



Utah Board of Pardons and Parole

2023-2028 Strategic Plan

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR OF THE UTAH BOARD OF PARDONS AND PAROLE

Greetings,

The Utah Board of Pardons and Parole has an important role in advancing and protecting public safety throughout the state of Utah. We are inspired and guided by our mission to protect public safety through informed and just decisions that consider victim input, the accountability of those under our jurisdiction, risk reduction, and rehabilitation. Board members and staff take this mission to heart, and we work to ensure that we have processes in place that create opportunities for input from victims, accountability for individuals under our jurisdiction, and risk reduction for communities. The Board plays an important part in a complex criminal justice system that makes Utah a safer place for everyone.

This strategic plan is the result of a collaborative process that involved members of the Board of Pardons and Parole, agency staff, and professional guidance and insight. We have considered the importance of public safety, the multiple perspectives of victims, those under our jurisdiction, their families, and the communities we serve. Throughout this strategic plan, we focus on critical public safety needs that include transparency of the agency and our decision-making processes, building an organizational culture that is agile and fosters a healthy work environment, embracing innovation, and collaboration with our justice system partners. The Board appreciates the support provided by the Governor's Office of Planning & Budget in the strategic planning process.

The work we do plays a meaningful role in promoting public safety which is vital for laying the groundwork for communities that are safe, have opportunities to thrive, and meet the challenges of the future. The Board looks forward to achieving these goals as we continue to work with our stakeholders and emerge as a leading parole authority for the nation. On behalf of the Board of Pardons and Parole, I am pleased to present our strategy for achieving this vision.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Carrie J. Cochran", with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Carrie Cochran
Chair, Utah Board of Pardons and Parole

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Utah Board of Pardons and Parole Strategic Plan serves many purposes, and the most important is to create a planned and incremental pathway to success as we embrace our role as criminal justice system leaders with an eye toward public safety and accountability. The Board appreciates the work of the 2022 Legislative Audit that provided guidance on areas of potential improvement and progress. The Board also extends gratitude to our staff who contributed to the development of this strategic plan and support the functions of the Board through dedicated public service.

This strategic plan is organized around critical focus areas resulting in four key strategic priorities of transparency, agility, innovation, and collaboration with the purpose of contributing to continual improvement in public safety outcomes.

To achieve these strategic priorities, we present goals with corresponding objectives, strategies, and time frames for implementation and measurement. In addition, each strategic priority includes specific benchmark performance measures that are designed to support continual improvement across all four strategic priorities. This framework supports agility and flexibility so we're improving and adapting to changes in law, policy, emerging leading practices, data trends, and the environment in which we work.

Throughout this strategic plan we recognize our challenges and embrace them, build from a solid foundation of strengths, and move toward a safer future for all Utahns.



STRATEGIC PLAN BY THE NUMBERS

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THE UTAH BOARD OF PARDONS AND PAROLE

The Utah Board of Pardons and Parole (“Board”) is established under Article VII, Section 12 of the Utah Constitution. The Board has authority to parole, remit fines, forfeitures and restitution orders, commute sentences, and grant pardons in all cases except treason and impeachment. The process and procedures of the Board can be found in the Utah Code Annotated in Title 77 Chapter 27 as well as Utah Administrative Code R671.

The Board is composed of five full-time members and up to five *pro tempore* members, all of whom are appointed by the Governor with the consent of the Utah State Senate. The Board’s work is supported by a professional staff who manage the essential functions of the Board. Some of these responsibilities include conducting hearings, providing information to victims, publishing Board decisions, coordinating with criminal justice partners, analyzing case information, and communicating with the public about Board operations.

The Utah Board of Pardons and Parole aspires to be a national leader among parole authorities, with processes that follow leading practices, research, and evidence. The Board’s work is guided by the National Parole Resource Center’s best practices targets, the National Institute of Justice, the Utah Sentencing Commission, and model practices used by other entities that advance public safety.

WHAT WE DO

The Board has many responsibilities within the criminal justice system in Utah. One of the Board’s main functions is determining when, and under what conditions, those serving prison sentences may be paroled. The Board also handles parole violations and revocations, imposes and modifies conditions of parole, considers commutation and pardon requests, makes parole termination decisions, and addresses restitution. The decisions the Board makes must be fair, just, unbiased, and consistent with state and federal law.

Board decisions must protect public safety while safeguarding the rights of crime victims and individuals under the Board’s jurisdiction. The Board’s decision making is guided by the Utah Sentencing Commission’s Adult Sentencing, Release, & Supervision Guidelines and the indeterminate sentencing lengths outlined in state statute. The Board uses an evidence-based structured decision-making model (SDM) to ensure protection of public safety, transparency, and clarity in decisions.

OUR GUIDING PHILOSOPHY

- **Public safety** is the primary objective of the Board. We achieve public safety through intentional, conscientious, and **evidence-based decision making** that considers the nature and circumstance of offenses, criminal history, conduct and progress in prison and on parole, risk assessments, re-entry plans, victim impact, and any other relevant factors. We promote sustained rehabilitation for individuals under our jurisdiction to enable them to safely reintegrate into society.
- The Board demonstrates the **highest professional and ethical standards** in making decisions about release, clemency, and pardons.
- The Board is **accountable** to the people of the state of Utah. Stakeholders include the public, local communities, victims and their representatives, and those who are under our jurisdiction, as well as our criminal justice system partners, including the Governor's Office, Utah State Legislature, and the Utah State Courts.
- The Board believes **outcomes** need to be measured and performance continually improved.
- The Board believes **fairness and equity** is achieved through collaborative decision making and **diversity of thought** among Board members.



OUR MISSION, VISION, and VALUES

Mission

The mission of the Board of Pardons and Parole is to protect public safety through informed and just decisions that consider victim input, the accountability of those under our jurisdiction, risk reduction, and rehabilitation.

Vision

Keeping Utah safe through fair, evidence-based decision-making practices, and public transparency.



Core Values

Accountability means we are responsible to hold each other accountable internally and embrace our role in public safety and support successful reintegration of people into community life in a way that is respectful of the needs of multiple stakeholders.

Fairness means we treat all people who engage with the Board, internally and externally, in a way that balances their unique circumstances with law, due process, and objectivity in decision making processes.

Transparency means our decisions are clear, consistent, and foster trust in the criminal justice system. Internally, we build trust with one another through discourse that is respectful and honest.

Empathy means Board members seek to understand the unique circumstances and experiences of people who interact with the Board. This includes people who are under our jurisdiction, victims, members of the public, and among ourselves.

Inclusion means recognizing and appreciating the experiences, perspectives, and insight of people of all backgrounds, both inside the Board of Pardons and Parole and among the stakeholders we serve.

Leadership means we embrace our role as criminal justice system leaders in Utah through relationship building, strategic partnership, and transparency with our stakeholders. Internally, we inspire servant leadership through intentional actions within and among Board members and staff.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The Board faces several challenges, including some identified by audits conducted by the Utah Office of the Legislative Auditor General in 2016 and 2022:

- The uniquely difficult nature of the Board's work means that not everyone will agree with every decision the Board makes. Board members understand and respect that reasonable minds can disagree. In this context, skillful communication and transparency are essential. The Board needs to better define and communicate its guiding philosophy and decision-making processes and ensure that its decisions are clear and understandable.
- Operational improvements – including streamlining workflow and improving data tracking and reporting capacity – require a clear and strong organizational structure. The Board needs a management plan and strategic plan to guide it. Updated policies and rules can help to assure consistency and adherence to best practices.
- The historical reliance on paper records has limited the tracking of meaningful performance measures and other quality assurance indicators. With its move to electronic data, the Board should establish high-quality performance metrics, assess its decisions for consistency, and ensure that it is meeting performance targets.
- The Board's decisions are often misunderstood because audiences may lack information about how the Board operates and makes its decisions. The Board needs to provide education and regular reporting so that others can understand what it is, what it stands for, and how it makes decisions.
- The perception of uneven workload issues, the change of work processes with the move to electronic records, and recent difficulties in maintaining consistent administrative leadership have combined to make the establishment of clear internal practices critical for organizational success. For organizational improvements to be successful, employees need avenues for input and participation, recognition of the key role of staff in agency change, and proper support and training.

The Board has opportunities and strengths on which it can build:

- Staff at the Board overwhelmingly enjoy their jobs because they get a sense of meaning from their work and understand how what they do contributes to the Board's success. In addition, many Board members and staff have worked in other segments of the criminal justice system, giving them increased insight and understanding about the importance of their responsibilities at the Board.
- The Board's current move to electronic records and its expert guidance from staff members makes organizational improvements more likely to succeed with fewer unintended or unforeseen consequences.
- The Board has a new administrative director, with over 25 years of experience in Utah's justice system, to lead the agency forward.
- Board members work well together and function as a team, even as they bring diverse professional and personal perspectives to their work.



OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

In response to the challenges and opportunities identified through the recent audit and strategic planning process, Board members and staff collaboratively developed four main strategic priorities. As an agency, the Board of Pardons and Parole has a responsibility to promote and maintain public safety throughout the state of Utah. Consequently, public safety is the core of our four-point strategy to guide the Board into the future.

Strategic Priority 1: Transparency

Promote transparency and clarity so all stakeholders and those affected by Board decisions understand what the Board does, how it makes decisions, and its commitment to procedurally fair, open, and transparent processes.

Strategic Priority 2: Agility

Our organizational culture models agility, consistency, and high performance by providing proper support and training for all employees. This healthy work environment fosters teamwork, values diversity of thought, and supports professional development that enhances our mission of public safety.

Strategic Priority 3: Innovation

The skillful use of technology and other innovations achieves internal efficiency, accuracy, and expert decision-making to meet the needs of victims, people under Board jurisdiction, their respective families, and the public.

Strategic Priority 4: Collaboration

Commitment to collaborative efforts to contribute to public safety through effective communication and data sharing among justice system partners and the use of meaningful performance measures and outcomes to advance continual improvement.

Strategy for Success



The mission of the Board of Pardons and Parole is to protect public safety through informed and just decisions that consider victim input, the accountability of those under our jurisdiction, risk reduction, and rehabilitation.

Keeping Utah safe through fair, evidence-based decision-making practices, and public transparency.

Values: Accountability, Fairness, Transparency, Empathy, Inclusion, Leadership

Strategic
Priority 1

Transparency

Strategic
Priority 2

Agility

Strategic
Priority 3

Innovation

Strategic
Priority 4

Collaboration

Fairness and Equity Through Transparency

Outcomes That Support Continual Performance Improvement

Professional and Ethical Standards



Strategic Priority 1: Transparency

Promote transparency and clarity so all stakeholders and those affected by Board decisions understand what the Board does, how it makes decisions, and its commitment to procedurally fair, open, and transparent processes.

Transparency Goals	Objectives	Strategies and Time Frames
1.1 Ensure that stakeholders know who the Board is, what we stand for, and how we make decisions.	1.1.1 Engage in strategically planned outreach and public education regarding the purpose, function, and processes of the Board.	Gather participant feedback from outreach efforts to determine whether efforts met their needs and the degree to which it was informative.
1.2 Provide clear, consistent information to stakeholder groups regarding hearings, Board processes, and opportunities for input.	<p>1.2.1 Enhance resources for victims, individuals under Board jurisdiction and their families, and the public, including revisions to the website.</p> <p>1.2.2 Provide public information that clarifies expectations for various stakeholder groups including victims, those under board jurisdiction, and their families about statutory requirements for Board decision making and processes so stakeholders know what to expect post-adjudication.</p> <p>1.2.3 Redesign the rationale sheets to ensure direct and clear communication and the provision of meaningful information to individuals under Board jurisdiction.</p>	<p>Complete the website redesign by Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 to include a feedback loop for site visitors to rate their perceptions of the quality of information and leave recommendations to improve clarity.</p> <p>Beginning in FY 2025 seek and track feedback from stakeholders and examine the feedback quarterly to identify communication gaps and make improvements.</p> <p>By FY 2025, begin collecting rationale sheet information electronically, and report aggregate outcomes publicly.</p>

Transparency Goals	Objectives	Strategies and Time Frames
1.3 Provide accessible information about Board performance and outcomes to the public.	<p>1.3.1 Compile and release an annual report of performance indicators to the public.</p> <p>1.3.2 Provide data reporting that is available on the website to include performance indicators and data that relates to Board decision making and processes.</p>	<p>By FY 2024, compile and release a public annual report that outlines key performance measures of recidivism, time under Board jurisdiction, prison releases by category, parole revocations, alignment of Board decisions with the sentencing guidelines, and aggregate reasons for departure from the guidelines and make this information available on the website.</p> <p>By FY 2025, update the Board’s procedural and operational policies to ensure they encompass all parts of the guiding philosophy, including public safety, and make these policies available as applicable.</p>

Strategic Priority 1: Transparency

Key Benchmark Performance Measures



Percentage of stakeholders indicating outreach efforts increased understanding of the Board.



Percentage of publicly available statutory measures.



Annual outcome measure of time under Board jurisdiction.



Strategic Priority 2: Agility

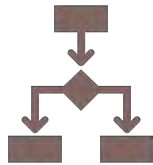
Our organizational culture models agility, consistency, and high performance by providing proper support and training for all employees. This healthy work environment fosters teamwork, values diversity of thought, and supports professional development that enhances our mission of public safety.

Agility Goals	Objectives	Strategies and Time Frames
2.1 Ensure that Board members and hearing officers consistently use the Strategic Decision Making (SDM) model.	2.1.1 Hearing officers and Board members are trained and proficient in the use of the SDM.	By FY 2026, 90 percent of hearing officers and Board members are trained on the SDM and are proficient in utilizing the tool during SDM-designated hearing types.
		By FY 2026, 80 percent or more of applicable hearings will use SDM.
2.2 Create equitable workload distribution among staff.	2.2.1 Analyze staffing needs to support efficiency and equitable distribution of workload by key functional areas.	Conduct a staffing needs analysis by FY 2027 to assess staffing needs based on workflow and best practices for optimal staffing levels.
		By FY 2027 develop an appropriations request, if necessary, to meet staffing needs.
2.3 Create a culture of professional development where Board members and staff have opportunities to learn, grow, and build their skill and knowledge.	2.3.1 Create a professional development strategy as part of annual performance planning for each staff member based on the nature of work and areas of interest.	By FY 2025, 90% of all staff and Board members will participate in training events on the topics of implicit bias and procedural justice.
	2.3.2 Develop an agency “in-service” training strategy that focuses on organizational development and sustaining a healthy workplace. Include training on procedural justice and implicit bias for all employees.	By FY 2026, as part of annual performance planning, each staff member will submit goals related to professional development. Then, Board management will track successful completion of those goals and use that information to connect to appropriations requests for future years.
	2.3.3 Support staff in their educational goals through flexible schedules and educational assistance where possible.	By FY 2026, create a supervisor development education series, with core modules and specialized training by supervisor type. By FY 2027, revise and implement a new employee training for onboarding.

Agility Goals	Objectives	Strategies and Time Frames
2.4 Make strategic investment in resources that support decision making that is fair, equitable, and consistent.	2.4.1 Determine resource and/or subscription services that provide the Board with authoritative information about best practices, legal resources, and other information related to parole and pardon processes.	By FY 2025, the Board will assess the benefits and cost of subscription services and resources that support hearing decisions based on current law, statute, and best practices.
	2.4.2 Provide Board members and hearing officers with resources that improve the efficacy, legitimacy, and equity of decision making, including sustained membership in national associations and conference participation.	Create opportunities for conference participation and enrollment in national associations as applicable.
	2.5.1 Provide professional development with a focus on equity and inclusion, respectful communication, and valuing differences among the many populations of stakeholders and groups served by the Board.	By FY 2026, the revised new staff onboarding education will include components on equity and inclusion, respectful communication, and employee wellness.
2.5 Foster a healthy work environment, including appropriate training and support, for staff and Board members.	2.5.2 Provide training on mental health resources, and information on recognizing and addressing secondary trauma and burnout.	Implement an at least yearly and rotating in-service training offering.

Strategic Priority 2: Agility

Key Benchmark Performance Measures



Percentage of hearing officers and Board members who are trained on SDM.



Percentage of applicable hearings using SDM.



Percentage of staff trained on the topics of implicit bias and procedural justice.



Strategic Priority 3: Innovation

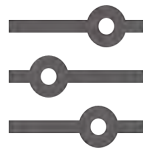
The skillful use of technology and other innovations achieves internal efficiency, accuracy, and expert decision-making to meet the needs of victims, individuals under Board jurisdiction, their respective families, and the public.

Innovation Goals	Objectives	Strategies and Time Frames
3.1 Use technology to improve Board functionality, transparency, and processes.	3.1.1 Continue to work with the Division of Technology Services to implement the O-Track electronic records system and execute additional modules and improvements as necessary.	<p>By 2024, complete the current electronic record system project.</p> <p>By FY 2027, assess efficacy and use of electronic systems, and plan for modifications on an annual basis, and appropriations requests as needed.</p> <p>By FY 2028, evaluate the need for a new pardon data system or improvements to the existing system; submit an appropriations request as needed.</p> <p>Annually assess the need for technological improvements and enhanced data sharing. Develop appropriations requests as needed.</p>
3.2 Streamline operations to improve internal consistency and effectiveness.	3.2.1 Assess administrative rules, policies, and procedures to promote efficiency improvements and alignment with national leading practices that are appropriate for the state of Utah.	<p>By the end of 2023, conduct an assessment of administrative rules, policies, and procedures to integrate leading practices and efficiency improvements.</p> <p>By the end of 2023, create a three-phase, annual investment and work strategy to align administrative functions of the Board with outcomes that promote incremental improvement and success outcomes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● By FY 2025, complete Phase 1 of plan. ● By FY 2026, complete Phase 2 of plan. ● By FY 2027, complete Phase 3 of plan. <p>Throughout the rule and policy review, consider bringing potential requests for statutory changes to the Utah Legislature.</p>

Innovation Goals	Objectives	Strategies and Time Frames
3.3 Use data to inform and improve Board processes.	3.3.1 Identify and use data metrics to guide system improvement and provide key performance indicators.	<p>By FY 2024, analyze and measure recidivism rates, parole revocation rates and parole releases annually.</p> <p>By FY 2026, analyze the consistency of Board decisions with guidelines and use the results to inform system approaches.</p> <p>Periodically assess organizational performance goals to improve effectiveness and workload distribution so as to remain agile and responsive to changing conditions.</p> <p>Develop benchmarks for key performance indicators as appropriate.</p>
3.4 Ensure clarity of operations and internal management integrity.	3.4.1 Create and formalize an improved management plan that outlines relationships between the Board, leadership, and staff.	<p>By FY 2026, draft an adaptive management plan through an inclusive staff and board member process that provides future insight on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT).</p> <p>By FY 2027, finalize the management plan and formalize it in administrative rule.</p>

Strategic Priority 3: Innovation

Key Benchmark Performance Measures



Annual outcome measure of Board decisions aligned with sentencing guidelines and aggregate reasons for departure.



Annual outcome measure of recidivism



Annual measure of prison releases by category.



Strategic Priority 4: Collaboration

Commitment to collaborative efforts to contribute to public safety through effective communication and data sharing among justice system partners and the use of meaningful performance measures and outcomes to advance continual improvement.

Collaboration Goals	Objectives	Strategies and Time Frames
4.1 Assist in the coordination of legal representation resources for parole violation hearings.	4.1.1 Advocate for quality legal representation at parole violation hearings (prosecution and defense) while maintaining the Board's role as a neutral decision-making body.	Provide training and educational opportunities to legal counsel to support quality parole violation representation.
	4.1.2 Coordinate the defense counsel contract for parole violation hearings.	Regularly evaluate whether the defense counsel contract capacity aligns with necessary levels and develop appropriation requests as needed.
4.2 Use information and data sharing to enhance public safety and support informed decisions. .	4.2.1 Support and promote real time information and data sharing and data collaboration with criminal justice stakeholders to enhance public safety.	Continue real-time sharing of information and data between the Department of Corrections and the Board for individuals under Board jurisdiction.
		Promote the continued integration of the Department of Corrections and Board data systems.
		Explore information and data sharing and communication opportunities with the Utah State Courts, and other criminal justice partners as applicable.
4.3 Explore potential ways to enhance communication with victims.	4.3.1 Enhance pathways for victims to communicate with the Board that rely on best practices.	Continue to engage with victims and victim advocates about ways to communicate that employ best practices and provide access to participation in the hearing process.
	4.3.2 Enhance pathways for the Board to notify and communicate with victims that rely on best practices.	

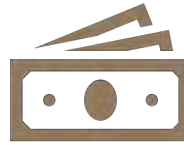
Collaboration Goals	Objectives	Strategies and Time Frames
4.4 Coordinate with stakeholders to improve long term criminal justice outcomes.	4.4.1 Develop strategies to improve communication with the Utah Department of Corrections and other criminal justice stakeholders.	By FY 2025, measure and analyze parole releases and factors related to parole returns.
	4.4.2 Strengthen relationships with justice system partners that support cross-system improvements while maintaining the Board's position as a neutral decision-making entity.	By FY 2025, examine data related to parole violation returns and explore ways to improve in collaboration with the Utah Department of Corrections and criminal justice stakeholders.
	4.4.3 Collaborate with the criminal justice system stakeholders on evaluating and addressing parole violation returns.	By FY 2026, develop collaborative processes to share information between the Board and the Department of Corrections about challenges, successes, and opportunities for improvement.

Strategic Priority 4: Collaboration

Key Benchmark Performance Measures



Annual outcome measure of successful completion rates and parole revocation rates.



Annual measure of defense contract capacity and defense contract need.

WORK PLANS

Key Benchmark Performance Measures Work Plan

Historically, the Board of Pardons and Parole has had limited access to data for performance measures. With funding from the Utah State Legislature and the upcoming completion of the Electronic Records Project, the Board will be better able to develop more meaningful performance measures and benchmarks of progress and success. Based on the guidance from the legislative audit, management will develop benchmarks that consider and are responsive to the guiding philosophies of the Board.

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| FY 2024 | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Identify potential data sources and analyze baseline data. (Researcher)2. Publish data in inaugural public annual report. (Researcher)3. Based on guiding philosophy, define what constitutes successful improvement for each measure. (Management)4. Using the baseline data and guiding philosophy, establish initial targeted benchmarks for each performance measure. (Management)5. <i>Ongoing</i>: Analyze whether there are fiscal needs related to data collection and performance measurement and, if necessary, submit appropriations requests. (Management) |
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| FY 2025 | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Analyze second year data and compare to baseline. (Researcher)2. Report outcomes compared to targeted benchmarks. (Researcher)3. Publish data in the public annual report. (Researcher)4. Evaluate progress in meeting benchmarks and identify areas of system improvement to enhance outcomes. (Management) |
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| FY 2026 | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Analyze third year data and compare cross-year trends. (Researcher)2. Report outcomes compared to targeted benchmarks. (Researcher)3. Publish data in the public annual report. (Researcher)4. Evaluate progress in meeting benchmarks and identify areas of system improvement to enhance outcomes. (Management)5. Examine performance measures to determine if refinement is needed. (Management) |
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| FY 2027 | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Analyze fourth year data and compare cross-year trends. (Researcher)2. Report outcomes compared to targeted benchmarks. (Researcher)3. Publish data in the public annual report. (Researcher)4. Evaluate progress in meeting benchmarks and identify areas of system improvement to enhance outcomes. (Management)5. Implement an ongoing continuous quality improvement process that utilizes data to improve processes. (Management) |
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| FY 2028 | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Analyze fifth year data and compare cross-year trends. (Researcher)2. Report outcomes compared to targeted benchmarks. (Researcher)3. Publish data in the public annual report. (Researcher)4. Determine whether new or updated performance measures would enhance progress and support system improvement. (Management)5. Reevaluate targeted benchmarks for relevance, meaningfulness, and determine if increases or adjustments are needed. (Management) |
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Additional Work Plans

The Board of Pardons and Parole will develop additional work plans as needed to address other areas of the strategic plan. These work plans will include details on fiscal year timelines, designated assignees, and budgetary needs that will help guide the implementation of the strategic plan. The strategic plan and the work plans are living documents that may be updated and revised to be responsive to legislative and statutory requirements, current system needs, and philosophical approaches.



Utah Board of Pardons and Parole

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