



Impact Study of the Closure of the Ventura Youth Correctional Facility

Findings and Recommendations

Prepared by Social Finance for the Workforce Development Board of Ventura County

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Executive Summary

The Workforce Development Board of Ventura County (WDBVC) provides Ventura County residents and businesses with the most up-to-date training, resources, and services to fulfill a wide array of workforce development needs. This report focuses on the June 2023 closure of the Ventura Youth Correctional Facility (VYCF), operated by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation’s (CDCR) Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), and the impacts of the closure on the facility’s staff, youths, surrounding businesses, and the broader community. This report also describes the impact of the Rapid Response services that WDBVC deployed to support those impacted by the closure and subsequent layoff event.

In late 2023, WDBVC engaged Social Finance, a national nonprofit, to conduct an impact study of the VYCF closure and develop recommendations for WDBVC’s Rapid Response services. This work is funded by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) 25% Additional Assistance Project. To support this work, Social Finance engaged with WDBVC staff, WDBVC members, business leaders, local and state government agencies, and local service providers.

Below is a summary of recommendations Social Finance developed based on interviews, data, and secondary research:

Services	Partnerships
<p>Adopt a more holistic approach to Rapid Response</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the downstream impacts of a layoff event • Identify potential re-employment pathways for affected staff in advance and integrate employer presentations into Rapid Response events <p>Continue to strengthen employer awareness of WDBVC services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue pursuing a multi-channel approach to dissemination • Assess materials and offerings for cultural competence and accessibility <p>Expand vocational programming for justice-involved youth, including those incarcerated at Ventura County Juvenile Facilities</p>	<p>Continue to strengthen employer engagement by adopting a “business demand-driven” orientation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define a single “port of entry” for businesses • Develop closer partnerships with other business-serving entities to collaborate on employer engagement • Establish a structured, systemic, regular exchange of information between WDB and business-serving partners <p>Facilitate cross-stakeholder forums for learning and collaboration</p>

WDBVC will use findings from this report to strengthen their services and hopes that this report will also inform broader efforts by workforce development stakeholders to provide a robust, holistic response to layoff events and advance the regional workforce development ecosystem.

Background

Ventura County stretches forty-three miles of Southern California coastline, covers 1,843 square miles, and is home to 843,843 people.¹ Ventura County is the 13th most populous county in California and has the 12th highest GDP. The county has a broad economic base that includes the in-demand sectors of healthcare, biotechnology, manufacturing, construction, and agriculture. According to the 2021-2024 WDBVC Regional and Local Plan, however, “the county’s level of economic opportunity is limited for new workers looking to enter the labor force. The economy is growing at a sluggish pace, and new jobs being added are mostly in low-skill, low-wage positions that do not offer adequate compensation to afford the high cost of living in the area.”² This poses a challenge to residents living in Ventura County, who often must commute out of the county to find higher paying jobs, and a challenge to businesses in the county who struggle to retain talent.

In response to Senate Bill 823 and reflecting Governor Gavin Newsom’s commitment to providing more treatment and rehabilitative services for youth closer to home, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation’s (CDCR) Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) closed the Ventura Youth Correctional Facility (VYCF) in Camarillo on June 30th, 2023.³ Over 90 state juvenile justice employees were affected and Camarillo’s surrounding businesses in government, agriculture, manufacturing, trade and logistics, healthcare, and hospitality faced new patterns of engagement.⁴

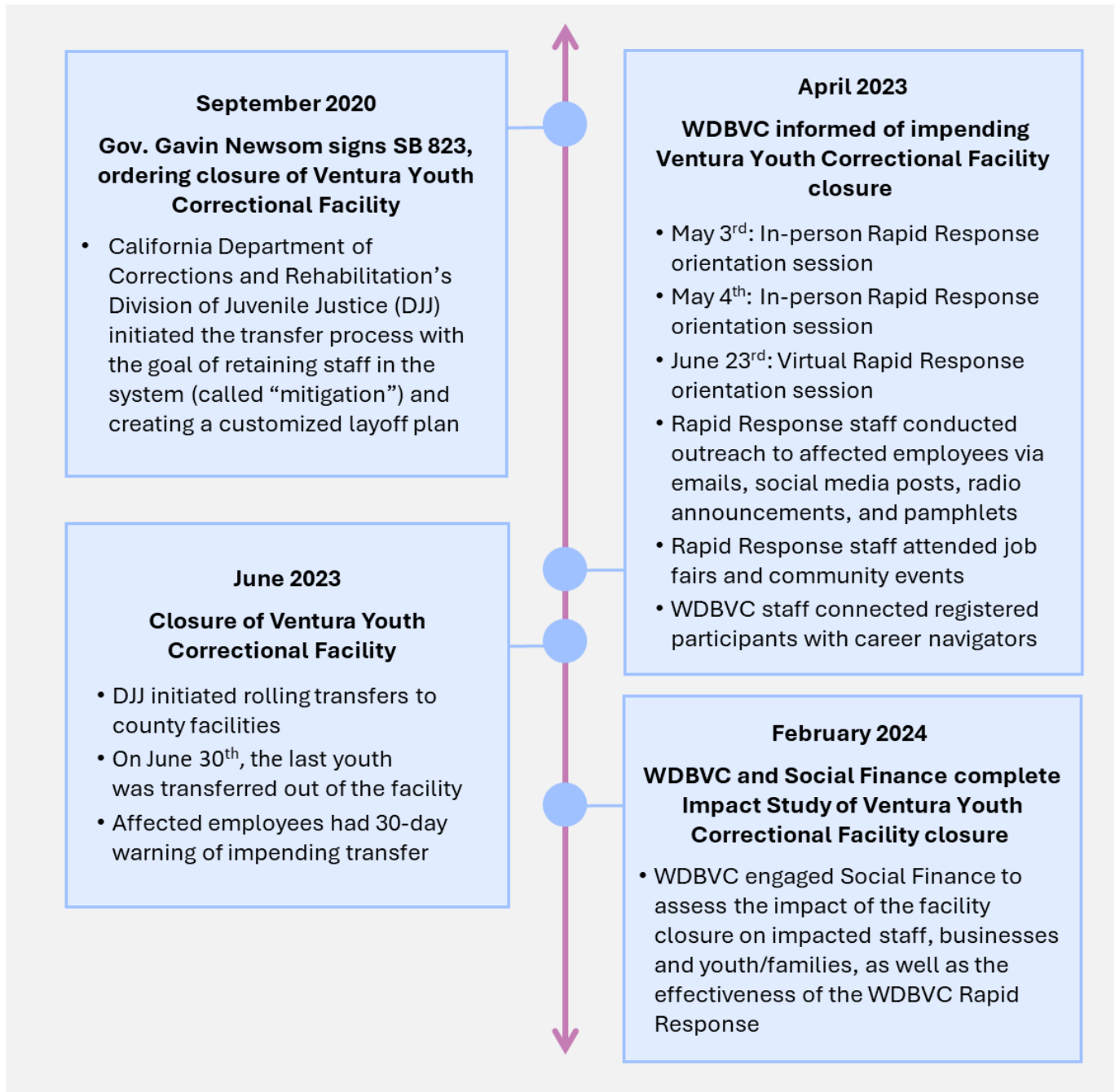
¹ US Census ([Link](#))

² 2021-2024 WDBVC Regional and Local Plan ([Link](#))

³ DJJ Ceases Operations, Transfers Last Youths to Counties ([Link](#))

⁴ Data from Workforce Development Board of Ventura County

Figure 1: Timeline of Events in Response to Closure of Ventura Youth Correctional Facility



Impact Study Approach

Key Research Questions: Social Finance collaborated with the WDBVC to align the following research questions, including:

1. How did the WDBVC respond to the closure of the Ventura Youth Correctional Facility (e.g., in terms of services offered)?
2. How might WDBVC better support the communities affected and prepare for similar events in the future?
3. How did the closure impact stakeholders include employees, youth and families, and surrounding businesses and suppliers?
4. How did WDBVC's services address the needs of communities affected?
5. How can WDBVC measure the impact and return on investment (ROI) of their services?
6. What recommendations and learnings can WDBVC apply to strengthen their services in the future? What learnings can other WDBs, and workforce development stakeholders apply?

Key Activities: To answer these research questions, Social Finance undertook the following key activities:

- Facilitated sessions with WDBVC staff and other stakeholders to identify goals and learning questions for the impact study.
- Analyzed limited local economic and workforce data to establish context for the closure and opportunities to support the economic transition.
- Conducted interviews with stakeholders including WDBVC staff, WDBVC members, training and education program providers, California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) staff, Ventura County Probation Agency, Ventura County Public Defender's Office, and local business leaders⁵.
- Used program data and interview findings to assess the effectiveness of WDBVC program offerings to support transitioning workers and compared the planning and implementation of the closure with the goals of the WDBVC.

Barriers and Limitations: In completing the above activities, Social Finance acknowledges the following limitations:

- **Challenges in contacting key stakeholders:** Social Finance was unable to reach and conduct interviews with several stakeholder groups including youth and employees affected by the closure, unions representing affected employees, and businesses surrounding the closed facility. However, Social Finance was able to interview stakeholders who interact regularly with these stakeholder groups, as outlined in the table below.

⁵ List of the stakeholders Social Finance interviewed for this report included in Appendix A

Key Stakeholders Not Reached	Supplementary Interviews Conducted
Affected Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviewed stakeholders at Specialized Training & Employment Project to Success (STEPS) and Goodwill, organizations that run programs for youth impacted by the justice system
Affected Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviewed stakeholders at the CDCR who supported employees affected by the VYCF closure Interviewed stakeholder associated with Ventura Adult Continuing Education (VACE), which supports dislocated workers with upskilling
Unions representing affected employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviewed stakeholder affiliated with the Economic Development Collaborative, which is connected to unions and businesses
Surrounding businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviewed WDB Members with relationships with local businesses in Ventura County

- **Limited data on the facility closure and surrounding economic impacts:** Social Finance was unable to obtain data on the employment of the individuals who were laid off, and where they were employed following the closure.
- **Lack of baseline data:** As described below in the section on impact assessment, understanding the true impact and efficacy of the WDBVC’s Rapid Response Services would require comparing outcomes from the facility closure to the outcomes of other Rapid Responses. In the absence of a robust point of comparison, Social Finance has developed recommendations on how the WDBVC can develop a set of baseline data and implement an assessment framework to use to evaluate Rapid Responses in the future.

Rapid Response Overview

The Workforce Development Board of Ventura County (WDBVC) offers job seeking, re-employment, and career training services for individuals in need of jobs as well as job fairs, training and hiring subsidies, and employment information for businesses in need of employees in Ventura County. In response to layoff events, WDBVC offers Rapid Response orientation sessions at the site of the layoff event to provide information on unemployment benefits, free trainings and certifications, and career navigation support (e.g., resume support, interview preparation, job board navigation, etc.).⁶

The Rapid Response services that WDBVC provided to employees of the Ventura Youth Correctional Facility (VYCF) were as follows:

- WDBVC worked with DJJ to provide on the ground Rapid Response support inside VYCF.
- WDBVC held three orientation sessions (two in-person, one virtual) at the facility for staff affected by the closure on how to access WDBVC Rapid Response resources, which include

⁶ Workforce Development Board of Ventura County Services ([Link](#))

online and on-the job training, unemployment benefit navigation, job search assistance, veteran employment services, resume building, health benefits navigation, and career coaching.⁷

- WDBVC sent emails to impacted facility employees, and career navigators followed up with staff.
- WDBVC passed out fliers at orientation sessions, or emailed fliers as follow-ups, to provide staff with reference materials.
- At the orientation sessions, employees registered with WDBVC, agreeing to receive information about WDBVC's services, and were assigned to career navigators who followed up with them to assist in job seeking and transition support.

Rapid Response Barriers and Limitations: Based on interviews with stakeholders, Social Finance identified the following structural barriers to the WDBVC effectively delivering Rapid Response services:

- There is a lack of clarity in state guidance on the activities the WDBVC could conduct during a Rapid Response. Additionally, while employers must notify WDBVC of an upcoming closure or layoff event via a Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) notice, they are not mandated to collaborate with the board.
- There are limited training providers in Ventura County that align with the skills needed to support justice-involved youth, which prevented WDBVC from providing as many options as possible to affected employees.
- Since The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) provides annual federal funds to WDBVC in response to dislocated workers getting re-hired within a short time frame, there is less incentive for WDBVC to prioritize longer-term training programs for individuals to attain higher paying jobs and career paths. Therefore, WDBVC may not be as incentivized to explore long-term training programs or to recommend those paths when counseling dislocated workers, rather than the most rapid option for re-employment, to avoid impacting their annual funding.

Impacts of the Closure

The following sections outline the results of the Rapid Response services at VYCF, and the impact of the closure on employees, youth and families, other correctional facilities, surrounding businesses, and suppliers.

The closure of the state-funded facility presented a unique context and challenge for the Rapid Response. Affected workers received a sizeable severance package in addition to six months of unemployment insurance available for workers in California. In addition, facility employees had extensive early warning of the facility closure (SB-823 was signed in September 2020) which allowed many employees to either transfer to other facilities within the state system or find employment at an outside employer well ahead of the official WARN issued in 2023. Finally, by the

⁷ WDB Online Flipbook for Job Seekers, WDBVC ([Link](#))

time the workforce board was given notice in 2023 of the closure the facility was mostly vacant; most employees had already transitioned out of the facility.

These factors combined to reduce the number of workers that WDBVC could engage, and among workers they did engage, many planned to use their severance to either retire or delay their search for a new job.

The closure of the facility also had secondary effects on the county probation system as well as the youth incarcerated at the state facility. The closure of the state facility resulted in the transfer of one youth to the Ventura County Juvenile Facilities (VCJF) as well as an increase in the number of youths who will be sentenced to the county facility on an ongoing basis. While these impacts may not typically be within the purview of what WDBVC attempts to mitigate through Rapid Response services, there were workforce-related impacts at the county facility that should be considered when assessing the impact of the state facility closure and the efficacy of the Rapid Response.

Unique Context

Compared to a typical layoff event in Ventura County, the closure of VYCF posed some key challenges that limited the effectiveness of the response.

- **Timing:** WDBVC was not connected to VYCF until April of 2023, just three months before closure. By that time, most staff at the facility had already made a decision regarding transfer to a different facility, retirement, or layoff, and had already left the facility. This limited the number of staff WDBVC was able to engage.
- **Severance:** Staff members received a sizable severance package in addition to unemployment insurance, which delayed individuals engaging with rapid response services.
- **Communications:** WDBVC did not have access to internal email addresses due to state clearance measures.
- **Security Barriers:** CDCR support staff were not located at the Ventura facility for security reasons. Without these staff present the WDBVC did not have warm hand-offs to affected employees leading to limited attendance at rapid response orientations.

Impact on Employees

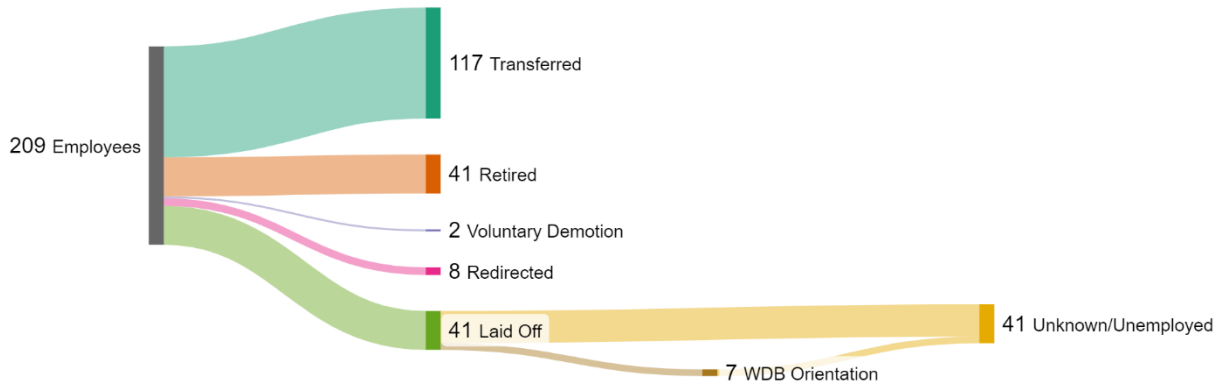
Before the passage of SB-823, VYCF had 292 employees. The roles of these employees are detailed in the appendix. With the announced closure, the headcount at VYCF shrank to 209. By the time WDBVC began providing Rapid Response services at VYCF, 117 employees had already been transferred to other jobs as outlined in the table below.

Table 1: Transfer Employees

Pre-Mitigated Process	Number of Employees
Comparable Transfer Process to Division of Adult Institution	10
Comparable Transfer Process Division of Adult Parole Operations	6
Delayed Lateral Transfer YCO YCC to Correctional Officer	99
Voluntary Transfer Process to other CDCR Locations	2
Total	117

Ultimately 92 employees were eligible to be engaged with the workforce board. The diagram below traces the path of employees following the VYCF closure:

Figure 2: Employee Outcomes Following Closure of Ventura Youth Correctional Facility



Of this group, 41 were laid off, 41 decided to retire, 2 received a voluntary demotion, and 8 were redirected to other positions of the same class within the county. Of the 41 employees who were laid off, 7 attended a WDBVC orientation. As can be seen in Figure 2, WDBVC does not know what the ultimate outcome was for a significant percentage of affected facility employees.

As described above, several factors impacted demand for WDBVC services, such as the three-year advance warning of the closure which allowed most employees to transfer, retire, or find another job by the time WDBVC was engaged. This resulted in lower enrollment in WDBVC training services and opportunities.

Impact on Youth/Families

“Youth coming out of custody don’t often have a stable living situation or adults they can count on...to help get them set up for needs like an ID, a driver’s test, or right to work documents...it would be great to have representatives to help with this.” - WDB Partner

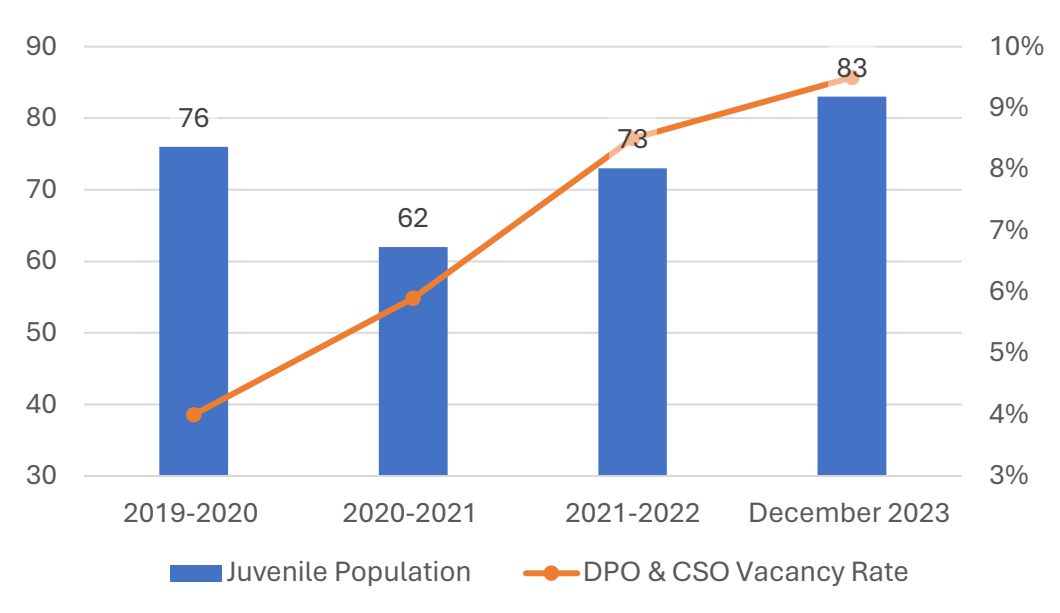
Ultimately, one youth was transferred from the state-funded facility to the county facility.

Social Finance was unable to interview family members impacted by the closure. However, interviews with others who work with justice-involved youth shed light on the typical needs of youth who are incarcerated or transitioning out of incarceration. Justice-involved youth, during and after incarceration, lack access to basic services and support systems. When transitioning out of incarceration and attempting to enter the workforce, youth often lack access to necessities such as reliable transportation, stable housing, and necessary documentation for employment. In addition, mental health and substance abuse challenges combined with a lack of family support create other formidable barriers to successful transitions into the workforce.

Impact on Juvenile Justice Facilities, Local Businesses and Suppliers

Juvenile justice facilities: Following the closure of the state facility, the juvenile population at VCJF grew significantly. This growth in the juvenile population has led to a subsequent increase in the need for Deputy Probation Officer (DPO) and Corrections Services Officer (CSO) staff. The chart below shows the growth in the juvenile population and staff vacancy rate over time.

Figure 3: Change In Juvenile Population and Staff Vacancy Rates at Ventura County Juvenile Facilities



As of December 2023, there were 15 vacancies apiece for DPOs and CSOs with a vacancy rate of 16% for CSOs and 10% for DPOs.⁸ The demand for correctional officers in Ventura County shifted from VYCF to the county facility, yet many correctional officers from VYCF were either transferred to facilities outside of the county or retired – contributing to the shortage of trained individuals to fill these roles at the county facility.

In addition, the increase in the number of youths incarcerated at the county facility increased the need for behavioral health services, vocational programs, and staff training.

Local Businesses: There was a limited impact on local businesses since few local businesses interacted with VYCF or their staff on a regular basis.

Suppliers: Social Finance was unable to identify or interview local suppliers connected to the VYCF.

⁸ From interviews with Ventura County Probation Office Staff

Assessing Impact

The framework detailed below will help WDBVC assess the impact of Rapid Response on an ongoing basis. Building backward from WDBVC's goals in executing a Rapid Response, Social Finance identified the key outcome measures and developed metrics to be used to assess impact.

Current Approach

Currently WDBVC, like all workforce development boards in California, uses the CaJOBS data system. Affected employee data is entered into this system post-program enrollment. Once entered into the system, enrolled employees are tracked from program completion through 12 months of employment.

However, attendees at orientation or other information sessions are not tracked in CaJOBS, creating a challenge for WDBVC in monitoring process metrics tied to information sharing. As WDBVC noted in interviews, there is no single system that tracks individuals from first contact through employment.

In a Rapid Response, WDBVC uses Excel to track metrics prior to enrollment in CaJOBS. These include the number of contacts with employers, the number of affected employees, and orientation session attendance. Funding for future Rapid Responses is dependent upon gathering this information – more individuals served in a calendar year will lead to more funding in the following year. Presently, there is no direct mechanism that links this Excel data to CaJOBS data, making it challenging to track long-term outcomes for affected employees.

Framework Overview

Audience:

An ongoing impact assessment process will help WDBVC communicate with WDBVC members, local elected officials, community-based organizations, and other stakeholders on the benefits of a coordinated Rapid Response.

Goal: Rapid reemployment

The primary goal of WDBVC's Rapid Response is rapid reemployment of workers affected by a layoff event. This includes reducing the acute impacts of a loss of income by enrolling workers in short- to medium-term support such as unemployment insurance and public benefits. WDBVC also hopes to reduce the length of unemployment by connecting affected workers with career counseling services and local employment opportunities. Finally, for workers who aim to transition job roles or industries, WDBVC supports workers in enrolling in and completing appropriate job training programs. In addition, Rapid Response has a secondary goal of disseminating information on the broader suite of WDBVC services to affected workers and employers.

Key Outcomes

Building on the goals of rapid reemployment and information sharing, we have identified the following items as key outcomes that should result from an effective Rapid Response.

- Increased knowledge of WDBVC services
- Shortened length of unemployment

- Re-employment
- Re-skilling and employment in new job roles

This set of outcomes is narrowly focused on the specific activities of WDBVC during the Rapid Response. A more comprehensive set of outcomes would include impact on other local businesses, local community services, and individuals who received services or goods from the affected employer.

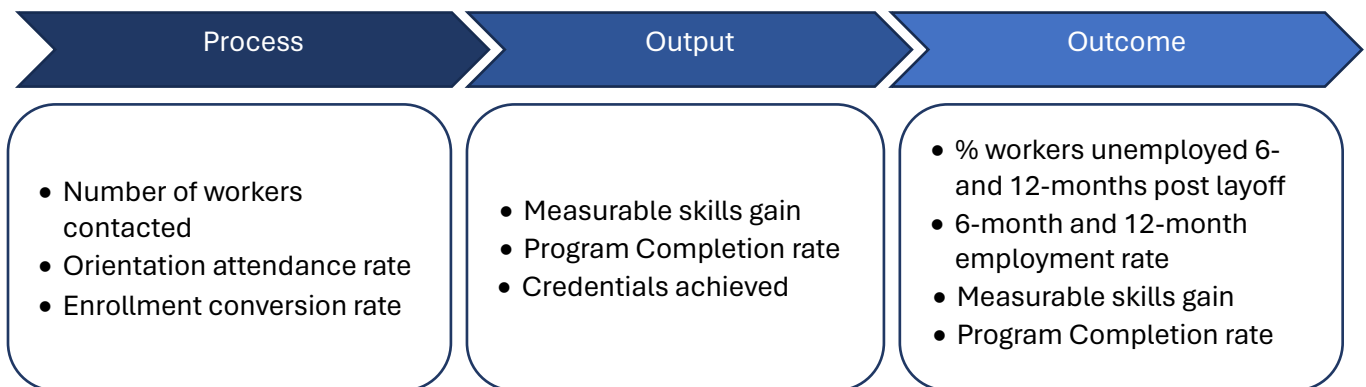
Key Metrics:

Our impact measurement plan metrics are tied to the key outcomes detailed above. Overall, WDBVC tracks most of these metrics either in Excel or CaUJOBS.

Table 2: Outcomes And Metrics for Assessing Impact

Outcomes	Metrics
Knowledge of workforce board services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of workers contacted • Orientation attendance rate • Enrollment conversion rate
Shortened length of unemployment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of workers still unemployed 6- and 12 months post layoff
Re-employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6-month and 12-month employment rate
Re-skilling and employment in new job roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measurable skills gain • Program completion rate • Credentials achieved • 6-month and 12-month employment rate

The same set of metrics can also be organized by process, output, and outcome measures. Using this structure, WDBVC can track Rapid Response effectiveness from the initial contact with workers through the long-term employment outcomes of affected workers. Presently, the WDBVC tracks process metrics in Excel, and output and outcome metrics in CaUJOBS. In the implementation section below, we will discuss how the WDBVC can begin to develop an impact measurement system that can track an individual’s pathway from first contact to 12-month employment.



Assessing Return on Investment

Federal, state, and local government bear significant costs from unemployment. These expenses include spending on unemployment insurance and placement services as well as lost revenue from income taxes, and, over the long term, spending on public benefits. Localities also bear less measurable but no less consequential costs due to reductions in workforce readiness, business activity, and economic growth.

As part of our efforts to quantify impact from the WDBVC's rapid response we conducted a high-level return on investment (ROI) analysis. This analysis allows us to determine whether dollars invested into the rapid response system led to long term fiscal benefit to the county. Given the scope of our work, this analysis is high-level, and includes only the easily quantifiable fiscal impacts from the rapid response.

One method of calculating return on investment of the rapid response is to measure the fiscal impact (increase in tax revenue plus reduction in government spending) and compare this to the cost of rapid response efforts. With rapid reemployment as the primary goal of rapid response, we can start by comparing how many weeks an affected employee spends unemployed versus the time the median Californian spends unemployed.

Without a set of baseline data for this assessment, it is difficult to determine whether the rapid response had an impact on the number of days unemployed for the typical laid-off employee. Given this challenge, below we will estimate the fiscal savings on a per week per individual basis.

Fiscal costs of unemployment

- **Unemployment Insurance:** Given this rapid response occurred at a correctional facility, we assumed that salary of the affected employee was \$54,123 which is the median salary for a protective service job in Ventura County. With this salary, the affected individual would be eligible for **\$450/week in unemployment insurance payments.**
- **Taxes:** Assuming the above annual salary and a household size of two, we can expect \$1,026 in annual state income tax payments. While receiving unemployment we can expect the individual to owe \$266 in state income tax payments for a difference of \$760. Therefore, we expect the state to incur a cost of **\$15/week in decreased tax revenue.**
- **Benefits spending:** Household entering unemployment longer than 26 weeks, will be eligible for public benefits (TANF, SNAP, housing subsidies, Medicaid, WIC, etc.). While it is challenging to estimate which households will be eligible for which benefits, we can use statewide data to develop high-level estimates. Using the Urban Institute's Tax Policy Center data, the **per capita spending on welfare** in California is \$3,870 (**\$74/week**) and the **per capita spending on welfare per low-income resident** is \$14,490 (**\$278/week**).

Total fiscal impact of reduced length of unemployment

- **Immediate Costs:** We estimate that the direct fiscal benefit of reducing the length of unemployment is approximately **\$464 per week per person.**
$$\$450 \text{ (unemployment insurance)} + \$14 \text{ (lost tax revenue)} = \$464 \text{ (immediate cost per week)}$$
- **Long Term:** For each individual that the rapid response keeps from long-term unemployment (i.e. longer than 6 months) we estimate reduced expenses on public benefits **between \$74 and \$279 per week per person.**

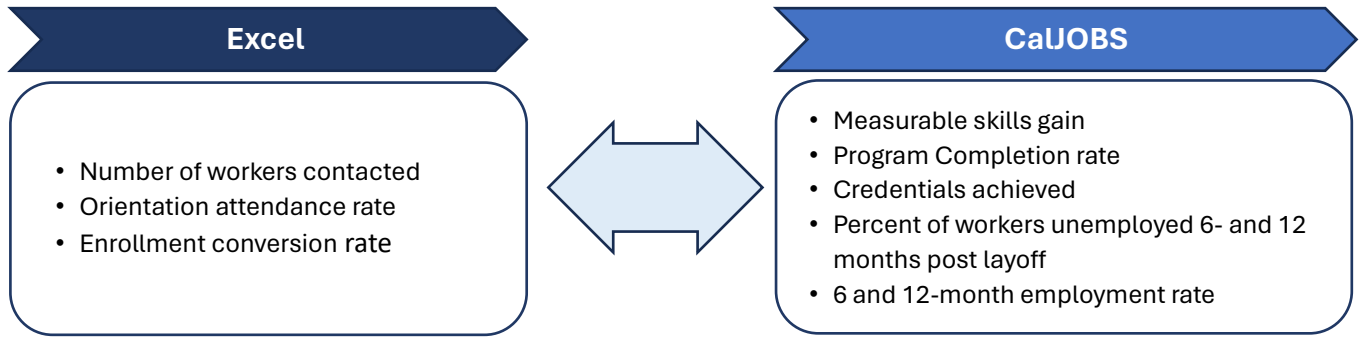
On a per individual per week basis the fiscal benefit of rapid reemployment may seem small, but prevention of long-term unemployment can have outsized benefits. For example, suppose an affected employee would have been unemployed for nine months but instead – through the support of the WDBVC – finds a job in three months. **The fiscal savings would range from ~ \$7,000 - \$9,500 on average if WDBVC's support can shorten an affected employee's time to re-employment by 6 months.**

Other considerations: The above analysis does not include the mental health impacts of long-term unemployment as well as the economic consequences from reduced workforce readiness and economic growth. A more robust analysis would be needed to include those costs, which are likely substantial.

Implementing Ongoing Impact Assessment

As noted above, the WDBVC is currently unable to track participants across their entire journey with the workforce board. Given this challenge, our recommendations will focus on steps WDBVC can take within their current system to improve impact measurement.

Figure 4: Current Metric Tracking Process



Social Finance recommends the WDBVC undertake the following steps to implement an ongoing process for impact assessment:

1. **Finalize key process, output, and outcome metrics:** Work with internal and external stakeholders to review and finalize the metrics detailed in Table 2.
2. **Identify current state of metrics tracking:** Identify which metrics WDBVC tracks within CaJOBS, which metrics WDBVC tracks outside of CaJOBS, and which metrics are not tracked at all.
3. **Establish end-to-end individual-level metrics tracking:** Develop a process for linking these disparate data points together across a single customer's journey through the workforce system. Social Finance recommends WDBVC match the names of Rapid Response orientation attendees to CaJOBS accounts for customers enrolled in the dislocated worker program using a combination of customer name and employer name. Over the long-term, the workforce board may consider developing a separate customer ID that can link individuals across Excel and CaJOBS data.
4. **Build a dataset of baseline data:** Begin tracking of data for Rapid Responses and use this baseline set of data to develop KPIs and performance targets.

After Action Review: Ongoing Qualitative Learning

To supplement the process of data tracking described above and develop robust ongoing learnings from rapid response, Social Finance recommends that the WDBVC conduct an after-action review (AAR) in the quarter after each rapid response. An AAR is a participatory narrative history of an organizational event. Each AAR is divided into four parts: “1) What did we expect to happen? 2) What happened? 3) Why was there a difference between what we expected and what happened? 4)

What can we change next time?”⁹ An AAR is a collective process aimed at improving future team performance, not a finger-pointing exercise.

Using this process, the WDBVC rapid response team will be able to develop a deeper understanding of what circumstances and processes best contribute to a successful Rapid Response. A significant part of conducting an effective AAR is dependent on all participants agreeing on their answer to question 2 – what actually happened. By implementing a consistent and accurate impact measurement process, the Rapid Response team will ensure every participant is working from a shared set of facts. Every member of the Rapid Response team should know how many affected employees were contacted, attended orientations, enrolled in workforce board services, completed programming, and attained employment – similar to Figure 2. Over time, a consistent impact measurement process will allow the Rapid Response team to set performance benchmarks that can act as the starting point to answering question 1.

Building from agreed-upon measures, performance goals, and data points, the Rapid Response team can identify areas to improve Rapid Response effectiveness and develop a feedback loop for continuous improvement.

Recommendations

Overall, interviewees believed that WDBVC is moving in the right direction in terms of strengthening their Rapid Response offering and employer-facing services through their Business Solutions team. One interviewer remarked that WDBVC “has made huge strides in getting out there” and increasing their visibility in the community, particularly among businesses.

Interviewees also acknowledged that many barriers are not specific to WDBVC but are characteristic of the broader workforce development ecosystem. For instance, information sharing is a common challenge across entities such as employers, training providers, and workforce development boards, and many stakeholders can play a role in initiating and sustaining effective collaboration.

However, interviewees representing a range of perspectives – including the business community, service providers, and the justice system – shared reflections on how WDBVC can further increase their impact that often coalesced around similar themes. Based on these themes and WDBVC’s stated goals, we have developed recommendations within the focus areas of Services and Partnerships.

Services

“People are what they do, and what they can't do what they do, they don't know who they are anymore. It's important to give them the tools they need to get back on their feet.” – WDBVC Partner

⁹ Harvard Business Review, A Better Approach to After-Action Reviews ([Link](#))

Adopt a more holistic approach to Rapid Response

One of WDBVC's primary goals for Rapid Response is to enable dislocated workers to return to work as quickly as possible following a layoff. As described above, the context of the facility closure differed from that of a typical event requiring a Rapid Response, in part because WDBVC only received 3 months' advance notice of the VYCF closure. This impacted their ability to deploy a robust response and limited the number of employees they could support, given most had already left the facility by the time WDBVC held Rapid Response orientations. While such factors are often outside of WDBVC's control, interviewees identified some areas where WDBVC could expand their support to workers and employers outside of the immediate scope of a typical Rapid Response event.

- **Consider the downstream impacts of a layoff event.** One consequence of the VYCF closure has been that many of the youth who would have been sentenced to VYCF are now sent to the Ventura County Juvenile Facilities (VCJF), putting pressure on VCJF staff's ability to support a larger population with different needs – many youth arriving at the county facility are older and serving longer sentences). Justice system stakeholders in Ventura County expressed that they would have welcomed WDBVC engagement to help address the resulting staff shortages in areas such as mental and behavioral health and wraparound supports but did not reach out to WDBVC for support. Particularly in instances with more advance notice, WDBVC can initiate communication with entities that may be affected as a secondary consequence of a layoff event and explore ways to support.
- **Identify potential re-employment pathways for affected staff in advance and integrate employer presentations into Rapid Response events.** Recently, one tactic WDBVC has begun piloting is combining a “mini-hiring event” with their standard Rapid Response offering, by inviting employers with hiring needs to Rapid Response orientations to establish connections with affected employees. WDBVC can experiment with integrating this approach more systematically into their Rapid Response services, potentially with the support of more proactive, structured collaboration with employers (see below for related recommendations).

As discussed below, many other broader strategies that WDBVC can pursue, such as strengthening mechanisms to share information with employers and other partners, are also likely to improve re-employment outcomes following Rapid Response.

Continue to strengthen employer awareness of WDBVC services

“[There should be a] concentrated effort to get out into the community as an organization. [WDBVC will] have a job developer go out to try to find a job for somebody. But I think they need a position where somebody is doing outreach for the workforce board, not outreach for a client.” – WDB Partner

Interviewees generally agreed that WDBVC is moving in the right direction in terms of experimenting with additional ways to advertise their services. For example, WDBVC has worked

with the West Ventura County Business Alliance (WVCBA) to spread the word about their services through digital and print advertising campaigns as well as through events such as the WVCBA Business Expo. WVCBA will also be hosting members of WDB's career team at their office space, providing space for WDB to meet with businesses. To expand staff capacity to interface with employers, WDBVC has ramped up hiring of Business Solutions specialists. Additionally, interviewees provided the following suggestions:

- **Continue pursuing a multi-channel approach to dissemination:** One interviewee recommended WDBVC establish a more vigorous social media presence, post success stories and videos, and explore other creative approaches to increasing their visibility. They highlighted the work of the Santa Barbara Workforce Development Board, which deploys a branded van in the community and publishes a newsletter the interviewee found to be effective in engaging stakeholders.
- **Assess materials and offerings for cultural competence and accessibility:** To increase engagement with WDBVC's offerings, they can consider inviting input from key populations, including employers and justice-involved youth, on their outreach materials and programming, to ensuring they are communicating and delivering services in a way that is relevant, accessible, and motivational for each audience. One interviewee from the justice system underscored the importance of tailored, culturally competent programming particularly given the racial and ethnic diversity of Ventura County.

Expand vocational programming for justice-involved youth, including those incarcerated at Ventura County Juvenile Facilities

"We would love to see workforce partners take over [vocational programming at Ventura County Juvenile Facilities]. They should be the ones in the facility – facilitating, managing, bringing in resources." – Justice system stakeholder

Interviewees within the justice system expressed strong interest in partnering with WDBVC to create programming for justice-involved youth. WDBVC's current services for justice-involved youth include the Specialized Training and Employment Project for Success (STEPS) program, in partnership with the Ventura County Probation Agency. STEPS provides justice-involved individuals with comprehensive training and wrap-around services to promote marketable skills for job growth in the manufacturing and Clean Green Industry sectors, through training and direct placement. The program serves adults as well as youth who are between the ages of 16 and 24. Currently, youth at Ventura County Juvenile Facilities (VCJF) can also access community college courses, and plans are underway to enable youth to access courses at a 4-year university.

Historically, one barrier to providing workforce services to youth incarcerated at VCJF has been the facility's relatively small scale. VCJF has not been able to offer the same diversity of services in vocational programming as DJJ facilities (i.e. options such as a welding curriculum have not been feasible). However, the population at VCJF has grown approximately 34% following the DJJ closure, from an average of 62 from 2020-21 to 83 at the end of 2023. The composition of the population at the facility has also shifted; youth sentenced to VCJF are typically older and face longer sentences.

One interviewee highlighted that the staff at VCJF were unequipped to serve a population with a larger number of 22-23 year olds with the appropriate workforce programming and behavioral health support; previously, the population at VCJF was predominantly 16-17 years old. Justice system stakeholders, including VCPA and the Public Defender’s office, welcomed leadership from WDB to create and manage a vocational program at VCJF.

Partnerships

Continue to strengthen employer engagement by adopting a “business demand-driven” orientation

“If you’re going to be business-serving, then you need to hire the staff or orient the staff to be more of a solution to what businesses need... [WDB can represent itself] as a business demand-driven organization as opposed to a grants administration-oriented group.” – WDBVC Member

Many interviewees emphasized the importance of strengthening WDB’s ability to orient their services toward employer needs. Strategies may include:

- **Define a single “port of entry” for businesses.** Multiple interviewees highlighted the importance of establishing a single point of contact with businesses to avoid confusion and inundating businesses with outreach from multiple sources and multiple avenues for obtaining information.
- **Develop closer partnerships with other business-serving entities to collaborate on employer engagement.** Interviewees suggested that WDBVC build deeper relationships with city economic development departments and other business-facing public agencies that interact frequently with employers and often develop a holistic view of employer needs. One interviewee also suggested collaborating more with staffing agencies to identify employers at risk of layoffs. WDBVC staff underscored their interest in developing these types of partnerships, given their goals are often aligned; for example, if WDBVC can

“From a business perspective, you don’t want to be hit by a lot of different agencies, all offering to handle a different portion of your potential issues. You really want a one-stop shop, out of the gate.” – WDBVC Member

“City Economic Development staff are knocking on business doors every day... There’s no structural means, no nurtured relationship to send that [information] back to the workforce system.” – WDBVC Member

“We see several hundred businesses a year we deem candidates for layoff aversion services, but I have no means of sharing that information with the Workforce Board... Partly, that’s on us. We’ve got to keep fighting to get that system in place.” – WDBVC Partner

provide layoff risk aversion services to more companies, more employers will be available to hire associates from staffing agencies.

- **Establish a "structured, systemic, regular exchange of information" between WDBVC and business-serving partners.** Particularly in the context of Rapid Response and in the absence of a mandate for employers to inform WDBVC of anticipated layoffs, WDBVC can help set up agreements that facilitate greater information sharing on business challenges. One interviewee, whose organization has been contracted by WDBVC to provide layoff aversion services, works with hundreds of businesses per year who are at risk of making layoffs, but lacks a legal framework to share that information with WDBVC. Such information would support WDBVC's goal of developing employer relationships more proactively; as a WDBVC staff member said, "We want to connect with employers in a proactive manner when they still don't know they need the help, to prevent layoffs in the far, far future."

Facilitate cross-stakeholder forums for learning and collaboration

"I'm excited about having more of those conversations and getting all of us into the same rooms. The more [WDB] can drive that, the more it's going to benefit everyone." – WDBVC Stakeholder

"I see my role as trying to get more collaboration between the agencies that exist, and I see right now that they perhaps are a little siloed in their approach to getting involved with businesses... My goal would be to help understand all the agencies available in Ventura County and draw them together." – WDBVC Member

Interviewees from various stakeholder groups frequently cited lack of information, communication, and coordination as a barrier to addressing workforce challenges in Ventura County. Many interviewees emphasized that WDBVC would be well positioned to act as a convener and coordinator to promote information-sharing across stakeholders including employers, training providers, and relevant city and county agencies.

One of the functions of a more formal mechanism for convening stakeholders could be to elevate and solve problems collectively, across siloes. Interviewees commented on the lack of coordination between training providers and businesses, and the dearth of industry associations to support cross-business collaboration. One common theme among interviewees representing the employer perspective was strong interest in WDBVC playing a more proactive role in increasing capacity for training and upskilling in Ventura County. However, employers often have highly specific needs for which no pre-existing, one-size-fits-all training solution may exist. Bringing employers and providers together on a regular basis to deepen WDBVC's understanding of needs in the employer market and possible training avenues may help accelerate the process of identifying needs and possible solutions.

Table 3: Potential Elements of a Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration Structure

Potential Elements of a Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration Structure	
Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce Development Board of Ventura County • Employers representing key industries and occupations • Local industry associations • Training and supportive services providers • Staffing agencies • Public agencies serving business needs, such as City of Ventura Economic Development Division
Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular meeting cadence to support proactive sharing of information (e.g. monthly Zoom meetings) • Mechanisms to facilitate data sharing, such as inter-agency confidentiality agreements • Point of contact at WDB for coordination
Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure broad understanding of goals and priorities of each stakeholder (e.g. current / anticipated workforce and skill needs) • Discuss shared challenges and iterate on solutions • Share labor market updates, including information on a wide range of occupational profiles and sectors • Strengthen stakeholder understanding of resources available (e.g. share list of local employers with training providers to support proactive job searches; share resources on local service providers for employers to support upskilling) • Identify and disseminate relevant professional development opportunities, such as cultural competency training for employers or trauma-informed training for service providers

Conclusion

The loss of a job is a destabilizing event that can affect every facet of a household from earnings to housing stability, to mental and physical health. Such a wide-ranging set of impacts must also be met with an equally comprehensive response. The WDBVC’s Rapid Response provides vital services to workers affected by layoffs, yet this response alone cannot meet all the needs of an affected individual. As a key player in the county’s workforce ecosystem, the workforce board has an opportunity to bring the right partners to the table to holistically address the needs of affected employees and to facilitate problem-solving across siloes. As the convener and connector for workforce development stakeholders in Ventura, WDBVC can be the leader in developing a proactive, responsive, and effective Rapid Response system.

Appendix

Stakeholder Interview List

Name	Role	Organization
Margie McCune	Associate Director of Workforce Consolidation and Reduction Support	California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR)
Norman Albances	Assistant Director	Workforce Development Board of Ventura County (WDBVC)
Colleen Smith	Business Solutions Specialist	Workforce Development Board of Ventura County (WDBVC)
Cynthia Avila	Business Solutions Manager	Workforce Development Board of Ventura County (WDBVC)
Tim Dowler	Chief Deputy of the Adult Services Bureau	Ventura County Probation Agency (VCPA)
Carrie Vredenburgh	Chief Deputy of Juvenile Services Bureau	Ventura County Probation Agency (VCPA)
Michael Rodriguez	Chief Deputy Public Defender	Ventura County Public Defender's Office
Ken Wiseman	WDBVC Board Member, Chief Workforce Development Officer, AMS Fulfillment	Workforce Development Board of Ventura County (WDBVC)
Jessica Reed	WIOA Career Services Manager	Workforce Development Board of Ventura County (WDBVC)
Bruce Stenslie	President and CEO	Economic Development Collaborative (EDC)
Laura Kistner	Director of Workforce Services	Goodwill Industries
Andy Conli	Business Development Manager	West Ventura County Business Alliance (WVCBA)
Carolyn Vang-Wagner	Director and Head Principal, WDBVC Board Member	Ventura Adult and Continuing Education (VACE), Workforce Development Board of Ventura County
Maria Lopez	Bridges to Work and Specialized Training & Employment Project To Success (STEPS) Coordinator	Ventura County Human Services Department
Elizabeth Arias	WDBVC Board Member, Port of Hueneme	Workforce Development Board of Ventura County (WDBVC)

Roles of Employees at the Ventura Youth Correctional Facility

DESIGNATION	CLASS	CL TTL
DENTAL	9268	DENTIST CF
	9296	DENTAL ASST CF
MEDICAL	1869	HEALTH REC TECH I
	7982	PHARMACIST I
	8253	PSY TECH/S
	8257	LIC VOC NUR/CDCR
	9269	PHYSICIAN&SURGN CF
	9275	REGISTERED NURS CF
	9278	NURSE PRACTITNR CF
	9283	PSYCH-CLINIC CF
	9286	REC THERPST CF
	9288	SR PSYCH CF/SUP
	9318	SUP REG NUR II CF
	9758	STAFF PSYCH
NON-CUSTODY	1139	OFF TECH (TYPING)
	1154	SUP RECDS TECH
	1155	CASE RECDS TECH
	1247	EXEC SEC I
	1303	PERSNL SP
	1304	PERSNL SUP I
	1317	SR PERSNL SP
	1505	MAT&STRS SUP II CF
	1508	MAT&STRS SUPV I CF
	1575	PRISON CANTN MGR I
	1793	PROP CONT I CF
	2011	CUSTODN I
	2183	CORR SUP CK
	2186	COOK SP II/CF
	2284	TEACHR HS-ART&C CF
	2288	TEACHR EM/LN HD/CF
	2295	TEACHR HS-PE CF
	2303	SPR OF CORR ED PRO
	2305	SUPVR ACP INST C F
	2422	VOC INST CUL AR CF
	2423	VOC INST DG G&H CF
	2727	LNG SP & HRG SP
	2734	RES SP/SP ED
	2849	VOC INST O S&RT CF
	2855	VOC INST C&R TC CF
	2945	SR LIBRARIAN COR F
	3074	TEACHR HS-E L A CF
	3077	TEACHR HS-MATH CF

	3079	TEACHR HS-S SCI CF
	3082	SUB ACAD TCHR CF
	4707	BUSNS SVS A SP
	4761	PROC&SVS OF II/CF
	4800	STAFF SVS MANGER I
	4912	CORR HLTH S A IICF
	5284	ASO BUDGET ANALYST
	5393	ASO GOVRL PROG ANL
	5479	A CORR FD MGR/DOC
	5480	SUP CORR CK/DOC
	6216	BLDG MAINT WKR C F
	6303	CORR PLNT SUP
	6400	TEACHING A CF
	6474	CARPENTER II COR F
	6524	PAINTER II COR FAC
	6538	ELECTRCN II CORR F
	6594	PLUMBER II CF
	6643	LOCKSMITH I CF
	6699	CHIEF ENGR I COR F
	6713	STAT ENG-CF
	6763	SUPVR BLDG TRDS CF
	6826	HVY EQUIP MECH/C F
	6941	MAINT MECH CORR F
	7199	PST CNTRL TECH CF
	7208	CORR BUSNS MGR I
	7979	PHARMACY TECH
	9608	COM RES MGR/CI
	9854	SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGST
	9916	CATHOLIC CHAPLAIN
	9922	PROTESTNT CHAPLAIN
PEACE OFFICER	9556	YOUTH AUT ADM/R S
	9560	PROG ADM/C S (SUP)
	9570	TREATMENT TEAM SPR
	9574	LT/YA
	9577	SGT/YA
	9579	YTH CORR OFCR
	9580	SR YTH CORR COUN
	9581	YTH CORR COUN
	9695	PAROLE AGNT III YA
	9696	PRL AG II/YA SP
	9701	PAROLE AGENT I YA
	9910	SUP CSEWK SP I/YA
	9911	CSEWK SP/YA

Sources: ROI Analysis

Name	Source	Link
CA Unemployment Insurance Benefit Table	California Employment Development Department	de1101bt5.pdf (ca.gov)
Living Wage Calculation for Ventura County, California	Massachusetts Institute of Technology	Living Wage Calculator - Living Wage Calculation for Ventura County, California (mit.edu)
Per Capita Welfare Spending	Urban Institute – Tax Policy Center	State and Local Government Finance Data Tax Policy Center
California income tax rates	Tax-rates.org	California Income Tax Rates for 2024 (tax-rates.org)