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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

A new cohort of 18 employment social entrepreneurs from across the U.S. joins the REDF Accelerator to experiment with sustainable strategies for growing their businesses and creating a more inclusive economy.

SAN FRANCISCO (November 17, 2022) — REDF is thrilled to announce a new cohort of 18 employment social enterprise (ESE) leaders is joining REDF’s Accelerator—a 5-month capacity-building program that equips leaders with the connections, skills, and tools to further grow their businesses. Reflecting REDF’s continued commitment to advancing economic equity, 67 percent of this cohort has first-hand experience of the barriers faced by the people they employ, and 50 percent employ people who have been involved with the justice system.

Employment social enterprises provide a crucial pipeline of work-ready talent for employers who want to implement more equitable hiring practices. Leaders who bring their own lived experience to running these mission-driven businesses play an important role in helping advance the national field. During the REDF Accelerator, they 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](#).

“We continue to be impressed and inspired by the efforts and achievements of the ESEs that we find and bring into the REDF Accelerator,” said Yodit Beyene, Associate Director, REDF Accelerator. “The new cohort represents a collection of leaders from across the country that are transforming their communities.”

From media and technology to consumer goods to construction, the latest cohort will convene leaders serving communities in 16 states across a wide range of industries. The cohort includes enterprises that introduce two new states in the Accelerator network, Alabama and New Mexico.

- Whitley O'Connor, [Homeless Alliance/Curbside Enterprises](#), Oklahoma City, OK
- Taylor Place, [TMPC Job Corps](#), Columbia, SC
- Blake Wilson, [Manufacture Good](#), Birmingham, AL
- Claire Sumadiwiryra, [Bellden Cafe](#), Bellevue, WA

- Jennifer Lawrence, [Social Enterprise and Training Center](#), Schenectady, NY
- Pete Leonard, [I Have a Bean](#), Wheaton, IL
- Jane Dowd, [Havenly](#), New Haven, CT
- Kerry Brodie, [Emma's Torch](#), Brooklyn, NY
- Lori Love, [Kitchens for Good](#), San Diego, CA
- Andre Peart, [ConConnect](#), New York, NY
- Danielle Ruttenberg, [Remark Glass](#), Philadelphia, PA
- Alyxandra Jones, [The Dignity Project DBA Well Grounded Coffee Community](#), Dallas, TX
- Katelin Westfall, [Bridge House/Community Table Kitchen](#), Boulder, CO
- Jon Khanna, [EDWINS Leadership and Restaurant Institute](#), Cleveland, OH
- Kimberly Britt, [ChiFresh Kitchen, LWCA](#), Chicago, IL
- Lutunji Abram, [Lutunji's Palate](#), Minneapolis, MN
- Susan Matteucci, [Southwest Creations Collaborative](#), Albuquerque, NM
- Kristopher Wade, [The Other Ones Foundation](#), Austin, TX

“I’m really looking forward to strengthening my leadership and problem-solving skills through the Accelerator program so I can contribute even more to my team and employees' success,” said Kimberly Britt, Worker Owner and Board President, ChiFresh Kitchen, a worker cooperative food service contractor, owned and determined by formerly incarcerated Chicagoans. “A healthy connection is essential in the healing process as well as your success in overcoming the trauma associated with incarceration, homelessness, and joblessness.”

The cohort will be among the more than [120 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 238 ESEs in 33 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.