand SVORI programs and a need for additional funding to achieve this continuation. The SVORI programs are actively pursuing funding from various sources (mostly federal and state) and employing a variety of communication and dissemination strategies to sustain the services and other program components delivered through SVORI funding. The improved inter-agency collaboration among numerous stakeholder groups that appears to be at least partially attributable to SVORI funding, coupled with the favorable political climate

Support for reentry appears also to be strong beyond the SVORI partnering agencies. Eighty-eight percent of the program directors reported that the current political climate in their communities is favorable to their reentry programming, and 80% reported that other reentry initiatives besides SVORI are underway in their states.

Finally, given the frequency with which programs are planning to pursue additional federal funds, we also report how such funds would be used. Exhibit 2 illustrates the top programmatic areas on which



toward reentry programming, suggests a supportive environment for continued reintegration efforts. In the final SVORI program director (to be fielded early in 2006), we will focus more extensively on sustainability strategies to gain a more in-depth understanding of specific strategies implemented and achieved as the original funding period draws to a close. We will report on these findings in a future *Reentry Research in Action* brief.

**Multi-site Evaluation of SVORI Principal Investigators**

**Pamela K. Lattimore, Ph.D.**

RTI International  
 Center for Crime, Violence, and Justice Research  
 3040 Cornwallis Road  
 Research Triangle Park, NC 27709  
 Phone: 803-754-5965  
 Fax: 919-485-7700

**Christy A. Visher, Ph.D.**

Urban Institute  
 Justice Policy Center  
 2100 M Street, NW  
 Washington, DC 20037  
 Phone: 202-261-5593  
 Fax: 202-659-8985



[www.svori-evaluation.org](http://www.svori-evaluation.org)

