

## ANALYSIS

### Department of Corrections Braille Transcription and Certification Program

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**Analyst:** John Terpening

**Request:** Approve the submission of a federal grant application to the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Assistance in the amount of \$900,000, to begin a braille transcription and certification program.

**Analysis:** The Department of Corrections (DOC) is requesting authorization to apply for a Second Chance Act grant, through the Bureau of Justice Assistance, that provides grant funding for reentry education programs that strengthen employment outcomes for individuals after incarceration to promote reentry success and wellbeing and reduce recidivism.

DOC would use the grant funding to begin a braille transcription and certification program through the American Printing House (APH) National Prison Braille Network, which currently operates in 31 states. This program provides the standards, curriculum, and software needed for prisons to establish a braille transcription program. Adults in Custody (AIC) that go through the program submit their work to APH for feedback, grading and certification, and upon release from prison certified transcribers are eligible for APH's apprenticeship program.

Braille transcription is in high demand, as there are relatively few certified transcribers. In Oregon, the Willamette Education Service District is responsible for transcription of Oregon school textbooks into braille, but currently have only one transcriber and contracts with out-of-state prisons to meet their transcription needs.

The application deadline is April 4, 2023, and there is no state match required. If awarded, DOC would to return to the Legislature for additional federal funds expenditure limitation and may need to request a limited duration position, funded by the grant, to administer this program.

**Legislative Fiscal Office Recommendation:** The Legislative Fiscal Office recommends approval of the request.

## Department of Corrections Fox

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**Request:** The Department of Corrections (DOC) is requesting authorization to apply for a \$900,000 grant from the Bureau of Justice Assistance.

**Recommendation:** Approve the request.

**Discussion:** DOC is requesting authorization to apply for a grant from the US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Assistance under the *Second Chance Act: Adult Re-Entry Education, Employment, Treatment and Recovery Program*. This grant is designed to strengthen educational outcomes and employment opportunities for adults returning to their communities after a period of incarceration.

If awarded, DOC will use these funds to begin a braille transcription and certification program, with the ultimate goal of moving into producing braille transcriptions of school textbooks for the Willamette Education Service District. The district is responsible for the transcription of Oregon school textbooks into braille and currently has only one transcriber. There is also potential to extend this service to other state education programs in the future. Braille transcription is a specialized skill and upon release from prison, a certified braille transcriber is eligible to apply for an apprentice program through the American Printing House's (APH) National Prison Braille Network. This apprenticeship program provides re-entry supports and further training in braille transcription and production. Upon graduation, APH supplies the apprentices with the tools and machinery needed to start their own freelance transcription business.

The grant application is due April 4, 2023 and there is no match requirement. This grant is expected to be awarded in October of 2023 and has a three-year period of performance.



# Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

## Oregon Department of Corrections

Office of the Director

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February 8, 2023

The Honorable Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, Co-Chair  
The Honorable Tawna Sanchez, Co-Chair  
Joint Committee on Ways and Means  
900 Court Street, N.E.  
H-178 State Capitol  
Salem, OR 97301-4048

Dear Co-Chairpersons and Members of the Committee:

The Oregon Department of Corrections (DOC) respectfully requests approval to apply for the Fiscal Year 2023 Bureau of Justice Assistance **Second Chance Act: Adult Reentry Education, Employment, Treatment and Recovery Program, Category 1: Improving Correctional Education** grant.

### Source of Grant

U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), Office of Justice Programs (OJP), Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA)

### Amount Being Requested

\$900,000

### Purpose of the Grant

DOC requests permission to apply for this grant to begin a braille transcription and certification program, with the goal of moving into production of braille transcriptions of school textbooks for the Willamette Education Service District (ESD) and potentially other state education programs.

Braille transcribers are in high demand, but there are a limited number of certified transcribers. Willamette ESD is responsible for the transcription of Oregon school textbooks into braille, but currently have only one transcriber and must contract with other state prisons in order to meet their needs.

Through the American Printing House's (APH) National Prison Braille Network, much-needed quality braille textbooks are created in prisons across the U.S. for students who are blind in grades K-12. DOC would obtain the curriculum and braille software needed through the National Prison Braille Network. Students' work would be sent to the American Printing House for grading and feedback. All decisions on meeting standards and awards of certifications are made by the American Printing House.

Once a certified braille transcriber releases from prison, they are eligible to apply to the APH for their Braille Transcriber Apprentice Program (BTAP). Through this apprenticeship program, the APH provides reentry supports as they transition back into society. Participants also learn additional skills such as braille production and small business management to help them get work as braille transcribers. Upon graduation, APH supplies the apprentices with the tools and machinery they need to start their own freelance transcription business.

<b>Application Deadline</b>	April 4, 2023
<b>State Match Required for the Grant</b>	None
<b>Additional FTE the grant will require</b>	DOC is still in the early planning stages, but anticipates possibly 1.0 additional full-time employees (FTE) will be required in a limited-duration position funded by the grant. DOC also foresees requesting indirect costs to compensate for reporting and other administrative grant requirements.
<b>How the Grant Supports the Agency Mission and Goals</b>	<p>Because research has demonstrated post-secondary education and vocational training and certification during incarceration reduces the risk of recidivism, the Legislature has funded basic education and work-based education opportunities within DOC. The proposed braille transcription training program will allow DOC to add a new education and certification opportunity for which there is a high demand in the community.</p> <p>Reducing recidivism through the proposed use of these grant funds supports the agency's mission to promote public safety by holding offenders accountable for their actions and reducing the risk of future criminal behavior. It also promotes <a href="#">Preparing Offenders for Reentry</a>, which is a component of the agency's vision.</p>
<b>Sustaining the Program after the Grant Period</b>	Once adult in custody (AIC) students receive their initial certifications, they will be able to transition into producing textbook transcriptions for the Willamette ESD or other entities. DOC is hopeful the program will eventually become self-sustaining once production begins. If the program is as successful as anticipated, DOC may consider submitting a Policy Option Package to the legislature to request funding for the training program supervisor position in order to continue the program.

Thank you for your consideration.



Heidi Steward  
Acting Director

xc: Amanda Beitel, Legislative Fiscal Officer  
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