

THE WILDCAT SERVICE CORPORATION: A SUMMARY

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The Wildcat Service Corporation was established by the Vera Institute of Justice in July 1972 to provide fulltime employment, accompanied by various job supports, to a target population of ex-addicts and ex-convicts. As a non-profit, multi-purpose public service agency, Wildcat has cooperated with various agencies of the New York City government and other non-commercial institutions in creating work for its employees.

Wildcat's employees, of whom there were 677 as of December 28, 1973, perform a variety of public service tasks; among other things, they paint and/or maintain public buildings and parks; they draft maps and charts for the City Planning Commission; they act as interpreters in Mount Sinai Hospital; they run an extermination and building cleanup program in Harlem; they provide a messenger service for New York City agencies; they collect used newsprint for resale and recycling; they drive and shop for elderly persons; and they work as clerks and administrative aides for the New York Public Library. (A complete list of current Wildcat projects, and the numbers of employees enrolled in each, is attached to this summary.)

Among the most interesting of the Wildcat projects are those which have been developed in cooperation with the New York Police Department. Wildcat employees--93 per cent of whom have arrest records--are inventorying forms and equipment for the police, assembling, painting and delivering police crowd-control barriers, painting and maintaining police stations, and providing a flat

tire pickup and delivery service for patrol cars.

Wildcat provides these job opportunities in what has come to be known as a "supported employment" setting. The goal of supported employment is to provide real work and a flexible atmosphere in which an ex-addict or ex-convict can acquire the work habits and work record which will make him an acceptable candidate for employment in private business or civil service jobs. Wildcat's basic premise is that ex-addicts and ex-convicts need to learn the customs and demands of the "straight" world in an environment in which their own needs and demands are recognized, understood and accounted for. In this way, Wildcat hopes to help its employees in breaking the cycle of addiction, crime, and welfare dependency. Employment at Wildcat is seen as preparation for a life of legitimate, self-supporting activity.

HISTORY OF SUPPORTED WORK

Since 1970, the Vera Institute of Justice has established more than half a dozen programs which provide work in closely supervised, low-stress settings for former alcoholics, ex-addicts and ex-offenders. Founded in 1961 as a criminal justice planning agency, Vera soon came to the conclusion that one important way to improve the criminal justice system would be to reduce the demands upon it. Consequently, Vera began to experiment with various ways to divert offenders and potential offenders into non-punitive rehabilitation programs which might counteract the forces tending to promote criminal behavior, and reduce the immediate strain upon the criminal justice system.

Vera's first "diversion" program, the Manhattan Bowery Project, provided medically supervised detoxification facilities and social

services for Bowery derelicts; its second, the Court Employment Project, offered job counseling and referrals to young defendants whose criminal behavior appeared to arise from the inability to find work; and its third, the Addiction Research and Treatment Corporation, was a methadone maintenance and social service program for heroin addicts.

From its experience with these three projects, Vera learned that diversion programs could be effective, that the City's addiction problem was becoming an inseparable part of its crime problem, and that employment was a critical part of the rehabilitation process, especially for ex-addicts. Meanwhile, Vera was beginning to investigate the possibilities for employing some Bowery Project out-patients, and in 1970 it established Project Renewal, a residential employment program for a small group of ex-alcoholics, who supported themselves by maintaining a number of New York parks and playgrounds.

The following year, Vera turned to the problem of employing ex-addicts and established the Pioneer Messenger Service, a commercially competitive messenger service operated according to supported work principles. From then on, Vera's supported work programs concentrated on employing ex-addicts and ex-convicts in non-residential settings. Subsequent supported work projects have included three Off-Track Betting offices, three public service work projects established with funds from the U.S. Department of Labor and the Emergency Employment Act, an 11-man project in the checkproofing department of a large New York City bank, and Wildcat.

WILDCAT'S STRUCTURE

The Wildcat Service Corporation is by far the largest of the Vera Institute's supported work projects. At the end of its first year of operations it employed 300 men and women, and plans were being made to expand tenfold, to 3,000 persons, by the end of 1974.

During its first year, Wildcat occupied one office, at 2000 Broadway, Manhattan, and employed only residents of the borough of Manhattan. There are now unit offices in Brooklyn and the Bronx as well, and a Queens unit is scheduled to open in the near future.

In May of 1973, Wildcat established a corporate planning office to oversee the expansion, and to coordinate the activities of the borough units. The corporate staff designs administrative and fiscal forms and procedures, plans new work projects, and provides technical assistance to the units.

FUNDING

The Wildcat program combines aspects of employment, manpower training, and drug treatment programs, which has enabled it to qualify for funds which are intended for a variety of purposes. In the 1973-74 fiscal year, the main sources of funds are: \$1-million from the National Institute of Mental Health; \$1.5-million from the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration; \$4.5-million from the New York City Department of Employment; \$1.6-million in diverted welfare payments, and \$380,000 from the U.S. Department of Labor. In addition, the New York City Board of Estimate has authorized \$2.5-million in service contracts with individual City agencies. These contracts will be negotiated,

drawn, and implemented throughout the year.

The \$1.6-million in diverted welfare payments represents a creative use of welfare funds to break the welfare cycle. Wildcat has obtained permission from appropriate authorities to divert its employees' welfare payments into the Wildcat salary pool. Normally, of course, employed persons would not continue to receive welfare, but the government looks upon the Wildcat program as an experiment in welfare reform, which qualifies Wildcat for this unusual arrangement.

WORK SUPPORTS

Wildcat combines business goals and principles with a flexible, supportive structure. Support is built into the program by means of 1) employment in groups, which allows employees to adjust to a new set of living and working habits with a group of peers who are undergoing similar adjustments, and frees them of the fear that their "past" may be discovered since it is their very history that qualifies them for work at Wildcat; 2) thorough orientation and clear job definition, which remove as much ambiguity from the work as possible; 3) frequent, formal work evaluations; 4) a detailed advancement and reward system, with considerable opportunity for both internal promotion and bonuses; 5) a support services program which aids the employee with practical problems arising in his changing life; and 6) a combination of understanding and firmness on the part of the administrative staff members, who must be sensitive both to the demands of the work and to the needs and problems of the employees.

Through its support services department, each Wildcat borough unit offers its employees personal counseling and advice on housing, finances, legal problems, medical services and education, among other things.

These supports are important to Wildcat employees in varying degrees. Some employees are able to work well with little more support than the group setting supplies; others require additional supports.

But despite the importance of these "adjustment aids," the mere opportunity to work should not be underrated; above all, Wildcat employees appear to profit from the chance to effect their own rehabilitation through a steady job which is not immediately jeopardized by the habits and attitudes of the non-"straight" world.

EMPLOYEE PROFILE AND PROGRESS

The average Wildcat employee is male (93%), 30 years of age, black (65% . Twenty-seven per cent are Puerto Rican, 7% white and 1% other), and single. He is an ex-addict (98%) who is methadone maintained (80%). He has a history of arrest (90%) and conviction (80%), generally on drug-related charges. He has not completed high school (91%), he has not held any given job for longer than two years (66%), and he was not employed for the six months prior to his acceptance at Wildcat (80%).

Of these employees who were hired by Wildcat a year or more ago, 62% are still working, either at Wildcat or in outside jobs. Thirty per cent have improved their job status, either by internal promotion or by finding better jobs.

JOB DEVELOPMENT

Wildcat estimates that half its employees are ready for non-supported jobs after a year in the program. By the end of Wildcat's first year of operations, it had become necessary to begin planning for a large-scale job development effort. In September of 1973, the Vera Institute established a Job Development and Placement Unit to seek positions for job-ready "graduates" of all Vera's supported work programs, including Wildcat.

Between Wildcat's inception and the end of the calendar year 1973, a total of 60 Wildcat employees moved on to non-supported jobs, either inside or outside Wildcat. Fifty-nine adjusted well; only one was terminated.

Of the 60 placements, almost a third (19) were achieved in the months of October, November and December--first fruits of the concerted job development effort.

At the moment, the Job Development and Placement Unit is concentrating on finding jobs in the private sector since turnover in private businesses is regular and job application procedures are fairly simple and quick. In the future, the unit will devote more effort to developing a civil service job market for Wildcat's graduates.

Ultimately, the unit will explore the possibility of creating large number of new jobs which suit the particular abilities of Wildcat graduates and which serve public needs that are not presently articulated. For the moment, however, the unit is looking to local commerce and industry to absorb the Wildcat employees who are now job-ready.

RESEARCH

Wildcat is an employment program, but it is also a research project. Its research goals are to test the effectiveness of supported work as a rehabilitative mechanism for ex-addicts and ex-convicts; to determine the characteristics of those employees who are able to make the best use of the program, and the characteristics of those work projects which seem to produce the most successful employees; and to calculate the program's cost/benefit ratio.

The Vera Institute's research department has undertaken an analysis of these questions and many related issues. It has set up a controlled study of 300 employees, whose progress in work and life is being compared with the progress of 300 members of a control group who were not offered jobs at Wildcat. The study should reveal how employment at Wildcat affects rearrest and readdiction rates, among other indicators of social adjustment.

Two types of economic analysis are under way. The first, called the social cost/benefit analysis, calculates the value of the goods and services produced by the program's resources--employees, management staff, materials, equipment and office space--and compares it with the value of the goods and services these resources would have produced if the program did not exist. At the end of the first year of operations, i.e., in July 1973, Wildcat was producing 142 per cent of the goods and services its resources might have produced otherwise.

The second type of analysis measures the taxpayer's actual dollar return on his investment in the supported work program. During the first year of operation, Wildcat returned 92 per cent of the taxpayer's investment (in good and services, taxes paid by employees, savings in crime-connected costs, freed health resources, and reductions in welfare payments). Since that time, the cost of the program has dropped considerably, thanks to economies of scale, and further economies are sure to result as the program continues to expand, so that there is no doubt that the taxpayer ultimately will realize far more than his investment.

The current annual per capita cost per supported work employee is \$8,100, about \$6,000 of which constitutes the employee's salary and the rest of which pays for management and other-than-personnel expenses. Each participant is producing about \$6,400 a year in goods and services (i.e., \$400 more than his salary), and is paying \$345 in taxes. The program is saving society \$1,000 per participant in reduced crime-related costs and health costs. In terms of the taxpayer analysis, then, the program is producing \$7,745 in economic benefits, compared to its cost of \$8,100.

Number of Employees

Manhattan 443 (M)
 Brooklyn 200 (B)
 Bronx 34 (BX)
 TOTAL 677

WILDCAT SERVICE CORPORATION
 ACTIVE PROJECTS REPORT
 Week Ending 12-28-73

SPONSORING UNIT	PROGRAM	# OF PERSONS EMPLOYED	TYPE OF WORK
Transportation Administration	Fire Zone Parking Violations Bureau	1 M <u>1 M</u>	Clean and paint the curb areas around City fire hydrants Checks for excessive parking violations and processes data on vehicles towed and sold.
Parks	Outdoor Maintenance	24 M 15 B	Maintenance of malls, roadways and park areas. Cut grass, pick-up litter and paint benches and fences. Indoor work projects include maintenance work in several Parks Department buildings.
Police	Paint Shop Fire Repair Police Inventory Quartermaster Section Barrier Shop Headquarters	21 M 4 B <u>1 M</u> <u>7 M</u> <u>5 M</u> <u>35 M</u>	Plaster and Paint Department installations. Exchange and repair flat tires for four police divisions and the central repair facility. Maintain inventory records and fill requisitions for supplies for police commands throughout the City. Assemble, paint, letter and deliver police barriers. Perform general maintenance for Police Headquarters at 1 Police Plaza.

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SPONSORING UNIT	PROGRAM	# OF PERSONS EMPLOYED	TYPE OF WORK
Police (continued)	Headquarters Window Cleaning & Ground Maintenance	8 B	Clean all windows and maintain grounds at Police Headquarters.
Environmental Protection Administration	Precinct Maintenance	18 M 8 B 14 Bx	Provide complete Maintenance Service
EPA - State University of New York EPA - Water Resources EPA - Air Resources	Paper Recycling Project Scorecard Landscaping Clerical, Lab, Escort	0 (7 hired by City) 6 M 13 B 18 M	"Paper Tigers" newspaper recycling program for the West Side of Manhattan: community relations, newspaper pickup, trash basket placement and service. Rate effectiveness of Department of Sanitation street cleaning. Landscaping and indoor maintenance at the Water Treatment Facility at New Town Creek. "Inspector aides" - accompany air resource inspectors in their regular duties.
Vera	Research	4 M	Interview applicants to obtain information for program evaluation and coding questionnaires.

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SPONSORING UNIT	PROGRAM	# OF PERSONS EMPLOYED	TYPE OF WORK
Legal Aid	Legal Aid Clerk	9 M	Perform various clerical duties including providing clients with information.
New York Public Library	Library Mid-Manhattan Branch	33 M	Fill a number of positions including cataloguers, desk clerks, mailroom clerks, periodical assistants.
Board of Education	Clerical Central Repair	26 M 30 B	Perform general office work and off-set printing, carpentry & glazing.
City Planning	Map and Chart Drafting	8 M	Prepare map overlays on census data & land use. Also, correlate information for a handbook to be used by community planning districts.
Pioneer Marine	Pioneer Marine School	36 M	Receive instruction in marine mechanics and work refurbishing ships.
Health Services Administration	Pest Control Harlem-Bushwick	10 M 35 B	Survey buildings, provide extermination service, clean lots and conduct a community awareness campaign on rodent prevention.
H.S.A.A.	HSA - ASA	1 M	Clerical work in Methadone Maintenance detoxification centers and in ASA central referral units.

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SPONSORING UNIT	PROGRAM	# OF PERSONS EMPLOYED	TYPE OF WORK
Mount Sinai Hospital	Translators	2 M	Spanish speaking interpreters work in the Emergency Room.
Hospital Audience Inc.	Clerical	7 M	Perform clerical duties for HAI which books tickets for hospital and prison performances.
Harlem Teams	Community Services	10 M	Clerical, building maintenance, comparison shopping
Department of Social Services	Case Aides	1 M	Assist case workers in a Welfare Hotel in checking public assistance classifications and also escort tenants to Welfare centers and hospitals.
Washington Heights/ Inwood Senior Citizen Transportation	Escort	2 M	Escort senior citizens from the Washington Heights area to various cultural events and points of interest in New York.
Wildcat Internal	Building Maintenance	6 M 2 Bx	Maintenance of Wildcat offices.
Department of Public Works	Masonry Cleaning	1 M	Indoor and outdoor marble and masonry cleaning and restoration work on such buildings as police precincts, fire stations, libraries and the Municipal Building.

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 Week Ending 12-28-73

SPONSORING UNIT	PROGRAM	# OF PERSONS EMPLOYED	TYPE OF WORK
Department of Public Works	Building Maintenance	47 M 53 B 16 Bx	Perform general maintenance work in fifteen City buildings.
Fire Department	Data Collection and Analysis	6 B	Correction of false alarm computer print-outs, input to computer system of personnel records, etc.
Wildcat	Clerical	33 M 14 B 2 Bx	Receive clerical training and perform general office work.
Multi-Agency	Contract Painting	26 M 14 B	Plaster and paint buildings designated by the Department of Real Estate and other City Agencies.
	Wildcat Public Messenger Ser.	29 M	Provide messenger and mail service at 42 locations for 64 City Agencies.
	Fix-It	15 M	Receive on-the-job instruction in carpentry and perform basic renovations e.g., building partitions and repairing door frames.