

**2008 Innovations Awards Program
APPLICATION**

CSG reserves the right to use or publish in other CSG products and services the information provided in this Innovations Awards Program Application. If your agency objects to this policy, please advise us in a separate attachment to your program's application.

ID # (assigned by CSG): 08-S-390K

Please provide the following information, adding space as necessary:

State: **Oklahoma**

Assign Program Category (applicant): **Corrections** (Use list at end of application)

1. Program Name – **The Bridge Project**
2. Administering Agency – **Oklahoma Department of Corrections**
3. Contact Person (Name and Title) – **Doug Byrd, Correctional Case Manager IV**
4. Address – **Rt. 1, Box 8 Helena, OK 73741**
5. Telephone Number – **(580) 852-3221**
6. FAX Number – **(580) 852-3200**
7. E-mail Address – **doug.byrd@doc.state.ok.us**
8. Web site Address – **N/A for the Bridge Project**
9. Please provide a two-sentence description of the program.

The Bridge Project uses offender labor, with an emphasis on disabled and elderly offenders, to crochet and craft items which are donated to non-profit entities throughout the year. This project reduces idleness within the facility and aids many people in our area communities.

10. How long has this program been operational (month and year)? Note: the program must be between 9 months and 5 years old on March 1, 2008 to be considered.

The program opened its doors October 1, 2004.

11. Why was the program created? What problem[s] or issue[s] was it designed to address?

This facility's mission is to house medium security offenders whose age is 35 and older. Therefore, many of our offenders are elderly. With age comes many physical limitations and there was a need to find viable employment for these offenders which also helped in reducing idleness. These jobs, under the guise of "giving back to the community" changes attitudes and raise feelings of pride and accomplishment within the offender population.

12. Describe the specific activities and operations of the program in chronological order.

Each day the bridge project building is opened by a staff supervisor. Offenders check in and check out tools if necessary. They begin crocheting blankets, painting wooden jewelry boxes (created from discarded corn dog sticks from our corn dog factory),

butting out and sanding wood for wooden toys and assembling all of these items. These activities are repeated day after day and usually around the holiday season, staff members distribute the items to area care centers, law enforcement, fire departments, EMS personnel, Human Services offices and they like to distribute to the needy.

13. Why is the program a new and creative approach or method?

I can best answer that by explaining the most difficult thing to sell to the offenders, staff and the public, was that we were going to employ upwards of seventy offenders crocheting blankets for the needy. Many of our workers could easily be labeled hardened criminals and have little or no experience doing anything good for anyone but themselves and their self-serving needs. This is what's creative about selling the idea, is that we could do it and we were going to do it. We were able to convince people of the validity of what we were doing because area newspapers supported us by running articles in the papers about our efforts, accomplishments awards and so on. The primary way we were able to convince people was for them to see area churches, schools and municipalities support us openly. These partnerships garnered us a Governor's Commendation in 2005.

14. What were the program's start-up costs? (Provide details about specific purchases for this program, staffing needs and other financial expenditures, as well as existing materials, technology and staff already in place.)

We converted a building that was being used for hobby craft. This building had all the tools we needed. It was already being staffed, so there was a shift in who would supervise the area, but there were no additional staffing needs. We survive off of both monetary donations and donations of materials to keep on hand for the offenders to use to create the items we donate.

15. What are the program's annual operational costs?

\$10,000.00 - \$12,000.00 estimated costs in materials. It is difficult to be exact as donations often come in partial sheets of wood and partial skeins of yarn.

16. How is the program funded?

By donations only.

17. Did this program require the passage of legislation, executive order or regulations? If YES, please indicate the citation number.

This program did not require any of the above stated requirements.

18. What equipment, technology and software are used to operate and administer this program?

The equipment required keeping the operation moving forward and the standard carpentry tools that were already in place were: Table saws, Sanders, Scroll saws, etc.

19. To the best of your knowledge, did this program originate in your state? If YES, please indicate the innovator's name, present address, telephone number and e-mail address.

We believe this idea originated here because of our specific need to address idleness among the elderly and disabled offenders. We know of no other program which proceeded that is identical. The idea was the culmination of several meetings with our original team and offender representative's from the yard at that time. There was no one person solely responsible for everything, it was a team effort.

20. Are you aware of similar programs in other states? If YES, which ones and how does this program differ?

I have heard of others in different states, for example, there is a program where offenders take broken and discarded bicycles/tricycles and rebuild/repair them so they can be donated to needy children's shelters in the community. There are many such programs around the nation.

21. Has the program been fully implemented? If NO, what actions remain to be taken? Yes
22. Briefly evaluate (pro and con) the program's effectiveness in addressing the defined problem[s] or issue[s]. Provide tangible examples.

It has accomplished what it was intended to accomplish. Specific examples include the statistics which show we have more offenders employed. Another example of how the program has been successful is the documentation which shows the amount of items and entities that we have supported during the years. Our recognition for the success of this program has been our awards, cards and letters acknowledging how we've been received and appreciated for our efforts.

23. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception?

The program was able to grow in the number of offenders we employ following a review by the state fire inspector, which we requested. This confirmed our belief the area we occupy would safely sustain additional workers. Our worker count went from approximately thirty-five to seventy, when this review was completed.

24. What limitations or obstacles might other states expect to encounter if they attempt to adopt this program?

The most critical step is to find a person who is truly sincere about helping people and who can lead a team to implement a program. Essentially, you need a strong leader who is articulate and truly committed who can take criticism knowing what they are implementing and will aid all concerned. This leader has to find and recruit others with similar views from varying areas within the respective agency and partnership with outside organizations to begin educating, selling, motivating and coordinating the required needs of the project. When that team and those partnerships/commitments are in place, the rest will happen. This is certainly no revelation and what is required in most any worthwhile endeavor.