

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 2,600 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 13% for an adult in custody who stays in our training program for at

least six months. This means only 13% of the participants start a new incarceration cycle in the first three years after release. Similar to the rate experienced by ODOC (19%), this rate is one of the lowest in the country and rivals that of Norway's Corrections system, considered by some to be one of the most effective in the world.

AIC Compensation

OCE's ability to compensate AICs for their work is defined by Oregon law. The Oregon constitution provides the following framework for compensation;

Compensation, except as otherwise required by federal law, shall only be used for the following purposes:

- a) reimbursement for all or a portion of the costs of the inmates rehabilitation, housing, health care, and living costs;
- b) restitution or compensation to the victims of the particular inmates crime;
- c) restitution or compensation to the victims of crime generally through a fund designed for that purpose;
- d) financial support for immediate family of the AIC outside the corrections institution; and
- e) payment of fines, court costs, and applicable taxes.

The federal law or Prison Industry Enhancement Certification Program (PIECP), was enacted in 1979 to encourage states and units of local government to establish employment opportunities for prisoners that approximate private-sector work opportunities. Per a combination of federal and state laws, 20% of the wages earned in a PIE Certification Program are given to the AICs to use for discretionary spending. The remaining portion of the wages are divided between taxes, child support, victim restitution, and program costs. AICs involved in work programs with goods made and shipped outside of Oregon are rewarded through the federal PIECP system. Service programs are not regulated by the federal PIECP program. All other programs use Performance Recognition Award System (PRAS).

PRAS

OCE programs are considered the most sought after jobs in Oregon prisons. With a constitutional requirement for AICs to be involved in meaningful work or education, DOC developed PRAS. This system is designed to recognize and encourage good institutional conduct through the provision of monetary awards and other incentives which AICs can use to save for release, send money to family, repay victims and support

themselves. AICs working for OCE are eligible to receive secondary performance awards through Team Goal Awards, Special Meritorious Awards, and the Individual Meritorious Award Program, in addition to PRAS. On average the maximum awards under DOC PRAS are \$84 per month compared to a maximum of \$500 in OCE programs.

KEY POINTS

Oregon Constitution

- Establishes mission of OCE
- OCE does not receive general fund dollars
- Defines how AICs may be compensated

Adults in Custody

- Voluntarily apply for OCE work programs
- Earn awards used to purchase goods, send money to family, reimburse victims, and save for release

OCE Job Programs

- Most sought after job opportunities in prison
- Double the earning potential of DOC jobs
- Provide performance rewards and incentives not available elsewhere
- Allow AICs to gain real-life job skills and training
- Teaches soft skills and teamwork
- Provides an opportunity to contribute to society
- Makes prison safer by reducing AIC idleness



Collette S. Peters, Director
(503) 945-0927

Ken Jeske, Administrator
Oregon Corrections Enterprises
(971) 600-6735

Oregon Department of Corrections
2575 Center Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301-4667
www.oregon.gov/doc

Oregon Corrections Enterprises
PO Box 12849
Salem, Oregon 97309
www.oce.oregon.gov