

Aspire to Entrepreneurship Pilot Project

Partnering Agencies

The District of Columbia Department of Small and Local Business Development (DSLBD), the District of Columbia Department of Employment Services (DOES), Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency for the District of Columbia (CSOSA), Capital Area Asset Builders (CAAB) and the District of Columbia Office of Returning Citizens Affairs (MORCA), are collaborating to develop and operate the Aspire to Entrepreneurship Pilot program to support justice-involved DC residents who have an interest in appropriate entrepreneurship. Strong partnerships are centrally important to us as we work to develop programming.

Purpose

The Department of Small & Local Business Development (DSLBD) supports aspiring and existing entrepreneurs into the creation and retention of local businesses. The justice-involved population in the District faces unique barriers to entry. The purpose of this partnership is to deliver the Aspire to Entrepreneurship Pilot to up to 25 justice-involved individuals with a conviction for a misdemeanor or felony as an adult. The Pilot is intended to operate for approximately one year, with a training phase and a business phase. DSLBD in partnership with relevant government agencies and the existing community of support will follow this path towards programming.

Project Description

Aspire Program Training Curriculum Outline

Computer Skills and Training: Participants will be required to take basic computer literacy workshops.

Module 1: Financial Literacy presented by CAAB

Module 2: Entrepreneurship Start Up basics

Module 3: Business Concept

Module 4: Marketing Plan

Module 5: Financial Projections

Module 6: Business Management & Development

The project will follow the PE model of (8) hrs. a day (5) days a week for the three-week intensive Entrepreneur Readiness training as well as the Entrepreneurial classroom training and Practicum.

Peer Review

At the beginning of each module 2-6 there will be an opportunity to exchange ideas with peers. Participants will use a journal to record their learning experiences, skills practiced, ideas generated and acquired knowledge.

Mentoring

Participants will be allocated a mentor as part of the program. The mentors have practical business experience, and a genuine interest in the development of the business. The mentor's role is to give feedback and encouragement, suggest alternative courses of action and discuss issues around specialist areas.

DSLBD will develop and oversee business mentorship opportunities and agreements both through DC Score and specialized mentorship and entrepreneurial apprenticeship relationships with existing entrepreneurs. Also Identify “host” businesses to provide apprenticeship to participants.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR ASPIRE TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP PILOT PARTICIPANTS

All potential Pilot participants must meet the following Project Empowerment and CAAB requirements to be eligible to enroll:

1. Age 18 to 55
2. District resident (as verified through a DMV records, lease, or judgment/commitment papers)
3. Currently unemployed
4. Not receiving government assistance, such as TANF, SSI, or Unemployment Compensation (Food Stamps are acceptable)
5. Not currently using any illegal substances (there will be a urinalysis conducted at Orientation)
6. Not a participant in a Project Empowerment Program within the past 5 years
7. Must demonstrate a substantial need for intensive employment assistance by exhibiting at least three (3) of the following six (6) barriers to employment:
 - a. English language deficiency with an inability to speak, read, or write the English language
 - b. Lack of a secondary school educational credential (high school diploma or its recognized equivalent)
 - c. A documented history of substance abuse
 - d. Homelessness
 - e. A history of Job Cycling in which the applicant has not maintained employment for more than one (1) consecutive quarter in the past eight (8) quarters, as verified through UI Wage Bumps
 - f. A conviction for a serious or violent offense

DOES Stipend

1. Review all recruited Pilot participants to ensure eligibility for Project Empowerment Program inclusion, and access all participants into a specialized subsection of Project Empowerment piloted here for aspiring entrepreneurs.
2. Provide \$9.00 per hour stipends for up to 25 participants referred from CSOSA, MORCA, or enrolled directly from DOES, Project Empowerment.
3. Provide a three-week intensive Entrepreneur Readiness training focused on preparing participants for entrepreneurship.

CAAB Savings Match

CAAB will manage a program to provide individuals with Individual Development Accounts (IDAs), which are special savings accounts—held in escrow—that match the deposits of low- and moderate-income people. For every dollar saved in an IDA, savers receive a corresponding match which serves as both a reward and an incentive to further the saving habit. Savers agree to complete financial education classes and use their savings for an asset-building purpose – typically for post-secondary education or job training, home purchase, or to capitalize a small business. In addition to earning match dollars and interest on their savings savers learn about budgeting, saving and receive additional training before purchasing an asset. CAAB will support Pilot participants in the development of IDAs. Participants can participate in CAAB's Jobs & Entrepreneurship Stimulus Account Program, which matches participant's savings 8 to 1 (i.e. saver saves \$500. and will receive \$4,000.) for future business and educational goal and expenses.