Are offender-made products inferior when compared to the private sector?

CIs produce quality products using a highly trained staff and offender workforce. Offenders perform most of the manufacturing and in-process inspection operations, and their work is continuously monitored by supervisors and quality control professionals. **CI programs meet or exceed many national industry standards.**

Do CIs use taxpayer dollars?

Some must rely on taxpayer support, but **86% of CI programs are fully self-funded and receive no tax appropriated funds.** Most CIs operate solely from the revenue generated from agricultural and manufactured products and services.

Prepare | Strengthen | Succeed

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The National Correctional Industries Association (NCIA) is an international nonprofit professional association whose members represent federal, state, county and international Correctional Industry agencies, as well as suppliers and partners in apprenticeship and work programs. Correctional Industries practitioners at all levels use NCIA's wide array of professional development opportunities to network and improve their skills. Through the annual national training conference, regional workshops, a comprehensive website, webinars and informative publications, NCIA keeps the field up-to-date on reentry strategies, emerging technologies, best practices, as well as the many success stories of offenders whose lives have been transformed by Correctional Industries.

Working on the Inside — Succeeding on the Outside

NATIONAL CORRECTIONAL INDUSTRIES ASSOCIATION

Correctional Industries

Frequently Asked Questions

Who benefits from Correctional Industries (CIs)?

Everyone benefits, including . . .

Taxpayers – Lower recidivism means taxpayers see **reduced incarceration costs** and safer neighborhoods.

Offenders – While learning critical jobs skills as well as invaluable soft skills, offenders gain the experience, expertise and self-confidence that will **help them find meaningful work after release.**

Private Businesses – CIs across the country **purchase more than $1.3 billion in local products and services annually**, according to the 2018 NCIA Directory. The Arizona State University Seidman Research Institute Annual Study concluded in 2016 that Arizona CI made a $169 million positive impact on the state's economy while creating 1,875 private sector jobs. Other CIs show similar benefits.

Do CIs take private sector jobs?

No. CIs **are not designed to take away jobs from the private sector.** Partnerships with CI can help private business enter or expand in their market.

What is the success rate for offenders who work through CI?

CIs report significant reductions in recidivism rates for participants in their programs. **CI's recidivism rate of 22% vs. the state rate of 39%** illustrates that offenders working in CI are less likely to return to prison than the average offender.

While the results from state studies vary in the extent of the recidivism reduction and post-release employment benefits, most studies in CI demonstrate positive benefits in both of these key outcomes.

How do CIs help with reentry?

CIs provide **real-world job skills training and experience** that often help offenders connect with private industry partners, suppliers and employers before and after their release.

For many offenders, their CI job shows them the importance of teamwork, good work habits, effective communication skills, job readiness and marketable/transferable job skills. When they see that their work is valued and appreciated, offenders can begin the process of recovering their self-esteem and self-confidence. They can begin to see that they do have other options in their lives as they complete their sentence and begin planning for a successful transition into their communities.

Why would an employer hire a former CI worker?

As with any employee, private businesses should consider what skills and experience an applicant might bring to their enterprise. If an offender possesses the jobs skills they require, they should be considered fairly with other applicants. Providing former offenders with opportunities to make new starts often results in loyal employees. In many cases, **federal tax credits and fidelity bonding are also available to employers who hire former offenders.**

As a successful reentry program, can CIs expand to offer offenders more job training opportunities?

Based on recidivism reduction benefits, **CIs are constantly looking for opportunities to expand and grow their programs so that more offenders can participate.** This requires more participation from local and state governments, non-profits and private businesses willing to buy products made through CIs.

Where possible, **CIs create effective private industry outreach programs** to reinforce the many ways that CIs can be a resource for start up or expanding businesses. CIs develop innovative solutions and relevant offender skills which help employers meet their business challenges.

Are offenders forced to work in CI programs?

No. **CI jobs are voluntary** at the state and federal level. In fact, in many cases, **there are wait lists of offenders applying for the various work opportunities.** Offenders need to meet the minimum requirements for the job and be cleared to work by prison operations. Some states also require that offenders have at least a high school diploma (or be working on a GED) to be eligible to work in CI programs.

What are working conditions like in CIs?

CI enterprises strive to replicate working conditions in private industries. Since the goal is to provide offenders with employable jobs skills, it is important to make sure that those skills will be useful to private industry employers. Agricultural and Manufacturing best practices are followed and supervisors' skills are regularly enhanced through training. Similar to private industry, workplace safety and security are CIs' top priorities.

Why are some offenders paid less than minimum wage?

CI job training opportunities are **similar to internships or apprenticeship programs**, where the emphasis is on learning, gaining experience and making business community connections. All training expenses are covered by the state and not charged back to the offender.

Additionally, the offenders engaged in the program **do not have the same expenses as civilian workers** whose salaries go toward housing, food, transportation, and health care. During incarceration, these expenses are covered by the state or federal government.