



February 7, 2017

SBA Aspire Grant Committee,

The DC Department of Small & Local Business Development (DSLBD) fosters economic growth in our city by supporting all small and local businesses in every stage of development. We have implemented many successful programs to further this mission, including many supporting minority, women, and disadvantaged businesses.

We are continually seeking ways to empower more communities through entrepreneurship, and to ensure that programming is inclusive. Under the leadership of Mayor Muriel Bowser, in 2016 we sought to support DC's justice-involved population, recognizing the barriers and critical need for support in this community. As you may know, over 50% of DC's returning citizen population is reportedly unemployed, making economic opportunity a critical need.

We launched the first *Aspire to Entrepreneurship* pilot in early 2016, through community and government partnerships, to create unique and innovative wraparound services support. We selected Changing Perceptions to operate our pilot grant, and their good work has been critical in program success. We appreciate the specific value that Changing Perceptions brings to our wraparound services model, with staff who act as "Navigators" combined with business savvy individuals who have incubated multiple businesses, and a diverse and committed Board.

Based on the success of that pilot, we are investing seed dollars into a year-long partnership to grow this initiative from a pilot to a program. We therefore whole-heartedly support the grant application of Changing Perceptions. We believe that your national financial and institutional backing combined with our local support and Changing Perceptions' expertise, we can do great things in this city and continue to build replicable model for SBA Aspire programs.

Thank you for your consideration. We hope to partner with you on this important work.

Sincerely,

Ana Harvey  
Director, Department of Small and Local Business Development



**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

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