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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

REDF Accelerator Brings Together Emerging Social Entrepreneurs with Expertise and Lived Experience in Overcoming Employment Barriers

New cohort of 18 employment social enterprise leaders from across the U.S. join the REDF Accelerator to surface sustainable solutions and drive innovation to create a more inclusive economy.

SAN FRANCISCO (April 12, 2022) — REDF is thrilled to partner with 18 of the nation’s emerging employment social enterprise (ESE) leaders through the [REDF Accelerator](#). Reflecting REDF’s continued commitment to learn from and with leaders proximate to the work, sixty percent of the newly selected cohort has first-hand experience of the barriers faced by the people they employ and support through their mission-driven businesses.

As employers search for untapped talent pools and seek to implement more equitable hiring practices, employment social enterprises provide a crucial talent pipeline. These businesses reveal and reinforce the talent of people breaking through barriers to employment, and leaders who have themselves experienced those barriers bring a unique perspective and valuable lens to the work.

Through the REDF Accelerator, these leaders will engage in a highly interactive five-month program in which they’ll work alongside each other to learn, experiment, 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, have access to continued opportunities to connect with ESE peers in REDF’s large and growing REDF Community network, and be eligible to apply for REDF’s Growth Portfolio.

“Every year, we are inspired by the number and diversity of impressive social enterprise leaders we are able to bring to our Accelerator,” said Yodit Beyene, Associate Director, REDF Accelerator. “This new cohort is yet another all-star ensemble of leaders who have the common goal of removing barriers to employment for their communities, but who all do it in unique and effective ways. REDF is excited to bring them together to elevate and share their collective learning and innovation.”

From media and technology to environmental services and auto repair, the latest cohort will convene leaders serving communities in 9 states across a wide range of industries.

- Cindy Ahola, [Community Cycles of California](#), San Jose, CA
- Leon El-Alamin, [The MADE Institute](#), Flint, MI
- Sable Barber, [Project Real Life Y.O.T.C.](#), Jonesboro, GA

- Dan Bodner, [QuickHaven, Inc](#), Rohnert Park, CA
- Kiana Calloway, [Roots of Renewal](#), New Orleans, LA
- Saulo Cooper, [Salt Kitchen](#), Round Rock, TX
- Craig Gerard, [Stone Soup PDX](#), Portland, OR
- Anthony Jolly, [Hot and Cool Cafe](#), Los Angeles, CA
- Maurice Jones, [PAR Recycle Works](#), Philadelphia, PA
- Neil Larsen, [Waterside Workshops](#), Berkeley, CA
- Oliver Lewis, [Peak Thrift](#), Denver, CO
- Julie Loos, [Ground Up PDX](#), Portland, OR
- Omar J. Perez, [Digital NEST](#), Salinas, CA
- Norma J. Quinones, [San Gabriel Valley Conservation Corps](#), El Monte, CA
- Martin Schwartz, [Vehicles for Change](#), Halethorpe, MD
- Julie Straw, [re:imagine/ATL](#), Atlanta, GA
- Charles Taylor, [Timelist Group](#), Los Angeles, CA
- Marla Zoeter, [Heartwood ReSources](#), Roseburg, OR

“I’m excited to join the REDF Accelerator and look forward to working with and learning from like-minded leaders,” shared Saulo Cooper, Chef and Chaplain at Salt Kitchen in Texas, a program that works with youth impacted by the justice system through on-the-job and interpersonal skills training. “I’m looking forward to expanding our impact not just in the community we serve, but through the quality of life we create for our employees and team members who are helping Salt Kitchen grow.”

The cohort will be among the [126 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.