

Issue Brief

OREGON CORRECTIONS ENTERPRISES



Sewing and Embroidery

Overview

Established in 1999 through the passage of Ballot Measure 68, Oregon Corrections Enterprises (OCE) is a semi-independent organization, whose administrator reports to the director of the Oregon Department of Corrections (DOC). OCE plays an important role in carrying out Ballot Measure 17, the constitutional mandate to engage male and female adults in custody (AICs) in meaningful work. ***By statute, OCE is funded solely through the sales of its products and services.***

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 AICs to make effective changes, leading to better outcomes. Through the development of positive work ethics and job skills, OCE assists AICs in their transition to realizing their potential as productive citizens, creating positive outcomes, while contributing to society and their families.

Quality

OCE products and services are sold at competitive rates but the real value is found in the quality and workmanship. In OCE programs, AICs are taught to build and deliver quality products and services to exceed customer needs. Learning skills with both state of the art equipment and manual processes, participants in the program learn the different techniques needed to work with different materials. Working in a production line, each AIC is taught to check the quality of the work from the previous station. This bolsters the idea of teamwork and enhances soft skills, such as communication, necessary to be successful when re-entering the job market.

Sewing Detention Uniforms

Using American-made 14.75 ounce denim for jeans and yard coats, OCE detention uniforms are made to be cost

efficient and long-lasting. The heavy weight material stands up to multiple washings longer than the competitors' offerings, creating long-term cost savings. OCE does not limit waist size or in-seam length, allowing customers to provide for anyone assigned to their care and custody. Of course, customers maintain the option of using alternative fabric types and colors.

Prison Blues

Prison Blues, popular with workers in the logging and construction trades, was created in 1989 at Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution. In addition to work wear, the clothing line includes screen-printed t-shirts, embroidered sweatshirts and hats, and various accessories. Prison Blues are popular around the world and sold through resellers in multiple countries, in addition to many locations throughout the United States. Workers learn the arts of sewing, embroidery, and screen printing, all marketable skills.

OCE does not sell Prison Blues items directly to the general public. Please visit www.prisonblues.com to find a vendor near you.

Custom Products

The staff and AICs in the OCE operations pride themselves in their ability to create products suited for institutions and corrections professionals, as well as the private sector. Custom projects are used to help participants develop problem solving and team work skills. These skills are essential in the job market and help contribute to re-entry success.

Embroidery and Screen Printing

In addition to the Prison Blues lines, OCE embroiders products for government agencies, such as Oregon State Parks and Recreation (volunteer vests and staff uniforms), and DOC (staff uniforms). In addition, OCE works with several non-profit organizations, such as the world-famous Pendleton Round Up, to fulfill their needs. With an

in-house training program, AICs learn up-to-date techniques in embroidery and digitizing design.

If you've ever purchased a Prison Blues t-shirt, you've seen the results of our quality screen printing program. OCE also applies screen printing to detention uniforms and various other products.

OCE's Contributions

Contributing to Public Safety

When AICs have productive activities to occupy their time, Oregon's prisons are safer. Working with DOC, OCE seeks partnerships with other agencies and private organizations to provide work and training programs for AIC that mirror real-world job experiences as much as possible. OCE holds AICs accountable for their actions, and these adults understand a prerequisite for participating in OCE programs is to maintain good institutional conduct. Based on the OAM, DOC, and OCE staff members help AICs by role modeling, redirecting inmate behavior, and reinforcing positive performance.

Work Skills Certification and Re-entry

Similar to the Federal Job Corps model, participating AICs gain entry-level experience with technical and industry-specific skills as well as develop pro-social skills and work ethic. They learn decision-making, social interaction, teamwork, reliability, and accountability. The programs strive to duplicate a real-world experience to prepare AICs for job readiness on the outside.

OCE administers industry-recognized Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) training programs. Through these programs, qualified AICs develop the skills and attitudes needed to enhance their opportunities to secure employment upon release

Benefiting the Citizens of Oregon

OCE purchases as much as possible of its raw material needs from Oregon companies, contributing to the success of local business. A 2018 study by ECONorthwest shows, for every million dollars produced by OCE, \$690,800 is re-spent along the supply chains in the state, compared to \$346,500 for private sector counterparts. OCE direct employees are primarily high-skill-level jobs, while the private sector includes low- and high-skill jobs. In total, OCE pays more in total wages, which has a net positive induced effect on Oregon's economy.

OCE regularly evaluates its programs to discover additional ways to operate in a more environmentally-friendly manner. OCE works to align its business practices with state initiative by utilizing environmentally friendly

practices to include chemicals, soy based inks, and water reclamation. Throughout our facilities we have reduced the use of harmful chemicals. We use environmentally friendly custodial cleaning products, water-based finishing stains, and vibrant soy-based printing inks. Our water reclamation system saves an estimated 10 million gallons of water per year. We also work with local recyclers to process the scrap metal, allowing it to be melted back down and made into usable products.

OCE also makes every effort to keep as many AICs working as financially possible. AICs contribute part of their earnings toward meeting obligations for child support, state and federal taxes, court-imposed fines, and victims' assistance fund. Each year OCE reimburses DOC millions for performance recognition awards and wages for the AICs for the successful completion of their assignments. The costs of OCE programs are not funded by taxpayer dollars, yet the program still benefits the state by avoiding criminal justice system costs. A 2017 report by the Oregon Criminal Justice Commission concluded for every dollar invested with OCE, the citizens of Oregon avoid \$5.20 in recidivism costs.



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