

Contestant Capacity:

1. Organizational Capacity: CAMBA, Inc. is applying for an award under the Aspire Challenge. Our official contact person is Eileen Reilly, who can be reached at (718) 226-0436 ext. 66305 or at EileenR@camba.org. Since its founding as a merchants' association nearly 40 years ago, CAMBA has provided Small Business Services in Brooklyn, NY, including classroom-based trainings and one-one-one technical assistance. In 2016 alone, CAMBA Small Business Services provided services to 428 low-income and very low-income microentrepreneurs. This included one-on-one technical assistance for 202 microentrepreneurs. Our classroom offerings revolve around bankability, formalizing small businesses and placing entrepreneurs in a position to qualify for bank financing, the key to small business growth. In order to accomplish this goal, our courses address the greatest challenges that small business owners face when applying for bank financing. We revise our curricula and develop new courses as necessary to meet the evolving needs of our clients. Our current small business courses include Business Planning 101 and our Business Plan Intensive Course for aspiring entrepreneurs. In the Intensive Course, we offer a tested and effective curriculum that teaches clients the fine points of developing a comprehensive, investor-ready business plan along with two years' worth of financial projections. Each client who completes their business plan in writing is then trained to summarize their plan in a presentation style atmosphere to prepare them to present to investors or potential funders. Since we have been offering this training, we have assisted over 250 aspiring entrepreneurs to develop their business plans. In just three years, we have had students win first and second place awards in the Brooklyn Public Library's prestigious PowerUP! Business Plan Competition.

CAMBA is well positioned to deliver entrepreneurship training to formerly incarcerated individuals. We have working relationships with many of the agencies in New York City that focus on this population, including the Fortune Society, the Doe Fund, the Osborne Association, the Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO), STRIVE, the Brooklyn Community Bail Fund, the New York County District Attorney's Office, and Kings County District Attorney's Office, and the Vera Institute of Justice. Our prior experience with this population includes providing job preparation, training, placement, and retention services through a United States Department of Justice-funded re-entry program operated by the Doe Fund, as well as providing intensive job preparation and training services through an Employment Works program operated by CEO.

2. Background of Management Team: Our Vice President for Economic Development is Eileen Reilly. Ms. Reilly has been with CAMBA as a manager for 22 years. She has overall administrative supervision and oversight for the agency's Small Business Services, Workforce Development, and Refugee Services programs. Ms. Reilly provides direct supervision to six managerial staff, including the Director of Small Business Services. She manages the growth and development of CAMBA's entrepreneurial training, counseling and technical assistance endeavors. Ms. Reilly oversees linkages with other business development and lending partners, providing direct loans to clients to start or expand their businesses and managing our loan capital pool. She holds a Bachelor's degree in cultural anthropology from Wesleyan University. Before joining CAMBA, her professional background included working for the New York County District Attorney and working as the Manhattan Borough Director for the Vera Institute of Justice's Court Employment Project.

Reporting directly to Ms. Reilly is Isaac Roldan, CAMBA's Director of Small Business Services. Mr. Roldan is responsible for the day-to-day management of all aspects of CAMBA's Small Business Services programming for low-income and informal entrepreneurs, including one-on-one technical assistance, classroom-based training, and small business lending. Prior to joining CAMBA, Mr. Roldan worked at Accion for nearly 10 years and had experience packaging loans. Moving up through a series of progressively more responsible positions, Mr. Roldan was the Manager of Business Development for Accion East immediately before coming to CAMBA. In this capacity, he established relationships with bankers and other community partners in order to generate referrals of business clients who did not qualify for traditional bank financing. He also managed all strategic efforts for partnership development and creation of new loan programs that would add value to the small business community.

Entrepreneurial Education Delivery Solution:

1. Participant Recruitment Plan: CAMBA will identify formerly incarcerated individuals who may be interested in entrepreneurial training primarily by working with the aforementioned agencies with which we have established ties. These local agencies, which work mainly or exclusively with this population, include the Fortune Society, the Doe Fund, the Osborne Association, the Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO), STRIVE, the Brooklyn Community Bail Fund, the New York County District Attorney's Office, and Kings County District Attorney's Office, and the Vera Institute of Justice. We will conduct active outreach with these partners, including staff-to-staff contact to promote our services and workshops to present our program directly to formerly incarcerated clients.

In addition to our existing network, we will reach out to other key participants in the criminal justice system, including the Legal Aid Society, which provides free legal representation to indigent criminal defendants, as well as the New York City Department of Probation and the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision. By building relationships with defense attorneys and probation and parole officers, we will further ensure that formerly incarcerated individual know that they can come to CAMBA for entrepreneurial training and an opportunity to build a new life. Through all of these means of outreach and recruitment, we expect to engage up to 20 formerly incarcerated individuals in a total of two annual cohorts.

2. Classroom Instruction: Taking Care of Business is CAMBA's modular business plan development curriculum which we have developed and refined over the past 10 years. We offer this curriculum in two annual cycles each of up to 10 weeks. For the Aspire Challenge, we will have a cohort of formerly incarcerated clients participate in each cycle with other nascent entrepreneurs. By putting them in a class with other students, we will normalize our clients and help them feel like a part of the community. Formerly incarcerated clients who cannot enroll in a cohort – due to their timing or any other reasons – will have access to other classes, as well as individualized, one-on-one technical assistance to enable them to successfully develop complete business plans.

Each student in Taking Care of Business works to develop a comprehensive, investor-ready business plan along with two years' worth of financial projections. Course offerings cover topics including industry analysis, day-to-day operations, competitive analysis, strategy, financing, marketing, human resources, contracting and in-person sales pitches. Leadership is emphasized throughout the curriculum, with students encouraged to make decisions from the perspective of the head of their own company. Each client who completes their business plan in writing is then trained to summarize their plan in a presentation style atmosphere to prepare them to present to investors or potential funders.

CAMBA focusses on financial literacy throughout our course. Students learn to read, interpret and improve their personal credit reports in order to leverage access to business financing. We also teach them how to create, read, and interpret business financial statements, including profit and loss statements, cash flow statements, balance sheets, and tax returns. In addition to classroom focus, students in Taking Care of Business have access to one-on-one financial counseling from Neighborhood Trust Financial Partners. Neighborhood Trust operates one of the Financial Empowerment Centers funded by the New York City Department of Consumer Affairs and has an office collocated with CAMBA where clients can receive free credit building and repair services.

Students in Taking Care of Business also have access to additional support services, including up to 10 hours of one-on-one, tailored technical assistance; counseling on the feasibility of starting a business; in-depth business counseling in business concept development, industry analysis, marketing and financial projections; and one-on-one counseling on identifying and accessing capital via investors, fundraising or small business financing. Our Business Counselors provide clients with one-on-one counseling through which they work with clients to develop their own ideas, interests, and visions, to translate them into a concrete business model, and to assess the viability of that model. Through this motivational process, staff models the task and challenges of creating a new entrepreneurial venture.

CAMBA will employ a variety of online resources to supplement our in-person curriculum. To assist our students with homework assigned under our curriculum, we will leverage on-demand courses offered at SBA.gov, including offerings such as Understanding Your Customer, Competitive Advantage, Introduction to

Pricing, and Market Research. All of our participants will also receive access to online resources offered by Nx Level, the entrepreneurial training network that designed the curriculum that Taking Care of Business is based upon. This will include online textbooks and workbooks that can be used for homework assignments and additional study.

3. Mentoring: CAMBA offers significant individualized support to participants developing entrepreneurial skills and strategies through our Entrepreneurial Assistance Program (EAP). Funded by the Empire State Development Corporation, EAP is the vehicle through which CAMBA developed and expanded Taking Care of Business. As noted above, we offer students up to 10 hours of one-on-one technical assistance; counseling on the feasibility of starting a business; in-depth business counseling in business concept development, industry analysis, marketing and financial projections; and one-on-one counseling on identifying and accessing capital via investors, fundraising or small business financing. To complement what we offer directly, CAMBA will refer participants to Business Mentor NY, a free, easy-to-use social network from the State of New York that connects aspiring entrepreneurs to seasoned business professionals with knowledge, guidance and encouragement who can help up-and-coming business owners to address their own unique challenges.

4. Community Connections: As noted above, CAMBA has relationships with a number of agencies that provide advocacy and transitional services to returning citizens. In addition to those mentioned previously, another key resource is the Legal Action Center (LAC). LAC offers criminal justice advocacy services, including assistance getting and correcting one's New York State RAP Sheet, obtaining Certificates of Relief from Disabilities or of Good Conduct, or securing relief from denials of occupational licenses due to a criminal record.

CAMBA itself is a large, multi-faceted community-based organization that offers a comprehensive array of social services that may be pertinent to struggling entrepreneurs. Among the many services we offer are Consumer Law legal services and an emergency food pantry. Moreover, as noted above, we are a host site for the Financial Empowerment Center run by Neighborhood Trust Financial Partners, where participants can receive free, one-on-one financial counseling.

In the past three years alone, CAMBA has provided training, technical assistance, and/or access to capital to over 1,200 aspiring and existing small business owners. These growing businesses are listed in the CAMBA Business Directory. Our Small Business Services team will use this Directory to assist formerly incarcerated clients in connecting with successful business owners who may be able to offer them guidance, encouragement, or even new business opportunities.

It should also be emphasized the CAMBA Small Business Services offers a whole range of trainings that may be helpful to participants in Taking Care of Business. Through Mobilize Your Business, our mobile technology training program, we offer modular courses in topics including Branding, Mobile Marketing, and Website Development. Through our Small Business Finance course, we place entrepreneurs in the seat of a loan underwriter. From that perspective, we teach clients how to read and create the key financial documents involved in operating a formalized business, which are crucial to accessing affordable bank financing, including profit and loss statements, cash flow statements, balance sheets, and tax returns. This course teaches entrepreneurs to make strategic financial decisions and to direct their bookkeepers or accountants, as opposed to just blindly handing over their financials. Once they have manually created the key financial statements, we teach participants how to generate these statements in a user-friendly, digital accounting system by simply tracking their income and expenses, a critical step evaluated by underwriters when analyzing the financial health of a small business. We then teach clients how to read their personal credit reports along with strategies to improve their credit rating and credit experience. Each client then creates their own loan package, which includes a loan application, personal documents, financial statements, and business documents. We determine loan coverage based on each client's application package so that clients understand their qualifying loan amount and strategies to increase their loan amount by simply tracking income and expenses. This last step is often a major accomplishment for disadvantaged entrepreneurs. Finally, CAMBA offers one-on-one assistance with EIN applications, entity formation, market research and Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise (MWBE) Certification so that entrepreneurs that qualify can take advantage of opportunities with local and state government agencies leading to significant increases in income.

Access to Capital:

1. Access to Micro-lending: The CAMBA Economic Development Corporation (CAMBA EDC) is a federally certified Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI). CAMBA EDC can make loans to qualified program participants of up to \$15,000. CAMBA also works with several other microlenders to package larger loans. We currently have a contract with Accion pursuant to which we refer at least 10 qualified clients per year to Accion for loans of up to \$250,000. Accion, in turn, refers at least 25 clients a year who they turned down to CAMBA for one-on-one technical assistance so that they might successfully reapply. Other microlenders that we work with to package loans include the New York Business Development Corporation, BOC Capital, Brooklyn Cooperative Credit Union, and the Renaissance Economic Development Corporation.

2. Connection to Capital and Funding Opportunities: We will offer both classroom-based and one-on-one technical assistance to prepare participants to meet with capital providers. As previously stated, through our Small Business Finance course, we place entrepreneurs in the seat of a loan underwriter in order to understand the crucial steps they would need to take in order to qualify for small business financing. In addition to the Small Business Finance course, we offer one-on-one technical assistance to ensure that entrepreneurs fully understand which steps are necessary for the approval of their specific small business loan application. Because there is an array of variables considered throughout the loan process, it is important for aspiring and existing entrepreneurs to understand where their credit, financial documents and formal record keeping may fall short. Identifying these weaknesses allows us to offer tailor made technical assistance to each entrepreneur, avoiding a one-size-fits-all service to entrepreneurs that have different needs. The tools used during our one-on-one trainings allow entrepreneurs not only to qualify for a loan in the short term. We also help them to analyze the steps they would need to take in the coming years in order to grow their businesses, continue to improve their credit, track all of their income and expenses, formalize their financial documents and understand their loan qualification amount based on their financial documents. The goal of this specific workshop and follow up one-on-one technical assistance is not only to understand how to qualify for financing, but also to take charge of their finances, guiding their accountants as opposed to placing this responsibility on the accountants whose main goal is to help entrepreneurs to avoid paying taxes. Ideally, most entrepreneurs would take on the responsibility of managing their finances, but this is not realistic for many of them. However, if they at the very least understand the financial documents their accountants are producing, they will have the ability to guide their accountants and prepare themselves for loan approvals in the future.

As noted above, all participants in Taking Care of Business receive one-on-one counseling on identifying and accessing capital via investors, fundraising or small business financing. This includes individualized assistance with preparing proper documentation, identifying events with local lenders or funders, and developing a business pitch to present to key members of the local entrepreneurial ecosystem. Between our technical assistance and classroom-based training, all formerly incarcerated individuals who participate in Taking Care of Business will be fully prepared to make successful connections to capital and funding opportunities.