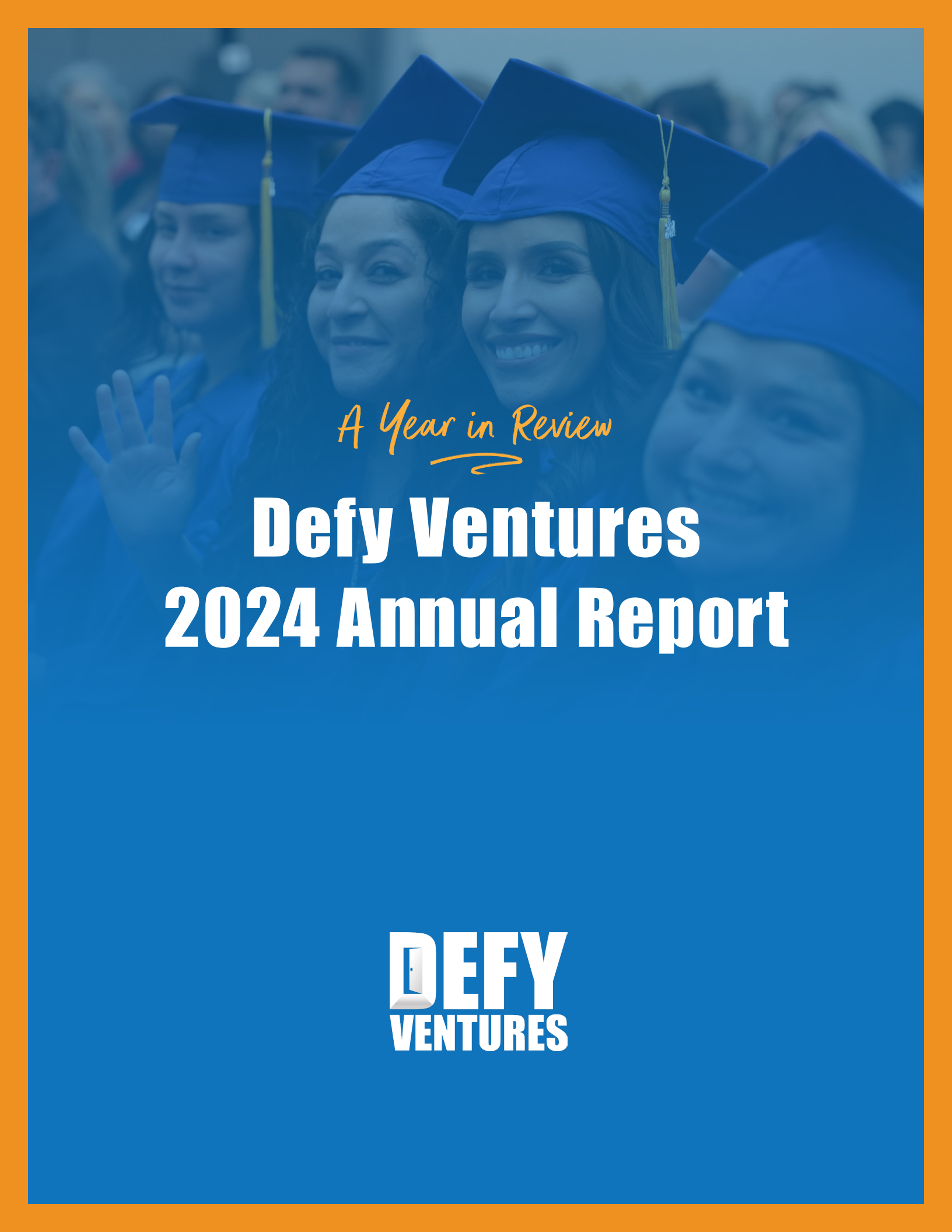




A Year in Review

Defy Ventures 2024 Annual Report

DEFY
VENTURES

2024 Annual Report

Table of Contents

Letter from the CEO	1
Defy Ventures Community	2
How Defy's Programs Create Impact	3
Stories of Impact	4-8
• Serendipitous Susan	4
• Lorenzo and Theo	5
• Determined Derwin	6
• Creative Claudius	7
• Motivated Milton	8
Year One Milestones	10
All-Time Impact	11
2024 Financial Position	12
Community of Supporters	13
In Their Own Words	14
How to Get Involved and Support Defy's Work	15
The Defy Volunteer Experience	16



Dear Defy Community,

By any measure, 2024 was a remarkable year for Defy. We served nearly 1,800 currently and formerly incarcerated individuals—our highest number ever—through both in-prison and community-based programs. We also launched Defy Utah, expanding our reach to a new state while continuing to grow our service across our existing chapters.

In partnership with 25 partner facilities, including prisons, youth centers, and transitional facilities, we deepened our impact across the country. We did this with more than 900 volunteers from the Defy community, who showed up for our Entrepreneurs in Training (EITs) in prison, on-line, and in the community. We did this as a community, juxtaposed against a backdrop of political division in our country that all too often feels overwhelming.

One of the best parts of my job is when I have the chance to spend a day with volunteers and EITs at our prison volunteer events. Volunteers and EITs come together with shared purpose, leaving behind cell phones and social media as well as judgement and preconception for the day. Without fail, I hear from volunteers and EITs about the powerful experience of finding shared humanity inside the walls of a prison.

From these experiences, I have learned this: when we lean into our shared humanity, into kindness and non-judgement, into redemption versus retribution, it is so much easier to find common ground.

Brian Stevenson has shared the idea of “getting proximate” to understand struggle and find solutions. Volunteers in the Defy community are also proximate to each other, connecting to each other’s shared humanity during our volunteer events.

And if the most unlikely group of people can choose to come together in prison for a day and reach across the widest array of differences and find common ground, then I know so much more is possible than what the algorithms are serving up to us. Perhaps this has been your experience too—if so, I’d love to hear from you on how Defy has changed you.

If you haven’t yet had a chance to experience a Defy event for yourself, please join us. The main requirements to volunteer are an open heart and an open mind.

It remains a great privilege to serve as Defy’s CEO and to be part of this community. Your generosity, participation, advocacy and good will are the fuel that make this all possible.

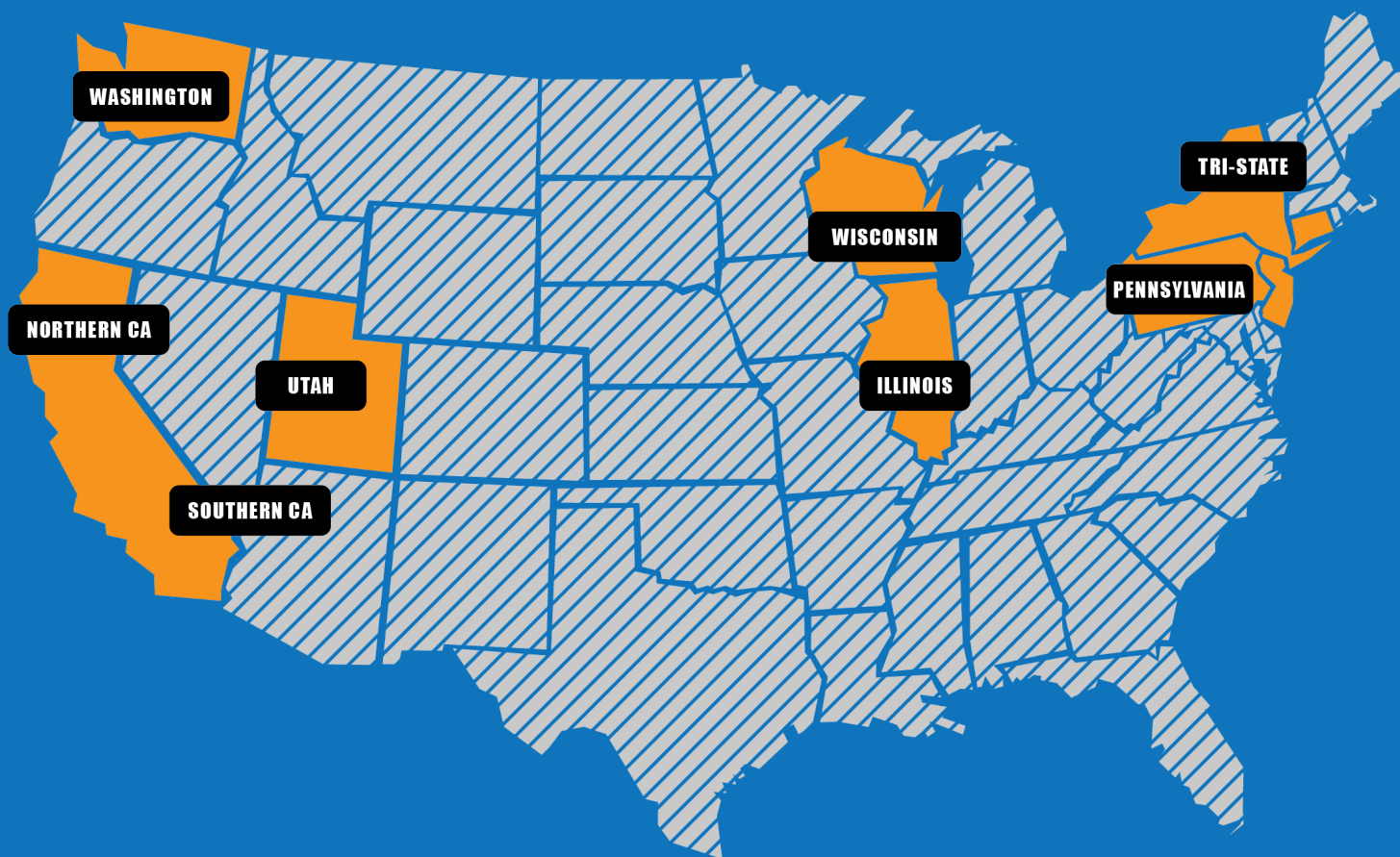
With Gratitude,

Andrew Glazier, *President and CEO, Defy Ventures Inc.*

Where We Serve

Defy Ventures Community

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 operated programs in *9 states*, and we were in over *25 facilities* by the end of 2024. Defy served *1,777 Entrepreneurs in Training (EITs)* in 2024, and engaged *904 volunteers*.

What We Do

How Defy's Programs Create Impact

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.

In 2024, Defy launched 25 CEO YNL cohorts, serving over 1,410 and graduating 615 incarcerated people.

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. *In 2024, Defy welcomed 167 EITs home and within 6 months 85% were employed full-time.*

Defy's Entrepreneurship Pathway: The **Entrepreneurship Bootcamp** is a 17-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. *In 2024, Defy served 97 EITs in our Entrepreneurship Pathway, and EITs launched 15 new small businesses!*

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

SoCal Volunteer Spotlight

Serendipitous Susan

In every Defy SoCal event in 2024—no matter if there was rain, sleet, or summer heat—you could count on seeing one constant: volunteer Serendipitous Susan. Susan showed up to an incredible total of 17 Defy events, a remarkable testament to the heart, consistency, and belief she brings to our Entrepreneurs in Training (EITs) every time she walks through the door.



From business coaching days to pitch competitions and graduations, Susan has become more than a regular; she's earned her honorary title as our go-to moderator, often invited to read the leadership statements of EITs who make it to the final pitch rounds.



Susan at Kern Valley Business Pitch Competition.

But it's not just her consistency that makes Susan special, it's also her heart. When asked what keeps her coming back, Susan said: **“It's the dedication and hunger for learning I see in the EITs. Being with them, witnessing their growth, and seeing their journeys unfold, that's where I get my own fulfillment.”**

Volunteers like Susan remind us that Defy's community grows strongest when rooted in shared purpose and that transformation is reciprocal.

SoCal Peer Facilitator Spotlight

Lorenzo and Theo

When California City Correctional Facility closed down, all the residents were transferred to new locations, including our incredible CEO of Your New Life (CEO YNL) peer facilitators, Laid-Back Lorenzo and Triumphant Theo. There was a real possibility we might not see them again until their release. But 2024 had a surprise waiting.



Thanks to the generous support of Dr. Bronner's, we launched a new CEO YNL cohort at the California Rehabilitation Center in Norco. And to our great and happy surprise, Lorenzo and Theo appeared in our classroom, ready to serve with us again!

Without missing a beat, they jumped back into their peer facilitator roles leading small groups, providing mentorship, holding a safe space for their peers, and setting a powerful example for the new Entrepreneurs in Training (EITs). Their return illustrated the power of our peer facilitator program and the ripple effect created when people are given the tools, trust, and opportunity to lead from within.



Lorenzo far left and Theo, 3rd from left with Defy's Director of Volunteer programs, Bree.

Theo later reflected,

“At Norco, [the residents] weren't used to much programming, so a lot of participants were skeptical. But to watch the two most challenging EITs grow through the program—and then take 1st and 2nd place in the pitch competition—that was the cherry on top.”

And even more exciting: we were thrilled to welcome Lorenzo home in August 2024, with Theo not far behind.

To Lorenzo and Theo: thank you for continuing to walk the path and for showing all of us what it means to defy the odds, together.

NorCal Peer Facilitator Spotlight

Determined Derwin



When "Determined" Derwin joined Defy NorCal's

CEO of Your New Life (CEO YNL) program as an Entrepreneur in Training (EIT) at the Correctional Training Facility (CTF) in 2021, he was, in his own words, "angry, stuck, worried, and just beginning to change." Quiet but commanding, Derwin wasn't the type to fill a room with words, but, even then, something about his presence said, "I'm here to grow."

Three years later, he has transformed into an impactful leader, becoming the lead Peer Facilitator for the entire Defy NorCal program at CTF. Known for his steady, stoic demeanor, Derwin leads with conviction, humility, and purpose. The program challenged him to get "comfortable being uncomfortable," including facing his fear of public speaking and embracing the power of his own story. And through acknowledging his personal discomforts, Derwin discovered something that shifted everything.

“Defy helped me learn that the same skills I used to engage in criminal behavior are transferable to starting my own business. Once I understood that, I couldn’t justify the old behavior anymore.”



Graduation acknowledgment of Derwin and other Peer Facilitators.

However, Derwin's transformation isn't just internal—it's visionary and prosocial. Through his own research, including learning his peer group's pain points and needs, he identified a gap in financial literacy among them. In response, he created Score Up, which is a course he now teaches for other incarcerated individuals at CTF, focused on building credit and financial empowerment for the incarcerated community.

He describes Defy like "finding an oasis in the desert after walking through Death Valley in the middle of the summer. You want to give up, you want to give in to your self-limiting beliefs, but you don't because you see an oasis filled with palm trees and water. It's not a mirage. It's Defy."

Derwin, thank you for standing in your power, modeling the kind of leadership this world needs, and reminding all of us what transformation in action looks like.

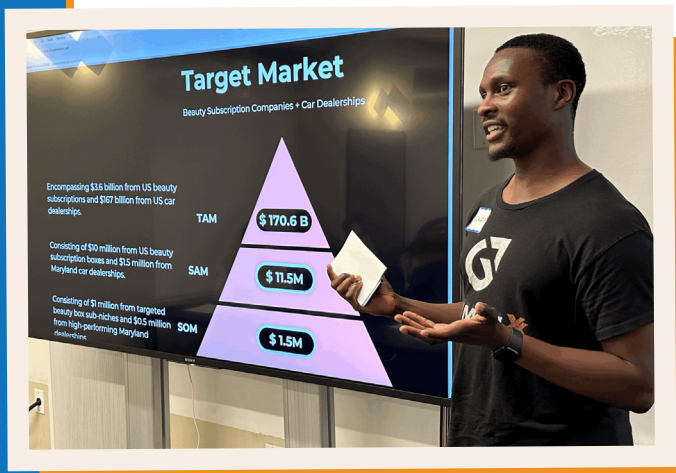
TriState Entrepreneurship Spotlight

Creative Claudius



For “Creative” Claudius, Defy’s Entrepreneurship Pathway programs weren’t just about learning business fundamentals—it was also about finding community in an ecosystem designed to create economic opportunities for ambitious entrepreneurs. It’s this sense of community—connecting with his Defy mentors and supporters—that Claudius has gained from working to launch his business in our Entrepreneurship Bootcamp and Business Accelerator programs as an Entrepreneur in Training (EIT).

On Juneteenth 2024—a day symbolizing freedom and new beginnings for Black Americans—Claudius presented his business, Gambix, to Defy’s Investment Committee in Midtown Manhattan. Gambix uses AI to help businesses develop dynamic, customer-centric websites. Nearly 40 business professionals had gathered to hear his pitch for up to \$10,000 in funding. Not only did the committee award Claudius the \$10,000 grant, they also provided ongoing coaching around business strategy and fund allocation in recognition that his vision had real potential.



Claudius pitching Gambix at Defy's Investment Committee.

Through The Innovationist Substack newsletter, he shares insights from his journey, embodying the community-driven spirit that first drew him to Defy.

From Bootcamp participant to funded entrepreneur, to mentor himself, Claudius exemplifies why programs like Defy matter. As he puts it: **“Programs like Defy provide community support, which helps to create additional economic opportunities for people.”**

Today, Gambix generates \$10,000 per month in revenue and continues growing rapidly. “We have been growing fast and adding more teammates,” Claudius reflects on his biggest success to date. Defy’s program had helped him tackle his biggest challenge: “Strategy and executing on a vision that needs to be systematically done step by step.” Now, that systematic approach is paying off.

He currently serves as a Program Manager at Gener8tor, paying it forward by helping other founders grow their social impact businesses.

Illinois EIT Spotlight

Motivated Milton

When Milton started Defy Illinois's (Defy IL) CEO of Your New Life (CEO YNL) program at the Kewanee Life Skills Reentry Center, he was a bit shy and nervous despite previously being a renowned DJ performing before large crowds. After years of incarceration, Milton wasn't sure that he was ready to put himself out there again, but he took a chance. Through Defy's program and support, he was able to reconnect to skills and passions that had been buried for a long time and learn new business skills that helped him advocate for his dreams.

To his surprise, the food truck business concept he developed in the CEO YNL program received a lot of encouragement and support from both his fellow Entrepreneurs in Training (EITs) and Defy Prison Program Manager. In February 2024, at Defy's Business Pitch Competition, his pitch not only earned him a spot in the final top five but also won him both the first-place award and Family and Peer Favorite award! From this experience, he learned he could advocate for himself and think as a CEO, not just as an employee. This boost of confidence reaffirmed that he had the skills and passion to come even further than he realized.

After Defy's Business Pitch Competition, Milton transferred to Peoria Adult Transition Center. As a Defy graduate, Milton was able to obtain a Chromebook and additional barrier navigation support from Defy. Staying in contact with the Career & Reentry Manager, Malaki Crayton, Milton started working in the culinary field and quickly reconnected with his first passion: DJ'ing. With Malaki's help, Milton gained the confidence to put together a proposal for the adult transition center leadership to start playing shows. He received permission to play at a venue in Bloomington-Normal, and it was a huge success. Now, Milton is actively pursuing building up his DJ business once again.



Milton receiving his certification.

Still by his side, Defy has connected Milton with a volunteer entrepreneur coach to support his development as an business owner in areas such as time management, marketing, and delegation. His business, The Playground District, LLC, recently received a contract to produce a song and has been playing shows in the Central Illinois region.

Of the Defy program, Milton said, **“Programs like Defy are important because they provide second chances and real opportunities for personal and professional growth. Defy doesn’t just teach business—it restores confidence, purpose, and the belief that change is possible. Through hands-on training, mentorship, and feedback, I won first place in the business pitch competition. That experience proved to me that with the right guidance and mindset, I could turn my passion into a real business.”**

We are excited to walk alongside Milton as his reentry journey continues to evolve. He is a testament to hard work and perseverance—no matter what.



Milton working on his DJ equipment.

Defy Ventures Utah Year One Milestones

In 2024, Defy Ventures launched its newest chapter in Utah. This was more than a program launch—it was the beginning of a movement at the Utah State Correctional Facility.

Breaking Ground, Building Futures

In October 2024, we welcomed our first group of Entrepreneurs in Training (EITs) at the Utah State Correctional Facility (USCF) men's unit.

Momentum picked up quickly, and by December, we launched our second cohort at the USCF women's unit. What followed was nothing short of extraordinary. The women formed a grassroots “study hall,” taking initiative to continue learning and growing with each other outside of class. They also created “Secret Sister,” a powerful peer-led tradition of exchanging weekly letters filled with affirmation and encouragement. These acts of support represent the heartbeat of Defy—transformation through connection.

Recognition and Rising Impact

Defy's impact hasn't gone unnoticed. In a moment of proud recognition, we received the Corrections Champion Award from Utah Governor Spencer Cox and former UDC Director Brian Redd. Founding Board Member Bryan Flamm and Program Manager Angela Johnson, accepted the honor on behalf of the team and our courageous EITs.



Left to right: UDC Deputy Director Becky Brown, Gov. Spencer Cox, Defy Utah Board Member Bryan Flamm, Defy UT Program Manager Angela Johnson, Former UDC Director Brian Redd, UDC Executive Director Jared Garcia.

All-Time Impact

9,951+

Defy Entrepreneurs in
Training (EITs) served

9,484+

Volunteers engaged
in Defy's mission

206+

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%

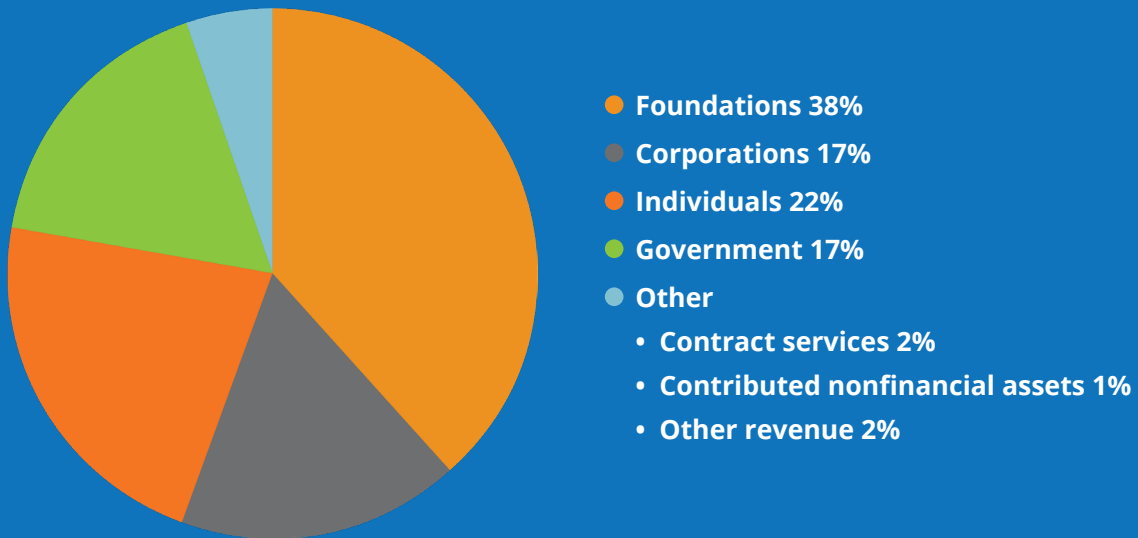
**Sample size for 1-year recidivism rate is 571, and for 3-year rate is 335.
According to an updated report from the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the
national 1-year rate is now 20%, and the 3-year rate is 39%.*

2024 Financial Position

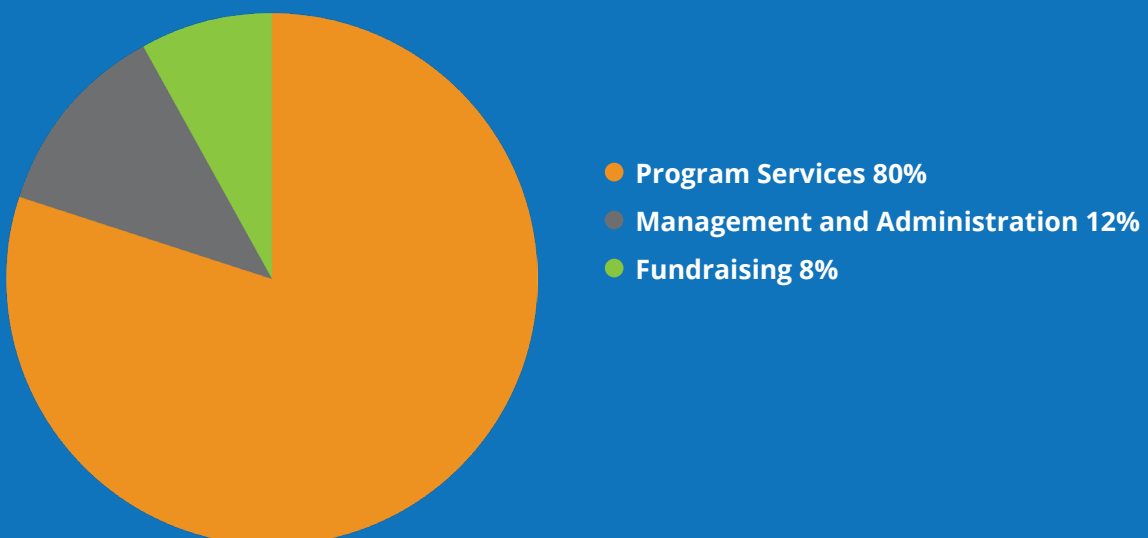
Defy Ventures' 2024 total public support & revenue was \$4,644,460.

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

Revenue



Expenses





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 2024. 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.



In Their Own Words

hope hope today stands for honoring our people in our efforts hoping with ceremonial dispositions all our lives would be better. with education we become powerful, and all the ignorant storms would be weathered. and we would realize we can achieve so much more when we do it all together. inspiration to our hearts and minds, is hard to find when you're confined, and there is a clock on the wall that's counting time, but not counting mine defined by the obstacles I conquered and everyday I try to be greater than when I came inside, to be a venerable man not the same old guy. to heal the hurt and gain inside be the difference, moving pieces up the board for the win, not position. Wanting to create harmony not opposition, sitting in learning environments trying to soak up wisdom. I hope you see a man not just a prisoner up in prison. With love in his eyes but still eagle like vision taking advantage of the good opportunities before they go missing. Urgently telling my folks I love them before they go distant. I see a sentence break commitment. I know one action can change everything and make things so different. and I hope you're hearing me, and feeling me and your souls listen. thank you for the hope, may you forever remember the words the poet spoke that he written

—Matthew G.

Graduation speech at SCI Chester, Chester PA

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

Defy offers corporate volunteering opportunities, fair chance hiring workshops, and other ways for your company to make a difference in creating a world of fair chances for all. Contact us to learn more!

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.

We also accept appreciated securities and cryptocurrency [on our website](#).

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

The Defy Volunteer Experience

Volunteering is a mutually transformative and beneficial experience for both Defy Entrepreneurs in Training (EITs) and for volunteers. Through Defy's programs and volunteer events, all participants experience humanizing connections, changing perceptions about human potential, challenging of mindsets, and personal growth. Volunteers are an integral part of Defy's program, and we invite you to join us. As a volunteer, you support our mission to create systemic change and shift mindsets!

Defy has in-prison and post-release volunteer opportunities that take place both in-person and virtually.

- **Prison Program Events (In-Person):** Prison events are full-day experiences that are instrumental to Defy's CEO of Your New Life program. Prison-based events take place in person and will often include bus transportation to and from the correctional facility. [Read more here!](#)
- **Community Transitional Facility Events (In-Person):** We also offer our CEO of Your New Life program to individuals at community-based transitional facilities. Transitional facility events are typically 3–6 hour experiences that take place in person within metropolitan areas where Defy chapters serve.
- **Community-Based Entrepreneurship Program Events (Virtual):** Join us as a business coach to support our post-release 17-week entrepreneurship bootcamp programs (offered nationally). These events are typically two-hour, virtual experiences. We also have opportunities for ongoing mentorship for EITs who have entered our business accelerator.

Contact partnerships@defyventures.org with any questions.



DEFY
VENTURES



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