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**Proposal Letter to:**

**The U.S. Small Business Administration**

**The Aspire Challenge**

Verna’s Ventures LLC

Verna’s H.E.L.P. Foundation

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The Aspire Challenge

Verna’s Ventures LLC and The Verna’s H.E.L.P. Foundation are pleased to present as a joint venture our proposal for the 2017 SBA Aspire Challenge. Our goal is to innovate and mentor entrepreneurial development for former incarcerated individuals or those who are non-violent ex-offenders. Our purpose will be to improve reentry and recidivism reduction with entrepreneurial education, mentoring and incentives of access to microloans lenders.

Verna’s Ventures is a WOSB with 25 year experience in sales and marketing. We market and sale our products to Businesses and the General Service Administration Global market. With the GSA two Multiple Award Schedules 73 and 81I for over 15 years, I felt we are qualified to help with the Aspire Challenge. As a small business we started with one manufacturer as distributor for boxes and bags, within five years we grew to twenty one manufactures as direct distributors. Our cage code is 1DW2, TIN# 47-5487352 and DUNS# 80-1497728.

Verna’s Ventures LLC, is owned by Verna Melton a former Dallas County Sheriff Law Enforcement Officer /Jailer. Where she worked with county inmates and previously incarcerated individuals daily. Verna Melton duties included, training other detention officers and caring for inmate’s safety within the jail and transporting inmates. Verna’s H.E.L.P. Foundation was founded by Verna Thomas - Melton to help people live positive in 1984, by having positive campaigns and events throughout Dallas County. She earned a 40 year documented track record from news paper headlines, Certificates Awards, to Mayors Proclamation and Governor Appointment.

The name of our organization that is registered with SAM, is Verna’s Ventures LLC – Address 4413 Fairlake Dr. -Mailing address is P O Box 494865; Garland TX 75049 / Contact Person, Verna Melton. Phone# (972)303-9102 vmgraph@flash.net

As a small woman owned business with 25 year experience and with challenges. We shall implement a mentoring and coaching program to access capital resources for former incarcerated individuals as we introduce them to being an entrepreneur.

Whereas, the Verna’s H.E.L.P. Foundation Legal Clinic and Job Fair helps former incarcerated individuals the opportunity to discuss one on one with Attorneys and other legal professionals to assist them with questions and other concerns  This Job Fair also help people that has been incarcerated or with a felony on their record. Our intentions are to help give HOPE and new VISION for a better positive life. Last year 12 former incarcerated individuals were hired the same day and five were instructed how to get their tickets paid if they had been released within the last 60 days for free.

**Our Management Team** shall offer The Aspire Challenge- program to all of Dallas County former incarcerated individuals or those who are non-violent ex-offenders. We shall include the following to help Verna Melton as mentors to help with the execution of the proposed solution are the following:

1. Rev. Arthur Melton, ISO Auditor, Verna’s Ventures for 20 years.

Rev. Melton has been in the ministry for 16 years. He is a member and Secretary for the Oak Cliff Ministers Union. Works with various church prison ministries. Address: 4413 Fairlake Dr – Garland TX 75043

1. Mr. Mark Toliver II, Retired – Dallas County Sheriff Deputy after 20 years, Bail Bondman for 5 years, President of N.O.W “No Opportunity Wasted” a program that mentors athletics. Member of the Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship – Outreach Ministry for troubled youth. Address: 1529 Weathstone Dr. – DeSoto TX 75115

**Recruitment-** Our program will recruit for a maximum of 40 former incarcerated individuals, men and women. DALLAS – “There are more than 70,000 people released from Texas prisons each year. More than 10,000 of them return to Dallas County”.

We shall recruit from Dallas existing re-entry programs. Recruiting will come from referrals from the Irving, Garland and Dallas Church Re-Entry Ministries, The Martin Luther King Re-Entry Program and the City Wide Community Development Programs.

From these programs we feel many ex-offenders, have gone through some basic mediation training and a chance to work through old conflicts and with some developed plans for re-entry into the community. With some job readiness training and education, we feel that these individuals would be great candidates for the Aspire Challenge program.

Other recruitment shall be through, The Verna’s H.E.L.P. Foundation Legal Clinic, one on one interviews each month.

**Classroom Instruction-** We shall have at all times two instructors during our classroom. To instruct, mentor and tutor each person one on one, with problems in learning or understanding the curriculum of entrepreneurial. Every participant will receive a Knowledge.Attitude.Skill.Habit. Entrepreneurship Training Manuel when in class and will check out books from the El Centro Library for additional information as needed.

To help those that may have a job. We shall offer both day and night classes twice a week. Each class shall be a maximum of 3 hours. It shall be mandatory that each participant be in class a minimum of 2 classes each week. They can also attend both day and night classes, if need to. Many classroom hours will include computer / overhead projector instructions to teach them about the different types of business, the 5 roles they need to know, how to market their business, with leadership ability, strategy and financing for their business. Building Locations TBD

Sample Schedule: Monday: 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 P.M.

Tuesday: 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 P.M.

Wednesday: 10:00 a.m. to1:00 P.M.

Thursday: 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 P.M.

Our program shall be a 12 week program. With a Curriculum study manual and one on one mentoring. All participants will get a Certificate of Completion after completing the twelve week program

**Mentoring** - They will learn how to start a business, from the Assumed Name to How to write a Business Plan. SBA instructors will be invited to do presentations to allow them to learn more about SBA, and State guidelines.

Field trips will include visiting some businesses to get ideas on Saturdays for those that want to see and learn. The field trips will not be mandatory, but will help give them ideas of future business such as 1) Retailer for Custom T-Shirts & Decals; 2) Barbershop 3) Beauty Salon 4) Bakery 5) Cleaners 6) Wrecker-Towing Service, 7) Moving Co . 8) Currier Service, 9) Dry Cleaners, and 10) Tire Shop,,, just to name a few.

**Community Connections**-

After the 4 weeks in our program. During our weekly schedule we will invite for 30 to 45 min. community bank officers, municipality small business managers to learn of their programs to help small businesses, along with community entrepreneurs to be our special guest. Entrepreneurs (such as Hiawatha Williams of Williams Chicken) to tell their story of how they got started in their business and the Bank Officers (Chase, Wells Fargo and Bank Of America) to learn who we are as a class and tell how they can help with the programs for small businesses.

After learning how to write a Business Plan and proposed budget, we will host 1 hour Banking Workshops to invite SBA Microloan Intermediaries to participate along with local micro lenders, to learn more of the requirements needed..

All participants will learn about the [Federal Bonding Program](http://communityconnectionssjc.org/programs/details/federal_bonding_program/) in case they hire other friends or family that may have been incarcerated.    
*Eligibility*: Any at-risk job applicant is eligible for bonding services, including: ex-offenders, recovering substance abusers (alcohol or drugs), welfare recipients and other persons having poor financial credit.  
*Fees*: No fees to the job seeker or the employer.

In 1966 the U.S. Department of Labor established The Federal Bonding Program to provide Fidelity Bonds that guarantee honesty for “at-risk”, hard-to-place job seekers. The bonds cover the first six months of employment. There is no cost to the job applicant or the employer. In most states the bonds are made available through the state agency responsible for workforce matters. The Federal Bonding Program is a partnership between the U.S. Department of Labor and The McLaughlin Company, an insurance brokerage firm, as agent for Travelers Casualty and Surety Company of America.

We will encourage each to our participant stay affiliated with a church ministry and other group agencies to help them stay self sufficient and drug free. To meet with groups to share the stories and courage others who have survived the hardship of incarceration as a result of their bad decisions. Not being bad people, but of surrounding circumstances.

APPENDIX

Today, VERNAS H.E.L.P FOUNDATION is a continuation of the Verna Thomas H.E.L.P. Foundation, which was founded in 1984, a non- profit 501 (C) (3) organization with four major purposes. Founded and Directed by Verna Thomas-Melton, with Executive Board Members;

 Dr. Ronnie D. Shade, M.D. - Board Chairman,

           Rev. Arthur R. Melton-Vice Chairman and Secretary

          Lisa Frazier Galloway—Assistant Director

         Nikki Shade—Treasury

As we start our plans for 2017, we look forward to encouraging and helping others in all the events and small business entrepreneurship education for formerly incarcerated individuals or those who are non-violent ex-offenders. Within the Dallas County area with HOPE and a new VISION for a better positive life.

**Verna’s H.E.L.P. Foundation is a non- profit 501 (C) (3) organization with four major purposes.**

**I- Our FREE Business Workshops for this year is**.– **Feb. 17, 2017** – ‘ HOW TO DO BUSINESS WITH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT” at Eastfield College confirmed participants are **Nancy N. Alvarez–Supervisor**,  Business Opportunity Specialist, Women Business Representative; Small Business Administration-Business Development Division;  **Albert Garza- Director -**General Service Administration Small Business;**Gregory James, Director** UTA Cross Timbers. Individual are encourage to participate to expand their business or would like to do business with the Federal Government. Learn how to get a GSA Schedule which allows their business on GSA Advantage!   This is the online shopping and ordering system that provides access to thousands of federal and military contractors, looking for millions of supplies (products) and services.  With a GSA BPA/Blanket Purchase Agreement a business may hold a contract for 5 years.

**II** – **The Annual Women Empowerment Prayer breakfast**, held each year (from 2013 to present) on the Saturday before Mothers Day weekend. Our goal is to coordinate a multi-ethnic effort of educating and advocating, the Power of Women in Prayer and Faith. While recognizing Dallas’ Most Powerful Living Legends and Influential Women of Faith, this event will be a time for fellowship, prayer and emotional healing for women by women. We pray for our elected officials in office and for those being elected to office. We’ve seen a number of challenges here in Dallas and across America we feel the need to come together as People of Prayer*.*

**III** – **An Annual  Back to school, “For School Safety”  Give Away**, during the month of August (from 2016 to present) - whereas we propose to give away 1,000 - Free Clear Back Backs, to help Elementary and Middle School students,  as a deterrent to stop the gun violence and drugs in our school.

Whereas, The Whitehouse**"**NOW IS THE TIME” includes, MAKING SCHOOLS SAFER” addresses the fact that “Each school is different and should have the flexibility to address its most pressing needs.” Which means it is up to us as leaders to decide which area to prioritize. “If there is even one step we can take to save another child, or another parent, or another town, from the grief that has visited Tucson, Aurora, Oak Creek, Newtown, and communities from Columbine to Blacksburg before that -- then surely we have an obligation to try."

Also during this give away we ask Retail Stores to help 1000 or more students from low income families with vouchers to help with school uniforms, shoes and /or clothing. These students are referred by school counselors and /or teachers. Many referrals come from school councilors within Dallas, Irving, Garland, Mesquite and De Soto ISD. These gift cards are to help with school uniforms, shoes and/or clothing. Last year, 2016 we received help from, Macys “Shop for a Cause” campaign, Target Super Stores and TJ Maxx stores.

**IV** - **Our Annual –FREE 2 day Legal Clinic & Job Fair** every 3rd Saturday of each month (since 2016) we will have a Legal Clinic. These clinic attendees will be able to discuss one on one with Attorneys and other legal professionals to assist them with questions and other concerns. For Veterans the HUD-VASH PROGRAM, this stands for Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing.  This Job Fair also include people, which has been incarcerated or with a felony on their record. Our intentions are to help give HOPE and new VISION for a better positive life.

**Day 1**- **the Legal Clinic**, we joint venture with The Good Street Baptist Church and community colleges.  This clinic they will be able to discuss one on one with Attorneys and other legal professionals to assist them with questions and other concerns. This clinic also would assist Veterans housing assistance through the HUD-VASH PROGRAM, which stands for Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing.

**Day 2**- **the Job Fair**, we invite many Dallas' Major Manufactures, Faith Based Organizations and Business Owners, hospitals and hotels to help sponsor this job fair, with intension's of giving many a chance for employment. While allowing each Business the opportunity to interview and hire eligible participants on that day. Last October 2016, twelve former incarcerated persons were hired that same day.

Thank you:

Verna Thomas-Melton

Verna T. Melton Director;

Verna’s H.E.L.P. Foundation

P O Box 494865

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