

Issue Brief

OREGON CORRECTIONS ENTERPRISES



Prison Industries

Oregon Voters Speak

Ballot Measure 17 –passed in 1994, amended Oregon’s constitution requiring AICs to work as hard as the taxpayers who provide for their upkeep; and be fully engaged in productive activity if they are to successfully re-enter society with practical skills and a viable work ethic.

Ballot Measure 68 –passed in 1999, established Oregon Corrections Enterprises (OCE) as a semi-independent and self-funded state agency to assist with the constitutional mandate (Measure 17) of engaging AICs in meaningful work.

Our Mission

The mission of OCE, in partnership with DOC, is to promote public safety by providing AICs with meaningful work experience in a self-sustaining organization. OCE plays an important role in implementing DOC’s Oregon Accountability Model (OAM). The OAM is a cohesive strategy to reduce recidivism and influence adults in custody (AICs) to make effective changes, leading to better outcomes.

An Incarceration with Purpose

OCE programs, in partnership with community businesses, ensure OCE can complete its mission to provide required programming inside our prisons. These programs add value to our communities, reduce idleness and create a purpose for AICs.

This sense of involvement and contribution to the greater community allows AICs to feel connected to those on the outside, supports their positive growth and development, and blends the lines of separation between the Department of Corrections (DOC) and AICs who are together focused on doing our part as a team to support all of Oregon in our programs.

This in turn provides a safer environment for staff and AICs. Nearly all AICs incarcerated in Oregon prisons will return to society. The skills acquired while working in OCE programs will help individuals become better members of society upon release.

A cost-benefit analysis conducted by the Criminal Justice Commission found Oregon taxpayers (and the reduction of victims) save \$5.20 for every dollar invested with OCE. (The full reports are on our website under Transparency and Accountability; KPIs.)

Opportunities through Partnerships

OCE relies on service programs to help finance other AIC work and training programs, teaching valuable skills in many other trades, translating directly to jobs in the community. These programs often do not generate enough revenue to be self-sustaining. Community partnerships support and develop opportunities for men and women currently incarcerated. Examples of programs include woodworking, upholstery, garment manufacturing, call centers, laundry operations, website auditing and more. These programs provide valuable, transferable job skills and often times, industry recognized certifications that prove essential when AICs return to the community. OCE is partnering with higher education to launch online education and training programs. Unfortunately, any loss of partnerships jeopardizes important programs and job opportunities for AICs.

Job Experience and Soft Skills

Each year 2,500 AICs choose to participate in one of OCE’s 29 voluntary work programs. Learning and using soft skills is one of the most impactful benefits our OCE workers learn while on the job. They learn and gain experience in: communication, teamwork, flexibility, accountability, problem solving, and leadership. These skills are sought after by every employer and lay a foundation for the AICs to more effectively transition home to their families and community.

Recidivism

The OCE programs are at the forefront of reducing recidivism in Oregon according to an Oregon Criminal Justice Commission report published in 2017.

OCE’s re-incarceration recidivism rate is 10% for an adult in custody who stays in our training program for at

