

# RFP for External Evaluator of U.S. Department of Education

## Disability Innovation Fund Grant

### Attachment A

#### Project Implementation Plan and Tools

This project positions Wor-Wic Community College as a hub of services and supports for disciplinary-referral vulnerable and justice-involved youth with disabilities, while also bolstering the college's accessible educational services and support for everyone throughout its rural service area. The project aligns with the college's mission to empower "a diverse population of students to achieve success by delivering high-quality, affordable education, professional training, workforce development opportunities, and comprehensive student services that strengthen economic growth and improve the quality of life on the Lower Eastern Shore." It aligns with Wor-Wic's Achieving the Dream partnership as a member of the Accelerating Equitable Outcomes cohort, through which the college is focusing on the unique needs of its largely rural population to identify resource gaps and programming that will transform students' experiences. Furthermore, the project establishes new and leverages existing relationships, including:

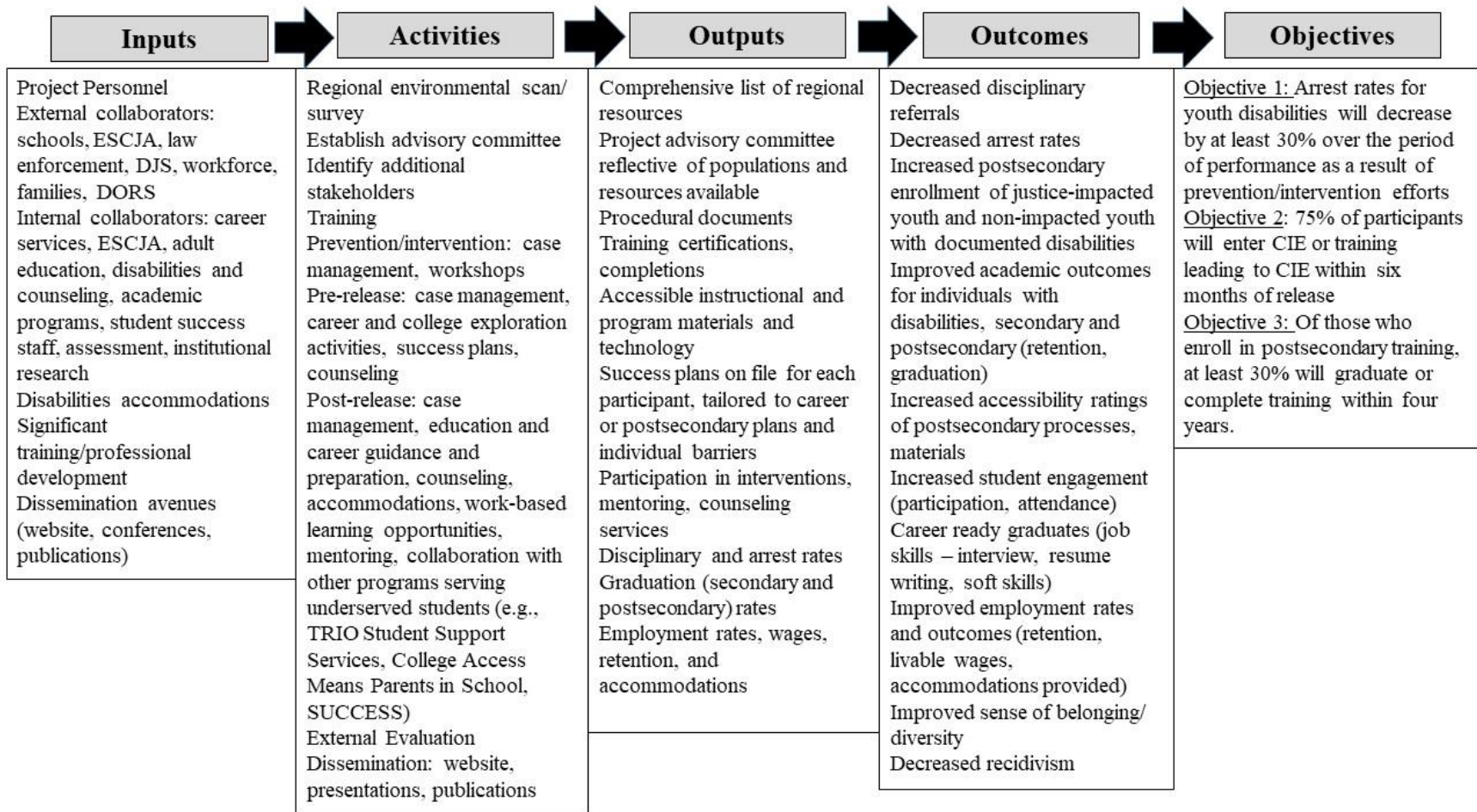
- Local Educational Agencies (LEAs): Wicomico, Worcester and Somerset County Public Schools, including special education personnel
- Eastern Shore Criminal Justice Academy (ESCJA): located at and administered by Wor-Wic, the ESCJA trains law enforcement and correctional officers from more than 60 agencies and facilities on Maryland's Eastern Shore (Lower and Upper), including new recruits and in-service officers
  - Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training, conducted by the ESCJA in collaboration with all three Lower Eastern Shore counties
- Maryland Juvenile Services Education Program (JSEP): Wor-Wic provides educational services to students in Maryland Department of Juvenile Services local detention and/or residential facilities
- Lower Eastern Shore disability services and advocacy agencies and organizations

Together, this partnership will directly address the barriers that keep disciplinary-referral vulnerable and justice-involved youth with disabilities from accessing high quality education and vocational training programs to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to secure CIE, including opportunities in advanced technology careers. This project draws on these relationships among (higher) education, law enforcement/corrections, and disability services to support participants in achieving their educational goals and training benchmarks, assist them with job placement and job coaching, and connect them with mentors and peers who have similar experiences for guidance, support, and a sense of belonging, the lack of which can be a barrier to obtaining or maintaining CIE for disciplinary-referral vulnerable and justice-involved youth with disabilities.

This project will be implemented in four phases over the course of the grant period:

- Phase 1: Environmental Survey – Fall 2024
  - To identify the resources necessary to position Wor-Wic as a hub of services and supports for disciplinary-referral vulnerable and justice-involved youth with disabilities while also

- bolstering its culture of systemic accessibility and universal design for all members of the community.
- To identify and further enhance the skills and tools necessary and available to improve opportunities for CIE and reduce recidivism once project participants return to the community.
  - To identify, assess, and address general risk and need factors involved in prevention and early intervention for project participants vulnerable to entering or reentering the juvenile justice system.
- Phase 2: Professional Development / Disability-Diversity Development – Spring 2025
    - CAST Training to develop campus community and resources.
    - IPICD Public Safety Disability Specialist Training to develop strategies and protocols to improve interactions between CIE team members and disciplinary-referral vulnerable and justice-involved youth with disabilities.
  - Phase 3: Pilot Program (Wicomico County Focus)—Fall 2025-Spring 2026
  - Phase 4: Full Implementation (Lower Eastern Shore Service Area) – Fall 2026-2029
    - Wicomico County, Worcester County, Somerset County
    - The Eastern Shore (through training of CIS teams from ESCJA service area)



\*Inputs, including training and case management are informed by literature, including Temple University’s Institute on Disabilities and the Arc’s National Center on Criminal Justice and Disability.

## Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes

Wor-Wic Community College's overarching goal is to create a regional, holistic program to reduce instances of justice system involvement for youth with disabilities, while providing clear, supported pathways to postsecondary education and training leading to CIE, or directly to CIE, for justice impacted youth with disabilities.

Primary objectives and outcomes that will indicate the project's movement toward achievement are noted in the logic model on the previous page.

- **Objective 1:** Reduce public school system arrest rates among youth with disabilities by at least 30%.
  - Baseline varies by county: 22.5% to 27.5% by September 2029; Benchmark less than 10%)
  - Outcomes: Decreased disciplinary rates; Decreased arrest rates; Increased engagement in intervention/prevention activities, including workshops and family engagement activities, by students and families
- **Objective 2:** 75% of participants will enter CIE or training leading to CIE within six months of release
  - Baseline: No baseline; target set based on service intensity
  - Outcomes: Increased postsecondary enrollment and academic/training outcomes (retention, graduation); increased access to learning materials and accommodations; increased student and family engagement in project (counseling, mentoring) and college or workplace-offered activities; engagement in career readiness activities; increased employment rates and wages.
- **Objective 3:** Of those who enroll in postsecondary training, at least 30% will graduate or complete training within four years.
  - Baseline for Wor-Wic's credit students with disabilities: 24%
  - Outcomes: Increased postsecondary persistence rates; increased accessibility ratings, accommodations; Engagement and sense of belonging; Engagement in mentoring, academic success and counseling activities

## U.S. Department of Education Grant Performance Report Performance Measures

According to DIF Grant requirements, Wor-Wic will also establish targets in the following areas, track progress toward those targets, and report actual performance data. Additional information regarding targets is provided in DIF instructional documents.

- Number of individuals (youth and/or other individuals with disabilities) to be served by the project.
- Number of project referrals.
- Number of individuals (youth and/or other individuals with disabilities) participating in the project.
- Of the individuals (youth and/or other individuals with disabilities) participating in the project, the number of individuals (youth and/or other individuals with disabilities) who received services and did not achieve competitive integrated employment.

- Of the individuals (youth and/or other individuals with disabilities) participating in the project, the pre-and post- project participation employment and wage outcomes.
- Of the individuals (youth and/or other individuals with disabilities) participating in the project, the demographics (e.g., gender, race, ethnic group).
- Of the individuals (youth and/or other individuals with disabilities) participating the project, the disability type.
- Of the individuals (youth and/or other individuals with disabilities) participating in the project, the number of individuals (youth and/or other individuals with disabilities) who achieve competitive integrated employment.
- The number of services professionals, including but not limited to employers, who completed professional training through the project.
- Of the services professionals who completed professional training, including but not limited to employers, the number who reported the training is high in quality, relevant, and useful to their work.

### **Potential for Replication**

Wor-Wic has developed the proposed project in four phases to allow time to adequately assess the results from a robust environmental survey and input from a diversity of stakeholder partners; to include rigorous training and professional development among multitude of stakeholders and groups that serve justice-involved youth, including college staff who will serve the population upon their transition to postsecondary education or training programs; to first pilot the program within one committed public school system; and then to allow for continuous assessment and improvement as the program expands within the tri-county region.

By implementing the project in four carefully-designed phases, the director will compile best practices, successes, and lessons learned to establish the program as a model for replication within other jurisdictions and to a broader audience. The project will be integrated into Wor-Wic’s annual assessment cycle that utilizes the Nuventive platform to organize goals, utilized direct means of assessment in the analyses of benchmarks, and create/update action plans to drive continuous improvement.

Products and results derived from the grant will be shared with other institutions of higher education, both locally and more broadly, through conferences, peer networking events and publications, to include project design and promising practices. Those practices will be supported through a robust external evaluation to assess impact by strategy.

### **Collaboration with Relevant Agencies and Organizations**

Wor-Wic’s project establishes linkages with public schools for prevention and intervention efforts; with the ESCJA for prevention/intervention, pre-release and post-release transition services, including Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) and IPICD Public Safety Disability Specialist (PSDS) Training; the Department of Juvenile Services to provide pre-release academic preparation, career readiness, and life skills training for incarcerated youth with disabilities; the Wicomico County adult education program, which is administered through Wor-Wic Community College for post-release individuals who have not

earned a GED and are of age to do enroll in the adult education program; other departments and offices within the college, including the Counseling and Disabilities Office, Career Services Office, credit and non-credit programs and departments at the college, depending on student needs; local and state service agencies and organizations, such as the Division of Rehabilitative Services, ShoreUp, and others, depending on the results of Phase 1 and the individual needs of the youth served. Additional description is found in Project Services: Collaboration with Partners for the Provision of Services.

### **Feedback and Continuous Improvement**

Wor-Wic's project incorporates feedback from multiple sources:

- Project Advisory Committee: Membership includes secondary and postsecondary stakeholders, law enforcement/justice system, workforce partners, social services and wrap-around agencies, justice-impacted or vulnerable youth with disabilities representative, parent, disabilities specialist and others, as identified. Quarterly meetings include data review; discussion of project successes and challenges; outcomes; future directions.
- College Council: Membership includes academic divisions, service departments and the Executive Leadership Team. Updates and outcomes will be shared by the project director and any feedback from impacted divisions and departments will be discussed during Project Advisory Committee meetings.
- Institutional Assessment: Incorporating the project into Wor-Wic's institutional assessment process places it in the institution's established cycle and ensures communication and feedback from the vice president level. The vice president reviews assessment for the director of learning services position.
- External Evaluation: External evaluation allows for an independent, third-party assessment of the program without influence of position within the college. The inclusion of all phases/partners/services within the assessment increases its reach and allows for ongoing feedback to the team, as well as reports that can be shared with the Department of Education.

### **Project Services**

#### Services Provided

Wor-Wic's project serves youth with disabilities through three broad strategies: early intervention/prevention services for youth with disabilities who are in the public school system and have not been justice-impacted; pre-release youth with disabilities currently in the justice system; and post-release justice-impacted youth with disabilities entering the workforce or pursuing postsecondary credentials through credit or non-credit workforce training programs (including adult education/GED).

Early Intervention/Prevention: Include considerations related to CIE in IEPs and parent meetings for students with disabilities, in partnership with schools; Training for School Resource Officers, Counselors, Community-School Liaisons, and other school staff; career counseling for youth with disabilities in public schools; job readiness training; mentoring/coaching

Pre-Release: Career assessment, counseling and coaching; Development of individual career and education plans to be integrated into re-entry plans; identification and liaison with community transition resources (wrap-around supports – child care, transportation, housing), also to be integrated into re-entry plans; job readiness skills (for those entering CIE and not pursuing postsecondary education/training; peer

support/mentoring; case management and employment/educational outcomes tracking; youth and family workshops with topics such as re-integration, transitional/wrap-around services, employment and career opportunities, life skills and social-emotional skills.

Post-Release: Educational and workforce development support (see key personnel); development/updating of individual career and education plans (e.g., “Success Plans”) to guide case management, wrap-around service needs and counseling interactions, and to serve as a roadmap to CIE; Career Services Office services (e.g., interview skills, resume-writing, job searches); campus-based mentoring/peer support group; academic and student support services; one-on-one case management/employment/placement assistance services.

### Strategies to Ensure Equal Access and Treatment for Underrepresented Participants

Wor-Wic Community College will implement the following strategies to work toward ensuring more equitable access and treatment for underrepresented participants in an effort to create a more generalizable model outcome.

- Wor-Wic will implement flexible recruitment and data collection approaches, such as:
  - Adapting recruitment strategies based on community needs and feedback from stakeholders and the project advisory committee; and
  - Offering remote options whenever possible to overcome physical access barriers and accommodating participants with limited resources or time constraints.
- The college will address systemic and sociocultural barriers through measures to:
  - Simplify consent language;
  - Reduce the burden of project activities;
  - Provide transportation assistance/options;
  - Collaborate with interpreters to support non-English speakers; and
  - Individualize approaches that acknowledges cultural differences while maintaining project rigor.
- Project staff will engage in community outreach and partnerships:
  - Collaborate with community organizations, faith institutions, and local stakeholders and the project advisory committee to build trust, raise awareness, and potentially co-locate services in community venues—as we do with our education programs offered at various Wicomico County Library branches.
- Wor-Wic will efficiently utilize grant funding and recruitment resources:
  - Allocate sufficient funding for enhanced recruitment efforts, including higher staffing levels to accommodate and address the comprehensive support needs of a greater number of students with disabilities
  - Budget flexible funds to support participants’ needs (e.g., scholarships, transportation, childcare).
- The college will prioritize diversity in trial design and reporting:
  - Integrate diversity considerations into the development strategy from the outset.
  - Broaden eligibility criteria, enrich for select populations, and implement decentralized trial aspects to improve inclusivity.
  - Consistently report demographic characteristics of study populations to promote transparency.

## Collaboration with Partners for Provision of Services

1. Wicomico County, Worcester County, Somerset County School Systems: Wor-Wic will collaborate with local school systems, starting with Wicomico County Public Schools to develop and implement the proposed pilot program. School representatives, including special education, counselors, and/or community liaisons will be invited to participate in the project advisory committee to determine barriers to services for students with disabilities (including justice-involved youth), leverage resources for service provision, identify training opportunities, and create a comprehensive pilot plan.
2. Juvenile Services Education Program (JSEP). The JSEP is an independent education program housed in Maryland's Department of Juvenile Services (DJS). JSEP provides educational services to all students in DJS detention and/or residential facilities, including individualized education plans (IEP). Wor-Wic's project team will engage with JSEP, also through the advisory committee, to create a path to employment or higher education (credit or noncredit programming) based on students' individualized needs, interests and capabilities.
3. Eastern Shore Criminal Justice Academy (ESCJA): Wor-Wic's ESCJA conducts entry-level police certification courses, mandated professional development courses, technical training courses, and supervisory training courses for the local law enforcement community in eight counties on Maryland's Eastern Shore. In addition, the ESCJA provides training courses, including Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) and School Resource Officer (SRO) training, for approximately 80 agencies from jurisdictions, hospitals and universities throughout Maryland. The ESCJA has committed to working with the project team to implement training for officers serving youth with disabilities, including the School Resource Officers who are frequently a student's first encounter with law enforcement. The SROs may significantly impact the prevention phase of the project.
4. Local disabilities resource agencies: Wor-Wic partners with numerous agencies supporting individuals with disabilities throughout the tri-county region. Each agency is unique in the services provided and, therefore, role in the project. Phase 1 (environmental scan) will result in the identification of the key agencies, based on resources identified. However, preliminary collaborations identified include, for example, ShoreUp, Tri-Community Mediation, Parents Place of Maryland, Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council (developmental and intellectual disabilities) and others.

## Training and Professional Development Opportunities

- CAST: Wor-Wic Community College's Disability-Diversity / Accessibility training and professional development will be developed in consultation with CAST. CAST is a nonprofit education research and development organization that created the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework and guidelines that ensure inclusivity in learning. CAST's work includes efforts in areas such as accessibility and inclusive technology; career exploration and development for workforce and career education; and postsecondary education, including assistive technology, accessible material and the diverse abilities and backgrounds that impact learning, Wor-Wic's project director has achieved CAST certification but aims to provide extensive professional development through the campus and stakeholder group to include all who work with targeted population.
- The Institute for the Prevention of In-Custody Deaths, Inc. (IPICD): Wor-Wic, through the ESCJA, will partner with IPICD to train ESCJA instructors to become certified IPICD Public Safety Disability Specialists (PSDS). The IPICD PSDS program focuses on educating and training public safety



employees to legally and safely contact disabled individuals. PSDS training includes content such as “Engaging Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities in Custody,” “Americans with Disability Act: The Basics,” and other content specific to various disabilities. The training of ESCJA instructors supports the sustainability of programming and allows for train-the-trainer created courses for juvenile services personnel, School Resource Officers, and other pertinent stakeholders.

## **Project Evaluation**

Program evaluation will assess the project’s processes and outcomes, using both qualitative and quantitative measures, and will be aligned with Wor-Wic’s institutional assessment process. The college uses Nuventive Solutions software to manage the program and service department assessment processes, which ensures a consistent, systematic evaluation process, allows storage of evaluation results and documentation to assess effectiveness over the history of the project, facilitates the creation of custom assessment reports, and allows for the development and updating of action plans designed to address potential problems.

Collecting quantitative and qualitative data from the project advisory committee, college personnel, workforce agencies, support agencies, all three school systems, law enforcement personnel, and other stakeholders will enable an analysis of the program’s accomplishments and challenges from multiple points of view. Quantitative data will be extracted from the Colleague student information database, Wor-Wic’s Institutional Research Office, IPEDS, school systems and justice system records. Examples of quantitative data to be examined include service usage rates, training completions, student contract frequency/content, graduation rates, college and career progression outcomes, and recidivism rates. Qualitative data will be assembled from surveys, focus groups and interviews and will assess the content of training and services, frequency of delivery, sufficiency of services, and participant self-efficacy measures.

Formative evaluation will enable the project advisory committee to assess their processes and to analyze effectiveness at each phase of the project and to drive mid-program modifications. Summative assessment will assess the project’s overall outcomes to determine if benchmarks are achieved for the stated objectives.

Proposed questions to guide evaluation include the following, and for each measure, data will be disaggregated by gender, race/ethnicity, disability, and other means identified by the group to assess the effectiveness of strategies on different subpopulation:

### *Prevention/Intervention:*

1. What is the status and availability of local resources supporting prevention and intervention efforts for youth with disabilities who are vulnerable to justice system involvement?
2. Is the capacity of local resources to support prevention and intervention efforts sufficient at the county and regional levels?
3. What are the supports that schools need, and how can the college and local agencies/organizations play a role in securing those resources?
4. What training is provided and how effective is it, as it relates to law enforcement interactions with youth with disabilities?
5. How well does the project engage staff and parents in prevention/intervention activities?
6. Assessed as a comprehensive program, how effective are intervention/prevention activities at decreasing office referrals, arrests, justice system involvement of youth with disabilities?

### *Pre-Release:*

7. What supports and accommodations are available regionally, and which are lacking, in current efforts to prepare pre-release youth with disabilities from entering CIE or from enrolling in postsecondary education and training leading to CIE?
8. Is the process effective and efficient for providing pre-release services to youth with disabilities, or are there policies in place that may be modified to improve access to services?
9. How effectively does the project provide career readiness and college preparation, or even pre-release training programs, within the justice system?
10. Are accommodations and accessibility tools routinely available within juvenile facilities and are there ways they can be improved?

*Post-Release:*

11. What proportion of youth with disabilities exiting the justice system have career and/or training plans in place?
12. What is the extent of holistic, wrap-around support included in youth release plans?
13. How effectively are wrap-around supports engaged in success plans?
14. At what level (hours, pay rate) do individuals served through the project transition to postsecondary education/training and then CI, or directly to CIE?
15. What are the postsecondary outcomes for individuals served, including obtainment of industry-recognized credentials, certificates and degrees.
16. What are the retention rates of individuals obtaining CIE (longer-term measure)?

Wor-Wic will contract with an external evaluator to enable a full, independent process and outcomes evaluation of the project. Institutional policies and state and federal regulations do not allow the identification of an external evaluator (contractor) outside of a formal procurement process, which includes the issuance of a Request for Proposals and assessment of responses/bids based on a consistent rubric. Although the evaluator cannot be named at the time of submission, the college will utilize the American Evaluation Association, similar projects implemented by other institutions and organizations, and general searches to design evaluation requirements specific to the proposed project that will enable a comprehensive assessment of each strategy and of the full project, as well as to distribute the RFP to evaluators with sufficient experience evaluating projects aimed at early intervention and prevention of justice system involvement, service delivery pre-release leading to educational and career opportunities, and post-release supports that result in degree/credential attainment and/or gainful employment to reduce recidivism rates, particularly as related to youth with disabilities.

The successfully-contracted external evaluator will be tasked with drafting a full evaluation plan for approval by project staff. However, preliminary measures identified by the team for evaluation include both quantitative and qualitative measures. Those measures include secondary school system county-level data for students with disabilities (graduation rates, college entrance rates, arrest rates); postsecondary enrollment, retention, graduation and transfer rates for Wor-Wic students with disabilities (the college does not track outcomes specific to justice-involved students); and state- or national-level trend data. Qualitative feedback may be measured against the full campus population, including credit and non-credit student surveys, since these data cannot always be disaggregated by disability status and never by justice-impacted status.

Evaluation data will be available semi-annually for performance reports and included in end-of-year performance reports. Evaluation reports and other publications of results will be made available to evidence building support contractor; technical assistance providers from the Department working with the college for the project; the Division of Rehabilitative Services and other vocational rehabilitation-related agencies; and housed on a website linked to Wor-Wic's website ([www.worwic.edu](http://www.worwic.edu)). Wor-Wic's project website, in alignment with grant requirements, will be developed in coordination with the college's

IT department in Year 1 to include the program design, objectives and partners, and refined in Years 2-5 to house participant resource materials and documentation for service professionals to include project design, results, promising practices, training materials, accessibility resources, and related publications.

Eval. Quest.	Measure	Tool	Analysis	Timeline	Source/ Responsibility
<b>Objective 1: Reduce public school system arrest rates among youth with disabilities by at least 30%.</b>					
1, 2, 3	Services available, capacity	Environmental survey	Pre- and post- comparison Post-survey v. best pract.	Year 1 & semi-annually	Adv. Committee/ Partners
4	Training availability, responsiveness to needs, capacity	LEA surveys, SRO focus group, interviews	Review of service gaps vs. best practices	Years 1 & 2	Project director, School partners, ESCJA, LEAs
5	Engagement of family, school staff	Activity attendance, focus groups, survey feedback	Attendance rates (disagg.), feedback re: usefulness, scheduling, needs	Per event	Coordinator
6	Behavioral outcomes for youth served through the program	Office referrals, SRO interventions, Arrests Arrest outcomes	Historical data comparisons, trends, disagg.	Semi-annual, starting with pilot	Coordinator, Schools, SROs, LEAs
<b>Objective 2: 75% of participants will enter CIE or training leading to CIE within six months of release</b>					
7, 8,10	Services available, capacity	Environmental survey	Pre- and post-project comparison; Post-survey vs. best practices/ literature	Year 1 & semi-annually	Advisory Committee/ Partners
9	Efficacy: career and college prep services	Individual Success Plans Career services provided in facilities College prep and training provided in facilities (workshops, non-credit, credit, devel. courses) Mentoring, counseling and related services provided in facilities	Success Plans in place to include college and/or career intentions, pathways, holistic/wrap-around supports, and timeline; Service records; Attendance and training completions; Alignment of post-release activity to Plans created pre-release	Semi-annually	Coordinator
<b>Objective 3: Of those who enroll in postsecondary training, at least 30% will graduate or complete training within four years</b>					
11, 12, 13	Well-defined and documented post-release plans	Individual Success Plans	Individual Success Plans, inclusive of wrap-around supports	Semi-annually	Coordinator, Wrap-around support partners

14, 15	Follow-through to education or CIE in alignment with plans	Credit, non-credit enroll. data (IR Offc.) Labor market data (case manager or student feedback, workforce system data)	% follow-through in alignment with Plans % enrolling or entering CIE (disaggregated)	Semi-annually	Coordinator, Data analyst, workforce development specialist
16	Retention and success	Postsecondary retention, persistence, graduation, credential attainment rates Job retention, promotion, wage rates	Participants' rates vs. college students with disabilities and without; disaggregated For CIE – historical data from local partners, comparison vs. local wage trends; disaggregated	Semi-annual	Coordinator, data analyst, workforce development specialist

### **Use of Results of Evaluation to Make Programmatic Changes**

Wor-Wic's Assessment Plan outlines the assessment cycle, timeline, responsibilities and procedures. By following the Plan, data from the project will be entered into Nuventive, evaluated in comparison to historical trends, control group data, or benchmarks by using multiple measures of assessment, and used to create action plans (for areas not meeting benchmarks). Wor-Wic's director of institutional assessment and effectiveness reviews assessment data for all divisions and shares feedback with college administration. The utilization of action plans and early feedback from supervisors and administrators allows for timely action to remedy problems.

Evaluation of activities is on per event, monthly, semester, or annual bases, depending on the activity/outcome. Formative evaluation results will be shared with the project advisory committee at bi-annual meetings to discuss concerns and solicit suggestions for improvement that can be implemented mid-project in order to ensure that the program stays on course to excel. Summative evaluation will assess the overall effectiveness of the project in meeting its objectives. Results from formative and summative assessment will drive future planning and sustainability efforts.