

BAA Intent Language:

It is the intent of the General Assembly that all DOC facility work programs operate in a manner that is both fiscally sustainable (to the extent possible given current statute limitations) and programmatically effective in preparing incarcerated individuals for meaningful employment upon release. The General Assembly notes with concern that a significant budget deficit has developed within the previously existing programs despite a wage structure that pays incarcerated Vermonters at rates significantly below the federal minimum wage, ranging from \$0.25 to \$1.35 per hour. To address these issues, the General Assembly directs the Department of Corrections to develop and submit a strategic plan addressing the following:

1. **Efficiency and Self-Sustainability:** A business plan that ensures all facility work programs (to include Vermont Correctional Industries, Vocational training programs, and other paid facility duties) operate without recurring deficits, including regular reporting to the General Assembly on the development of deficits and corrective actions taken to address them in real time.
2. **Workforce Development and Skill Transferability:** A comprehensive evaluation, in consultation with the Department of Labor, of the skills provided through the programs, with an emphasis on ensuring that those skills are transferable to employment opportunities post-incarceration. This includes consideration of expanding technical training and certification opportunities that carry recognized value in the labor market.
3. **Equitable Participation:** An analysis of whether the program serves a sufficient portion of the incarcerated population to justify its administration and whether participants gain meaningful and valuable work experiences.
4. **Wage Structure and Program Impact:** A review of the wages paid to program participants, the implications of this wage structure on program outcomes, and the appropriate use of those funds in relation to the program's objectives.

The Department of Corrections shall submit this plan, including proposed benchmarks for improvement, to the relevant legislative committees of jurisdiction no later than December 15, 2025. Further, the General Assembly expects timely reporting of financial or operational activities within the program to ensure appropriate oversight and prevent future deficits.