

## ***Aspire KC: Building entrepreneurship skills for Kansas City's formerly incarcerated – Contestant Capacity***

**Organization:** The University of Missouri – Kansas City Innovation Center

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**History and Core Competencies.** The UMKC City Innovation Center assists emerging and existing business owners by providing assistance to hone their business basics, evaluate commercialization opportunities, and connect with the right resources at the right time. For more than 10 years, the Innovation Center has been delivering just-in-time education, counseling and access to resources to aspiring and existing business owners resulting in increased jobs and sales for the community it serves. Services include market research, business plan development, prototype development, establishing proof of concept, management team development, investor presentation development, intellectual property development, obtaining early-stage debt, grant and equity capital, establishing strategic partnerships, and providing managerial support.

**Proven Results.** The UMKC Innovation Center provided business support to 1,679 clients during 2016 that resulted 91% customer satisfaction and the following client economic impacts:

2016 Economic Results – UMKC Innovation Center			
Sales Increases	\$46,290,834	Loans and Equity Increases	\$30,667,414
Jobs Created and Retained	564	New Businesses Created	128

**Incarceration Experience and Geography.** UMKC Innovation Center will partner with Second Chance to provide services to any Kansas City area aspiring or existing business owner. Approximately 5% of the Center's start-up training clientele is made up of individuals who have been previously incarcerated. Aspire KC's project partner, the Second Chance Risk Reduction Program, works 100% with returning citizens. The Aspire KC service area will include the Kansas City, Missouri surrounding counties of Jackson, Clay, Platte, and Cass.

### **Project Management Team – Training, Lending, Technical Assistance, and Reentry Experience**

**Rebecca Gubbels, Business and Program Development Consultant, UMKC Innovation Center** - Rebecca has 15 years' experience as both a lender and a business owner. Rebecca's finance background includes managing an SBA Microloan Intermediary and later a decade of commercial lending. Rebecca has owned 3 companies and now applies that experience consulting with small business owners. Rebecca is a Kansas City area native who holds a B.B.A. in Entrepreneurship from Baylor University. Rebecca is also a certified transformational coach, a certified peer-to-peer roundtable facilitator, and was one of the first 50 Ice House certified facilitators in the world. Approximately 5% of Rebecca's Ice House training participants are previously incarcerated individuals.

**Jill Hathaway, Business Development Consultant, UMKC Innovation Center** - With an education in international economics and finance, Jill managed the loan department for First Union bank before feeling the pull to sales and marketing, where her true passion lies. For the past 15 years, Jill has owned 3 footwear retail stores in the Kansas City metro. Jill earned her BA degree in Economics and French from Tulane University, New Orleans. Jill was once an Ice House participant that showed so much acumen and enthusiasm that she has now been consulting with business owners for 3 years and has become a certified Ice House facilitator.

**Addie Vobach, Supervisor with the Second Chance Reentry Program** - Member of the Kansas City Metropolitan Crime Commission since 2014. She began her career with the Crime Commission as a Community Resource and Offender Workforce Development Specialist. She is a 2012 Sociological Honor Society graduate from the University of Missouri-Kansas City with a Bachelor of Science degree in sociology. She has experience working with the Missouri Department of Social Services and is an active volunteer with local community and faith-based organizations.

## *Entrepreneurial Education Delivery Solution (2-page maximum)*

**Recruitment and Outreach.** The Innovation Center's primary project communications and recruitment partner is the [Second Chance Risk Reduction Program](#), a program of the Kansas City Metropolitan Crime Commission. Second Chance (SCP) launched in 2010 to address the issue of mass incarceration and works tirelessly to end the cycle of poverty, crime and incarceration. SCP provides direct, reentry assistance to 200-250 high-risk offenders returning to the Kansas City area from state correctional facilities each year and provides hundreds more with post-prison, transitional information and access to community resources. Eighty percent of clients who successfully complete Second Chance reentry programming have remained out of prison and stable within the community after one year. Excellent results and deep relationships are why Second Chance is such an exceptional recruitment partner. SCP will be marketing the Aspire entrepreneurship opportunity to its 1000+ clients and its trusted partner network. That network includes The Greater Kansas City Reentry Team comprised of the corrections community, behavioral health providers, educators, employment specialists and other community partners.

**Proven Curriculum delivered by Experienced Business Owner Facilitators.** Aspire KC will be based on Ice House Entrepreneurial Mindset Training. The Ice House Entrepreneurship Program is designed to inspire and engage participants in the fundamental aspects of an entrepreneurial mindset as an essential life skill. The program draws upon eight fundamental concepts of entrepreneurial thought and process derived from the companion text, [Who Owns the Ice House? Eight Life Lessons from an Unlikely Entrepreneur](#). Each lesson contains video case studies featuring a variety of real-world "unlikely" entrepreneurs who have overcome challenges by embracing the core concepts of an entrepreneurial mindset. Ice House offers more than one type of learning media: in-person group learning, video learning, written expression, and reading materials. In comparison to some other start-up content, Ice House best accommodates various adult learning styles while having comparatively small reading requirements to more easily serve those with potential literacy concerns.

The Center has been using Ice House with Kansas City entrepreneurs for four years now. Ice House is inherently about entrepreneurship being the process of getting paid to solve problems for other people. Problem solving provides not only a route to business ownership but simultaneously a route to creating a rewarding, purpose-driven life. Aspire KC delivers content by utilizing successful business owner who also have years of Ice House facilitation experience.

**Cohort Size and Structure.** The Innovation Center project will serve 30 – 45 participants through two or three cohorts of individuals. A cohort of in-person training includes nine, 3-hour sessions. Each of the nine group sessions will run from 5:30 – 8:30 p.m. to accommodate participants with full-time jobs so they can still work while learning. That timeframe also accommodates the north and southbound evening bus schedules. If enough participants have a need, the Innovation Center will also explore providing childcare for each in-person group learning session.

**Augmented and Custom Learning.** Each session focuses on one of the eight Ice House mindset lessons: Choice, Opportunity, Action, Knowledge, Wealth, Brand, Community, and Persistence. The cohort will culminate in a ninth business plan "pitch" presentation session. Aspire KC will augment the foundational Ice House curriculum with tools, content, speakers, and community participation. Having taught Ice House for more than four years, the Innovation Center has developed a suite of videos and handouts to flesh out the small business management topics unaddressed in the curriculum alongside a cadre of Kansas City based speakers that truly connect with the learners. The table below outlines the Ice House topic, the additional content added to each session, and the community partners and speakers planned for each week:

Week	Topic	Augmented Content	Community Participation
1	Choice	Online Personal Business Assessment	Second Chance
2	Opportunity	"Basics of Writing a Business Plan" content	Local Entrepreneur
3	Action	"Basics of Writing a Business Plan" content	
4	Knowledge	"All In Startup" customer interview tools	Business Reference Librarian
5	Wealth	Personal credit training	Microloan Alliance Partner
6	Brand	Innovation Center custom tools/handouts	Ex-offender Marketing Company Owner
7	Community	Innovation Center custom tools/handouts	Second Chance and KCSOURCELink
8	Persistence	Innovation Center custom tools/handouts	
9	Pitch Night	Pitch review by lenders/business owners	3 Microlenders/3 Entrepreneur Partners

**Business Plan and Business Plan Canvas.** Ice House curriculum utilizes a business plan canvas tool rather than a traditional business plan. Using the canvas tool is a single page, rigorous, iterative process that encourages clarity due to its brevity. However, while the canvas is excellent for identifying and testing assumptions to get to true product feasibility, our participants will need a full business plan format to qualify for their financing. As such, the Innovation Center will supplement the Ice House curriculum with their proprietary "Basics of Writing a Business Plan" course material interspersed throughout the cohort's sessions.

**Individual Mentoring.** All of the Innovation Center's entrepreneurial training comes with one-on-one business consulting services. Each participant will be assigned a mentor/consultant. Aspire KC's mentoring schedule will include a pre-course consulting meeting to allow participants a private setting to begin discussing their business concept, to allow the mentors and facilitators to set participation expectations, and to allow clients using public transportation to familiarize themselves with the class location, the adjacent bus stop, and the bus schedules. This project's mentoring schedule also includes a final business plan "pitch" preparation meeting. Mentors will work privately with each client to help them prepare to share the most relevant parts of their business plan with the pitch evaluators and cohort audience. Participants may request additional one-on-one consulting time as needed. The Center anticipates Aspire KC participants to average 7 hours of mentoring time over the duration of the course.

**Community Ecosystem Integration.** Aspire KC community connections serve to aid with marketing the learning opportunity but also to ground the individual squarely within the city's existing entrepreneur and reentry support infrastructure. Aspire KC will be fully integrated into Kansas City's impressive suite of entrepreneurial, social service, and career services resources. This network serves as a platform from which new programming can be developed, bringing together appropriate partners to wrap services around specific business issues. The Innovation Center will use this network to bring partners to the Aspire KC program.

Network Organization	Relationship	Function in Kansas City Marketplace
Second Chance	Aspire KC project partner	Employment assistance and job-skills training, Housing and transportation assistance, Individual and group mentoring, Referrals for health care and substance abuse treatment
Microloan Alliance	Current Innovation Center partner	Kansas City microlender network
KCSOURCELink	Innovation Center program	Entrepreneurial ecosystem entry point aggregating more than 230 low or no-cost entrepreneurial service organizations
Money Smart KC	Current Innovation Center partner	Social service, transition, and personal finance referral resource aggregator, Focus on low-to-moderate income individuals
Full Employment Council	Current Innovation Center partner	Career counselors to communicate to all job seekers that those with a criminal record can access this entrepreneurial education opportunity as an alternative career path.

#### ***Page 4: Access to Capital (1-page maximum)***

**Participating Microlenders.** Kansas City went for approximately 5 years without a microloan intermediary. That created a distinct gap in the KC credit market. As such, the UMKC Innovation Center spearheaded the effort to attract new microlenders to the city. Not only were those efforts successful, Kansas City now sports so many emerging microlenders that a new Kansas City Microloan Alliance has been created. The Innovation Center currently works to identify clients and package loans for all Kansas City area Microloan Alliance members.

Kansas City Microloan Alliance Members			
Member	Fund Type(s)	Member	Fund Type(s)
Accion	General fund	Justine Petersen	Agriculture, construction, previous offender, and general funds
Alt Cap	Construction, artist, and general funds	Kiva Zip	General fund
Hispanic Economic Development Corporation	Bi-lingual general fund	WE-Lend	Female focused general fund

**Loan Needs Assessment.** Innovation Center Project Team members Rebecca Gubbels and Jill Hathaway are former commercial loan officers who regularly provide no-cost loan packaging services for Center clients. Rebecca Gubbels has the added distinction of having previously run an SBA Microloan Intermediary. That depth of experience allows the Innovation Center team to help clients assess their funding purpose, ideal loan size, global debt service coverage including the proposed loan payment, collateral structure, and other loan details.

**Loan Packaging.** Once the Center's loan assessment process concludes, the loan documentation phase begins. The Innovation Center team's lending background leads to the ability to offer "pre-underwriting" service. Pre-underwriting includes a full loan memo, electronic and hard copy loan documentation, collateral calculation, as well as personal, business, and global cash flow calculations. Area lenders need then only to briefly review the information and submit directly to loan committee.

**Pitch Nights.** Each Aspire KC cohort culminates in a business plan "pitch" night. Project participants will interact directly with our microloan partners on that evening as the Center will invite representatives from at least three of our area microlenders and three fellow, commonly used entrepreneurial eco-system support organizations to provide feedback on participants' presentations. This culmination serves to further the relationships and awareness started in the Wealth and Community nights where microlenders previously attended and began getting to know the project entrepreneurs. This simultaneously gives clients an opportunity to get direct advice to improve their concepts and any eventual loan applications prior to formal application.

**Lender Matchmaking Event.** Aspire KC will close with a single, microloan matchmaking event. Kansas City is fortunate to now have so many microlending options. As part of this project, in concert with the public library system, the Innovation Center will host all the city's microlenders in one place at one time to introduce their services, compare and contrast their funds, and work towards eliminating borrower confusion. All project participants will be invited. All other Kansas City formerly incarcerated individuals will be invited via the Innovation Center's communication and recruitment partners. Members of the general public will also be welcome. This event will serve to remind participants of their loan options, reignite any stalled applications, and show those most recently joining the reentry process the wealth of entrepreneurial options available as they begin this next phase of their lives.