**Page 1: Contestant Capacity (1 page maximum)**

**Name:** TenderLove Community Center **Official Contact Person:** Debbie Johnson, Executive Director

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**Organization history**: TenderLove Community Center was opened in Albuquerque, New Mexico in 2011. Our program to assists women to rise above their traumatic experiences, and build self-sufficiency by learning a manual trade and life skills through a twelve-month program. We believe that providing a stable and safe place where women can learn new skills, find their own creative spark, and gain confidence will empower them to enter or re-enter the job market, or start their own business.

Most of our clients are survivors of traumatic circumstances such as domestic violence, victimization, incarceration or homelessness—usually all three. We provide a stable and safe place four days a week where women can come to work, learn new skills, find their own creative spark, and gain confidence that will empower them to enter or re-enter the workforce or start their own business.

**Core Competencies:** We serve over 46 women each program year, with about 1/3 of those graduating from the program. Participants who complete this program will be able to:

* Apply a range of manual skills (currently sewing or cooking; auto repair, woodworking coming soon) in real-world situations.
* Put themselves forward in a positive manner for micro-loan applications, soliciting contracts and other interactions.
* Establish their own micro business, or find a career.
* Be self-­‐sufficient in obtaining and retaining housing and business support.
* Be able to establish and maintain a household budget, and follow business rules, regulations and taxation.

**Geographic area of focus and service area:** we are located in Albuquerque, NM and serve the surrounding area.

**How we are positioned to deliver entrepreneurship training to formerly incarcerated individuals:** The vast majority of the women we serve were previously incarcerated as is 50% of our instructional staff; as a result, we are uniquely suited to understanding the context in which these women live their lives, and the upheavals and pitfalls they face.

**Entrepreneurial ecosystem:** In the past several years, Albuquerque has been working hard at positioning itself as a hub for entrepreneurial activity, including City of Albuquerque task forces, the establishment of a local “One-million Cups” and the provision by SBA of many seminars on entrepreneurship. Local banks and credit unions have been embracing the need for microloans as a means of promoting local businesses.

**Needs assessment for formerly incarcerated women within the region:** The needs of formerly incarcerated women can often vary greatly from those of men, as women still are considered the family care-givers in most cases and have to consider the needs of dependent family members as well as their own, not simply economically, but in terms of time devoted to care-giving, whether taking loved ones to appointments, or talking with teachers, physicians, social workers or other caregivers. This requires any economic solution to be time flexible. Consequently, training programs that aim at typical 40-hour per week jobs are not likely to succeed. Additiionally, the complexities of welfare to work regulations often penalize women who are able to work by cancelling family access to social programs before the individual can afford to fill the gaps.

**Management Team:** Debbie Johnson is a health care worker with over 20 years experience with marginalized individuals; Tommie Benson has taught home economics and worked with marginalized women for several decades; Velma Ruane and Danon Espinoza are graduates of Tenderlove’s program and are overcoming the traumas that led to their previous incarcerations.

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

1. **Participant Recruitment Plan:**

The most effective recruitment we have for TenderLove’s program is by word-of-mouth between our current and past program recipients and their friends and contacts from the time of their incarceration. Love INC of Albuquerque has sent us many women in the past. Additionally, TenderLove works with [Ann Edenfield, Wings for Life International](http://wingsforlifeinternational.org/gallery.html), an Albuquerque based organization established to break the generational cycles of incarceration, and [Steelbridge](http://www.mysteelbridge.org/get-help/help-for-women-children) , a Rescue Mission.

We have made presentations at various churches, and have created postcard sized notices that we post on bulletin boards, hand out in stacks at the library, and hand out in places where local homeless women gather. We have been working with Bernalillo County’s Community Services Division to try to develop contacts within the Metropolitan Detention Center to work with women while they are incarcerated, and we are listed as an eligible organization for women in New Mexico’s SNAP program. *The success of these approaches is demonstrated by the high percentage of women in our program who were formerly incarcerated (over 90%).*

1. **Classroom Instruction:** TenderLove began with just a sewing curriculum, but in August of 2015 the Board decided to expand Tenderlove’s training to include other manual skills that would continue to fit the purpose of teaching a skill that students could use to find a job or establish their own micro-business. This year we will introduce a culinary arts component. In future we expect to add auto mechanics, wood-working, computers and metal working.

For each skill, we will have a curriculum that gives women a sense of accomplishment while learning marketable skills, modeled on the curriculum developed for the sewing program, that ensures a visible, physical manifestation of what was taught each week; for the sewing program, for example, students start with making a pin cushion and then an apron—these are items that give immediate, positive feedback. Specific competences are set for each week of the program. Regular assessments provide encouragement and accountability, emphasizing the importance of consistency, flexibility, diligence, and teamwork. As students complete elements of the curriculum, we review their progress, and move them forward on the curriculum at their pace. The course is offered free to qualified women 6 hours per day, 4 days per week for 50 weeks. Some students learn very quickly and can move through the program more quickly. Sewing lessons move from basic sewing machine use through understanding and selecting fabric and include basic mathematics such as subtraction and multiplication for use with patterns. Projects include aprons, blouses, skirts, pants, and dresses. Students together create a wedding gown, and are required to sew their own graduation gowns as a final project.

We currently have capacity to provide sewing instruction for 18 women at a time; not all of these women complete the program, and not every one of them was previously incarcerated, but the majority have been, or have husbands or family members who were. The women bond while learning and teach each other crafts and skills they already know. Instructors encourage this community building by emulating it themselves, with previous graduates coming in to volunteer as well.

Our culinary arts program will be offered in conjunction with a local food-service business so that while our students learn in a commercial kitchen, they will also be afforded the chance to learn how the business is run.

We also provide wrap-around services that include working with case managers, helping those in shelters to secure housing. We host a financial literacy workshop at our facility through Nusenda, a local credit union, and host representatives from BBVA/Compass for less formal financial literacy and savings preparation. Through New Mexico SNAP’s Career Link, some of our students are paid while learning. We have personal connections with providers of GED training and reading literacy training through Albuquerque’s Reading Works.

While there are organizations in town that generally encourage entrepreneurship for any idea or vision, we have discovered that most of the women who come to our program have no specific ideas of what they do or make in their own business, but encouraging them to share craft ideas with one another to sell or give to friends provides a starting point to learning how they can create items of value to others. We have a store area in our facility that we use to showcase items made in the program that can be sold to visitors: students and Tenderlove share the profits 50/50 if items are made with Tenderlove materials, or students can receive 100% of the proceeds for items they make with their own materials. We also try to get to one or two farmer’s markets or other sale venues each year, where women can sell their items and take the opportunity to see what other people make to sell there.

We have established a business arm for Tenderlove, called Sew4Real which acts as real world training for our graduates, where they can participate in the process of running a business, from working with and editing Sew4Real’s business plan, to soliciting business, writing and fulfilling contracts, understanding pricing, finances, business law and regulations and taxation. Southwest Women’s Law Center has partnered with us to advise in the management of this business and help in using it as a model for their own microbusiness when they are ready to go out on their own.

1. **Mentoring:**

As trust is built, students who have housing are permitted to take sewing machines home to work on projects of their own that they can give or sell to family members, friends, neighbors. Natural friendships and bonds are developed between our students and the instructors or previous graduates with whom they are most comfortable; these bonds are encouraged by providing a continuous welcome both to graduates and to students who may have started the program and had to leave for whatever reason. Our executive director maintains contact with graduates and welcomes students who have left due to recidivism or other circumstances, but demonstrate a commitment to try again.

4.  **Community Connections:**

TenderLove’s executive director is on the board of the Near North Valley Neighborhood Association and has developed relationships with individuals who run Albuquerque’s One Million Cups. She is also on the City of Albuquerque’s COC and a member of the New Mexico Coalition to End Homelessness. Through these and other connections she has developed a wide network of people who understand and support TenderLove’s mission, and is able to connect students through this network.

TenderLove has become an important part of the Near North Valley Neighborhood, and our previous students move on into the greater Albuquerque community, the lasting connections they have formed through TenderLove provide a network of connections for each other.

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

1. **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.

As mentioned above, TenderLove provides financial literacy training through Nusenda Credit Union and BBVA/Compass. This also helps create the connection our students need with potential microlenders.

1. **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 experience that our program graduates get working with Sew4Real provides a real-world that our women can model and use to develop their own documentation.

Because of our staff’s presentation of Sew4Real’s mission to Albuquerque’s One-Million-Cups, our executive director has a keen understanding of the process and can guide current or previous students through the process of proposing and making a presentation. We also have a connection with WESST, “a statewide small business development and training organization committed to growing New Mexico's economy by cultivating entrepreneurship.” TenderLove staff connections with WESST help make it possible to introduce students to their process, taking the fear out of initial contact.