

A group of people in a meeting room, some wearing masks, with one person raising their hand.

A YEAR IN REVIEW

Defy Ventures 2021 Annual Report

**DEFY
VENTURES**

A Letter from the CEO

May 2022



Dear Defy Community,

I recently had the pleasure (at long last!) of kicking off our newest prison program cohort at Central California Women's Facility in Chowchilla, CA. This was a cohort we expected to launch last fall but, like many other planned relaunches across the country, was delayed due to the COVID-19 variants that impacted many of our lives. So it was even more inspiring to hear the excitement of the newest Defy Entrepreneurs in Training (EITs) and to see their talent, commitment, and promise recognized by the volunteers in attendance. Gathering with Defy EITs and volunteers to launch a new cohort felt strangely normal, even with the undeniable reminders of the past two years in the form of face masks and the prison gym still serving as a makeshift COVID ward. Driving home through the almond groves of California's Central Valley, I was tempted to put the struggles that we have all faced (especially those living through both COVID and incarceration) behind us and "pick up where we left off." That is, of course, totally absurd.

The collective and individual trauma of the past two years has changed us all and the needs of the people we serve have continued to evolve, likely in ways we don't fully know yet. Fortunately, Defy has not been standing still during this time. Over the past year, our team has grown and our programs have continued to iterate responsively to the needs of the Defy EITs. As an organization, we have spent time planning for growth by developing a new operating model and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) framework to ensure that we are ready to expand and serve more EITs with greater clarity as to both our organizational function and culture. New partnerships in 2021, including those with the Drucker School of Management at Claremont Graduate University and LegalZoom, continue to blossom and propel us forward. And of course, the steadfast commitment of our volunteers and financial support from individuals, corporations, state and federal agencies, and foundations maintain our organization's stability and secure the opportunity for our work to grow. Thank you for being part of this community of support.

I hope you will join us this year as we continue to serve EITs with renewed energy and purpose. While I have learned not to predict the future, I can say that all signs point to more EITs beginning their journey with Defy across all of our chapters. As of now, we have more than a dozen prisons and transitional facilities with program launch dates within the next several months across all of our chapters and affiliates, with more on the way. This is in addition to the programs that did get underway in 2021—including several prison and transitional programs, post-release career and reentry programs, and virtual entrepreneurship programs. Opportunities to volunteer at these program events are regularly posted to our volunteer website; the Defy team, the EITs, and I can't wait to see you at one of them!

With Gratitude,



Andrew Glazier

President and CEO, Defy Ventures Inc.



2021 Highlights



84% of Defy graduates who were seeking employment found job placement with Defy's support.

Defy's Career and Reentry Pathway provides released EITs with ongoing employment support, including resume coaching, mentorship, workshops, technology training, and job referrals.



Welcomed home 100+ EITs with a free Chromebook.

Access to technology to apply for jobs and secure vital resources is an important part of an EIT's reentry journey. Defy supplied a Chromebook to every EIT who completed our CEO of Your New Life (CEO YNL) program and came home in 2021.



Engaged 380+ new and 150+ repeat volunteers.

Volunteers are an instrumental piece of Defy's program and we could not do this work without the hundreds of new and returning volunteers each year who offer EITs a supportive community along their journey.



Five new EIT businesses were incorporated for free through LegalZoom.

In 2021, Defy and LegalZoom announced a new partnership which includes funding for Defy's programs, business planning grants for EITs in the Entrepreneurship Pathway, and free incorporations to EITs launching their businesses!

2021 Highlights



Resumed in-prison and transitional facility cohorts of CEO YNL since the beginning of the pandemic.

In 2021, COVID-19 continued to cause prison closures and program delays. Amidst the health precautions, Defy was able to safely bring programming back into several prisons and transitional facilities across the states where we serve.



Completed our third full refresh of the CEO YNL curriculum, including information responsive to changing contexts due to the pandemic.

Defy's 1,200+ page curriculum is a core strength of our program, due in part to the regular content updates that prioritize EIT feedback and experiences to make a curriculum that is responsive, relevant, and current.



Defy awarded the first Drucker Certificates of Entrepreneurship to EITs.

In 2021, Defy partnered with the Drucker School of Management at Claremont Graduate School to issue a Certificate of Entrepreneurship for graduates of Defy's CEO YNL and Entrepreneurship Bootcamp programs. These certificates give an important resume and confidence boost to EITs!



Facilitated Defy's Fair Chance Hiring Workshop to educate companies on the practice of giving people with criminal histories a fair chance at a job.

In 2021, Defy saw increased interest from the business community about fair chance hiring and how this relates to corporate DEIB priorities. Defy's workshop shifts mindsets by helping groups explore perceptions and hiring policies.



All-Time Impact

6,300+

Defy Entrepreneurs in
Training (EITs) served

6,700+

Volunteers engaged
in Defy's mission

150+

Businesses launched
by Defy EITs

<10% 1-Year Recidivism*

vs. the national average of 20%

<15% 3-Year Recidivism*

vs. the national average of 39%

**Sample size for 1-year recidivism rate is 337, and for 3-year rate is 218.
According to an updated report from the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the
national 1-year rate is now 20%, and the 3-year rate is 39%.*



How Defy's Programs Create Impact

Defy's mission is to shift mindsets to give people with criminal histories their best shot at a second chance. Our vision is to cut the recidivism rate in half by leveraging entrepreneurship to increase economic opportunity and transform lives.

Defy's programs work toward accomplishing our mission and vision by supporting Defy Entrepreneurs in Training (EITs) along the reentry journey both before and after release from prison. The diagram illustrates Defy's programs along our two program pathways: the Career and Reentry Pathway and the Entrepreneurship Pathway.

Our Programs

Before Release:

CEO of Your New Life (CEO YNL) is a holistic, six-to-nine-month program that provides personal development, career readiness, and entrepreneurship training during incarceration or within transitional facilities.

After Release:

Defy provides ongoing post-release programs along two main pathways: the **Career and Reentry Pathway**, and the **Entrepreneurship Pathway**.

The **Career and Reentry Pathway** supports EITs who have completed CEO YNL and helps them transition home through a supportive community, workshops for skill development, referrals to service providers, and connections to employers.

Defy's Entrepreneurship Pathway:

The **Entrepreneurship Bootcamp** is a 14-week program for formerly incarcerated people with stable housing and employment, who are interested in exploring entrepreneurship.

The **Business Accelerator** supports EITs through the process of incorporating, launching, and growing new businesses, and includes advanced coursework in entrepreneurship and business management.

The **Defy Entrepreneur Network (DEN)** keeps EITs who have completed the Entrepreneurship Pathway and launched their businesses connected to a community of support through workshops and events.

Program Pathways

- Reentry and Career Pathway
- Entrepreneurship Pathway

Before Release:

CEO of Your New Life
(CEO YNL)

After Release:

Career and
Reentry Pathway

Entrepreneurship
Bootcamp

Employment
*Goal after
program completion

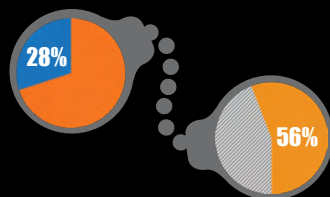
Business
Accelerator

Business Launch
*Goal after
program completion

Defy Entrepreneur
Network (DEN)

The Injustices...

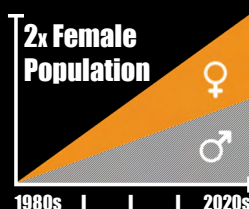
Black and Hispanic people make up 28% of the US population yet make up 56% of the US incarcerated population.¹



Black Americans are incarcerated at more than five times the rate of white Americans.²



Since 1980, the number of women in prison has been increasing at twice the rate of growth for men.³



The unemployment rate for formerly incarcerated people is nearly five times higher than the unemployment rate for the general United States population.⁴



Evidence shows that having a record reduces employer callback rates by 50%.⁵



The national three-year recidivism (return-to-prison) rate is nearly 39%.⁶



Our Work Tackles

Defy works to address layers of racial injustice through our commitment to **changing perceptions**, **breaking cycles of recidivism**, and **helping people to create equity** in historically marginalized communities. By nature of the disproportionate impact of mass incarceration on communities of color, 80% of people served in Defy's programs identify as Black, Latin American, Asian, mixed race, Native American or Alaskan Native, or other.

Defy's CEO of Your New Life curriculum is gender responsive and has elements to **specifically address the challenges facing incarcerated women**. Defy serves in several women's prisons and 11% of Defy EITs in 2021 were women, reflective of the ratio of women incarcerated in the United States.

Because we know that employment is key in preventing recidivism, Defy engages the **business community through employer partnerships** and by offering **fair chance hiring workshops** to educate companies about the importance and benefits of giving formerly incarcerated individuals a fair chance at a job. Our **volunteer events** also serve to shift volunteers' hearts and minds about people with criminal histories, so that we can recruit more agents of change in our mission.

To achieve greater economic inclusion and lower recidivism and incarceration rates, Defy aims to increase the number of fair chance employers, investors, and formerly incarcerated people who are ready for careers or to launch a small business.

The United States has become a nation of incarceration, fueled by racial and social injustice. People of color are incarcerated at disproportionate rates, and the number of incarcerated women has been rising steadily. After being released from prison, formerly incarcerated individuals often face economic exclusion, including high unemployment rates and reduced access to capital. Defy Ventures is on a mission to create the conditions for people to **defy these odds**.



Defy's Unique Approach

What sets us apart? Defy's approach to tackling injustice and creating opportunity has a few components. First, we provide both *inside and outside* program support to EITs—from incarceration through reentry. Second, Defy's focus on *entrepreneurship* fosters a skill set that prepares EITs for the workplace and/or for starting their own businesses. Finally, Defy's programs shift mindsets among *both EITs and the business community*, in part through transformative volunteer events.

Providing support inside...

Defy Illinois restarted programming in 2021 at Kewanee Life Skills Reentry Center after the pandemic shutdown. At a business coaching day with volunteers, one EIT, **Carlos**, said, "I am no longer that person who believes that it's okay to use violence as a way to cope with frustrations and disagreements. I made a conscious decision early on to change and prepare myself for a life outside these prison walls. It was a challenge for sure, but I was up for the challenge...**I've transformed my entire life.** I've become a man who truly is appreciative of moral principles and values."



Assistant Warden of Programs (AWP) Katina Joiner works at Pontiac Correctional Center and knew of Defy from her time at Kewanee. She invited Defy Illinois to Pontiac to present on Defy's program—160 potential EITs showed up! AWP Joiner said, "I am so happy and can't wait to start the partnership. Thank you for the opportunity."

...and outside



With the help of Defy, **Allison Carroll** landed a full-time job in 2021.

"I joined Defy Ventures as an EIT while incarcerated because I needed something to do with my time, and having owned my own profitable ice cream shop in high school, I had an interest in entrepreneurship. After completing the CEO YNL course, I saw an opportunity to help my prison community by volunteering to be an EIT co-facilitator. Teaching afforded me a renewed sense of purpose and helped begin restoring my confidence, which had taken a massive beating during the judicial process. **After my release, staying involved with Defy was an incredible networking vehicle, helping me refine my story and secure several job interviews.** Defy volunteers and employees truly care and are incredibly helpful in the process of rebuilding one's life post incarceration."

Defy's Impact: In 2021, 84% of Defy graduates who were seeking employment found job placement with Defy's support.

Defy's Unique Approach

Teaching entrepreneurship leads to some EITs starting businesses...



Giovanni Lizarraga decided to leave his union job where he was being paid \$40+ an hour to pursue his entrepreneurial dreams and begin building his business, Thee Handyman Services. Gio had already generated over \$20k in profits a little over six weeks after leaving his job.

"I knew for a while that I wanted to start my own business, and Defy helped make that possible. I learned a lot about construction while working for the union, but what I needed was the business knowledge to get my company started. **The skills I gained from Defy's Bootcamp—from management to marketing to keeping the books on track and more—made it possible for me to launch and run my business.** [Defy staff member] Quan was a great mentor and well-versed in all of the material, and I'm so happy with how everything is going. Life is good!"

...or becoming "intrapreneurs" at their jobs.



Dion Coleman joined Defy's Bootcamp program and used what he learned to excel as an outreach specialist at his nonprofit job. Dion's performance and the Drucker certificate he earned after completing Defy's program led to the CEO asking Dion if he would be interested in getting management training to lead a new office at the organization.

"The bootcamp was strenuous and rigorous, and it prepared me for my job, which is also strenuous and rigorous. Defy's Bootcamp helped me to channel my energy and focus on doing one thing at a time, something I learned in the time management section at Defy. **Because of the Drucker certificate and what I've learned through Defy, I've had more opportunities open up for me at my place of work.**"

Defy's Impact: Defy EITs have launched 150+ businesses and in 2021, five EITs incorporated their businesses for free through Defy's partnership with LegalZoom.

Defy's Unique Approach

Helping shift mindsets among the business community creates jobs and opportunities for EITs to be successful in reentry

Checkr is a Defy employment partner, has hired many Defy EITs over the years, and many employees have volunteered with Defy and joined our mission.



"Defy Ventures has been a huge part of my success! They armed me with the tools to prepare to come home after 19 years, including reentry support, education, and most importantly, a career path. Being able to now serve on the NorCal Advisory Board, I feel it is my duty and honor to help those like myself become successful and pay it forward. I now have a successful career in a great company called Checkr, and **it is all possible due to the many people who never gave up on those of us who are formerly incarcerated and continue to support the cause.**"—Adam Garcia, Defy graduate, NorCal Advisory Board member, and Checkr employee

"We hold Defy Ventures and the incredible work they do near and dear to our hearts. From experiencing the amazing work they do first-hand through volunteer work, to learning about fair chance hiring and its importance in employment, to constantly being inspired by the EITs—**it's one of the most meaningful partnerships we've ever done.** We are honored to support Defy's work, and are grateful for the inspiration it has in turn brought to our organization."—Catherine Davie, Head of Social Impact, LegalZoom



Strively provides training in tech sales to formerly incarcerated people, with an aim to reduce recidivism. Founder **Kate Leidy** says, "Defy referred prepared and qualified candidates to Strively, **all of whom have since started their careers in tech sales.** The opportunities are limitless for Strively graduates."

"My life today is better than I could have ever imagined. I have been knocking on doors and looking for openings in tech sales for the last year and a half, but fear of rejection held me back. Because of Strively and Defy, I am working my dream job at Pilot.com, **a company that cares about building a diverse team and does not judge me for my past.** It almost seems too good to be true! I am so grateful to the Defy and Strively families and all of the other amazing people who invested in me and others like me. We succeed together!"—Ryan Hoppe, Defy and Strively graduate



Defy's Unique Approach

Defy's volunteer opportunities create a space for mutual growth and learning for EITs and volunteers



"Volunteering with Defy left me with hope and inspiration. To see the passion and grit the EITs have left me **feeling inspired to keep coming back** to help them and also to keep persevering through my entrepreneurial journey as well."—**Kristi Zuhlke**, Illinois Advisory Board member and volunteer

I volunteered to teach Google Suite classes to Defy EITs and share my technical knowledge. Being involved with Defy Ventures has **opened up my mind to see that not everyone has equal opportunity** when it comes to learning technology and that I should continue to share my knowledge to help individuals who want to learn these skills. Defy's program provides these learning opportunities that create a path for EITs to be successful."—**Jamison Lopez**



"I got involved with Defy because I believe financial literacy is key to empowering EITs to excel and exceed their goals. I would not be who I am and have accomplished the wins in my life had it not been for the access to education, resources, and advocacy I've received along my journey. And I'm committing to paying it forward. **The financial education workshops I've led have impacted me as much as the EITs.** Even though I'm leading the workshops I always learn so many valuable things from them."—**Shelby Reid**

Mike Goor mentored EIT Rafael Lopez and helped support him through his decision to secure full-time employment instead of launching his business, due to what worked best for Rafael's reentry journey.

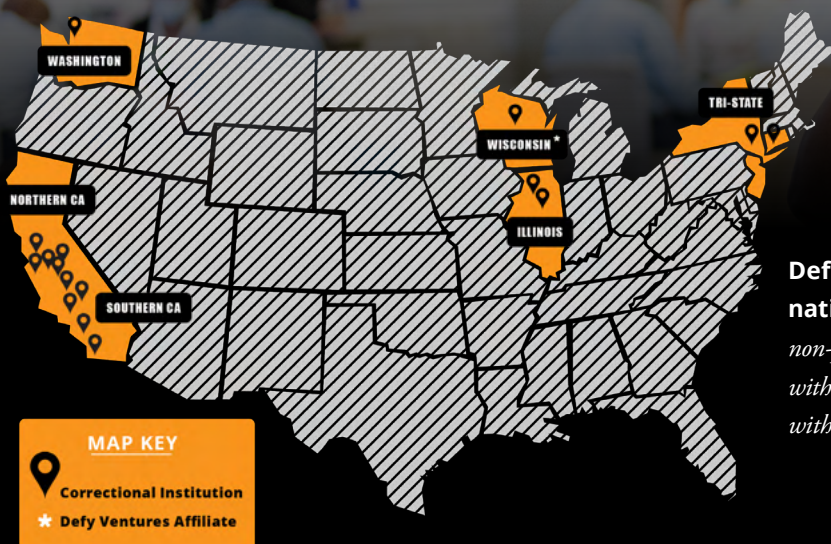


"In a relatively unforgiving world, I believe that everyone deserves a second chance. Through working with the EITs at Defy, that was never more evident than witnessing the immense enthusiasm and gratitude these folks demonstrate around developing opportunities to rebuild their lives. Through my relationship with Rafael, **I have learned the merits of positivity even in the face of adversity, along with appreciation and concern for others.**"



Steve Rogers mentored Defy EIT Carl Williams through Defy's Accelerator program. Carl started a business called Royal Men Solutions, which provides services from custom furniture to cleaning for commercial and residential spaces. Carl's business is thriving due to his hard work and the support from the Defy community, including volunteers like Steve.

"Working with Defy and Carl has been rewarding beyond what I could have expected. To see the drive and passion Carl has for his business and his community means so much to those who know and interact with him. The work that Defy does is a shining light to those who need guidance and encouragement to get back on their feet. **In a world that seems more divisive and conflicted, Defy is a force for unity, compassion, and a future filled with hope.**"



Where We Serve

Defy operates programs in 7 states and 16 prisons nationwide. *Defy Ventures Affiliates are independently governed non-profit organizations that operate in a collaborative relationship with Defy Ventures and deliver our program under license. Locations with an *asterisk symbol are Defy affiliates.*

2021 Program Highlights from Defy Staff



“The strength of the Defy community continued to shine in 2021, and I’m grateful for the volunteers and partners who helped make opportunities possible for the Defy EITs. To work, collaborate, and partner alongside this community has been an amazingly joyous experience. To know that there are selfless individuals who dedicate time, energy, resources, and spirit inspires me every day and makes me proud to be part of the Defy organization. We couldn’t make the impact for EITs that we do without our partners and volunteers!”

—**DeJuan Lewis**, *Director, Defy NorCal*



“I’ve been so impressed by the resilience of the EITs coming home. Seeing them get jobs and succeed in their reentry has been rewarding. I’m proud to play a role in their journeys, and helping them reach their goals and witnessing the progress they have made in their personal and professional lives is a highlight of my work.”

—**Darlene Luca**, *Manager,
Career & Reentry Programs, Defy SoCal*



“It’s been a privilege to facilitate two Bootcamp cohorts in the Tri-State region and be a part of building a solid program for formerly incarcerated folks with entrepreneurial aspirations. It’s been amazing to see the EITs grow and transform personally and professionally through the 14-week program. One of the most rewarding things for me is how the EITs have built a positive community with one another and how they continue to support each other outside of Defy. It’s been special to see their business ideas and the community they’ve built flourish, and it’s rewarding knowing that the structure of Defy’s program helped make this possible.”

—**Kyle O’Connor**, *Manager,
Entrepreneurship Programs, Defy Tri-State*



“We launched the CEO of Your New Life: Community program at our first transitional facility in Washington in 2021. Seeing the growth of the EITs from the beginning of the program to graduation was impressive. The volunteers who joined us were great. They shared not only their business and career expertise but also their personal stories and how they overcame obstacles to achieve professional success. The fact that they were willing to spend time with us was inspiring and encouraging to the EITs (and to me!).”

—**David Shirley**, *Manager,
Career & Reentry Programs, Defy Washington*

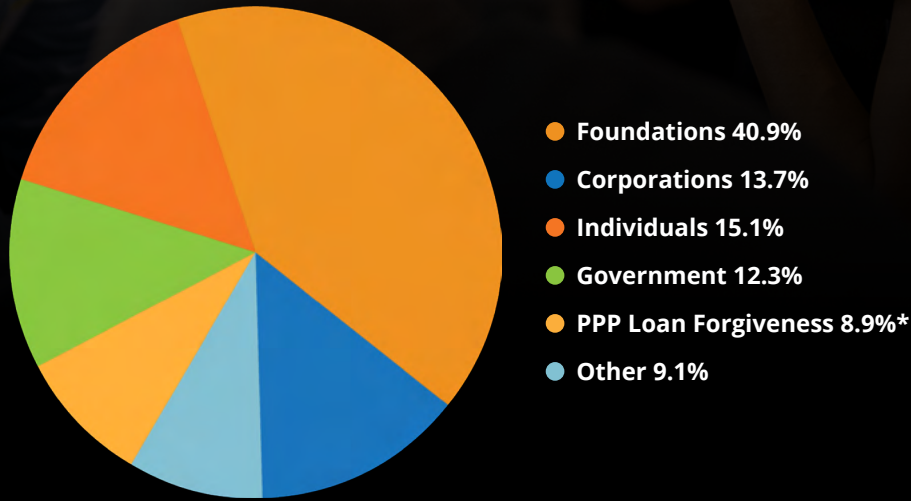


2021 Financial Position

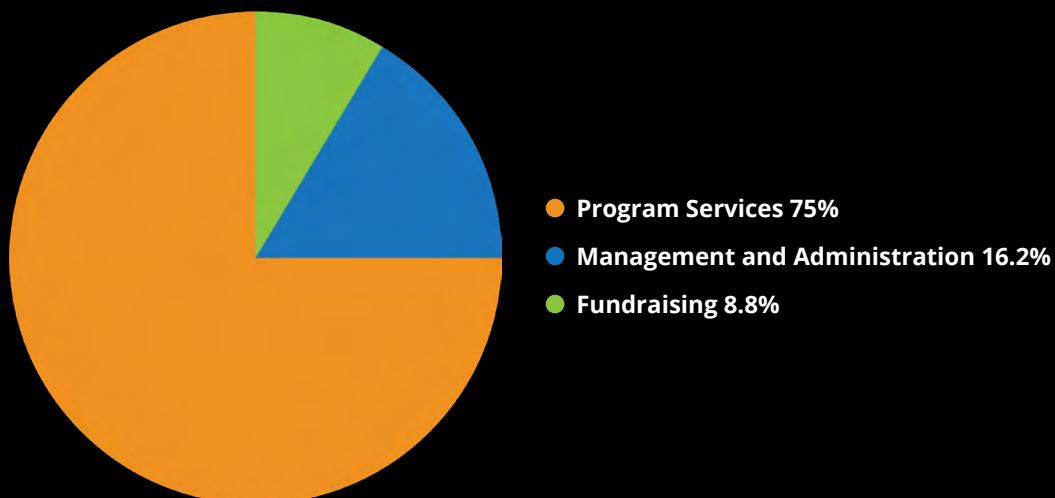
Defy Ventures' 2021 total public support & revenue was \$3,009,539.

For more information, please see our [audited financials](#).

Revenue



Expenses



**Defy received stimulus funding through the Small Business Administration's Paycheck Protection Program, to maintain staff levels during the COVID-19 pandemic and economic downturn in FY20–21. These funds are recognized as revenue in FY21, as they were fully forgiven by the lender and SBA.*





Community of Supporters

Defy's work is only possible through partnership across sectors including funders, program partners, employment partners, and business community volunteers and allies. We are grateful for our many partners in 2021. Together, we can create a world of true second chances and legitimate first chances.



● Funding Partner ● Program Partner ● Employment Partner

Program Partners provided workshops for EITs, helped develop programs and curriculum with Defy, or provided event space or other non-monetary resources to run Defy programs.
Employment Partners hired or employed Defy EITs.



Corporate Partnerships for Second Chances

Defy Ventures' mission is to shift mindsets to give people with criminal histories their best shot at a second chance. We do not embark on this mission alone; the work of creating a world of second chances is the work of partnership across sectors. Defy invites the business community to join in our mission through partnership that can include fair chance employment and/or advocacy for fair chance hiring, group and individual volunteer opportunities, grant funding and employee giving programs, and collaborative workshops and learning events.



✳ **Financial Partnership:** Defy's corporate partners are key to the success of our programs.

Through corporate sponsorship, grant funding, and employee giving programs, your company can play an active role in addressing mass incarceration and breaking cycles of recidivism by financially supporting Defy.

✳ **Volunteer Opportunities:** Corporate volunteers provide important support to Entrepreneurs in Training including mentorship and coaching, resume support and mock interviews, networking, and more. Through group and individual volunteer opportunities, we welcome your skills to help Defy EITs have their best shot at success. Defy volunteer opportunities benefit both volunteer and EITs, and fit many corporate social impact and DEI strategies as we work together to create a better world.

✳ **Fair Chance Hiring:** Defy works with businesses of all sizes who are interested in learning about fair chance hiring practices in order to remove barriers to employment for people with criminal histories. Defy's Fair Chance Hiring Workshop provides a place to start learning, and our employment partnerships create a pipeline of jobs for released Defy graduates.

Defy partner benefits include social media, website, and newsletter recognition, co-marketing and storytelling opportunities, personalized Lunch & Learn events (virtual or in-person), and event recognition (if applicable).

By partnering together for second chances, Defy and the business community can create opportunities for people with criminal histories to secure living-wage jobs and build businesses, ultimately supporting people who face barriers to economic inclusion to build equity and break cycles of poverty and recidivism for a multi-generational impact.

For more information, email us at partnerships@defyventures.org.



Fair Chance Hiring Workshop

Defy Ventures exists to shift mindsets to give people with criminal histories their best shot at a second chance. Toward this end, Defy invites the business community to take a deep dive with us in learning about fair chance employment and the challenges faced in reentry. Defy's Fair Chance Hiring Workshop is an interactive workshop designed to help companies and professional groups learn about fair chance hiring while exploring attitudes and perceptions about individuals who have been incarcerated. This 60- to 90-minute workshop can be delivered virtually (over Zoom) or in-person.

Why Fair Chance Hiring?

When formerly incarcerated people reenter society, they can find themselves serving a “second sentence” based on prejudiced perceptions, stigmas, and barriers to success. Defy holds the foundational belief that people with criminal histories have skills and talents to contribute to society and that they deserve a fair chance to thrive and contribute after incarceration. This workshop creates an opportunity for companies and professional groups to engage in deeply meaningful dialogue around social, racial, and economic equity and how people with criminal histories can be included in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives. Together, we will:

- Discuss what it means to be a Fair Chance Employer
- Participate in a hiring simulation to examine beliefs about hiring and working with formerly incarcerated adults and how this relates to your company or organization
- Uncover the challenges faced by people with criminal histories during reentry and how to unlock this talent pool
- Explore potential tools and pathways to building social and economic justice within your organization and surface concerns for discussion
- Address a meaningful problem with peers and colleagues, led by Defy Ventures staff members, in a way that's inspirational and memorable

Who is the workshop for?

The Fair Chance Hiring Workshop is for companies and professional groups who are interested in learning more about fair chance employment while examining their own beliefs about working with people with criminal histories. The workshop is designed to start a conversation around what's possible and offer a pathway forward. Potential groups include:

- Executive leadership teams
- Diversity, Equity & Inclusion staff
- HR Leaders
- Cross-functional groups within a company or organization
- Employee groups
- Professional organizations
- Faith-based groups
- Business School Programs

The Fair Chance Hiring Workshop is for companies of all sizes and fields of work to explore an important area of social justice, economic equity, and diversity and inclusion. Workshop size may range from 15 to 50 participants, and a donation is welcome to support Defy's team in delivering this important content.

For more information, email us at info@defyventures.org.





How to Get Involved and Support Defy's Work

Volunteer

Defy can only achieve our mission with the help of the broader community. By volunteering with Defy, you're helping to shift mindsets and create a more inclusive economy and society. You can find our available volunteer opportunities on our [volunteer website](#).

Volunteer opportunities include:

- Prison program events
- Community-based transitional facility program events
- Community-based entrepreneurship events
- Community building events

Corporate Partnership Opportunities and Fair Chance Hiring Workshops

Find more information about these opportunities in our in-depth pages in this report! As seen throughout our report, the business community plays an important role in creating a world of fair chances for all.

Donation Information

We are so grateful for the support of our community!

You can support Defy's work with a donation [online](#) or by sending a check to:

Defy Ventures, Inc.

P.O. Box 102117

Pasadena, CA 91189

Defy's tax ID number is 27-3611908.

You can find other ways to donate (like contributing stock or cryptocurrency) on our [website](#).

To connect with us, please contact info@defyventures.org.





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For more information, email us at info@defyventures.org or visit us at defyventures.org.