

Opportunity-Ready

Micro-credentials to Engage the Incarcerated Population

ALL LEARNERS



**It began with a
conversation...**

“Tell me more about this digital badge stuff. I wonder if it could work for the women at the jail.”

-Matt Tardie



**It is
becoming a
narrative...**

“The time spent in incarceration does not have to be wasted time. It can be used very purposefully...I believe personally that...you can change the trajectory of your future.”

-Commissioner Randall Liberty, MDOC



Opportunity-Ready Pathway

The Design Challenge

- Address life-readiness, education-readiness, & work-readiness skills
- Delivery through secure tablet vendor, Edovo
- Honor the human connection
- Authentically assess completion evidence

“Embrace the Shake”

Design Decisions

- Driven by research and empathy interviews
- Deliver in podcast format – “the human textbook”
- Create workbooks for learners to draw, doodle, capture thought responses, and reflect on topics
- Assess through storytelling and plan development



The Curriculum: An Iterative Process



Life-Ready: The prototype

Overarching Theme: "Experience is Everywhere"

25 podcasts (7 minutes each)

Experience is Everywhere: Introduction

The Power of Expression

The Power of Emotion

The Power of Storytelling

The Power of Reflection

The Power of Self-Talk

The Power of Awesome: Finding Your Gift

The Power of Persistence

The Power of Self-Advocacy

The Power of Peers

The Power of Connection

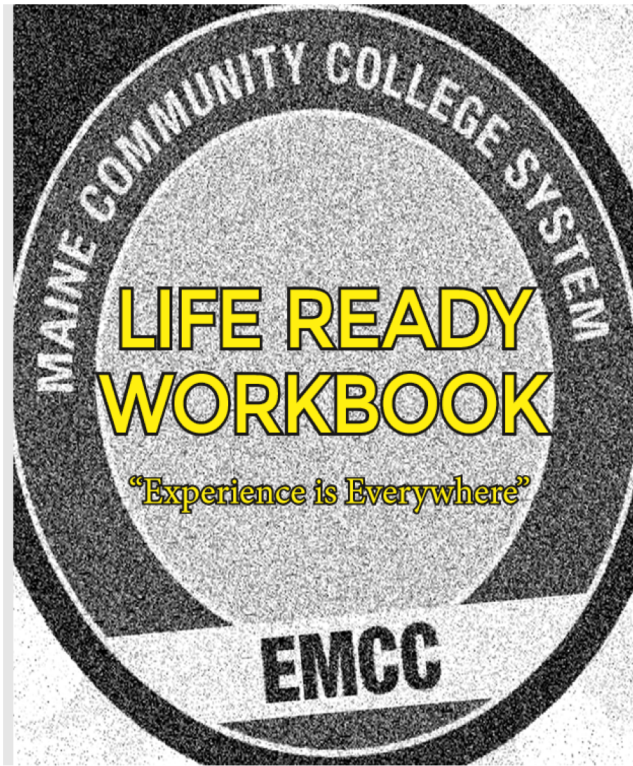
The Power of Conscious Decision-Making

The Power of Now

The Power of Motivation

The Power of Creation

Final Exercise: Random Autobiography



The Workbook

- Space to draw and capture notes while listening
- Transcripts of podcasts
- Reflection questions to answer for each topic
- Other associated exercises
- Random Autobiography samples, instructions, & template



Life-Ready Partnerships

Brian Welsh, EMCC
Student Navigator

Tasia Lima, TRiO
Advisor

Jeremy White, TRiO
Advisor

Dee Nichols & Susan
Bennett-Armistead,
UMaine Literacy
Faculty & *What's Now,*
What's Next founders

Terri Swanson,
Community Leader

Jane Loxterkamp, ECE
Faculty

Andrew Clifford, Main
Street Music Studios

Mark Nason, Eric
Ferguson & Mike
Hambrock, NESCOM

Green Tank
Productions (music)

Brian Hill, CEO &
Founder of Edovo

Commissioner Liberty,
MDOC

Current students,
including those who
were formerly
incarcerated



Education-Ready

The Power of Self-Assessment:
Who are you as a learner?

Learning Styles

Emotional Intelligence

Multiple Intelligences

ACEs

Resilience

The Power of Choice: Your Learning Path

A College Primer

Information Literacy

Study Skills

The Admissions Process

Financial Aid

Prior Learning

Advising

Final Exercise:
Personalized Learning Plan



Education-Ready Partnerships

Brian Welsh, EMCC
Student Navigator

Lauren Quinn,
Coordinator of
Advising &
Registration

Luke Bulley, EMCC
Financial Aid Advisor

Elizabeth Castro,
Admissions

Cynthia Young, EMCC
Librarian

Current EMCC
students

Benjamin Church
(music)

Under Construction:
Adult Education,
Workforce
Development, other
customized content



Work-Ready

The Power of
Exploration: Career
Assessment

O*Net Paper Packet
or WOWI

Career Assessment
Reflection

21st Century Skills
Badges: New World
of Work

21st Century Skills
Reflection

Professional
Etiquette

Employer
Expectations

Job Search Basics

Resume & Cover
Letter Basics

What to Expect in an
Interview

5-Minute Futures: 15
podcasts featuring
local business &
community leaders

Next Steps Action
Plan



Work-Ready Partnerships

Brian Langley: former
Senator, local
restaurant owner,
Executive Director of
Bridge Academy Maine

Employees from
Jackson Labs

Mid-Maine Chamber of
Commerce

Members of MCCA
Board of Trustees

Thomas Brennan,
Nestle Waters North
America (Poland,
Maine)

Central Maine
Healthcare

David Barber, Barber
Foods (Portland,
Maine)

Michael Bourque,
MEMIC

Backyard Farms

Northern Light
Healthcare

Bangor Region
Chamber of Commerce

Grondin Construction

Donna Cassese, Forest
Industry Consultant

Bill Whitmore, Harvard
Pilgrim Healthcare

Bill Trevaskis (music)



Opportunity- Ready

Cumulative Reflection:
Where were you when you began?
Where are you now?
Where are you going?
What have you learned from this
experience?



Life-Ready Pilot: Mountain View Correctional Facility

- 18 Participants, range in age and length of sentence, medium security units
- Facilitation:
 - 2 Peer Badge Ambassadors (paid positions through MDOC)
 - 3-person team (plus Augie, the therapy dog) from EMCC (frequent visits early on, decreasing over time)



User Feedback

- Add transcripts to workbook; more scenarios to react to
- Suggestions for additional topics: “The Power of Encouragement” and “The Power of Addiction/Recovery”
- “People here don’t want to earn ‘badges’...but they want to join the program when I tell them about it.” (The language we use matters)
- Education staff and officers reported increased connection and morale on the units
- Feedback changed our approach to the Education-Ready/Work-Ready content



Successes

- 10 out of 18 completed – some participants stopped but most were interrupted by transfer/release
- 2 participants wrote autobiographies of between 40 and 50 pages
- One wrote and recorded a song
- One graduated with Associate's degree – received a scholarship to complete his last class for degree based on program participation
- 4 other participants were given scholarships to complete a college course through UMaine-Augusta

Successes

- 2 participants were accepted as apprentices to the Culinary Program, which was approved by DOL Apprenticeship Program
- One participant who was released has applied to EMCC – he is accessing student food pantry supports and making steps to complete placement tests as he also works to find secure housing
- One participant wrote letters directly to the Commissioner advocating for additional programming and was visited personally by the Commissioner in response
- Over 200 other individuals in MDOC facilities accessed the content through the Edovo platform



Lessons Learned

- The human connection is essential
- Internal supports and external supports are required – the most successful approach includes a trained internal facilitator
- For incarcerated populations, consistent weekly or bi-weekly facilitation from an external instructor is required
- Development of Opportunity-Ready Micro-credential Facilitator training to address internal supports is necessary (currently in development)

Scaling the Pathway: All Learners Count

Although designed with incarcerated groups in mind, the pathway is moving beyond those borders...

Life-Ready
content is
embedded in
EMCC Human
Relations courses

5 person pilot
with
CourageLIVES;
Working to
integrate with
Bangor Area
Recovery Network

17 person pilot
with Bridge
Academy (high
school students)

Discussions
underway to offer
in 2 other county
jail programs,
including What's
Now, What's Next

We are also in discussion with a local employer to customize the pathway for their employee onboarding process

Scaling the Pathway: All Learners Count

All populations
will identify an
internal facilitator

All internal
facilitators will
participate in
Opportunity-
Ready Facilitator
Training

EMCC staff will
support the
creation of any
additional content
customized to the
access population

EMCC staff will
validate
completion
evidence and be
responsible for
issuing of badges



**Opportunity-Ready in the context of
a bigger picture...**

National, State and Local Initiatives



Lumina Foundation focus

- State attainment goals capture credentials AND degrees – “credential of value”
- “All Learning Counts” grant





Statewide Initiative: 60% of adults ages 25+ holding a post-secondary credential of value by 2025 (Adopted Maine State Legislature, 2018)

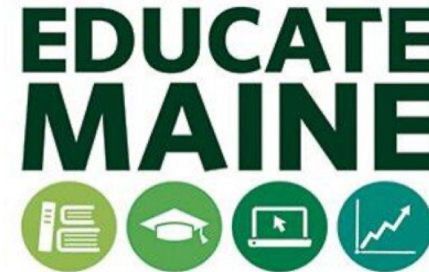
All Learning Counts Grant Partners



Adult Education ^{MAINE}
Learning for Work and Life



Wabanaki Center



edovo





ALC-Maine Target Populations

- Incarcerated
- Low Income
- People of Color/New Mainers
- Native Americans

ALC-Maine Goals

- Allow learners, who have experienced prior “educational trauma” and generational poverty, to earn affordable, achievable, stackable micro-credentials, building confidence and opening the door to desirable jobs and careers
- Earn multiple, valued Industry/ Association and other micro-badges
- Set continuous lifelong learning goals (stop in and out)

Level 1



Introduction & Foundation

- Introduction to topic/theme
- Foundational work
- College and career readiness

Level 2



Training & Practice

- Courses, Modules
- Bootcamps, Certificates
- Professional Development
- Workshops, Training

Level 3



Application & Feedback

- Internships
- Co-ops
- Work-based learning
- Experiential learning
- Apprenticeships, Jobs



Opportunity- Ready & ALC- Maine

The incarcerated subcommittee:

- Will support training of internal facilitators at other MDOC facilities (and support completion for the 200+ who have accessed content)
- Will support connection of content to UMaine Augusta's 2nd Chance Pell degrees offered at MDOC facilities (3 credit college success course)
- Expansion of pathway offering to Somerset County Jail (5 person pilot) and the PACE program through Penobscot County Jail and Riverside Adult Ed (20 person pilot)



**“One of the best things we can
do is heal the harm...”**

—Finding Fred, Episode 9, “Help the Helpers”

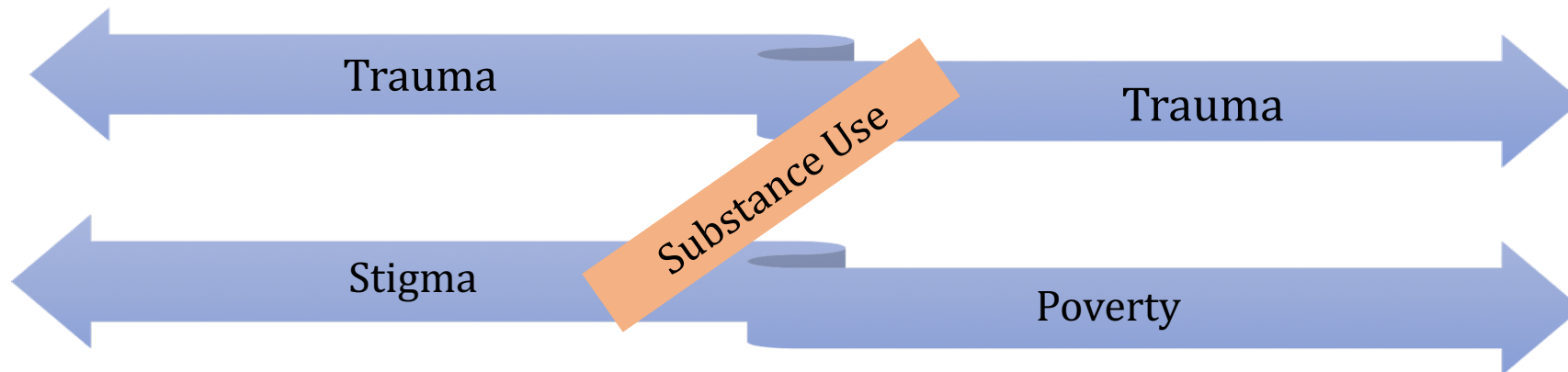
Implications: The Access Continuum

Physical Incarceration

- Most restrictive environment
- Limited access – internet, program options, outside world

Systemic/Cultural Incarceration

- Perceived as least restrictive environment (not in prison)
- For vulnerable populations in rural areas, barriers can create a most restrictive environment





We are changing the conversation.



When all learning counts...

“[Learners] lives are the literature upon which the experience is built – the text from which they analyze – there is power in this.”



Megan London, Eastern Maine Community College

mlondon@emcc.edu

Katy Grant, Maine Department of Corrections

Katy.Grant@maine.gov

Joseph L'Africain: Maine Community College System

jlaftricain@mccs.me.edu

Claire Sullivan, University of Maine System

claires@maine.edu