



Contact: Chris Hedegaard
253.661.7805, ext. 220
chris.hedegaard@orionworks.org



Orion Industries Receives Funding from Federal Government’s Social Innovation Fund and the Venture Philanthropy Organization REDF



Orion Industries Will Employ More People and Help Build the Evidence Base with New Funds

- Following a rigorous national competition, Orion Industries, which is a social enterprise with a mission of helping those with barriers to employment, has been selected for the new portfolio of California-based venture philanthropy organization REDF, joining a national initiative to scale up the social enterprise field across the U.S. supported by the federal Social Innovation Fund.

- Orion is part of a growing field of innovative businesses in the U.S. called social enterprises. These are mission-driven businesses that hire and assist people willing and able to work, but who face multiple barriers to employment; reinvesting their revenue to create more jobs, and providing supports to employees that increase their economic mobility and long-term employment.

- This grant is part of a nationwide initiative supported in part by the federal Social Innovation Fund (SIF), which has to date committed an unprecedented \$14.5 million to REDF’s initiative. This is the largest federal investment ever in U.S. employment-focused social enterprises.

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Orion Industries has joined the new portfolio of the venture philanthropy organization REDF, backed by the federal government’s Social Innovation Fund. Orion will receive multi-year grant funding and business advisory services, contributing to providing transitional employment and community placement for those who have barriers to employment.

To select the grantees, REDF held a rigorous national competition for social enterprises to receive grants of at least \$100,000 annually for up to five years. More than 200 social enterprises from across 36 states submitted proposals but only 22 were selected. REDF has more than 18 years of experience providing funding and capacity building to employment-focused social enterprises in California. This is the first year the organization is expanding nationally to serve seven new cities, while growing the strong base of social enterprises in California.

1590A Street NE
Auburn WA 98002

253.661.7805

orionworks.org



The selected organizations will employ thousands of people nationally by investing these new resources for business growth. At the same time, REDF will foster deeper collaborations with small, medium and large employers, philanthropy and government to catalyze and accelerate the growth of social enterprises in order to catalyze thousands of additional job opportunities.

Individuals who are low income and face additional barriers to employment face an uphill battle in their journey towards self-sufficiency and financial independence. Orion's model of transitional employment utilizes paid training, classroom instruction, vocational counseling and job placement services to address these barriers. Orion's aerospace manufacturing division and contact center services division serve as platforms for transitional employment with the goal of assisting individuals into community jobs with a career path moving them further in their journey towards a living wage.

Last year, an independent study by Mathematica Policy Research of seven social enterprises funded by REDF showed the impact of these businesses:

- Every \$1 social enterprises spend returns \$2.23 in benefits to society.
- One year after starting work in a social enterprise, the income of people employed increased 268%, income from government benefits dropped from 71% to 24%, and housing stability tripled.
- Before being hired by the social enterprise, 25% of participants had never had a job and 85% did not have stable housing the year prior; 70% had been convicted of a crime.
- Six months after transitioning out of social enterprise employment, two-thirds were still gainfully employed.

"The Social Innovation Fund provides new pathways for people who have faced significant barriers to employment, said Damian Thorman, Director of the Social Innovation Fund. "We are excited this award to Orion Industries, a subgrantee of REDF, will transform people's lives by creating jobs using social enterprise solutions with funding from us."

Orion President and CEO, John Theisen said, "Orion is proud to be a part of this national initiative to support the social enterprise model in providing job training and employment services to individuals with barriers to employment. Orion has a unique service model and we are excited to partner with REDF and work with them on strategies to expand our services."

"REDF is investing in social enterprise growth because we believe right now is the game-changing moment when we can and must open up new opportunities to people who want to work and just need the chance to do so," said REDF President Carla Javits. "We aim to catalyze the business community, philanthropy, government and nonprofits to work together to create job opportunities and hire people who need them, while developing an even more rigorous evidence base so that we can all do more of 'what works best' while developing a vibrant ecosystem that will have long lasting impact. We are grateful to the Congress and the Administration for supporting the Social Innovation Fund, to private donors and foundations that are stepping up to match this support, to the nonprofits that are taking the risk to create new business models, and most of all to the courageous men and women who are overcoming the odds, going to work and transforming their lives."



"I'm proud that one of our great King County aerospace suppliers is being recognized as a national leader in helping military veterans, people with disabilities, and people who were previously homeless compete for family-wage jobs," said King County Executive Dow Constantine. "Orion's innovative approach to connecting people with opportunities not only has a positive impact on individual lives – it produces the talented workforce that our manufacturing and aerospace industries need."

Joelle was the recipient of Orion's 2015 Participant of the Year Award. Joelle's success learning new computer skills in Orion's training and assessment center, her hands-on training at Orion's front desk as the afternoon receptionist, and her amazing work ethic, all contributed to Joelle winning the award.

Joelle said, "I had to overcome a barrier that changed how I learned, and Orion helped me to refocus. I learned to get over a fear of asking questions or asking for help, and from that I learned that I can do anything I put my mind to; I just need to put in the effort and try."

What makes Joelle really stand out is her dedication to providing outstanding customer service to both internal and external customers. Visitors to Orion compliment us on having such a genuinely friendly receptionist.

Joelle said, "When I came to Orion I thought I would learn new office skills. I didn't know that I would learn about me."

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More about Orion Industries

Founded in 1957 as a vocational program for students with disabilities, Orion Industries is headquartered in Auburn, WA, where its three divisions, aerospace manufacturing, contact center services, and the training and employment division offer job training through mentorship programs.

Orion's aerospace manufacturing enterprise supplies precision machined parts and sub-assemblies to aerospace customers throughout the world. Orion is certified to the international aerospace manufacturing quality standards ISO 9001 and AS 9100, and is the recipient of the Boeing 2011 Supplier of the Year award.

Orion's contact center services division features an outsource contact center that prepares program participants for careers in the customer contact industry. Its foundational operations program was developed to create a contact center employing people with disabilities that operate using recognized industry best practices.



Orion’s training and employment division offers skills training using Orion’s aerospace and contact center services divisions as platforms. The Orion training and employment division also offers training in their office skills and customer service programs, and supports individuals in achieving their goals through mentorship, job placement and job retention services.



The **Social Innovation Fund** is a program of the **Corporation for National and Community Service**, a federal agency that engages more than 5 million Americans in service through its AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, Social Innovation Fund, and Volunteer Generation Fund programs, and leads the President's national call to service initiative, United We Serve.

The **Social Innovation Fund** (SIF) is a powerful approach to transforming lives and communities, an approach that positions the federal government to be a catalyst for impact – mobilizing private resources to find and grow community solutions with evidence of results. As part of the SIF program, REDF must match the federal funds dollar-for-dollar and again by the organizations they select to receive grants. To date, REDF has received Social Innovation Fund matching investments from private funders including Bank of America, the Kresge, Weingart, Annie E. Casey, Woodcock, California Wellness, F.B. Heron, Kellogg, San Francisco and California Community Foundations, The California Endowment, JP Morgan Chase, and many other foundations and individual donors.

REDF creates jobs and employment opportunities for people facing the greatest barriers to work – like young people who are disconnected from school or work, people who’ve been homeless or in prison, and people with mental health disabilities. Founded in 1997 by George R. Roberts (KKR), REDF provides funding and business expertise to mission-driven organizations to launch and grow social enterprises, which are businesses with a “double bottom line” that make money in order to employ people with multiple barriers to employment. REDF has helped over 10,000 people in California get jobs and find hope. Now REDF is taking best practices learned from 18 years of experience to grow their impact nationally and help thousands more people work, advance, and create a more stable future. For more information, visit <http://redf.org/>. To learn more about REDF’s portfolio organizations visit <http://redf.org/what-we-do/invest/>.