

## ASPIRE Tucson – A community-based, inside-out entrepreneurial training program

### **Page 1. CONTESTANT CAPACITY**

**Organizational Background.** Tucson Clean & Beautiful, Inc. (TCB), a social and environmental non-profit serving Pima County since 1985, is the fiscal agent and lead applicant under this competition. **Contact:** Tom Ellis, Executive Director, Tom.Ellis@Tucsonaz.gov 520-837-6831. For more than 30 years, TCB has built enduring multi-jurisdictional partnerships with government, businesses, non-profits, neighborhoods, and community groups, engaging thousands of diverse individuals in training, education and participatory activities that restore and improve the environment while building community. Through environmental programs (tree planting and maintenance, invasive species eradication, water harvesting projects, murals, recycling and composting programs, and stewardship of public spaces) TCB educates and engages the public, builds and strengthens community, improves public safety and community well-being, and enhances human and environmental health. TCB has developed two restorative justice, mentor-led, life skills/employment training programs for system-involved individuals facing high barriers to employment based on their criminal record: **YARDS** for juveniles and **Green Streets** for adults. Both programs develop direct avenues to employment through mentoring and hands-on real work experience.

**2. Management Team. A) Kate Gannon, Programs Director - Tucson Clean & Beautiful, Inc.** Role: Program Manager/Community Liaison/Instructor. Ms. Gannon is a passionate practitioner of asset-based community development and empowering individuals and communities through participatory development and implementation of ground-up solutions. With a solid background in business, and 14 years developing and implementing community improvement projects, Ms. Gannon thrives in the entrepreneurial non-profit sector, creating collaborations that harness the capacities and strengths of participants to develop sustainable solutions to vexing social, environmental and economic challenges. Fluent in spoken Spanish. Certified Arborist. Certified Public Accountant 1990-2004. Masters of Accounting. Masters of Landscape Architecture.

**B) Rafael Batain, Small Business Owner, Zoe Landscaping & Lawn Care/ Co-Leader "If Project."** Role: Program Development/ Instructor/Mentor. At age 14, Mr. Batain was tried as an adult for three counts of felony armed robbery and one count of burglary. He served eleven years in prison from age 14 through age 25 (1994-2005). Three years later he was convicted of one count of felony possession and one count of criminal tools and served 8 more years in prison (2007 to 2015). He was released in July 2015, and with the help of mentor Tim Wagner, started Zoe Landscaping and Lawn Care. In November 2016, he graduated from Brookline College with an Associates degree in Criminal Justice and a 4.0 grade point average. Most recently he started **the If Project**, a storytelling, mentoring campaign in partnership with the Pima County Juvenile Justice Court and Tucson police officer Sean Payne. **C) Melanie Yubeta, Arizona State Correctional Officer III.** Role: Participant recruitment, prison liaison, program/prisoner advocate. Within the prison system, Ms. Yubeta is a champion for both institutional and individual change. Her boundless energy and enduring enthusiasm has helped open the prison for community programming inside the prison walls. Within a system in dire need of better outcomes, Ms. Yubeta is leading change with her dream that the system leave individuals better equipped to succeed than when they arrived. **D) Jennifer Parlin, Program Coordinator, University of Arizona Garden Kitchen.** Role: Program Development/Mentor/Instructor. Using her background in policy and management, public health and community development, Jennifer brings effective methods of communication in the workplace and self-management practices. She exemplifies the Servant-Leadership model of management dedicated to the improvement and attainment for all collaborators. She specializes in customized educational activities to reduce health disparities across socioeconomic levels. She interned at the Juvenile Detention Center in Tucson, where she developed a transition program from incarceration to community for detainees. The culmination of this project was the report *"Transition from Juvenile Detention: Resources, Opportunities, and Reduced Recidivism."* Masters of Public Health. **C) Tim Wagner, Business Mentor and Coach and Small Business Owner – LightWave Technical Consulting,** President and Senior Technical Engineer. Role: Instructor/Mentor. Mr. Wagner manages network security for more than 500 small businesses in the Tucson area. Past experience: Aerospace Engineer for McDonnell Douglas Aeronautics, Financial Advisor for Income Network (FDIC & SEC Registered); Vice President of Sales and Marketing for New Horizons CLC, Inventory Asset Accountant in the United States Air Force. Education: University of Maryland (Engineering), Graduate of CCCM Pastoral School of Ministry.

## Page 2. ASPIRE Tucson

### BACKGROUND/NEEDS ASSESSEMENT

Arizona has one of the highest incarceration rates in the nation, yet does little to equip incarcerated people for success upon returning to society. Instead, incarceration stacks additional burdens and barriers upon individuals already struggling to lead successful lives. Arizona is eighth among states with the highest incarceration rates and is one of the nation's leaders in the use of private prisons, which have no incentive to offer programming to help prevent repeat offenders. Until now, Arizona's state-run facilities have had very little in the way of re-entry programming either. Recently, however, the Arizona Department of Corrections has directed the Wilmot Prison Complex (one of 13 state-run prison complexes) to seek community-based programming initiatives to reduce recidivism. The Whetstone Unit, a lower security (#2) facility, housing 1300 adult males with release dates ranging from 1 to 5 years, has recently begun this effort, leading the way in the State system. This Aspire Challenge proposal builds on recent community partnerships to bring training and life skills into the Whetstone Unit. **ASPIRE Tucson** is a powerful opportunity to bring innovative, successful re-entry programming inside the prison walls where approximately 400 men are released annually, each with little more than the clothes on their back. Incarceration can enhance opportunities for individuals to engage in the process of personal transformation. In addition, many incarcerated people possess multiple entrepreneurial traits. Training *inside* prison walls can help equip individuals for the difficult, and far too often, unsuccessful transition back into society. This program gives soon-to-be-returning individuals the time and structure to explore personal growth, research and develop entrepreneurial strategies, and devise a realistic re-entry plan. ASPIRE Tucson can provide them with a new way of thinking, new skills, and an entire community of individuals and organizations supporting re-entry success. The fundamental objective of ASPIRE Tucson is to transform lives and reduce recidivism by facilitating entrepreneurial endeavors.

### EDUCATION DELIVERY SOLUTION

**1. Participant Recruitment Plan.** The ASPIRE Tucson team will recruit 50 participants in two cohorts of 25 men each, from the Whetstone Unit (one of seven prison units located at of the AzDOC Wilmot Road Complex) in Tucson. Individuals will: 1) have an interest in starting a business, 2) be scheduled for release to southern Arizona within six months from the start of the cohort, 3) submit an essay stating why they want to participate in the program, and 4) sign a contract agreeing to fulfill class requirements, including full participation in classroom activities, completion of homework, and periodic post-release follow-up. Each participant will complete a comprehensive self-assessment of individual strengths and gaps so that instructors can ensure, to the extent feasible, that the instruction and mentors provide individualized support.

**2. Classroom Instruction.** The ASPIRE team is energized and excited by **Ice House Entrepreneurial Program**, the entrepreneurial training framework developed by ELI (the Entrepreneurial Learning Initiative organization). Our management team will attend facilitator training to ensure consistency, fidelity, and coherence of approach to working with individuals both inside the prison and upon release. The programs will run for 10 weeks within the prison and will continue upon an individual's release through six formal, regularly scheduled meetings with the primary Mentor. The extent and duration of Mentor contact will be developed on a case by case basis, but will include at least weekly contact for the first six weeks and monthly contact during the first year. Once the Challenge is awarded and team members receive curriculum training, a formal evaluation plan will be developed to measure outcomes and track recidivism during the three years following release from prison. Each cohort will consist of 10 classes held in a prison classroom once a week for three hours. Approximately three hours of homework will be assigned each week. Participants will be provided with lesson handouts and supplementary information, along with writing pads and pens. (No Internet access is available inside the prison. References to Internet tools will be provided for use upon release and if needed, the individuals will be referred to free digital literacy classes upon release.) Each class will have three instructors/mentors present, in addition to prison staff. After each class, a 40-minute conference period will be held for instructors/mentors/speakers to provide individualized assistance to participants.

### **Page 3. ASPIRE Tucson**

Participants will have the opportunity explore and pursue their personal entrepreneurial interests and visions through the Ice House entrepreneurial training curriculum, to develop financial literacy and communication skills, and receive training in stress management. Guest speakers will relate the challenges and rewards of entrepreneurship, provide culturally relevant examples of successful re-entry, and will form a web of community support and connection immediately available to participants upon release. Over the course of the 10-week (inside) training, each participant will complete a business and re-entry plan.

**Inside.** Classroom format will be designed to encourage discussion and participation, build trust, and foster professional, respectful relationships. Desks will be provided for note taking and moveable chairs will enable the formation of talking circles, depending upon lesson content. Through the Ice House framework, individuals will be guided to develop an entrepreneurial mindset. Instructors/mentors will bring resources into the prison in a variety of prison-allowable formats, including handouts, videos, presentations, hands-on demonstrations, and role-playing. Resources will be drawn from the Ice House curriculum, from the Small Business Administration's (SBA's) resources and from other sources specific to participant needs and interests. Throughout the training, all participants will be guided to develop and refine a complete business plan and re-entry strategy. **Outside.** Upon release, in accordance with each individual's re-entry plan and business plans, trainees will meet regularly, each week for six weeks with their Mentor, to work on specific tasks related to implementation of their business/re-entry plans. Participants will be engaged in pursuing individualized opportunities, identified before release, for training, temporary employment, hands-on work experience, or launching their venture. Through regular communication, mentors will help ensure unforeseen challenges don't become insurmountable. In addition, participants can take advantage free business development classes and workshops offered through Tucson's chapter of SCORE at Tucson's public libraries. The Internet provides vast resources and Mentors will ensure participants avail themselves of free computer literacy training upon release from prison.

**3. Mentoring.** All participants will be provided individualized support for developing entrepreneurial skills and strategies and for completing and fulfilling a successful re-entry plan. Rafael Batain will be an important Mentor. As an individual who has gone through the different stages of the re-entry process and has earnestly pursued success and personal excellence, he understands the challenges formerly and currently incarcerated individuals face, giving him an authentic and credible voice. Mr. Batain understands that personal initiative and accountability is essential for He is an emphatic believer in the ability of each person to succeed. He will personally spend time with each individual. In addition, each member of the team has a commitment to the success of participants and will be assigned to Mentor each participant based participant interests and/or needs. Mentors will work with each person individually, and as a team, to develop an individualized set of resources and community contacts for re-entry and entrepreneurial success. Several community support and recovery groups provide assistance during re-entry and beyond, including North Star (a men's re-entry support group), Business Association of Tucson for local small businesses, and the local chapter of Business Network International.

**4. Community Connections** are an essential component of this program. Through guest speakers, ASPIRE Tucson will help build a caring, connected community to support individual re-entry. Inviting community speakers into the prison helps reduce the stigma of incarceration and invests community members in the process of successful re-entry. Guest speakers enable customized curriculum, based on the interests of participants and provide a diversity of perspectives, pathways, and passions. By building connections to the community starting inside the prison walls, we will foster connections to support participants as they re-enter society. Fortunately we've already built much of this infrastructure through our existing training programs. Guest speakers and instructors, and the organizations they represent, combined with the prison's re-entry services, provide a network of non profits, social service providers, support groups, businesses and mentors for wrap-around services to help fill immediate re-entry needs of graduates, such as current identification, proper work attire, stable housing, recovery and support services.

## Page 4. ASPIRE Tucson

### ACCESS TO CAPITAL

Capital comes in many forms. As part of the re-entry and business planning process, we'll work with individuals to find the right kind of capital to meet each participant's needs. To the extent possible, participants can begin to access important resources from inside the prison. Other resources won't be available until release. Based on individual needs, the management team will identify opportunities for additional training, transitional employment to fill immediate income needs, unpaid or paid internships, and/or paid apprenticeships to build specific skills, in addition to support groups for individuals dealing with the challenges of re-entry or recovery. Starting on the inside, trainees will be connected with individuals and organizations that can assist with different aspects of starting and running a business, as well as specific educational and training opportunities that are individually relevant. Tucson's local chapter of **SCORE** offers ongoing free business startup and small business classes as well as access to business mentors. **PPEP Micro Business Development Corporation**, Tucson's SBA microloan intermediary, has agreed to assist participants with the process of accessing capital, beginning inside the prison walls. PPEP staff will lead a micro-loan workshop inside the prison and will begin personalized assistance with individuals once they complete their business plan, including assessing credit eligibility, obtaining credit scores, reviewing submission documents, and assisting with loan packaging requirements. PPEP stands ready and willing to assist. Other community organizations may provide micro loans, including the YWCA and the Community Food Bank.

As part of the business and re-entry plan development, ASPIRE Tucson will assist participants in developing individualized training and internship opportunities to work with individuals and organizations in the community to gain necessary skills and knowledge. Through ASPIRE Tucson's network of guest speakers and instructors, participants will connect with individuals and organizations that will encourage and assist with re-entry and establishment of successful entrepreneurial ventures.

In addition, ASPIRE Tucson will set aside \$10,000 of the Challenge proceeds to provide 10 participants, five individuals from each cohort, with an 80 hour, \$1,000 paid apprenticeship, an opportunity to work with a community partner/mentor to gain additional specific knowledge in preparation for starting a new venture. Participants will be invited to participate in a competitive process before release from prison. The management team will score proposals and award Apprenticeships based on the quality and completeness of each individual's business, re-entry and apprenticeship plan.

**ASPIRE Tucson - An inside-out, community-based entrepreneurial training program**, offers a unique opportunity for community-supported entrepreneurial development and successful re-entry. Engaging individuals in the process of personal transformation *before* release is shown to have better potential to lower recidivism rates. The three main barriers to re-entry are addressed through the ASPIRE Tucson re-entry training program, including lack of employment opportunities, strong community ties, and unrealistic preparedness. In addition to giving ex-offenders an opportunity to rebuild their lives, this program invests in building a community that is deeply invested in creating opportunities for formerly incarcerated individuals. ASPIRE Tucson has the potential to change Arizona's approach to re-entry programming by modeling a successful re-entry strategy that seeks to end the cycle of recidivism by investing in individuals with criminal records, providing them with renewed purpose and an opportunity to earn a living wage.

