



BUILDING PROMISE USA

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PILOT INITIATIVES 2023

RE-ENTRY SELF-SUSTAINABILITY PILOT INITIATIVE

PEER LED, PEER RUN, PEER DRIVEN

Building Promise USA
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Letter from our
**EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR**

Greetings,

According to the US Department of Justice, over 650,000 incarcerated Americans return to their communities each year, but two-thirds are re-incarcerated within three years. For individuals being released, the realities of re-entry back into society can be daunting because many lack the necessary support to make this transition. Historically, this population struggles to find, secure, and retain employment due to stigma, harmful policies, and disconnection from personal networks.

Finding and maintaining a job is a critical dimension of successful reentry. Research also proves that employment is associated with lower rates of reoffending and higher wages are associated with lower rates of criminal activity. However, the formerly incarcerated population face tremendous challenges in finding and maintaining legitimate job opportunities due to lower levels of education, limited work experience, and limited vocational skills.

The Workforce Development Pilot Initiative (WDPI) programs have been organized as a community-based solution to address the excessive barriers and lack of access to career opportunities for people who were formerly incarcerated by Building Promise USA (BPUSA), the City of Austin Equity Office, Indeed, and Workforce Solutions Capital Area.

In 2023, BPUSA and its strategic partners will be introducing a pilot initiative under the WDPI umbrella that is focused on preparing formerly incarcerated individuals to be workforce ready. This proposal will give a brief overview of the Reentry Self-Sustainability Pilot Initiative (RESPI) and our upcoming HIRE Event.

We look forward to your support along the way.

Carl F. Hunter II

Carl F. Hunter II, M.Div
Executive Director

The Reentry Self-Sustainability Pilot Initiative (RESPI) is designed to provide immediate cash assistance after release from incarceration to promote social and economic reintegration. Cash assistance would provide our participants the flexibility they need to use the funds, especially when many of them do not have access to traditional housing or documentation, cannot access a bank account, and or cannot receive unemployment because they do not meet eligibility requirements. Research shows that guaranteed income programs alleviate poverty, reduce the racial wealth divide, increase workforce participation (especially among women), and improve multi-generational health outcomes among justice-involved adults and their children. By supporting recipients to better meet their most basic needs, cash transfer programs promote inclusive economic development.

Program Goals

- To provide cash assistance to 25 returning citizens released from surrounding Travis County prisons. Each recipient would be eligible to receive \$500 weekly payments up to \$2,000 based on participation in BPUSA's four-week programming as an incentivize to focus on the connection to necessary services and engagement with job-readiness programming that will help in their re-entry.
- To build a case around the success of this model to present to local government to create long-term opportunities to collaborate with the City and Travis County to address mass incarceration and systems changes needed to support reentry reform efforts; potentially creating policy change to encourage investment in local reentry services.

Target Population

Individuals released from prison within 90 days prior to RESPI's program start date.



RESPI

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RESPI Project Outline

Eligibility and Structure

Our program will focus on individuals who have:

- Served a minimum of two (2) consecutive years;
- Have at least a GED or high school diploma

Each week will build on itself, ensuring that our participants have the knowledge and resources to support their learning and success. As a peer-based organization, our model is largely peer-based and taught, utilizing evidence-based methods to improve the reentry success of our participants.

Program Outline

During this second four-week period, program participants will receive \$500 per week to incentivize their participation in BPUSA's programming based on the following schedule:

Week 1: Orientation & Preparation for the Journey: Participants will enroll in the One Stop Shop Initiative, complete the Alpha Mentoring Program (AMPed), and receive mindfulness training to improve areas like emotional processing and teamwork skills.

Week 2: Hard-skills training: in partnership with Indeed and Workforce Solutions Capital Area, participants will learn how to build a resume, best practice interview techniques, the opening of an Indeed account, and interview preparation.

Week 3: Hard and soft skills training: participants will gain soft skills like time management, confidence, and collaboration, apply for jobs, and improve their digital and financial literacy.

Week 4: Soft Skills training: participants will practice workplace scenarios, practicing the skills that they've learned from the program, thus demonstrating active learning and engagement in the program.

Each week, participants will have the opportunity to regularly meet with their Peer Support Specialist, have dedicated time to expand their office skills, and end each week in a group debrief session to discuss their experience and feelings about that week's lesson plan. By the end of the program, participants will present proof of three (3) job applications and receive a certificate of completion.

RESPI

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Technology Allies Project (TAP)

There are an estimated 800,000 Black and Hispanic people in jail or prison in the US. Each one has approximately a 2 in 3 chance of being incarcerated again within three years of release.

The Technology Allies Project (TAP) is an effort to reduce these odds by providing a holistic entrance into careers in high technology. Our program is a five-step process:

- Select and assess a cohort of 15-20 justice-involved people
- Engage transition support from justice-involved peers
- Provide high-tech career planning and training
- Supply workplace skills, an apprenticeship, and full-time employment
- Deliver ongoing career mentorship and support

We use a diagnostic assessment to determine learning needs. We provide support for counseling, housing, transportation, and other essentials. We teach basic computer and digital skills before progressing to career-specific technical training with apprenticeships. When they finish, our participants become full-time professionals with career mentoring.

Cohort members are Black and Hispanic individuals. Participants receive a stipend in the training phase of the program until they begin their paid apprenticeship. Because Black and Hispanic households are headed and influenced by women at higher rates than other communities, our aim is that half of the cohort will be women.

The coalition of organizations who are pursuing this effort are funded, vetted organizations with a proven track record of performance and excellence. In alphabetical order:

- **African American Youth Harvest Foundation** provides programs that enhance the quality of life for African American and low-income youth and families. They contribute to program development, Austin community connections, and physical program space.
- **Austin Urban Technology Movement** works with community organizations, employers, and the government to provide training opportunities for the Black and Hispanic communities. They contribute to apprenticeship opportunities and computer equipment.
- **Blacks In Technology** helps Blacks prepare for, secure, and be successful in professional technology careers. They provide career planning and mentorship.
- **Building Promise USA** delivers peer-run workforce training and leadership skills to people exiting jail or prison. They contribute peer support, self-maintenance support, and workforce skills training.
- **Generational Shift** provides education to help people from underserved communities launch tech careers. They contribute technical skill training to the effort.
- **Morgan State University** is a historically Black university in Baltimore, Maryland. Faculty and students from the Center for Predictive Analytics will assess participants and study outcomes.
- **PRYDE Foundation** provides mentorship, technical training, and career development resources to young adults. They support the effort by teaching essential computer and digital skills.





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