

Texas ReEntry Services Entrepreneurial Education Program

Capacity

1. Organizational Background

Mission Statement: Creating safer and stronger communities by providing ex-offenders opportunities and means to become productive, contributing members of society.

Founded in 1998, Texas ReEntry Services (TXRS), a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization, has a 19-year history of providing reentry service, to formerly incarcerated individuals residing in Tarrant County, Texas. Approximately 6000 individuals return to Tarrant County communities from federal and state correctional institutions annually, making it the third largest Texas County for releases. TXRS sees approximately 1000 of those individuals, who bring with them a unique set of needs and challenges.

Our comprehensive program is designed to promote safer communities by breaking the cycle of crime and incarceration for former inmates and their families. Through our individualized case management, we evaluate the individual's strengths and needs, to develop a service plan, designed to assist him/her in getting those needs met. In addition to our case management, we provide employment services that include job readiness training, resume development, interviewing and networking skills, and body language and grooming. After assisting them in creating resumes, cover letters, and thank you letters, we provide job referrals. Depending on their education level, we encourage our clients to either get a GED or receive vocational training through our local college. We also assist them in obtaining critical documents such as, state IDs, social security cards and birth certificates, which are necessary for employment. Other services include literacy / GED classes as well as anger management/ domestic violence/ substance abuse relapse prevention groups. We provide HIV testing and Peer Education through our mental health provider (MHMR) and Tarrant County Hospital. Lastly, we provide referrals to other community services in accordance to the client's service plans.

We believe that our wrap-around services will enhance our entrepreneurship education program participants' opportunity for success.

2. Background of Management Team

Our founder and director Kay Smith has an Associate of Arts Degree in mental health, a Bachelor of Science Degree in family science and a Master's of Sciences Degree in social work. Although she has never been incarcerated, she has twelve (12) family members who have been incarcerated. She uses her life experiences and educational background to continue to strengthen and develop TXRS programs.

Eugene Maxey, a formerly incarcerated person, has been with TXRS for five years. He serves as case manager and in the past, has served as an employment specialist.

Hiland Watts, a formerly incarcerated person, has a strong background in corporate training and computer skills. He serves as our employment specialist and Job Readiness Training facilitator, in addition to assisting our clients in our computer lab.

James Beach, a business owner, has developed five businesses and serves as both an advisor and assistant in the development and implementation of our entrepreneurship program.

Entrepreneurial Education Delivery Solution

1. Participant Recruitment Plan

Texas ReEntry Services receives client referrals from Texas Department of Criminal Justice Parole Division and several other social services agencies, in addition to word of mouth and self-referrals. To qualify for our program, a person must first go through an intensive intake process. This process is designed to elicit information regarding the client's personal history, criminal background, employment and education histories, in addition to other health and substance issues. This is first step to determine the client's eligibility for the Texas ReEntry Services Entrepreneurial Education program. Additional steps include, their participation in our job readiness training program, and obtaining critical documents. We also want to know how our clients spent their time while in prison and what programs and classes he/she participated in. The selection process also includes references and a review committee.

We believe this process will allow us to assess if the individual has the necessary qualities, skills, and determination, to complete our entrepreneurship program.

2. Classroom Instruction

The first quarter of the program is designated to identifying a proven, existing entrepreneurship education curriculum, developing lesson plans, making contacts with and engaging with various Tarrant County stakeholders, and recruitment of participants. Our goal is to provide 3 cohorts of 10-12 individuals during the remaining 3 quarters. Each cohort will meet in-person within a classroom environment at Texas ReEntry Services location. They will meet on a weekly basis for 8-10 weeks. The groups are facilitated a trained, by a former incarcerated individual, to help encourage cohesion.

Classroom instruction includes but is not limited to the following:

- Understanding the basic concepts of entrepreneurship
- Qualities of an entrepreneur
- Strategy
- Generating and developing a business plan
- Market and financial analysis
- Leaderships skills
- Operational management
- Product development/marketing
- Human resources

Program participants will have access to computers equipped with attitude and personality tests. They will also be able to use them for research; market analysis; financial planning; and product development. Texas ReEntry Services Entrepreneurial Education Program participants will utilize the Small Business Administration's (SBA) web-based tools and resources.

Because individuals learn in a variety of ways, we will use multiple teaching tools such as PowerPoint, videos, graphics, and group discussion. We will use Pre-and Post-testing in each class session to accurately assess our student's learning progress. We will use satisfaction surveys to determine the effectiveness of our materials and lesson plans.

3. Mentoring

TXRS Entrepreneurship Program will partner with SCORE to provide mentors for our participants. Their business development expertise will be invaluable to our participants as they strive to become business owners and provide for their families. We also hope to engage with various business professionals to assist with the mentoring of our participants and enhance their learning process.

4. Community Connections

Texas ReEntry Services is very familiar with most social services providers in the Tarrant County area, which allows us to make referrals, as indicated by our services plans. Tarrant County also has several databases (United Way's 211 and Tarrant County Cares) that are accessible to our clients.

To encourage economic well-being for our clients, we will contact and engage with numerous banks and financial institutions, that are willing to provide information and financial education in the Tarrant County area. We also want to engage The Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce, the Black Chamber of Commerce, and the Hispanic Chamber Commerce, of Tarrant County. We will also engage with several civic clubs and organizations such as the Rotary Clubs. We will invite business people from various fields to provide additional information and encouragement.

Access to Capital

1. Access to micro-lending

Texas ReEntry Services will maintain a list of micro-lenders that will be available to our entrepreneurship education program, by the fifth week of the course. We will be introducing this concept on our fourth session, and then on the fifth week, have outside guest come and discuss the micro-lending concept in depth. Since we intend to work closely with the Small Business Administration district office and Fort Worth Business Assistance Center, we will approach SBA Microloan Intermediaries for guidance and information regarding microloans.

2. Connection to capital and funding opportunities

We will review the participants' support and financial needs during individual consultations. At that time, it will be determined what appropriate resources will be needed. We will assist the participants in preparing all necessary documentation. We will also provide instruction on interview/marketing skills to better equip our participants for the events. We will provide matchmaking opportunities with local lenders and funders, as well as business pitch events, to key members of our local entrepreneurial ecosystem, during the last four weeks of the quarter.