

Aspire Challenge - Capacity

Name of Organization: Grand Ledge Fledge LLC (The Fledge), 325 S. Clinton, Grand Ledge, MI 48837

Official Contact Person: Jerry Norris, 517-230-7679, jerry@closeandcompetent.com, grandledgeledge.com

The Fledge was founded in May of 2015, it is a registered LLC with the State of Michigan. The Fledge is one of only a few private and for-profit incubators. We focus on allowing any aspiring entrepreneur to have a chance to start their business. We are hyper-inclusive, and we serve the mid-Michigan area but we have members and fledglings who travel from as far as Detroit, Grand Rapids, Mt. Pleasant, Chicago and Ft. Wayne. We use a unique process we have named Project Based Innovation. We recruit members (there is no application to become a member and it is free) through marketing campaigns, free events (e.g. coding club), and strategic alliances. The members then will often get involved in community project where they will learn skills, mentor others, develop technologies, generate ideas, work on customer discovery, build prototypes, go through business training as necessary, and launch their business. Some of our projects include: Longest Skate park in the World: we taught welding, woodworking, masonry, website design, internet of things, and power generation. This project generated 8 companies and involved approximately 80 members. One of our current projects is building a solar cart that allows a portable set of solar panels to charge a DIY Tesla Battery, that has outlets for 110V, 120V and 3-phase as well as a connector for a Tesla wall charger and a Green Powered Music stage. We are again teaching welding, power generation, soldering, and electrical engineering. This project has generated 3 companies so far and has approximately 30 members.

The Fledge has 3600 square feet; a conference room with work stations, projectors, free Wifi and printers. We have about 6000 square feet of welding, woodworking, and metal works stations. We have a fully functional recording studio, 3d Printers, desktop CNC, 3d Scanners, Soldering stations, coding tools, measurement device work stations, art studio and screen printing operation. This summer we will add two more facilities. We are financially healthy and have accomplished many things.

We are incubating 36 companies and have over 200 members. We have 47 strategic alliances, who include organizations such as LEAP, MSU Community Outreach, Spartan Innovations, The Hatching, Altruus Capital, and many others. We work with Kiva, MEDC (BAF, ETF), BBCEtc. (SBIR/STTR), Michigan Angel Fund, and Michigan Venture Capital Association. We have recently been awarded a contract from MSU Outreach to write a Co-Learning plan about our model.

Our skill sets are vast and ever evolving. Our membership serves as mentors (a major principle of the Fledge is that everyone is a teacher and everyone is a student). Our founder, Mr. Norris, has over 30 years of training experience, is a seasoned entrepreneur, and well connected in the Michigan Entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Background of Management Team

Jerry Norris: Mr. Norris is an experienced entrepreneur, management system expert, and Business Funding Consultant. He currently serves as: CEO of the Grand Ledge Fledge, LLC, CEO of GAIA, LLC, Business Acceleration Consultant for Lansing Area Economic Partnership (LEAP), Secretary for the Grand Ledge Alliance for a Quality Community, Manager and Due Diligence Specialist of Altruus Capital.

Daryl Alexander: Mr. Alexander is the first returning citizen to work under the Fledge's model. He is an experienced entrepreneur, trainer, and mentor. He brings the following experiences and education to the project: Convicted Felon, released 2012, Completed parole 2014, Dale Carnegie Graduate 2013, Career Quest Graduate (Network Administration IT)-2015, 2015-Official Fledgling/Mentor for IoT/IT/Computer Science, Senior Partner/Co-Owner MD Technologies. 2016

Marni Swanson: Mrs. Swanson is an experienced administrator and works for the Fledge in that role. She has a degree in Psychology from Central Michigan University. She has previously held the role of Senior Account Representative for Blue Cross Blue Shield.

Pages 2-3: Entrepreneurial Education Delivery Solution (2-page maximum)

The following Diagram is an overview of our model:

Intake form existing organizations and Court Systems	Choose Cohort Participants	8 Weeks of Business Training and Ideation Creation	Choose Business Ideas and Form Teams	4 Weeks of Business Prep	Pitch and Funding	Continued Business Incubation and Acceleration
Mentoring, Online Courses, Homework Assignments, Service Providers, Funding Opportunities						

Participant Recruitment Plan:

The Fledge will utilize a funneling system of recently released and former convicted citizens through local post incarcerated support groups that specialize in helping returning citizens transition back into society. The Team Manager Daryl Alexander (Former Michigan Department of Corrections prisoner) has been proactive in prison reform and mass incarceration issues within the community. We will use these relationships to recruit our cohorts. In addition, we will be presenting our program to multiple groups and continue to use our marketing and growth strategies identified above.

The applicant shall demonstrate how they intend to identify the participants who will receive the services described in this challenge.

Advocacy, Reentry, Resources and Outreach (A.R.R.O.) of NorthWest Initiative and Citizens for Prison Reform (CPR) will help us identified candidates who are interested and ready to try our program. We will also utilize our contacts in the local court systems for potential candidates to be interviewed for program.

Classroom Instruction:

Our classroom instruction will focus on several concepts over a 12 week period: Business Classes and a Ideation phase where participants will be required to experiment with different tools and technologies. Participants will also contribute to our community based project initiatives. The instruction will walk them through an entrepreneurial curriculum that is tailored for the cohort. The curriculum is comparable to the y-combinator online curriculum which was just released for the public to use for free.

Describe how the base curriculum will be augmented with the components necessary (financial literacy and leadership skills, etc to provide participants with the highest likelihood of economic success.**

Our curriculum will cover financial literacy including accounting, taxes, credit, funding, and the three common accounting reports – P/L, Balance Sheet and Statement of Cash Flow. We will also be using common tools such as customer discover, business canvas and customer surveying to help with idea and plan development.

Contestants shall also describe how they execute the following:

Organize participants on a cohort basis (minimum of two cohorts per year) to meet in-person for classroom instruction that progressively develops over several weeks

We will have three cohorts per year. The classroom instruction will be as follows: 12 weeks in duration, 2-hour period for business concepts, 2-hour period for ideation, this will occur in this format for the first 8 weeks. The final 4 weeks will focus on the participants coming up with a business idea, form a team around the idea, and spend the remaining time developing an executive summary and pitch deck and preparing for a pitch. At the end of the 4 week period the team will Pitch and the winners will get funding with the top place winner automatically being entered into the Hatching.

Provide online resources and other components/activities that supplement the in-person curriculum

We will work with our partner organizations to help ensure the participants have internet access when they are away from the Fledge, e.g. get Bigby gift cards and loan them laptops so they can have access to the online

courses. We will use SLACK and Skype as our messaging tool. Each participant will also be given access to the y-Combinator material available online.

Model the task and challenge of entrepreneurship interests and visions:

The Fledge offers various programs that allow people to experiment with different interests. Each participant will have access to Welding, Woodworking, Screen Printing, 3D Printing, Coding Classes, mentors and tools, Desk Top CNC machine, recording studio and musical equipment, beat machines, Virtual reality. They will spend one evening a week learning these tools. Based on their interests, they will then start to put together a business idea around that interest.

Address topics such as process, strategy, financing, marketing, human resources, leadership, contracting and market/product development-

Process, strategy, financing, marketing human resources, leadership, contracting and market/product development all are part of the class room and online curriculums.

Guide all participants, by the end of the training, to refine and draft a complete business plan

By the end of the cohort section, the participants will have a completed business plan, executive summary and pitch deck. In the last 4 weeks of the cohort the participants will present and refine their business plan several times. Each participant will be given a chance to win money in a pitch competition, where a series of judges will decide to invest in the companies (part of the Aspire Prize Money will be used to fund this).

Mentoring:

Describe how your organization will provide individualized support to participants developing entrepreneurial skills and strategies. One on one mentoring with Management Team members, with a progressive and incremental checkpoints for continuity and achievements.

Each participant will be assigned one or more mentors who they can communicate with throughout the length of the cohort (and beyond in most cases). The mentor will have a specific business expertise but will also be well versed in all aspects of the business realization process. Mentors will report progress for each participant. In addition, each participant will be required to walk through a progress of assignments with weekly deliverables that show understanding of the skills and strategies. We use a competency based model to ensure that competency is reached and that we are not just checking off boxes for training hours, worksheets, etc.

Community Connections:

Describe how the organization will create opportunities to connect with the local business community and social service providers to increase participants' financial literacy, access to transitional services, and any other service that improves the economic well-being of the returning citizen.

We will partner with an assortment of groups to help us provide access to local business and service providers we have access to legal teams, bankers, insurance agents, wealth management, and marketing firms. We will also work with our network of existing teams and companies to help returning citizens become part of a team or employed by a company. Our end goal is to allow the returning citizen to start a business, join a business and generally improve their economic opportunities. We often use the phrase "Sponsor Yourself."

A note on Sustainability

We plan to create a private for-profit incubator modeled after the Fledge for returning citizens. After 3 cohorts we plan to have a model in place where we can generate revenue from success of our companies formed to allow for 3 cohorts per year to be run under the model while building more and more shared opportunities for all of our participants.

Access to Capital (1-page maximum)

Access to micro-lending:

Describe how you will link participants with participating microlenders (and when appropriate, SBA Microloan Intermediaries, to fund and grow new businesses-

The Fledge is a member of the Regional Innovation Network Group (RING) which is organized and managed by the Lansing Economic Area Partnership (LEAP). Through this association, we have relationships with the following funding sources:

- LEAP: Has Mentor in Residence funding, Entrepreneurial Assistance funds, several pitch competitions and the fledge will provide scholarships to boot camps, e.g. marketing, entrepreneurial, financial, and patent development.
- Through our association with LEAP we also have access to their Members, e.g. MSU FCU, for financing round tables.
- Entrepreneurial Institute: We have an association with the Entrepreneurial Institute who administers SBA micro loans for
- Kiva: We, Lansing, with the help of LEAP are currently working on becoming a KIVA city to help administer micro loans for our participants.

Connection to capital and funding opportunities:

Describe how your organization will provide assistance to prepare to meet with capital providers, preparing proper documentation, matchmaking events with local lenders and funders, or business pitch events to key members of an entrepreneurial ecosystem.

The participants will be introduced to several types of funding opportunities including competitions, loans, grants, and investors. We have expertise in working with all of the groups listed below. Our teams have pitched and one the Hatching and Green Light, we have teams who have been in Accelerate Michigan, we are on the due diligence team for Lansing Proto and Altruus, we work closely with conquer (some of their participants use our space), we have generated offers for the Capital Community Angels and are a pipeline for MAF and MVCA. We will work with our cohorts to help them apply to all the following:

- The Hatching: a monthly pitch competition hosted by LEAP and Spartan Innovations, with a monthly prize of \$1000 and a host of services for the winner.
- Green Light: An annual pitch competition with up to \$25,000 in prize money.
- Accelerate Michigan: An annual pitch competition with up to \$500,000 in prize money.
- Lansing Proto: a product based accelerator with a \$15,000 investment and 12 weeks of programming.
- Conquer: the MSU run incubator with a \$20,000 and 12 weeks of programming.
- Altruus: a local fund that invests \$25000 in early stage start-up.
- Capital Area Community Angels: We will prepare investor pitch decks and present them to the Capital Area Community Angels.
- Michigan Angel Fund (MAF): We will prepare investor pitch decks and present them to the MAF.
- Michigan Venture Capital Association (MVCA): Some participants will be introduced to certain members of the Venture Capital community.

We have strong relationships with these groups. The bottom line is, we know where to get the funding and how to get it.