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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

18 Innovative Employment Social Enterprise Leaders Selected for 2021 REDF Accelerator
Cohort will Share Diverse Perspectives and Experiences to Bolster Employee Supports and Business Strategy

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (May 20, 2021) – REDF (Roberts Enterprise Development Fund today announced its 2021 [REDF Accelerator](#) cohort of 18 inspiring employment social enterprise (ESE) leaders who will work together for five months to test strategies for growing their businesses and increasing impact. REDF believes that leaders who reflect the communities they support, and with life experiences similar to the people they employ, bring an important perspective to their work that strengthens their programs and contributes to their employees' success. This year's cohort reflects REDF's [commitment to advance equity](#) by selecting and funding ESEs in a way that values diverse experiences and backgrounds.

This year, as the fast-growing employment social enterprise field spans the U.S, we welcome Accelerator leaders from Florida and Indiana for the first time. Representing a wide range of industries, from firefighting and fitness training to sailing and staffing, and both for-profit and nonprofit business models, the growth-ready ventures share a common mission – hiring and providing supportive services to employees striving to build a better life as they overcome steep employment barriers like homelessness or incarceration.

"REDF recognizes that leaders of color and leaders with lived experience similar to the people they employ have the greatest proximity and therefore well-informed solutions for addressing challenges in their communities. Their insights, and the perspectives of their program participants, have played a pivotal role in making REDF more effective and informing how we approach our work," says Carla Javits, REDF president and CEO. "These prescient business leaders know what mainstream employers are finally discovering, that individuals who are traditionally overlooked and underestimated bring a wealth of skills and talents to the workforce. We're honored to partner with these leaders as they grow their businesses and invest in the enormous potential of their employees."

The 2021 cohort includes:

- [Bikes not Bombs](#), Elijah Evans, Jamaica Plain, MA
- [Blessings Catering](#), Delphia Brewton, Tacoma, WA
- [Blue Jacket Inc](#), Lindsey Lortie, Fort Wayne, IN

- [CONBODY](#), Coss Marte, New York, NY
- [Conservation Corps Long Beach](#), David Sall, Long Beach, CA
- [Fog Hill Management](#), Shinar Little, Washington, D.C.
- [Forestry Fire Recruitment Program](#), Brandon N Smith, Los Angeles, CA
- [GLIDE](#), Lillian Mark, San Francisco, CA
- [Lancaster Works](#), Tyrone G Miller, Lancaster, PA
- [MAKE Projects](#), Anchi Mei, San Diego, CA
- [Multicultural Refugee Coalition](#), Meg Erskine, Austin, TX
- [Piikup](#), April Fenall, Oakland, CA
- [Riseup Industries](#), Jonathan Yackley, Santee, CA
- [Sail Future](#), Michael Long, St. Petersburg, FL
- [The Urban Wild](#), Samia Lemfadli, Brooklyn, NY
- [Unibody Fitness NYC](#), Hector Guadalupe, New York, NY
- [Valeo Vocation](#), Sherri Jensen, Tacoma, WA
- [Weld Seattle](#), Jay Pershing, Seattle, WA

“My childhood experiences and system-involvement anchors me to this work and helps keep me laser focused on our participants' well-being and life outcomes,” shares Michael Long, Founder and Executive Director at SailFuture, a Florida-based child welfare agency and private school with several student-run social enterprises. “During the REDF Accelerator I am excited to focus on refining our participant experience and develop a marketing campaign to bring our yacht management services to scale in the Tampa Bay market.”

With a tailored curriculum designed in response to the cohort’s feedback, leaders will develop and test strategies to improve operations, programs, and financial sustainability within their businesses. At the conclusion of the REDF Accelerator, each mission-driven business will receive a grant to implement strategies and activate ideas from their time in the program. They’ll also become part of the [REDF Community](#) of 150+ high impact employment social enterprises located around the country, gaining access to funding, other valuable [REDF programs](#), and the opportunity to continue to learn alongside their peers.

Since its launch in 2016, REDF Accelerator has partnered with 72 leaders from 25 states. Applications for the next REDF Accelerator cohort open Fall 2021.

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ABOUT REDF

REDF (the Roberts Enterprise Development Fund) is a pioneering venture philanthropy accelerating a national movement of employment social enterprises – businesses with a social purpose to provide paying jobs, training, and support for people striving to build a better life as they overcome steep barriers to employment. Independent research shows this approach works. It leads to greater economic security and mobility and a significant rate of return to society—\$2.23 in benefits for every \$1 invested. For more information, visit www.redf.org.