

FreeWorld's Partnership with the Jefferson County, Colorado Workforce Board



FreeWorld Specializes in Placing Returning Citizens in High-Wage Careers

FreeWorld (FW) is a tech nonprofit dedicated to ending generational poverty and reducing recidivism for returning citizens by creating pathways to economic mobility. Currently, we focus on training and placing returning citizens in living-wage careers within the trucking industry, with plans to expand into additional vocational fields in the future.

Our mission is driven by the urgency of helping returning citizens secure living-wage jobs as quickly as possible, recognizing the significant challenges they face with each day of unemployment. Over half of FreeWorld's staff are formerly incarcerated, providing firsthand expertise in the reentry process. With this understanding, we have designed a program that removes critical barriers to reentry. Our technology helps participants access vital records, secure reliable transportation through an Uber partnership, and receive stipends to cover living expenses during full-time training.

A cornerstone of FreeWorld's scalability is the success of our Workforce Partnerships. We collaborate with partners at all levels—state agencies, Workforce Development Boards, and American Job Centers—to streamline the job placement process for returning citizens. By connecting them with workforce training funds, we ensure their smooth progression toward earning their CDL-A license and beginning their careers. This case study highlights our partnership model in Jefferson County, CO, showcasing the impact and potential of these collaborations.

FreeWorld's Partnership with Jefferson County Business & Workforce Center

The Jefferson County Business & Workforce Center (JeffCo) exemplifies a flexible and innovative collaboration with FreeWorld, resulting in FreeWorld's most impactful workforce partnership to date. Our model in Jefferson County has provided valuable lessons for other Workforce Partners seeking to fully leverage FreeWorld's offerings to better serve returning citizens.

Since its founding in 2018, FreeWorld has maintained an **85%** placement rate for CDL-A earners while generating **\$38.7M** in recidivism cost savings. Through JeffCo's partnership, these results are even stronger, with **89%** of shared clients successfully earning their CDL-A license.

JeffCo's success stems from its willingness to rethink and redesign traditional workforce processes to reduce barriers for returning citizens and seamlessly integrate FreeWorld's program. Their innovative approach has set a replicable standard for other Workforce Partners dedicated to creating meaningful opportunities for returning citizens.

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What is the Jefferson County Partnership Model?

Partnership Overview

FreeWorld and JeffCo have created a streamlined, two-way referral system to maximize support for justice-involved job seekers pursuing CDL-A careers. Under this model:

- **FreeWorld** refers clients to JeffCo once they obtain their CDL-A permit.
- **JeffCo** refers clients to FreeWorld when individuals express interest in pursuing a CDL-A career.

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These individuals are referred to as “shared clients,” reflecting the collaborative nature of the partnership. This approach is critical for driving successful outcomes:

- **JeffCo** benefits by engaging with clients who are further along in the process, thus protecting their outcomes.
- **FreeWorld** provides wraparound support and hands-on assistance to help clients complete their CDL-A training and secure living-wage jobs in trucking.

The impact of this collaboration is significant—82% of JeffCo’s returning citizen job seekers pursuing a CDL-A in 2024 were referred by FreeWorld.

Key Features of the JeffCo Model

JeffCo has made critical adjustments to their traditional processes to maximize the impact of this partnership:

1. **Eliminating the In-Office Requirement**
 - **Why it matters:** Shared clients are typically referred after earning their CDL-A permit, a stage where dropout rates are minimal and readiness for trucking school is high.
 - **What changed:** JeffCo accepts electronically signed paperwork generated and executed by FreeWorld, and conducts client meetings via phone; removing the need for in-person visits and preserving client momentum toward training completion.
2. **Streamlined Paperwork¹**
 - **Why it matters:** A simplified process reduces administrative burdens and ensures clients can focus on achieving their career goals.

¹ Examples can be found in Appendix 1

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- **What changed:** When clients sign FreeWorld's agreement, they simultaneously complete JeffCo's Title I enrollment paperwork. FreeWorld facilitates the entire process, consolidating multiple steps into one seamless interaction for shared clients. The documents and data involved can be reviewed in Appendix 1:
 - i. JeffCo Title 1 Paperwork
 - ii. Shared Client Data
- 3. **Simplified Career Readiness Criteria**
 - **Why it matters:** Traditional workforce assessments often present unnecessary barriers for justice-involved individuals.
 - **What changed:** JeffCo accepts the Commercial Learner's Permit (CLP) as evidence of career readiness². This approach removes the need for lengthy assessments, such as unrelated math or literacy tests, which often hinder progress.
- 4. **Delegated Enrollment Process**
 - **Why it matters:** Delegating tasks to FreeWorld reduces administrative complexity for JeffCo and ensures all clients have a seamless experience being served by both organizations.
 - **What changed:** FreeWorld handles the enrollment process and communication with CDL A training providers, and leads communication between all partnership stakeholders.
- 5. **Close Management of Student Journey**
 - FreeWorld enrolls students into schools, closely tracks our students' progress, and manages student performance in schools. This level of involvement allows FreeWorld to push for the most successful outcomes.

How FreeWorld Drives Partnership Success

FreeWorld plays a pivotal role in ensuring the success of partnerships like the one with JeffCo by providing comprehensive support throughout the client journey and partnership lifecycle.

- **Customized Client Support:** Each returning citizen referred by FreeWorld receives personalized assistance to navigate complex systems, including:
 - Help obtaining vital records and permits.
 - Access to transportation via FreeWorld's Uber partnership.
 - Financial support for living expenses during training.³
- **Administrative Support:** FreeWorld alleviates Workforce Boards' administrative burden by handling Title I paperwork, coordinating with training providers, and serving as the central point of communication among all stakeholders.

² Traditional workforce assessments vary widely and are often ambiguous and differ across AJCs. They can include Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (CASAS), Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) exams, Personality-Career compatibility tests, and job training tests. FW strongly believes that the permit test itself verifies the readiness for a career in trucking.

³ A complete list of FreeWorld's financial supports can be found in Appendix 2

Case Study of Streamlined Success:

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- JeffCo currently only has access to WOIA funding to support shared clients, but in other FreeWorld partnerships with access to multiple funding sources, we are equally involved in designing administrative supports that satisfy and streamline their funders' requirements.
- **Technology-Driven Insights:** FreeWorld's Workforce Portal empowers Workforce Boards to measure and refine program effectiveness via real-time tracking of client progress and funding.

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- **Capacity Building for Workforce Boards:** FreeWorld delivers onboarding training, client engagement tools, and ongoing technical support to build Workforce Boards' capacity and enhance partnership results.

This comprehensive support ensures that Workforce Partners can focus on serving clients without being overwhelmed by administrative challenges.

The Value of the JeffCo-FreeWorld Partnership

FreeWorld's expertise in addressing the unique challenges of returning citizens, combined with JeffCo's willingness to adapt traditional processes, has resulted in a transformative model for workforce partnerships. This case study illustrates the success that is possible when Workforce Partners:

- Embrace innovative technology and practices.
- Focus on reducing barriers for justice-involved job seekers.
- Create collaborative systems that drive both client and partner success

The **JeffCo Partnership Model** demonstrates how process improvements can achieve extraordinary outcomes for returning citizens and highlights the potential for replication in workforce systems nationwide. Furthermore, when Workforce Partners are able to adapt like JeffCo, FreeWorld can better help them improve outcomes in their success metrics, including training completion, employment, retention, and wage data.

Recommendations for Workforce Partners

To replicate the success of the JeffCo partnership, Workforce Boards (WDBs) must be prepared to adapt their processes to reduce barriers for vulnerable populations like returning citizens. Fully integrating FreeWorld's offerings into client engagement processes requires a willingness to rethink traditional models.

Here are four actionable recommendations for Workforce Partners:

- Adopt a Two-Way Referral Model**

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- **Why it works:** A collaborative referral system ensures clients are pre-vetted and prepared for enrollment.
- **Key outcome:** Streamlined client enrollment with tailored support at every step.
- **Eliminate In-Person Office Visit Requirements**
 - **Why it matters:** Clients referred by FreeWorld are accustomed to receiving virtual support and moving quickly through online processes. Requiring in-person office visits introduces unnecessary hurdles that can delay or disrupt their progress.
 - **Recommendation:** Allow clients to complete all required interactions and paperwork remotely to maintain momentum.
- **Streamline Paperwork and Approvals**
 - **Why it helps:** Consolidating paperwork reduces administrative complexity for clients and staff alike.
 - **Recommendation:** Combine required documents, including FreeWorld agreements and WDB enrollment forms, into one streamlined step. FreeWorld can facilitate this process to ensure seamless completion.
- **Replace Traditional Assessments with Relevant Metrics**
 - **Why it's effective:** Generic assessments, such as TABE testing and CASAS tests, often measure unrelated skills and create unnecessary barriers. The Commercial Learner's Permit test serves as a more appropriate indicator of career readiness and commitment.
 - **Recommendation:** Accept the Commercial Learner's Permit as proof of readiness, bypassing redundant or irrelevant assessments.

The Path Forward

When Workforce Partners embrace these recommendations, they unlock the potential for scalable, impactful partnerships like JeffCo's. By redesigning processes to align with FreeWorld's client-centric model, WDBs can help more returning citizens transition into living-wage careers, reducing recidivism and promoting economic mobility.

Key Takeaway: The success of the JeffCo-FreeWorld model demonstrates that small but significant changes in processes can yield extraordinary results for justice-involved job seekers and the communities they serve.

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Appendix 1: Streamlined Paperwork in FreeWorld's JeffCo Partnership

Clients simultaneously complete JeffCo's Title I enrollment paperwork when they sign FreeWorld's agreement. FreeWorld facilitates the entire process, consolidating multiple steps into one seamless interaction for shared clients and then provides the relevant signed paperwork and data to JeffCo:

- JeffCo Title 1 Paperwork ([See example](#))
- Shared Client data:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Full Name● FirstName● LastName● Email● Referral Type● Date Of Birth● Phone From Application● Address● City● Zipcode● State● Has Stable Transportation● Is Housing Stable● Housing Situation● Work Status● Work Situation● Reason For No Work● Part-Time Explanation● Hours Worked	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Annual Wage● Yearly Income● Govt Assistance● Restitution Owed● Before Program Child Support● Monthly Child Support Owed● Has Bank Account● Has Birth Certificate● Has Social Security Card● Has Proof Of Residence● TPR Drivers License● Years In Custody● Released From Custody Date● On Supervision● Ethnicity● Education Level● Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Prior CDL● Has DUI● Is Veteran● Number Of Children● HasSexOffense● License Number● Trucking Schools● Trucking School Name● Employment Status● Application Created At● Got Permit Date● In School Start Date● Got CDLA Date● Placement Status● Got Job Date● SSN● WIOA Funding Status
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Case Study of Streamlined Success:

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Appendix 2: FreeWorld's financial support offerings for shared clients

- DOT/DMV fees to obtain permit and DOT physical (price varies by geographic area typically \$100-200/per FA)
- Weekly stipend of \$375 for 4 weeks, totaling \$1,500 while enrolled in trucking school
- Weekly housing stipend: \$200/week for 4 weeks (case by case)
- Funds to obtain vital documents (BC, SS card, DL, proof of residence) - typically \$25-100 (case by case)
- Support for fees/fines/tolls/tickets up to \$450 deducted from weekly stipends (case by case)
- Got permit bonus: \$100 for obtaining permit
- CDL-A licensing fee: \$50-100
- CDL bonus: \$25 for obtaining CDL-A