



Practicum at a Glance

Reem Najjar
Worcester State University
Department of Health Sciences

Background

The Department of Health and Human services in the Worcester City Hall serves the city of Worcester with these Task Forces:

- Opioid abuse task force
- Public Health Task Force
- Mental Health Task Force
- **Re-Entry Task Force**
- **Re-Entry Mission:**

To identify, prioritize, and analyze the needs of the individuals released from incarceration.

The purpose of the Re-Entry Task Force is to ease those released from incarceration into stable housing, employment, and clothing post researching where the gap is within the Worcester House of Corrections regarding assisting the released with Re-Entry and accommodations prior to release and upon release.



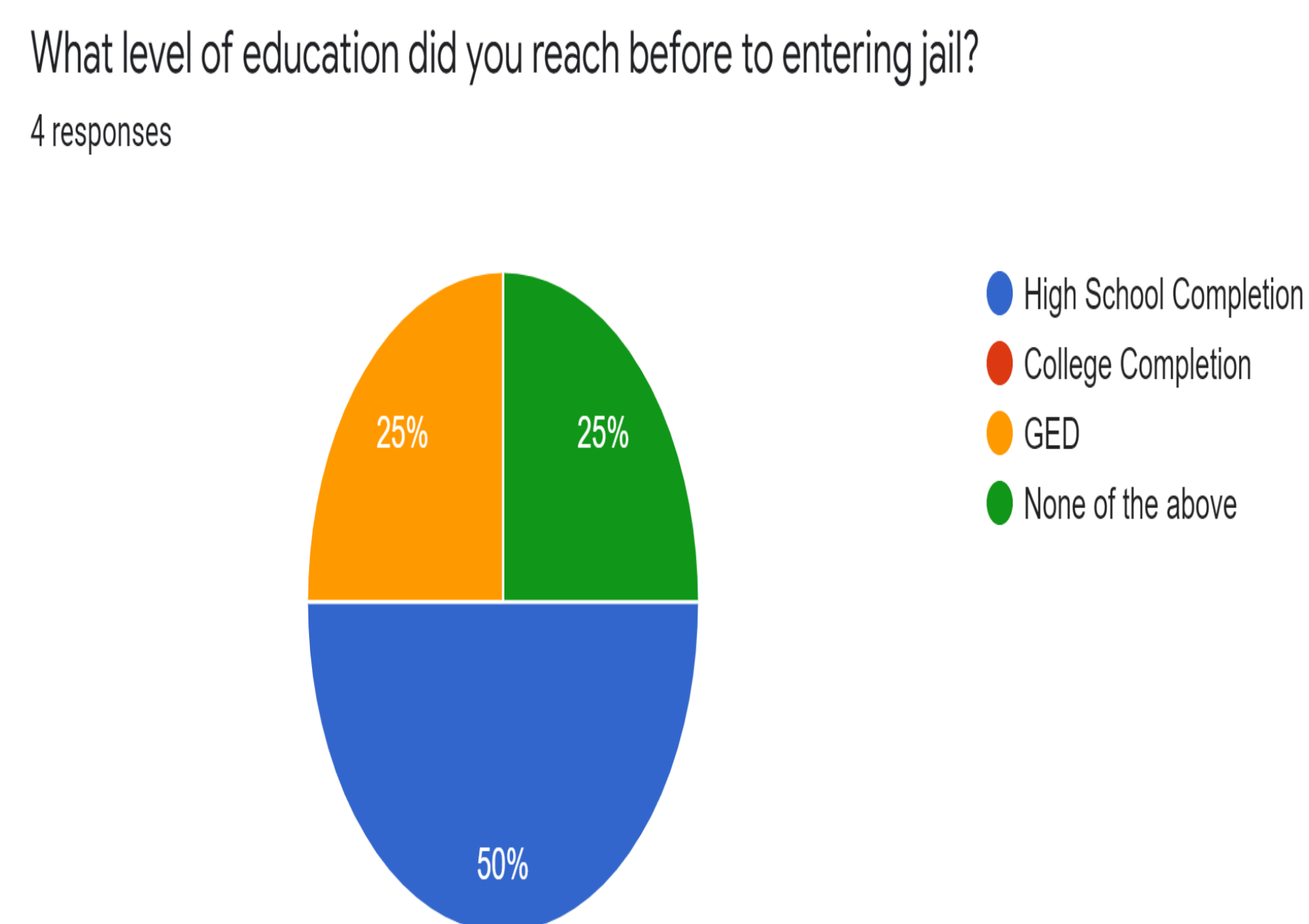
Site Role

- Developing a community needs assessment
- Identifying the barriers through primary and secondary methods of data collection that the incarcerated population face in imprisonment and upon being released
- Through setting up key informant interviews and focus groups
- Setting up appointments with the transitional housing to initially meet one individual and have an in-depth interview prior to collecting a more inclusive focus group to let the priority population be heard.

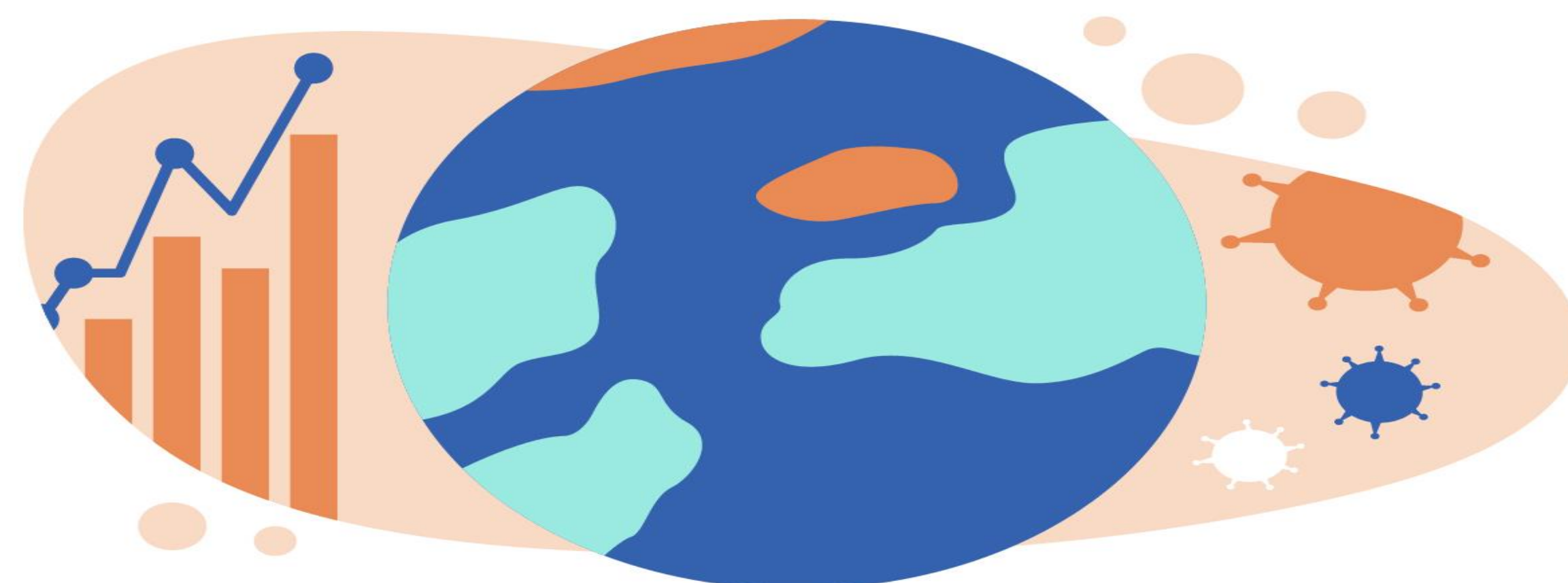
Project Highlights

- Collecting data in addition to gaining insight from the organizers of the assistance organizations and the priority population directly.
- Connecting the changes to be made to the information found in peer-reviewed and university-based articles.
- Scheduling key informant interviews with South Middlesex Opportunity Council, Legendary Legacy, The Hector Reyes House, and Open Sky.

Figure 1 or Picture:



- After researching the re-entry programs within Worcester House of Corrections, like S.T.O.P, surveys were developed to see the impact that the re-entry program within the prison system at WHOC in terms of the quality of its services and the population they serve in their prison.
- Rapport with the individuals within the focus group at the Hector Reyes House



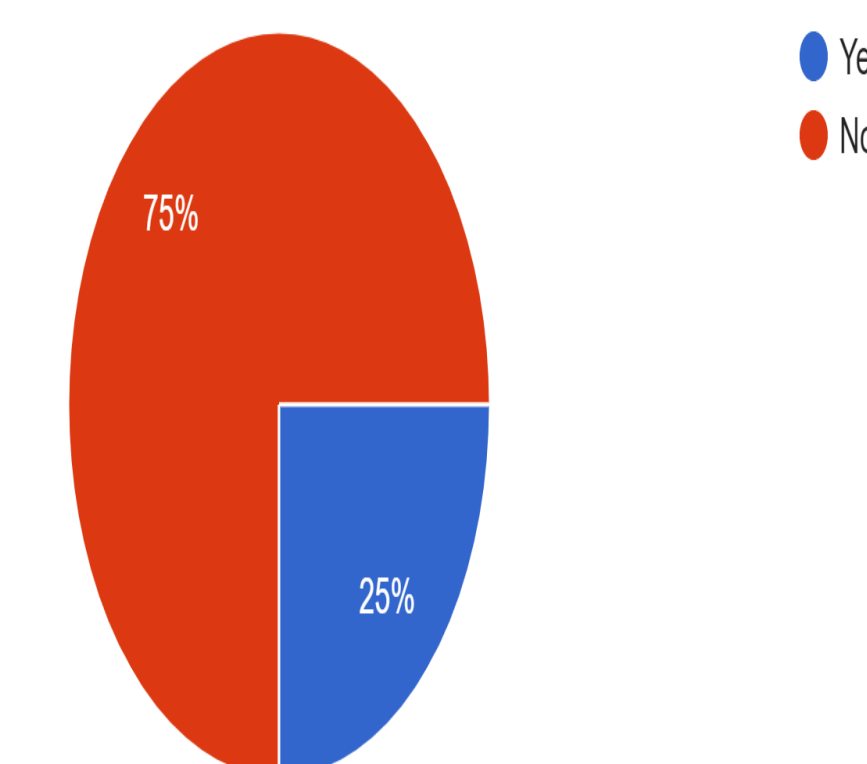
Project Highlights



Findings from surveys and focus groups:

- The housing, reintegration specialist opportunities, and benefits accommodations served to those being released from WHOC are not sufficient
- Programs ended once the pandemic began, such as, the substance abuse program (S.T.O.P) and the classes they offered for the GED/ educational/ vocational or HiSet prep
- WHOC only offers vivitrol as a treatment option to those suffering substance abuse and are very limited to their treatments they serve.

Were you able to utilize the Worcester County House of Corrections and Jail's Reintegration Service?
4 responses



- The priority population reside in neighborhoods with poverty and are thankful for assistance from transitional programs like the Reyes House.
- The end recommendation is to propose to WHOC to serve higher quality re-entry programs that focuses on the inner needs of the men released thus building that trust with them.

Lessons Learned

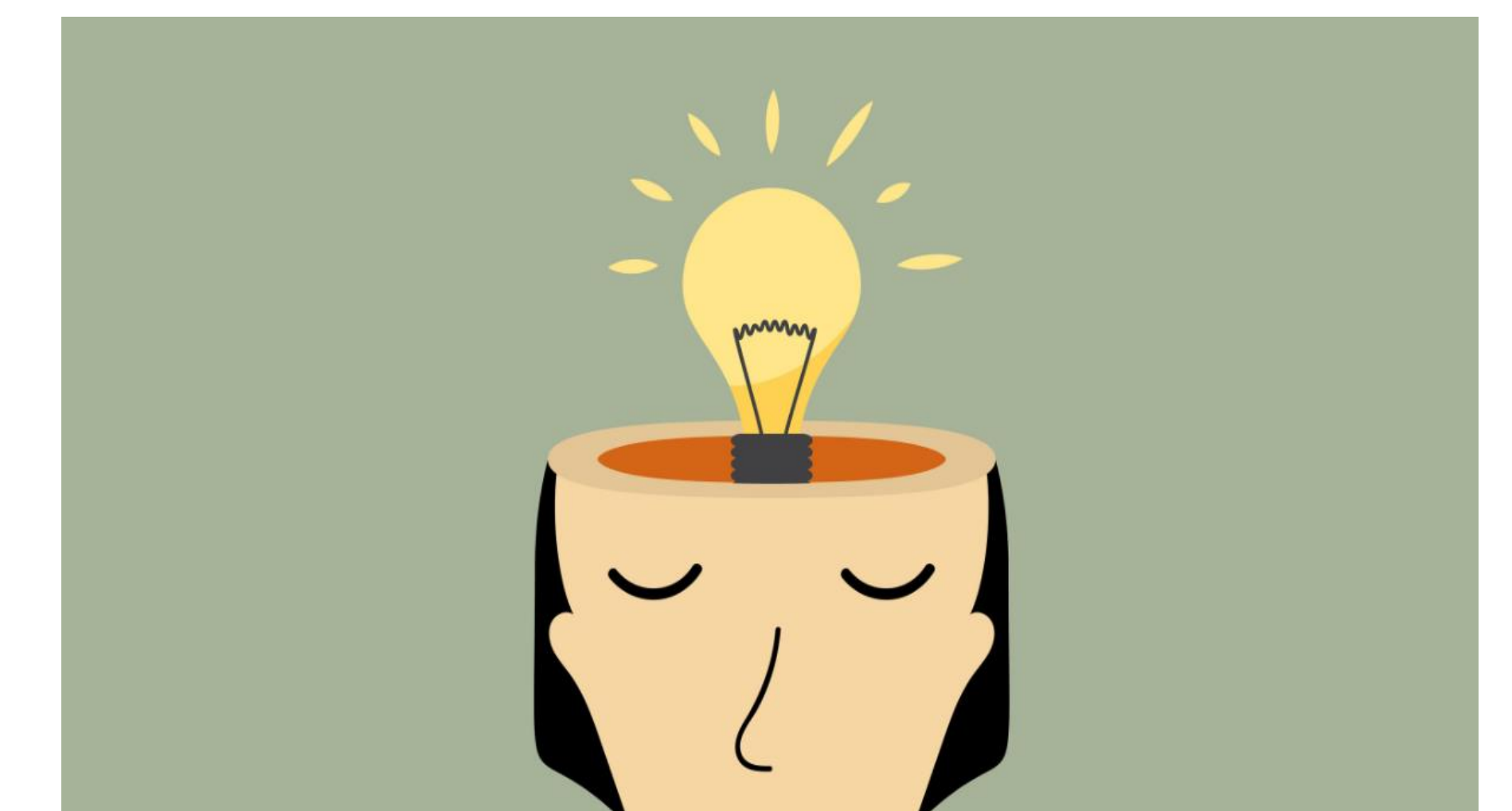
Lessons I Learned

Every Public Health issue, one must be determined to research the underlying layer of that issue, for example, applied was that there has been a surge of incarcerated men released yet have an increased chance of recidivism

Speak with the priority population directly to connect the dots of the data and produce the solutions to the underlying problem at hand.

Time management and commitment is something learned and achieved.

Research needs ones; full and undivided attention to detail and research.



Advice for future students for the practicum is:

-Take into consideration of writing out the 'whole/ underlying picture' of the core research needed to help propose interventions

-Be keen and eager to hear the personal opinions and direct voice of the priority population

- Consult with the project manager that is working in the site with you and meeting with you weekly, they will give you great feedback on your findings!

References

- The Geography of Incarceration in a Gateway City. Forman, Benjamin, Rennert, Lindwe. September 2017
Easterling, D., & McDuffee, L. (2019). How Can Foundations Promote Impactful Collaboration?. TheFoundation Review
Easterling, D., & McDuffee, L. (2019). How Can Foundations Promote Impactful Collaboration?. TheFoundation Review