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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**REDF Awards \$3.6 Million to 12 Employment Social Enterprises
Poised for Growth and Impact**

With a commitment to trust-based philanthropy and equity, REDF's Growth Portfolio provides three years of unrestricted funding, tailored capacity-building support, and hands-on coaching and partnership to social enterprises advancing economic inclusion and mobility.

San Francisco, CA (January 17, 2024) – As a core component of its work to build a more inclusive economy, REDF (the Roberts Enterprise Development Fund) is pleased to announce \$3.6 million in grants over three years to 12 high-impact employment social enterprises through its [Growth Portfolio program](#). Of the businesses selected for funding, eight are led by people of color and/or those with lived experience, and more than half serve people who have been involved with the justice system.

All grantees operate as employment social enterprises (ESEs), purpose-driven businesses that provide paying jobs, training, and supportive services to people overcoming workforce barriers, including opportunity youth, emerging adults, refugees, asylees, people who have been homeless, involved with the justice system, experienced domestic violence, trafficking, and/or substance use as well as those with mental health challenges.

A leading venture philanthropy focused solely on building the employment social enterprise field, REDF is proud to invest in these ESEs as proven levers for advancing economic inclusion and mobility among people with enormous well of talent ready to be tapped, who are striving to overcome barriers to employment that in too many cases, are caused and compounded by the racial inequities embedded in our systems.

Since 1997, REDF has invested in more than 266 ESEs in 38 states and DC. Collectively these partnerships have helped 100,000 people enter the workforce and generate more than \$2 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.

“We were blown away by the quality of ESEs who applied – every year, it feels like it gets harder and harder to make decisions because there are so many strong ESEs. It’s really heartening to see the strength of the sector.” said Karen Chern, Growth Portfolio Director at REDF.

Forming the fourth cohort of REDF’s Growth Portfolio, each ESE will receive three years of unrestricted grant funding totaling \$300,000, along with three years of customized capacity-building support and advisory services designed to increase their reach, sustainability, and impact as vital centers for equitable workforce development. With the addition of this cohort, REDF now supports 38 businesses in the Growth Portfolio, its largest grant portfolio to date.

Together, these 12 mission-driven businesses provide quality jobs and career opportunities across a range of industries in nine states:

- [All Square](#) (Minneapolis, MN). Invests in the minds and lives of those impacted by the criminal justice system through a craft grilled cheese restaurant, a professional institute offering a year-long curriculum in law, entrepreneurship, and financial planning, and trauma-informed therapy.
- [EMERGE](#) (Minneapolis, MN). A workforce and community development nonprofit with two social enterprise businesses: Second Chance Recycling and Furnish Office & Home resale store. EMERGE helps people in their community find meaningful employment and careers, gain skills through career training pathways, endorse financial literacy and work with youth to promote positivity and to begin their workforce journey.
- [Emma’s Torch](#) (Brooklyn, NY). Provides refugees with in-depth culinary training as well as employability, equity, and empowerment training and workshops to ensure long-term success, independence, and adjustment to the American workplace.
- [Ground Up PDX](#) (Portland, OR). Provides job training to womxn overcoming adversity in the Portland area. Through the sale of healthy and delicious nut butters, they empower womxn with the confidence and skills they need to get back on their feet.
- [Just Q’in BBQ](#) (Cincinnati, OH). A restaurant committed to the art of barbeque, and to providing fellowship and job training to justice impacted individuals.
- [Los Angeles Conservation Corps](#) (Los Angeles, CA). An environmentally focused youth development non-profit organization. By offering paid work experience on green community projects and innovative afterschool, secondary and vocational education programs, they build resilience in the youth and young adults of Los Angeles and in the neighborhoods they call home.
- [People Advancing Reintegration, Inc.](#) (Philadelphia, PA). A nonprofit electronics recycler that provides transitional employment to people returning from prison.
- [Rise Up Industries](#) (Santee, CA). Provides formerly gang-involved individuals recently released from incarceration with 18 months of full-time employment and job training in CNC (Computer Numeric Control) machine operating alongside other comprehensive services including case management, tattoo removal, counseling, mentoring, education assistance, financial literacy, life skills training, and work ethic development.

- [Seeds of Change](#) (Knoxville, TN). Provides jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities for those in recovery and rehabilitation through their landscaping design and construction social enterprise.
- [Touch A Heart, Inc.](#) (Aiea, HI). Provides food service vocational training and apprenticeships, and hard, soft, and life skills education to empower individuals facing barriers to employment, particularly those who are justice-involved, battling addiction, or dealing with other life challenges. Touch a Heart operates multiple social enterprises, including Baker’s Heart and 'Ohana Meals.
- [VALEO Vocation](#) (Tacoma, WA). A staffing and employment agency that works to combat poverty and homelessness in Pierce County by offering quick access to income, combined with wrap-around support, to help participants create a well-defined path towards permanent employment and housing.
- [Wildflyer Coffee](#) (Minneapolis, MN). A specialty coffee shop/café that creates employment opportunities for youth experiencing homelessness and housing instability through the cultivation of life skills and personal empowerment.

In year one of the three-year partnership, all members of the Growth Portfolio will complete a comprehensive Baseline Assessment, which REDF will use to tailor capacity-building supports in business planning, program design, operations, human capital, and fundraising. Grantees will also receive one-on-one coaching with the goal of helping them leverage their strengths to expand employment opportunities, increase organizational revenue and sustainability, and continue to enhance long-term outcomes for employees and their communities.

“We are beyond excited about partnering with REDF in a deeper, more impactful way to allow us to fulfill our local mission of empowerment of those coming from incarceration and back into society,” shared Ian Dovan, Seeds of Change Founder. “As we lock arms with REDF in the portfolio program, we are thrilled for this opportunity to not only be more sustainable in a potentially difficult economic time coming up, but to be able to keep our foot on the gas pedal, unleashing the potential of landscapes and lives. The investment from REDF will directly impact the lives of current and future Seeds of Change participants, allowing us to not just walk with purpose, but to run with enthusiasm, toward our vision of flipping the local recidivism rate.”

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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 266 ESEs in 38 states and DC. Collectively these partnerships have helped 100,000 people enter the workforce and generate more than \$2 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.