

# PROCESS EVALUATION OF SELECT RESTORE, REINVEST, AND RENEW (R3) FUNDED GRANTEES: A SUMMARY



ILLINOIS CRIMINAL JUSTICE INFORMATION AUTHORITY  
CENTER FOR VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION RESEARCH

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*Abstract: The Illinois Cannabis Regulation and Tax Act created the Restore, Reinvest, and Renew (R3) program, which reinvests a portion of cannabis tax revenue into communities experiencing high rates of gun injury, unemployment, child poverty, and incarceration. These grant funds support programming in five priority areas: civil legal aid, economic development, reentry services, violence prevention services, and youth development. Utilizing a mixed methods approach, researchers conducted site-specific process evaluations on the implementation and operations of select R3 grantees. Data sources varied by site, but included observations, interviews, surveys, focus groups, and administrative data. Overall, researchers found that 1) programs valued the needs and input of the communities they served and tailored services to meet those needs; 2) programs faced implementation delays due to funding administration and COVID-19 challenges; 3) programs varied greatly in terms of data collection and evaluation capacity; 4) assessment and planning programs successfully brought together relevant stakeholders and service delivery programs were typically successful in meeting goals for clients served. This article summarizes a larger report that further details the process evaluations.*

## **Restore, Reinvest, Renew (R3) Grant Program**

On June 25, 2019, Illinois joined the growing list of states that legalized adult recreational cannabis use through Public Act 101-27. Public Act 101-27 established the [Illinois Cannabis Regulation and Tax Act](#) (the Act).<sup>1</sup> The Act went into effect on January 1, 2020, allowing adults ages 21 and older to legally purchase recreational cannabis from licensed dispensaries in the state. The Cannabis Regulation and Tax Act intends to establish an equitable legal cannabis industry while repairing harms done by economic disinvestment and historical overuse of criminal justice responses in communities.

Public Act 101-27 also established the Restore, Reinvest, and Renew (R3) grant program, overseen by the [R3 Board](#).<sup>2</sup> The R3 program reinvests a portion of cannabis tax revenue via community grants to address issues within communities experiencing high rates of gun injury, unemployment, child poverty, and incarceration. Per the Act, grants are available in five program areas: civil legal aid, economic development, reentry services, violence prevention services, and youth development.<sup>3</sup>

The R3 program seeks to:<sup>4</sup>

- Directly address the impact of economic disinvestment, violence, and the historical overuse of criminal justice responses to community and individual needs by providing resources to support local design and control of community-based responses to these impacts.
- Substantially reduce the total amount of gun violence and concentrated poverty in the state.
- Protect communities from gun violence through targeted investments and intervention programs.
- Promote employment infrastructure.

With support from key stakeholders, the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (ICJIA) developed and released two Notice of Funding Opportunities (NOFO) for R3 funds. The first NOFO was for service delivery (for applicants providing services in communities) and the second for assessment and planning activities (for applicants seeking to build community capacity within and between organizations). A NOFO is “an agency's formally issued announcement of the availability of State, federal or federal pass-through funding through one of its financial assistance programs. It provides eligibility and evaluation criteria, funding preferences/priorities, the submission deadline, and information on how to obtain an application for the funding opportunity.”<sup>5</sup> Release of the R3 NOFOs involved several key phases, including: determination of eligible application areas (R3 areas), development of NOFOs emphasizing equity, a longer application window, technical assistance to potential applicants, scoring by implicit bias trained external reviewers, and a training series for funded R3 grantees.<sup>6</sup>

Geography requirements are a key element of the R3 program, as organizations applying for funding were prioritized if they were located in an R3 area or if a majority of their employees live in an R3 area. The R3 Board voted to divide Illinois into 12 regions, with total funding allocation percentages in each region as follows: Central (5.1%), Collar (9.7%), Cook-Chicago

Northern (5.7%), Cook-Chicago Southern (28.3%), Cook-Chicago Western (13.1%), Cook-Suburban (15.3%), Northeast Central (6.1%), Northern (5.1%), Northwest (1.7%), Northwest Central (2.2%), South Central (5.9%), and Southern (1.9%). Available funding amounts were based on applicant location.<sup>7</sup> Applicants could submit one application for each region where proposed services would be provided. During its first year, the R3 program awarded \$31.5 million to communities in need.<sup>8</sup>

Another key element to the R3 program is ongoing evaluation of R3-funded grant programs. ICJIA's Center for Violence Prevention and Intervention Research, in collaboration with the University of Illinois at Chicago Great Cities Institute (GCI), Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIUC), and the University of Illinois Springfield (UIS), conducted site-specific process evaluations to learn about the implementation of select R3 programs. This article summarizes process evaluation findings. For more details on specific sites, please see the full report.<sup>9</sup>

## Methodology

Process evaluations examine program implementation and operations. In this evaluation, researchers sought to gain a better understanding of select Restore, Reinvest, and Renew (R3) grantees during the first year of implementation. Understanding the implementation of these programs is of vital interest to the communities they operate in, staff and leaders who run them, and people who support them through legislation and funding. Additionally, it is a chance to understand what parts of the program are working well and what aspects present room for growth.

A subsection of funded sites was considered for full evaluation. Sixteen service delivery grantees and six planning grantees located across Illinois were selected as evaluation sites. To ensure variation in sites selected, researchers considered several key criteria:

- **Location:** Where were services located? Funded programs were grouped by their service location to ensure that each research team was evaluating sites within their local area.
- **Services provided:** What kind of services were provided? The evaluation sample was selected to capture all five R3 service priorities.
- **Funding amount:** How much money did the site receive? Sites in each region were sorted by the amount of funding received and researchers aimed to obtain a range of funding amounts within their proposed sample.
- **Workload:** How much evaluation time and effort would each site require? Researchers considered whether the program was a collaborative (a group of two or more organizations that received funding under one application for a single cooperative program) and whether the program had been submitting periodic performance reports (PPR) to ICJIA (a requirement to receive R3 funds, submitted quarterly) in determining workload. Specifically, researchers sought to select a mixture of both collaboratives and single organizations to balance the amount of work to be done with subrecipient sites. Additionally, researchers recognized that potential sites that had submitted PPRs to date were less likely to require significant technical assistance upfront and were more likely to be prepared for evaluation.

- **Volunteers:** Did the grantee volunteer to be evaluated? Programs that indicated interest were reviewed, and those that were deemed possible sites based on program documents were included in the proposed sample.<sup>10</sup>

Table 1 lays out characteristics of the service delivery and assessment and planning programs chosen for the current evaluation.

**Table 1**

*Evaluation Sample: Grantee Characteristics*

Region	Grant Type	Evaluation Team Responsible	Grantee Count	Year 1 Funding Range	Collaboratives (#)
Cook	Assessment and Planning	GCI	1	\$177,968	1
Northern	Assessment and Planning	GCI	1	\$151,697	1
Central	Assessment and Planning	UIS	2	\$80,000 - \$80,899	2
Southern	Assessment and Planning	SIUC	2 <sup>a</sup>	\$25,548 - \$86,442	1
Cook	Service Delivery	ICJIA	4	\$250,000 - \$2,500,000	2
Northern	Service Delivery	GCI	4	\$91,069 – \$732,032	3
Central	Service Delivery	UIS	4 <sup>b</sup>	\$57,486 - \$858,669	3
Southern	Service Delivery	SIUC	4	\$228,702 - \$830,000	2

*Note.* Information in the table based on analysis of R3 grant application information.

<sup>a</sup>Two assessment and planning grantees were selected in the Southern region; however, one site dropped out of the evaluation process.

<sup>b</sup>Four service delivery grantees were selected in the Central region; however, one grantee was funded in two separate R3 areas within this region and both sites were included in the evaluation.

### ***Community-Based Research Approach***

Employing a community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach was a priority for the evaluation team. Traditional research and evaluation involves an outside research entity imposing their research plan onto a program and its community, collecting and analyzing data without community input and publishing the results in a space that the community may not have access to. CBPR, however, is a research framework that encourages collaboration between program stakeholders, communities, and researchers.<sup>11</sup> CBPR emphasizes power sharing and equal partnership, recognizing that everyone has a diverse perspective to bring to the table and that research is better when including these unique perspectives.<sup>12</sup> These diverse perspectives can be particularly valuable in creating more comprehensive approaches to addressing complex social challenges, like those targeted by the R3 program.<sup>13</sup>

To help facilitate CBPR in the current evaluation, ICJIA partnered with university teams throughout the state, which allowed the evaluation teams to work in closer proximity to the programs being evaluated (as seen in Table 1). Further, as ICJIA had not previously implemented CBPR practices into its research and evaluation work, the agency commissioned a guidebook for community-based evaluation from the University of Illinois Chicago Great Cities Institute (GCI). All evaluation teams were asked to utilize this guidebook in designing and carrying out their evaluations.

The current evaluation work incorporated CBPR principles where possible and focused heavily on relationship building. Evaluation teams worked closely with program staff to learn about the programs' activities, needs, and challenges and assess evaluability. This allowed the program staff to define their community and identify existing strengths and resources. While ICJIA grantees are contractually obligated to participate in evaluation activities, the evaluation teams strove to approach the process evaluation design and execution with an emphasis on a mutually beneficial and collaborative process. Researchers worked in partnership with program staff to determine the goals, research questions, and methods of the process evaluation. Further, to gain insight into the program, and provide a deliverable that the program could use internally, researchers worked with each evaluation site to develop and refine logic models. Logic models map out the relationship between program activities and intended impact by visually depicting the relationships between program resources, activities, outputs, assumptions, and outcomes.<sup>14</sup> Logic models are useful tools for both program planning, implementation, and evaluation. They also encourage iterative processes, as they should be updated as programs make adaptations.

CBPR methods are labor-intensive and require considerable buy in, effort, resources, and time.<sup>15</sup> However, ICJIA viewed the community-based approach as a way to build the capacity of the programs by providing guidance and consultation on modifications that could resolve gaps in the program model and/or program administration.

### ***Research Questions***

To allow for continuity across the multi-site R3 evaluation, each evaluation team adopted the same set of research questions. The research questions were developed by the ICJIA evaluation team and encompassed general topics related to program implementation. In addition, staff from individual R3-funded sites were provided the opportunity to add any additional research questions specific to their program. The initial research questions (i.e., not program specific) are listed below.

1. What, generally, was involved in the implementation of the service delivery program? For example, how was the program structured, what activities did it engage in to address the five R3 program priority areas, and what challenges were encountered during implementation?
2. How were the program's clients recruited, engaged, and retained? Also, how were participants matched with appropriate services? What was missing in recruitment, engagement, or retention of clients?

3. How many people received services and/or completed the program? In addition, what might explain the reason for client attrition?
4. What capacity does the program have for a rigorous outcome evaluation? For example, what kind of data do they collect on clients, how accessible is it, and what is the quality of that data?
5. What community engagement strategies were utilized by the program during implementation and were they effective? In addition, what are the characteristics of the target community?
6. How can researchers best engage with staff and clients of funded programs? What was involved in designing and developing evaluation questions and activities with service delivery programs?
7. How can a future outcome evaluation incorporate the needs and values of program staff, clients, and potential clients and best encompass a community-based research approach?

### ***Timeline***

The original grant period for the first round of Restore, Reinvest, and Renew funding began on February 1, 2021; however, some programs initiated services before contracts were signed. The original contract period ended in January 2022, but programs were given the opportunity to apply for a second year of extended funding through January 2023. Program funding totals appearing in this article reflect the total amount granted during the two-year period. The specific time periods covered across sites varied, as sites received signed contracts and started implementing assessment and planning programming or delivering services at varying times.

### **Regional Process Evaluations**

#### ***Cook County***

ICJIA's Center for Violence Prevention and Intervention Research evaluated four Cook County R3 service delivery programs (Table 2). Researchers convened multiple virtual meetings with staff at each site to develop research questions, create logic models, understand available data sources, and gain staff perspectives through unstructured interviews. Data came from various sources, including administrative data provided on grant operations, PPR data provided by grantees to grant administrators, information and materials about the program that were created by grantee staff, and contextual demographic data from the American Community Survey.

**Table 2**

*Cook County Evaluation Sites*

<b>Grantee Name</b>	<b>Program Type</b>	<b>Priority Area(s)</b>	<b>Year 1 Funding Amount</b>
Alternatives, Inc.	Service Delivery	Youth Development, Violence Prevention	\$513,997
Cornerstone Community Development Corporation	Service Delivery	Economic Development, Reentry Services, Violence Prevention	\$250,000
Emerald South Economic Development Corporation	Service Delivery	Economic Development	\$2,500,000

Metropolitan Family Services	Service Delivery	Civil Legal Aid, Economic Development, Reentry Services, Violence Prevention, Youth Development	\$1,169,729
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**Service Delivery.** Alternatives, Inc. (Alternatives), received an R3 grant to expand its restorative justice and behavioral health programming for youth ages 10 to 24 and their families in Chicago. Alternatives provides services located in Chicago Public Schools as well as in the community at Alternatives' Southside Youth Center. The program aims to build school capacity for restorative justice and support additional restorative justice and trauma-informed services. During the grant period, 173 youth were engaged in therapy through the program (a 98% successful referral rate) and 94 youth participated in after-school programming. In addition to providing direct services to youth and their families, program staff conducted professional development training and facilitated technical assistance individually tailored to a school's needs to improve culture and climate in partner schools. During the grant period studied, the program provided training for 165 school staff members with over 90% of participants reporting satisfaction with the training.

Cornerstone Community Development Corporation (Cornerstone) received an R3 grant to provide workforce development services to clients in South Suburban Cook County with goals of reducing recidivism and increasing client employment. Cornerstone provided services with the aim of stabilizing, sustaining, and empowering participants. Clients worked with a case manager to complete a comprehensive needs assessment and create an individualized service plan. Prior to beginning workforce training, clients completed an employment readiness course focusing on soft skills and a workplace safety course. Cornerstone offered training and certification in several employment sectors, including construction, security, hospitality, and food service. These courses ranged from four to six weeks. The program also provided clients with wrap-around services, such as homelessness prevention, peer mentoring, and recovery support services. During the first year of R3 funding, the program reported serving 82 clients; 34 clients obtained new employment.

Emerald South Economic Development Collaboration received an R3 grant to support its Terra Firma program which develops vacant lots throughout Chicago's mid-South side to facilitate economic growth and improve communities. Participants engaged in "greening" the vacant lots, which can include clean up, planting, fencing, and maintenance to benefit area residents and local businesses and advance community health and safety. Terra Firma's partners provided workforce training, support, entrepreneurship education, and business coaching all specifically aligned with the environmental jobs sector. The program has transformed 96 vacant lots (27 acres) through paid employment opportunities for 20 adults and 44 youth and over 300 community members have participated in program events. In addition to engaging service delivery partners and community stakeholders, Terra Firma has convened researchers from a variety of institutions to examine program impact in different domains and leverage data to drive decision-making.

Metropolitan Family Services (MFS) received an R3 grant to increase service provision to clients in southwest suburban Cook County. MFS services link criminal justice system-involved clients in need of stable housing to resources, train clients through workforce development services, and build community capacity. During the grant period, 71 clients participated in workforce development programming and 44 were placed in job training. Clients had access to comprehensive services, including civil legal assistance, behavioral health, and other individualized referrals. The program partnered with Ceasefire Roseland to deliver violence prevention and workforce development services; MFS subsidizes training for individuals to become employed as community violence interrupters. Program staff were dedicated to engaging the community, participating in 27 community events during the grant period, reaching approximately 3,900 community members. MFS is the convening entity of a Neighborhood Network collaborative that has held 30 meetings between local stakeholders to address service gaps and work toward collective goals.

### ***Northern Illinois***

The Great Cities Institute (GCI) at the University of Illinois Chicago conducted six R3 process evaluations in northern Illinois (Table 3). GCI conducted two rounds of interviews with program staff, organization board members, and community members. Researchers also analyzed administrative data and observed program activities, such as planning meetings and service provision. GCI staff engaged participants virtually or in-person at five of the six evaluation sites. Observation was not conducted at the sixth school-based site, due to Institutional Review Board protections for children as a vulnerable population in research.

**Table 3**

#### ***Northern Illinois Evaluation Sites***

<b>Grantee Name</b>	<b>Program Type</b>	<b>Priority Area(s)</b>	<b>Year 1 Funding Amount</b>
Garfield Park Community Council	Assessment and Planning	Economic Development, Reentry Services, Violence Prevention, Youth Development	\$177,968
Will County	Assessment and Planning	Civil Legal Aid, Economic Development, Reentry Services, Violence Prevention, Youth Development	\$151,697
Kankakee School District 111	Service Delivery	Civil Legal Aid, Economic Development, Reentry Services, Violence Prevention, Youth Development	\$732,032
Northern Illinois Recovery Community Organization	Service Delivery	Reentry Services	\$225,000
Perfectly Flawed Foundation	Service Delivery	Reentry Services, Violence Prevention	\$91,069
Prairie State Legal Services	Service Delivery	Civil Legal Aid, Reentry Services	\$154,508



**Assessment and Planning.** Garfield Park Community Council received an R3 grant for a planning initiative to improve a section of the local neighborhood, employing information gathered through a resident survey and an economic development assessment performed by a consulting firm. The survey was collaboratively designed by community organizations and “community liaisons” who later conducted the survey with residents. Over 500 face-to-face surveys were completed as part of the planning initiative. For the economic development assessment process, the consultants gathered ideas and interests from stakeholders in the area and incorporated a variety of community-level data (e.g. demographics, land use, crime). After drafting the report, the consultant discussed findings with residents and incorporated their feedback into the final community-level planning document. Findings from these two projects aimed to provide new and actionable information to community leaders and residents to develop further proposals and plans for improving the area.

Will County received an R3 grant to develop a plan for addressing community concerns, identifying existing community resources, measuring service gaps, and evaluating strategies to target R3 priority areas. The planning initiative aimed to produce a comprehensive plan document and build collaborative relationships between about 25 Joliet-area organizations and institutions involved in the project. A consultant conducted a community needs assessment, which included seven neighborhood meetings with over 80 attendees and five community forums with almost 200 attendees and then presented the findings at an additional community forum. Results from the needs assessment informed a strategic plan. The engagement of community expertise throughout the planning process provided an informative perspective on many Will County issues and potential programmatic solutions. The products of the planning initiative can inform program policy and support future funding requests.

**Service Delivery.** Kankakee School District 111 received an R3 grant to support its Youth Empowerment Program (YEP), providing sixth grade through 12<sup>th</sup> grade students with expanded access to existing services, as well as diversion and prevention programming. YEP participants choose programs aligned with their needs and interests, such as mentoring, community service, college visits, job training, and youth employment. The program model is aligned with the district’s multi-tiered system of support, where participants receive a level of support that is responsive to their needs. In early 2022, over 650 individuals had participated in the YEP program. The program’s capacity has increased by forming linkages between staff leaders of the many partner programs and offering a variety of options to meet client needs.

Northern Illinois Recovery Community Organization (NIRCO) received an R3 grant to provide recovery services to criminal justice system-involved individuals, particularly those with substance use and/or mental health disorders, in the northeast Lake County area. The program aims to build recovery capital for participants through services and referrals addressing needs such as clinical treatment, employment, housing, and transportation. NIRCO emphasizes peer-driven recovery by developing community among its clients and providing group sessions for mutual support and engagement. By June 2022, NIRCO’s R3 program had completed 118 client intakes. The most common areas of service provision for these individuals were employment, substance use treatment, and housing. Participant feedback indicated that clients were largely

satisfied with the program, were abstaining from substance use, and had minimal contact with law enforcement.

Perfectly Flawed Foundation (PFF) received an R3 grant to provide a peer-supported, harm reduction-informed recovery program to individuals in Bureau, LaSalle, and Putnam counties. The program connects with clients through on-site drop-in availability, staff outreach activities, and a mobile unit that distributes naloxone and other harm reduction supplies. Staff provide participants with case planning, referrals for clinical services, and direct supportive services (e.g. transportation) in furtherance of clients' self-directed recovery plans. PFF also works to shift the perception of substance use disorders from a law enforcement issue to a public health matter through education and community-building efforts. Data indicated that, in a typical month, the program conducted around 65 peer support meetings and distributed almost 175 naloxone doses. The program fulfills a need in the largely rural area for a low-barrier, voluntary program that offers services to individuals at any stage in their recovery journey.

Prairie State Legal Services (PSLS) received a grant to provide civil legal assistance, legal education, and complementary restorative justice activities in the Rockford area. Staff attorneys offered legal advice, representation, and/or pro se assistance based on the complexity of the client issue. PSLS has hired Rockford residents as "community navigators" to provide training to other community members on basic legal rights and responsibilities. PSLS facilitates peace circles to build a restorative justice culture in a Rockford charter school. By March 2022, over 200 clients had received legal services and 140 attended various legal education training events. The program aims to empower community members with the resources to resolve civil legal issues on their own.

### ***Central Illinois***

Researchers at the University of Illinois Springfield (UIS) conducted process evaluations of six R3 grantees in Central Illinois (Table 4). The research team interviewed program leaders, made site visits to each grantee, and collaboratively developed logic models for the four service delivery programs evaluated. The UIS evaluators requested data from all sites; however, the availability and utility of existing data varied widely between grantees. The process evaluation in this region emphasized capacity building for grantees to improve the assessment of target populations' needs and examine whether program activities were leading to the expected outcomes.

**Table 4**

#### ***Central Illinois Evaluation Sites***

<b>Grantee Name</b>	<b>Program Type</b>	<b>Priority Area(s)</b>	<b>Year 1 Funding Amount</b>
The City of Springfield	Assessment and Planning	Economic Development	\$80,000
The East Springfield Community Center Commission	Assessment and Planning	Economic Development	\$80,899

The East Springfield Community Center Commission	Service Delivery	Reentry Services	\$728,093
Land of Lincoln Legal Aid	Service Delivery (Northeast Central and Central Regions)	Civil Legal Aid	\$57,486; \$114,918
Peoria Public Schools	Service Delivery	Civil Legal Aid, Economic Development, Reentry Services, Violence Prevention, Youth Development	\$858,669
Springfield Urban League	Service Delivery	Economic Development, Youth Development	\$419,702

**Assessment and Planning.** The City of Springfield received an R3 grant for a planning and assessment project that addresses economic disinvestment using a community-based participatory approach. The City hired a planning consultant to engage in primary data collection with residents and other community stakeholders through surveys, interviews, focus groups, and observation. The consultant then analyzed results in conjunction with relevant supplementary administrative data, which yielded 15 priority areas for community revitalization (e.g. transportation, legal assistance). This information informed a strategic plan with actionable goals and priority objectives. The goal of the final planning document was to present community-supported solutions designed to attract investment. The strategic plan will be made public and progress will be monitored using an online dashboard.

The East Springfield Community Center Commission (ESC3) received an R3 grant to conduct a planning initiative to assess Springfield area reentry needs. ESC3 coordinated meetings with nine different organizations to gather information on the reentry process and potential needs of returning citizens, including employment, housing, education, and treatment. The process employed the Community Tool Box (a free online resource for community development) to identify relevant resources and create a logic model. ESC3's initiative aimed to connect individuals leaving prison and jail and entering the Springfield community with services to reduce recidivism and improve public safety.

**Service Delivery.** The East Springfield Community Center Commission (ESC3) also received an R3 grant to provide reentry services to individuals in the Springfield area through Project R.A.C.E. (Returning American Citizens Empowered). The project emphasizes employment-related services for high-need clients returning from incarceration with the goals of reducing recidivism and improving public safety. Project R.A.C.E. experienced initial challenges related to staffing and service delivery partnerships, which impacted program capacity. The program's prospective goals included addressing the variety of needs presented by returning citizens and promoting economic development in the project's service area.

Land of Lincoln Legal Aid (LOLLA) received an R3 grant in the northeast central funding region to expand civil legal service provision in 14 counties, primarily in Champaign and Vermilion. Services aimed to reduce or eliminate legal barriers to health, safety, and economic well-being. Over 960 civil cases were closed on behalf of residents in Champaign and Vermilion

counties. LOLLA collaborates with partners across the region to conduct outreach, community education, and systemic advocacy. Additionally, LOLLA received an R3 grant in the Central funding region to provide civil legal services to individuals in Macon and Sangamon counties. Program staff offered similar services in this region, including direct legal assistance and additional referrals in partnership with community organizations.

The City of Peoria Board of Education received an R3 grant to expand wraparound services provided to students through their Hope, Health, and Healing program. The program provides legal and reentry resources through an attorney and four justice advocates who guide and support students involved with the criminal justice system. Students receive counseling and other services to address trauma as part of a violence prevention initiative. Career coaches provide employment readiness skills and mentoring to students. Youth development is offered through a middle to high school transition program, access to school counselors, and throughout other youth-focused services. Through individualized service plans, the program aims to increase participants' likelihood of success in education, employment, avoiding recidivism, and improved physical, social, and emotional health.

Springfield Urban League received an R3 grant to support its Community Empowerment Program, which offers economic development services. Youth and young adult participants receive assistance obtaining a high school diploma, job-readiness training, work-based learning, and career planning. Industry partners collaborate with the program to offer occupational and job training, as well as customized training programming to address specific local workforce needs. The program also operates a Small Business Empowerment Center that supports entrepreneurs as they launch and grow businesses in R3 areas. The Community Empowerment Program aims to improve youth academic performance, improve employment opportunities for youth at risk of dropping out of school, and raise employment and income levels in a disadvantaged community.

### ***Southern Illinois***

Researchers at Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIUC) conducted five process evaluations of R3 grantees in southern Illinois (Table 5). Evaluators conducted semi-structured interviews with program staff members during site visits to the four service delivery grantees; 16 interviews were completed, with at least three interviews at each site. Additionally, researchers conducted two virtual focus groups with two service delivery grantees and their partner organizations. Researchers analyzed the qualitative data gathered from the interviews and focus groups, as well as supplementary administrative data, such as summary reports, aggregate participant data, and assessment materials. The researchers created and reviewed logic models with all service delivery sites. Researchers also conducted one process evaluation of an assessment and planning program; the SIUC team virtually met with program staff and reviewed program materials to complete the evaluation.

**Table 5**

#### ***Southern Illinois Evaluation Sites***

<b>Grantee Name</b>	<b>Program Type</b>	<b>Priority Area(s)</b>	<b>Year 1 Funding Amount</b>
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Centralia Juvenile Justice Council	Assessment and Planning	Economic Development, Violence Prevention, Youth Development	\$86,442
Academic Development Institute	Service Delivery	Economic Development, Violence Prevention, Youth Development	\$830,000
Arrowleaf	Service Delivery	Violence Prevention, Youth Development	\$253,906
Lutheran Social Services of Illinois	Service Delivery	Reentry Services	\$228,702
United Way of Greater St. Louis	Service Delivery	Economic Development, Violence Prevention, Youth Development	\$829,240

**Assessment and Planning.** The Centralia Juvenile Justice Council received an R3 grant to conduct a collaborative assessment of Centralia’s juvenile justice system and community needs. Partner agencies held town hall meetings to gather community feedback and then undertook a process to map existing resources and identify gaps that could be addressed by future programming efforts. Over three months in Summer 2021, members of the collaborative distributed a survey to residents to gain input on community strengths and needs, specifically in the areas of youth development, economic development, and violence prevention. Based on the findings, the group created a strategic plan to outline a community-specific program that aims to enhance the community’s quality of life and create positive, lasting relationships.

**Service Delivery.** Academic Development Institute (ADI) received R3 grant funding for collaborative work under its Youth Engagement Program (YEP) in the East St. Louis metropolitan area. The program is modeled on a “system of care” approach that delivers appropriate developmental services across each stage of a client’s life. ADI and its partners provide services to young people and their families related to early childhood development, educational achievement, and job training. They also provide as trauma-informed professional development for school staff. Through YEP, youth have access to educational camps, positive community events, and leadership training to offer alternatives to violence and anti-social behaviors. Collaboration between partners was designed to increase public awareness of available services and facilitate more effective connections to meet the variety of community needs. The program surpassed its enrollment target, serving more than 200 youth.

Arrowleaf (formerly known as Family Counseling Center) received an R3 grant to provide youth development and violence prevention services in Alexander and Pulaski counties. Youth clients have opportunities to participate in social and behavioral development groups, serve on a youth advisory council, undertake service-learning projects, and apply for post-secondary financial scholarships. Support for families is available through a 10-week parenting skills training curriculum, family engagement events, and referrals to additional services (e.g. a food pantry, mental health resources). Arrowleaf also participates in community-level violence prevention activities, such as public awareness campaigns and prosocial events. The program has a long-term goal of building consistent engagement with the community and sustain partnerships with other agencies to deliver integrated services.

Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI) received an R3 grant to expand reentry services and employment opportunities for returning citizens and reduce recidivism across multiple southern Illinois counties. Case managers work with clients to complete intake assessments, develop individualized service plans, and make referrals. The program offers virtual and in-person job skills training, certifications, and employment placements. R3 funds also supported efforts to increase community awareness and bolster the program's employer network. LSSI has an established presence throughout the region, facilitating well-developed partnerships with state agencies, community organizations, and local businesses. After facing initial delays in implementation, the program aims to continue increasing the number of clients assessed and enrolled.

United Way of Greater St. Louis received an R3 grant to provide out-of-school time programming for youth in District 189, located in the East St. Louis metropolitan area. United Way partners with six main organizations to offer a variety of academic programs and extracurricular activities that aim to improve youth educational, social, and emotional development. R3 funding also supports summer camp programming, career readiness courses, and literacy improvement. The program outpaced its initial goal of 1,000 by serving more than 1,400 youth. External staff development opportunities increased during the grant program period with a marked emphasis on restorative practices training. Collaboration is facilitated through monthly meetings with coalition members to discuss ongoing program implementation, challenges, and changes. An additional monthly meeting is open to the broader community to engage residents and share common goals.

## **Conclusion**

The Restore, Reinvest, and Renew (R3) program reinvests a portion of cannabis tax revenue into communities via the distribution of grant funds to five program areas (economic development, violence prevention services, reentry services, youth development, and civil legal aid). It focuses on issues within communities experiencing high rates of gun injury, unemployment, child poverty, and incarceration. The R3 program seeks to:

- Directly address the impact of economic disinvestment, violence, and the historical overuse of criminal justice responses to community and individual needs by providing resources to support local design and control of community-based responses to these impacts.
- Substantially reduce the total amount of gun violence and concentrated poverty in the state.
- Protect communities from gun violence through targeted investments and intervention programs.
- Promote employment infrastructure.

The Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority's (ICJIA) Research and Analysis unit, in collaboration with Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIUC), the University of Illinois at Chicago Great Cities Institute (GCI), and the University of Illinois Springfield (UIS), conducted site specific process evaluations to learn about the implementations and operations of select R3 grantees. Researchers employed a community-based approach by working in partnership with program staff to determine the goals, research questions, and methods of the process evaluation.

## Findings

The programs evaluated here intentionally represent a diverse group of grantees, with respect to location, service type, funding amount, and collaborative processes, among other varying characteristics. Site-level and regional conclusions are available in the full report; however, some themes emerged across all the evaluation sites (Table 6).

**Table 6**

*Key Findings from Process Evaluations*

<b>Program Type</b>	<b>Finding</b>
Assessment and Planning, Service Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Programs placed strong emphasis on community needs</li><li>• Grantees experienced delays in programming and client recruitment, resulting from funding administration and impacts of COVID-19</li><li>• Amount and types of data available varied widely between grantees</li></ul>
Assessment and Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Initiatives successfully brought together stakeholders and community perspectives</li><li>• Grantees differed in their approach (e.g., planning for a specific program vs. assessing community needs)</li><li>• Many planning initiatives did not indicate clear plans for how project results will be used</li></ul>
Service Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Some grantees used R3 funds to expand existing services while others launched brand new programming</li><li>• Programs implemented evidence-based models as well as evidence-informed models in conjunction with other programming</li><li>• Most programs met goals for number of clients served</li><li>• In cases where goals were not met, programs identified barriers and planned or had already implemented adaptations</li></ul>

## Community Focus

Programs placed a strong emphasis on addressing specific needs of the communities they serve, with many utilizing a formal assessment process to understand needs and gaps in services. Many grantees adapted programming to provide responsive service delivery and incorporate client or community feedback into their program processes. Moving forward, a number of grantees have

the opportunity to continue to ensure their services meet community needs by improving their knowledge of clients' experiences with their services through instruments assessing client satisfaction and other relevant outcomes. Evaluators provided technical assistance in this area during the process evaluation, but additional support could serve to increase grantee capacity for ongoing self-evaluation.

### ***Delays***

Grantees experienced challenges related to funding administration and program implementation.<sup>16</sup> The impacts of these challenges varied. Some grantees were unable to provide services until funding was disbursed, while others lost supportive partners due to changes in timelines. Further, programs had to deal with the impacts of COVID-19 and the policies implemented to limit the spread. This impacted both implementation and client engagement. However, nearly all programs experienced increases in capacity as the grant program period progressed.

### ***Data Availability***

The amount and types of available data varied widely between funded programs. Some sites collect systematic information that is readily accessible, while others are still working to develop appropriate measures and methods for tracking program activities and outcomes. This evaluation supplemented data provided by grantees with demographic data to provide contextual descriptions of the communities in which the programs operate. Future research should consider data variations and limitations when designing an outcome evaluation and funders should be aware of the need for technical assistance in developing effective data collection systems.

### ***Assessment and Planning Programs***

The assessment and planning initiatives examined here succeeded in bringing together relevant stakeholders and incorporating perspectives of various groups, often including community residents. For many of these grantees, the question remains as to what will result from those planning projects. Some grantees chose to plan a specific community program for future development, while others used the project period to focus on assessing community needs. In the future, researchers could examine the extent to which assessment and planning grantees proceed to successfully secure funding by employing the products of the planning process.

### ***Service Delivery Programs***

Despite initial delays, service delivery programs were, on the whole, successfully implemented and providing services to clients as designed. The majority of programs examined in this process evaluation were meeting or exceeding their goals for number of clients served. When sites were not meeting their goals, barriers were identified, and strategic adaptations were planned or implemented to address them.

Grantees examined for the evaluation ranged from small grassroots providers to large statewide organizations. However, the maturation stage of funded programming varied independently of the organizations' sizes and budgets. Some small organizations used R3 funds to expand services they had been providing for decades in their communities, while some large organizations



launched brand new program types. These factors all combined to create unique contexts for program implementation and had implications for how the grantees delivered their services.

In some cases, programs employed evidence-based program models, such as cognitive behavioral therapy. Other sites utilized service types that have not been rigorously evaluated but were designed to address needs specific to their communities. Many programs provided a combination of some evidence-informed practices, such as case management or mentoring, in conjunction with other programming aspects, which may not have been empirically proven as effective, to deliver services that aim to meet the wide-ranging needs of their client populations.

### **Limitations**

Evaluation teams in the various regions faced limitations while carrying out the process evaluations. First, the current evaluation was ICJIA's inaugural attempt at implementing a CBPR approach for a statewide grant program. As indicated previously, CBPR methods require considerable buy in and time from all partners. For smaller grassroots organizations (like those R3 funds), this kind of commitment can be particularly challenging. Further, data systems and data availability varied widely across sites, due in part to capacity differences. In the current work, evaluators recognized that many of the programs did not have the capacity for, or interest in, certain evaluation methodologies or analyses. As such, evaluators prioritized the capacity and research interests of the programs themselves when developing process evaluation methodologies. Second, programs experienced delays in implementation and early outreach/engagement due to both administrative delays and the impacts of COVID-19. This had direct implications on planning processes and service delivery as well as the evaluation work.

### **Future Research**

The second year of the R3 grant funding period ended in January 2023. Service delivery programs in good standing were invited to apply for a third year of funding to extend through January 2024. Following the completion of this process evaluation, the research teams began conducting site specific outcome evaluations with the service delivery sites included in this report to understand the impacts of their described services. The efforts undertaken in this process evaluation have facilitated a significant understanding of program implementations and operations, which benefitted the outcome phase of the evaluation. Researchers continued to engage the funded service delivery sites and incorporated specific questions of interest to program stakeholders where possible in furtherance of a community-based approach.

For the full report, please refer to: Escamilla, J., Gatens, A., Huckle K., Weisner, L., Lewis, J. H., Imeokparia, T. O., Bland, T., Blankenberger, R., Dooley, T., Kriz, K., Kroner, D., Pleggenkuhle, B., Hickert, A., Lockett, L., Meyer, M., Phillips, C., Saldana, B., Wade, K., & West, N. (2025). *Process evaluation of select Restore, Reinvest, and Renew (R3) funded grantees*. Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority.

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<sup>1</sup> 410 ILCS 705/1-1 *et al.*

<sup>2</sup> 410 ILCS 705/10-40.

<sup>3</sup> 410 ILCS 705/10-40(g)(2).

<sup>4</sup> 410 ILCS 705/10-40(a)(1-4).

<sup>5</sup> See 44 Ill. Admin Code 7000.30.

<sup>6</sup> For more details on the R3 grant making, grant review, and funding processes during the program's inaugural year of performance, please see Weisner, L. & Gatens, A. (2023). *Restore, Reinvest, and Renew Program grantmaking and implementation: An examination of a state cannabis tax-funded grant program's inaugural performance period*. Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority.

<sup>7</sup> Available funding percentages were designated for each region by dividing the summed population of eligible R3 areas within a region by the total summed population across all eligible R3 areas.

<sup>8</sup> Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority. (2021, January 21). *Delivering on key equity goal, Pritzker administration awards \$31.5 million in first ever Restore, Reinvest, and Renew program grants to organizations across the state* [Press release]. <https://r3.illinois.gov/news/2021-01-21-release>.

<sup>9</sup> For the full process evaluation report, please refer to: Escamilla, J., Gatens, A., Hucke K., Weisner, L., Lewis, J. H., Imeokparia, T. O., Bland, T., Blankenberger, R., Dooley, T., Kriz, K., Kroner, D., Pleggenkuhle, B., Hickert, A., Lockett, L., Meyer, M., Phillips, C., Saldana, B., Wade, K., & West, N. (2024). *Process evaluation of select Restore, Reinvest, and Renew (R3) funded grantees*. Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority.

<sup>10</sup> A total of four sites indicated interest in participation. Two were included in the proposed sample.

<sup>11</sup> Collins, S. E., Clifasefi, S. L., Stanton, J., Straits, K. J. E., Rodriguez Espinosa, P., Andrasik, M. P., Miller, K. A., Orfaly, V. E., The LEAP Advisory Board., Gil-Kashiwabara, E., Nicasio, A. V., Hawes, S. M., Nelson, L. A., Duran, B. M., Wallerstein, N. (2018). Community-based participatory research (CBPR): Towards equitable involvement of community in psychology research. *American Psychologist*, 73(7), <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000167>.

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- <sup>13</sup> Collins, S. E., Clifasefi, S. L., Stanton, J., Straits, K. J. E., Rodriguez Espinosa, P., Andrasik, M. P., Miller, K. A., Orfaly, V. E., The LEAP Advisory Board., Gil-Kashiwabara, E., Nicasio, A. V., Hawes, S. M., Nelson, L. A., Duran, B. M., Wallerstein, N. (2018). Community-based participatory research (CBPR): Towards equitable involvement of community in psychology research. *American Psychologist*, 73(7), <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000167>.
- <sup>14</sup> Center for Violence Prevention and Intervention Research. (2019). *Logic models: Practical planning to reach program goals*. Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority. <https://icjia.illinois.gov/researchhub/articles/logic-models-practical-planning-to-reach-program-goals>.
- <sup>15</sup> Resnik, D.B., & Kennedy, C. E. (2010). Balancing scientific and community interests in Community-Based Participatory Research. *Accountability in Research*, 17(4), 198-210. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08989621.2010.493095>.
- <sup>16</sup> For a detailed review of the R3 grant program implementation, see Weisner, L., & Gatens, A. (2022). *Implementation of Restore, Reinvest, and Renew: The inaugural year of a cannabis tax funded grant program*. Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority. <https://icjia.illinois.gov/researchhub/articles/restore-reinvest-and-renew-program-grantmaking-and-implementation-an-examination-of-a-state-cannabis-tax-funded-grant-programs-inaugural-performance-period/>.