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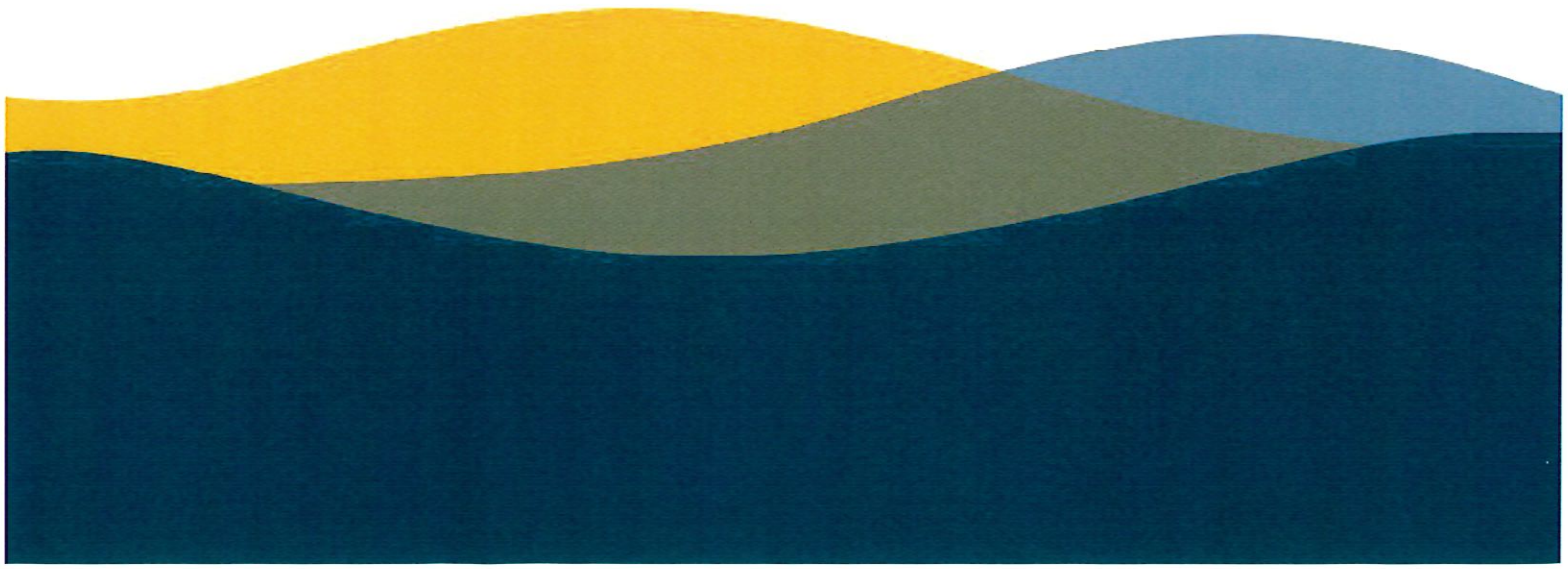
Quarterly Report – Grant Cycle Six, Quarter Five

July - September 2026

This report is generated by UNO-NCJR

for the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services (NDCS) Submitted by:

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University of Nebraska Omaha

Vocational and Life Skills Quarterly Report

GRANT CYCLE SIX, QUARTER FIVE

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Executive Summary

The Vocational and Life Skills (VLS) Program was created through Nebraska Legislative Bill 907 in 2014 to support individuals returning to the community after incarceration. The program funds organizations across Nebraska that provide services such as job training, education, mentoring, housing support, and life skills development to help individuals successfully transition back into their communities. The program is administered by the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services and evaluated by the Nebraska Center for Justice Research (NCJR). Questions on this report may be directed to Dr. Katelynn Towne, Senior Research Specialist at the Nebraska Center for Justice Research (ktowne@unomaha.edu).

This report provides information on:

- The organizations funded through the VLS program
- The number of individuals served during the quarter
- Program participation and completions
- The average cost to serve participants across programs
- How grant funding has been distributed and used

Program data is reported by service providers through the Nebraska Inmate Case Management System (NICaMS). Because this system is continuously updated, some numbers may change slightly as new information is entered or corrected.

Overall, this report provides a snapshot of how VLS funding is supporting services that help individuals build employment skills, access community resources, and work toward successful reentry. More information about the program offerings can be located in the NDCS Opportunities for Change Catalog that is updated annually. Additionally, updates on VLS programs and announcements can be found on the NDCS Reentry Services page.

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Report Definitions

Participants Served

This term refers to the number of unique individuals served through various VLS programs. A program participant is an individual who engaged with a program during the specified reporting period. Each person is counted once, regardless of how many times they participated in program activities.

Cost Per Participant

This metric represents the amount of VLS investment used to support each participant within a specific program. Programs may also have additional funding sources that contribute to participant support. Cost per participant is calculated by dividing the total reimbursements paid to the program to date by the total number of individuals served by that program during the reporting quarter.

Program Offering Participations

This term refers to the total number of engagements or interactions participants had with VLS programs. Unlike "Participants Served," which counts unique individuals, this measure counts each instance of participation. As a result, the same individual may be counted multiple times if they take part in multiple program offerings.

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Provider Descriptions

Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC)

ABC is part of a national company that provides trade-specific apprenticeship training and work-based learning opportunities for careers in the construction industry. ABC offers classes in correctional facilities and ABC facilities in Lincoln and Omaha.

Different Approach

Different Approach Sober Living's aim is to provide a safe, supportive, and structured environment where individuals in recovery can rebuild their lives. Different Approach offers tailored approaches to recovery and empowers residents to develop life skills needed to transition into substance-free living.

Mental Health Association (MHA)

MHA provides peer-run behavioral and "wrap-around" support services in Lincoln and Omaha. This holistic approach provides participants with access to services on an as-needed basis. Services include evidence-based programming and peer-group activities that are provided in residential and facility settings.

Metropolitan Community College (MCC)

MCC is a public education institution that supports the 180 Re-entry Assistance Program (180-RAP) to provide education and work readiness training both within prison and on the Omaha campus. MCC provides college courses, workshops, employment consultations, and a food pantry for those in need.

O.NE. Mentoring Academy

O.NE. Mentoring Academy (O.M.A.) focuses on the mind, body, and soul, emphasizing a holistic approach to the self and the complexities of humanity. Its anger management program offers participants an eight-week course, meeting for 1.5 hours each week in small groups of six to ten participants, with the objective of fostering cognitive and behavioral change through anger management philosophy and techniques. The organization's cornerstone is its commitment to addressing issues of self-worth, stress, depression, and anxiety by utilizing psychotherapeutic methods and effective coping strategies.

Opening Doors

Opening Doors is a reentry program at the Center for People in Lincoln. Opening Doors offers career pathway courses, job search services, 1:1 coaching, 5 Keys classes, and volunteer opportunities for positive social engagement. Participants also receive career readiness training—including resume writing, cover letters, and mock interview support—while building cognitive, relational, and technical skills for successful reentry.

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ReConnect, Inc.

ReConnect offers facility- and community-based programming that incorporates promising and best practices to support prosocial skill development for individuals who are incarcerated or living in the community. Community-based services include individual case management and support to address housing, employment, basic needs, and other factors impacting self-sufficiency and reentry success. Services are also available in Spanish.

RISE

RISE seeks to end cycles of incarceration by equipping currently and formerly incarcerated people with job readiness, reentry planning, and housing and employment pathways that help participants thrive in their communities.

The Work Lab

The Work Lab is a nonprofit organization that partners with local employers to support justice-involved individuals in sustaining long-term employment. The organization focuses on addressing practical and behavioral needs that may create challenges in the workplace, helping employees remain stable in their positions while strengthening the companies that hire them. Through individualized support and collaboration with businesses, The Work Lab works to improve retention and promote successful workforce reintegration.

Western Alternative Corrections, Inc. at Bristol Station

Bristol Station assists formerly incarcerated persons in transitioning into the community in a residential setting located in Hastings, NE. Participants have access to opportunities of self-discovery and are encouraged to develop sustainable pro-social routines. WAC ended its contract with NDCS to provide VLS-funded programming effective April 10, 2026.

Ybor – A Second Chance Kitchen

Ybor is a culinary reentry program that creates pathways to employment and advancement in the restaurant industry. Through partnerships with Southeast Community College and local restaurants, participants progress through a structured culinary pipeline: food safety certification, culinary fundamentals class, a pre-apprenticeship at Ybor's events, and ultimately full-time employment in a Lincoln restaurant while joining a registered apprenticeship through the U.S. Department of Labor. Ybor's mission is to deliver more than just job training—it's a pathway to careers, community, and confidence. Each phase of the program uses the dignity of work and the structure of a professional kitchen to help participants build pride, professionalism, and a sustainable future.

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Participants Served

During quarter 5 of grant cycle 6, VLS funded programs served a total of **1,262 unique individuals, 1,239 of whom successfully completed programming** across all reporting organizations. **A total of 527 individuals were currently enrolled** from the quarter across participating organizations when this report was drafted.

Program[1]	Currently Enrolled (Q5)[2]	Successful Completions (Q5)[3]	Total Participants (Q5)[4]
Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC)	16	3	22
Different Approach	1	66	69
Mental Health Association (MHA)	126	341	350
Metropolitan Community College (MCC)	194	590	590
O.NE Mentoring Academy	1	0	0
Opening Doors	40	39	42
ReConnect, Inc.	26	105	108
RISE	134	248	248
The Work Lab	2	1	1
Ybor	0	64	65

[1] Participant data are unique to each program and participants may be active in multiple programs.
[2] A summation of individuals who are still progressing in VLS funded programming from the quarter.
[3] A summation of individuals who successfully completed VLS funded programming during the quarter.
[4] A summation of individuals who completed VLS funded programming during the quarter.

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Cost Per Participant

Program	Total Funds Awarded (GC6)	Total Participants (GC6)[5]	Total Reimbursements at Q5 (GC6)	Average Cost Per Individual (GC6)[6]
Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC)	$740,000.00	151	$506,669.74	$3,355.43
Different Approach	$197,100.00	209	$171,837.84	$822.19
Mental Health Association (MHA)	$1,250,000.00	1,226	$785,130.35	$640.40
Metropolitan Community College (MCC)[7]	$1,564,600.00	1,846	$764,107.19	$413.93
O.NE Mentoring Academy	$61,706.46	12	$10,275.00	$856.25
Opening Doors	$972,752.00	337	$522,798.21	$1,551.33
ReConnect, Inc.	$600,000.00	928	$357,833.36	$385.60
RISE	$500,000.00	384	$296,700.54	$772.66
The Work Lab	$30,000.00	1	$9,131.67	$9,131.67
Western Alternative Corrections (WAC)[8]	$730,000.00	52	$329,700.00	$6,340.38
Ybor	$353,841.54	347	$209,745.72	$604.45
Total	**$7,000,000.00**	**3,756[9]**	**$3,963,929.62**	**$1,055.36**

[5] A summation of unique individuals who completed VLS funded programming since the grant cycle started.
[6] Grant cycle reimbursement costs divided by the summation of unique individuals who participated in programming excluding active enrollments.
[7] MCC has not submitted reimbursements for the month of June at the time this report was drafted.
[8] Western Alternative Corrections (WAC) ended its contract with NDCS to provide VLS-funded programming effective April 10, 2026.
[9] This number is a summation of unique individuals across the programs. Some individuals participate in multiple programs, and this number excludes duplication to provide a total of unique individuals represented across VLS.

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Program Offering Participations

VLS *Program offerings* were developed for each grantee, so the evaluation may describe programming components. Each grantee provides different services; thus, each has a unique catalogue of offerings. Some participants may only need one offering while others may receive multiple. The program offering status describes how participants are or have participated in programming. The variety in program offerings has changed over the years and will continue to change to meet the needs of the population. Therefore, some of the data presented will not match exactly with previous quarterly reports on program offerings.

Program offering participations for grant cycle six, quarter five (July 2026 – September 2026) are presented below. Program staff work with each participant to develop an individualized plan of programming unique to their needs. Many participants are involved in multiple program offerings at each program, and some offerings available are not suitable for each participant. Some may only complete one program offering, while others may participate in multiple offerings either back-to-back or simultaneously.

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Associated Builders and Contractors Participations

There are **16** active participations in Associated Builders and Contractors' (ABC) program offerings from this quarter. Quarter completions are provided across the offerings in the table below. The following program offerings at ABC did not have participations in the presented quarter: Applied Construction Math; Carpentry 1; Construction Technology 1, 2, 3; Electrical 1, 2, 3, 4; HVAC 1, 2, 3; OSHA 10 Hour Construction; OSHA 10 Hour General Industry; OSHA 30 Hour Construction; Plumbing 1, 2, 3; Virtual Electrical; Virtual Welding.

Program Offering	Satisfactory Completion	Terminated from Program	Withdrawn from Program	Total
Core	3	0	20	**23**
Total	**3**	**0**	**20**	**23**

Different Approach Participations

There is **1** active participation in Different Approach's program offerings from this quarter. Quarter completions are provided across the offerings in the table below.

Program Offering	Satisfactory Completion	Terminated from Program	Withdrawn from Program	Total
Case Management and Goal Setting	11	2	0	**13**
Community Partnerships	13	0	0	**13**
Employment and Education Support	13	0	0	**13**
Family and Social Support	4	0	0	**4**
Housing Continuity Planning	6	1	0	**7**
Justice System Collaboration	16	0	0	**16**
Life Skills Development	9	3	0	**12**
Orientation to Services	48	0	0	**48**
Peer Support and Mentorship	23	2	0	**25**
Professional Referrals and System Navigation	1	0	0	**1**
Recovery Support Services	4	0	0	**4**
Sober Housing Assistance	26	9	0	**35**
Transportation Assistance	4	0	0	**4**
Well-being and Health Support	1	0	0	**1**
Total	**179**	**17**	**0**	**196**

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Mental Health Association Participations

There are **142** active participations in Mental Health Association's (MHA) program offerings from this quarter. Quarter completions are provided across the offerings in the table below. The following program offerings at MHA did not have participations in the presented quarter: Benefits; Green House; Other Services; and Outreach.

Program Offering	Satisfactory Completion	Terminated from Program	Withdrawn from Program	Total
CARES	54	0	0	**54**
HONU	22	5	1	**28**
Hope	121	0	0	**121**
Peer Prevention Group	155	0	0	**155**
Rent Wise	24	0	0	**24**
Terrapin	4	5	1	**10**
Total	**380**	**10**	**2**	**392**

Metropolitan Community College Participations

There are **194** active participations in Metropolitan Community College's (MCC) program offerings from this quarter. Quarter completions are provided across the offerings in the table below. The following program offerings at MCC did not have participations in the presented quarter: Associate Degree; Career Certification; Job Readiness; National Career Readiness Certificate; Peer Support Group; and OSHA.

Program Offering	Satisfactory Completion	Terminated from Program	Withdrawn from Program	Total
CDL Preparation	13	0	0	**13**
Employment Readiness	65	0	0	**65**
Forklift Certification	76	0	0	**76**
Long-Term Relief Group	62	0	0	**62**
MCC Credit Course	173	0	0	**173**
Non-Credit Workshop	154	0	0	**154**
Orientation	265	0	0	**265**
Other Services	1	0	0	**1**
Trauma Informed Peer Support	340	0	0	**340**
Total	**1,149**	**0**	**0**	**1,149**

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O.NE Mentoring Academy Participations

There is **1** active participation in O.NE Mentoring Academy's program offerings from this quarter. There were no quarter completions for O.NE Mentoring Academy during the reporting quarter.

Opening Doors Participations

There are **47** active participation in Opening Door's program offerings from this quarter. Quarter completions are provided across the offerings in the table below. The following program offerings at Opening Doors did not have participations in the presented quarter: Aftercare; Career Connection; and Food Foundations.

Program Offering	Satisfactory Completion	Terminated from Program	Withdrawn from Program	Total
Computer/Administrative Skills	44	0	5	**49**
Other	1	0	0	**1**
Reentry Reality	3	0	0	**3**
Warehouse/Manufacturing Logistics	9	0	0	**9**
Total	**57**	**0**	**5**	**62**

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ReConnect, Inc. Participations

There are **26** active participations in ReConnect's program offerings from this quarter. Quarter completions are provided across the offerings in the table below. The following program offerings at ReConnect Inc. did not have participations in the presented quarter: Construction Tool Box Credentials; One-Day Success Prep Workshop; Pass It On; and Success Prep Bloom.

Program Offering	Satisfactory Completion	Terminated from Program	Withdrawn from Program	Total
Final Number	10	0	0	**10**
GPS (self-paced)	3	0	0	**3**
KEYS 1	7	0	2	**9**
KEYS 2	8	0	0	**8**
Orientation	2	0	0	**2**
Other Services	1	0	0	**1**
Post-Release Reentry Support	2	0	0	**2**
Ready for Work	186	0	0	**186**
Right Start	23	0	0	**23**
Right Start 2.0	23	0	0	**23**
Success Prep	11	0	2	**13**
Total	**276**	**0**	**4**	**280**

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RISE Participations

There are **134** active participations in RISE's program offerings from this quarter. Quarter completions are provided across the offerings in the table below. The following RISE program offering had no participant engagement during the reporting quarter: Focused Cognitive Work.

Program Offering	Satisfactory Completion	Terminated from Program	Withdrawn from Program	Total
Crisis Intervention	5	0	0	**5**
Emotional Support	624	0	0	**624**
Employment Assistance	17	0	0	**17**
Financial Assistance	25	0	0	**25**
Housing Assistance	14	0	0	**14**
Parole/Probation/Supervised Release Support	14	0	0	**14**
Reentry Planning	68	0	0	**68**
Reentry Services and Support	15	0	9	**24**
Substance Use Assistance	1	0	0	**1**
Transportation Assistance	28	0	0	**28**
Total	**811**	**0**	**9**	**820**

The Work Lab Participations

There are **2** active participations in the Work Lab's program offerings from this quarter. Quarter completions are provided across the offerings in the table below.

Program Offering	Satisfactory Completion	Terminated from Program	Withdrawn from Program	Total
Resource Navigation	1	0	0	**1**
Total	**1**	**0**	**0**	**1**

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Ybor Participations

There are **13** active participations in Ybor's program offerings from this quarter. Quarter completions are provided across the offerings in the table below.

Program Offering	Satisfactory Completion	Terminated from Program	Withdrawn from Program	Total
Apprenticeship	4	0	0	**4**
Food Handlers Permit Classes	46	0	0	**46**
Intro to Culinary Fundamentals Class at SCC	7	1	0	**8**
Pre-Apprenticeship	9	0	0	**9**
Total	**66**	**1**	**0**	**67**

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