

Illinois Correctional Industries (ICI) has long been recognized at the state and national level for leadership in developing sustainability initiatives and for implementing sustainable practices into daily operations. An example of this is the ICI-Menard Recycling Center located at Menard Correctional Center, near Chester, Ill., in rural Randolph County.

What initially started as a modest effort to pull cardboard from the prison's waste stream as a cost-savings measure has grown beyond the prison's wall to a full-fledged Recycling Processing Center serving not only area state facilities but also most of the communities in the area. In light of this success and as a major component in the IDOC's Sustainability Initiative, ICI has been tasked to expand this effort and build an internal recycling infrastructure within the agency using the Menard-ICI Program as the template.

ICI's goal is to expand recycling services to every adult IDOC facility in Illinois. Each of the respective recycling operations will be staffed with 10 offenders and will initially focus on diversion of recyclables from that facility's waste stream.

This facility centric approach will provide a variety of immediate impacts. The local facilities will experience an immediate savings because materials they formerly paid to have taken and disposed of in landfills will now be removed from their waste stream. These same materials will be sorted and processed into a sellable commodity by assigned offenders. The sales of the recycled commodities will in turn provide a revenue stream to support the program as well as provide a foundation of fiscal sustainability for the operations.

An important aspect of all ICI programming is the vocational opportunities provided to assigned offenders. The recycling expansion is no exception. Those working in the program will be provided with a documented job training experience that will supply them with a skill set needed to pursue employment opportunities in the fast emerging "green collar" segment of the economy. A recent study commissioned by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) has projected an 11% growth rate for this segment of the "green" economy.

The ICI Recycling Initiative will provide added savings to the agency by selecting offenders working in the program who meet the strict criteria to earn Industry Good Conduct Credits. This program allows assigned offenders who maintain pristine institutional records and adhere to strict programming goals to earn a 44/45 day reduction in their sentence and time incarcerated for every 90 day participation period in the work program. Additionally, it is well documented that when inmates are released with marketable job skills, like those provided by ICI, their incidence of recidivism are greatly reduced.

ICI has already expanded existing recycling efforts and initiated successful start-up programs at several facilities. Two of the new start-ups at Centralia Correctional Center and Shawnee Correctional Center respectively have already begun building cooperative relationships with local stakeholders in their local communities. These types of

relationships not only help expand services to areas of the state that have been typically underserved, they help grow an industry in Illinois that has been proven to be an economic engine for the state.

The DCEO study mentioned previously estimated that the combined direct, indirect and induced impacts of Illinois' Recycling, Recycling Reliant and Reuse Industries are responsible for approximately 111,500 jobs with a payroll of \$3.6 billion, \$30.3 billion in additional gross receipts and more than \$1 billion in state and local taxes.

The ICI Recycling Initiative has developed several goals for this effort including:

- Growing the sustainability of our operations and those of the facilities that house them.
- Reducing the operating costs of our agency while generating a reliable revenue stream to support our programs.
- Providing “real world” job training and vocational opportunities for offenders in our charge.
- Increasing the value of our programming by increasing low- or no-cost recycling opportunities to local communities.

Most importantly, ICI has set a goal to increase recyclable recovery rates statewide to levels that will have a positive impact in growing this industry in both Illinois and the Midwest region. The DCEO report states that “Not only does recycling save significant energy, but it also creates 6-10 times as many jobs as land filling the same amount of material.” Based on past data and the fact that the ICI model in large part targets typically underserved areas of the state, we have the confidence that we can bring significant amounts of commodities to the market providing a “grow” opportunity for this private sector industry and the jobs that will create.