

Case Statement

Mission Statement

The mission of WorkForce Inc. is to improve the re-entry success of those formerly incarcerated through providing opportunities for recorded earnings, work history and growing financial stability. These are joined with support services and offered in a professional and caring environment, resulting in viable attachments to work, family, and community life for those re-entering our community.

Philosophy Statement

Our mission objective is driven by a central philosophy: “Work, Responsibility, and Reward” which fosters attachment to work as paramount to personal responsibility and associated rewards.

Problems Addressed

Prison Re-Entry

The return of 6000 persons each year with felony convictions who have served their time to central Indiana has become a recognized policy issue for local governments – the solution of which requires efforts of both the public and private sectors. Public and private resources must be combined in a concentrated and intentional way to address the comprehensive issues related to reentry.

Public safety is paramount to quality of life. Evidence shows attaching ex-offenders to the work place dramatically decreases recidivism and improves successful re-entry, resulting in long term economic success.

Recycling and Sustainability: Electronic Waste; Plastic; Cardboard; Aluminum

Electronic waste is the fastest growing component of the U.S. waste stream. Annually, 1.2 million computers will be disposed of in Indiana. Hazardous materials in electronic waste can leach into ground water. WFI offers jobs for those re-entering the community that reduce the impact of e-waste, resulting in improved environmental quality of life. Since January 2006 Workforce has processed over 3 million lbs of electronic waste.

WFI acts as the contractor with the City of Indianapolis for the Tox Drops, where electronic waste is collected along with household hazardous waste. Visit our website: www.recycleindy.com

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WFI is also a contractor for the Indiana Department of Administration (IDOA) to recycle end of life electronic state surplus.

WFI recycling includes a comprehensive community recycling center as an additional means to build on the e-waste model which we know works, towards achieving similar if not greater results. Through opening of the new community recycling center for the Eastside of Indianapolis, WFI is able to take in household recyclables such as newspaper, cardboard, aluminum cans, glass, and plastic.

Indianapolis has tremendous growth opportunities for offering recycling opportunities to its citizens, particularly in underserved neighborhoods. Currently, Indianapolis has a curbside penetration rate of 4%. WFI aspires to remove a significant amount of waste from communities across Indiana and prepare the components for safe and efficient recycling locally and abroad with approved recyclers and re-use organizations.

Workforce Development

Unemployment is higher than it has been in over a decade and yet the single greatest workforce base, ex-offenders, is not being tapped to meet employer needs. While industries are struggling with a shortage of workers, ex-offenders are struggling with opportunities for work and economic self-sufficiency. The effects of this underutilization of available workforce is devastating on the local, national, and even global economy.

High unemployment is contributing to steeper barriers for persons seeking employment with felony convictions more than ever before. Sending ex-offenders out on the street to find employment on their own, even with enhanced job readiness and job search skills, is unlikely to lead to employment success.

WFI addresses these barriers by providing paid employment of up to six months within a service enriched environment. The WFI model offers an integrated focus on job skills development, character development, excellent customer service practice, and realistic appraisal of the barriers that will be faced, resulting in a significantly enhanced chance for future job success and avoidance of re-arrest.

WFI also assists in permanent job placement through providing job search training and job development. The model offers extended supports to participants as they complete WFI transitional jobs program and shift to long term employment attachment with area industries. WFI is committed to contributing to general workforce development – adding competent workers to the workforce.

How We Fit in the Community

WorkForce Inc is a community based organization. Nestled in the heart of one of the most distressed inner city neighborhoods in Indianapolis, WFI operates services which provide jobs, income, and support for some of the city's most vulnerable, those reentering the community from incarceration.

WorkForce Inc could not accomplish the extraordinary results without the support, resources, and strategic alliances offered through our public and private partnerships. Partnerships include the Indianapolis Mayor's office, Governor's office, national elected officials, City of Indianapolis, the Indianapolis Private Industry Council, neighborhood organizations, area churches, philanthropic organizations, social service agencies, private sector employers, local business community, trade associations, private sector initiatives, and other non-profit community organizations. Workforce is also a member of the Local Area Partnership (LAP) lead by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The LAP is an effort designed to work with all Marion County levels of government and agencies that interact with the reentry issue.

What We Do

WFI is committed to empowering program participants in developing strong character necessary to overcome the legacy of the prison experience and to minimize the perception barriers of employers and the general public.

WFI is committed to fostering strong and growing relationships between program participants and their spouse/ partner and children.

WFI is committed to the principle that work and responsibility create their own rewards and thus emphasize this principle with our participants, celebrating when they began to experience this principle on their own.

How We Do It

Organization Structure

- WFI is organized as a “Social Enterprise”
- This structure exhibits many aspects of a true business enterprise: that is we produce real products for real customers.
- We compete in the marketplace for those customers, we pay a competitive wage and intend to increase market share through extraordinary customer service.
- WFI is governed by a Board of Directors
- WFI is lead by a president and involved input from a management team made of up seasoned professionals representing more than 75 years of collective experience in the areas of business, nonprofit management, project management, prison reentry, and workforce development.

Integration of Mission Components (How we deliver Work Responsibility and Reward)

- a) Our mission components serve each other:
 - i) Work experience in “de-manufacturing”, materials handling and shipping and receiving contributes to providing income, character development and readiness skills for permanent employment after the transition period
 - ii) Service provided to the community through e-waste recycling models community service for our participants, and gives them a direct experience in serving the public
 - iii) Income provided through work directly assists participants in meeting not only their needs of daily living, but also parole/ probation mandates, serves their families and children through support payments
 - iv) When probation and other fees threaten to absorb all earned income, we advocate with parties involved and the broader policy structure to change the system. Embracing work and responsibility *without* reward, undermines the whole process.
 - v) Support services are structured as an EAP (Employee Assistance Program) to emphasize how these services are connected to the work place and work activity. We are ready to extend these EAP services to our participants as they began permanent employment elsewhere in partnership with their new employers.
- b) Work experience and “circle forum discussion” provide a laboratory for participants to:
 - i) Identify thought patterns learned in prison context that conflict with independent living

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- ii) Develop foresight regarding consequences of choices made in inter personal relationships, job site behavior and behavior in civil society.
- iii) Development of self image distinct from labels associated with past mistakes
- iv) Develop positive strategies to deal with discrimination associated with race and felony status.

How Are We Unique

The WFI structure differs from enterprises run solely for profit because of the complementary focus on social objectives noted above. Some explicit differences:

- The vast majority of our workforce are “transitional” – they work at WFI for up to 6 months in preparation for competitive employment elsewhere
- Monitor and help enforce parole/ probation mandates through the development and fostering of relationships between parole and probation officers, the Department of Corrections, Applicable Courts and Judges, and policy makers.
- Work supports are much more comprehensive than in a typical enterprise as are the “Reward” part of our model.
 - Provide “barrier busting” services and direct payments, for example:
 - Assists with driver license renewal
 - Pay arrearages in utility bills
 - Court representation as available when issues develop due to system conflicts or unavoidable issues that can lead to parole/ probation violation
 - Transportation to job interviews, medical appointments, etc.
 - Set standards and provide encouragement for interaction with children and their educational process
 - Assistance in the procurement of housing and transportation
- Provide general job readiness training, job search and job development services
- Provide skills assessment and training on site
- Provide opportunities for participants to directly serve the community through e-waste collection events and direct service projects.

Implications of Social Enterprise for other private enterprise

In order to establish a realistic business enterprise experience – WFI must compete vigorously in the market place so that participants can identify how their work efforts serve the enterprise’s business goals

Because WFI also serves a social mission that cannot (by definition) be financed from revenue earned in the product market, WFI must also seek alternative sources of funding – this funding must be allocated per the OMB regulations governing how government funds are used.

Such alternative sources of funding do not necessarily constitute the basis for a charge of “unfair competition.” For example, it is unlikely that our business competitors also engage in the extensive EAP services described above, nor are they likely to turn purposely over the bulk of their workforce at six month intervals.

While WFI is necessarily a competitor in specific market segments – WFI also contributes to the overall civic order and thus adds value for other private enterprise in central Indiana

After all, economic analysis of competitive enterprise often lauds the role competition plays in promoting economic efficiency generally in society

It is also clear from conventional economic analysis (sometimes described as “Political Economy”) that the distribution of overall wealth and income earned in competitive markets have no particular normative standing – that is, the “rightness” of how resources are distributed in society must be judged from other sources e.g., driven by political, social or religious values.