

1. Contestant Capacity

Name of Organization: Edmonds Community College

Official Contact: Merritt Hicks, M.Ed, Faculty, Next Steps Program, 425.640.1271, merritt.hicks@edcc.edu

1.1 Organizational Background

1.1.1: Prime Institution: Edmonds Community College (EdCC) is poised and ready to take on the Aspire Challenge to reduce recidivism and increase the economic opportunities of the formerly incarcerated through education, ¹ access to capital, wrap-around support, and community connection. Located in Lynnwood, WA just north of Seattle, EdCC is on the forefront of re-entry support in our primary service area of Snohomish County as well as underserved areas of neighboring Seattle. EdCC's Next Steps is a program designed to provide innovative, transformative support for individuals and their families who have been involved in the criminal justice system as they prepare for education and re-entering the workforce. ² Additionally, EdCC serves the individuals housed in nearby Monroe Correctional Complex (MCC). The men's prison houses 2,500 inmates, and 350 of them attend classes through EdCC's corrections education program. We know this population, their needs, and the community support and services available to them upon reentry.

1.1.2: Partner Institution: The Center for Inclusive Entrepreneurship (CIE) has partnered with EdCC since 2013 to provide accessible and affordable "first step" entrepreneurship training, one-on-one consulting and other support, empowering people to start and grow profitable small businesses, create jobs and build community resilience and wealth. CIE programs focus on low-income adults in underserved communities, with specific emphasis on women, people of color, ESL immigrants, people with disabilities, and people in transition (e.g., returning vets, people in reentry, people leaving homelessness, and people experiencing long-term unemployment). Over two-thirds of our participants make less than 50% of the area median income (very low income), and half make less than 30% of the area median income (extremely low income). Over two-thirds of our participants are people of color and over half are women. Over 20% of our participants are first generation ESL immigrants. Since our launch in April 2013, CIE has contributed to the journeys of well over 500 disadvantaged entrepreneurs through our programs and special initiatives. Nearly 250 have completed our signature First Step to Business course and nearly 50 have received intensive (10+ hours) one-on-one technical assistance. With our assistance, CIE clients have launched over 30 new businesses and created or sustained 45 jobs, with 20 businesses receiving an aggregate of nearly \$200,000 in startup or expansion financing. ³

1.2 Background of Management Team

Merritt Hicks (EdCC): Merritt has degrees in Human Services, Community Studies and Education. Her Master's in Education has an emphasis in Adult Education, and Training and transitions. She has worked with underserved populations for forty years, half of which has been in adult education. She taught in the Washington State Corrections system for seven years, and is responsible for the design and development of the Next Steps Program. She is a certified Ice House Entrepreneurship Mindset facilitator and currently incorporates elements of the Ice House curriculum into the Next Step program.

Mike Skinner (CIE): Mike is the founder and director of CIE and has worked for over 12 years in the microenterprise field designing and managing several successful microenterprise programs. As a certified Ice House Entrepreneurship Mindset facilitator, he introduced Ice House to the Northwest, offering the course directly or indirectly through partnerships to over 300 people in a wide range of settings. A corporate finance attorney for 12 years before dedicating himself to the elimination of poverty, Mike has a BA in Philosophy from the University of Washington and a JD from Columbia University School of Law.

Giselle Saguid (CIE): Giselle is a CIE business advisor with over 10 years of microenterprise development experience. She started her career in the microfinance industry in the Philippines implementing the Grameen methodology. As a military spouse, she has taught entrepreneurial classes as part of the Department of Defense's Transition Assistance Program at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island and Naval Air Station in Everett, earning recognition from the U.S. Small Business Administration's Seattle District Office as the Veteran Small Business Champion for 2013.

2. Entrepreneurial Education Delivery Solution

2.1 Participant Recruitment Plan: EdCC serves Snohomish County. Although Snohomish County is the third largest county in the state, it has very few resources available for justice involved adults. EdCC's Next Steps program is currently the only reentry program in operation for this population, making it ideally placed to recruit participants for the Aspire Challenge. Currently EdCC's Next Step program receives, screens, and intakes approximately 70 justice-involved individuals annually that are referred by the Bureau of Prisons probation, Washington State Department of Corrections, and Snohomish County Jail and Probation. Participants will be recruited through this pipeline. All participants will have the opportunity to complete the Transitional Pathways Course with Ice House training and those who successfully complete, are interested in owning a business, and have met the expectations of the program will progress to CIE's First Steps to Business course.

2.2 Classroom Instruction

2.2.1 Transitional Pathways: Next Steps is built around Transitional Pathways (TP), a well-established holistic life skills course designed as a combination of whole-class instruction and individual teamwork.⁴ TP intakes students on a rolling basis and meets three times a week covering topics essential for re-entry, such as the importance of 'soft skills', communication skills for work and the college classroom, stress and frustration management, internal/external locus of control, expectations of self/others, learned helplessness and empowerment, positive self-talk, habit elimination and development. Project management, organizational skills and computer competency skills are integrated, practiced and reinforced throughout the course. By embedding TP into the Next Steps program, participants will have access to our existing and essential wrap-around case management support in addition to soft-skills and entrepreneurship training.

2.2.2 Ice House Entrepreneurial Mindset: Aspire Challenge funding will allow us to enhance Next Steps by fully integrating all elements of the Ice House Entrepreneurial Mindset (IHEM) training into the existing TP curriculum. Developed by the Entrepreneurial Learning Initiative with support from the Kauffman Foundation, IHEM training is an innovative 9-week entrepreneurship learning program that combines narrated chalkboard presentations with video interviews and case studies featuring modern-day examples of ordinary people who have triumphed over hardship and adversity by embracing an entrepreneurial mindset. Participants are immersed in the entrepreneurial mindset to awaken their "inner entrepreneur," empowering them to explore the possibility of entrepreneurship, self-employment, and business ownership as a meaningful path to sustainable livelihoods. IHEM provides a useful framework for an adult conversation with people who are struggling with multiple barriers to financial independence and who are ready to hit the reset button.⁵ IHEM has been successfully utilized in programs for the incarcerated,⁶ and is currently being used at Erie County Jail (PA), StepUP Ministry Reentry Program (NC), El Paso County Jail (CO), Leavenworth Prison (KS), and Marshall County Correctional Facility (MS) and will soon be used in local prisons in Cincinnati (OH), Cleveland (OH), Saint Charles (MI), and Oxford (NE).

In the TP course, participants will have weekly discussions on one of the chapter themes of the book, *Who Owns the Ice House, Eight Lessons from an Unlikely Entrepreneur*. Those themes are: 1. Choice, 2. Opportunity, 3. Action, 4. Knowledge, 5. Wealth, 6. Brand, 7. Community and 8. Persistence. Students will use the second half of the class time to complete individualized assignments related to the Ice House material as they work their way through the book and online program. These assignments will incorporate those tasks required to complete their Individual Success Plan, and include goals and decision-making strategies, barriers and opportunities, realistic action plans, economic literacy and asset development, establishing checking and savings accounts, understanding how to improve a credit rating, learning about credit rehabilitation, financial aid, and personal financial assessments to address legal and personal obligations.

2.2.3 Next Steps participants completing the TP/IHEM course who are interested in exploring a business idea will be referred to CIE's First Step to Business. First Steps to Business is a proven, intensive, reality-based course that helps an emerging entrepreneur learn fundamental business concepts, develop a basic business plan, assess the feasibility of a business idea, and get to a quick "go-no go" decision. First Steps to Business will be offered quarterly

throughout the Aspire Challenge to cohorts of 5-7 Next Step participants. The 8-hour curriculum is generally delivered in four weekly 2-hour sessions. Participants start with a personal net worth statement and household income and expense statement to establish a baseline and realistic financial goals; use an opportunity discovery canvas to assess the market opportunity and marketing strategies; and develop a cash flow projection and breakeven analysis to assess financial viability and profitability. For the Aspire Challenge, the course will use an I-BEST approach, a nationally recognized best instructional model developed in Washington to increase retention and completion.⁷ Under this approach, CIE will co-facilitate the course with the Next Steps TP/IHEM facilitator who will model active learning and assist participants in understanding the course content.

Throughout the Aspire Challenge, Next Steps participants will provide support and constructive feedback and share resources with each other as they work through their checklists of learning modules. We know through our experience with Next Steps that, although participants may enter the program at different times, they quickly build a community through their classes and their facilitated labs. They will further organize into cohorts as they transition to CIE's quarterly First Step to Business course. Those who are interested in entrepreneurship will also have the option to co-enroll in an EdCC career related certification or degree programs, for example: Business Management, Business Information Technology, etc.

2.3 Mentoring: Next Steps participants who complete CIE's First Step to Business with a viable business idea will have access to CIE's intensive goal-focused one-on-one business mentoring, where they will work with CIE's highly experienced business advisors to customize person-centered individual coaching plans focused on their specific and unique gifts, challenges, and business ideas. This is the heart and soul of CIE's program. In a typical year, CIE business advisors provide an aggregate average of over 1,200 hours of one-on-one assistance helping participants write business plans, apply for loans, develop strategies to find and keep customers, and build tools to help manage business finances and operations.

For the Aspire Challenge, we will establish a support lab on EdCC's campus with fixed regular hours where participants can work alone or in teams with support from the Next Steps TP/IHEM faculty and CIE business advisors. Participants can also schedule one-on-one time with a CIE business advisor at times and locations that are convenient to them. Individual coaching plans will leverage SCORE counselors, workshops, and online resources. In addition, participants will be encouraged to access CIE's pool of volunteer business mentors through MicroMentor.org. These efforts will help participants develop their own board of advisors and resource networks - both essential to business success.

2.4 Community Connections: In addition to the main partners, the EdCC Aspire Challenge will collaborate with other entities with vested interest in reducing recidivism and supporting the justice-involved to ensure that participants have access to additional wrap-around resources vital to their successful transition. Next Steps partners with Pioneer Human Services to provide transitional services to those who are assigned by the Bureau of Prisons to a halfway House in Seattle.⁸ Additionally EdCC and Pioneer provide parenting classes for parents living in this halfway house.⁹ Next Steps partners with Goodwill at their training sites in both the north and central parts of Snohomish County.¹⁰ We make referrals for employment training programs and vouchers for clothes upon release from incarceration, and they have hosted our classes on site. CIE partners with Greater Seattle SCORE, a nationwide nonprofit association dedicated to educating entrepreneurs and helping small businesses start, grow, and succeed. SCORE is a resource partner with the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), and has been mentoring small business owners for more than forty years. In addition to free business counseling, SCORE provides free workshops and an online library with resources, templates and tools to assist entrepreneurs in developing tools and plans they need to navigate their way to small business success. In 2016, Seattle SCORE opened four new branches and its 70 volunteer counselors served 2,093 unique clients, provided 3,778 individual mentoring sessions, conducted 72 workshops for over 1,025 people, and helped launch 1,172 new businesses.¹¹

3. Access to Capital

Although CIE does not offer business capital, it has helped over 20 participants access an aggregate of over \$200,000 in small business startup or expansion capital from a variety of sources. Because CIE is not beholden to any particular access-to-capital model, it is free to help its participants first explore opportunities to bootstrap a “minimal viable” business launch using lean startup techniques. In CIE’s experience, this is the most effective approach for people with very limited resources. If external capital is still necessary, CIE helps participants figure out how much is needed, connects them to the most appropriate funding source, helps them put together the required application and business plan, and help them navigate the closing.

3.1 Access to Micro-Lending: CIE has deep relationships with all of community lenders and microloan programs serving the region, who frequently refer people to CIE for loan packaging assistance. CIE partners most closely with the Seattle branch of Mercy Corps Northwest (MCNW), a Portland-based Community Development Finance Institution and SBA microloan intermediary.¹² MCNW provides graduates of CIE’s First Step to Business “no-questions-asked” starter loans of up to \$1,000. In addition, successful completion of CIE’s First Step to Business is now a prerequisite for MCNW’s new matched savings program which provides a \$4,000 grant to eligible Seattle entrepreneurs who save \$500 in earned income over a 6-month period (an 8:1 match). The \$4,500 in owner equity provides “skin in the game” required by most lenders and serves as collateral that can leverage additional loan capital. CIE is also a Kiva Zip affiliate and has helped its participants access capital through Kiva’s crowd-funding program.¹³

3.2 Connection to Capital and Funding Opportunities: Housed at Impact Hub Seattle, a social enterprise incubator and co-work space, CIE has become an integral part of the Northwest’s social entrepreneur eco-system. It is co-located with Social Venture Partners (an impact investor network funding nonprofits, social enterprises and businesses with social justice and environmental missions), Fledge (a social enterprise incubator backed by several pools of investment capital), and the Seattle Angel Conference (a network of investors providing funding to emerging entrepreneurs). CIE established and leads the Washington Coast Works Sustainable Small Business competition, now in its third year, where emerging entrepreneurs in rural and tribal communities on the Washington Coast participate in an intensive entrepreneurship boot camp and fast pitch event for a chance to win up to \$20,000 in seed capital.¹⁴ As an approved self-employment assistance provider with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), CIE has helped several participants access DVR self-employment grants of up to \$10,000.

EdCC and CIE know the challenges facing the justice-involved during their transitional and reentry periods, and how the empowerment of entrepreneurship can revolutionize lives and reduce recidivism in this vulnerable population. This partnership catalyzes our many years of experience with this population, with small business development, and with providing highest quality education and training experiences. Our organizations have deep roots in our local community, throughout the justice system, and with businesses, start-ups, and potential investors.

We are thrilled at the opportunity to bring all these pieces together to meet the Aspire Challenge. There are great needs and prospects for this program in our community. Our service area covers a rapidly expanding population, a burgeoning heroin epidemic and climbing property crime rates.¹⁵ Additionally, our location in Snohomish county and neighboring King county provides ample opportunity for small business development in the service sector, tourism, recreation, green innovations, and the arts.^{16,17}

Web Resources and References

- 1 <http://www.edcc.edu/about/default.html>
- 2 <http://www.edcc.edu/nextsteps/default.html>
- 3 <http://www.cie-nw.org/>
- 4 <http://www.edcc.edu/nextsteps/transitional-pathways.html>
- 5 <https://elimindset.com/>
- 6 Keena, L., & Simmons, C. (2014). Rethink, Reform, Reenter: An Entrepreneurial Approach to Prison Programming. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 59(8).
- 7 <http://www.sbctc.edu/colleges-staff/programs-services/i-best/>
- 8 <http://pioneerhumanservices.org/>
- 9 <http://www.edcc.edu/nextsteps/parenting.html>
- 10 <https://www.goodwillwa.org/training/>
- 11 <https://seattle.score.org/>
- 12 <https://www.mercycorpsnw.org/>
- 13 <https://borrow.kiva.org/about>
- 14 <http://wacoastworks.org/>
- 15 Vogel, Larry. (2015, September 27). Snohomish County's heroin epidemic: More resources needed, local experts say. *MLT News*, Retrieved from mltnew.com
- 16 <http://snohomishcountywa.gov/1491/Economic-Development>
- 17 <http://www.edc-seaking.org/>



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206.768.1990 tel | 206-768-8910 fax
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February 10, 2017

Aspire Challenge Grant Office
C/O US Small Business Administration
409 3rd St, SW
Washington DC 20416

To Whom It May Concern:

Please accept this letter of support for the Edmonds Community College's application for the Aspire Challenge Grant. With grant funding the Edmonds Community College plans to recruit potential re-entry students out of their current Next Steps Transitional classes and then have students attend Ice House Entrepreneurship Mindset workshops (also available at Edmonds Community College). For those students who would be suited to start their own business, they would be providing instruction on how to complete their Individual Success Plan. The plan would include a support lab and those students who develop a viable business plan will then be assisted in writing a business plan and given access to micro-loans.

Pioneer has a continuing partnership with the Edmonds Community College and the Next Steps program. We have had individuals attended their employment preparedness program that then went on to college or employment. Please contact me if you require additional information.

Regards,

Angelia Clark
Social Service Coordinator
Pioneer Fellowship House
206-667-9674

February 10, 2017

U.S. Small Business Administration
Aspire Challenge Program

Re: Aspire Challenge Proposal from Edmonds Community College

Dear Aspire Challenge Proposal Evaluators:

I am writing to support the Aspire Challenge proposal being submitted by Edmonds Community College (EdCC) in partnership with the Center for Inclusive Entrepreneurship (CIE) to reduce recidivism and increase the economic opportunities of justice involved individuals in King and Snohomish County through entrepreneurship, self-employment and small business ownership.

As you know, SCORE is a nationwide nonprofit association dedicated to educating entrepreneurs and helping small businesses start, grow, and succeed. In addition to free business counseling, SCORE provides free workshops and an online library with resources, templates, and tools to assist entrepreneurs in navigating their way to small business success. In 2016, Seattle SCORE opened four new branches, including a new branch serving Snohomish County. In 2016, it's 70 volunteer counselors served 2,093 unique clients, provided 3,778 individual mentoring sessions, conducted 72 workshops for over 1,025 people, and helped launch 1,172 new businesses.

Seattle SCORE has enjoyed a long-standing partnership with CIE. For example, we worked together to develop a monthly business resource open house in partnership with the Seattle Public Library, which now includes all the micro and small business development programs in the region who have outreached our collective services to hundreds of emerging entrepreneurs and existing business owners throughout the Seattle area. Seattle SCORE and CIE frequently cross-refer and/or co-serve entrepreneurs. We look forward to every opportunity to continue to work with CIE to deepen our partnership and further our respective missions.

Greater Seattle SCORE believes that EdCC's proposal will provide a much-needed boost to justice-involved individuals and economic development in underserved communities. We look forward to contributing to the success of the proposed project. We therefore strongly support and respectfully urge the SBA to fund this project.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions at hal.brookins@scorevolunteer.org or 206-915-3619.

Sincerely,

Hal Brookins

Hal Brookins, Outreach Chair
Greater Seattle SCORE



**Community Partnership for Transition Solutions
Snohomish County**

February 10, 2017

RE: Aspire Challenge Grant
Letter of Support

To Whom It May Concern:

The Community Partnership for Transition Solutions (CPTS) of Snohomish County is comprised of numerous community members vested in connecting formerly incarcerated individuals with available resources, thereby assisting with the reentry process. We network and share information and resources in Snohomish County to support partner agencies in their efforts to provide reentry clients and their families with knowledge, skills, and tools for successful reintegration into society.

We support our partner, Edmonds Community College, in their efforts to expand the opportunities for the justice-involved population in the realm of entrepreneurship. Edmonds Community College has demonstrated their commitment to those in transition from prison and jail returning to the community by implementing the Next Steps Program, providing life skills and educational pathways. This added entrepreneurial series will only serve to enhance the existing program and provide another avenue for individuals to transform their transferrable skills from the streets to the business world.

Sincerely,

Members of the Community Partnership for Transition Solutions of Snohomish County

[Handwritten signatures]
Debbie Maen
M. Maen
Don Black
Maurice Allen
Ray G. [unclear]
[unclear]
John [unclear]
[unclear]
Sherlyl Chester
Kali Foster
M. D. [unclear]
[unclear]

The Work We Do...

Snohomish County Partnership for Transition Solutions (CPTS) is a group of community partners who are committed to connecting formerly incarcerated individuals with available resources in order to assist them with the re-entry process.

Snohomish County CPTS Partners:

Catholic Community Services

Center of Excellence/Everett Community College

Correctional Industries

Department of Corrections

Department of Social and Health Services

Division of Child Support

Division of Child Support Alternative Solutions

Division of Child Support Employment Pipeline

Edmonds Community College

Employment Security Department

Everett Community College

Evergreen Manor

Friends of Youth

Girl Scouts Western Washington - Beyond Bars

Goodwill Everett

King County Prosecutor's Office

Mud Homes

Pioneer Fellowship House

Pioneer Human Services

Reentry Corps

Service Alternatives

Snohomish County

Snohomish County Alternative Solutions

Snohomish County Drug Court

Snohomish County Prosecuting Attorney's Office

Snohomish County Public Defender Association

Snohomish County Therapeutic Alternatives

State Board for Community and Technical Colleges

U.S. Attorney's Office

U.S. Probation and Pretrial Services

Unloop

Volunteers of America

Washington Expungement Services

Workforce Snohomish

WorkSource

YWCA