

Evaluation of the Aspire Entrepreneurship Initiative for the U.S. Small Business Administration's Office of Entrepreneurial Development

Client: U.S. Small Business Administration

Overview

Many formerly incarcerated individuals face barriers when attempting to reenter the workforce, such as—

- Legal restrictions against employment in certain occupations based on criminal history
- Employer bias against individuals with a criminal record
- Lack of education, skills, formal work experience, professional networks
- Lack of reliable transportation, stable housing

Self-employment training may address these barriers and improve self-sufficiency by helping individuals to develop and launch their own businesses. The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) partnered with the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and co-sponsor Justine PETERSEN to pilot the Aspire Entrepreneurship Initiative program in four cities. The initiative aimed to help returning citizens with young children cultivate the skills and business savvy necessary for economic stability, enhanced opportunity, and employability by providing them with intensive entrepreneurship education and access to capital.

Insight—

- Designed the multimodal evaluation architecture

- Conducted the formative evaluation
- Conducted semistructured, in-depth qualitative interviews with stakeholders, program staff, and participants

The study enhanced understanding of how the pilot was implemented, identified and measured the pilot's immediate outcomes, and laid the foundation for measuring intermediate- and long-term outcomes. In particular, the evaluation provided better understanding of the program's effects on entrepreneurship, economic well-being, and financial literacy and stability.

Products

Evaluation design plan, final report

Wilson, C., Estes, B., & Corbo, A. (2017). *Formative evaluation of the Aspire Entrepreneurial Initiative*. Insight Policy Research, Inc. Washington, DC: Office of Entrepreneurial Development, Small Business Administration.

