

1.0 CONTESTANT CAPACITY

Between 1980 and 2014, the number of incarcerated women in the United States increased by more than 700%.¹ Our team understands that imprisonment and returning to the community from jail or prison is tough regardless of gender. However, the increasing rate of incarcerated women continues to tear families apart and devastate communities. *The cycle needs to end.* Reducing rates of recidivism requires a systemic approach, holistic programs, and deliberate actions on the part of states, probation agencies, social services providers, higher education and financial institutions, faith-based and community organizations such as **EsteemGrow**. We provide a collaborative team consisting of experienced partners with proven capabilities in delivering transformational services to our target population- formerly incarcerated women, young adults, and their children.

1.1 Organizational Background

EsteemGrow is a new social enterprise formed August 2016 in Chantilly, VA, a suburb of the Nation's Capital. We are on a mission to economically empower underserved individuals, transitioning adults and children, to become their best self through community-based social entrepreneurship. Our core capabilities include mentoring, coaching, entrepreneurial training, financial literacy, and social enterprise development and innovation.

While a 2011 report highlights Virginia as one of only five states with recidivism rates below 30%,² the National Capital region as a whole has an above average rate of formerly incarcerated individuals. Stimulated by the spirit to build on the momentum of the Aspire Entrepreneurship Initiative **and** accelerate economic mobility for formerly incarcerated individuals, we intend to build on the momentum of our areas improved sentencing and community corrections processes. Our geographical location strengthens our ability to provide participants with a variety of opportunities to creatively reframe their mindset while obtaining socially conscious capital and partnerships. To increase our impact, we've partnered with multi-sector organizations to collaboratively add capacity, capability, and community connections to our team (see Table 2-2). Our management team includes **InnovatorsBox®** which aims to redefine human capital potential and workforce culture by empowering all professionals with creativity and creative confidence. InnovatorsBox provides creative workshops, consulting, mentoring, and products to empower leaders to build a creative mindset and practice it with confidence, and **Community Business Partnership (CBP)**, the premier SBA small business development resource partner in the greater DC area. CBP provides access to responsible capital through its affiliate Community Development Financial Institute(CDFI) and helps underserved and disadvantaged small businesses start and grow by providing entrepreneurial education, technical assistance, business incubation services, and networking opportunities.

Table 1-1: Strengths of the EsteemGrow Aspire Challenge Management Team

Key Management Team		Role and Experience
	Kristina Francis President, EsteemLogic/ EsteemGrow DUNS 080389857	Role: Program Management, Entrepreneur Bootcamp, Pitch Competitions Experience: 20 years as a business and execution lead, charged with developing strategic plans and delivering innovative and transformational business automation solutions to clients. Directly managed a \$35M portfolio. Other: 2015 Booz Allen Hamilton leading lady for client service and advocacy for women and people of color. Startup Weekend DC Flip the Ratio Mentor; Member of PipelineWomen Angel Investors Official Contact POC: kfrancis@esteemlogic.com ; 571-235-9284
	Monica Kang Founder, InnovatorsBox® www.innovatorsbox.com	Role: CreativeJump, Creative Confidence/Leadership, Community Connections Experience: National trainer in creative leadership, creative confidence, innovative problem solving, and inclusive storytelling. Other: 2016 American Small Business Champion by SCORE/ Sam's Club. Top young social entities in 2016 Fulbright Annual Conference. White House Nations of Makers Innovative startup (2016). Lead Organizer/ Facilitator at Startup in DC. <u>President</u> of DMV Startup.
	Greg Pickett Dir. Business Finance, CBP www.cbponline.org	Role: Access to Capital; Pitch Judge, <u>Microlender</u> and MicroMentor Experience: 25+ years of commercial and small business banking experience, including underserved borrowers. Director of Finance for a CDFI. Other: US Association for Small Business and Entrepreneurship (USASBE) 2016 Practitioner of the Year. 2016 Social Venture Network Innovation Entrepreneur. Access to Capital Presenter for Changing Perceptions Reentry Program DC.

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2.0 ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATION DELIVERY SOLUTION

Without diverse, innovative and adequately funded approaches and programs for reducing recidivism and empowering formerly incarcerated individuals the negative consequences of the problem are certain to grow. Specifically, in our research, we found fewer resources and post-release prison services aimed towards women and children. While most of the data included women in the aggregate, one statistic focused solely on incarcerated women stood out- *‘Children of incarcerated women are six times more likely to become incarcerated themselves.’* We believe in reframing the mindset of our participants through our unique Creative Confidence and Leadership training, priorities based coaching, and scenario based networking can ultimately help our women and their families reach greater success. Table 2-1 highlights a few unique challenges formerly incarcerated, high-risk women, and their families experience and components of our approach aimed to address these challenges.

Table 2-1: Unique Challenges of Formerly Incarcerated Women

Unique Challenge to Women	Our Differentiate Approach
There are fewer organizations and resources focused on the unique needs of women and their children	Recruit, train, equip and empower up to 25 women and incorporate their children into the process each year.
6 in 10 women in state prisons experienced physical or sexual abuse in the past. 69% reported that the assault occurred before age 18	Partner with existing reentry program to offer women continued counseling for family services and mental health support. Our creative confidence and leadership training and coaching allow the women to identify and maximize their strengths while building strong community networks.
Children of incarcerated women are six times more likely to become incarcerated themselves ³	Include children in select components of entrepreneur training and creative potential workshops. Cross-generational learning opportunities.
Cost of Childcare can prohibit women from participating in programs or obtaining jobs	Provide childcare in post-release events (Children 16 and younger) Host at least four family friendly events during the program
Homeless Women and Children often at increased risk for incarceration	Partner with existing program to include transitioning homeless women in the program.
State and federal laws limit formerly incarcerated people from working in a host of industries. In Virginia, many types of occupations require licenses that individuals convicted of a felony or misdemeanor cannot get.	Partner with local entities to help navigate reentry barriers; Increase opportunities for participants to develop, fund, and launch their own business successfully.
Multiple studies show disproportionate loan denials to women and minorities without criminal backgrounds; only about 5% of all venture-capital funding goes to women-run startups without criminal backgrounds.	Work with our CDFI to provide Microloans \$5000, leverage Kiva, and work with at least 5 participants to develop crowdfunding videos to learn how to fundraise and gain a new tangible skill they can use as they join society
Access to Healthy Food Options	We will provide a seminar on growing and cooking healthy vegetables.

2.1 Participant Recruitment Plan

Our plan to recruit and train 25 women start with generating awareness amongst our partner organizations. **EsteemGrow** will recruit 20 reentry participant’s pre-releases from **Virginia Department of Corrections, Homestretch, Friends of Guest House, and Opportunities. Alternatives. Resources (OAR) Fairfax**. We will identify five additional women and their families already enrolled in the **Homestretch** program. Each potential participant will complete the **EsteemGrow** Assessment and Re-Entry Risk Assessment, delivered with our partner agencies, aimed to identify the participant’s strengths, drivers, obstacles, and vision. We will use data from this assessment to (a) determine program readiness, (b) personalize training materials, and (c) measure progress throughout the program and beyond. To be eligible to participate in the **EsteemGrow** program, a participant must (a) be a female 18 years or older; (b) have children; (c) can read, write, and navigate the Internet; (d) be within 9 months of release; and (e) be approved by their Reentry contact from our partner organizations. If all parties agree that the program will benefit the individual and her family, then the individual will (a) sign a participant agreement and (b) will receive their Orientation Kit (1 month prior to program start) consisting of: two

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Entrepreneurial focused books, Planner, Journal, InnovatorsBox SPARK Cards, course outline, mentor bios, and access to online community with resources and content to help educate and prepare our participants for the journey.

2.2 Classroom Instruction

We will organize participants into two cohorts across a 3- month program. Our holistic training includes three proven core training programs: **CreativeJump** (facilitated by **InnovatorsBox®**), **Entrepreneur Bootcamp** for Returning Citizens (facilitated by **EsteemGrow** developed with resources from USASBE and Resilience Education), and **Access to Capital** (facilitated by **CBP**). Cohorts will meet in person 2-3 times a week for in classroom instruction hosted at the correctional facility. We will provide assignments, video conferencing with mentors, and access to video and online training to each participant. We will also train them how to set up and create their online identity (i.e., LinkedIn, Twitter). The **EsteemGrow** model is delivered in 4 phases: **Pre-Release-Developing You**: ReFraming the Mindset (CreativeJump, Confidence and Leadership, Networking with Spark, Persuasive Presentations) and **Pre-Release: Developing the Business**: What is an Entrepreneur?, Entrepreneur Bootcamp, Access to Capital Seminar), **First 30 Days of Release**: Finalizing the Business Plan/Pitch Competitions, and **Post Release**: Accessing Capital, Ongoing Mentorship and Community Connections.

2.3 Mentoring

EsteemGrow will match each participant with a mentor and peer mentor group. Our qualified mentors will help the participant complete the program, increase courageous confidence, and create credible business plans. Our volunteer mentors have experience in starting, building and growing a business and were identified through religious congregations in the community and startup organizations across the National Capital area. Each mentor will complete existing formal training offered by **OAR Fairfax** ensuring they receive specific training on mentoring the returning citizen population. Mentors will meet with participants via Skype and in person as scheduled. We will host a mentor meet and greet during the program orientation. Graduates of our program will be trained to become mentors to future cohorts.

2.4 Community Connections

The answer to recidivism and economic empowerment requires deliberate and consistent collaboration between the entire community. Our program increases success and sustainability by maximizing partnerships with existing organizations and building strong community coalitions. We are pleased to permit our participants to include up to three children to participate in scheduled workshops, family and community events post release. Table 2-2 highlights a few key connections in our ecosystem.

Table 2-2: EsteemGrow Community Connections

Connection	Partner Name	Service
Re-Entry Programs	OAR Fairfax; Friends of Guest House; HomeStretch; VA Correctional Facilities	Access to established programs with existing family, mental health, housing, and food services. Presentations by formerly incarcerated entrepreneurs. Pre-Release Risk Assessments. Provide opportunities to network across peer communities.
Mediation Assessments/Legal Consulting/Coaching	Conduit Consulting LLC; Careerstone Group; Skylar Showell Consulting; Montage Diversity Consulting	Input into EsteemGrow Assessment for each participant to include StrengthFinders or similar assessment. Progress evaluation throughout the program. Business consulting for participants.
Academic Resources/ Small Business Resources	USASBE; Resilience Education; Community Business Partnerships; VA Small Business Development Center; MicroMentor	Proven specific entrepreneur research and training aimed at prisoners reentering society. Additional skills training online or in-person.
Startup Community in DC, Northern VA	Meetup; WeWork; Breathe; Startup Weekend; Seed Spot; DC Tech Meetup, etc.	Host meetup event outings, practice storytelling, pitch business idea increase prosocial bonds and soft skills (communication, networking). Obtain funding through pitch opportunities.

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3.0 ACCESS TO CAPITAL

Our team will equip reentry women with the tools necessary to obtain microloans or social financing for their new business ventures. With guidance from mentors and key program managers, our participants will learn how to leverage funding resources for their business ideas. We are extremely confident that the access to capital opportunities provided by our CDFI partner will make an impactful difference for our participants, ultimately giving most of the women and their families the jumpstart they need to build a legacy.

3.1 Access to Micro-lending

EsteemGrow has an agreement with **CBP**, a CDFI microenterprise loan fund, to present the Access to Capital workshop. **CBP** will also be a judge at one of the pitch events. **CBP** is in the process of applying for intermediary microlender status with the SBA. With this designation, **CBP** will be able to assist in potentially providing more impactful sized microloans to our participants.

3.2 Connection to capital and funding opportunities

In addition to **CBP**, we are partnering with Woodforest Bank to deliver the customized presentation of the Money Smart for Adults and Young People Curriculum. During the seminar, participants will tackle their financial fears, gain knowledge of their financial roadmap, and plan for their future. Their mentor and other program staff will work with the participant to answer questions and help operationalize information.

During the First 30 days and Post-Release phases, participants will have an opportunity to work with coaches to develop personal mission statements and business pitches. Based on idea maturity and presentation readiness, up to five participants and their families will be selected to work with a videography team to create a professional pitch/crowdfund video campaign. Their video will be used for the final pitch competition and three external formal pitch competitions. We will also host a pitch summit at the end of each cohort and invite early stage Impact Angel Investors, such as PipelineWomen, Vindetta Project, etc., who focus on social change for underserved communities and women-owned businesses.

We will also host a 'What's missing in your life?' accelerator weekend aimed to jumpstart business ideas and plans. The event will be open to program participants, participant's kids 13+, and other reentry citizens in our geographic area from similar entrepreneur programs (ie. ChangingDCPerceptions; MissionLaunch). We will have several area judges and early stage investors present to listen and award winners. We will award at least \$3K to the winning idea.

The journey towards starting over and establishing a new business can be complicated and overwhelming. While the Aspire Challenge aims to reduce recidivism, we understand that recidivism is not the only measure of success. Our program is structured to transform the life of our participants and their families. Success for us includes the following: 100% completion of the program, 100% participation in the pitch summit, increased confidence among our participants and their children, demonstrated ability to market and communicate ones personal and business vision, development of lifelong partnerships across the community, and 100% participation as a peer mentor for future cohorts. It is imperative **EsteemGrow** participants recognize their inherent value and collective power and reinforce positive possibilities for their life and the next generation.

1 Carson, E. A. (2015). Prisoners in 2014 (NCJ 248955). Retrieved from Bureau of Justice Statistics website: <http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/p14.pdf>.

2 Pew Center on the States. (2011). State of Recidivism: The Revolving Door of America's Prisons.

3 Christian, S. (2009, March). Children of incarcerated parents. In National Conference of State Legislatures. Percentages and Counts calculated using data from Bureau of Justice Statistics, US Department of Justice