Getting on the Same Page: Building Better Outcomes Through Data

Michael Farmer, Fresno County Probation Department

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What We'll Cover

1

How we got here

From an outcome evaluation to a data question

2

The tools

Crosswalk, data dictionary, and reporting templates

3

Implementation

What it has taken to put the tools to use

4

Lessons

What other counties can adapt

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PART ONE

How We Got Here

Michael Farmer, Fresno County Probation Department

The Project at a Glance

Early 2024

Launch: logic models, advisory workgroup, analytic plan

July 2024

Site visits and case file reviews at the first two programs

Dec. 2024

Year 1 results to the CCP; scope shifts to data readiness

2025

Process evaluations at four more programs; tool design begins

Spring 2026

Crosswalk, dictionary, and table shells; provider training

2026

Preliminary outcome evaluation using standardized data

Year 1 (2024): Evaluate two programs

Year 2 (2025): Build the reporting foundation

Year 3 (2026): Preliminary outcomes

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Where It Started: What the CCP Asked

PROJECT GOAL

"Provide an impact and process evaluation of Fresno County's AB 109 priority programs… to gain a better understanding of the effectiveness of the County's AB 109 efforts."

Original scope: two programs per year over three years, six program evaluations in all

THREE EVALUATION QUESTIONS

1. **Evidence-based practice**
   Are AB 109 programs using evidence-based programs and practices?
2. **Program outcomes**
   Are program practices effective in achieving program-specific goals?
3. **Broader AB 109 goals**
   Are participants experiencing reduced recidivism and improved well-being, and what contributes to success?

Year 1 design: administrative data from 2017–2021 (Probation, Sheriff's Office, programs) plus 2024 site visits, staff interviews, case file reviews, and a best-practice literature review

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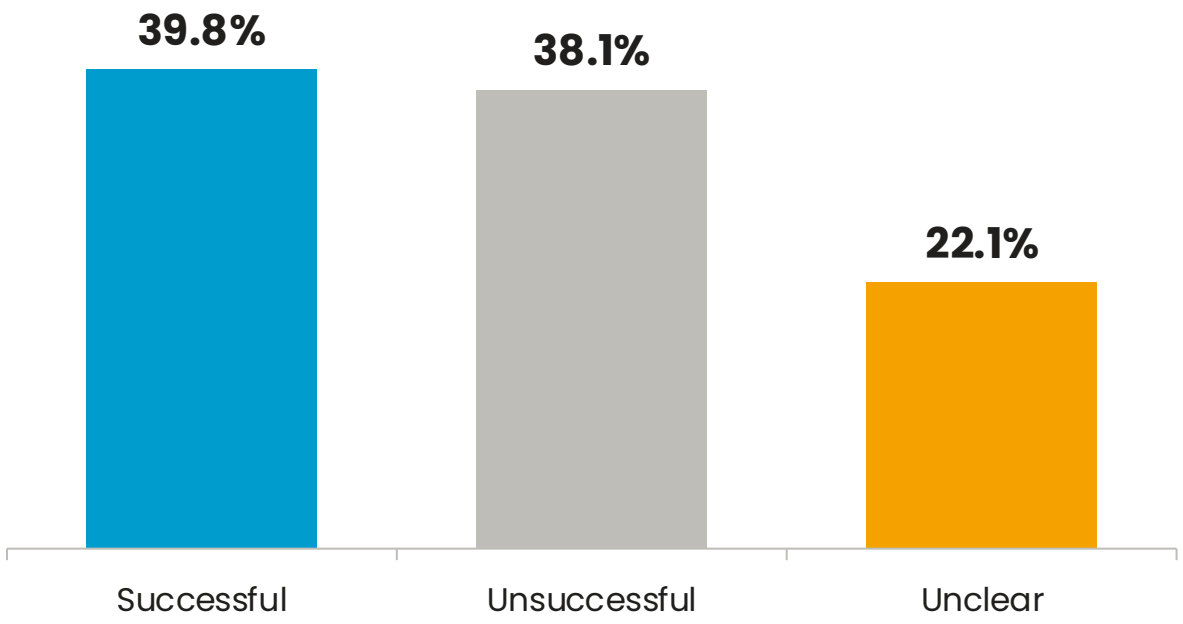
What the Year 1 Data Showed

Transitional housing program: exit status (N = 289)



"Unclear" = authorized departures and program transfers that could not be classified as successful or unsuccessful

Source: Year 1 evaluation results presented to the CCP, Dec. 2024. Administrative data, 2017–2021

1 in 5

exits could not be classified as successful or unsuccessful

35 days

average stay in the housing program, against an intended 120

8.5 weeks

average enrollment in the pre-apprenticeship program, against a 12-week curriculum

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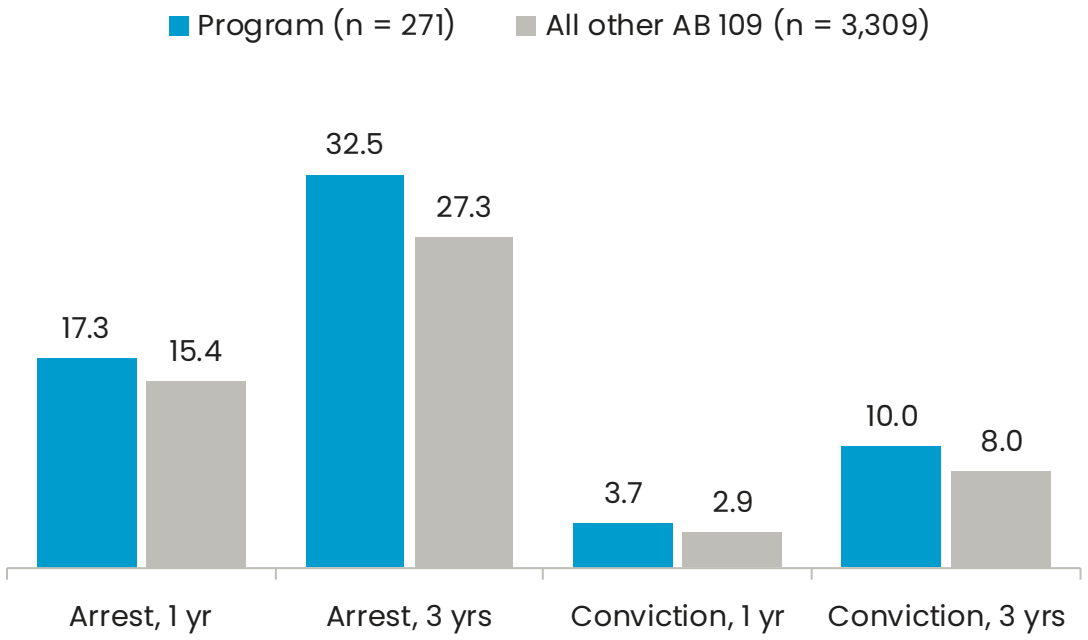
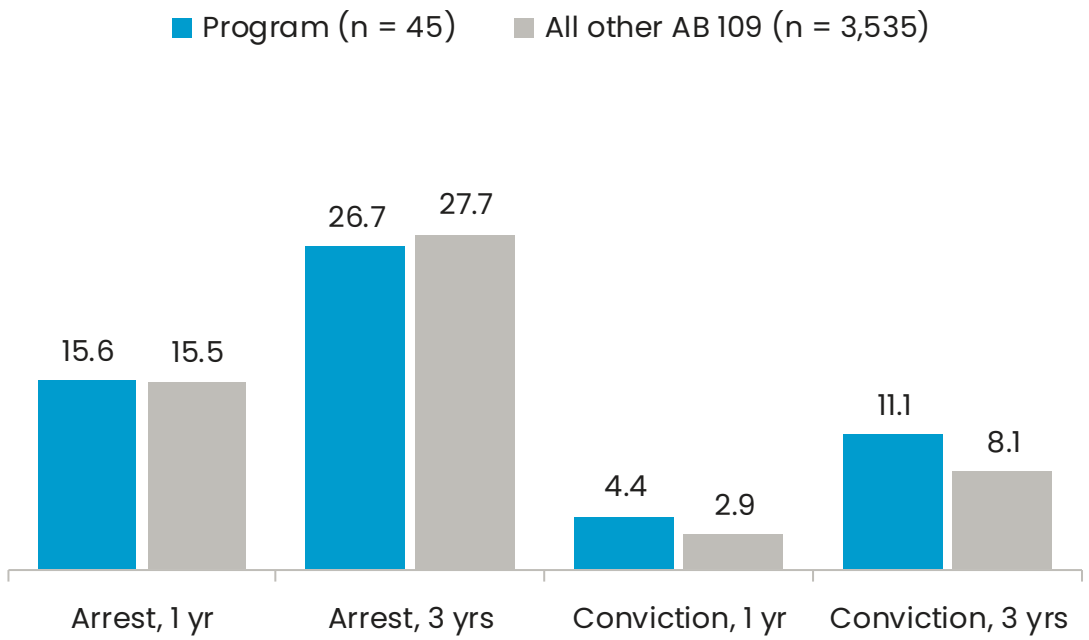
Similar Recidivism, but No Way to Explain It

Housing program vs. all other AB 109 (%)



Pre-apprenticeship vs. all other AB 109 (%)



Why we couldn't interpret these: recidivism was measured from probation discharge, not program discharge, and records lacked the service and exit detail needed to explain differences.

Source: Year 1 evaluation results, Dec. 2024. Arrests and convictions within 1 and 3 years of probation discharge; 2017–2021 cohort.

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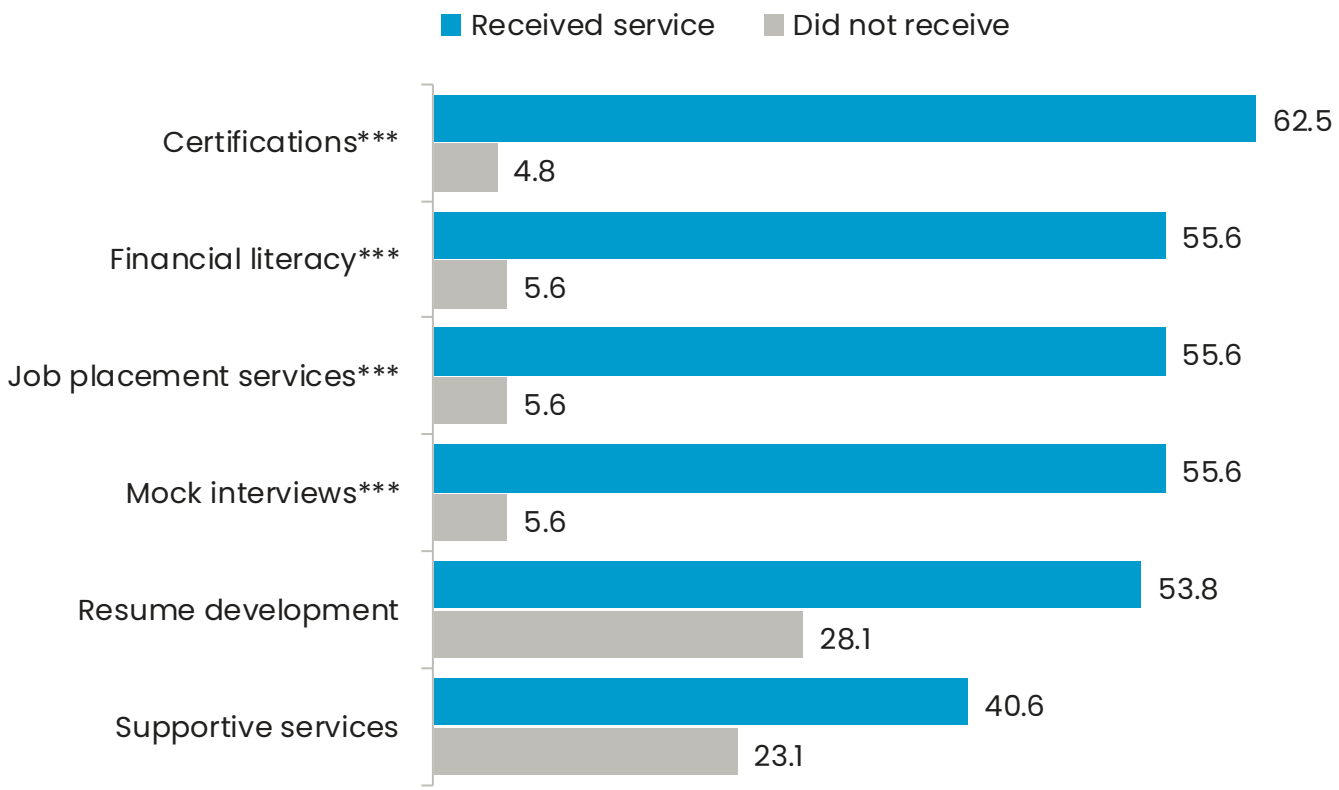
Service Records Made Analysis Possible

Pre-apprenticeship: employed 90 days after exit (%)



WHY THIS MATTERS

This program tracked services for each participant, so we could link services to employment.

The other Year 1 program had little client-level service data, so this kind of question couldn't be asked.

Consistent service fields make this possible for every program.

*Source: Year 1 evaluation results, Dec. 2024. N = 45. ***p < .001. Associations only; these results do not establish program effects.*

Where the Data Fell Short

Timing gap

Outcome data covered 2017–2021, while site visits described 2024 practice

Missing participant detail

Service engagement, reasons for leaving, and barriers to housing or work were often missing

Records hard to connect

Inconsistent probation IDs and exit reasons limited linking across files

Inconsistent measures

Risk scoring differed across tools, and recidivism followed probation, not program, discharge

The issue wasn't effort. Programs collected different things, in different systems, with different definitions.

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A Decision Point: Strengthen the Foundation First

DECEMBER 2024: ADJUSTED SCOPE

Year 2 **Process evaluations and data readiness**

Process evaluations at four remaining programs, individualized technical assistance, and standardized data collection

Year 3 **Preliminary outcome evaluation**

Results-Based Accountability metrics applied consistently across programs, using the data Year 2 put in place

Recommended within existing CCP funding

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WHAT THE FOUNDATION NEEDED

- Clarify the information needed to answer County questions
- Establish shared definitions and reporting expectations
- Identify responsibilities across partners
- Build a consistent basis for future evaluation

PART TWO

Building the Tools

Jennifer Lux, PhD, RDA Consulting

Understanding the Existing Process

What we did

- Site visits and process evaluation fieldwork at four more programs
- Meetings with Probation, Behavioral Health, and each provider
- Reviewed available records and reporting practices
- Connected reporting needs to the evaluation questions

What we heard

- Wide variation in data systems
- Key fields labeled and recorded inconsistently
- Case management differences affected completeness
- Committed staff, but differing expectations
- Providers wanted clearer countywide guidance

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Three Tools That Work Together

Data Exchange Crosswalk

Who supplies the information, and how does it move between partners?

Data Dictionary

What does each field mean, and what belongs in it?

Provider Reporting Templates

How do staff organize and submit the information?

Keep them aligned: a change to one definition may also mean a change to the template and the reporting instructions.

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The Data Exchange Crosswalk

Stage 1: Planning

1. **Probation** sends providers the list of participants they need data for
2. **Probation** uses the dictionary and table shells to identify the fields each program tracks
3. **Probation** determines the summary information to share with the CCP

Stage 2: Collection

4. **Service providers** enter the requested program data into the table shells
5. **Service providers** email table shells to their contracted Assistant Deputy Chief by the 25th of each month

Monthly cycle
Submit by the 25th; review by the 2nd

Stage 3: Analysis & Reporting

6. **Probation** reviews program data for completeness and quality by the 2nd of each month
7. **Probation** summarizes findings for the CCP Assistant Deputy Chief
8. **CCP Assistant Deputy Chief** shares summary findings with the CCP

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Adapted from the Fresno County AB 109 Evaluation Data Crosswalk, Version 1.2 (March 2026)

A Shared Data Dictionary

1. Defines each field and its reporting format
2. Specifies the expected unit or drop-down response options
3. Clarifies terms staff may interpret differently
4. Names the partner responsible for each field

I. Participant Demographics and Baseline Characteristics				
Suggested Field Name	**Description**	**Data Type**	**Drop-down Options**	**Source**
Probation_ID	Client's unique probation identification number	Number	N/A	Probation
Zip_Code	Client's current zip code	Number	N/A	Probation
Birth_Date	Client's date of birth	Date	N/A	Probation
Gender	Client's gender	Drop-down menu	- Female - Male - Transgender Female - Transgender Male - Non-binary - Unknown - Declined to state	Probation

Draft excerpt: participant demographics and baseline characteristics

All partners consult the dictionary so the same field means the same thing everywhere.

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The Most Important Field: Client Probation ID

One accurate identifier lets records from different partners describe the same person.

Provider table shells

Services, engagement, enrollment and discharge

ID

Probation records

Supervision, demographics, risk level

ID

Sheriff's Office data

Arrests and convictions

Year 1 lesson: missing or inconsistent IDs limited what could be linked. Now the ID is the first column in every template and the first thing checked on review.

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One Field, Different Interpretations

What would you enter in a field labeled “Contacts”?



A telephone number



Time spent with a participant



Number of interactions

Clear instructions specify what to count, which unit to use, and how to report it.

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Reporting Templates That Fit the Services

Common fields for consistency across programs

Program-specific fields that reflect each service type

Drop-down options that match the dictionary

Provider feedback on unclear or inapplicable requests

			Housing				
Probation_ID	Client_Engagement	Contacts	Enrollment_Date	Discharge_Date	Housing_Status_Intake	Housing_Status_Discharge	Reintake_Indicator

- Homeless/Unsheltered
- Transitional/Sober living housing
- Living with family/friends (Doubled up)
- Stable/Permanent housing (Renting/Owning)
- Unknown
- Declined to state

Example table shell for a housing program: shared fields such as Probation_ID and dates, housing-specific fields, and drop-down response options

Watch for duplicate requests: attendance already sent to Probation weekly raised the question of whether, and how, to ask again.

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Implementation Requires Ongoing Support

Provider training

Data planning and collection training on all three tools

Self-paced review

Partners review materials on their own schedule

Office hours

Open sessions with RDA for questions (April 2026)

Focused conversations

Providers and County contacts work through service details

Monthly follow-up

Review real submissions and revise guidance

Distributing the tools was the beginning of implementation, not the end.

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Reviewing the Information We Receive

1. **Confirm**
   Expected files arrived with the required information
2. **Check**
   Identifiers, dates, and consistency across files
3. **Clarify**
   Blanks and discrepancies with the partner who has the answer
4. **Document**
   How each issue was resolved, for later cycles

What can a blank mean?

- **Missing**
  The information exists but wasn't entered
- **Not collected**
  The program doesn't gather it
- **Not applicable yet**
  e.g., a discharge date for someone still enrolled

Each answer calls for a different follow-up.

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PART THREE

Lessons for Your County

Stephanie Duriez, PhD, RDA Consulting

County Ownership and Early Communication

- **Explain why** reporting expectations are changing
- **Clarify how** the County intends to use the information
- **Involve the staff** responsible for provider relationships
- **Address concerns** before and throughout implementation

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WHAT WE LEARNED

Guidance and training support implementation, but they don't replace a County conversation about why the change matters.

Earlier communication from leadership would have set shared expectations before rollout.

Five Lessons From Implementation

1. **Establish County ownership early**
2. **Make reporting responsibilities explicit**
3. **Pair shared definitions with relevant fields**
4. **Plan time for support and review**
5. **Build continuity into the process**

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Connecting Reporting to County Questions

Service use	Which services do participants receive?
Participation	What do enrollment and exit records tell us?
Oversight	Which gaps need follow-up?
Evaluation	What additional information is needed?

Summary measures suggested for CCP reporting

- Demographics
- Engagement and participant progress
- Referrals to each program
- Individuals served
- Number and type of services
- Program completion rates
- Successful PRCS and MS completions
- Reentry stabilization

Measures from the Data Crosswalk v1.2. Current information strengthens the basis for evaluation but does not yet establish program effects.

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Where Fresno Is Headed

Year 1

Identified the gaps

Evaluation showed where records couldn't answer the County's questions

Year 2

Built the infrastructure

Crosswalk, dictionary, table shells, and provider support

Year 3

Preliminary outcomes

Results-Based Accountability metrics on standardized data; validate data request protocols

Beyond

Sustain and extend

Tools reusable across vendors and future RFPs; longer follow-up for outcome studies

Outcome measurement depends on participants accumulating time in the community after services end.

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A Starting Point for Your County

1. **Choose one reporting question**
   that matters for oversight or evaluation
2. **Identify what partners already collect**
   before adding new requirements
3. **Bring the responsible people together**
   who collect, review, and use the information
4. **Test definitions, tools, and roles**
   with the staff who will use them
5. **Plan ongoing review and support**
   and assign someone time to do it

YOUR TURN

What is one reporting relationship you could clarify when you get back, and who would need to be part of that conversation?

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Questions and Discussion

Where do reporting definitions or responsibilities become unclear?

What would make reporting more practical for your partners?

Who maintains the process when staff or contracts change?

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Appendix: Year 1 Participant Profiles

Characteristic	Housing program (N = 289)	Pre-apprenticeship (N = 45)
Race/ethnicity		
Hispanic	50.2%	64.4%
White	27.3%	2.2%
Black	17.3%	22.2%
Other	5.2%	11.1%
Male	93.4%	93.3%
Mean age (SD)	37.6 (10.2)	34.0 (7.3)
Risk level		
High	64.7%	51.1%
Moderate	19.4%	20.0%
Low	15.9%	28.9%
Caseload: PRCS / mandatory supervision	81.7% / 18.3%	93.3% / 6.7%
Mean length of enrollment, days (SD)	35 (33.8)	60 (36.4)

Source: Year 1 evaluation results, Dec. 2024. Administrative data, 2017–2021. Risk levels standardized across the STRONG-R and static risk tools.

Appendix: Year 1 Recidivism Detail

Measure (% of participants)	Housing program (n = 271)	All other AB 109 (n = 3,309)	Pre-apprenticeship (n = 45)	All other AB 109 (n = 3,535)
Arrest within 1 year	17.3	15.4	15.6	15.5
Arrest within 3 years	32.5	27.3	26.7	27.7
Conviction within 1 year	3.7	2.9	4.4	2.9
Conviction within 3 years	10.0	8.0	11.1	8.1

Recidivism was measured from probation discharge. Each program is compared with all other AB 109 participants, so the comparison groups differ slightly.

Source: Year 1 evaluation results, Dec. 2024.

Appendix: Services and 90-Day Employment

Service	Received, n (%)	Employed at 90 days: received	Employed at 90 days: did not receive
Case management	45 (100%)	35.6%	n/a
Thinking for a Change (T4C)	45 (100%)	35.6%	n/a
Supportive services	32 (71%)	40.6%	23.1%
Financial literacy***	27 (60%)	55.6%	5.6%
Job placement services***	27 (60%)	55.6%	5.6%
Mock interviews***	27 (60%)	55.6%	5.6%
Certifications***	24 (53%)	62.5%	4.8%
Resume development	13 (29%)	53.8%	28.1%

*Source: Year 1 evaluation results, Dec. 2024. N = 45. ***p < .001. Average hourly wage among those employed at 90 days: $22.80 (SD 12.2).*