

# DRIVEN TO INNOVATE

## Snapshots from Delivering the TDL Workforce

Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics (TDL) is a critical sector to the U.S. economy, employing over 4.6 million workers who track orders, ensure the safety of goods during transit, and manage the logistics of planning and executing shipments using different modes of transportation.

Through JFF's Delivering the TDL Workforce, a two-year initiative generously supported by the Walmart Foundation, 10 regions across the country scaled up their TDL training programs to provide low- to middle-skilled workers with occupational training that led to industry recognized credentials, offered them supportive services, and placed them into good jobs.

This series highlights the innovative ways three grant recipients used this initiative to expand training access to incarcerated women, spur employer investment in TDL training, and secure steady funding to sustain programs.

## TDL Training Puts Women on a Path to Self-Sufficiency



**Vanessa Adams** asked the parole board to let her stay in prison so she could complete a TDL training. Her peers thought she was crazy, but Vanessa knew that those extra few weeks would mean she could reenter the community with skills and certifications that would provide opportunities she'd never had

before. Vanessa's decision to delay her release in order to participate in a TDL training program was something of a late-breaking epiphany. The class had already been offered to two cohorts at the Iowa Correctional Institute for Women (ICIW), and Vanessa had little interest in participating. "I wondered why the other women seemed to be having so much fun" sitting in class, she explains. And even after she enrolled, the class seemed "boring at first." But once she started driving the forklift and moving clothing, food, and other supplies around the prison warehouse, she fell in love with the work. "It keeps you busy," Vanessa explains. "There's so much variety, the day flies by. I like being on the go—I'm not a sit-down, be on the computer type of gal." The TDL training has completely changed Vanessa's perception of the work options available to her. "I used to feel like all I could do is serve or host; now I have the knowledge to do all kinds of things with warehousing, logistics. It's eye-opening—the opportunities I have now."



For **Shelly Vincent**, taking the TDL course at ICIW was equally illuminating. Until she enrolled in the course, Shelly had never given a thought to warehouses or trucking, and it had never occurred to her that she might someday work in the TDL field. A single mother of six, Shelly had worked for most of her

life in low-wage jobs; the closest she'd gotten to skilled work was her stint as a certified medical assistant. But her history of addiction and incarceration meant that working in health care was no longer an option.

Now Shelly is a dispatcher at a small over-the-road trucking company based in Council Bluffs, Iowa. She spends her days choreographing the complex dance required to get the loads into the trucks and to their destinations with maximum efficiency, while ensuring that each trucker meets both his weekly earnings quota and all safety regulations. The job is challenging, and Shelly enjoys every minute. "Every day is different," she explains. "I'm never bored, and I love learning new things all the time." Shelly is so good at her job that her boss wants to pay for her to take the necessary courses to become a safety supervisor—a job that carries significant responsibility and a sizable pay increase. "Without the TDL training at ICIW, I wouldn't have any of these opportunities," Shelly marvels.

Both Vanessa and Shelly had been in and out of jail numerous times before their incarceration at ICIW; both suffered from addiction, both have children, from whom they are now legally separated, and neither has a college degree or ever imagined working in transportation or logistics. "It never occurred to me to drive a forklift," Vanessa notes. "I thought I would be a teacher, even though I didn't have any passion for teaching." And Shelly observes, "Before the TDL training, the only jobs I could get were in fast food, housekeeping, or as a cashier."

Shelly, Vanessa, and dozens of other women have access to new employment opportunities thanks to the TDL training that Central Iowa Works's (CIW) site director Pat Steele brought into the prison, with the help and support of ICIW warden at the time, Patti Wachtendorf, and the staff of Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC).<sup>1</sup>

## An Untapped Talent Pool

In 2015, CIW received a Delivering the TDL Workforce training grant from Jobs for the Future, funded by the Walmart Foundation, which required that it serve at least 25 percent women. Pat set out to recruit new students from a local halfway house for women, where he had previously offered residents various types of education and training. But the women turned him down, explaining that they simply didn't have time to enroll in the seven-week training program because of the time-consuming post-release requirements and immense pressure to find work immediately. ICIW's warden loved the idea, but identified three barriers to making it a reality: she had no staff to supervise the students during the program, no computers, and no instructors. If Pat could overcome those hurdles, he would be welcome at Mitchellville.

## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT & CRIMINAL HISTORY

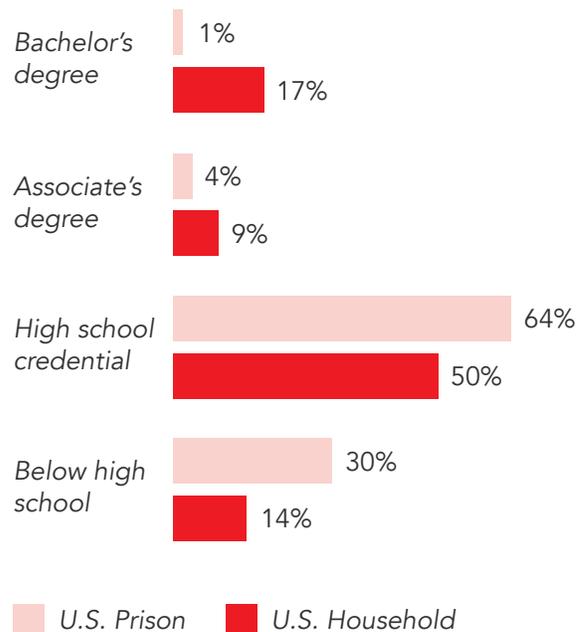
Both Shelly and Vanessa have completed high school, which puts them ahead of many people with criminal histories.



Without a high school diploma or access to postsecondary education, people with a criminal history have limited employment options and are likely to continue to commit offenses, which leads to further incarceration and reduced educational and economic opportunities.

### Educational Attainment for Correctional Population vs. General Population, 2012-2014

Highest level of educational attainment



Source: PIACC Prison Study, 2014;  
<https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2016/2016040.pdf>

Aware that DMACC had funding to offer education for people who are incarcerated, Pat approached the college and proposed bringing his TDL training into nearby CIW. Overcoming the logistics and staffing challenges took some creative thinking, but within months CIW and DMACC were ready to offer the first TDL training at CIW to a carefully selected group of women close to their release dates. The TDL training program consists of coursework required to earn a number of nationally recognized certifications (see box) and includes a simulation in which students run a logistics operation. Teams begin \$30,000 in the red and are tasked with bringing the simulated business into the black within five years. On average, teams achieve

a \$50,000 to \$75,000 profit margin. The first cohort of students who participated in the training at CIW finished with \$1 million in profit. How? By building hotels within the simulation, which created increased demand for the transportation and logistics services business they were running. Pat was amazed. “These are some seriously smart women,” he observed. “What an asset they could be to local businesses.” Subsequent cohorts have done equally well—adding products and services to the simulation, building new lines of business, and generating profits that far exceed anything Pat has witnessed either outside the prison walls or in the nearby men’s prison at Newton, where the TDL training is now also offered.

## TDL TRAINING AT A GLANCE

The seven-week TDL training program offered at the prison is identical to that offered at CIW’s facility and includes on-site class instruction, computer simulations, and hands-on training in forklift operation. Graduates earn four nationally recognized certificates and receive job preparedness training and coaching that includes writing resumes and cover letters, interview practice, job search help, and training around essential workplace behavior.

### Certifications

- Manufacturing Skills Standards Logistics Associate
- Manufacturing Skills Standard Logistics Technician
- Forklift Operator
- OSHA 10-Hour Card

### Staff

The TDL training program consists of two staffers who work with students in the prison. Both are employed by CIW:

**Training Coordinator:** Performs a wide range of activities, from screening and assessing applicants to teaching the TDL training and supporting students as they develop work behavior skills. The training coordinator serves as a teacher, mentor, and cheerleader, helping students establish career goals and develop plans to achieve them.

**Employment Navigator:** Assists students in preparing for employment and serves as liaison between graduates and the business community. The employment navigator cultivates relationships with local employers, locates jobs for graduates of the TDL training programs, arranges for interviews, and provides labor market and community resource information. Once a graduate is employed, the navigator monitors their job performance and provides support when needed.

### Impact at CIW

To date, 45 women have completed the TDL program. Of them, 29 have been released, 26 have been placed in jobs, and 1 has returned to prison (a 0.03 recidivism rate). Of the 38 men who completed the TDL program, 11 have been released, 5 have been placed in jobs, and none returned to prison. The most recent class of 13 graduated in March 2017 at the men’s correctional center, and most will be released before the end of the year.

### Overall Impact

The program successfully served 231 jobseekers (including those served at CIW and Newton Correctional Facility), 38 percent of whom were women, and has placed 96 of them into jobs at an average wage of \$12.15 per hour.

## WALK A MILE IN THEIR SHOES

### *Reentry Simulation Program Changes Hearts and Minds*

As a workforce veteran, Pat Steele had always known that some of his clients were returning citizens; he had frequently recruited at the halfway house for recently released women, but he had no idea what post-release requirements entailed. Neither do most employers, policymakers, law enforcement officers, or others who have the power to shape the experience and opportunities of returning citizens. When Pat heard about a reentry simulation that gives participants a taste of the challenges faced by returning citizens, he used his connections with the U.S. Attorney's Office in Des Moines to get his hands on the simulation. Then he proposed to warden Patti Wachtendorf that they offer it at ICIW.

The simulation, which was held in September 2016, allowed 31 employers, state agency workers, and community-based organization staff to experience firsthand the challenges facing returning citizens. In the simulation, each participant gets a card with details about the offense they have committed and a description of what they need to do in the first week after release to continue to qualify for parole. A typical list includes reporting for drug testing; applying for benefits of various types (food support, housing, and transportation vouchers); meeting with the parole officer; looking for a job; and more. Each of these appointments is typically in a different office, requires different types of documentation, and may be scheduled at conflicting times. Simulation participants soon found themselves facing the frustration of lacking money, transportation, time, and access to the documents they needed, and many rapidly returned to the simulated jail area. "This has really changed my mind" about how hard it is to return from incarceration was a common thread in participants' comments.

Marva Williams, economic development director at the Federal Reserve Bank in Chicago, was one of those participants. She describes the

experience: "It wasn't until the second round [of the simulation] that I really understood what I needed to do. I was so intimidated by all the things I had to do that I couldn't even report to work or pay rent; I ended up in a shelter—it felt humiliating that I couldn't cope." One aspect of the simulation that Marva found especially striking was how adversity brought out people's creativity and resourcefulness: "One of the really interesting things was the way people started to broker with each other; people selling things to one another to help one another get by." She recalls being "astounded by all the responsibilities—I had all of those responsibilities that we all have (feed, clothe, and house myself, work), but having to do all that on top of reporting to a parole officer, reporting for substance abuse counseling and testing, filling out paperwork for benefits—it was really challenging."

The simulation Marva attended was held inside ICIW, which added to its impact. Marva recounts that "just going to the prison was an eye-opener; it was a little scary and claustrophobic being inside the prison itself. The setting is very nice—pastoral, lots of green space; people walking from building to building; but knowing that you are locked up was intimidating. It was strange—you can't take anything with you; I couldn't even take notes."<sup>5</sup>

In addition to experiencing the simulation, participants heard from ICIW's warden, who explained that most women who end up incarcerated have experienced sexual and/or domestic abuse and trauma, have PTSD, or suffer from addictions and mental illness. Three incarcerated women also shared their stories with participants. "Learning all that was really eye-opening," Marva noted. "Hearing from the three inmates was illuminating; getting the entire context, understanding the obstacles that people have to deal with. A friend of mine always says 'people do the best that they can'—I haven't always believed that; now I believe that more."

## ABUSE, TRAUMA, AND WOMEN'S RISING RATES OF INCARCERATION

The incarceration rate among women has been rising since 1980 and continues to accelerate faster than the rate among men, but the reasons for incarceration and the challenges women face upon release differ significantly from those of their male counterparts:

- A woman's path to crime is often rooted in a history of abuse and trauma: 75 percent of women in prison are survivors of intimate partner violence.
- Women are less likely to be charged with violent crimes and more likely to be incarcerated for drug-related offenses linked to their history of abuse, coercion, and sexual exploitation.
- Thirty-one percent of women detained in county jails battle mental illness and substance use disorders related to their trauma, compared to 14.5 percent of men.
- Women—and more specifically women of color and poor women—are disproportionately affected by system failures that limit access to quality education, employment opportunity, housing stability, and other support services needed to overcome trauma and abuse.

### ***Employment: Critical to Successful Reentry***

Employment reduces recidivism significantly. Studies have shown that although recidivism rates range from about 31 to 70 percent in different states, when returning citizens are employed soon after their release, recidivism rates drop dramatically and range from 3.8 to 8 percent. These reductions hold true regardless of whether the returning citizen's conviction was for violent or nonviolent crimes.<sup>6</sup>

For most people, reentry occurs between ages 25 and 54, the prime age for labor force participation. Although over 80 percent of 25- to 54-year-olds are employed across the general population, only 33 percent of all released inmates find employment within the first year, a number that tapers off in subsequent years.<sup>7</sup> Without a good paying job, returning citizens fall back on what and who they know, commit crimes, and end up back in jail, in a never-ending cycle of repeated incarceration. Both Vanessa and Shelly had been in and out of jail multiple times before being sent to prison. Shelly explains: "I was in and out of jail between 20 and 30 times in a two-year period. They kept letting me out. I kept doing the same things over and over again."<sup>8</sup>

A history of incarceration has significant negative impacts on a person's employment prospects. Not only do people who have criminal histories tend to be poorly educated

and have low skill levels, but employers can and do legally discriminate against them.<sup>9</sup> This is why employers that are receptive to hiring returning citizens are critical to successful reentry efforts.

Rees Associates, a bulk mail operation in Des Moines, regularly hires people referred by CIW, including two graduates of the TDL training program. "Rees believes in giving people second chances," explains human resources director Veronica Gonzalez-Arechiga. "Our partnership with CIW has worked really well," she continues. "I was especially impressed by how the two graduates of the TDL program handled their criminal histories. They were open, honest, and up-front. They took responsibility for their actions." These interview skills, and their strong work ethic, are why TDL graduates are in demand in Des Moines' tight labor market.

For Jan Rayman, CEO of recycled building materials company ReWall, hiring returning citizens through CIW makes business sense. "They're good workers. They show up on time, do a good job," Jan explains. Before it began working with CIW, ReWall regularly hired workers through staffing agencies, and their retention rate was in the single digits. The retention rate for CIW workers is over 50 percent. "The staffing agency viewed workers as disposable," Jan says. "If one didn't work out, they just sent another. But workers from CIW are vetted, they've been trained, and screened; CIW wants them to succeed. And that's good for business."

Almost half of ReWall's 12-person workforce is made up of returning citizens. They work in each of the three shifts the company runs, and Jan has no concerns about letting them run the third shift alone. He trusts them, and they repay that trust with loyalty and quality work. When ReWall expands into Connecticut and other states in 2017 and beyond, Jan hopes to connect with local agencies and hire returning citizens. "We recycle used beverage cartons and make them into something new and strong and beautiful. We can do the same for our workers," Jan says.

Vanessa has not been so fortunate. Although she loves warehouse work, and the local field office of Acme Tools offered her a job, her criminal history means that she can't pass the background check, and corporate rules require a three- to four-year waiting period before she could be hired. Vanessa is waiting tables for the time being, hoping to find an employer like ReWall that will give her a chance to prove that her skills and training make her a valuable employee. Unfortunately, the challenge that Vanessa faces is a common one: many employers are unwilling to look past a criminal history, even when job candidates have the skills that match company needs.

## ***Wrap-Around Supports***

Returning citizens require holistic support, and CIW teams up with the [Evelyn K. Davis Center for Working Families](#), a Des Moines community-based organization, to provide support services that include financial literacy classes; help with transportation, housing, and other logistics; and assistance navigating bureaucratic systems. The support begins before women are released from ICW—staff from the Evelyn K. Davis Center come into the TDL classroom at ICW to meet the women, build relationships, and offer housing assistance and financial planning services upon release.

Once the women are released, they can access all the services at the Evelyn K. Davis Center, where they are eligible for financial supports and other benefits not available to all the center's clients. Marvin DeJear, director of the center, explains that graduates of the TDL program have access to extra financial supports because they've demonstrated that they're serious about making a positive change and getting work. The supports may include a free bus pass, housing subsidies, or other benefits that returning citizens need to help them get through the first few weeks or months after release.

For Vanessa, the wraparound supports were invaluable. The job preparedness training "made applying for a job not as stressful," she explains. "I felt prepared for interviews and had a good résumé. Pat [Steele], Amber [Ramirez, employment navigator], Zach [Steele, TDL training coordinator]—they're all available to help with finding jobs, applying for them; they will take you to an interview; I can call them for anything. The Evelyn K. Davis Center helped with two months of a bus pass, they got me to Dress for Success to get interview clothes. It was a huge confidence boost, knowing I was really well prepared for a job interview."

## ***The Tools to Succeed in "A Man's World"***

By requiring grantees to serve at least 25 percent women, the Delivering the TDL Workforce initiative allowed CIW to develop a much-needed new training and employment program that creates unprecedented opportunities for women. In her graduation speech Vanessa wrote: "What has this class done for me? Of course, I have gained knowledge, but I have also gained transformation of self. I have confidence and hope. It's empowering to know that a woman like myself is capable of getting a job in a 'man's world,' that pays well, and I can be self-reliant, taking care of myself."

And Shelly observes,

**TDL is a growing industry; there's always room for advancement. When I did the training, I knew I'd be able to get a job, but I didn't realize how far I could go. The TDL training opened a lot of doors. It's given me a lot of hope and a huge future to look forward to.**

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### JOBS FOR THE FUTURE

Jobs for the Future (JFF) is a national nonprofit that builds educational and economic opportunity for underserved populations in the United States. JFF develops innovative programs and public policies that increase college readiness and career success and build a more highly skilled, competitive workforce. With over 30 years of experience, JFF is a recognized national leader in bridging education and work to increase economic mobility and strengthen our economy. Learn more at [www.jff.org](http://www.jff.org).

## ACCESS TO HIGH-PAYING CAREERS

Many occupations that provide family sustaining wages without a college degree are in male-dominated industries. It takes careful planning to break these gender barriers and successfully connect women to these jobs. Training providers can draw on resources from the [Adding a Gender Lens to Nontraditional Jobs Training toolkit](#), for strategies to recruit women into their programs, enhance job training to address critical issues such as safety for women, and prepare women for job interviews and other components of career success.

## QUICK FACTS

### *Delivering the TDL Workforce*

**WHAT** A two-year initiative supported by the Walmart Foundation and administered by JFF.

**WHO** Ten regions across the country received grants. JFF provided technical assistance to sites to adopt national best practices in training program design, participant recruitment and retention, curriculum delivery, employer engagement, local partnership development, and job placement strategies. JFF and the sites particularly focused on recruiting and connecting women to this predominantly male sector.

### *Impact of the initiative over two years*

**3,697**

Jobseekers served, including **781** women

**2,150**

Jobseekers placed into jobs with an average placement wage of **\$15.59** per hour

**768**

Incumbent TDL workers trained, including **224** women

Generated pay raises for

**371**

incumbent workers

## ENDNOTES

1. Patti Wachtendorf served as warden of Iowa Correctional Institution for Women from 2009 through 2016. In January 2017, she became the warden of the Iowa State Penitentiary, the first woman to hold this position. Source: <http://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/crime-and-courts/2017/01/06/first-female-warden-oversee-iowa-state-penitentiary/96246332/>
2. Source: *Highlights from the US PIACC Survey of Incarcerated Adults: Their Skills, Work Experience, Education and Training*, 2014. Available at: <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2016/2016040.pdf>. See also American Institute of Research webinar, PIACC Prison Study: An Overview of the Skills of U.S. Incarcerated Adults. Available at: <http://www.air.org/event/piaac-prison-study-overview-skills-u-s-incarcerated-adults>.
3. Ibid.
4. Federal Interagency Reentry Council. 2013. *Education*. New York, NY: Author. Available at: [https://csgjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/SnapShot\\_Education.pdf](https://csgjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/SnapShot_Education.pdf)
5. A reporter for the Cedar Rapids Gazette also attended the simulation. Read her account here: <http://www.thegazette.com/subject/news/public-safety/simulation-exposes-eastern-iowa-employers-officials-to-life-as-ex-offenders-20160912>. And Marva describes the simulation in this blog: <http://cdps.chicagofedblogs.org/?p=2291>
6. Peter Cove and Lee Bowes, "Immediate Access to Employment Reduces Recidivism," June 11, 2015, *Real Clear Politics*. Available at: [http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2015/06/11/immediate\\_access\\_to\\_employment\\_reduces\\_recidivism\\_126939.html](http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2015/06/11/immediate_access_to_employment_reduces_recidivism_126939.html)
7. Schmitt, J. & K. Warner. 2010. *Ex-offenders and the Labor Market*. Washington, DC: Center for Economic and Policy Research; Pager, D. 2007. *Marked: Race, Crime, and Finding Work in an Era of Mass Incarceration*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
8. The fact that Vanessa and Shelly had been in and out of jail repeatedly is typical of national trends. Of the 12 million annual jail admissions, estimates are 9 million are for unique individuals with 3 million admissions being individuals who have passed through the system more than once. Subramanian, R., R. Delaney, S. Roberts, N. Fishman, & P. McGarry. 2015. *Incarceration's Front Door: The Misuse of Jails in America*. New York, NY: Vera Institute of Justice. Available at: <http://archive.vera.org/sites/default/files/resources/downloads/incarcerations-front-door-report.pdf>
9. Employers within 800 occupations ranging from barber shop to child care ban hiring those with a history of incarceration; over 30,000 state laws allow employers to discriminate against people with a criminal history; in the 1990s, only 32 percent of employers ran criminal offender record information (CORI) checks, while today over 90 percent of employers either regularly or always run CORIs. Raphael, S. 2010. *Improving Employment Prospects for Former Prison Inmates*. NBER Working Paper Series. Work Paper 15874. April 2010. Available at: <http://www.nber.org/papers/w15874.pdf>; National Research Council. 2014. *The Growth of Incarceration in the United States: Exploring Causes and Consequences*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press; Rodriguez, M.N. & M. Emsellem. 2011. *65 Million "Need Not Apply": The Case for Reforming Criminal Background Checks for Employment*. New York, NY: The National Law Employment Project.





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