

Internal Trainers: A Smart Decision

Prepared by Carey Group for the Pennsylvania
Partnership for Criminal Justice Improvement

March 2026

Project Funding

This project was paid for by federal and state funds from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency.



Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----------|
| Introduction | 1 |
| Why Internal Training Capacity Matters..... | 1 |
| Key Components of a Cost–Benefit Analysis | 2 |
| Step 1: Identify the Costs..... | 4 |
| Step 2: Identify the Benefits..... | 5 |
| Step 3: Quantify Benefits (Where Possible) | 6 |
| Step 4: Compare Costs and Benefits Over Time..... | 7 |
| Presenting the Results and Measuring Success | 8 |
| Long-Term Vision: Building Toward Full-Time Trainers..... | 8 |
| Conclusion | 9 |

Introduction

There is no question that using internal trainers can result in both financial and operational benefits for a county department; however, it can be difficult to articulate these benefits to the president judge, commissioners, or other funders. This document provides a structured way for county departments to evaluate and communicate the benefits of investing in internal trainers and incentivizing staff to serve as trainers, with the goal of strengthening the case for additional funding for dedicated training positions in larger departments.

Why Internal Training Capacity Matters

Relying on external trainers can result in high costs, delays in training, and a lack of relevance when trainers have a limited understanding of department needs and culture. Therefore, to improve outcomes, it is important for counties to have well-trained, consistent, and motivated employees to deliver high-quality training to staff. Yet, many departments face training capacity challenges, including:

- lack of staff interested in becoming trainers,
- high onboarding costs of trainers, and
- high turnover of trainers.

Building internal training capacity through a structured “train-the-trainer (TTT)” model addresses these issues by:

- leveraging institutional knowledge and practical experience,
- building leadership capacity among existing staff, and
- creating a sustainable model for staff’s skill development aligned with standards and goals.

One possible TTT model—one that is currently available to county adult probation departments—would see department staff trained by external training organizations to facilitate courses that they would then deliver to their peers. While, at first, staff trainers might also carry a caseload, over time, departments may transition to having full-time trainers. It is this TTT model that is discussed in this document.

Key Components of a Cost–Benefit Analysis

A cost–benefit analysis (CBA) helps decision-makers quantify how investing in internal trainers yields measurable returns over time. The process involves four key steps: identify the costs, identify the benefits, quantify the benefits, and compare costs and benefits over time. It is important to note that every county is different, and their capacity and the financial impact will vary greatly. Counties are encouraged to use this document as a guide, utilizing facts and numbers that mirror their own.

The document focuses on three staff trainings—risk assessment, motivational interviewing, and case planning—that stem from Pennsylvania’s operating standards for adult probation and parole departments.¹ The same CBA process can be used for other required trainings.

Operating Standards

B.2. Assessment Process

The agency has an actuarial assessment process that identifies individual programming needs, risk of reoffending, and level of supervision. There are provisions for regular review. The assessment process includes the following:

- an initial assessment of appropriate individuals using a standardized and validated third generation or newer assessment tool,
- referrals for additional assessments or evaluations when needed (CRN, Drug and Alcohol, MH/ID, sex offender, domestic violence, etc.),
- personal interview with the individual, and
- assessment or reassessment results are recorded in the case file and communicated with the individual.

Training Need: Ohio Risk Assessment System

Continued

¹ The standards can be found in *Operating Standards for Adult Probation and Parole Departments in Pennsylvania* (<https://www.pa.gov/content/dam/copapwp-pagov/en/pccd/documents/aboutus/documents/operating%20stds%20for%20co%20adult%20prob%20%20parole%20depts%20in%20pa%203rd%20edition%20revised.pdf>). If a county is not in compliance with the standards, they are in jeopardy of not receiving their annual Continuing County Adult Probation and Parole Grant (CCAPPG) funds.

B.6. Supervision Strategies

The agency supports supervision strategies and programs that have been scientifically demonstrated to enhance compliance with the court or releasing authority-ordered conditions, and that reduce criminal behavior, such as use of practices including but not limited to the following:

- assess actuarial risk/needs,
- enhance intrinsic motivation,
- target interventions,
- skill train with direct practice (CBT methods),
- increase positive reinforcement,
- engage ongoing community support,
- measure relevant processes/practices, and
- provide measurement feedback.

***Training Need:** Motivational Interviewing*

B.7. Individualized Case Plan

An individualized case plan is developed for appropriate individuals as determined by the risk and need assessment. This plan is reviewed and approved by a supervisor. The individual receives a copy of the case plan. The case plan includes as appropriate:

- the appropriate level of supervision as determined by the individual's risk and need,
- development of goals and objectives that address community safety and individual needs to reduce recidivism,
- objectives to be met by the individual and the field officer, and
- services that address the individual's needs.

***Training Need:** Case Planning and Management*

Step 1: Identify the Costs

Document all direct and indirect costs associated with developing and supporting internal trainers.

Example²

| Train-the-Trainer Certification Costs ³ | | | |
|--|------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Item | ORAS (5 days) | MI (6.5 days) ⁴ | Case Planning (2 days) |
| Tuition | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Hotel (Average \$150 a night) | \$600 | \$600 | \$150 |
| Mileage (Average \$125 per trip) | \$125 | \$375 | \$125 |
| Meals (Average \$75 per day) | \$375 | \$525 | \$150 |
| Total Per Course | \$1,100 | \$1,500 | \$425 |
| Ongoing Incentive and Support Costs | | | |
| Trainer Stipend, Bonus, or Pay Differential | \$1,000 | \$1,000 | \$1,000 |
| | | GRAND TOTAL | \$6,025 |

REGIONALIZATION REDUCES COST OF TRAIN-THE-TRAINER TRAININGS

In Pennsylvania, numerous large and small counties have found significant cost savings by using a regionalized approach. Counties host TTTs or staff trainings and invite other counties to attend, and they share trainers.

² In the example, one staff member will attend each TTT and be trained to facilitate the corresponding course.

³ The County Chief Adult Probation and Parole Officers Association of Pennsylvania is paying the tuition for TTT courses through a PCCD grant. Counties are responsible for room, mileage, and meal costs. These costs will vary based on the location of the training, county union contracts, and policies related to reimbursements. Similarly, ongoing incentive and support costs will vary depending on policy and union contracts. The numbers provided are for demonstration purposes only and should not be considered recommendations.

⁴ The TTT for the MI course would be 6.5 days over three sessions, with a period of time in between to practice skills. The first two sessions would each be 2 days, and the third session would be 2.5 days.

Step 2: Identify the Benefits

Identify both tangible and intangible benefits that result from using internal trainers.

Example

Reduced Overall Training Costs

- Reduced reliance on external vendors (i.e., elimination or reduction of contract training expenses)

Improved Service Quality and Efficiency

- Higher compliance with operating standards and evidence-based policies and practices
- Consistent training content geared to department needs
- Fewer performance-related incidents or corrective actions
- Increased buy-in from staff (i.e., when training is facilitated by a peer rather than by an external person)
- Decreases in rearrests, hearings, and jail population
- Improved community safety

Enhanced Organizational Capacity

- Development of internal leadership and subject matter expertise
- Increased staff morale and culture of learning

Step 3: Quantify Benefits (Where Possible)

Use available departmental data to calculate cost savings and productivity gains that result from using internal trainers.

Example⁵

| External Training Costs Saved ⁶ | | | |
|---|------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ITEM | ORAS (2 days) | MI (4 days) ⁷ | Case Planning (1 day) |
| Tuition | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Hotel (Average \$150 per night x three staff members) | \$450 | \$900 | \$0 |
| Mileage (Average \$125) | \$125 | \$250 | \$125 |
| Meals (Average \$75 per day x three staff members) | \$450 | \$900 | \$225 |
| Total Per Course | \$1,025 | \$2,050 | \$350 |
| Total for Training | | | \$3,425 |
| Productivity Gains ⁸ | | | \$2,000 |
| TOTAL ANNUAL COSTS | | | \$5,425 |

⁵ In the example, the county has an average turnover of three staff annually, and each staff member is required to take all three courses.

⁶ When staff are trained by external trainers, the County Chief Adult Probation and Parole Officers Association of Pennsylvania pays tuition fees through a PCCD grant. Counties are responsible for room, mileage, and meal costs. Mileage costs assume that training participants travel together to the training location (i.e., mileage is calculated for only one training participant). The actual costs will vary depending on the actual turnover rate (i.e., the number of staff being trained annually), location of the training, and reimbursement policies of the county.

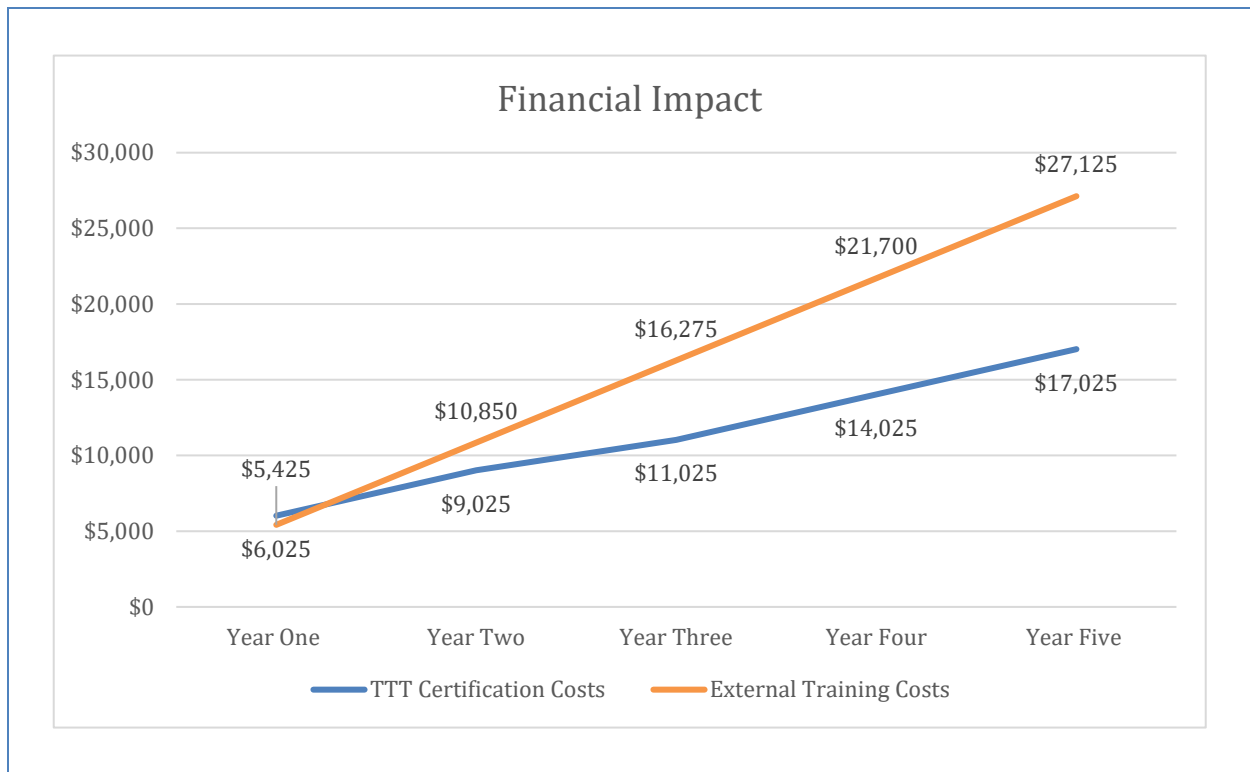
⁷ The MI training would take place over two 2-day sessions.

⁸ In the example, productivity gains are grouped together and include items such as higher compliance with operating standards and evidence-based policies and practices; increased efficiency; decreases in jail days, hearings, and arrests; increased community safety; reduction in turnover; and other potential benefits of utilizing the TTT model. A county should list the specific benefits when creating their analysis.

Step 4: Compare Costs and Benefits Over Time

Calculate impacts over a 3- to 5-year period, capturing both direct financial savings and operational improvements. Create a break-even analysis showing when the savings from internal training offset initial costs.

Example⁹



⁹ The cumulative cost of a TTT certification program, including the original TTT certification costs and providing annual stipends, is represented by the blue line. The orange line represents cumulative external training costs. Break even occurs between Year One and Year Two of the program. At Year Five, the county saves \$10,100 (\$27,125 - \$17,025).

Presenting the Results and Measuring Success

When presenting the cost–benefit analysis to the president judge, commissioners, or other funding bodies, departments should:

- use **clear visuals**, such as charts that compare external vs. internal training costs over time,
- include **case studies or benchmarks** from similar counties that have implemented internal training models, and
- highlight the **nonfinancial impacts**, such as improved service quality, safety outcomes, and staff satisfaction.

To sustain funding and to reinforce transparency, accountability, and credibility, departments should:

- track key metrics, such as training participation, trainer turnover, onboarding time of new trainers, and staff satisfaction with trainings, annually;
- conduct periodic updates of the cost–benefit analysis; and
- share impact reports with county leadership.

Long-Term Vision: Building Toward Full-Time Trainers

As departments grow, the cost–benefit analysis can demonstrate how, over time, the savings from developing and utilizing internal trainers can be significant. Those savings can be used to hire dedicated full-time trainers rather than trainers who also carry a caseload.

Counties that might be ready for this next step may experience:

- a large number of staff requiring consistent onboarding and ongoing education in evidence-based practices,
- increasing demand for specialized or mandated training (e.g., compliance, safety), and
- documented long-term cost savings that outweigh the salary of full-time trainers.

Conclusion

Developing internal trainers utilizing the TTT model is a financially smart decision. Department leadership can determine exactly how smart a decision it is for their county by using this guide to develop a customized cost-benefit analysis. As counties across the state develop internal trainers—creating a training network—those trainers can be shared across county lines, helping one another to facilitate courses and, in the process, to build their training skills.