

## Case Study

# Rise Up Industries and the Challenge of Reentry for Formerly Incarcerated Individuals

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*“America is the land of the second chance – and when the gates of the prison open, the path ahead should lead to a better life.”*

George W. Bush

President George W. Bush said this in his 2004 State of the Union speech.<sup>1</sup> When he signed the Second Chance Act into law in 2007, he added, “We believe that even those who have struggled with a dark past can find brighter days ahead.”<sup>2</sup>

This case study is about one organization, Rise Up Industries (RUI), trying to build that path to a better life. RUI provides reentry services and support to formerly incarcerated individuals who were previously in gangs through an intensive job training program, offered alongside a holistic set of support services. The purpose of this case study is to provide a deeper understanding of this approach and the results it has produced to date, while situating it in the context of other initiatives focused on reentry and reducing recidivism.<sup>3</sup>

This study concludes that RUI’s reentry program is a promising approach and likely makes a small-scale contribution to solving a very hard problem – successfully fostering the reentry of formerly gang-involved, incarcerated individuals into society.

**R**ise Up Industries emerged from the work of Kairos Prison Ministry in the early 2010s.<sup>4</sup> During an event organized by Kairos at the Donovan Correctional Facility in San Diego, Father Greg Boyle of Homeboy Industries<sup>5</sup> in Los Angeles challenged Joseph Gilbreath, a Kairos volunteer, to establish something similar in San Diego. In response, Gilbreath, Ross Provenzano, and other Kairos volunteers founded RUI in 2013. The mission statement of RUI reads: *Rise Up Industries minimizes gang involvement by providing integrated gang prevention, gang intervention, and post-detention reentry services.* RUI describes their longer-term goal for this three-pronged approach as breaking the “intergenerational cycle of gang violence.”<sup>6</sup>

RUI began by launching their 18-month reentry program in 2016, after just over three years of research on the needs in San Diego and the organizations already working on reentry services in San Diego County.<sup>7</sup> According to RUI leadership, they launched the reentry program first in part because alumni of the reentry program could then participate in their gang prevention and intervention efforts.

RUI is currently laying the foundation for more robust gang prevention programming through a series of speaking engagements, in which reentry program participants and alumni speak with at-risk and justice-involved youth with the goal of assisting them in making more positive life choices. As part of these efforts, RUI is also developing an MOU with Monarch School.<sup>8</sup> Monarch School is a school in San Diego that educates children impacted by homelessness. Participants in the program will continue to regularly visit the school to speak with the students. RUI’s future plans for its gang prevention and intervention initiatives will be discussed in more detail below.

## The Reentry Program

RUI’s reentry work includes two basic components: 18 months of intensive job training focused on training participants to be machine tool operators and a basket of additional reentry support services provided to the participants in the job training program.

**Participants:** The reentry program focuses on formerly incarcerated individuals that grew up in street gangs. The time program participants spent in prison varies widely, from several years to several decades. RUI does not recruit. Their participants come to them through word of mouth and normally contact staff through a letter or phone call from prison or soon after being released. To select participants, RUI conducts a series of interviews and a psychosocial assessment of potential candidates. According to RUI staff, the primary criteria for selection is an earnest desire to change and a demonstrated willingness to commit to the 18-month program.

**Job training:** RUI trains participants to be CNC machine operators.<sup>9</sup> The curriculum includes classroom training, hands-on training using CNC machines, and on-the-job training in the RUI machine shop. RUI can train 12 participants at a time. When at this capacity, two participants graduate each quarter, two can enroll each quarter, and a total of eight participants can graduate each year. This rotation creates an organic mentorship/apprenticeship element to the program as well. According to RUI documents, the full program involves 340 classroom hours, 606 hours of hands-on training, and 1,727 hours of on-the-job training working on the machine shop floor.

Originally, RUI planned to organize their training program around selling coffee and providing silk screening services. As a result of conversations with a formerly incarcerated individual who had been involved with Kairos, and who had been trained in CNC machining in Donovan Correctional Facility, they decided to focus on training machine tool operators. This skill has several benefits for individuals going through the reentry process. The skills required are learnable in 18 months, CNC machine operators are in high demand, and positions pay a relatively good wage – average annual salary is roughly \$40,000.<sup>10</sup> RUI graduates' salaries have often been above this average, with recent graduates making from \$50,000 to \$68,000 within two years of starting their job.<sup>11</sup>

Finally, operating a CNC machine is not physically demanding and can be done into one's 60s and 70s. This contrasts with many types of positions offered to those leaving prison, such as construction or working in San Diego's shipyards. These jobs can be difficult physically for those who have spent decades incarcerated. Moreover, few leaving prison have savings or have been contributing to social security or other retirement plans, meaning they will need to continue to work to an older age.

**Machine shop social enterprise:** RUI's participants are trained in their machine shop, which operates as a social enterprise. RUI opened its first machine shop in 2016 with one CNC machine. It now runs a 3,400-square-foot facility with six CNC machines. The machine shop has had over 60 customers since its opening. RUI leadership said that given the current size of the facility, they don't have the capacity to take on more work from current or new customers. An RUI board member noted that customers choose RUI in part because of its mission.<sup>12</sup> Thus, if RUI can produce products of equal quality and at the same price as for-profit companies, it has some comparative advantage in the marketplace.

The machine shop currently provides roughly 30 percent of RUI's gross revenue. According to RUI's business plan, their current expansion plans, discussed below, will allow them to reach an initial goal of the machine shop providing 50 percent of RUI's gross revenue in five years. Ross Provenzano, a current RUI board member who has been involved with RUI since

the beginning, said, “If we are able to get to 50 percent, it would be huge.” He went on to note that fundraising, particularly to support formerly incarcerated individuals, is always going to be difficult and that it is getting more difficult all the time.<sup>13</sup> The leadership also described a very long-term vision, based on peer organizations they have interacted with, of the machine shop providing 100 percent of their revenue.

RUI staff see the social enterprise as central to their vision but are also aware of the inevitable tension between the business side of RUI and the mission-driven side of RUI. They are eager to reduce as much as possible their reliance on donors and grants but also note, for instance, that a normal business would not train individuals for 18 months and then immediately provide them to their competition. Jonathan Yackley, the Deputy Executive Director of RUI, emphasized that anyone who has managed a social enterprise knows this tension is real: “Earning more money allows you to serve more people, but, on the other hand, you have to be careful not to let production work (which generates income) get in the way of training (which does not).”<sup>14</sup>

**Reentry support services:** Since they opened, RUI has provided other reentry support services alongside the job training program. According to RUI, each participant receives at least five counseling sessions, has regular interactions with a case manager, is appointed a mentor, and completes three months of budgeting and financial literacy training. As needed, participants may also engage in weekly counseling sessions throughout the 18 months, have tattoos removed, attend 12-step recovery groups, and continue budgeting and financial literacy training. Other types of support include assistance finding affordable housing, arranging medical insurance or medical treatment, and navigating social services or government agencies (e.g., to get a birth certificate or driver’s license).

RUI recently hired a full-time case manager to coordinate these services, based on each participant’s need, through the development of an “Individualized Service Plan.” Previously, RUI had a part-time case manager. RUI provides reentry support services directly or through partnerships with other organizations. For example, the San Diego District Attorney’s office provides support for tattoo removal while Family Health Centers helps with medical insurance and treatment. An analysis produced by RUI as part of their five-year vision estimates that participants in RUI’s program spent 447 total hours receiving support services as compared to 2,673 hours in formal training and on-the-job training on the machine shop floor – roughly 14 percent of participants’ time spent with the organization.

In addition to the specific services offered, RUI's *approach* to providing social services is worth emphasizing. First, RUI staff are emphatic that each of their participants is an individual. Beyond the core set of services that each RUI participant receives, participants only receive the services they and the case manager decide they need, when they need it. To implement this "as needed" approach, RUI integrates flexibility into all their programming. Those participating in job training, for instance, can leave RUI's facility to access services or to go to appointments as needed.

Second, alongside the more formal services offered, RUI clearly seeks to foster a culture of mutual support. More than one staff member used the word "kinship" in describing how RUI supports its program participants and how they support each other. Staff members noted that participants call each other brother and highlighted activities like the Friday book clubs, where participants can connect with each other in ways that are not possible during training or on the shop floor.

## Plans for the Future

RUI leadership is undertaking two major new initiatives. The first expands the reentry program. The second formalizes the gang prevention program through the establishment of a community center focused on gang prevention.

**Expanding the reentry program:** RUI has currently launched a five-year plan to double the capacity of their reentry program to 24 participants. This will require obtaining a new 20,000-square-foot facility. Upon obtaining a new facility, RUI plans to reach their new maximum capacity of 24 participants by 2025, which will allow them to graduate 16 participants per year. RUI hopes to obtain the new facility in a more gang-impacted community than Santee, where their facility is currently.<sup>15</sup>

**Community-based gang prevention programming:** In addition to the expansion of its reentry program, RUI plans to expand its efforts to prevent youth involvement in gangs. To date, these efforts have primarily been one-off events or small-scale efforts in which RUI participants or alumni share their experiences with youth, community members, policymakers, or other stakeholders. The MOU with Monarch School, described above, is one effort to move beyond one-off events to more sustained engagement with an organization serving youth.

RUI leadership described plans to establish a community center for youth in a gang-involved neighborhood. Currently, RUI is working with researchers to develop a more detailed plan for this initiative. In interviews, two RUI board members acknowledged that this initiative would be challenging, noting that it is an almost entirely different program model than current reentry work, that many other organizations work in the youth space, and that youth prevention programs would require a different funding model than the reentry program, which generates income through the social enterprise.

RUI is not currently implementing initiatives under the gang intervention prong of their approach, defined as helping youth and young adults who are already in gangs to leave them. RUI leadership noted that work under this prong would evolve out of the gang prevention and reentry work.

## Rise Up Programming Model – Key Takeaways

The following section will discuss RUI’s results to date, but first it is important to highlight some key takeaways from RUI’s reentry programming model.

**The commitment:** Current and former participants stressed that RUI’s program – a full-time, 18-month program – required serious commitment. One participant noted that when he was thinking about joining RUI, he realized he had never been out of prison for 18 months in a row.<sup>16</sup>

Related to this, current participants noted that the most challenging part of the program was that it requires living on minimum wage in a very expensive city. RUI pays minimum wage at first, then \$1.00 over minimum wage after six months and \$2.25 over minimum wage after 12 months. One participant said he needs to work a second job after he finishes the day at RUI in order to have enough money on which to live. The same participant suggested that RUI provide dedicated transitional housing as a way to help participants complete RUI’s program.<sup>17</sup>

**The culture of care:** The extent to which RUI staff genuinely care about the participants in the program is immediately evident. One alumni of the program said he had such trust issues coming out of prison that it took him months to trust that the staff did just want to help him, that there was not some ulterior motive. This care is most evident in the commitment of RUI staff to getting participants the support they need. In an interview, Joseph Gilbreath immediately emphasized the individuality of all participants, that there is no cookie-cutter approach.<sup>18</sup> This care is also evident in the use of words like “kinship” and “family” to describe the team at RUI, including the participants in the program. One alumnus of the program noted how an RUI staff member loaned him his car so he could get to work when not even his family would do so.<sup>19</sup>

It is clear that such care is needed. Many individuals coming out of prison are emotionally traumatized and/or often physically unhealthy. Even those who are not can be overwhelmed by the challenges of rebuilding their lives and often lack the skills or knowledge to do basic things such as use a cellphone or get an email account. One participant noted that he had problems at a previous job because he did not know how to punch in using a modern time clock.<sup>20</sup> For all these reasons, it is important that RUI provides holistic support not only to help manage the myriad practical issues reentering individuals face but also to provide emotional support and a safe space to manage deeper emotional issues.

Such holistic support, however, raises several issues, the most important of which is what happens at the end of the program. RUI staff acknowledged that even though participants in the program are fully trained in the relevant professional skills, they do not enjoy the same flexibility or support after the transition to a normal job. RUI is working on strategies to help participants better manage that transition. Similarly, an alumnus of the program noted that there is a tension to be managed between the desire to treat RUI participants as “family members” and the fact that they are still employees. He said participants still need to see RUI as an employer, “If not, everyone takes things really personally.”<sup>21</sup>

**The social enterprise:** RUI’s approach includes a business that produces products competitive in quality and price to for-profit companies and has as many customers as it can serve at its current capacity. This is a significant achievement. Most social enterprises fail. According to one study by the World Economic Forum focused on Mexico, only 2.6 percent lasted seven to nine years.<sup>22</sup> Within the United States, it is estimated that social enterprises fail at the same rate as normal small businesses – meaning half don’t last longer than five years.<sup>23</sup> In contrast, given their customer base, there is every reason to believe that RUI’s business is sustainable and can continue to provide revenue to help RUI meet its mission.

## Recidivism

As of July 22, 2022, RUI has enrolled 41 participants. Fourteen participants have graduated. All graduates of the program received full-time employment as machine operators upon graduation. One graduate has been reconvicted – for a recidivism rate of seven percent among graduates.

Eighteen individuals enrolled but left the program for a variety of reasons. Some of these individuals left because they had good opportunities and have been successful since leaving the program, while others have continued to struggle.<sup>24</sup>

Seven percent recidivism compares very favorably to estimates of recidivism generally. A 2021 report, for instance, estimated 44.6 percent of offenders in California were reconvicted within three years of release.<sup>25</sup> Others have noted that the recidivism rate in California has hovered around 50 percent for years.<sup>26</sup> These percentages are based on the Bureau of State and Community Corrections' definition of recidivism for adults: reconviction within three years of release from prison.<sup>27</sup>

There are two important caveats, however, in drawing conclusions about the seven percent recidivism rate of RUI. First, the sample size is small, only 14 graduates. Second, it is difficult to know what would have happened to the participants if they had not entered the program. RUI screens for participants with a demonstrated “desire to change,” so it is possible that the participants would have been fine in the absence of the program, with a lower-than-average recidivism rate. The reverse is also possible, that in the absence of RUI's program, the participants would have had a higher-than-average recidivism rate. This is plausible given that RUI only serves former gang members, who often served long prison sentences.

Future research on RUI should seek to track some kind a “comparison group” with individuals similar to participants in the program but who do not enter the program. This could be a group, for instance, that is accepted for the program but that RUI does not have the space to include. Pre-post interviews could be done with this comparison group in order to understand how they fared without participating in RUI's program. This type of research would allow stronger conclusions to be drawn about the effectiveness of the program.<sup>28</sup>

## Cost and Cost-Effectiveness

Given RUI's intensive, 18-month model, which creates a relatively high cost per graduate, it is useful to discuss the cost and cost-effectiveness of its programming.

**Cost:** According to 2021 financial statements provided by RUI, the organization's total expenses in 2021 were \$1,034,698. Given that RUI graduates eight individuals per year, the cost per graduate is \$129,337. However, the participants in the program also generate revenue. The social enterprise's net revenue in 2021 was \$144,677, or \$18,084 per graduate. When this revenue is taken into account, the total net cost is \$890,021 and the net cost per graduate is \$111,252.63.

**Cost-effectiveness:** The most direct way of looking at the cost-effectiveness of RUI's program is to calculate the costs saved by reducing recidivism. According to the report cited above, the recidivism rate for California is 44.6 percent.<sup>29</sup> It costs roughly \$106,000 to incarcerate an individual for one year.<sup>30</sup> The table below runs cost-effectiveness scenarios for RUI's current cost structure and for their projected cost structure after their five-year expansion plan.

## Current and Projected Scenarios

### 2021 Scenario

GRADUATES PER YEAR	8	
NET COST PER GRADUATE	<b>\$111,253.63</b>	
TOTAL NET COST	<b>\$890,021</b>	(\$111,252.63 X 8)
EXPECTED RECIDIVISM RATE	<b>3.57 individuals</b>	(BASED ON CALIFORNIA RECIDIVISM RATE OF 44.6%)
RUI RECIDIVISM RATE	<b>0.56 individuals</b>	(BASED ON RUI'S RECIDIVISM RATE OF 7%)
CHANGE IN RECIDIVISM	<b>3.01 individuals</b>	

Assuming an average prison sentence of five years and an annual cost of incarceration of \$106,000, then:

COST OF INCARCERATING 3.01 INDIVIDUALS	<b>\$1,595,300</b>	(3.01 X 5 X \$106,000)
COST SAVINGS FOR ONE YEAR OF PROGRAMMING (ACCRUED OVER FIVE YEARS)	<b>\$705,279</b>	(\$1,595,300 - \$890,021)

### Projected Scenario for 2025<sup>31</sup>

GRADUATES PER YEAR	16	
NET COST PER GRADUATE	<b>\$52,189</b>	
TOTAL NET COST	<b>\$835,016</b>	(\$52,189 X 16)
EXPECTED RECIDIVISM RATE	<b>7.11 individuals</b>	(BASED ON CALIFORNIA RECIDIVISM RATE OF 44.6%)
RUI RECIDIVISM RATE	<b>1.12 individuals</b>	(BASED ON RUI'S RECIDIVISM RATE OF 7%)
CHANGE IN RECIDIVISM	<b>5.99 individuals</b>	

Assuming an average prison sentence of five years and an annual cost of incarceration of \$106,000, then:

COST OF INCARCERATING 5.99 INDIVIDUALS	<b>\$3,174,700</b>	(5.99 X 5 X \$106,000)
COST SAVINGS FOR ONE YEAR OF PROGRAMMING (ACCRUED OVER FIVE YEARS)	<b>\$2,339,684</b>	(\$3,174,700 - \$835,016)

One could run various scenarios with these numbers by shifting assumptions around regarding the success of the program, the recidivism rate used, or the average length of a prison sentence. However, in general, because of the very high cost of incarceration, if it is assumed that RUI's program creates a reduction in recidivism, then it will almost always be a cost-effective solution.

In addition to savings from reducing recidivism, one might also consider revenue generated by placing program participants in well-paid jobs. Individuals leaving prison normally get minimum-wage jobs, or no jobs at all. Each individual graduating from RUI's program has been placed in a well-paid job that is part of a longer-term career track. Each year they are in that job, they both generate tax revenue and make fewer demands on social services. Lastly, there are the non-quantifiable benefits of reducing recidivism. Although it is not possible to place a dollar value, for instance, on a father being able to spend extra years with his children, these years have immense value to the father, to the children, and to the broader society.

Finally, it is important to note that this analysis shows that RUI is a cost-effective solution but not whether it is the *most* cost-effective solution. Making this conclusion would require a comparative cost-effectiveness analysis comparing RUI with other reentry programs. Such research is beyond the scope of this case study but should be considered for the future.

The previous section summarized the results of RUI's programming based on the data that is currently available. This section will place the RUI program model in the context of the broader research on reentry programming. The goal is to better understand if we should expect RUI to be successful based on the findings of this research regarding what is effective and ineffective in regard to reentry programming more generally.

Researchers on reentry have developed a number of different lists and typologies of what is needed to foster successful reentry. While these lists vary somewhat, they normally include housing, employment, life management skills, support for physical and mental health, support to address substance abuse, emotional-behavioral support, and peer support and healthy relationships.<sup>32</sup> Sometimes one or more of these is left out, sometimes the prioritization differs, but in general there is consensus that reentering individuals require support to address a spectrum of needs, from the basic to the more intangible and complex.

While there is some consensus on what is needed for successful reentry, the clear takeaway from the current research is that designing consistently successful reentry programs is extremely difficult. *The Handbook of Issues in Criminal Justice Reform in the United States*, for instance, summarizes the findings on reentry programs as “lackluster,” noting that evaluations of these programs “typically yield mixed results.”<sup>33</sup> A 2018 review of research by the National Institute of Justice concludes simply, “We don't have a strong understanding of what works and what doesn't...”<sup>34</sup>

In line with this conclusion, there are numerous examples of research, looking at a wide variety of reentry initiatives, that have found no effects or, in some cases, negative effects. These include the following:

- Maria Berghuis' review of nine rigorously evaluated reentry programs concludes, “The results suggest that current reentry programs have no significant effects on reducing or increasing odds of recidivism for adult, male offenders.”<sup>35</sup>
- In a systematic review of the evidence, Jennifer Doleac finds some evidence of positive impact for only one program: cognitive-behavioral<sup>36</sup> therapy. She finds little evidence of positive impact and even evidence of negative impact for several types of programs, including housing support, transitional jobs, therapeutic communities, HOPE-style substance abuse programs,<sup>37</sup> and wraparound services.<sup>38</sup>
- An evaluation of seven programs funded by the Second Chance Act found a small but statistically significant *increase* in rearrests and reconvictions in the group that received services compared to the control group.<sup>39</sup> An evaluation of seven job training programs funded under the Enhanced Transitional Job Demonstration initiative found no “statistically significant impact on the amount of child support paid or on a broad measure of recidivism.”<sup>40</sup>

Some studies do show positive results, but they feature small or mixed impacts – showing positive results on certain measures but not others, or impacts only for certain subgroups. These include the following:

- In a systematic review of evidence on juvenile aftercare programs designed to reduce recidivism, Weaver and Campbell overall found no significant impact but concluded that these programs can be effective for older youth with more violent criminal histories.<sup>41</sup>
- An evaluation of the Male Community Reentry Program – a program that moves inmates out of prison to a community-based program location prior to the completion of their sentences – shows somewhat more promising results. For participants in the program for at least nine months, the program reduced the likelihood of rearrest by 13 percentage points and reconviction by 11 percentage points.<sup>42</sup> The authors did indicate these findings should be seen as preliminary, given the small number of individuals placed in the comparison group during the research.

Closer to home, research conducted by San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) has found similar mixed results:

- The final evaluation report of the San Diego Prisoner Reentry Program, implemented in San Diego County between 2007 and 2012, found that participants in their first year after release were less likely than the comparison group to be rearrested or returned to prison, but that the program had no impact on reconviction or on receiving a prison sentence for a new offense.<sup>43</sup>
- An evaluation of the Successful Treatment and Reentry (STAR) Program released in 2021 found that, after 24 months, those who went through the program had significantly *higher* rates of arrest and conviction than those in the control group.<sup>44</sup>

This brief review of research on reentry shows the challenge that the current carceral system within the United States poses for reentry programming, both in the number of individuals being imprisoned and the length of the sentences they are serving. Within this research, there are no program models that have been shown to successfully and consistently address these challenges. At the very least, it appears that programs need to be customized to meet the needs of specific subgroups of the reentering population. This population is not homogenous, and therefore we should not expect a single type program to work for everyone coming out of prison.

It is also important to be realistic about the extent to which *programs* can address the reentry challenge without broader changes. Some researchers, in fact, have concluded that reentry programming will never be able to address the full scale of this challenge without broader societal changes. Mears and Cochran, for instance, conclude that, “In short, successful reentry depends on improving our criminal justice correctional system, and more broadly policy making.”<sup>45</sup>

Are there findings from the reentry research that can help us understand whether we should expect RUI's programming to be effective? As noted above, overall, the research on reentry initiatives is somewhat pessimistic. However, there are some unique characteristics of RUI's model that provide reasons to believe their programming will be more effective than many of the programs assessed in the research.

## Job Training

Job training is at the core of RUI's approach. Multiple researchers have found that job training of various kinds has not been effective.<sup>46</sup> However, many of these programs focus on either providing support for job placement or providing low-level transitional jobs. Leadership at RUI intentionally designed their program as a longer-term, more intensive training program that prepares participants for a career instead of a transitional job. Joseph Gilbreath noted that when RUI started, "We were thinking what they needed was employment," but over time RUI learned that "they needed a career with a livable wage."<sup>47</sup>

Jonathan Yackley described RUI's approach as comprehensive and compared it specifically to approaches that just provide job training or a career center that just helps individuals find a job. He noted as well that from the beginning RUI believed that short-term job training would not be effective.<sup>48</sup> This realization comes in part from their connection with Homeboy Industries, which is known for its "as long as it takes" approach to working with individuals.<sup>49</sup>

It is also likely important that RUI offers a range of support services in addition to job training. Newton et al. conclude that, "When offered in isolation from other services, there is reason to suspect that employment readiness programs will be ineffective."<sup>50</sup> RUI participants noted that doing all the little things necessary to manage life outside of prison was often what had the potential to cause the most problems.<sup>51</sup>

## Wraparound Services

While RUI's range of support services may contribute to the success of its job training efforts, the support raises a different issue. In a review of the research to date, Doleac found that "the existing evidence suggests that wrap-around service programs, as currently implemented, are not effective and may be actively detrimental to participants."<sup>52</sup> She argues that this could be the case because programs demand too much time and energy of participants, time and energy that perhaps could be spent more productively doing other things.

There are some reasons to believe that RUI programs can overcome this challenge. RUI's model integrates support into the eight-hour work day, during which the participants are paid a full-time wage. Most wraparound-service programs pay at most a small subsidy to the participants. At RUI, either support for participants is provided onsite during the work day or participants can leave during the work day to, for instance, do tattoo removal or get a driver's license. Moreover, RUI is committed to a flexible, as needed approach to providing support services, thereby reducing the overall demand on participants' time. The hiring of a full-time, onsite case manager will likely improve their ability to implement this flexible approach.

Doleac also hypothesizes that wraparound services might fail because they damage an individual's sense of agency, conveying the message that individuals cannot succeed without help. She argues, "less intensive interventions may be more successful precisely because they allow people the psychological freedom to build new lives, and opportunities to achieve success with direct assistance."

This issue is relevant for RUI's programs. In interviews, the RUI team discussed the challenge of participants transitioning to a normal workplace that does not offer the same level of support. Similarly, an RUI alumnus discussed the tension between seeing RUI as a family and seeing RUI as an employer. This is a complex, nuanced issue, and the right degree of support to provide, while not undermining an individual's agency, will be different for each participant. The ability of RUI to be flexible, and the deep knowledge they have of every participant, likely supports their ability to manage this tension. At the same time, perhaps counterintuitively, their deep commitment to kinship and a culture of care may make it difficult at times to support the independence and agency of their participants. Jonathan Yackley indicated that they are aware of this challenge and noted that they use techniques such as "coach-navigator interventions" and "motivational interviewing" to provide support while increasing, as opposed to undermining, agency and efficacy.<sup>53</sup>

## Duration of the Program

Within the reentry research, we found no studies that assessed programs as long as RUI's – 18 months. Somewhat surprisingly, researchers often fail to report the duration of reentry programs under assessment, but no programs in the research reviewed reported a duration of 18 months or more. Therefore, the impact that the duration of RUI's program has on effectiveness is largely an open question. One of the few bright spots in the literature, the MCRP program, also had a relatively long duration and was more effective if participants were in the program for nine months versus six months.<sup>54</sup> On the other hand, longer programs will increase the tension between providing support and fostering agency described above. Given how central the 18-month commitment is to RUI's model, it will be important to monitor future research to see if additional insights can be gleaned regarding the relationship between duration and effectiveness.

The previous sections assessed the current data on RUI's effectiveness and cost-effectiveness and examined what the broader research on reentry programming can tell us about whether we should expect RUI's programs to be effective. However, even assuming effectiveness, there is a second key issue, that of scale. Roughly 40,000 individuals are released from prison in California each year,<sup>55</sup> roughly 600,000 are released from prison nationwide.<sup>56</sup> In the U.S., 93 percent of individuals in prison will return to their communities.<sup>57</sup>

Even after their planned expansion, RUI will serve 24 participants and graduate 16 individuals per year. This expansion will take five years. Thus, in the short- to medium-term, RUI will not be able to significantly scale its programs. This is not surprising given the organization's long-term, intensive job training program, its commitment to treating each participant as an individual, its goal of fostering kinship, and so on.

While it is sobering to look at the number of graduates RUI produces in comparison to the total number of individuals released each year, it is not necessarily fair to expect that RUI should concern itself with the overall scale of the reentry problem. RUI leadership admit that their size is a challenge when talking about their organization, particularly in interactions with funders or government officials. They also make clear that their primary focus is on creating impact for the individuals with whom they are able to work. Joseph Gilbreath noted that, from his time working with Kairos Prison Ministries, his focus has been working with participants one-on-one as individuals. He noted that he's "not interested in numbers" if that means losing focus on the individual or sacrificing the efficacy of the program.<sup>58</sup> Jonathan Yackley also said, "We are going to do a great job with the people that have entrusted their time to us and treat them well."<sup>59</sup>

This sentiment may not satisfy government officials and policymakers concerned with creating solutions on the scale of the problems their communities face. The reality, however, is that, according to the research on reentry, there are not ready-made, scalable solutions to the problem of reentry. Focused solutions serving a small number individuals may currently be the best option available.

There is a final path to scale, which would involve scaling the model of RUI through the establishment of similar organizations, as opposed to growing RUI itself. In many ways, this "franchise model" is the approach of the Global Homeboy Network of which RUI is a part. The Network consists of organizations in 33 states and 19 countries committed to Homeboy Industries' goal of providing "marginalized men, women, and youth with tools they need to change their lives and become productive members of their communities."<sup>60</sup> The challenge with this approach is having enough organizations in the network to create impact at scale. One RUI participant noted that RUI, with its longer-term, intensive job training approach, is unique in San Diego. He meant this as a compliment to RUI, but it also speaks to the challenge of addressing the reentry problem through a franchise model even at the smaller scale of a county like San Diego. Nonetheless, future research should explore the extent to which the Global Homeboy Network is successfully creating impact at scale, or not.

*When asked about the question of scale, Joseph Gilbreath shared this about the larger vision of Rise Up Industries:*

RUI is not solely focused on reentry services. Our mission is to minimize street gang activity in San Diego. Gangs are responsible for the majority of violent crime in most communities. Gang activity involves an intergenerational life cycle as youth follow the paths of their parents, uncles, and cousins. A large percentage of the incarcerated population has also been involved in gangs. If the root causes are not addressed, the cycle continues, thus increasing gang violence, other crime, and incarceration. RUI intends to address this issue through a three-prong approach – gang prevention, gang intervention, and reentry.

RUI started with the third prong – reentry. The intent is to have reentry program members and graduates help structure the future prevention and intervention programs. RUI members and graduates have served as credible messengers in speaking engagements with at-risk youth. This is a valuable service to these youth who are faced with difficult life decisions at a very young age. It is also a healing experience for the members as they address the impacts of the poor choices they made earlier in life. As the prevention and intervention programs start up and the alumni base from all three programs continues to grow, there will be a significant increase in community involvement and outreach and a clear demonstration that there are better alternatives to gang life. This will not happen overnight, but a systematic, structured approach with continual refinement based on lessons learned is needed if this cycle is to be broken.

To again summarize the core conclusion of this case study: Based on their results to date, RUI's reentry program is a promising program that potentially makes a small-scale contribution to solving what the research tells us is a very hard problem – reintegrating formerly incarcerated individuals into society. Despite the relatively high cost per participant of RUI's model, it also represents a cost-effective solution given the high cost of incarceration. Finally, because it has developed a successful social enterprise and has a viable plan for that enterprise to fund roughly 50 percent of its operations in the next five years, RUI has a significantly higher chance of being sustainable than most nonprofits. This provides the opportunity to create sustained impact over time.

## Future Research

While this case study answered many questions about RUI and its model, it also raised several questions that future research should seek to answer. First, more research on the effectiveness of RUI's model is needed. In particular, research that establishes some kind of comparison group of individuals who are similar to RUI's participants but do not go through RUI's program is necessary to make stronger claims about the effectiveness of RUI's model.

Second, more research should be conducted on the duration of RUI's model and its relationship to effectiveness. At the core of RUI's model is the 18-month commitment participants make. This time commitment is hard on participants and also contributes significantly to the high cost per participant of RUI's model. Thus, it would be beneficial to research whether similar results can be achieved in one year or even nine months, for instance.

Third, more research should be conducted on Homeboy Industries and the “franchise model” of the Global Homeboy Network. Is this network model a more effective way to achieve greater scale than expecting individual organizations to scale their impact themselves?

Finally, more research is needed comparing RUI to other reentry program models. As noted above, assuming research continues to show RUI's program model is effective, it is likely a cost-effective solution to the reentry problem. But that does not mean it is the most cost-effective solution. The only way this can be assessed is through comparative research that looks at the cost and the results of several reentry program models.

Conducting these strands of research in the future not only will tell us more about RUI but also will help inform broader reentry policy and programming in the San Diego region. Given the scale of the challenge, and the diversity of the reentering population, a broad ecosystem of policies, programs, and other initiatives is necessary to address it. Future research can help inform the development of that ecosystem to ensure that initiatives like RUI can successfully play their part and that synergies are built across the ecosystem so that the overall impact is more than the sum of its parts.

Individuals involved with Rise Up Industries interviewed for this case study:

- Joseph Gilbreath, Executive Director
- Jonathan Yackley, Deputy Executive Director
- Dustin Greeves, Machine Shop Manager
- Two current reentry program participants
- One reentry program alumnus
- Stephen Boyle, Board Member
- Ross Provenzano, Board Member (and one of RUI's founders)

- 1 George W. Bush, “2004 State of the Union Address,” The White House, accessed August 18, 2022, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/government/fbci/pri.html>.
- 2 George W. Bush, “President Bush Signs H.R. 1593, the Second Chance Act of 2007,” The White House, accessed August 18, 2022, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2008/04/20080409-2.html>.
- 3 This case study is part of a broader Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice research effort on non-punitive, non-retributive approaches to prevent violence and reduce recidivism in the San Diego region. Thus, a secondary purpose of the case study is to lay the groundwork for future comparative research that analyzes the work of Rise Up Industries and other organizations in San Diego County working on similar issues, including Youth Empowerment, Project AWARE, Oceanside Resilience, and others.
- 4 For more on Kairos Prison Ministry, see here: <https://www.kairosprisonministry.org/about-kairos-prison-ministry.php>.
- 5 For a good overview of Homeboy Industries, see R. Duncan M. Pelly, Yang Zhang, and Stephen J. J. McGuire, “Homeboy Industries: Redefining Social Responsibility,” *Journal of Case Research and Inquiry* 4 (2018): 17-47.
- 6 Quoted from a Rise Up Industries presentation to the Project Safe Neighborhoods Task Force, San Diego, CA, June 29, 2022.
- 7 During the research for this case study, the author was given an internal RUI document containing a matrix produced as part of RUI’s preparatory research. The document listed 65 organizations operating in San Diego along with all the services they provided.
- 8 The locations of speaking engagements have included Lincoln High School, Canyon Crest Academy, St. Augustine High School, Nativity Prep, McAlister Institute, Youth Detention Facility, and Sheriff’s Detention/Court Services Academy, among others.
- 9 CNC is short for computer numerical control. CNC machine operators operate computer-controlled machine tools that manufacture a variety of metal parts for industry.
- 10 “Machine Operator - Salary in San Diego, CA,” Salary.com, accessed August 24, 2022, <https://www.salary.com/research/salary/benchmark/machine-operator-i-salary/san-diego-ca>.
- 11 Jonathan Yackley, personal communication with author, June 21, 2022.
- 12 Ross Provenzano, interview, May 6, 2022.
- 13 Ross Provenzano, interview, May 6, 2022.
- 14 Jonathan Yackley, personal communication with author, July 22, 2022.
- 15 Stephen Boyle, interview, April 21, 2022.
- 16 RUI program participant, interview, April 7, 2022.
- 17 RUI program participant, interview, April 7, 2022.
- 18 Joseph Gilbreath, interview, February 3, 2022.
- 19 RUI program alumnus, interview, April 7, 2022.
- 20 RUI program alumnus, interview, April 20, 2022.
- 21 RUI program alumnus, interview, April 20, 2022.
- 22 Leticia Gasca, “3 Reasons Why Social Enterprises Fail – and What We Can Learn From Them,” World Economic Forum, June 8, 2017, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/06/3-reasons-why-social-enterprises-fail-and-what-we-can-learn-from-them/#:~:text=Failure%20rates&text=As%20for%20how%20long%20the,10%20years%20as%20a%20company>.
- 23 Eric Nee, “Learning from Failure,” *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, February 18, 2015, [https://ssir.org/articles/entry/learning\\_from\\_failure#](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/learning_from_failure#).
- 24 Jonathan Yackley, personal communication with author, May 24, 2022. RUI does not formally track the participants who have left the program.
- 25 California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, *Recidivism Report for Offenders Released from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation in Fiscal Year 2015-16* (California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, 2021), 3, <https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/research/wp-content/uploads/sites/174/2021/09/Recidivism-Report-for-Offenders-Released-in-Fiscal-Year-2015-16.pdf>.
- 26 California State Auditor, *California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation: Several Poor Administrative Practices Have Hindered Reductions in Recidivism and Denied Inmates Access to In-Person Rehabilitation Programs* (Sacramento, CA: California State Auditor, 2019), 5, <https://www.bsa.ca.gov/pdfs/reports/2018-113.pdf>.
- 27 “BSCC Definitions – AB 1050,” Bureau of State and Community Corrections California, accessed August 18, 2022, [https://www.bscc.ca.gov/s\\_recidivism/](https://www.bscc.ca.gov/s_recidivism/). Care should be taken in comparing recidivism rates. Different agencies use different definitions of recidivism. The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) in the United States Department of Justice, for instance, includes arrests as well as convictions in their definitions. See “National Recidivism and Reentry Data Program,” Bureau of Justice Statistics, accessed August 18, 2022, <https://bjs.ojp.gov/recidivism-program#0ecjfc>.

- 28 There are ethical and logistical issues that would need to be managed to conduct this kind of research. The point here is only to say that creating research with some kind of comparison group is necessary in order to make stronger claims about the effectiveness of RUI's programs.
- 29 California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, *Recidivism Report for Offenders*, 3.
- 30 "How Much Does It Cost to Incarcerate an Inmate?" Legislative Analyst's Office, last modified January 2022, [https://lao.ca.gov/policyareas/cj/6\\_cj\\_inmatecost](https://lao.ca.gov/policyareas/cj/6_cj_inmatecost).
- 31 This scenario is based on RUI's 2021 Business Plan. It assumes that the cost of incarceration, the average prison sentence, and the overall recidivism rate in California all stay constant.
- 32 For examples, see Daniel P. Mears and Joshua C. Cochran, *Prisoner Reentry in the Era of Mass Incarceration* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2015), 229; "5-Key Model for Reentry," Institute for Justice Research and Development, accessed August 18, 2022, <https://ijrd.csw.fsu.edu/projects/current-projects/5-key-model-reentry>; Adiah Price-Tucker et al., *Successful Reentry: A Community-Level Analysis* (Cambridge, MA: The Harvard University Institute of Politics, 2019), [https://iop.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/sources/program/IOP\\_Policy\\_Program\\_2019\\_Reentry\\_Policy.pdf](https://iop.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/sources/program/IOP_Policy_Program_2019_Reentry_Policy.pdf); and Emilee Green, "An Overview of Evidence-Based Practices and Programs in Prison Reentry," Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, December 19, 2019, <https://icjia.illinois.gov/researchhub/articles/an-overview-of-evidence-based-practices-and-programs-in-prison-reentry>.
- 33 Elizabeth L. Jeglic and Cynthia Calkins, "Introduction: The Need for Criminal Justice Reform," in *Handbook of Issues in Criminal Justice Reform in the United States*, ed. Elizabeth L. Jeglic and Cynthia Calkins (Springer, 2021), 335, [https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-77565-0\\_18](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-77565-0_18).
- 34 David Muhlhausen, "Research on Returning Offender Programs and Promising Practices," presentation to the Secretaries Innovation Group, June 12, 2018, National Institute of Justice, <https://nij.ojp.gov/speech/research-returning-offender-programs-and-promising-practices>.
- 35 Maria Berghuis, "Reentry Programs for Adult Male Offender Recidivism and Reintegration," *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 62, no. 14 (2018): 4669.
- 36 Jennifer L. Doleac, "Strategies to Proactively Reincorporate the Formerly-Incarcerated into Communities," Institute of Labor Economics, Discussion Paper No. 11646, June 2018, <https://docs.iza.org/dp11646.pdf>. Doleac also looks at policy changes, finding support for certain policy shifts such as providing court-ordered rehabilitation certificates, reducing the intensity of court-ordered supervision, and expanding DNA databases. Perhaps counterintuitively, she finds negative impacts for "ban-the-box" strategies.
- 37 A recent National Institute of Justice evaluation also found that the HOPE model offered no advantages over traditional probation programs. Pamela K. Lattimore, Doris L. MacKenzie, et al., "Rigorous Multi-Site Evaluation Finds HOPE Model Offers No Advantage Over Conventional Probation in Four Study Sites," National Institute of Justice, November 30, 2018, <https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/rigorous-multi-site-evaluation-finds-hope-probation-model-offers-no-advantage-over>.
- 38 For additional discussion of the challenges with wraparound services, see Jennifer L. Doleac, "Wrap-Around Services Don't Improve Prisoner Reentry Outcomes," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 38, no. 2 (2019): 508-514.
- 39 Ronald D'Amico and Hui Kim, *Evaluation of Seven Second Chance Act Adult Demonstration Programs: Impact Findings at 30 Months* (Social Policy Research Associates, 2018), 41, <https://www.spra.com/wordpress2/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Evaluation-of-Seven-Second-Chance-Act-Adult-Demonstration-Programs.pdf>.
- 40 Bret Barden, Randall Juras, Cindy Redcross, Mary Farrell, and Dan Bloom, *New Perspectives on Creating Jobs: Final Impacts of the Next Generation of Subsidized Employment Programs* (United States Department of Labor, 2018), ES-6, [https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/opre/etjd\\_sted\\_final\\_impact\\_report\\_2018\\_508compliant\\_v2\\_823\\_2018\\_b.pdf](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/opre/etjd_sted_final_impact_report_2018_508compliant_v2_823_2018_b.pdf).
- 41 Robert D. Weaver and Derek Campbell, "Fresh Start: A Meta-Analysis of Aftercare Programs for Juvenile Offenders," *Research on Social Work Practice* 25, no. 2 (2015): 211, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1049731514521302>.
- 42 Kimberly Higuera, Garrett Jensen, and Emily Morton, *Effects of the Male Community Reentry Program (MCRP) on Recidivism in the State of California* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford Public Policy, 2021), 40, [https://stacks.stanford.edu/file/druid:bs374hx3899/MCRP\\_Final\\_060421.pdf](https://stacks.stanford.edu/file/druid:bs374hx3899/MCRP_Final_060421.pdf).
- 43 Darlanne Hoctor Mulmat, Lisbeth Howard, Kristen Rohanna, Elizabeth Doroski, and Cynthia Burke, *Improving Reentry for Ex-Offenders in San Diego County: Final Evaluation Report* (San Diego: SANDAG, 2012), [https://www.sandag.org/uploads/publicationid/publicationid\\_1675\\_14598.pdf](https://www.sandag.org/uploads/publicationid/publicationid_1675_14598.pdf).
- 44 Sandy Keaton, Gregor Schroeder, Connor Vaughns, Elisabeth Jones, and Cynthia Burke, *San Diego County's Successful Treatment and Reentry (STAR): Evaluation Report* (San Diego: SANDAG, 2021), [https://www.sandag.org/uploads/publicationid/publicationid\\_4822\\_31547.pdf](https://www.sandag.org/uploads/publicationid/publicationid_4822_31547.pdf).
- 45 Mears and Cochran, 254.
- 46 Doleac, "Strategies to Proactively Reincorporate the Formerly-Incarcerated into Communities"; Barden et al.; and Danielle Newton, Andrew Day, and Margaret Giles, "The Impact of Vocational Education and Training Programs on Recidivism," *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 62, no. 1 (2018): 187-207.

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- 47 Joseph Gilbreath, interview, April 7, 2022.
- 48 Jonathan Yackley, interview, April 7, 2022.
- 49 See *Homeboy Industries: A Rehabilitative Approach to Serving the “Most Marginalized”* (Los Angeles: Homeboy Industries), 13-14.
- 50 Newton et al., 202.
- 51 RUI program participants, interview, April 7, 2022.
- 52 Doleac, “Wrap-Around Services Don’t Improve Prisoner Reentry Outcomes,” 510.
- 53 Jonathan Yackley, personal communication with author, June 21, 2022. For more on the coach-navigator approach and motivational interviewing, see Barbara A. Butrica and Kassandra Martinchek, *Effective Programs and Policies for Promoting Economic Well-Being* (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2020), [https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/101105/Effective%2520Programs%2520and%2520Policies%2520for%2520Promoting%2520Economic%2520Well-Being\\_2.pdf](https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/101105/Effective%2520Programs%2520and%2520Policies%2520for%2520Promoting%2520Economic%2520Well-Being_2.pdf).
- 54 Higuera et al.
- 55 E. Ann Carson, “Prisoners in 2020 – Statistical Tables,” Bureau of Justice Studies, December 2021, <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/p20st.pdf>.
- 56 “Incarceration and Reentry,” Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, accessed August 18, 2022, <https://aspe.hhs.gov/topics/human-services/incarceration-reentry-0>.
- 57 Berghuis, 4655.
- 58 Joseph Gilbreath, interview, April 7, 2022.
- 59 Jonathan Yackley, interview, April 7, 2022.
- 60 “Global Homeboy Network,” Homeboy Industries, accessed August 18, 2022, <https://homeboyindustries.org/our-story/global-homeboy-network/>.

