

2025 Award Winner: Distinguished Coaching Catalyst

How Coaching Helps Restore Dignity and Rebuild Lives at

Mission Possible



What happens when someone starts to believe in themselves again?

For people rebuilding after incarceration, homelessness, addiction, or instability, the journey forward rarely begins with a job offer.

It begins earlier — with a shift.

A moment where self-doubt softens.

Where possibility feels real again.

Where someone starts to believe: I can move forward.

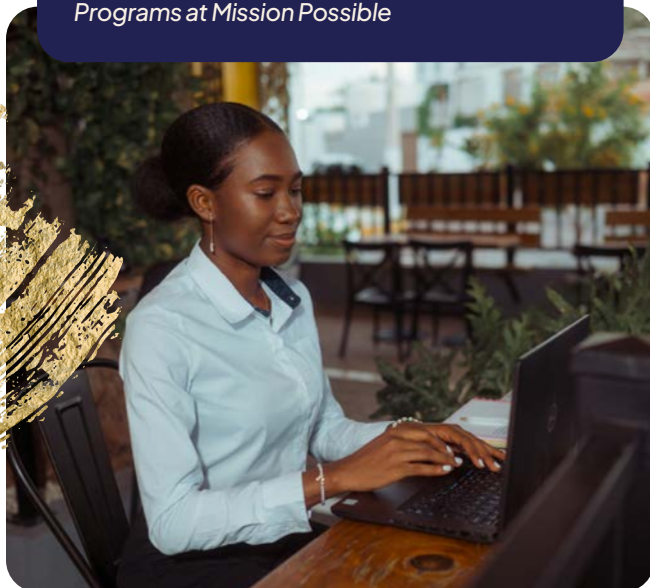
That's where Mission Possible begins.

Mission Possible is a nonprofit that transforms lives through meaningful work with coaching. They walk alongside people facing barriers to employment, offering transitional work experience, community, and support for those ready to take a step forward.

And through their coaching support, something begins to change in their clients' lives.

“It was such a meaningful experience to receive this recognition for our coaching program from the ICF. We have seen firsthand the transformative impact of coaching for associates”

—Tara Chang-Swanson, ACC, Director of Programs at Mission Possible



In 2025, Mission Possible received the International Coaching Federation (ICF) Coaching Impact Award for Distinguished Coaching Catalyst in the Social Impact category for their transformative coaching program. This award recognizes individuals or organizations creating meaningful social change through coaching. Aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals and ICF's values, it highlights how coaching can drive lasting, positive impact in communities and beyond.

But the real story is not the award. It's what happens when someone is seen — not for where they've been, but for who they can become.

A Response to Complexity, Not a Single Barrier

Mission Possible works with people facing layered and intersecting challenges: poverty, housing instability, recovery, mental and physical health conditions, and reintegration after incarceration. These are not isolated barriers. They overlap, reinforce one another, and can make steady employment feel out of reach.

Among participants:

- 80% are experiencing poverty.
- 67% are people of color.
- 21% are Indigenous, despite representing just 2.2% of the local population.
- 52% are living with a disability.
- 36% are homeless or precariously housed.

Seen in this context, Mission Possible is not simply helping people prepare for work.

It is creating a pathway back into community life that recognizes both the weight of these challenges and the potential within each person to move forward.



“Coaching helps us support people without trying to fix them. It creates healthy boundaries and allows participants to take ownership of their progress, while protecting our team from burnout.”

—Tara Chang-Swanson, ACC

Coaching as the Turning Point

Mission Possible’s model combines transitional employment, job training, and wraparound support. But coaching is what connects it all.

Participants receive 12 one-on-one coaching sessions over six months, creating consistency in a time that often feels uncertain.

Progress is rarely linear. There are setbacks. Doubts. Moments where moving forward feels harder than standing still. Coaching creates space to pause — and then continue.

It helps participants clarify what they want, recognize their strengths, and take ownership of their next steps. And over time, something shifts.

A participant shared that “Coaching gave me the tools to set goals and actually follow through.”

Follow-through is where transformation becomes visible. It’s what turns short-term progress into lasting stability.

A Different Kind of Support

At Mission Possible, coaching is intentionally distinct from traditional support models.

Program staff provide guidance, resources, and employment opportunities. Coaches do something different. They walk alongside participants without directing, fixing, or carrying the change for them.

That distinction matters. This approach supports participants while also helping staff work in healthier, more sustainable ways. Mission Possible chose coaching intentionally because it helps create healthy boundaries and resist a “savior complex.” Rather than trying to rescue people or carry change for them, staff can support participants in ways that are empowering, sustainable, and less likely to lead to burnout.

In a high-stakes social environment, that balance is critical.

Building a Coaching Culture

At Mission Possible, coaching is not confined to formal sessions. It is embedded throughout the organization.

Participants experience coaching not only in one-on-one conversations, but in everyday interactions on job sites, in team environments, and in small moments where reflection and accountability are encouraged.

This shared mindset creates consistency and reinforces growth across the entire experience.

Coaching isn't just for participants. Staff also receive regular coaching, reinforcing a culture where people are consistently supported, challenged, and seen as capable of growth.

Mission Possible has intentionally built coaching capability across its organizational culture:

- 4,272 coaching sessions delivered.
- 50 staff trained in coaching skills.
- 16 certified internal coaches.
- 100% recovery coaching certification for the team.
- A commitment to 30% internal hiring by 2028.

Progress You Can See — and Sustain

The results reflect both human and measurable impact.

Mission Possible measures success in goals achieved, training completed, and jobs secured. But the real impact is so much more.

Sustaining employment tells a deeper story than securing it. It reflects renewed confidence. Stronger self-belief. Ownership of one's choices. The ability to navigate setbacks — and keep going.



IMPACT SNAPSHOT

93%

increase in
employment
transitions from
2021–2025.

86%

employment
sustainment
among coaching
participants.

Participants also show growth in:

- Decision-making.
- Accountability.
- Work readiness.
- Interpersonal skills.

These changes begin internally, but they shape what becomes possible externally because how someone sees themselves influences how they show up in interviews, in workplaces, and in their communities



Individual Change to Social Impact

The impact of Mission Possible does not stop with one person finding work. It moves outward. When someone gains stability, families feel it. When confidence grows, relationships shift. When people re-enter the workforce with purpose, communities become stronger.

This is where coaching becomes a catalyst for social progress.

In addition to addressing immediate needs, it also builds capacity for individuals to participate, contribute, and belong. That impact is visible in the program's growth. What began as a small pilot has expanded to reach nearly 150 participants each year, all working one-on-one with a coach.

And as the program grows, so does its ripple effect. Having experienced the dignity and stability that coaching created in their own lives, some program graduates choose to help others achieve the same. They are stepping into coaching roles, bringing lived experience into the model and strengthening its ability to connect, relate, and empower.

This is more than growth. It is a cycle of possibility, where change is experienced, shared, and supported. And that is how progress sustains itself.

Dave's Story: From Survival to Purpose

Few stories capture the cycle of possibility better than Dave's.

After a 24-year meth addiction, Dave's life had become unstable and uncertain. As he began recovery, the idea of returning to work felt overwhelming. He had no resume. No recent references. And little confidence that he could succeed without risking his recovery.

Then he found Mission Possible.

What he encountered first was simple: eye contact, welcome, and the sense that someone saw him as capable.

He initially resisted coaching. He did not want someone telling him how to live his life. But coaching turned out to be something else entirely. His coach didn't direct him. She walked alongside him, helping him see his own potential and make his own decisions. Step by step, things began to change. He completed first aid certification, filed taxes for the first time in years, and opened a bank account.

Eventually, something unexpected happened. When a coaching role opened, he was encouraged to apply. Dave had never imagined himself as a coach. But he said yes.

Today, he is a permanent coach at Mission Possible, supporting others who are where he once was. His story is about so much more than employment. It's about rediscovering dignity. Reclaiming purpose. And becoming part of someone else's beginning.

A Conversation at a Time

Mission Possible shows what becomes possible when coaching is a lever for social impact. It helps people rebuild their lives, strengthens communities, and creates a cycle of possibility in the world.



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