

A Case Study: Executive Summary

Reentry to Workforce Partnership

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The Challenge: A New Approach to Reentry Support

The Reentry to Workforce Partnership (RTW) grew out of two Pennsylvania Horticulture Society (PHS) programs being done in the Philadelphia Prison System (PPS). City Harvest, a hands-on horticulture and landscape skills program, works with inmates in the Alternative and Special Detention (ASD) division of the PPS. The second program, Roots to Re-entry (R2R) extends the City Harvest training to include on-the-job training during work release and places participants in jobs with local landscape contract employers. R2R gathered partners, including PPS, the Defender's

A SNAPSHOT: ROOTS TO REENTRY JOB TRAINING AND PLACEMENT PROGRAM

PURPOSE: To give inmates a chance to develop new skills and gain hands-on landscaping and horticulture experience, as well as life skills and job placement opportunities upon their release.

TARGET POPULATION: Candidates selected for the program are non-violent offenders on work release from the Philadelphia Prison System between the ages of 18 and 45 with a basic level of literacy and a strong interest in working in the landscaping industry. These persons tend to be poor, low-skilled individuals who face limited employment prospects upon reentry.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

- ✦ 14-week job training program teaching landscaping/horticulture and job readiness skills
- ✦ Starts pre-release and continues for two years post-release
- ✦ Provides direct support services including health education, literacy, occupational therapy services, peer counseling, and case management to help access other support services as needed

PROGRAM PARTNERS

Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, Federation of Neighborhood Centers, The Philadelphia Prison System, The Office of the District Attorney City of Philadelphia, Defender Association of Philadelphia, Adult Probation and Parole, Thomas Jefferson University and Hospital, KJK Associates, Moon Site Management, Inc., and Liberty Tree and Landscape Management

FUNDING PARTNERS

The Prison Board of Trustees, The Thomas Scattergood Behavioral Health Foundation, The Philadelphia Foundation (including general funding and the David S. Mathers fund), Job Opportunity Investment Network, The Pew Charitable Trusts, The Boeing Company, 1830 Family Foundation, JP Morgan Chase & Company, JP Morgan Chase Foundation, United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey, The Methodist Hospital Foundation, GlaxoSmithKline, Independence Foundation, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Association and the District Attorney, to advise and help coordinate the implementation of the program.

R2R's pre- and post-release span and job placement component are innovative. The initial partners, including the funders, anticipated quick success. They assumed that the pre- and post-release intervention would provide the foundation for the people leaving prison to access the other services that were available to them to be successful. The results told a different story. While some participants had great success, are still employed today and thus have avoided recidivism, many did not take advantage of the services as expected and many more than hoped for returned to prison. The partners were determined to learn how to change the program to get the results they desired.

“Green jobs initiatives like City Harvest and Roots to Re-Entry get at the heart of the PHS mission, which is to empower people and change lives through horticulture.”

Drew Becher
President, PHS

What Worked and What Didn't Work

Over the next four years RTW grew and changed to better serve individuals discharged from PPS. New partners with additional programs came on board. One of these partners, The Federation of Neighborhood Centers (FNC) became a co-leader of the partnership. FNC's program, Career Support Network (CSN), an innovative workforce model that attacks and overcomes unemployment in

targeted populations with high incidence of job loss in the first year after being newly hired, turned out to be a great match for the partnership. CSN integrates mental and physical health services, chronic disease self-management, occupational counseling, and peer support into job training programs and post-employment supportive services. This program offered a new, much needed holistic approach that directly links mental and physical health and employment, thereby addressing a critical gap in the current workforce development system. The FNC team became a flexible, thoughtful collaborator that shared PHS's commitment to continuous learning and process improvement.

In 2011 the RTW partners brought on Strategy Arts, a consulting firm with experience working with cross-sector partnerships to help address issues of overlap of programs and gaps in coordination. Strategy Arts worked with the team to align the partner activities, using principles of the Collective

Impact model¹ including developing a common agenda, a shared measurement system, and a method for aligning activities. The alignment processes and tools provided a structure that partners needed to fully understand how their activities could best be aligned to benefit participants. Strategy

FACTORS OF SUCCESS

CREATING EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

- ✦ Identifying partners with services that align
- ✦ Recruiting partners to remove barriers
- ✦ Involving funders as strategic partners
- ✦ Creating tools to coordinate activities
- ✦ Involving people with lived experience
- ✦ Providing structure to think strategically

REDUCING RECIDIVISM

- ✦ Links to jobs
- ✦ Support to “show up” for the job
- ✦ Responsive to the individual
- ✦ Coordinated case management
- ✦ Compassionate and individualized engagement
- ✦ Magnify importance of physical and mental health to job retention

¹ Kania, John and Kramer, Mark. 2011. Collective Impact. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. Winter 2011: 36-41.

Arts also designed and led a series of meetings that allowed the group to identify strategies with the most promise for positive impact, and a place to evaluate the level of success of those changes.

The RTW team learned significant lessons about what the barriers to successful reentry are and how a cross-sector partnership can work together effectively. They knew support services and coordination of those services were essential to success, but they didn't know how to synchronize those services among the different partners. They assumed that pre- and post-release intervention would increase the impact for the participants, but they did not anticipate the extent of the complexity of the partnership. Most importantly, they realized that they must work together to identify the elements within the system that prevent coordination and develop solutions to address these deeply ingrained structures.

What's Next

Approximately 40,000 individuals are released into Philadelphia from federal and state prisons and local jails each year, according to a 2011 Economy League report.² In 2010 nearly 6% of the city's budget was spent on jails.

The RTW partners will continue their work to support individuals released from PPS through the R2R and CSN programs. They have five areas for focused practice and learning. But they know that they have to reach beyond their partnership to have a stronger impact. Scattergood's Joe Pyle reflects on the partnership's learning: "We realized our theory that support services would fall naturally in line was wrong. This requires a massive level of coordination." Pyle is impressed by the coordination that the partnership has created over the past four years.

"Now they are poised to take this learning to the next level to make wider change in the reentry system."

FNC is taking the lead on creating this expanded effort, building on the knowledge gained by the RTW partnership. They are teaming up with Strategy Arts and PHS to implement a full Collective Impact initiative to transform the reentry system in Philadelphia. The Collective Impact approach will bring a broader set of organizations and individuals from different sectors together to define common goals for this transformation. It then provides a framework for aligning their efforts and learning together using common measures of success.

Through a holistic and collaborative process, people who have been incarcerated will achieve stable, meaningful, and productive lives for themselves, their families, and their communities. This will make Philadelphia a safer, healthier, and stronger community for all of us.

FOCUS AREAS MOVING FORWARD

- ✦ Determine how to increase the number of employers willing to hire formerly incarcerated individuals
- ✦ Identify meaningful measures of success and develop a process for sharing those with the expanding network
- ✦ Develop a strategy for sustained funding of both the programming and the infrastructure required for an effective partnership
- ✦ Develop and implement a communications plan to support stakeholder collaboration and collective learning
- ✦ Build public will to support the partnership's efforts

² Economy League of Greater Philadelphia. *Economic Benefits of Employing Formerly Incarcerated Individuals in Philadelphia: Executive Summary*. Philadelphia, PA, 2011.