



## Innovation Award Application 2014



### Building Futures, Building Bike Racks

Jamison Manion  
Programs Administrator for Workforce Development

Jakob Helmboldt  
Pedestrian, Bicycle & Trails Coordinator

City of Richmond, Virginia

1500 E. Main St, Suite 400  
Richmond, VA 23219

804.646.6374

[Jamison.manion@richmondgov.com](mailto:Jamison.manion@richmondgov.com)

---

Describe the Program/project/ product/ service innovation:

The City of Richmond's Workforce Development Program (Program) provides a pathway for individuals to take control of their own economic futures, including occupational training for skilled positions. The Program also provides job training for selected individuals coming out of incarceration, giving them an opportunity to reenter society with a trade or skill and aiming to reduce recidivism. The Program's welding and metal fabrication certification course partnered with the City's Pedestrian & Bicycle initiatives to develop an enterprise project that would produce bike parking racks that the city had been purchasing from large national suppliers. Utilizing the budget for the bike racks to provide seed money and collaborating with outside (business) partners allowed the Program to provide a needed product for the City while keeping City expenditures in the community.

---

Short description of the importance, internal impact, and community benefits:

This collaboration had many positive outcomes; skilled workforce development, decreased potential for recidivism and reduction of barriers to reentering society post-incarceration, local business collaboration and financial benefit, development of an enterprise model for the training program, and real-world work experience where the trainees can see the end product in their community.

---

What makes this a quantum leap of creativity?

The initiative combined multiple stakeholders, agencies, and funding sources to create an outcome that was greater than the sum of its individual parts. This was true collaboration and synergy that resulted in a real-world enterprise, providing skilled-trades training, engaged the local business community, and provided the City with a locally made, competitively priced product that was previously being sourced from companies throughout the US. A successful outcome required working through bureaucratic and organizational barriers, creating buy-in from the business community, and collaboration across city agencies / departments that typically did not interface in routine City business. The result is a positive outcome for literally everyone involved from individuals, to city agencies, to local businesses, as well as the broader Richmond community. Had the enterprise model not been chosen then the participation of some of the businesses entities

may have been less viable as this approach yielded greater outcomes and opportunities for all stakeholders and participants.

---

#### Who benefits?

The benefits accrued impact individuals and the community at large. Individual trainees receive job skills to become certified welders while engaged in producing a real-world product via a model that has the potential to become an ongoing enterprise for the Program. The local business partners benefit from a modest income stream and community good will, and a pipeline of skilled labor. The City (both as an entity and a community) benefits by having products produced locally, employing local labor and businesses, as well as demonstrating that the City is committed to creative, collaborative solutions. An added benefit is that the end product is visible within, and used by the community, including potentially by the workforce participants themselves which adds a value dimension that cannot be priced.

---

#### How was the program/project/product/service initiated and implemented?

A recently elected City Councilman initiated conversations regarding the City's sourcing of bike parking racks from large, national vendors and the potential for utilizing the Workforce Development Program as an enterprise vehicle to provide the products. Introductions were facilitated by City Councilman Parker Agelasto and coordination began between the Program Administrator (Mr. Manion) and the City's Pedestrian and Bicycle Coordinator to begin planning the logistics of a successful collaboration. Mr. Manion identified a local fabrication business with an existing contract vehicle through which the City could conduct the welding training and certification, as well as actual fabrication of the end product. The Richmond Public Schools Adult Technical training Program provided the training and classroom coordination setting up the training on site at a local business, Strickland Machine Co. In addition, support was provided by two other businesses: ARCET donated the welding equipment for training and BMG Metals is discounting materials for fabrication. To create the product and fund training at a competitive price required the additional leverage of grant funding to offset the cost to the City to provide training and production to be done in a manner that allowed the product to be provided at a competitive price point.

What risks were taken?

The Department of Public Works and the Bicycle and Pedestrian Program had to provide seed money to launch the initiative at an initial unit cost greater than existing vendors, with the promise of competitive unit pricing once the program was underway. Strickland Machine Co. had to commit to providing resources to facilitate the training and ongoing fabrication operations with an uncertain outcome. Both the city and the businesses had to risk utilizing trainees from impoverished conditions, many of whom have prior convictions to become the workforce to produce high quality products to be proud of.

---

What, if any were the costs and/or savings?

Due to the project nature and many facets of this collaboration it is difficult to quantify all costs and savings. However the City is able to procure a needed product at a fair market price while at the same time providing technical skills training to a hard to serve population. This is truly a case not of this or that – but THIS AND THAT. Previously such training was not offered due to the expense. Through working with city agencies, local businesses, and the public schools, a cost effective model was created to produce the product needed and provide a needed community good through workforce development of in-demand job skills. The outcome is a product at market cost, a training program conducted within budget, trainees becoming certified in a skilled trade, and a local business generating a modest income stream from their participation. Additionally, the value of producing a product locally, recirculating dollars in the local economy and sourcing a locally made product through this initiative has intrinsic value that can't be quantified in monetary terms.

---

What are the lessons learned that other local governments can learn from?

Be innovative, find partners to collaborate with (both internal and external to the municipality), and seek opportunities to capture and add value within the organization by capitalizing upon them. Local governments are complex business enterprises that have an array of programs and initiatives which can often provide solutions for each other if those synergies are proactively sought out and willing to break with old models to work collaboratively with businesses and

schools. Governmental constraints (e.g. regulatory conditions) often make it difficult to develop alternative, much less innovative models for doing business and finding workable solutions to overcome sometimes complex barriers. However there are potential rewards for creative and collaborative solutions that can deliver far greater success than remaining “in the box”.

---

What department and/or individual(s) championed the innovation? If a contractor was used, please list the name and their contact information.

The Center for Workforce Innovation (CWI), Jamison Manion, Programs Administrator for Workforce Development spearheaded this initiative and saw the project through from concept to implementation. The CWI is a collaborative partnership between the Department of Economic and Community Development and the Department of Social Services. Additional support made possible by the Department of Public Works partnering to provide funding for services that would normally be procured outside of the city.

---

Any additional information you would like to share?

[Click here to enter text.](#)