



Application to Small Business Administration for the Aspire Challenge Competition - 2/9/17

AKRON URBAN LEAGUE (AUL) CAPACITY

Organizational Background - The Akron (Ohio) Urban League (AUL) is a 91-year-old community organization that works to improve the quality of life of Summit County citizens, particularly African Americans. It does so by advocating and facilitating programs that are economically and educationally transformational in people's lives and those of future generations. The AUL has decades of experience developing entrepreneurs, growing minority owned businesses and enabling ex-offenders to advance their education, acquire workforce readiness skills, attain employment with livable wages, and advance in their career paths. AUL core services include:

- **School of Entrepreneurship (SOE):** The SOE provides training, mentoring, technical assistance and resources to predominantly minority entrepreneurs and small business leaders for all stages of their business development. *In 2017 and 2018, the SOE will expand its program to support entrepreneurial training for ex-offenders in the fields of culinary food preparation and cosmetology.*
- **Empowerment Institute** – This consumer-centric, one-stop, year round resource includes the Minority Business Assistance Center, advanced training opportunities and employment opportunities with public works projects.
- **Urban Youth Academy:** Youth of all ages are supported in their path to self-sufficiency through programs that support them to complete their schooling with a specific focus on STEAM skills, GED acquisition, preparation for the workplace, acquisition of life skills and placement in employment.
- **Safety and Crime Prevention:** Public forums are held to address community safety and crime prevention in targeted neighborhoods of Summit County.
- **Health and Wellness:** Workshops, events and public forums, presented in partnership with Cleveland Clinic Akron General Hospital, address health and wellness among vulnerable populations, with a goal to reduce factors influencing health in the areas of health behaviors and clinical care.
- **AUL Ex-offender Program:** Services to ex-offenders include job readiness training, GED acquisition and employment acquisition, transportation assistance, provision of professional clothing and case management services.
- **Living Wage Employment:** The AUL works with market-driven industries in the county to train individuals for specific careers that will lead to a livable wage of at least \$21.16 per hour.
- **Advanced Training:** The AUL provides advanced certification and training for small business owners.

Organization: Akron Urban League, 440 Vernon Odom Blvd., Akron, OH 44307

Contact: Dr. Sadie Winlock, President & CEO, 330-434-3101, swinlock@akronurbanleague.org

Background of Management Team - **Dr. Sadie Winlock, AUL President and CEO** has more than 30 years of experience in the for-profit, not-for-profit and small business sectors. She holds a B.A. Degree in English from North Carolina Central University, an MBA Degree from Myers University, and a Doctorate in Management from the University of Phoenix. **Kim Lee, Director, School of Entrepreneurship**, has a professional career that embraces more than 15 years of administrative experience, including program development and implementation. She has an extensive background in entrepreneurship, management, recruiting, and training coupled with over 15 years in general accounting and grants accounting. Ms. Lee holds Bachelor and Master's Degrees in Organizational Leadership from Malone University and an Associate's Degree in Accounting Technology from Southern Ohio College. The AUL staff works with ex-offenders through its programs, prison and court house visitations and the provision of AUL services.

ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATION DELIVERY SOLUTION

Participant Recruitment Plan – Akron Urban League’s School of Entrepreneurship currently provides resources to approximately 200 small, minority owned and disadvantaged businesses at all stages of development, in Summit County and seven surrounding counties. Services range from basic start-up assistance to business growth, counseling/coaching, MBE/EDGE certification training, networking opportunities, marketing/branding expertise, contract procurement assistance and access to capital and financial guidance.

The SOE will develop and initiate a customized and highly interpersonal entrepreneurial training program in the areas of culinary food preparation and cosmetology for ex-offenders, as well as entrepreneurial opportunities with the City of Akron for its multi-year public works projects. It will recruit 25 participants who have an interest, a support system and the personal attributes needed to complete a three-year, three phase entrepreneurial training program that will guide them from basic skill acquisition to business start-up, maintenance and growth. The AUL will work with a community-based nonprofit, Truly Reaching You Ministries (TRY), to identify and refer potential candidates to the SOE. TRY is a reentry organization that provides a healthy support system, mentoring, training and education services to male and female ex-offenders. In essence, TRY provides the safe environment and supportive community to help individuals in the process of re-entry, establish healthy lifestyles and make decisions that are needed to support their desire to gain employment and start and sustain a business.

The AUL School of Entrepreneurship will identify, refer, prepare, help to select and support candidates through the duration of the SOE training programs for ex-offenders. A team comprised of AUL and TRY staff, justice system professionals, minority entrepreneurs, business mentors, life coaches and others will identify, screen and select participants based on criteria that assesses their history and skillset, attitude and ambition, commitment to personal transformation and a crime-free, drug-free life, and availability to meet the SOE three-year training schedule.

The combination of the daily interpersonal support of TRY staff, the unique components of the SOE (e.g. Ice House Entrepreneurship online learning program) and one-on-one business mentors (including business owners that are ex-offenders) for the duration of the SOE program, are critical to the successful completion of the SOE program by ex-offender participants.

Entrepreneurial Classroom Instruction – The Akron Urban League owns the rights and uses the ***Ice House Entrepreneurship*** online learning program to inspire and engage SOE participants in the fundamental concepts of an entrepreneurial mindset and the unlimited opportunities it can provide. This mindset shapes the culture, instruction and experiential learning opportunities for SOE participants. The three-year training curriculum of the SOE is based on the needs and challenges faced by small business owners identified by the Small Business Administration. SBA certified business advisors and counselors, along with area university faculty and business professionals comprise the SOE instructional staff. Specific topics addressed within SOE classroom, online (SBA and SBDC business planning resources) and workshop trainings include: how to start a business on a shoe string budget, personal and professional financial management, product service model design, building your brand, market research and strategy development, business plan development (a program requirement), financial management, operations, human resource recruitment, employment and management; access to capital and capital formation, the cost and availability of health insurance, relational and emotional intelligence skills and more.

ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATION DELIVERY SOLUTION (CONTINUED)

Entrepreneurial Classroom Instruction (Continued): SOE participants will work in cohort groups based on (1) the developmental stage of their business (Stage 1: entry level workshops, counseling, coaching, mentoring and Ice House Entrepreneurship training module; Stage 2: intermediate level workshops, counseling, coaching, mentoring; Stage 3: Advanced level workshops including PMBA Program, counseling, coaching and mentoring), (2) past entrepreneurial or business development training, or (3) the focus (e.g. culinary skills or cosmetology) of their business.

Culinary Food Entrepreneurial Training: The Akron Urban League will partner with Stark State College to adapt its associate's degree program in culinary arts to the SOE Culinary Food Entrepreneurial Training Program for ex-offenders. In addition to the entrepreneurial training described above, participants will learn about food fundamentals, food purchasing, marketing, event management, buffet and catering, and menu planning. They will also be required to complete a culinary practicum through the Akron Urban League's Conference and Catering Center, as well as with area restaurants and food service organizations. The Conference and Catering Center hosts scores of conferences, banquets, meetings, seminars and community events, offering culinary food entrepreneurial training participants with a built-in on-site venue for training, preparation and presentation.

Cosmetology Entrepreneurial Training: The AUL will partner with local experienced cosmetologists to prepare ex-offender participants to establish businesses in the field of cosmetology. This will enable them to pursue a career as a cosmetology professional, and establish their own private cosmetology business. Courses will balance the technical skills required in cosmetology, including haircutting, creative hair styling, coloring, modern nail technology, skin care, chemistry, facials, and salon management. Participants will also learn how to enhance cosmetology service relationships and to generate referral and repeat customers. At the end of their coursework, participants will be ready to successfully take the cosmetology licensure exam in Ohio.

Mentoring – Mentors for the SOE are SBA certified business counselors affiliated with University of Toledo and Kent State University, as well as successful entrepreneurs, business owners and life coaches that provide one-on-one counseling, mentoring and support to entrepreneurial participants. These are people who have started their own businesses and can offer coaching, mentoring and entrepreneurial advice from their own experience. With the support of other organizations, including Truly Reaching You Ministries, mentors will be recruited who are ex-offenders that have successfully established their own businesses.

Community Connections – The AUL works with a host of businesses and community partners to both enhance participant's experiential learning opportunities within the SOE, as well as to help them start-up, grow and sustain their entrepreneurial ventures. Partners include Akron Business Accelerator, JumpStart (based in Cleveland), City of Akron, Summit County, Greater Akron Chamber of Commerce, Truly Reaching You Ministries and others. JumpStart's Core City program extends the resources to AUL's SOE participants through one-on-one consultations, additional workshops and the opportunity to receive financial awards or no cost business development and marketing assistance.

ACCESS TO CAPITAL

The Akron Urban League's School of Entrepreneurship works to support participants to secure loans and business development resources to create and grow sustainable businesses which generate jobs. These partners include Ohio SBA, the U.S. Minority Business Development Agency, The State of Ohio's Minority Business Enterprise Center, the Economic Community Development Institute, financial institutions (e.g. Huntington Bank, Fifth Third Bank), University of Akron (restricted business start-up fund), Mustard Seed Development Corporation, individual philanthropists and other organizations. Counseling and technical assistance services help prospective business owners to acquire an understanding of their business finances by providing financial assessment and counseling (e.g. prepare profit and loss statements, cash flow statements and balance sheets), loan application assistance (e.g. evaluating options and potential sources of capital), and direct lending (financing for start-up businesses, loan terms, financing for working capital, inventory, supplies, machinery and equipment purchases, credit scores, application fees). They also specifically address the pros, cons and how-to's of bond financing, private equity and venture capital, loan packaging, microloan and low-interest loan funds. Other topics are addressed that impact the financial viability of a business such as understanding taxes and government regulations, debt management and reduction, finding affordable healthcare and attracting and retaining a quality workforce. AUL SOE participants are directed to regional and state low interest loan funds to support their micro-enterprises. Akron Urban League staff are also available to approach regional philanthropists and angel investors for unique and/or highly promising entrepreneurial start-ups or expansions.

Additional information: If the Akron Urban League is selected as a recipient of the Aspire Challenge to establish a culinary food and cosmetology entrepreneurial training programs, it will match the \$75,000 award with private funds secured from area businesses and/or individuals. Additional funds for the projected School of Entrepreneurial budget of \$450,800 will be secured from government and foundation grants, United Way of Summit County and fees from services.

An Akron Urban League Entrepreneur Success Story

Melissa Bailey, resident of Canton Ohio had a desire to own her own restaurant after providing catering services for several years. She received training and mentoring support from the Akron Urban League's Minority Business Assistance Center. She completed the legal requirements to register her business with the state of Ohio and federal government. With facilitation by AUL, Melissa was referred to an area bank and credit union, which provided loans to support her restaurant startup. Her business opened in August 2016 with 3 employees and is on a growth trajectory. The AUL MBAC office is continuing to provide Melissa with marketing and business development counseling and support.