

NEXUS LP

Nexus LP Project
Las Vegas, NV
Submitted by,

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Serving the criminal justice population through prevention, intervention and rehabilitation treatment, thereby assisting the community in our fight against crime.

To: Interim Finance Committee, Chairs
Assemblyman Arberry and Senator Raggio
From: TP Hubert, President Board of Directors
Date: February 16, 2008
Re: *Nexus LP Project*

The RidgeHouse Inc. has a long and credible history of providing residential and outpatient services for offenders released from the Nevada prison system. The need for residential reentry services was quickly evident to the original founders of the RidgeHouse, principally, the KAIROS community. KAIROS is a national prison ministry program that has been active in western Nevada for over 25 years.

The RidgeHouse recognizes that there is a growing need for transitional housing and treatment programs here in Reno and an even more acute need of these services in Las Vegas. BJS statistics clearly reflect that over 650,000 offenders are released annually to the community. The few and meager community resources like RidgeHouse cannot hope to meet the current offender population let alone the 5,000 affected by AB 510. Similarly, we should be alarmed at the 20,000 California prisoners now being released due to the state's budget deficits. Nevada is at a crossroad with respect to managing this unprecedented influx of newly released offenders. National statistics, evidence-based practice, and the RidgeHouse experience clearly support that residential and treatment services, such as mental health and substance abuse counseling and community support, are essential for those being released. Those offenders receiving these types of human services are least likely to re-offend.

The RidgeHouse offers its support to community organizations that provide transitional services for this growing offender population. The RidgeHouse, principally located and serving clients in the Reno area, recognizes that these services are particularly needed in southern Nevada, which contributes almost 72% of the state's prison population. We are eager to support programs like *Nexus LP* to identify and assist offenders being released from jail and prison in Las Vegas. The RidgeHouse is willing and able to collaborate with similar southern Nevada community service organizations, like the Clark County Urban League, to set up and provide reentry services.

James Palombo presented the *Nexus LP* project to the RidgeHouse Inc. Board of Directors. The Board voted to endorse Mr. Palombo's project and serve as fiscal agent. The RidgeHouse is encouraged by this proposal and the support of UNLV. Furthermore, the RidgeHouse Board of Directors, the staff and volunteers, the clients and their families- really the RidgeHouse Community- appreciate your consideration about the importance of reentry and transitional services in Nevada. If you have any questions about the RidgeHouse and its programs, please do not hesitate to contact RidgeHouse Inc. Executive Director Steve Burt, or myself.

Thank you.

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According to most offenders, the hardest part of the incarceration process is re-entry. The majority of those coming out of prison are likely to return. Current data for the State of Nevada indicates a 65% rate of recidivism. As one inmate recently put it, "The idea of staying free scares me. It's crazy out there!"

For those familiar with the issue, this is nothing new. Social conditions, individual responsibility, and the economic and political climate all interface with the re-entry process. In this sense, re-entry poses some difficult considerations. Work, education, life skills, culture, and technology shock- the concepts of individual habilitation- are not adequately addressed during imprisonment and will come to bear in managing release. And of course, when the offender re-commits, the trail of victim to courts, to corrections, and finally to more failure spells more pain, more time and more money. It is indeed a complex and difficult situation for society as well as for the offender. For example, housing an inmate for one year is estimated at \$27,000. With an average stay of over 2 years, this means that we are spending a great deal of money with chances upon post release limited.

In attempting to break this cycle, and in light of the growing numbers of ex-offenders that Southern Nevada can anticipate, we propose the following program. It is certainly not a panacea for recidivism. It is, however, a viable, worthwhile, cost effective, and comprehensive yet simple plan that will help address the problems facing both the ex-offender and the public. This program's efforts will not only be relevant to our current concerns, but also to those which the community will face in the future.

Program Overview

Nexus LP Program focuses on the notion of "staying free," and in particular, as noted by professionals and practitioners, that re-entry should be of major concern. The Nexus LP Program is a consolidation of interests and energy of existing community organizations. Having canvassed agencies like Nevada Partners, The Community Counseling Center,

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The Urban League, The Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc. (VVA) and resources like the College of Southern Nevada, and UNLV, this program represents a “grass roots” community effort designed to service the social and personal needs of a significant portion of ex-offenders in southern Nevada. Of particular concern to the center is the growing needs of veterans involved the criminal justice system.

The Center, in cooperation with The RidgeHouse Inc., a well-established prison reentry program in Reno, along with the VVA will provide multiple offender counseling services. The Center will provide individual and group ‘community counseling’ and re-entry services such as obtaining social security and work cards, driver’s license, training and referral, and work and education counseling and referral. Nexus also offers opportunities for meditation and other creative activities, public meetings/gatherings and discussion. The Center will develop in its first year into a comfortable, coffee- klatch setting similar to the very successful Delancey Street model in San Francisco. The ambiance of the center will focus on integrating ex-offenders into a positive and productive lifestyle, which provides them a viable chance of “staying free.” Eventually, primarily ex-offenders, both at the service and administrative levels, can operate the Nexus process, similar to the Delancey Street and RidgeHouse models.

Finally, the program will involve a strong UNLV research component. A multi-disciplinary approach will engage faculty and students from the sociology, psychology, social work, and criminal justice departments, including two paid internships. The program will be able to provide data/analyses as to the issues at hand. This link will be valuable not only for program evaluation but also for the development of new projects and for future funding efforts as well. In sum, by providing direct services for the ex-offender population as well as access to relevant data, the center can be seen as a “one-stop” source for individual, agency and/or public assistance as well as a clearinghouse for future idea/project/funding developments that speak to the re-entry process.

Program Process

Eligible offenders will be provided information about the Nexus LP program while incarcerated. This will most likely happen shortly before release, and it will include a briefing on program features, objectives, criteria and responsibilities. From this point, the

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offender, either as a condition of his/her parole or upon their volition, will follow up by developing and maintaining contact with the program. When contact occurs, individuals will come to the office/center and be given an intake review which will include a more in depth look at the services available through Nexus and an initial review of the community counseling process. At this point, it will be up to the individual to decide to what extent they want to participate in the program. Whatever their decision, the information exchanged between the individual and the program will be documented, including the individual's veteran status. If the individual decides to participate more fully in counseling and/or work and/or education efforts, a contract will be developed and the process will begin. Outcome evaluations will be performed for each case. This information can be shared with those in the system who are responsible for ex-offender supervision.

The program director will be a full-time re-entry specialist who will act as project facilitator, counselor and program developer. The director will possess a graduate degree in a related field and requisite experience in the re-entry and community service areas, as well as an understanding of the issues and concerns facing both the mainstream and veteran ex-offender. The director's duties will include overseeing the counseling process and documentation of details, the development of funding possibilities, research coordination, development of workshops, and other related projects, and overall program public relations. A re-entry program assistant will possess a minimum of a bachelor's degree in a related field and experience within the criminal justice process. Compensated staffing is completed with two graduate interns from UNLV, from Criminal Justice and/or Social Work, who will assist with program/client needs. Importantly, they will also act as a liaison to any client- or program-based research endeavors involving UNLV.

The Nexus LP approach, like its initials, (LP stands for "Listening Post,") listens and provides services to ex offenders directly, through referral, and cooperation a variety of community organizations and state and federal agencies. First, the Center will offer a form of counseling- community counseling- centered on a socio-educational approach. This means that unlike the more typical clinical approach (which we can also reference), we will discuss concerns like drug use, violence, and anger within the larger sociological context of everyday life. This more easily allows individuals, with more relaxed and

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conversational exchanges, to see themselves and their decisions and choices within the complexity of their social situations, with the focus on managing all the elements they must contend with in “staying/living free.” Within the context of this process, and with the help of our academic-based CSN and UNLV partners, the program’s goal will be that some ex-offenders can become ‘neighborhood counselors,’ allowing them to help others in their immediate environments as situations warrant. Like with the AA or NA formats, the sense here is that in recognizing how difficult it is to “stay free” the notion of doing so may become as acceptable/popular as compared to the crime/gangster alternative. In addition, Nexus LP will address the growing veteran offender issues in Southern Nevada. The plight of the homeless and veteran offenders has national concerns. The VVA at both the State and National levels has long been advocate for incarcerated veterans. Nevada has the nation’s fastest growing veteran populations in America. Although Nevada Department of Corrections does not currently track numbers of veteran offenders, veterans comprise approximately 10% of the nation’s state-held prisoners. Veterans often have special needs, especially those who served in time of war. Few resources specific to their re-entry needs currently exist, leaving them at greater risk of failure. Nexus will serve to identify those in the NDOC system, providing both counseling and referrals to programs within the Veterans Administration and will function as an adjunct to their growing attention to this population.

Finally, Nexus LP will apply a “systems approach” to its program efforts. This means that, via direct communications, mailings or project development, the program will integrate its efforts with all parts of the system, including the police, courts, parole and probation, the juvenile system and other community agencies. In essence, this connection will help foster an open working relationship relative to issues and concerns that are at play in every corner of our community.

Program Features and Budget

Program Eligibility: Nexus can accommodate any number of initial contacts and its ‘social setting’ will allow for any number of informal discussions and conversational exchanges. In terms of actual program participants, we anticipate that the program can help up to 100 clients at any given time.

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Program and Client Evaluation and Documentation: We will use a Data Protocol reference guide to evaluate both our program efforts and client participation.

Assessments performed within our case management will include intake, client self-assessment (how one thinks about goals and objectives), interim and participation assessments and reports, and closure/aftercare documentation including re-arrest/recidivism. These will comply with requirements from NDOC, the Department of Parole and Probation, and the Veterans Administration. These assessments will also form the basis of program evaluation. Program and process evaluations will take place twice a year. Client evaluations will be performed in accord with client participation. We may also employ more sophisticated research models in conjunction with our UNLV partner.

The program's client documentation focuses on the participant's 'well being' and his/her attachment to the "staying free" concept via job, education and/or vocation connections. Documentation of well being will include involvement with counseling, attention to life and interpersonal skills, and improvement with self-discipline and self-help motivation. Documentation of work skills will include attention to occupational essentials - interview skills, application requirements, resume writing, time management and actual work-training as well. On an educational level, documentation will reference certification in any field as well as the development of any post-secondary course work. In short, the process will provide individuals with the ability to visualize and evaluate their efforts in relationship to a successful transition to community life.

Community Resources: It is extremely important to have an understanding of and access to the resources of the community. Nexus will augment and utilize- but not replicate- what already exists in the community. Other programs service the direct needs demonstrated by the ex-offender population, for example agencies specific to welfare, job training, etc., and also resources like the library systems, community college and university programs, museums and other public venues that individuals can often benefit from and to which they often need exposure. Interfacing with other agencies will also assist in collaborations on new ideas and community project development as well.

Record Keeping/Program Integrity: The Program Director will be responsible for program records management, including participant case file management, research management and program management, i.e., employee time schedules, program expenses

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etc. Documentation and records management will meet any requirements and provisions of our funding source and Ridge House Inc.

Program Budget: The attached budget proposes one-year costs and projects to a 3-year program. RidgeHouse Inc. will act as fiscal agent/recipient for any and all funding.

RidgeHouse Inc. will oversee the "NEXUS LP PROJECT."

*As a final note to our proposal . . . it is obvious by the initiation and language of AB510 that the public is concerned about the issues tied to incarceration and the re-entry processes. Although a significant amount of funds will be allocated to NDOC, it is clear that attention also needs to be focused on efforts put forth in the community. We believe that Nexus represents a plan that, on cost and program levels, can be effectively employed to assist the ex-offender and our community at large. Said another way, with a structure and organization that speaks to accountability, expertise, cost-effectiveness, community support, viability and future efforts, we are providing a program consistent with both public interest and the concerns of the IFC.

Proposed Budget FY 08/09

A. Personnel

Nexus Director	\$65,000
Case Manager	40,000
Intern-stipend	7,500
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\$120,000

B. Fringe benefits (21%)

\$ 25,200

C. Supplies

Computers and printers (one-time cost)	\$5,000
Copy machine (one-time cost)	5,000
Office supplies (misc.)	2,000
Printing/duplicating	1,000
Fax machine	1,000

\$14,000

D. Program Costs

Training	\$ 200
Conferences/meetings	200
Travel	5,000
Rent	9,600
Postage/delivery	200
Telephone/fax	4,000
License/fee	500
Insurance	3,000
Furniture/equipment (one-time cost)	3,000

\$25,700

(subtotal)

\$184,900

E. Administrative (10% RidgeHouse, Inc)

\$18,490

Total Annual Budget

\$210,230.00

Total at 3 Years

\$630,690.00

*2nd and 3rd year costs (minus one time costs and
admin Adjustments)*

\$378,180

Total for 3 years:

\$581,570.00
