



InnerCity Weightlifting



InnerCity Weightlifting (ICW) improves the life trajectories of Boston's youth at the highest risk for violence by providing compelling opportunities for them to avoid violence and choose productive paths. Using the sport of weightlifting to get gang-involved young people off the streets and into the gym, ICW builds meaningful relationships and a support network for each student. Its program revolves around the students' core needs: education, career development, life skills, self-esteem, and optimism. Students who demonstrate their commitment to the program become eligible for a paid internship and participation in a certified personal training course. Upon completion of the course, they may run their own personal-training business within ICW, providing a pathway to a viable career. As participation in ICW is entirely voluntary, students who come to ICW have a genuine interest in change. When they see peers whom they respect making positive choices, and they see adults whom they respect supporting these choices, the path to change comes into focus. Youth involved in gang violence are often considered to have insurmountable barriers to living productive lives; yet, ICW has shown that by meeting certain conditions these students can and will elect to transform their lives. Through its work with Boston's youth and young adults at the highest risk of violence, ICW brings positive change to the broader community and aspires to significantly reduce coordinated youth violence across the city.

Founded 2010

\$450,000
Current Program Budget

Contact

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INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITY

InnerCity Weightlifting is seeking \$650,000 per year for two years to meet the demand for its program expansion.

THE NEED

Most of Boston's gun violence and homicides are driven by an extremely small segment of Boston's youth who are engaged in coordinated, gang-related violence. Without effective interventions to reduce violence and propel these youth on a path toward productive lives, the cycle of violence is likely to continue.

- Since 1988, the number of gangs in Boston has increased from 15 to more than 100, and gang membership has increased from 450 to 3,500
- Despite a drop in homicides between 1990 and 2009, police report that gangs today are less predictable and more prone to random or quickly escalated acts of violence
- 1 percent of Boston's youth are responsible for more than 50 percent of Boston's homicides and over 70 percent of the gun violence
- 44 percent of Boston's juvenile offenders are rearrested within one year of their release

THE OPPORTUNITY FOR SOCIAL IMPACT

ICW has developed a solution that addresses the gap in effective interventions for Boston's youth at the highest risk for violence.

- Since its 2010 founding, ICW has served more than 200 youth; over 80 students are on the waiting list
- The recidivism rate for ICW students has been 25 percent, nearly half the rate for all juvenile offenders in Boston
- ICW's earned-income model, which generates revenue through personal-training contracts, is structured to self-sustain a significant percentage of ICW's overall budget as the organization grows
- Because of its unique approach and impact, ICW has attracted attention from public officials and significant support from public and private sources

TWO-YEAR GOALS

- Grow ICW's service capacity by 100 percent to serve 200 youth
- Secure ICW dedicated gym space
- Build business to 150 personal training contracts to provide training internships for 50 youth and employ 10 trainer/mentors
- Build a robust, long-term student tracking system

WAYS TO INVEST

- Financial**
 - \$60,000 – Provides first-year, start-up financing for an ICW-exclusive gym as the venture builds to sustainability
 - \$20,000 – Pays salary for coach to be deeply involved with 10 target students for one year
 - \$10,000 – Supports paid internships for 10 students
 - \$5,000 – Pays for six students to complete personal-training career tracks
 - \$20 – Buys a personal-training session with an ICW student
- In-Kind**
 - Individual or corporate-sponsored personal-training contracts
 - Contacts with property managers or gym owners
 - Coaches committed to student transformation

"We can't fail, because they believe in us as much as we believe in ourselves"

—ICW target student



SOCIAL INNOVATION IN ACTION: THE INNERCITY WEIGHTLIFTING MODEL



Working with Boston's Youth at the Highest Risk of Violence:

In response to the May 2010 fatal shootings of two 14-year-old boys, city officials, police, religious leaders, and community organizations came together to develop Boston PACT (Partnerships Advancing Communities Together). Launched July 1, 2010, with a mission to reduce violent crime in Boston neighborhoods, the PACT program identified a list of 240 "high impact players," young adults who were most actively driving gun violence in the city and who were most likely to be the perpetrators or victims of firearm-related incidents. PACT has implemented a comprehensive approach to providing services and support to young people on the "PACT list," and ICW has become an important community-based partner in this effort.

Key to ICW's success is its credibility and partnerships with the few other organizations that serve the PACT-list youth. ICW has formed close partnerships with select other organizations that have earned the respect and trust of both the community at large and the youth: Street Safe (an organization that employs a team of "street outreach workers" to high-risk youth), Youth Option (an organization that teaches general workforce development skills), and Youth Connect (an organization that provides social workers for young people who have been arrested). Thanks to these partnerships, ICW is able to assist its students with any needs they may have.

Beyond serving youth from the PACT list, ICW's "target group," ICW serves a secondary cohort of students that consists of friends invited by the target group. Given the target group's typical context, this secondary cohort consists almost exclusively of gang-involved youth. To date, the ratio of target students to secondary students within ICW is 1:2. This ratio allows ICW staff and volunteers to create an environment that is more comfortable and effective for target students.

ICW's model has two, interwoven parts: 1) a safe, supportive venue for mentoring and positive peer relationships, within an environment where youth can begin to make positive choices, and 2) a workforce development program that provides economic opportunity for ICW students and generates revenue to increase ICW's financial sustainability.

Providing a Healthy, Safe, and Supportive Environment – The Initial Engagement:

Often, a student's initial attraction to ICW is the draw of the weightlifting and the invitation of a friend. Although ICW connects with youth through referrals from Boston's court system, police department, street outreach workers, and social workers, all ICW students are involved in the program *entirely* of their own volition (without court stipulations or mandates), and many are referred by friends who are already involved in the program. This approach ensures that the students who participate have a desire to change and that ICW meets its students' needs. In order to gauge its value to students, ICW tracks its "net promoter score," a measure of how many of its target students refer friends to the program. Since its inception, ICW has maintained a net promoter score of 100 percent, meaning that after participating in six practices, all of ICW's target students have invited and brought friends to join the program.

Positive Mentor/Coaching Relationships:

ICW coaches typically spend 10 hours per week training students in the gym and 10 hours per week outside the gym, supporting the students in other ways. ICW coaches embody a philosophy that students' bright futures (and not their pasts) are the focus of attention. This is the understood expectation within the walls of an ICW gym, and this helps create an atmosphere in which each ICW student strives to preserve and live up to the respect that they are given by the coaches. After being involved with ICW for a short time, a new student will begin to represent these ideals and perpetuate a positive peer environment for others.

Each coach embodies the ICW value system of respecting one another and respecting oneself. The coaches do not approach relationships with students with a prescriptive agenda, and they understand that the first objective is to build credibility and trust with the students. As the coach establishes credibility, he is invited by the student to provide more support and connections to services such as advocacy at court or school, support with job and school applications, and life counsel. The coach is also the primary referral source to organizations that are available for the students' various development needs. Referral partners include Youth Options, Youth Connect, PACT partnering organizations, Year Up, and others. As the student-coach relationship develops, the coaches spend an increasing amount of time outside of the gym with the students, and the positive social outcomes experienced by students increase.

Opportunities for Workforce Development:

Soon after engaging with ICW, students become aware that ICW provides a legitimate and achievable path to a solid vocation in the field of personal training. While not every target student will pursue national certification in personal training, each is given the opportunity to participate in a personal-training apprenticeship program with an ICW coach. Shadowing an ICW coach as he conducts training sessions at the ICW facility provides students with income and exposure to professional behavior and positive business relationships. The personal-training component of ICW is a strong mechanism for building social capital. Students deepen their relationships with coaches and the coaches' clients, and perceptions (both students' and clients') shift one person at a time. With these shifts come a change of perception in the community and even in mainstream culture that youth at the highest risk for violence are "social liabilities." Instead, these youth can now be regarded as gifted and "untapped social resources." Likewise, perceptions among ICW students toward mainstream culture shift in a way that allows them to identify themselves as individuals with competency, earning power, and the social capacity to engage in a mainstream, professional environment.

INNERCITY WEIGHTLIFTING'S RESEARCH-BASED APPROACH

Juvenile justice and criminology research suggests that there are a small number of factors that perpetuate the cycle of violence and criminal activity. ICW's approach is to address each of the major, anti-criminogenic factors that mitigate a person's aggressive (i.e., criminal) behavior by providing positive adult role models who craft a culture of 1) positive peer relationships, 2) "pro-social" attitudes, thought processes, and behaviors, 3) education, as appropriate; and 4) fruitful employment.



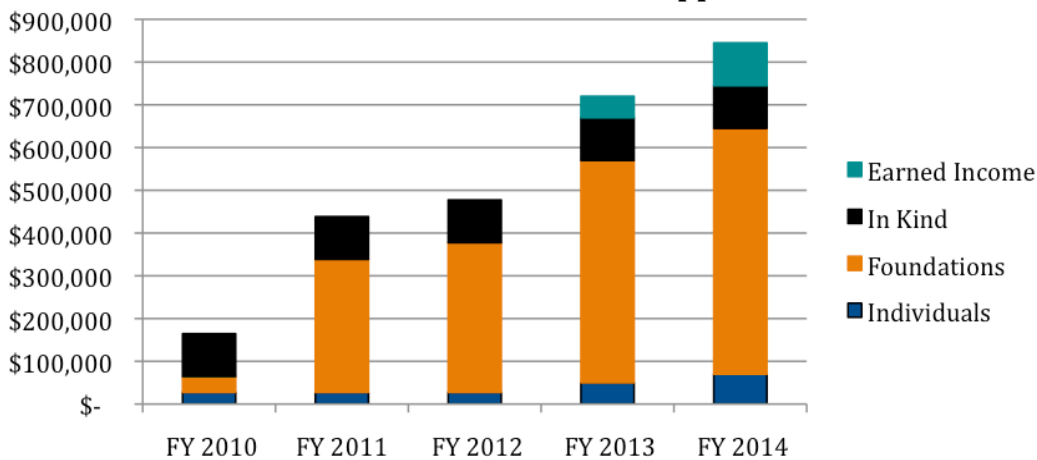
TEAM AND GOVERNANCE

Founder and Executive Director Jon Feinman, MBA, CSCS, USAW Coach, brings extensive experience in Olympic weightlifting, personal training, and work with urban youth. Prior to founding ICW in 2010, he worked individually with gang members in what the Boston Herald called “the most dangerous gang in the world,” as well as created a personal training business that placed him in the top 5 percent earning personal trainers in the United States. Other key staff include Ken Lima, chief operating officer, and Josh Feinman, director of business development. ICW’s board of directors is led by Anne Morriss, founder and managing director of Concire Leadership Institute, and it is comprised of a diverse group of leaders from various arenas including management consulting, social media, philanthropic foundations, juvenile justice, and personal training.

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Largely due to the attention it has received from the remarkable outcomes delivered in its first two years, ICW has grown from a budget of \$30,000 for FY 2010 to a budget over \$400,000 in 2012. Most of this growth has been funded by foundations, with additional support from individual donors. ICW also has a significant level of in-kind support by way of volunteer tutors, personal trainers, and gym space. Grateful for the philanthropic support it has received as a start-up organization, ICW will continue to develop relationships with funders in order to increase capacity to meet demand for its program. In addition, ICW aspires to enhance its financial sustainability through an earned-income model. When the model is fully developed, ICW anticipates generating approximately 40 percent of its budget from fees paid by its coaches to use ICW facilities. In the coming year, ICW requires an investment of \$60,000 to establish its exclusive gym facility needed to launch the earned income model and begin generating revenue from that source.

Sources of Revenue and Other Support



KEY INVESTORS

- Amelia Peabody Foundation
- The Boston Foundation
- Grand Circle Travel Foundation
- Lenny Zakim Foundation
- Lodge of St. Andrews Charity
- Mable Louise Riley Foundation
- Northeastern Students for Giving
- Shaw Foundation
- Tugg Foundation

“ICW means a lot. They are like my brothers, my family. This program changed the direction of my life. I would probably be back in jail if not for ICW.”

—ICW target student

“Initially, I was skeptical of InnerCity Weightlifting’s potential, but it has consistently shown amazing results.”

—Boston Police Lieutenant leading the gang violence unit

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

Program Performance and Organizational Health:

Below is a summary of the key measures that ICW will track to demonstrate progress, capture lessons learned, and make course corrections as needed. Note: Fiscal year is July 1 – June 30.

	FY 2012		FY 2013 (P)		FY 2014 (P)	
Program Performance						
Number of students receiving coaching (target and secondary students)	42	41	50	100	70	140
Number of hours per week with coach (target and secondary students)	6	3	15	6	15	6
Net promoter score (percentage of students, after six practices, inviting others to ICW)	100%		100%		100%	
Percentage of target students retained after three practices	95%		90%		90%	
Number of personal training clients	4		50		100	
Organizational Health/Capacity Building						
Secure a lease for a facility to be used exclusively for ICW and expand the number of facilities	--		Secure lease to exclusive facility		--	
Hire additional coaches	Hired 2 coaches		Hire 2 additional coaches		Hire 2 additional coaches	
Expand staff capacity (business development manager, programming manager, volunteer manager)	Hired programming manager		Hire development officer		Hire volunteer manager	
Enhance tracking tools for program and operational evaluation	Crafted rudimentary tracking tool		Further Develop tracking tool		Fully integrate tracking into decision making	
Total revenue	\$480,000		\$710,000		\$840,000	

Social Impact:

After ICW's first two years of operation, its target and secondary students have shown an approximately 50 percent lower likelihood to be criminally involved than other juvenile offenders in Boston, as measured by arrest incidences of ICW students versus all of Boston's juvenile offenders.

ICW uses the metrics below to measure its effect on students and is developing enhanced tracking tools to provide a deeper understanding of its effect on students in the near and long term. Although it is complex to measure, ICW is also interested in understanding how its role in facilitating relationships between students and personal training clients builds social capital and leads to attitude and systems changes.

Student Pro-Social Choices:	FY 2012	
Net promoter score (percentage of students, after six practices, inviting others to ICW)	100%	
Percentage of violent crime recidivism (after six months in program; respectively target and secondary students)	10%	0%
Percentage of non-violent crime recidivism (after six months in program; respectively target and secondary students)	15%	10%
Percentage of students experiencing their longest tenure from last arrest	36%	
Percentage of target students pursuing education	83%	
Percentage of target students gaining employment	89%	

SUCCESS STORY: ALEX S.*

ICW's first student, a rising leader in the "world's deadliest gang," enrolled in November 2009, while ICW was in its pilot phase. Two weeks later he was stabbed seven times. Lucky to have survived, Alex began training with a barbell ICW set up in his basement. As he recovered, he transitioned to ICW training sessions at a local gym, where he met many students with similar stories. Since being enrolled, Alex has been shot, hit by a baseball bat, and jumped countless times. Despite this almost overwhelming pull back into a life of violence, he has found the support system he needs, through ICW's fellow students and coaching staff. In the Fall of 2010, for the first time in seven years, Alex was out of jail, out of court, and off probation. He is now studying for his GED and personal training certification. In addition, Alex is pulling young people off the streets and showing them an alternative path by bringing them into the gym. (Alex S. is a pseudonym.)

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