

The Power of Partnership

Caltrans, CEO, and REDF

The Challenge

Each year, 55,000 people are released from incarceration in California. Within three years, two-thirds will return to prison. Research demonstrates the key role that stable employment plays in reducing recidivism, but returning citizens face formidable barriers to reconnecting to the workforce. The valuable contributions they can make to our economy, our communities, and our country go unrealized, with costly cycles of incarceration and homelessness often the result.

The Solution

Employment social enterprise is a cost-effective, evidence-backed model that provides people striving to overcome employment barriers with the jobs and support they need to succeed. Government agencies, with their significant purchasing power, can expand that employment pathway—transforming lives, strengthening families, and building more economically inclusive communities.

The Opportunity

Over the past 15 years, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) has forged partnerships with public agencies and employment social enterprises, including Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO), to provide jobs to thousands of Californians returning home from incarceration. These partnerships provide Caltrans with valuable beautification services while also offering people coming home from prison an immediate job with a local employment social enterprise that can help them reintegrate into the workforce.

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REDF

Partnering with REDF to Realize the Opportunity

REDF recognized the potential for CEO to scale their impact and provide a pathway to a better life for tens of thousands of formerly incarcerated people in California. In 2011, REDF helped make the connection between CEO and Caltrans. The partnership catalyzed CEO's first California office in Oakland, and since then, CEO has opened robust sites in San Bernardino, San Diego, Santa Clara, Marin, Sacramento, Solano, Riverside, and Los Angeles. This type of growth and pace of expansion would not have been possible without the Caltrans partnership.

By partnering with employment social enterprises like CEO, government agencies can be a first step to permanent employment for tens of thousands of Californians.



**Center for
Employment
Opportunities**



The Impact

29 CEO/CALTRANS CREWS
HAVE EMPLOYED **6,279** PEOPLE

\$14 MILLION
IN WAGES EARNED
WHILE WORKING ON CEO/CALTRANS CREWS

OVER **3,000** PEOPLE
PLACED INTO **FULL-TIME JOBS**

\$50 MILLION
IN WAGES EARNED IN JOBS
AFTER WORKING WITH CEO/CALTRANS

RECIDIVISM RATE OF **8%**
(COMPARED TO STATEWIDE RATE OF 65%
IN THREE YEARS)

3:1
COST SAVINGS
FOR THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA IN REDUCED RECIDIVISM

1. Recidivism Rates. California Innocence Project (website), <https://californiainnocenceproject.org/issues-we-face/recidivism-rates/> (accessed December 5, 2019)

About REDF

REDF is a venture philanthropy that invests exclusively in social enterprise businesses that employ and empower people overcoming barriers to work. Since 1997, REDF has provided capital and advisory services to 90 employment social enterprises in California, which have provided training for and employed 24,500 people statewide.

About CEO

The Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) works to reduce recidivism and strengthen communities by providing people returning from prison with immediate paid employment, skills training, and ongoing career support. To offer work experience, CEO operates more than 107 transitional work crews that provide maintenance and beautification services to customers across the U.S., including one of their biggest public sector partners, Caltrans.