NC | Department of
Adult Correction

PROTECTION • INNOVATION
REHABILITATION

PRIORITY QUESTIONS RESEARCH AGENDA

2023-2025
Action Plan
January 2024

Contents

Executive Summary

Since March 2023, the North Carolina Department of Adult Correction (NCDAC) and the North Carolina Office of Strategic Partnerships (OSP) have partnered to develop NCDAC's Priority Questions Research Agenda (PQRA) Action Plan. The aim of the PQRA is to define key areas in which the agency will research and develop evidence to inform policy, programmatic, and operational decisions. The PQRA comes at an opportune time as NCDAC works to hire staff, formalize policies and procedures, and further its use of data and research to inform rehabilitation and reentry services to currently and formerly incarcerated individuals.

Use of NCDAC PQRA Action Plan

This NCDAC PQRA Action Plan lays out NCDAC's Priority Questions (PQs), organized by Strategic Goal, with details for each PQ; including the background and motivation for the PQ; a brief description of proposed evidence building activities and timing; and anticipated challenges for answering the PQ. At the end of the document, the section "NCDAC Next Steps to Advance Evidence Building Activities" includes next steps for executing the Action Plan. NCDAC and external partners will refine the PQs and proposed research methods to execute specific projects.

This Action Plan is a "living document" NCDAC will update regularly based on stakeholder feedback, evidence generated through research activities, and emerging agency needs.

Development of the NCDAC PQRA Action Plan

Based on the PQRA development process, including **internal listening sessions and feedback forms**, NCDAC leadership identified 11 PQs in its 2023-2025 Strategic Plan published in July 2023. In August 2023, NCDAC and OSP hosted three **external listening sessions and fielded an anonymous feedback form** to collect additional feedback, resulting in a revised set of 10 PQs[1]. *See Table 1.*

> **WHAT ARE AGENCY PRIORITY QUESTIONS?**
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> **Agency Priority Questions are questions, that when answered, position an agency for optimal performance and outcomes. Priority Questions, and their answers, can directly inform strategic operational and policy decisions by agency leadership and staff.**

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[1] NCDAC initially included 11 PQs in its Strategic Plan but consolidated some questions in the development of this Action Plan to arrive at a total of 10 PQs. NCDAC and OSP combined two of the PQs under Strategic Goal 3 into one question given their overlapping nature related to safety and security at NCDAC facilities.

Priority Ranking	Priority Question	Strategic Objective	Evidence Building Activities[A]	Planned Start[B]	Expected Results[C]
Strategic Goal 1: Support Our Employees					
2	How effective are NCDAC efforts to retain staff?	1.1	FFF, PM, PE	Oct. 2023	ST/LT
3	How effective are NCDAC initiatives and programming to improve employee well-ness, including both mental and physical health?	1.4	PE	Oct. 2023	LT
4	How effective are NCDAC recruitment efforts?	1.1	FFF, PM, PE	Feb. 2024	ST/LT
8	How effective at developing a high-performing workforce are NCDAC policies and practices related to staff training, professional development, leadership development, coaching, and career advancement?	1.2	PM, PE, PA	May 2024	LT
9	How effective are NCDAC practices related to staff accountability, including the employee disciplinary process?	1.3	PM, PE	May 2024	LT
Strategic Goal 2: Safely Manage and Support Offenders[D] from Custody through Reentry					
1	How effective are NCDAC rehabilitation, programming, and reentry practices at reducing recidivism and improving post-release outcomes?	2.2	PM, PE	Oct. 2023	LT
7	How can NCDAC better leverage and organize data (and technology) to optimize decision-making?	2.4	FFF	Mar. 2024	ST
Strategic Goal 3: Strengthen Safety & Security at All NCDAC Locations					
6	How effective are NCDAC's practices for reducing the number of infractions, safety issues, and contraband in NCDAC facilities?	3.1, 3.2	FFF, PM, PE	Mar. 2024	ST/LT
Strategic Goal 4: Operate Effectively & Efficiently					
5	How can NCDAC strengthen relationships, communication, and collaboration across divisions, among staff, and across state agencies?	4.1	FFF	Feb. 2024	ST
Strategic Goal 5: Increase Transparency of NCDAC's Missions and Operations					
10	How can NCDAC strengthen engagement with community partners?	5.2	FFF	June 2024	ST/LT

[A] Evidence building includes the following activities: Foundational Fact-Finding (FFF); Policy Analysis (PA); Performance Measurement (PM); and Program Evaluation (PE). For definitions on each activity, see Appendix.

[B] Planned start dates are defined as the target date for having initial scoping meetings to refine PQ.

[C] Expected results defined as: ST (short-term) if results expected before 2025 and LT (long-term) if results expected after 2025 or if activity is recurring.

[D] The term "offender" is used in the NCDAC Strategic Plan, but NC OSP uses the term: "people who are incarcerated or formerly incarcerated."

Overview

The mission of the North Carolina Department of Adult Correction (NCDAC) is for all Divisions of the Department to protect the public by collaboratively focusing on rehabilitation, protection, innovation, accountability, and professionalism. NCDAC is the second largest North Carolina state government agency with almost 20,000 positions and an annual budget of approximately $2 billion. NCDAC is responsible for approximately 30,000 individuals who are incarcerated in state prisons and more than 75,000 individuals who are on supervised probation, parole, or post-release supervision.

NCDAC is a newly created Cabinet Agency established in the 2021-2023 budget passed by the North Carolina General Assembly and signed into law by Governor Roy Cooper in November 2021. Formerly within the North Carolina Department of Public Safety (NCDPS), NCDAC officially started operations on January 1, 2023 as a stand alone Cabinet agency.

This NCDAC Priority Questions Research Agenda (PQRA) Action Plan provides a high-level overview of proposed research activities for the agency through 2025. NCDAC and external partners will refine the PQs and the proposed research methods as research projects are executed to answer specific PQs.

What is a Priority Questions Research Agenda Action Plan?

The Priority Questions Research Agenda (PQRA) Action Plan establishes and defines key areas for the agency to research and develop evidence to inform its policy, programmatic, and operational decisions and fill gaps in knowledge that hinder the agency's ability to achieve its goals and objectives. The Action Plan articulates the agency's vision for a culture of evidence-based decision making, listing Priority Questions (PQs) aligned to its Strategic Plan, potential approaches to address the identified questions, and anticipated challenges and solutions in answering the PQs.

PQRA Development Process

Listening Sessions with NCDAC Division Leadership & Staff Survey: Recognizing input from NCDAC division leadership as a key starting point in identifying PQs, NCDAC and OSP conducted seven listening sessions across selected divisions[2]. OSP also worked closely with NCDAC's All-In Committee[3] to solicit input from a broad range of staff through a survey and one-on-one interviews.

Identification of NCDAC PQs for Strategic Plan: OSP synthesized information from the staff listening sessions and survey and identified 40 potential PQs, 11 of which are in NCDAC's 2023-2025 Strategic Plan.

External Stakeholder Feedback: In August 2023, NCDAC and OSP invited representatives of the Task Force for Racial Equity in Criminal Justice (TREC), the State Reentry Council Collaborative (SRCC), and the Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission (SPAC) to participate in any one of three virtual listening sessions to obtain feedback on the 11 PQs included in NCDAC's 2023-2025 Strategic Plan. OSP fielded a survey sent to members of each group to collect feedback from those unable to attend one of the three virtual listening sessions or who preferred to share feedback anonymously.

Revised Priority Questions and Development of the PQRA Action Plan: NCDAC and OSP revised and ranked the initial 11 PQs included in its 2023-2025 Strategic Plan based on recommendations from external stakeholders and input from agency leadership. NCDAC initially included 11 PQs in its Strategic Plan but consolidated some questions in the development of this Action Plan to arrive at a total of 10 PQs. NCDAC and OSP combined two of the PQs under Strategic Goal 3 into one question given their overlapping nature related to safety and security at NCDAC facilities.

This NCDAC PQRA Action Plan is available on NCDAC's public website and OSP's NC Project Portal. The Project Portal and NCDAC's website will post updates on research activities to answer key PQs defined here in the Action Plan.

Organization of this Action Plan

The NCDAC PQRA Action Plan is organized by NCDAC's 2023-2025 Strategic Plan Goals:
• **Goal 1:** Support Our Employees
• **Goal 2:** Safely Manage and Support Offenders[4] from Custody through Reentry
• **Goal 3:** Strengthen Safety and Security at All NCDAC Locations
• **Goal 4:** Operate Effectively and Efficiently
• **Goal 5:** Increase Transparency of NCDAC's Missions and Operations

Within each Goal, NCDAC orders the questions by priority to the agency (Priority 1 = highest priority, Priority 10 = lowest priority) recognizing finite agency resources and staff availability. For each Strategic Goal, this Action Plan details the PQs aligned with that goal, including background and motivation for answering the PQs, a brief description of proposed evidence building activities and timing, and anticipated challenges for answering the PQs.

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[2]Divisions included: 1) Institutions (Prisons); 2) Community Supervision; 3) Rehabilitation and Reentry; 4) Educational Services; 5) Comprehensive Health Services; 6) Administration; and 7) Operations.
[3]The All-In Committee is a staff-led peer group that provides a venue for staff to provide feedback to NCDAC leadership on ways to improve work environments, salaries, safety, employee wellness, job satisfaction, and staff engagement. There are approximately 250 staff formally involved from all levels and areas of NCDAC.
[4]The term "offender" is used in the NCDAC Strategic Plan, but NC OSP uses the term: "people who are incarcerated or formerly incarcerated."

Strategic Goal 1: Support Our Employees

Strategic Goal Objectives

- **Objective 1.1: Reduce staff vacancy rates by recruiting qualified staff and increasing retention of current employees.**
- **Objective 1.2: Develop a high-performing and effective workforce.**
- **Objective 1.3: Hold employees accountable for their actions.**
- **Objective 1.4: Support the mental and physical health and well-being of our employees.**

Priority Questions

NCDAC Strategic Goal 1 identifies five PQs the agency should address to inform how it achieves each objective. Each PQ is detailed below including the rationale and plan for addressing each question, and anticipated challenges and solutions.

Priority Question 2 out of 10: How effective are NCDAC efforts to retain staff? (Objective 1.1)

Sub-questions:

2A. What steps can NCDAC take to improve the methodology and data collection activities it uses to measure employee engagement, morale, job stress, and other factors related to staff decisions to stay with or leave the agency?

2B. What is the effectiveness of NCDAC salary increases, bonuses, or other types of compensation for increasing employee retention?

2C. What factors contribute to NCDAC staff considerations to stay or leave? And how do the answers to these questions vary by role type, geography, etc., where relevant?

2D. What is the state of NCDAC facilities, and what upgrades are necessary to make the workplace a safer, happier place to be, where people will want to come to work?

Table 2. Details for Priority Question 2

PQ 2: How effective are NCDAC efforts to retain staff? (Objective 1.1)	
Background and Motivation	NCDAC external and internal stakeholders discussed in listening sessions the challenge the agency is facing retaining staff, particularly front-line positions like corrections and probation and parole officers. Stakeholders shared that staffing levels are paramount to enabling NCDAC to effectively provide security and deliver rehabilitation and reentry services to those under custody and supervision.
Proposed Evidence Building Activities [5]	*Foundational Fact Finding* [6] *:* Inventory and develop recommendations to improve NCDAC's data collection instruments and methodology. Conduct surveys, stay interviews, and focus groups to understand the factors that contribute to staff decisions to stay with the agency. **Performance Management:** Conduct ongoing tracking and analysis of data related to retention efforts. ***Program Evaluation (TBD):*** Conduct a quantitative evaluation on the effectiveness of NCDAC salary increases and bonuses on employee retention.

Activities Timeline	• **Planned start [7] :** Oct. 2023
	• **Expected results [8] :**
	   Short-Term: FFF
	   Long-Term: PM, PE

Anticipated Challenges and Solutions	Current data are often too limited and general to be actionable, so answering this PQ would require formalizing and implementing a process for collecting quantitative and qualitative data on new staff as they arrive, throughout their time with the agency, and at the point of exit.

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[5]*Note: The Proposed Evidence Building Activities column includes activities NCDAC could do on its own and in partnership with other groups such as OSP and/or external researchers.*

[6]*Evidence building includes but is not limited to the following activities: Foundational Fact-Finding (FFF); Policy Analysis (PA); Performance Measurement (PM); and Program Evaluation (PE). For definitions on each activity, see Appendix.*

[7]*Planned start dates are defined as the target date for having initial scoping meetings to refine PQ.*

[8]*Expected results defined as: ST (short-term) if results expected before 2025 and LT (long-term) if results expected after 2025 or if activity is recurring.*

Priority Question 3 out of 10: How effective are NCDAC initiatives and programming to improve employee wellness, including both mental and physical health? (Objective 1.4)

Sub-question:
3A. What are NCDAC staff needs related to peer and behavioral/mental health supports? How can the SHIELD program provide these supports to improve employee mental health?

Table 3. Details for Priority Question 3

PQ 3: How effective are NCDAC initiatives and programming to improve employee wellness, including both mental and physical health? (Objective 1.4)	
Background and Motivation	NCDAC external and internal stakeholders discussed in listening sessions and indicated on surveys that a key goal is to improve employee wellness and understand the effectiveness of current initiatives (e.g., SHIELD, All-In).
Proposed Evidence Building Activities [9][10]	***Program Evaluation (Needs Assessment):*** Conduct interviews and surveys with SHIELD and other NCDAC staff to identify agency staff needs around peer and behavioral/mental health supports and areas in which support/s could be improved. ***Program Evaluation (TBD):*** Evaluate the implementation and/or effectiveness of various programs such as SHIELD, All-In, etc. ***Program Evaluation (Quantitative Impact Study):*** Test the impact of one more strategies (e.g., changing language of internal communication about supports available to staff, to encourage take-up).

Activities Timeline	• ***Planned start*** [11] **:** Oct. 2023
	 • ***Expected results*** [12] **:**
	     Short-Term: PE (Needs Assessment)
	     Long-Term: PE (Other)

Anticipated Challenges and Solutions	• Would need to develop data collection infrastructure to evaluate programs, if not already available. • An evaluation of SHIELD likely will require the assistance of external researchers with expertise in Integrative Behavioral Health Services.

[9] *Note: The Proposed Evidence Building Activities column includes activities NCDAC could do on its own and in partnership with other groups such as OSP and/or external researchers.*

[10] *Evidence building includes but is not limited to the following activities: Foundational Fact-Finding (FFF); Policy Analysis (PA); Performance Measurement (PM); and Program Evaluation (PE). For definitions on each activity, see Appendix.*

[11] *Planned start dates are defined as the target date for having initial scoping meetings to refine PQ.*

[12] *Expected results defined as: ST (short-term) if results expected before 2025 and LT (long-term) if results expected after 2025 or if activity is recurring.*

Priority Question 4 out of 10: How effective are NCDAC recruitment efforts? (Objective 1.1)

Sub-question:

4A. What strategies can NCDAC implement to effectively market corrections as a profession and address negative stereotypes potential applicants may have? How does marketing effectiveness differ by role type, geography, etc., where relevant?

4B. What NCDAC strategies are the most effective to recruit a quality, diverse correctional workforce?

Table 4. Details for Priority Question 4

PQ 4: How effective are NCDAC recruitment efforts? (Objective 1.1)	
Background and Motivation	Stakeholders shared that staffing levels are paramount to enabling NCDAC to effectively provide security and deliver rehabilitation and reentry services. While recruitment is viewed as a slightly lower priority than staff retention, NCDAC recognizes the importance of identifying potential strategies and approaches for increasing the effectiveness of NCDAC recruitment activities to encourage a diverse and qualified applicant pool for NCDAC positions. An OSP Rapid Evidence Review (see Appendix A) contributed to the recommended actions for a quantitative impact study.
Proposed Evidence Building Activities [13] [14]	*Foundational Fact Finding:* Conduct surveys and focus groups to understand the factors that contribute to staff decisions to apply for and begin a position, as well as to stay with the agency in the long run. *Performance Management:* Conduct ongoing tracking and analysis of data related to marketing and recruitment efforts. *Program Evaluation (Quantitative Impact Study):* Test the impact of one or more strategies (e.g., changing language in marketing of positions, changing application and interview process) on outcomes such as the number of clicks on online job ads, number of applications, number of applicants who persist through the process, and number of new hires who remain with DAC at 6 and 12 months.

[13] *Note: The Proposed Evidence Building Activities column includes activities NCDAC could do on its own and in partnership with other groups such as OSP and/or external researchers.*

[14] *Evidence building includes but is not limited to the following activities: Foundational Fact-Finding (FFF); Policy Analysis (PA); Performance Measurement (PM); and Program Evaluation (PE). For definitions on each activity, see Appendix.*

PQ 4: How effective are NCDAC recruitment efforts? (Objective 1.1)	
Activities Timeline	• **Planned start** [15] **:** Feb. 2024 • **Expected results**[16]**:** 　Short-Term: FFF 　Long-Term: FFF, PM, PE
Anticipated Challenges and Solutions	• Would need to understand "informal" methods of marketing and advertising (i.e., referrals; "word of mouth"), which could be addressed through qualitative data collection. • Another challenge might be the time necessary to measure longer-term effectiveness.

Priority Question 8 out of 10: How effective at developing a high-performing workforce are NCDAC policies and practices related to staff training, professional development, leadership development, coaching, and career advancement? (Objective 1.2)

Sub-question:

What training courses are effective for preparing staff to support the comprehensive and diverse set of needs of the population served by NCDAC, and in particular, the needs of certain marginalized groups (e.g., veterans, individuals with disabilities, women, LGBTQ+ people)?

Table 5. Details for Priority Question 8

PQ 8: How effective at developing a high-performing workforce are NCDAC policies and practices related to staff training, professional development, leadership development, coaching, and career advancement? (Objective 1.2)	
Background and Motivation	NCDAC external and internal stakeholders discussed the importance of staff training to support NCDAC's rehabilitation and reentry services, including the possibility of offering law enforcement credentialing. However, internal staff expressed concerns about limited take-up and awareness of the various programs and trainings available to staff.

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[15]*Planned start dates are defined as the target date for having initial scoping meetings to refine PQ.*

[16]*Expected results defined as: ST (short-term) if results expected before 2025 and LT (long-term) if results expected after 2025 or if activity is recurring.*

PQ 8: How effective at developing a high-performing workforce are NCDAC policies and practices related to staff training, professional development, leadership development, coaching, and career advancement? (Objective 1.2)	
Proposed Evidence Building Activities [17] [18]	**Performance Management:** Conduct ongoing tracking and analysis of data related to staff participation in and outcomes of training opportunities (e.g., Career Progression Program). **Program Evaluation (Quantitative Impact Study):** Test the impact of one or more strategies to encourage take-up (e.g., changing language to build awareness and interest in training opportunities and other similar benefits). **Program Evaluation (TBD):** Evaluate the implementation and/or effectiveness of various training opportunities (e.g., whether participation is linked to better outcomes). **Policy Analysis (TBD):** Evaluate the implementation and impact of policies related to training, professional development, coaching, and career advancement.
Activities Timeline	• **Planned start** [19] **:** May 2024 • **Expected results**[20]**:** Long-Term: PM, PE, PA
Anticipated Challenges and Solutions	• Would need to develop data collection infrastructure to evaluate programs, if not already available. • If many opportunities are informal rather than formal, additional qualitative data collection would be needed to understand participation and impacts. • Given concerns about selection bias (i.e., who participates in training is not random), program evaluation on the effectiveness of specific trainings may not be able to estimate causal effects without rigorous experimental or quasi-experimental methods.

[17] Note: The Proposed Evidence Building Activities column includes activities NCDAC could do on its own and in partnership with other groups such as OSP and/or external researchers.

[18] Evidence building includes but is not limited to the following activities: Foundational Fact-Finding (FFF); Policy Analysis (PA); Performance Measurement (PM); and Program Evaluation (PE). For definitions on each activity, see Appendix.

[19] Planned start dates are defined as the target date for having initial scoping meetings to refine PQ.

[20] Expected results defined as: ST (short-term) if results expected before 2025 and LT (long-term) if results expected after 2025 or if activity is recurring.

Priority Question 9 out of 10: How effective are NCDAC practices related to staff accountability, including the employee disciplinary process? (Objective 1.3)

Table 6. Details for Priority Question 9

PQ 9: How effective are NCDAC practices related to staff accountability, including the employee disciplinary process? (Objective 1.3)	
Background and Motivation	External stakeholders did not prioritize this, but internal staff raised questions regarding effectiveness and fairness of the current accountability and disciplinary processes.
Proposed Evidence Building Activities [21] [22]	***Performance Management:*** Conduct ongoing tracking and analysis of data related to staff participation in and outcomes of employee accountability and disciplinary processes (both formal and informal). ***Program Evaluation (Implementation/Process Evaluation):*** Use mixed-methods to understand the effectiveness and fairness of both formal and informal staff accountability/disciplinary processes and systems.
Activities Timeline	• ***Planned start*** [23] **:** MAY. 2024 • ***Expected results*** [24]**:** Long-Term: PM, PE (Other)
Anticipated Challenges and Solutions	• Confidentiality of data may present challenges for data sharing, linking, and analysis. • If much of the disciplinary process is informal rather than formal (and if it is not currently well documented), additional qualitative data collection will be needed to understand participation and impacts.

[21]*Note: The Proposed Evidence Building Activities column includes activities NCDAC could do on its own and in partnership with other groups such as OSP and/or external researchers.*

[22]*Evidence building includes but is not limited to the following activities: Foundational Fact-Finding (FFF); Policy Analysis (PA); Performance Measurement (PM); and Program Evaluation (PE). For definitions on each activity, see Appendix.*

[23]*Planned start dates are defined as the target date for having initial scoping meetings to refine PQ.*

[24]*Expected results defined as: ST (short-term) if results expected before 2025 and LT (long-term) if results expected after 2025 or if activity is recurring.*

Strategic Goal 2: Safely Manage and Support Offenders from Custody through Reentry

Strategic Goal Objectives

- *Objective 2.1: Manage offenders to ensure safety and security for the public, employees, and offenders.*
- *Objective 2.2: Prepare offenders for successful reentry into their communities.*
- *Objective 2.3: Focus on holistic health and wellness services for offenders.*
- *Objective 2.4: Implement evidence-based supervision and custody practices for offenders.*

Priority Questions

NCDAC Strategic Goal 2 identifies two PQs the agency should address to inform how it achieves each objective. Each PQ is detailed below including the rationale and plan for addressing each question, and anticipated challenges and solutions.

Priority Question 1 out of 10: : How effective are NCDAC rehabilitation, programming, and reentry practices at reducing recidivism and improving post-release outcomes? (Objective 2.2)

Sub-questions:

1A: Do people who participate in institutional rehabilitation programs (e.g., cognitive behavioral interventions, parenting programs, work release, vocational training/apprenticeships, etc.) show improvements in rates of recidivism and/or in behavioral outcomes (e.g., reductions in disciplinary infractions, staff assaults, self-injury, etc.) compared to the general incarcerated or formerly incarcerated population?

1B: Do people who participate in reentry services and programs (e.g., Recidivism Reduction Services, Moral Reconation Therapy, career center participation, etc.) show improvements in rates of recidivism and/or other outcomes (e.g., increased rates of employment, housing, engagement in treatment) compared to the general formerly incarcerated population?

1C: Do any of the aforementioned associations vary dependent on demographic or other identifiable characteristics (e.g., age, sentence length, crime type(s), Security Risk Group (SRG; 'gang') affiliation, sex/gender, etc.)?

[25]The term "offender" is used in the NCDAC Strategic Plan, but NC OSP uses the term: "people who are incarcerated or formerly incarcerated."

Strategic Goal 2: Safely Manage and Support Offenders from Custody through Reentry

Sub-questions:

1D: What are recommended practices or strategies for NCDAC to build a high-quality data infrastructure to track service/program participation and recidivism in the community supervision population?

1E. How effective are the Local Reentry Councils?

1F. How effective is the NCDAC-North Carolina Department of Motor Vehicles (NCDMV) partnership program?

1G. How effective is NCDAC workforce development and education programs at preparing and connecting exiting individuals with self-sustaining employment?

1H. What is the impact of the tablet distribution program?

1I. How effective are NCDAC's substance use treatment programs?

1J. What NCDAC programs and strategies can help those leaving NCDAC supervision find housing and improve post-release outcomes?

1K. How does the effectiveness of NCDAC rehabilitation and reentry programs vary based on where individuals are returning (e.g., rural versus urban setting)?

Table 7. Details for Priority Question 1

PQ 1: How effective are NCDAC rehabilitation, programming, and reentry practices at reducing recidivism and improving post-release outcomes? (Objective 2.2)	
Background and Motivation	NCDAC internal and external stakeholders consistently identified PQs around understanding the effectiveness of NCDAC rehabilitation and reentry practices as the top priority for the agency to answer through 2025. Within the broader question, stakeholders listed several specific initiatives for potential evaluation of impact on recidivism, including the effectiveness of Local Reentry Councils, the NCDAC-NCDMV partnership, housing programs, and substance use treatment programs. External stakeholders also emphasized the importance of looking at post-release outcomes beyond recidivism and considering the post-release experience more holistically and with a broader definition of "success" (e.g., employment outcomes; family life; health and health care access).
Proposed Evidence Building Activities [26] [27]	**Performance Management:** Conduct ongoing tracking and analysis of data related to reentry and recidivism (necessarily in partnership with other agencies and community partners). **Program Evaluation (Descriptive Outcomes Study):** Conduct descriptive outcome analysis examining correlation between participation in institutional rehabilitation and reentry programs with recidivism, behavioral, and other post-release outcomes. **Program Evaluation (Quantitative Impact Study):** Test the impact of one or more reentry programs and initiatives (e.g., local reentry councils; substance use programs) on post-release outcomes, including recidivism rates.

[26]*Note: The Proposed Evidence Building Activities column includes activities NCDAC could do on its own and in partnership with other groups such as OSP and/or external researchers.*

[27]*Evidence building includes but is not limited to the following activities: Foundational Fact-Finding (FFF); Policy Analysis (PA); Performance Measurement (PM); and Program Evaluation (PE). For definitions on each activity, see Appendix.*

PQ 1: How effective are NCDAC rehabilitation, programming, and reentry practices at reducing recidivism and improving post-release outcomes? (Objective 2.2)	
Activities Timeline	• ***Planned start [28] :*** Oct. 2023 • ***Expected results [29]:*** Short & Long-Term: PM, PE
Anticipated Challenges and Solutions	• Evaluation of specific programs requires strong design to test for causality (i.e., is a program impacting recidivism rates?). • Post-release data, including those necessary to examine recidivism, can be both difficult and costly to collect. These efforts will likely require the buildout of a data-sharing system. • The varied post-release landscape (e.g., urban vs rural) will also need to be considered in the research design.

Priority Question 7 out of 10: How can NCDAC better leverage and organize data (and technology) to optimize decision-making? (Objective 2.4)

Table 8. Details for Priority Question 7

PQ 7: How can NCDAC better leverage and organize data (and technology) to optimize decision-making? (Objective 2.4)	
Background and Motivation	NCDAC internal stakeholders consistently mentioned challenges associated with data collection, analysis, access, and sharing. Different divisions within NCDAC currently use myriad systems with varying levels of access and analysis capabilities. These systems do not always communicate with one another, and some divisions lack the personnel expertise necessary to fully use these systems.

[28] *Planned start dates are defined as the target date for having initial scoping meetings to refine PQ.*

[29] *Expected results defined as: ST (short-term) if results expected before 2025 and LT (long-term) if results expected after 2025 or if activity is recurring.*

PQ 9: How effective are NCDAC practices related to staff accountability, including the employee disciplinary process? (Objective 1.3)	
Proposed Evidence Building Activities [30] [31]	**Foundational Fact Finding:** Conduct surveys and focus groups to understand the current challenges associated with data collection, analysis, access, and sharing. **Foundational Fact Finding:** Conduct rapid evidence review to assess the current understanding of best practices for data and technology use in corrections decision-making, as well as in other state government entities.
Activities Timeline	• **Planned start [32] :** March. 2024 • **Expected results [33]:** Short-Term: FFF
Anticipated Challenges and Solutions	• Information gathered from foundational fact finding is likely to generate suggestions for new or updated NCDAC data and technology practices. Data sharing across divisions and other partners is likely to be one such practice. These practices are likely to require financial investment, staff buy-in, and extensive data security assurances. However, much of these investments and efforts could likely happen alongside other NCDAC efforts to update its current OPUS system or other data systems.

[30]Note: The Proposed Evidence Building Activities column includes activities NCDAC could do on its own and in partnership with other groups such as OSP and/or external researchers.

[31]Evidence building includes but is not limited to the following activities: Foundational Fact-Finding (FFF); Policy Analysis (PA); Performance Measurement (PM); and Program Evaluation (PE). For definitions on each activity, see Appendix.

[32]Planned start dates are defined as the target date for having initial scoping meetings to refine PQ.

[33]Expected results defined as: ST (short-term) if results expected before 2025 and LT (long-term) if results expected after 2025 or if activity is recurring.

Strategic Goal 3: Strengthen Safety and Security at All NCDAC Locations

Strategic Goal Objectives

- *Objective 3.1: Prioritize sustainable renovations and updated technology to enhance employee and offender safety and security.*
- *Objective 3.2: Reduce contraband at NCDAC prisons to protect the health and well-being of employees and offenders.*
- *Objective 3.3: Adequately prepare staff to respond to emergencies.*

Priority Questions

NCDAC Strategic Goal 3 identifies a PQ the agency should address to inform how it achieves each objective. The rationale and plan for addressing this question, and anticipated challenges and solutions, are detailed below.

Priority Question 6 out of 10: How effective are NCDAC's practices for reducing the number of infractions, safety issues, and contraband in NCDAC facilities? (Objective 3.1 and 3.2)

Sub-question:

6A. How can NCDAC better utilize technology to enhance staff and offender safety and security?

Table 9. Details for Priority Question 6

PQ 6: How effective are NCDAC's practices for reducing the number of infractions, safety issues, and contraband in NCDAC facilities? (Objective 3.1 and 3.2)	
Background and Motivation	NCDAC internal stakeholders identified the need to keep incarcerated populations and staff safe. Safety issues impact employee experience, employee retention, and the ability to deliver programming. External and internal stakeholders viewed the technology specific sub-question (previously a separate PQ as a lower priority).
Proposed Evidence Building Activities [35][36]	**Foundational Fact Finding:** Conduct rapid evidence reviews to assess the best practices to enhance safety within correctional settings (including research literature and a synthesis of available industry options). **Performance Management:** Conduct ongoing data tracking and analysis related to infractions, safety issues, and contraband in facilities. **Program Evaluation (Quantitative Impact Study):** Test the impact of one or more initiatives aimed at reducing the number of infractions, safety issues, and contraband in facilities (e.g., random assignment of netting preventing contraband from entering facilities from drones).

[26]Note: The Proposed Evidence Building Activities column includes activities NCDAC could do on its own and in partnership with other groups such as OSP and/or external researchers.

[27]Evidence building includes but is not limited to the following activities: Foundational Fact-Finding (FFF); Policy Analysis (PA); Performance Measurement (PM); and Program Evaluation (PE). For definitions on each activity, see Appendix.

PQ 9: How effective are NCDAC practices related to staff accountability, including the employee disciplinary process? (Objective 1.3)	

Activities Timeline	• **Planned start [37] :** March 2024
	• **Expected results [38]:**
	   Short-tern: FFF
	   Long-Term: PM, PE

Anticipated Challenges and Solutions	• NCDAC would need to define types of practices that would be most feasible with available resources to narrow the scope of this PQ. Conducting an evidence review of specific categories of interventions prior to making decisions about potential program evaluation(s) would be very feasible. • For 6A, the scope of this question could pose a challenge. NCDAC should identify specific security and safety outcomes it would like to focus on and then work to identify potential technology solutions. Another challenge will be vetting vendor claims about the effectiveness of products.

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[37] *Planned start dates are defined as the target date for having initial scoping meetings to refine PQ.*

[38] *Expected results defined as: ST (short-term) if results expected before 2025 and LT (long-term) if results expected after 2025 or if activity is recurring.*

Strategic Goal 4: Operate Effectively and Efficiently

Strategic Goal Objectives

- *Objective 4.1: Strengthen coordination of effort among divisions and sections to support the establishment of NCDAC as a new cabinet agency.*
- *Objective 4.2: Expand organizational efficiency and pursue innovative solutions for operational improvement.*
- *Objective 4.3: Support the professionalization of our workforce by meeting nationally recognized accreditation standards.*

Priority Questions

NCDAC Strategic Goal 4 identifies one PQ for the agency. The rationale and plan for addressing the question, and anticipated challenges and solutions, are detailed below.

Priority Question 5 out of 10: How can NCDAC strengthen relationships, communication, and collaboration across divisions, among staff, and across state agencies? (Objective 4.1)

Sub-questions:

5A. What internal communication practices are most effective to ensure all NCDAC staff receive information in a timely and actionable manner?

Table 10. Details for Priority Question 5

PQ 5: How can NCDAC strengthen relationships, communication, and collaboration across divisions, among staff, and across state agencies? (Objective 4.1)	
Background and Motivation	NCDAC internal stakeholders identified the importance for better communication and collaboration across the agency including building awareness of changes to policies and procedures and an explanation of "why" around key decisions. External stakeholders identified a need for NCDAC to collaborate more with other agencies in NC around reentry and health services.
Proposed Evidence Building Activities [39] [40]	***Foundational Fact Finding:*** Conduct surveys and focus groups with staff and a variety of external groups to learn about ways to better collaborate, communicate, and strengthen relationships across the organization and beyond.
Activities Timeline	• ***Planned start*** [41]: Feb. 2024 • ***Expected results*** [42]: Short-Term: FFF
Anticipated Challenges and Solutions	• Fact finding that informs actionable operational changes will require a data collection effort that is timely, relevant, and focused on specific activities (rather than speculation or theory). • Given NCDAC is still formalizing many roles and processes, it may be useful to allow some of these processes to mature before examining the effectiveness of current communication practices.

[39] *Note: The Proposed Evidence Building Activities column includes activities NCDAC could do on its own and in partnership with other groups such as OSP and/or external researchers.*

[40] *Evidence building includes but is not limited to the following activities: Foundational Fact-Finding (FFF); Policy Analysis (PA); Performance Measurement (PM); and Program Evaluation (PE). For definitions on each activity, see Appendix.*

[41] *Planned start dates are defined as the target date for having initial scoping meetings to refine PQ.*

[42] *Expected results defined as: ST (short-term) if results expected before 2025 and LT (long-term) if results expected after 2025 or if activity is recurring.*

Strategic Goal 5: Increase Transparency of NCDAC's Missions and Operations

Strategic Goal Objectives

- *Objective 5.1:* Increase employees' awareness and understanding of operational decisions and requirements through improved internal communication.
- *Objective 5.2:* Publicize the positive work performed by NCDAC agencies through both improved external and internal communications.

Priority Questions

NCDAC Strategic Goal 5 identifies one PQ for the agency. The rationale and plan for addressing the question, and anticipated challenges and solutions, are detailed below.

Priority Question 10 out of 10: How can NCDAC strengthen engagement with community partners? (Objective 5.2)

Sub-questions:

10A. How can NCDAC improve communications with community organizations regarding availability of resources, and ways to collaborate and better support re-entry?

10B. How can NCDAC better inform community partners (including volunteers) on how to work with prison staff and vice versa?

10C. How can NCDAC better incorporate lived experience within the NC carceral system into programming, services, and policies meant to help those under supervision and custody successfully reenter society?

Table 11. Details for Priority Question 10

PQ 10: How can NCDAC strengthen engagement with community partners? (Objective 5.2)	
Background and Motivation	External stakeholders in particular encouraged NCDAC to find solutions to better communicate and work with community organizations to connect those leaving agency custody with reentry resources to reduce recidivism and improve other post-release outcomes. This includes, for example, making it easier for community partners and volunteers to engage, providing training to NCDAC staff on how to work with community partners, etc.
Proposed Evidence Building Activities [43] [44]	*Foundational Fact Finding:* Conduct surveys, focus groups, and public forums with a variety of external partners and stakeholders to learn about ways to better collaborate, communicate, and engage with these groups. This includes, for example, the feedback shared through the external stakeholder feedback listening sessions and anonymous feedback form.
Activities Timeline	• **Planned start** [45] **:** June 2024 • **Expected results** [46] **:** Short &Long-Term: FFF
Anticipated Challenges and Solutions	• Ensuring a comprehensive set of community partners are engaged in the process. • Ensuring data collection and analyses are sufficiently robust, timely, and regularly updated to enable use of the results.

[43] *Note: The Proposed Evidence Building Activities column includes activities NCDAC could do on its own and in partnership with other groups such as OSP and/or external researchers.*

[44] *Evidence building includes but is not limited to the following activities: Foundational Fact-Finding (FFF); Policy Analysis (PA); Performance Measurement (PM); and Program Evaluation (PE). For definitions on each activity, see Appendix.*

[45] *Planned start dates are defined as the target date for having initial scoping meetings to refine PQ.*

[46] *Expected results defined as: ST (short-term) if results expected before 2025 and LT (long-term) if results expected after 2025 or if activity is recurring.*

NCDAC Next Steps to Advance Evidence Building Activities

This NCDAC PQRA Action Plan outlines the recommendations for answering each of the 10 PQs through a variety of methods from foundational fact finding to robust impact evaluations. NCDAC plans to follow the process and timelines described below and detailed in Table 12 to answer each PQ.

1. **Scoping Meetings:** NCDAC will conduct meetings with core NCDAC staff ("point people") who will be involved in activities to answer each PQ to refine the scope of the question, discuss data and resource availability, and prioritize actions for developing responses. As of November 2023, NCDAC has held scoping meetings for PQs 1-3. Table 12 details the timeline for holding scoping meetings for the remaining PQs in 2024.

2. **Rapid Evidence Reviews:** Prior to conducting any research and evaluation activities, NCDAC and OSP will complete Rapid Evidence Reviews to determine the existence of any rigorous research and evidence related to the PQ. The Rapid Evidence Reviews can both: 1) provide partial answers to some of the PQs, 2) identify potential approaches to pilot and evaluation, and 3) identify gaps in the literature that could be addressed through this PQRA Action Plan. Appendix A includes an example of a Rapid Evidence Review that OSP completed related to PQ 4 (NCDAC Recruitment Efforts). Table 12 details the timeline for completing Rapid Evidence Reviews after scoping meetings.

3. **Determine Whether Project Can be Completed with Internal NCDAC Resources or Needs External Research Support:** NCDAC staff will determine whether they have the internal staff with the requisite time and expertise to conduct the analysis necessary to answer each PQ. If there are not sufficient internal resources, NCDAC can consider posting the questions and related projects to the NC Project Portal and seek external research support as needed.

4. **Research Partner Interest Meetings and Project Descriptions:** NCDAC and OSP will host Research Partner Interest Meetings to share and discuss project opportunities posted to the NC Project Portal. Afterwards, interested researchers are invited to submit project descriptions for NCDAC's consideration (OSP typically recommends asking researchers to submit project descriptions within two weeks after the interest meeting).

5. **Research and Evaluation Activities:** NCDAC and external research partners (if any) will start conducting research and evaluation to answer the PQs based on agency prioritization and capacity.

Table 12 shows PQRA activities completed as of November 1, 2023, along with a planned timeline for evidence building activities for NCDAC through 2025.

Table 12

Priority Ranking	Strategic Goal	Priority Question	
1	Strategic Goal 2: Safely Manage and Support Offenders from Custody through Reentry	How effective are NCDAC rehabilitation, programming, and reentry practices at reducing recidivism and improving post-release outcomes?	
2	Strategic Goal 1: Support Our Employees	How effective are NCDAC efforts to retain staff?	
3	Strategic Goal 1: Support Our Employees	How effective are NCDAC initiatives and programming to improve employee wellness, including both mental and physical health	
4	Strategic Goal 1: Support Our Employees	How effective are NCDAC recruitment efforts?	
5	Strategic Goal 4: Operate Effectively & Efficiently	How can NCDAC strengthen relationships, communication, and collaboration across divisions, among staff, and across state agencies?	
6	Strategic Goal 3: Strengthen Safety & Security at All NCDAC Locations	How effective are NCDAC's practices for reducing the number of infractions, safety issues, and contraband in NCDAC facilities?	
7	Strategic Goal 2: Safely Manage and Support Offenders from Custody through Reentry	How can NCDAC better leverage and organize data (and technology) to optimize decision-making?	
8	Strategic Goal 1: Support Our Employees	How effective at developing a high-performing workforce are NCDAC policies and practices related to staff training, professional development, leadership development, coaching, and career advancement?	
9	Strategic Goal 1: Support Our Employees	How effective are NCDAC practices related to staff accountability, including the employee disciplinary process?	
10	Strategic Goal 5: Increase Transparency of NCDAC's Missions and Operations	How can NCDAC strengthen engagement with community partners?	

	Scoping Meetings	Rapid Evidence Review	Identify Internal or External Research Support	Research And Evaluation Activities
	Oct. 2023 + Ongoing (In Progress)	By Dec. 2023	By Nov. 2023	By Mar. 2024
	Oct. 2023 + Ongoing (In Progress)	By Nov. 2023	By Nov. 2023	By Mar. 2024
	Oct. 2023 + Ongoing (In Progress)	By Nov. 2023	By Nov. 2023	By Mar. 2024
	Feb. 2024 + Ongoing	By March 2024 (Example in Appendix A)	By April 2024	By June 2024
	Feb. 2024 + Ongoing	By March 2024	By April 2024	By June 2024
	March 2024 + Ongoing	By April 2024	By May 2024	By July 2024
	March 2024 + Ongoing	By April 2024	By May 2024	By July 2024
	May 2024 + Ongoing	By June 2024	By July 2024	By August 2024
	May 2024 + Ongoing	By June 2024	By July 2024	By August 2024
	June 2024 + Ongoing	By July 2024	By July 2024	By August 2024

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Appendix A – Rapid Evidence Review Example

What are the most effective strategies for marketing and advertising correctional?[47]

The North Carolina Department of Adult Correction (NCDAC) currently faces high vacancy rates for several mission-critical job roles, especially for corrections officers and probation and parole officers. As part of its **2023-2025 NCDAC Strategic Plan**, NCDAC identified a key strategic goal objective of reducing agency staff vacancy rates by recruiting qualified staff and increasing retention of current employees.

This Rapid Evidence Review[48] summarizes evidence synthesized by the North Carolina Office of Strategic Partnerships (OSP) about different strategies and initiatives used to market and advertise correctional and law enforcement job openings to fill open positions and meet staffing needs, with the particular goal of assisting NCDAC with answering some of its priority questions. A rapid evidence review is a brief, semi-structured search for key literature on a given topic. It is not a comprehensive or systematic review of the topic, however, in many instances such reviews[49] are summarized in the rapid evidence review.

What does the evidence say?

Limited rigorous research on what are the most effective strategies for marketing and advertising correctional law enforcement jobs.

OSP found limited evidence from large-scale rigorous methodologies to inform this question, with the most relevant experimental studies focused on police officers rather than correctional officers, probation and parole officers, or other types of staff that NCDAC employs (e.g., Linos, 2018; Linos & Riesch, 2020, The Lab @ D.C., 2017)

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[47] This relates to NCDAC Priority Question #4: How effective are current NCDAC marketing and advertising practices at filling open positions?

[48] This rapid evidence review was intended to quickly summarize evidence on relevant programs to inform NCDAC's Priority Questions Research Agenda. It is not a comprehensive or systematic review of the topic but rather, a summary of the themes that emerged from the literature discovered in our search. See Methodological Appendix for more details on search process and search terms used.

[49] Examples of included reviews could include systemic reviews – where strict search and inclusion criteria are applied to a large body of literature to find the "best fit" published findings on a particular topic, and meta-analyses – a review in which the statistical results of several studies are combined to generate an average result.

A few studies identified potential strategies to improve the hiring processes and reduce potential barriers for individuals seeking a career in corrections and law enforcement.

1. **Reducing administrative "friction" and simplifying hiring processes can increase likelihood of candidate applications and hires, but there's a need to test how streamlined processes affect different outcomes along the pathway from candidate interest to hire.** Administrative burden is a barrier to recruiting and keeping a candidate through the entire recruitment process. While there are no known studies that test this experimentally as it relates to correctional officers, parole/probation officers, or other types of staff that NCDAC employs, a field experiment using a rigorous randomized control trial (RCT) design (Linos & Riesch, 2020) focused on hiring in the Los Angeles Police Department found that reducing friction costs and simplifying processes improved the likelihood that a candidate would remain in the process and actually be hired. However, The Lab @ D.C. used a randomized evaluation and found that a redesigned website with a streamlined process increased applications by 4% but had no impact on the final step: signing up to take a qualifying test, suggesting it is important to test how various efforts affect outcomes along the pathway from candidate interest to hire. Even though these studies focused on police, the results of these types of interventions focused on streamlining processes/removing administrative burden may generalize well to other organizations/role types to the extent that the challenges of red tape are similar.

2. **Emphasizing personal benefits of job role like the challenge of the job and job security can increase the likelihood of application overall, and particularly for underrepresented groups**. Another important consideration is not just ways to increase recruitment and hiring overall, but also to increase recruitment of particular groups of people (e.g., Black or African American) to improve the representative match between the demographics of the employee population and the demographics of the population served. This issue has been raised as it relates to the lack of non-White police, and a field experiment using a rigorous RCT design testing the effectiveness of various job advertisements in postcards found that public service motivation messages were ineffective at increasing the likelihood that candidates apply, but messages focused on the personal benefits (e.g., the challenge of the job and career benefits), were about three times as effective at getting applicants to apply, relative to a control group (Linos, 2018). Notably, all the post cards included a picture of a Black male police officer, and these types of messages were particularly effective for candidates of color and Women. These results may not generalize perfectly to corrections staff to the extent that stigma or other barriers to entry operate differently for these different organizations/role types.

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[50]Specifically, the challenge message was: "I love being part of the police because you never know what to expect: it's challenging but rewarding work! If you're the kind of person who thrives in challenging environments, you're just the kind of person we're looking for," and the career benefits message was: "I love being part of the police because I'm constantly developing my skills: this isn't just a job, it's a career. If you're looking for a long-term career, you're just the kind of person we're looking for."

3. **Hosting events at correctional facilities might help overcome stereotypes applicants may have about working in a prison environment.** Negative stereotypes and stigma about prisons may be a challenge for recruitment, particularly for educators or health care staff (Higgins & Swartz, 2022). One potentially promising way to reduce stereotypes and increase willingness to work in a prison is to expose students to prison environments through an "insight-day" in partnership with a university nursing program (Hunt et al., 2020). To our knowledge, there have not been follow up studies to determine whether these insight-days increase the likelihood of taking and being retained in a position within a prison.

Conclusions and Considerations for NCDAC Priority Questions Research Agenda
NCDAC could consider testing different types of messaging in advertising positions.

We recommend[51] NCDAC consider piloting and testing various recruitment messages and changes to the application and interview process to understand the types of messages that are most effective for improving the following outcomes:
1. Number of clicks for online job advertisements (job fairs and specific job roles)
2. Number of applications for select NCDAC open job positions
3. Number of applicants who persist through the application process (application to acceptance of offer)
4. Number of new hires who remain with NCDAC at 6 and 12 months after start date

Within these potential pilot projects, we recommend NCDAC consider how messaging might have different effects for different groups of people and/or for different types of positions (e.g., nurses and educators, relative to correctional officers and probation and parole officers).

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[51] Please note, this set of considerations and recommendations does not take into account the costs associated with various options.

Study Details & References

Study	Context and Sample	Type of Approach/ Program	
Higgins & Swartz (2022)	180 participants in a U.S. state (10 each in 18 focus groups) representing six subpopulations including veteran officers (10+ years of experience), new officers (2 years of experience or less), military veterans, treatment staff, high-risk staff (in restrictive housing or correctional psychiatric treatment units), and cross gender supervision.	N/A – this study investigated correctional staff motivations for pursuing a career in corrections and their decisions to stay.	
Hunt et al. (2020)	17 (female only) student nurses in the UK.	Assesses the effectiveness of "prison-based insight-days" on nursing student's views of taking a placement in a custodial setting, as a way of addressing challenges with recruiting nurses to work in prisons.	
Linos (2018)	Police populations. Large sample size (9,907 postcards randomized to four treatment arms, 11,900 randomized to control group).	Postcard advertisements with randomized messaging.	

Method	Findings	Reference
Qualitative: 18 focus groups of staff from 12 adult correctional facilities.	Key themes emerged related to the motivations to become a correctional worker including social connections to someone who already works in corrections, changes in career path, an "energetic, exciting, and flexible" work environment, and benefits. The key themes related to the reasons for staying in the position include experiencing negative personality changes that would make it harder to find a job outside corrections in the future, work style (e.g., rewarding interpersonal opportunities and veterans appreciating work environments with structure similar to the military), comradery with other staff, and the desire to make it to retirement.	Higgins, E. M., & Swartz, K. (2022). Pursuing a correctional career: The motivations and reasons for staying. Corrections, 7(4), 275–295. https://doi.org/10.1080/23774657.2020.1793429
Qualitative data collection and thematic analysis using questionnaires and interviews with 17 students. Data was collected prior to and following the insight-day.	First-hand exposure to prisoners and to what it would be like to work in a prison helped to dispel stereotypes and reduce negative preconceptions of prison healthcare environments. Given the opportunity to learn more about what it would be like to work in a prison, some found it unexpectedly appealing.	Hunt, E. L., Booth, N., & Hunt, L. A. (2020). Seeing is believing: The effect of prison-based insight-days on student nurses' perceptions of undertaking practice placements within a prison healthcare environment. Nurse Education in Practice, 45, 102795. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nepr.2020.102795
Randomized controlled trial/field experiment, with randomization at the household level. Send one postcard per household.	"Focusing on public service motivation (PSM) messages is ineffective at attracting candidates that would not have applied anyway. Rather, messages that focus on the personal benefits of applying to the job—either emphasizing the challenge of the job or the career benefits—are three times as effective at getting individuals to apply as the control, without an observable loss in applicant quality. These messages are particularly effective for people of color and women, thereby supporting a key policy goal of the police to increase diversity of applicants."	Linos, E. (2018). More than public service: A field experiment on job advertisements and diversity in the police. Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, 28(1), 67–85. https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/mux032

Study	Context and Sample	Type of Approach/ Program	
Linos & Ri-esch (2020)	Police populations. Sample size: 1,275 treatment, 1,333 control.	Modified email messaging enabling and encouraging speedier completion of paperwork online; and text message reminders.	
The Lab at DC (2017)	Washington D.C.'s Metropolitan Police Department during 2016-2017. Specifically, 3,000 website visitors who clicked on "Join the MPD: Apply Today!"	Assesses the effects of a redesign streamlining the MPD's online recruitment process using insights from behavioral science.	

Method	Findings	Reference
Randomized controlled trial/field experiment.	"Applicants who were offered simpler, standardized processes completed more tests and were more likely to be hired. Later reductions to perceived burden led to an 8 percent increase in compliance, with a 60 percent increase in compliance within two weeks. However, removing steps that would have allowed for better understanding of eligibility kept unqualified candidates in the process for longer, reducing organizational efficiency."	Linos, E., & Riesch, N. (2020). Thick red tape and the thin blue line: A field study on reducing administrative burden in police recruitment. Public Administration Review, 80(1), 92–103. https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13115
Randomized evaluation. Visitors who clicked on "Join the MPD: Apply Today!" button on the MPD website were randomly sent to either an existing version or a redesigned version of the recruitment webpage with a streamlined process.	The redesigned website increased the number of applications by 4% but did not increase the number of people who signed up to take a qualifying test.	The Lab @ DC. (2017). Can a redesigned website improve MPD recruitment? https://thelabprojects.dc.gov/mpd-recruitment-website

Appendix B - Potential Approaches for Answering NCDAC's Priority Questions

The table below provides brief descriptions of the types of research methodologies that may be used to answer a NCDAC Priority Question.

Research Method	Description
Evidence Review	A search, summary, and assessment of the quality of the available evidence on the effectiveness of one or more related programs or interventions, with a goal of determining which interventions have demonstrated effectiveness. May involve a comparison against an inventory of existing agency practices.
Foundational Fact Finding	Foundational research and analysis such as aggregate indicators, exploratory studies, descriptive statistics, and basic research. (OMB M-19-23)
Policy Analysis	Analysis of data, such as general-purpose survey or program-specific data, to generate and inform policy, e.g., estimating regulatory impacts and other relevant effects. (OMB M-19-23)
Descriptive Data Analysis	Non-causal, quantitative methods used to describe the relationship between various factors, differences across groups in terms of needs or outcomes, changes in outcomes over time, or other types of information, without making causal claims about these relationships, differences, or trends.
Performance Measurement	Ongoing, systematic tracking of information relevant to policies, strategies, programs, projects, goals/objectives, and/or activities research. (OMB M-19-23)
Program Evaluation *(See Next Page)*	The application of systematic methods to address questions about program operations and results. It may include ongoing monitoring of a program as well as one-shot studies of program processes or program impact (Newcomer, Hatry, & Wholey, 2015)[52].

Appendix B - Potential Approaches for Answering NCDAC's Priority Questions

Research Method	Description
Program Evaluation: Implementation/Process Evaluation	Often mixed methods, an assessment of implementation of a program (e.g., whether its operations, activities, functions, performances, resources, etc. are being utilized as intended).
Program Evaluation: Outcome Study	Often quantitative, but can include qualitative data as well, an evaluation of the outcomes of a program, where methodological challenges prevent credible inferences about the actual causal impact of the program (e.g., descriptive regression analyses or pre-post comparisons)
Program Evaluation: Quantitative Impact Study	Rigorous methodological designs that plausibly lead to causal impacts of a program (e.g., Randomized controlled trials and Randomized Field Trials, quasi-experimental approaches such as regression discontinuity, difference-in-differences, matching designs under various assumptions)
Program Evaluation: Cost-Benefit Analysis	Comparison of costs and benefits of a program in dollar terms. Alternatively, a cost-effectiveness analysis relates the costs of a program (in dollar terms) to its key outcomes or benefits (not necessarily in dollar terms).

[52]Newcomer, K. E., Hatry, H. P., & Wholey, J. S. (Eds.). (2015). Handbook of practical program evaluation. Jossey-Bass & Pfeiffer Imprints, Wiley.

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