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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**REDF Accelerator Brings Together Dynamic Social Enterprise Leaders with a Focus on Lived Experience in Overcoming Employment Barriers**

*A new cohort of 16 employment social entrepreneurs from across the U.S. joins the REDF Accelerator to experiment with strategies for accelerating business growth and impact*

**SAN FRANCISCO** (July 26, 2023) — REDF is thrilled to announce a new cohort of 16 employment social enterprise (ESE) leaders is joining REDF’s Accelerator—a 5-month capacity building program that equips leaders with the network, skills, and tools to further grow their businesses.

With a focus on building a cohort that brings diverse experience and perspectives to their work, 44 percent of leaders have first-hand experience of the barriers faced by the people they employ and 39 percent are led by people of color.

Employment social enterprises reveal and reinforce the talents of individuals overcoming employment barriers with a unique combination of paid, on-the-job training and wraparound support. Participants are able to stabilize their lives, gain and strengthen skills and move into competitive employment. Leaders who bring their own lived experience to running these mission-driven businesses play an important role in devising sustainable solutions and approaches for participants.

“Struggling with addiction and having 32 years of sobriety and recovery helps me relate to many of the challenges our employees at DV8 face while reentering the workforce after incarceration and addiction,” shares Rob Perez, owner of DV8 Kitchen. “I’m excited to work with other like-minded social entrepreneurs who share the passion of providing opportunities for people who might not have them and learn how to better serve our employees and grow the DV8 mission.”

During the REDF Accelerator, leaders will work alongside a cohort of peers to learn, experiment, and implement practices that will grow their businesses and impact. At the conclusion of the Accelerator, each enterprise will receive a \$20,000 grant to operationalize their strategies. Leaders will also have the opportunity to connect with ESE peers in REDF’s large and growing REDF Community network, and be eligible to apply for REDF’s Growth Portfolio, which offers additional grant funding.

"We are excited to welcome the newest cohort of employment social enterprise leaders to our Accelerator program," said Yodit Beyene, Associate Director, REDF Accelerator. "These individuals are passionate about serving their communities through their businesses and have the drive and determination to succeed. They are the future of the ESE sector, and we are confident that they will make a positive impact on our society. We are proud to support their journey and help them achieve their goals."

The latest cohort will convene leaders from 10 states and Washington, D.C., including Kentucky, a new state to join the Accelerator network. Representing the broad application of the social enterprise model, industries represented include temporary staffing, equine management, and construction.

- Shanita McAfee Bryant, [The Prospect KC](#), Kansas City, MO
- Joell Dunlap, [Square Peg Foundation](#), Half Moon Bay, CA
- Jennie Groff, [Stroopies, Inc.](#), Lancaster, PA
- Elisha Hall, [Sweet Beginnings](#), Chicago, IL
- Joseph F Jaeger, [Revolution Workshop](#), Chicago, IL
- Andy Kizzee, [Binghamton Development Corporation](#), Memphis, TN
- Kelly Lyndgaard, [Unshattered, Inc.](#), Hopewell Junction, NY
- Aaryn Manning, [Project Place](#), Boston, MA
- Robbi Montoya, [Dorothy Day House](#), Berkeley, CA
- Nathaniel Pak, [Re-use Hawai'i](#), Honolulu, HI
- Rob Perez, [DV8 Kitchen](#), Lexington, KY
- Cole Richman, [Bottom Bunk](#), Los Angeles, CA
- Reed Sandridge, [Second Story Cards](#), Washington, D.C.
- Ming-Ming Tung-Edelman, [Refugee Artisan Initiative](#), Seattle, WA
- Nikki Wegner, [Chinook Enterprises](#), Mount Vernon, WA
- Tony Yadon, [Parents by Choice, Inc.](#), Stockton, CA

The cohort will join the [144 ESE leaders the REDF Accelerator](#) has engaged since launching in 2016.

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#### ABOUT REDF

REDF invests in employment social enterprises (ESEs) — businesses that provide jobs, training, and support to people breaking through barriers to employment. REDF partners with these businesses and the entrepreneurs who lead them — providing capital, capacity, and community — to amplify their transformative impact. Since 1997, REDF has invested in more than 280 ESEs in 38 states and DC. Collectively these partnerships have helped 86,000 people enter the workforce and generate more than \$1.6 billion in revenue that is reinvested in employee success—creating a ripple effect that strengthens families and communities and helps build an economy that works. For everyone.

For more information, visit [www.redf.org](http://www.redf.org).