

Richmond Entrepreneur's Assistance Program (REAP)

“Leveraging the skills and talents of many, we help people launch their own small business or build and expand an existing business or nonprofit through targeted job creation, resources, mentors and funding”.

GOAL:

More than 100 churches are partnering with REAP to provide funding and mentors sharing their business expertise. Many churches will commit to spending a percentage of their budget to purchase goods and services from REAP supported businesses.

We are serving individuals and families (adults, all ages) who are currently unemployed or underemployed by providing funding, training and long-term support for people who choose to start their own business.

We are creating new job opportunities by funding positions in existing small businesses and nonprofits.

THEORY:

Thousands of highly qualified people are currently experiencing career transition. Corporations have closed, hiring has been delayed, and positions have been combined or eliminated. Many local, state and federal organizations are playing an important role in training and developing the workforce.

REAP, through faith-based partnerships, plays a unique and critical role in serving people who are struggling with job loss and all of the financial and emotional realities that accompany this period of change.

Working collaboratively, we can provide funding, resources, mentors, peer support groups, and friendship to the people we serve. Because of our large volunteer base, we can be more inclusive, more personal and take the time needed; especially for people who have employment challenges or do not qualify for other programs.

TARGET POPULATION:

The REAP Program is a focused effort to assist people in the Metro Richmond Region through the transition period associated with a job loss to establish a new, small business as a viable alternative to/or in addition to their job seeking efforts.

Our job placement service gives people the opportunity to train in a new industry or use their current skills to help grow existing small businesses or nonprofits.

INPUTS:

Each church* partner is asked to:

- Make an annual donation/pledge.
(Following the Impact 100 model, 100 churches donating \$1,000.00 each would give us \$100,000.00 in funding). Additional levels of support are available, including in-kind donations and other services).
- Promote the REAP program; encouraging volunteer mentors.
- Share the REAP opportunity with their congregation; encouraging potential and existing small business owners to participate in our programs.

Rev. Jeanette Phelps, REAP's Executive Director, initially with a Steering Committee and then a Board of Directors and Advisory Committee will coordinate all REAP programs and services.

Start-up funding has been provided by St. Michael's Catholic Church, 4491 Springfield Road, Glen Allen 23060.

*Corporate, nonprofit and individual partnerships are appreciated. Many volunteers are needed; all are welcome.



STRATEGIES:

Our first event is: Entrepreneur Express, August 26, 2010, 8:30 a.m. – Noon at St. Michael's Catholic Church. This is designed to be a "one-stop shop" for new and existing small business owners.

Entrepreneur Express is presented by the Virginia Department of Business Assistance, Virginia Tourism Corporation, Virginia Cooperative Extension and the Greater Richmond Small Business Development Center.

REAP website, including all community resources, events and our application process will be available before the Entrepreneur Express event.

Mentor recruiting and training is taking place in August. And we are gathering church leaders on August 10 to discuss best practices for our partnership and additional ways that we might serve people in their congregations and the community who are in career transition.

Our official launch date is set for September 7, 2010 – with funding, mentors, community partnerships and our organizational structure in place, we are ready to serve; bringing hope, practical support and financial stability to our REAP business partners..



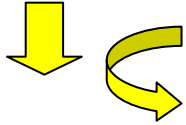
OUTPUTS:

We are serving 3 different “groups”:

Church partners – we are here to help them serve the people in their congregations by creating jobs/businesses for their members who choose to work with REAP (100-125 church partners).

Mentors – our mentors are critically important to the success of new and existing small business owners. Creating a meaningful experience for our volunteers is a top priority. (75-150 mentors).

New/existing small business owners & job seekers. They are the reason for this program; the “why” of everything that we are all doing; the churches, the mentors and all of the REAP partners and sponsors.



August 10 – church leaders workshop
August 11 – program/mentor presentation – St. Michael’s JAM, and
Needles Eye Ministry Career Transition groups.
August 19 – Mentor Training Workshop
August 26 – first Entrepreneur Express event.
October – Entrepreneur Express event (date to be announced)

SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES:

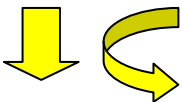


- We are working collaboratively with New Visions/New Ventures, SCORE, the Virginia Department of Business Assistance, local Chambers and economic and community development organizations to provide the best training and services for our clients.
- 80% of church partners continue to support REAP.
- 95-100% of mentors have had a positive experience and are more engaged in other church ministries.
- Following implementation stages; we matched business owners to mentors, growing at a pace that assured success. Basic funding allowed for 25 new businesses and 3 job placements.

MID/INTERMEDIATE-TERM OUTCOMES:

It is impossible to predict how long it will take for the economy and the job market to improve; even for skilled professionals. REAP services will continue to be needed by people who are less skilled or face other challenges (ex: people who have been incarcerated and refugees).

We are carefully monitoring the number of people served, financial support, volunteers, job placement leading to permanent employment and business success. We will make adjustments to our program to best serve the needs of our participants.



We have secured additional funding (grants, sponsorships, events).
The systems and criteria have been perfected. At this point, we are supporting as many people as funding and mentors allow.
The average cost of a business start-up is evaluated.
Additional funding will be needed for job placement service.