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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

REDF Accelerator Brings Together Leading Social Entrepreneurs with Expertise and Lived Experience in Overcoming Workforce Barriers

New cohort of 18 employment social enterprise leaders from across the U.S. will join the REDF Accelerator program to drive innovation and impact in economic inclusion.

SAN FRANCISCO (December 15, 2021) — As part of our ongoing efforts to surface and strengthen the impact of proximate leaders and solutions, REDF is thrilled to partner with 18 of the nation’s most promising employment social enterprise leaders through our REDF Accelerator. Fifty percent of participants in the newly selected 2022 cohort are social entrepreneurs with lived experience of the challenges faced by the people they employ and support through their mission-driven businesses, including opportunity youth and people with histories of incarceration or homelessness.

With the U.S. economy at a pivotal crossroads for potential reform, perspectives and solutions from those nearest to and experienced with the challenges of economic exclusion are essential for charting a more equitable and inclusive path forward. Described as a “mini-MBA” for social entrepreneurs, the [REDF Accelerator](#) offers ESE leaders a unique opportunity to receive targeted support and connect with each other in their shared efforts to advance the equitable workforce development models and solutions that today and tomorrow’s economy calls for.

“REDF is thrilled to bring together and invest in this powerful and diverse group of leaders with deep expertise and lived experience in overcoming barriers to employment,” said Yodit Beyene, Associate Director, REDF Accelerator. “The Accelerator remains a unique and vital source of collective learning and innovation in employment social enterprise, growing the knowledge and networks of participating leaders and informing our own strategies and investments through the expertise and perspective of leaders across industries and geographies”

This year’s cohort will convene leaders serving communities in 17 states across a wide range of industries, from retail, food service and technology to recycling, landscaping, deconstruction, moving services, and more.

- Robert Andrews, [CommunityWorks](#) (CO)
- Kelsey Culver, [Willis Dady Employment Program](#) (IA)
- Kevin Engdahl, [Emerge Enterprises Inc./Second Chance Recycling](#) (MN)

- Spencer Hathcock, [Neighbor Moving](#) (NC)
- Charlotte Hammond, [Advanced Outsource Solutions \(AOS Staffing\)](#) (MO)
- Michael Hollingsworth, [Nu-Way Staffing](#) (GA)
- Kim Huey, [Turn 90](#) (SC)
- Sam Hunt, [Root NS, Inc.](#) (MA)
- Carley Kammerer, [Wildflyer Coffee](#) (MN)
- Robin Kumabe, [Touch A Heart](#) (HI)
- Martin Lawson, [Unloop](#) (WA)
- Cyn Dalton, [Create Common Good](#) (ID)
- Kathryn Rogers, [A 2nd Cup](#) (TX)
- Christopher Rutherford, [Architectural Salvage Warehouse of Detroit](#) (MI)
- Jessie Salazar, [Salazar Landscaping](#) (CA)
- Paul Thompson, [Purpose Workforce Solutions](#) (IL)
- Jean-Claude Toussaint, [OIC Strategic Integration, LLC](#) (FL)
- Sherri Waid, [Northern Valley Industries, Inc.](#) (WI)

Through the Accelerator, these leaders will engage in a highly interactive five-month program in which they'll work alongside each other to learn, test, and implement innovative methods, skills, and tools to grow their businesses and impact. At the conclusion of the Accelerator, they will receive a grant to operationalize their strategies, as well as continued opportunities to connect with ESE peers in REDF's large and growing network and engage in other valuable REDF programs.

"I am excited to work with the REDF community to learn new and innovative ways to support the students that we are privileged to serve," shared Martin Lawson, Executive Director at Unloop, a social enterprise that provides a pathway to a career in software development for people marginalized by a conviction. "I know my peers in the cohort will bring a wealth of knowledge, and I am eager to both learn from them, and share my own experience so that others might grow."

With REDF welcoming leaders from Idaho, Iowa, South Carolina, and Wisconsin for the first time in its history, the cohort will be among the [108 total ESE leaders](#) from 34 states that the REDF Accelerator has engaged since launching in 2016.

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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 – mission-driven, revenue-

generating businesses that invest the money they make into helping people striving to overcome employment barriers get jobs, keep jobs, and build a better life. 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.