

SHELTERED WORKSHOP MANAGERS

Dignified and meaningful employment for people with disabilities...Quality services for Missouri.



Missouri's sheltered workshops may be one of the best bargains in the entire state. Employing 7,500 people with disabilities in a wide range of settings, they offer opportunities that might otherwise require massive subsidies. Not surprisingly, thousands of parents and guardians value their service, which still reflects the grassroots that formed workshops more than 40 years ago.



Missouri Workshops: Great Services and a Great Bargain

What would you say if someone offered you \$5 or \$6 in exchange for \$1? Then, what would you say if for that bargain, they solved several challenges that troubled both your community and the state?

That's the deal Missouri gets from its nearly 100 sheltered workshops. By providing employment for some 7,500 people

with disabilities and business services that earn income, workshops offer Missouri a "two-fer" that is unbeatable in today's tough economy.

Workshops are more, however. They form a critical network for local, county, regional and state services that includes employment and skill training, advocacy and more.

All of this should be no surprise. Missouri workshops were started more than 40 years ago by parents, guardians and others who were vitally concerned with opportunities for people with disabilities. They and others have continued to work for realistic services that pay their way, while delivering a range of services.

It's a bargain that can't be beat.

Sheltered Workshops: Missouri's Hidden Jewels

Missouri is home to 92 workshops that employ people with developmental disabilities. And while almost everyone knows about the shops in their community, few see the entire picture of this remarkable network.

Workshops are actually small, independent businesses. Although they may receive funds from a county levy and support from the state of Missouri, 70 to 80 percent of their funding comes from contract services they provide to the community.

Diverse Services

These contract services are everything from packaging to assembly for local or even national businesses. The services often include maintenance for area offices or for public locations such as highway rest stops. Recycling for paper and other materials is another service many workshops provide. Several even manufacture their own products as creative ways to augment their income and provide employment for people with disabilities.

This "industrial model" of services is in sharp contrast to programs that would have to be completely subsidized. Many of these workers might have no other option than programs operating entirely with government funding. With workshop employment, they receive invaluable job and life skill training, along with the satisfaction of earning a paycheck. And Missouri also benefits with an investment of only \$1 for every \$10 returned.

Working Hard to Succeed

There are several unique factors that make this possible. The "work" in workshop is no accident. Because they compete for the majority of their income, Missouri's workshops focus intensely on their business customer needs, offering a maximum of flexibility and quality. In recent years, as overseas "outsourcing" has cut into work-

shop contracts, these organizations have leveraged creative insight and business savvy to develop new services and products that help maintain revenues to employ people with disabilities.

Workshop employees with disabilities are paid based on their ability to perform in relation to the performance of a person without a disability. If an employee produces 50 percent of what a non-disabled person produces, then he or she receives 50 percent of what that person is paid. These procedures are checked frequently by the U.S. Department of Labor.

This does add to the burden of workshop supervisory and administrative staffs. This group may include some of the hardest working employees in Missouri. Because of the special needs of workers with disabilities, supervisory staff often do "double duty" with additional responsibilities. A typical example involved a supervisor who was preparing bids for work with a major national corporation one minute, then assisting with the special medical needs of a worker with a disability the next minute.

Savvy Business

Workshops generally have their own sales staff that call on local businesses to make them aware of the services the workshop can provide. Other workshops have joined together in cooperative arrangements to share salespeople, while still others depend on the manager to do the sales work. Much of a workshop's business is repeat business from satisfied customers.

Since each workshop is a private, not-for-profit corporation, each is overseen by a volunteer board of directors. Board members include local business people, educators, lawyers, accountants and family members of employees. The board outlines the general course for a given shop and hires an operational manager for the day-to-day operations.

Multiple Challenges

None of this is easy. Unlike formal state agencies, sheltered workshops do not receive direct appropriations. Instead, they are funded \$19-a-day per diem for each employee. The per diem applies to a six-hour workday. But over the last few years, the state has paid only \$18. This has created a \$9-million funding shortfall and a doubling of the waiting list for people who want to work.

Still another challenge comes from well-intentioned people who wish to employ all workers with disabilities in private busi-



Missouri's 92 sheltered workshops are actually independent, small businesses that employ some 7,500 people with disabilities. To make that work for more than 40 years, they have developed a range of services that now include everything from recycling wood products to operating greenhouses.

ness. Although many workshops do operate "supported employment" departments in cooperation with outside, private businesses, workshop veterans and their family members realize that placing all workshop employees in private, competitive businesses is unrealistic.

Regardless of these and other hurdles, workshops continue to provide employment for 7,500 Missourians, important businesses services and invaluable contributions to their communities.

MASWM

Mission

Sheltered Workshops in Missouri share a common mission of providing dignified and meaningful employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

If you have questions regarding the Missouri Association of Sheltered Workshop Managers, please contact: Legislative Chair Randy Hylton at (816) 781-6292 or e-mail rhyton@vsiserve.org; or President Bob Koch, (636) 239-2744 or e-mail bkoch@shelteredworkshopsinc.org, or visit www.moworkshops.org

Workshops Offer Wide Range of Services

Services provided by Missouri workshops meet multiple business needs including outsourcing, custom projects and other programs, all designed to provide employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Nearly every workshop in the state provides packaging, mailing, assembly and other services related to fulfillment and delivery. Workshops offer these services with a maximum of flexibility for their client businesses, often working with individual businesses to create custom programs. In effect, companies that utilize workshop services have an on-demand expansion of their own capabilities.

People with disabilities, employed by Missouri workshops, produce goods and

services for Fortune 500 companies, as well as smaller, local businesses. A partial list of contracts includes work opportunities in electro-mechanical and manual assembly, custom, high speed packaging, automated and computerized inspection and quality control, custom mailing, commercial laundry and janitorial work, data entry, machine operation, wood, metal and plastics fabrication, document preservation and entrepreneurial enterprises.

Along with such traditional outsourcing efforts, workshops also operate a number of on-site services. These include maintenance of state facilities such as high-traffic, highway rest areas. Workshops have also successfully joined—and in many areas lead—the “green” revolution with recy-

cling and other programs.

Many workshops also produce their own original products. These range from first aid kits for pets or people to industrial wooden skids and other items. Such original products are often developed after extensive market research, frequently in cooperation with information provided by Missouri’s higher education and extension services.

All of these programs provide ever-increasing employment opportunities for Missourians with developmental disabilities. They also provide outstanding services to Missouri communities and the state as a whole.



Missouri workshops are actually small, non-profit businesses. These 92 organizations provide key services for the state of Missouri and for some 7,500 people with disabilities. The key involves opportunities for employment, and in doing that workshops provide community businesses and national corporations with a wide range of business services.

Services for People with Disabilities: A Top Priority

Since the late 1960s, Missouri sheltered workshops have been the key to community-based services for people with disabilities and their families. Missouri’s workshops not only provide employment for 7,500 state residents, they also help improve their quality of life through an amazing array of activities and services.

First of all, the workshops’ business model provides employment opportunities and activities that, in many cases, would require massive state and local subsidies without workshops. The chance to earn a paycheck while practicing job and life skills is a benefit for Missourians that is virtually priceless.

Workshops also form the backbone of an important network of services that often begin in public schools and, with workshop

assistance, continue after graduation. Workshops collaborate with school-to-work efforts, provide transportation assistance and often operate their own skill-development and training programs. By nature, they are among the most experienced organizations in Missouri when it comes to working with people who have developmental disabilities, and their support staffs are a proven benefit.

In addition, workshops also provide a nucleus of advocacy and family support. In nearly all instances, they were among the first organizations founded by parents, and they have spent years listening to the needs and wants of people with disabilities. They have worked tirelessly, often on their own, to develop the support network to translate those needs and wants into meaningful ser-

vices. This includes development of self-advocacy skills so that people with disabilities and their families can advocate for themselves.

Workshops are actively involved with state and private service leaders to implement “extra” services such as day activity programs, assessment and evaluation systems, and community integration.

Missouri sheltered workshops are proven leaders in enabling people with disabilities to access a variety of vocational and personal options through direct service or referral networks. While employment opportunities are among the most important workshop efforts, they are far from the only services for people with developmental disabilities.

From the Grassroots Up: Shops Build Business

The story of Missouri's sheltered workshops began in the 1960s. Seeking options for their children with disabilities, often desperately, parents and guardians began forming workshops to provide employment opportunities for their children with disabilities.

For most of these parents and their children, the alternatives were sitting at home or in programs that required 100 percent governmental subsidies. With real vision, these parents realized that gainful employment would bring other advantages as well, including pride and skills. Although much has changed, that foundation remains true for workshops today.

Missouri sheltered workshops remain different from shops in many other states. They depend heavily on contracted work and the revenue from that work to maintain operations. They are actually small businesses that hire individuals with disabilities. On average, a workshop's contract revenue accounts for 70-80 percent of workshop revenue, government assistance 10-24 percent and the rest from additional grants.

The majority of workshop employees have been diagnosed with developmental disabilities. Other frequent disabilities include mental illness, head injury, blindness, deafness, seizure disorders and physical disabilities.

Prior to being hired for employment in the workshop, these Missourians must be assessed by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to determine whether or not they are capable of working in a competitive environment. If the rehabilitation counselor determines they cannot work competitively, the counselor will certify them for employment in the workshop.

Although workshops compete in an open market, the needs of their employees mean extra supervision and other elements that increase workshop overhead. A major step was taken in 1971 with passage of Missouri Senate Bill 40. SB40 provided important funding support by enabling local counties to create tax levies for workshops and residential facilities. Additional funding today includes a



From their beginnings in the 1960s, Missouri's sheltered workshops have consistently pushed creative solutions for job creation. The result has been a grassroots effort that also serves businesses and the community.



per diem supplement for each workshop employee from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Sheltered Workshop Division.

County and state funding does fill a critical gap from higher overhead for workshop supervision and other services to people with disabilities. Workshops also rely on quality, flexibility and their large workforce to sell their services, making that supervision

critical.

Besides the obvious, providing employment for people with disabilities, workshops also put money back into the community. Payroll, purchase of goods and services and participation in local affairs are some of the ways that workshops contribute to the community. This community "payback" totals hundreds of millions of dollars each year. Just one more bargain that workshops bring.