

Business Value Assessment for Workforce Development Organizations

CASE EXAMPLE

The [Boston Private Industry Council](#) (Boston PIC) is a non-profit workforce intermediary aimed at strengthening Boston's communities and workforce by connecting youth and adults to education and employment opportunities that intersect with local business needs. The organization's mission is accomplished through its relationships with and ability to connect employers, labor, schools, training providers and public agencies around a common set of goals. As part of the Business Value Assessment (BVA) learning group, the Boston PIC assessed the business value of several incumbent worker skills training programs that it runs in partnership with Partners HealthCare System,. The organization then went on to assess business value as part of a partnership project with [Vinfen Corporation](#) (Vinfen), a not-for-profit human services organization with about 200 residential and day treatment facilities in Massachusetts, serving individuals with psychiatric, developmental or physical disabilities. Vinfen employs more than 2,000 direct care employees, many of whom are entry-level Awake Overnight Counselors and Residential Counselors.

Vinfen experiences difficulty recruiting and retaining Counselors. The Counselor position requires a clean driving record and reliable transportation, and individuals need to pass a certification test by the end of their probation period. The work environment can be demanding, and as indicated above, overnight shifts are often required. In addition state law and regulations bar individuals with specific criminal histories, making some job applicants ineligible. To address some of these concerns, the Boston PIC and several other community organizations operated a recruitment, screening, and 10-week training program, which incorporated Vinfen's hiring criteria, worked with job seekers to assess their suitability for direct care work with Vinfen, and provided training to pass a Medical Administration Procedures (MAP) test.

The program partners **asked Vinfen executives at the beginning of the planning process** which concerns they wanted the program to address, and what metrics could be used to assess whether the program was successful. As many as six metrics were discussed, including the interview-to-hire rate, retention, attendance, error rates, and performance ratings. The Boston PIC encouraged Vinfen to **prioritize the measures, and focus on the most feasible and internally credible**. For example, attendance was discarded as an option because Vinfen would be changing the time card system mid-project. This early discussion about data tracking also helped address **data confidentiality issues** up-front and program participants were asked to sign a waiver. Vinfen ultimately decided that three metrics would be both credible and feasible to track a: hire-rate, retention, and pass-rates for the MAP test.

The program leaders and Vinfen also discussed **the importance of having a comparison** group of employees. They decided to compare the 26 Boston PIC graduates to the baseline employment averages that Vinfen observed over time ("baseline"), and to the specific employment outcomes for 107 direct care employees hired directly through Vinfen's standard recruiting process during the same time period ("comparison group").

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Vinfen typically expended substantial staff time and resources to recruit and screen candidates, to yield few or no new qualified hires. With the Boston PIC program, a substantially larger proportion of job candidates were hired into positions than average.

Measure: Hire Rate. *Target:* At least 75 percent of the enrolled trainees would be hired. *Result:* Of the 26 trainees who completed the training program, Vinfen hired 24 into direct care positions. In other words, 92% of applicants provided through the Boston PIC program were hired, compared to the 25% of job applicants who are typically hired through Vinfen’s standard recruiting process. The hire rate goes up when one considers that at least 8 employees who did not need the training component of the program were also referred directly to the employer after screening.

Vinfen could have paired this employee hire data with a **cost-savings assessment**, to calculate the value of the staff time saved per hire through the Boston PIC recruitment and screening approach. While Vinfen did not choose to embark on this level of analysis, the new hire yield from the Boston PIC program appears to have been a “win” for the employer.

On the other two measures – retention and MAP test pass rate – **the outcomes were mixed.**

Measure: Retention. *Target:* The Boston PIC training program graduates hired by Vinfen will have a better retention rate, i.e., remain longer, than the baseline and comparison group. *Results:* 92% of the Boston PIC graduates were still employed at three months, compared to the baseline rate of 76% and the comparison group rate of 93%.

Measure: Pass Rate on Test. *Target:* Improve Medical Administration Procedure (MAP) test results compared to the baseline and comparison group. *Results:* Of the 20 Boston PIC graduates who took the MAP test, 80% passed, compared with a baseline of 61% among Vinfen employees, and 77% among the comparison group.

The Boston PIC graduates’ retention and MAP test pass rate exceeded the baseline Vinfen typically saw by 20% or more on both of these measures. However, the outcomes for the Boston PIC graduates on these measures were virtually the same as the comparison group. In discussing these result with Rebekah Lashman, Manager of Workforce Partnerships at the Boston PIC, she indicated that the comparison group they used might not have been refined enough. The comparison group included employees with a much wider range of employment, educational and personal characteristics, working in a varied set of facilities. On the other hand, the Boston PIC graduates were primarily urban, inner-city residents, for which 92% retention at three months was a significant outcome despite the obstacles they overcame to be successfully employed in direct care positions across the region.

In considering how these findings impacted their relationship with Vinfen, Rebekah Lashman explained:

The bottom line is credibility. Pursuing business value assessment with an employer shows you’re willing to look at the results. This raised the level of trust and credibility with Vinfen. The Tool helps with turnaround and analysis. And [Vinfen] could use these results to help make appropriate decisions, for example at board meetings. Also, the Boston PIC was able to look at aspects of doing fee-based recruitment and screening.