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ASSESSMENT OF THE SHELBY COUNTY OFFICE OF RE-ENTRY (SCOR)



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INTRODUCTION

One The Shelby County Office of Re-Entry (SCOR) is one of the key organizations dedicated to supporting and assisting the successful reintegration of justice involved individuals back into the community. As a community agency, it aims to address the often complicated and numerous needs of these individuals upon transitioning back to civilian life. SCOR works with the support of the State of Tennessee Department of Correction (TDOC) and the Shelby County Mayor's Office.

SCOR's primary focus is to work with justice-involved individuals returning to the community and provide them with inclusive resources that are needed based off their unique circumstances. Recognizing the different challenges and barriers that these individuals often face upon re-entry to society, SCOR aims to offer a wide array of essential services. These services incorporate aspects such as employment assistance, housing support, educational opportunities, and various mental health services.

BACKGROUND

SCOR Partnerships

SCOR employs partnerships on both the state and local levels to serve justice-involved individuals more broadly. By working closely with TDOC and the county mayor's administration, SCOR can help provide a coordinated and cohesive approach to these resources. Recently, SCOR has initiated a working group called the Justice Network, which aims to bring together collaborations between many different entities. These entities include organizations that directly work with justice involved individuals to some that offer services that could be used by those individuals.

Programs within SCOR

There are several programs that are housed within SCOR, including FOCUSED and INK. FOCUSED is a 12-week training program that aims to provide returning citizens with the skills and opportunities needed to help find employment. FOCUSED integrates job readiness training with the possibility of being a better candidate within specialized vocational training programs. For those individuals who attend

these vocational and job readiness trainings, they are more prepared to utilize the hard skills they have obtained and also receive a letter of recommendation from SCOR. Participants who successfully complete FOCUSED must have met a minimum attendance requirement of 80% or better, and are better positioned to become more self-sufficient.

The INK Program is the pre-release vocational program offered by SCOR in collaboration with the Shelby County Division of Corrections. INK is designed to provide those who are still incarcerated with valuable vocational skills and training to help their transition to civilian life be smoother. Currently there are four vocational training programs that are offered through this program: barbering, janitorial services, forklift, and natural hair. Completing this training will hopefully allow these individuals to find employment easier.

Advantages of SCOR

One of the distinguishing features of SCOR that has been highlighted under the current leadership is its role of being a centralized hub for reentry services. Many of those who are returning to society from incarceration are often pointed towards SCOR to seek assistance. Understanding the importance of not only accessibility but convenience, SCOR can serve as an essential resource to assist individuals. This centralized approach may eliminate some of the barriers that justice involved individuals face upon re-joining society, making it easier for them to navigate the process and have access to the support that they need.

METHODS

Data

Data for this assessment were provided by SCOR. The participants who were included within this study were those who had accessed the services at SCOR between August 2022 and August 2023. SCOR provided PSI with anonymous demographic and program participation data monthly until the end of the evaluation period for all eligible participants. These reports provided snapshots of all program participants

who started their time with SCOR in August 2022 and allowed us to view any changes that may have been made with these individuals.

In addition to providing data, in conjunction with the Memphis Shelby Crime Commission, SCOR hosted a monthly meeting that included partner organizations, government agencies, various nonprofits, and community stakeholders. The purpose of this meeting was for SCOR to provide updates on its own initiatives and programs while inviting partner organizations to assist. PSI ensured that there was representation at these meetings in order to gather any qualitative data that could be of use for the assessment.

<u>Variables</u>

In this assessment, the primary variables of interest were those identifying the number of participants who had become 'inactive' during their time with SCOR and the reasons behind their inactivity. Reasons for inactivity fell under six different categories: completion of program requirements, deceased, recidivism that resulted in re-arrest, individuals declining offered services, or those being removed due to non-compliance or other reasons. An additional variable was created using the start and inactive dates to determine how many months individuals were in the program before they ultimately went inactive. By examining these variables, the assessment aimed to measure how successful individuals were while being enrolled in SCOR and its various programs.

In addition to tracking program engagement, we also included variables aiming at the needs of these justice-involved individuals at the time they entered into the SCOR program. Variables such as the types of services needed, ranging from employment assistance, skills training, transportation assistance, and more were examined. The latest offense that these individuals were convicted of prior to entering the SCOR program was used to help provide insights into what challenges may be present as well as identifying any possibility for targeted interventions. Additionally, understanding how these participants heard about SCOR was used to help analyze the routes through which individuals were seeking assistance.

Finally, demographic variables such as age, gender, and race were utilized to better understand the population being served by SCOR. Additional factors were collected,

such as if individuals had any substance abuse issues or mental health diagnoses, their status at enrollment, and any program affiliation that they had within SCOR.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Participant Profiles

During the time period of August 2022 through August 2023, SCOR handled to some degree 733 individuals. As indicated in Table 1, the analysis shows that the majority of participants fell within the age range of 30-39 years old, comprising of 33.56% of the total participants. Additionally, other large proportions were seen in the age brackets of 20-29 and 40-49, accounting for 24.01% and 22.51% of participants, respectively. Regarding gender distribution, a significant majority of participants identified as male, comprising of 82.56% of the total. Furthermore, a predominant representation of African American individuals, comprising of 86.36% of the participants, was noted.

Table 1. General Demographics for SCOR Clients

Age	
18-19	2
20-29	176
30-39	246
40-49	165
50-59	103
60+	38
Unknown	3
Gender	
Female	126
Male	605
Other	2
Race	
Asian/Pacific Islander	3
Black/African American	633
Hispanic/Latino	17
Native American/American Indian	4
White/Caucasian	66
Other	8
Unknown	2

Another aspect of these individuals' profiles that was examined was their marital status and if they had any children. Table 2 shows a large portion of clients, totaling 78.04%, identified themselves as single. Additionally, reports indicated that a

substantial majority of the clients, accounting for 71.35%, reported having children. However, out of those 523 clients, only 169 (32.31%) were identified as the custodial parent. These statistics were aimed at examining the familial dynamics and responsibilities among individuals trying to access reentry services.

Table 2. Marital and Custodial Demographics for SCOR Clients

Marital Status		
	Single	572
	Married	56
	Divorced	39
	Widowed	9
	Other	48
	Unknown	9
Children		
	Yes	523
	No	210
Custodial Parent		
	Yes	169
	No	354

Additionally, Table 3 presents the educational achievements of the participants, revealing that the largest portion, totaling 227 individuals (30.97%), reported having attained 'Some High School' as their highest level of education. Following closely behind, 23.74% of participants held a 'High School Diploma'. The table also shows the employment status of participants upon their arrival at SCOR, indicating that a substantial majority, comprising of 592 individuals (80.76%), were 'Unemployed'. On the other hand, only 18.01% of participants started their engagement with SCOR with some form of employment, whether part-time or full-time. These results better underscore both the educational and employment challenges faced by individuals accessing reentry services, highlighting not only the importance of enhancing educational attainment but helping these individuals find suitable employment to better support their reintegration into society.

Table 3. Educational Attainment and Employment Status for SCOR Clients

Education	
Some Grade School	27
Some High School	227
High School Diploma	174
GED/HiSET	142
Some College	90
College Degree	25
Graduate Degree	2
Other	36
Unknown	10
Employment Status	
Unemployed	592
Part-Time	55
Full-Time	77
Unknown	9

As a final profile element, Table 4 shows the legal profiles of participants to provide a better understanding of the offenses for which they were convicted prior to engaging with SCOR. A significant majority of them were coming from felony convictions, totaling 86.38% of participants' legal profiles. Additionally, across the total of 733 participants included in this time period, a total of 977 charges were listed among their latest offense prior to SCOR. It is important to note that some participants may have faced multiple charges, reflecting the higher number of charges listed. 'Assault/Battery' was the most common offense, accounting for 22.78% of all charges. This was followed by 'Theft of Property' at 14.46%, 'Burglary' at 14.05%, 'Robbery' at 11.87%, and 'Possession of Controlled Substance' at 6.00%. With a majority of these individuals having felony charges, it only extends the knowledge that those who are attempting to access services are facing additional complex situations.

Table 4. Offense Group and Latest Offense

Offense Group	
Felony	633
Misdemeanor	81
Unknown	19
Latest Offense Prior to SCOR	
Assault / Battery	167
Assault / Battery Theft of Property	167 106
Theft of Property	106

Participant Characteristics and Program Engagement

The current assessment also looked at particular characteristics of the participants who were seeking to access reentry services. Figure 1 shows the breakdown of how individuals were informed about SCOR and the services it provides. By examining this aspect it was the goal to examine the pathways through which these justice-involved individuals accessed reentry services. Notably, the most common source of referral was through 'Law Enforcement,' accounting for 193 individuals (26.33%). (This category likely includes probation and parole officers.) Additionally, a substantial number of individuals, totaling 135 (18.42%), reported being ordered to participate in SCOR's services upon their release. While this may be fairly common for SCOR participants, it was interesting to note that the third most common pathway was through a 'Family/Friend,' which accounted for 131 participants (17.87%). Understanding how individuals learn about and engage with SCOR services is crucial for helping the program grow its outreach efforts for those returning from incarceration.

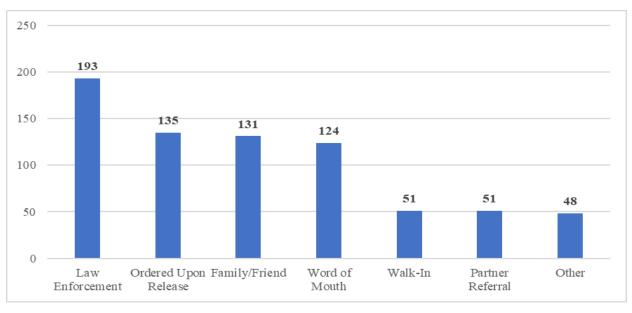


Figure 1. Program Information for SCOR Participants

Another valuable insight for these individuals accessing reentry services through SCOR is the prevalence of substance abuse issues and mental health diagnoses. Table 5 outlines the occurrence of these characteristics. Regarding substance abuse, the data showed that a majority of participants, comprising of 55.53% of the total, reported not having any substance abuse issues. Among the 297 individuals who did, the most

common category was 'Drugs' with 108 participants (14.73%). Additional, 83 participants (11.32%) reported experiencing issues related to both alcohol and drugs ('Both'), while only 34 participants (4.63%) reported alcohol-related issues exclusively.

In terms of mental health diagnoses, 150 participants (20.46%) disclosed having a mental health diagnosis in their medical history. Notably there were 101 individuals (13.78%) for whom no data were provided regarding substance abuse or mental health issues. In addition to dealing with justice-involved individuals, having the additional battle of either substance abuse or mental health issues adds additional issues for helping them with comprehensive support services that address their diverse needs.

Table 5. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Diagnoses

Substance Abuse		
	Alcohol	34
	Drugs	108
	Both	83
	None	407
	Unknown	101
Mental Health Diagnosis		
	Yes	150
	No	482
	Unknown	101

As far as being affiliated with any potential programs, Figure 2 provides an overview of the program affiliation among individuals accessing services through SCOR. Notably, the data showed that over a third of them (36.15%) were affiliated with one of the two programs that are housed within SCOR, FOCUSED and INK. From those individuals, the majority of them were affiliated with INK (19.10%), while the rest of those individuals, comprising of 17.05%, were affiliated with FOCUSED. These are great avenues for justice-involved individuals to be integrated within SCOR while incarcerated and upon release.

In addition, of the 140 individuals that were enrolled in INK, a breakdown of program affiliation shows that the majority were part of the 'Janitorial' program, comprising of 62 individuals (44.29%). Following 'Janitorial,' the next most common program was 'Forklift' (29, 20.71%), 'Natural Hair' (26, 18.57%), and 'Barbering' (17, 12.14%). It should be

noted that there were six individuals designated within INK but did not have a specific program listed within the data.

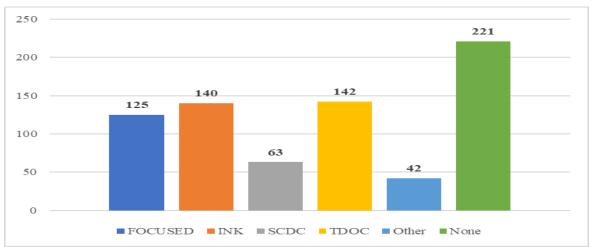


Figure 2. Program Affiliation for SCOR Participants

Upon entering into SCOR, participants are given a form to fill out to better help case managers know what all is needed by each individual. Table 6 presents the total number of applicants who selected each service option upon entering SCOR, giving valuable insights into the range of needs expressed by these individuals. Notably, 74 individuals (10.10%) left this question blank. Among the 659 participants who selected at least one option, six categories emerged as especially common, with each selected by at least a third of the respondents. The most frequently selected service was 'Employment Assistance,' chosen by over half of the participants (57.36%). Following closely behind were 'Food/SNAP Application' (43.70%), 'Rent/Utility Assistance' (36.27%), 'Skills Training' (35.81%), 'Healthcare' (34.90%), and 'Transportation Assistance' (33.38%). These highlight the diverse range of needs that are expressed by justice-involved individuals upon entering into SCOR.

Table 6. Services Needed by SCOR Participants

Services Needed	
Anger Management Classes	88
Clothing Closet	195
Employment Assistance	378
Food/SNAP Application	288
Healthcare	230
HiSET/Diploma	63
Identification (Birth Certificate or ID card)	176
Maximus Child Support	79
Prescription Medication Assistance	75
Rent/Utility Assistance	239
Skills Training	236
Substance Abuse Classes	47
Transportation Assistance	220
Veteran Assistance	9
Voting Rights Restoration	79

Monthly Enrollment and Inactivity Analysis

Figure 3 shows the monthly influx of new clients that came to SCOR through the time period of this assessment, which shows several notable variations in client intake. Through the 13-month span, three months had a considerable intake of over 80 new clients each, highlighting not only a higher demand for reentry services but a higher demand on the lives of the case workers during those periods. On average, SCOR saw an influx of 56.38 new clients per month throughout the assessment period.

Figure 3. New SCOR Clients Per Month

In addition, Figure 4 illustrates the cumulative number of clients who were served by SCOR during the same time frame, showing a continuing growth of individuals accessing reentry services through SCOR. By the conclusion of August 2023, SCOR had provided assistance, of varying degrees, to a total of 733 unique individuals. This steady increase in clientele both by month and overall emphasizes the vital role played by SCOR and the case workers in supporting the reintegration of these justice-involved individuals into the community.

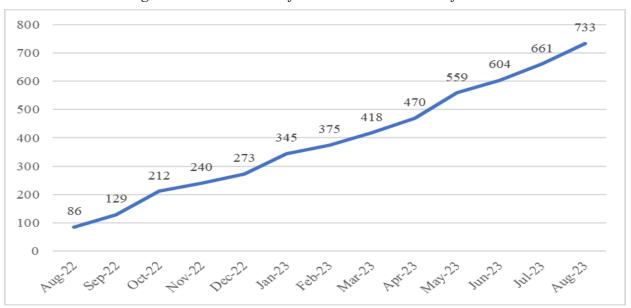


Figure 4. Total Number of New Clients Per Month for SCOR

One of the important aspects of examining participation was to look at those who were, at least at some point, listed as 'Inactive.' Table 7 examines the reasons why individuals were eventually listed as inactive. Out of a total 397 individuals who became inactive at some point, only one individual returned to an active status temporarily before becoming inactive again. Among the 53 participants with specific reasons documented for their inactivity, the most common reason selected was 'Refused Services,' (28 participants) followed by 'Completion' (15 participants).

However, it should be pointed out that the most prevalent reason for inactivity among the 397 individuals overall was 'Removed from Services,' comprising of 86.15% of those individuals. It is important to acknowledge that this selection serves as a catch-all designation for individuals whose reasons for inactivity do not neatly align with the other pre-established choices. This issue highlights the need for a more fleshed out system of documenting why individuals become inactive, ensuring that SCOR is collecting as much information as possible to help them better serve these individuals.

Table 7. Reasoning for Inactivity

# of Those Inactive	397
Reason for Inactive	
Completion	15
Deceased	1
Re-Arrest	6
Refused Services	28
Removed From Services	342
Revocation	3
Unknown	3

To provide better insight into the duration of active engagement with SCOR before individuals moved to an inactive status, Figure 5 examines how long these participants were listed as active. Among the 330 individuals who were listed as inactive, with both start and inactive dates documented within the time period of this assessment, the most prevalent duration of active engagement was four months. Within this four-month timeframe, 40.00% of participants (132 individuals) were moved to the inactive status. Extending this scale to five months reveals that the majority of participants transitioned to inactive status (56.36%, 186 individuals).

Notably, four months as the most prevalent timeframe between being active and inactive may be attributed to SCOR's policy of moving individuals to inactive status after a 90-day period of no contact. This could suggest that individuals may engage with SCOR initially, return once, and subsequently disengage, resulting in their transition to inactive status after a total of four months.

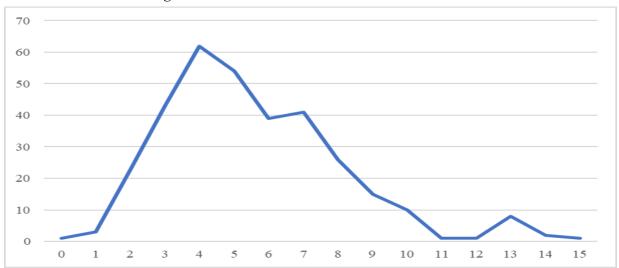


Figure 5. Months Between Active and Inactive Status

Correlation Between Variables – (b=#, p<#)

In order to test for any statistical association between activity in SCOR's programing and variables associated with these individuals, a Pearson correlation analysis was conducted. Table 8, at the end of the assessment, shows the correlation between all the variables that we collected during the study. While several associations were identified through the correlation, there are several that align with the focus of this assessment. In our analysis, we found a significant positive correlation between individuals who had been convicted of a violent crime and their reported need for services (b=.178, p<.001). This indicates that those who were convicted of a violent crime had an increase in the reported need for services upon starting at SCOR. This correlation suggests that individuals who are coming for programming with violent crime convictions may require additional support and intervention from staff to address their needs effectively. Continuing with the services needed by these individuals, we noted a significant positive correlation between individuals reporting a substance abuse problem and those with a mental health diagnosis (b=.204, p<.001).

As the presence of substance abuse issues increases, there is a corresponding increase in the likelihood of also having a mental health diagnosis among participants. With this, there is also a statistically significant relationship between mental health diagnosis and services needed (b=.173, p<.001). However, there was no significance in the relationship between just substance abuse and services needed. These two significant relationships better highlight the need for being able to address both substance abuse and mental health disorders to help provide comprehensive support and effective reentry services.

When examining the status of these participants, we noted a significant relationship between their status and the number of services needed (b=.209, p<.001). This suggests that those who were classified as inactive tended to report a higher number of needed services compared to those who were listed as active. This could be for a number of reasons but does underscore the importance of hands-on engagement and the high level of support that is needed to help address the issues of those participants who have multiple needs upon returning to society.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on analyses of all available data as described above, the Public Safety Institute provides the following conclusions:

- 1) Under its current leadership, SCOR has made very significant strides in serving justice-involved individuals compared to where it was previously.
- 2) The results of the assessment suggest that SCOR demonstrates clear elements of effectiveness. There are also areas where further improvement may be warranted. SCOR provides some of the most valuable resources and support services for returning citizens. However, the assessment highlights that its effectiveness may not yet be at its full potential. This emphasizes the importance of ongoing evaluation and adaptation of programs to better meet the needs of those justice-involved individuals. By acknowledging areas for enhancement, SCOR can continue its commitment to providing impactful and successful reintegration practices.

- 3) While SCOR and its initiatives are crucial steps towards addressing the needs of justice-involved individuals to reduce their recidivism rate, there is a clear need for enhanced data collection measures, particularly concerning demographic variables such as employment. Being able to easily track a participant's employment outcome could provide invaluable insights into the effectiveness of the initiatives being offered by SCOR. This could also be tied into the 'services needed' for each participant which is only updated the first time the form is completed. Being able to create a list of all the services that are needed and monitor the status of each one could be crucial to better assisting these individuals.
- 4) Although SCOR does a great job at collecting relevant information for each of its participants, there are inaccuracies and discrepancies throughout the data set. These inconsistencies can often challenge the reliability and validity of findings and lead to difficulty in making informed decisions about resources. It is essential that SCOR and like agencies implement some form of quality assurance measures, invest in staff training, and ensure that data is not only complete but correct. By putting a higher focus on data integrity, leadership within SCOR and various other stakeholders can help improve the outcomes in supporting successful reintegration and reducing recidivism.
- 5) While there are challenges in assessing the effectiveness of SCOR, there is optimism for improvement with the building of additional initiatives like the Justice Network group. Formation of this collaborative endeavor signifies a promising step towards addressing these issues by bringing organizations together and working as partners. Through the efforts of diverse stakeholders, which include government agencies, community partners, and resources agencies, the Justice Network group aims to establish best practices and stronger partnerships to ensure more positive reentry outcomes.

The PSI has developed the following four recommendations:

1) To enhance the effectiveness of these initiatives and foster stronger collaboration among various agencies, we recommend implementing better communication strategies and additional data sharing permissions between

- entities involved in reentry efforts. Being able to streamline data sharing processes to assist with up-to-date data as well as ensuring compliance with privacy regulations would better assist SCOR with being able to track data points such as employment.
- 2) To ensure that the limited resources that are available are being used to their most effective measure, we recommend adding another tool to help create a prioritization factor. Since SCOR is designed to be the primary hub for all of those who are reintegrating back into society, it should be of no surprise that its staff and resources can be spread thin at times. Creating a tool that is designed to help accurately identify individuals who are not only the most in need of intervention and support but are most likely to benefit from those services would be beneficial. There are some individuals who, despite being in the program for several months at a time, ultimately ended up refusing services. These individuals may represent a group of individuals who have needs that cannot be met by SCOR at this time, but they also are participants in programs who are using resources that may be better suited for other participants.
- 3) It is recommended that SCOR consider revising its policy regarding the timeframe for moving individuals to inactive status from 90 days of no contact to a shorter duration, such as 30 days. This adjustment aims to enhance program accessibility and support proactive engagement with reentry services. By reducing the no-contact period, SCOR can help make sure that a timelier response to individuals' needs and have increased access to support resources. This can help SCOR refine its outreach and retention strategies to better support individuals in maintaining ongoing engagement with services.
- 4) In order to enhance not only the accuracy but completeness of data collection during interactions between participants and their case managers, additional tools and means should be used for data capture. One approach may be to integrate digital data collection platforms into the case manager process that is being conducted at each visit with a participant. These tools can further allow real-time data entry and tracking, allowing case managers to document not only progress by these individuals, but their service needs and outcomes during each meeting.

Table 8. Correlation Between Variables																			
	Age	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Gender (1)	0.043																		
Race (2)	0.059	0.007																	
Marital Status (3)	.202***	-0.001	.118**																
Children (4)	.178***	-0.047	-0.047	0.071															
Custodial Parent (5)	-0.136**	475***	099**	0.022	-0.024														
Certification (6)	.078*	.099**	0.065	0.018	-0.018	0.046													
Education (7)	.105**	-0.053	.119***	.091*	0.033	-0.03	.181***												
Employment Status (8)	0.043	-0.038	.082*	0.042	0.054	.095*	.165***	.084*											
Parole (9)	.171***	.113**	.076*	-0.028	0.006	096*	0.017	.077*	.090*										
Probation (10)	130***	0.041	0.043	0.038	-0.054	0.042	.130***	-0.002	.077*	213***									
Offense Group (11)	0.044	.107**	0.021	0.027	-0.011	090*	088*	0.018	-0.059	.158***	0.031								
Violent Crime (12)	-0.001	0.055	110**	-0.015	-0.043	0.064	0.04	0.036	0.044	-0.037	.124***	-0.004							
Nonviolent Crime (13)	.099**	.138***	.138***	-0.004	0.048	-0.005	0.02	0.015	.078*	0.066	-0.033	104**	562***						
Substance Abuse (14)	.178***	-0.001	.126**	0.059	0.024	191***	-0.007	-0.013	0.036	0.028	-0.044	0.065	162***	0.067					
Mental Health Diagnosis (15)	.104**	0.017	.149***	0.073	-0.035	-0.046	0	0.055	-0.026	-0.01	-0.045	0.035	-0.025	0.049	.204***				
Services Needed (16)	-0.001	0.036	0.036	-0.005	-0.07	0.051	.177***	0.025	0.067	.096**	.185***	-0.057	.178***	.087*	0.045	.173***			
Program Affiliation (17)	0.082	.192***	0.044	0.002	-0.055	0.026	0.145**	0.034	.245***	.288***	.281***	-0.083	0.211	0.003	143*	0.056	.220***		
Participation Status (18)	0.062	0.045	0.064	-0.001	-0.073	0.05	.187***	0.037	.085*	0.014	.114**	-0.057	0.062	0.024	-0.036	0.061	.209***	.280***	
Reason for Participation Status Change	0.046	0.053	.075*	-0.016	-0.074	0.056	.192***	0.016	0.081	.100**	.138***	-0.041	.095*	0.012	-0.037	0.059	.251***	.290***	.967***
* p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001																			

