

APPENDIX A:

DREAMS Realized ABSTRACT

APPLICANT NAME: Project Possible

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PROPOSED PROJECT TITLE: DREAMS Realized in Monroe, Louisiana

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM:

Monroe, Louisiana is a small city strategically positioned along the I-20 corridor. Economic growth in the city has been uneven with the northern quadrant thriving while the southside, which is home to the city's 62% African American population, resides. A consortium guided by the Southside Economic Development District's (SEDD) 25 Year Strategy entitled DREAM, led to a consortium conceptualizing the DREAMS Realized in Monroe project. DREAMS Realized is led by community development corporation Project Possible, JDS Advisers, eco-friendly recycling company Delta Builds Enterprises and strategic partner SEDD. The DREAMS Realized project seeks to build the capacity of 548 socially and economically disadvantaged individual entrepreneurs through implementation of a series of workshops and technical support from generating ideas to accessing funds required to startup and expand businesses. DREAMS Realized will target a wide array of African Americans from those who are justice-involved and need a second chance following incarceration to sole proprietors who may have been denied opportunity to expand. Help for Monroe is here through capacity building, networking entrepreneurs with corporations, government partners, technical one-on-one support from business advisors and, most importantly, access to funding through loans, grants and more.

APPLICATION SUBMISSION DATE: March 10, 2023

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY NUMBER: MBDA-OB-2023-2007775

TOTAL FEDERAL FUNDING REQUESTED:

TOTAL NON-FEDERAL COST SHARE:

NAMES AND CONTACT INFORMATION FOR KEY PROJECT PERSONNEL:

Mrs. Sonya Jacobs – sonya.jacobs@jdsadvisers.com 318-366-2549 – Project Director, JDS Advisers

Mr. Leonard Guillory – leonardguilloryiv@gmail.com 985-518-3429 – Board Member, Delta Builds

Mr. Tony Little – tonylittle100@gmail.com – Board Member, Southside Economic Development District (SEDD)

A. Project Description

i. *Executive Summary:*

Monroe, Louisiana is a small city strategically positioned along the I-20 corridor. Economic growth in the city has been uneven with the northern quadrant thriving while the southside, which is home to the city's 62% African American population, resides. A consortium guided by the Southside Economic Development District's (SEDD) 25 Year Strategy entitled *DREAM*, led to the DREAMS Realized in Monroe project. DREAMS Realized will be implemented by JDS Advisers, community development corporation Project Possible, eco-friendly recycling company Delta Builds Enterprises and strategic partner SEDD. The DREAMS Realized project seeks to build the capacity of at least 548 socially and economically disadvantaged individual entrepreneurs through implementation of a series of workshops and provision of technical support from generating ideas to accessing funds required to startup and expand businesses. DREAMS Realized will target a wide array of African American entrepreneurs from those who are justice-involved and need a second chance following incarceration to sole proprietors who may have been denied opportunity to expand. Help for Monroe is here through capacity building, networking entrepreneurs with corporations, government partners, technical one-on-one support from business advisors and, most importantly, access to funding through loans, grants and more.

B. Location, Industry, and Market Segment

i. *Location and Geographic Service Area:* A central characteristic to the American dream is the notion that with perseverance, diligence and hard work success and achievement are attainable. But what has this meant for scores of African Americans who have been systemically and structurally excluded from the promises of the American dream. Though Black business owners are wealthier than their Black peers who do not own businesses, African Americans entrepreneurs have had a tough time and their dreams have been deferred. There is ample evidence that the smaller size of African American-owned firms is the result of woes from inability to access funding and investment, not lack of capability, business acumen or ambition.¹ The tougher financial constraints faced by African Americans have stunted growth and have suspended aspirations. Case in point, throughout the U.S. Black women entrepreneurs are outpacing other ethnic groups starting businesses, but still experience dreadful disparities in attaining the elusive financing. Roughly 96% of Black-owned businesses are sole proprietorships owned and operated by one individual compared to 80% of non-Black-owned businesses.²

Employer businesses, which are defined as having more than one employee are much more likely to participate in multifaceted infrastructure projects like those proposed in the President Biden's Jobs plans. Further, this underrepresentation of Black businesses costs the US economy millions of jobs and billions in revenue. If Black businesses were on par with White-owned businesses, an increase from 10 to 23 employees, for instance, would generate 1.6 million jobs.³ If the number of

¹ African-American Entrepreneurs: Contributions and Challenges. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/362887786_African_American_Entrepreneurs_Contributions_and_Challenges, SBA, 2021.

² Andre M. Perry 2020.

³ Perry 2020.

Black businesses matched the revenue of non-Black businesses \$5.9 trillion would be added to the tax base. Economist Dr. Andre Perry extrapolated: if Black businesses accounted for 14% of employer firms (equivalent to the Black population in the U.S.), there would be 798,318 more Black businesses.⁴

A small city like Monroe, Louisiana with a significant socially and economically disadvantaged individuals (SEDI) population (62% African American) is an ideal location for an investment to enable those who have been disenfranchised historically to participate fully in the economy by aiding entrepreneurs to, at long last, pursue and realize their dreams of starting up and/or expanding businesses.

ii. *Demographics, assets, needs, community and business ecosystem for SEDI, focus on industry and market segmentation responding to needs:* Monroe is the eighth-largest city in Louisiana with a population that declined from 54,779 in 1990 to 47,284 in 2021.⁵ It is the seat of Ouachita Parish, which is on the list of counties with persistent poverty. Like many southern states, the demographic profile of Monroe tells several narratives.

Monroe has a vibrant African American population (62% Black and 34% White) population known for its heritage, resilience and community strength.⁶ The rich cultural heritage, political will and tight-knit community in the southside of Monroe has actively fought for social and economic development for African Americans. The Southside Economic Development District (SEDD) was established to provide a path out of poverty for district residents by improving economic opportunities, critical infrastructure, access to capital, and neighborhood improvement resources. This plan aptly entitled *Southside DREAM* was the city of Monroe's effort to reverse the downward trends that have crippled it by investing in projects that promote the economic growth and address many of the root causes of its economic decline.⁷ The plan was created through a series of workshops attended by the range of community members: clergy, teachers, parents, business owners and representatives of the disenfranchised. This plan is the impetus for the establishment of a locally driven entrepreneurship ecosystem in Monroe.

Though Monroe is the home of several major corporations, development has largely been in the northern part of town bypassing the city's southside, which is home to a majority of its African American residents. The impaired economic development of Monroe's Southside reflects decades-long missed community disinvestment and socio-economic exclusion. Over one-third (37%) of Monroe's residents live below the poverty line.⁸ Further, the child poverty rate is 54%, which leads to academic struggles and less likelihood to complete high school.⁹ The racial and geographic patterns in health, education, and earnings were constructed over hundreds of years of racism, economic exploitation, segregation, racial zoning and mass incarceration.

⁴ Andre Perry, Know your price: valuing Black lives and property in America's Black cities, 2020.

⁵ American Community Survey, 2021.

⁶ Ibid, 2021.

⁷ Southside Economic Development District Plan. Parish of Ouachita, City of Monroe, Louisiana, April, 2022.

⁸ American Community Survey, 2021.

⁹ Ibid, 2021.

Louisiana has the nation's highest incarceration rate coupled with youth who are 'disconnected' from employment and education. Disconnected youth are more than 1.5 times more likely to live below the poverty line. Black men in Louisiana have the highest disconnection rates with 27% while the national rate for all races and genders is 11%. The total crime rate in Monroe is 9,088 per 100,000 people, which is 287% higher than the national rate of 2,346 per 100,000 people. The violent crime rate in Monroe is 2,969.1 per 100,000 people, which is 666% higher than the national rate of 388 per 100,000 people.¹⁰

Like any other place in the U.S., new businesses are critical to creating more jobs: 40% of net new jobs created in the past two decades were the result of hiring by new businesses. The shortage of Black businesses throttles employment and the development of Black communities which is costing the U.S. economy millions of jobs and billions of dollars in unrealized revenues.' Monroe, the southside specifically, needs investment into the African American community to first rectify the past and then, to realize the American dream. In Monroe, the funding from MBDA would be a game changer and, would restore the dreams that, until now, have been derailed, deterred and deferred.

C. Target Participants

i. *SEDI Sub-sets*: Though African Americans are not a monolithic group, there are socially and economically driven barriers that have hindered opportunities. Due to the SEDI majority, that is 62.2% African American in Monroe, this project will focus solely on African Americans. Subsets of SEDI include: youth – disconnected, out of school, recent graduates, justice involved, unemployed or 'underemployed', families – residing in section 8 housing, women caring for elder or young children, unemployed men and women, small business owners who gave up because of lack of funding, Black sole proprietorships and business owners with employees - growing investable and scalable businesses with the goal of raising capital, selling the business or filing for an initial public offering

One size does not fit all African Americans. Rather, any and all programming for SEDI entrepreneurs must be reflective of the many differences in experiences and circumstances across types of businesses and owners.¹¹ To address the variations in experiences, socio-economic statuses and the mere fact that there is not one solution to address the massive disparities in northern Louisiana, the DREAMS Realized Project will offer 4 programmatic tracks to meet the varied needs of SEDI entrepreneurs: 1) *Generator* for entrepreneurs with ideas, 2) *Incubator* for registered companies to startup, 3) *Accelerator* ideal for sole proprietors, and, 4) *Realized* for entrepreneurs to access capital. DREAMS Realized will conduct a rapid assessment to attain key information from participants including: business experiences, skills, interests, aspirations, hobbies, work experience, ambitions and, of course, what are their dreams. The questionnaire will examine what assistance participants may require to overcome barriers and to increase the likelihood of graduating from the courses and starting businesses.

¹⁰ FBI, 2021.

¹¹ Ibid.

Barrier Reduction Strategy: The DREAMS Consortium acknowledges that SEDI who have been out of school, justice involved, ‘disconnected’ or, for a variety of reasons, locked out of the formal economy, may require additional services to prepare them to fully participate in the program. Wrap around services to support participants include onsite child care, transportation since Monroe is a rural area and public transportation unreliable, connectivity for those who do not have access to the internet and, if needed, social services. DREAMS will engage with social sector partners for referrals to social services as needed including a social worker who is a licensed psycho therapist.

Child Care: Many low-income families in Louisiana lack accessible, affordable care for young children which causes missing days of work and/or resigning from jobs.¹² Access to quality child care not only allows parents to work but provides businesses with a reliable workforce. Unfortunately, for women with young children in Louisiana, 15% reported having to quit a job due to child care issues (versus 2% of men); 16% of women reported going from full-time to part-time (versus 3% of men); and 12% reported turning down a promotion due to child care issues (versus 2% of men). Commercial child care facilities charge anywhere from \$110 to \$200 weekly, costing up to 50% of a minimum wage worker’s income. DREAMS acknowledges that the MBDA encourages, but will not provide for child care. Thus, DREAMS will engage with a SEDI owned enterprise to provide onsite childcare and/or after school programming during all sessions.

Transportation: During the assessment the DREAMS staff will make certain that all participants have a means to travel to the weekly workshops. In the case that a participant will be unable to travel, DREAMS will facilitate carpools. *Access to the Internet:* According to the American Community Survey, only 68% of Monroe’s residents have broadband access to the internet, which maybe a challenge for entrepreneurs to participate in online sessions. In the case that an entrepreneur does not have access to the internet, DREAMS will coordinate with partners to donate laptop computers to SEDI entrepreneurs.

- ii. *Industry/Market segment focus:* DREAMS Realized intentionally has partnerships with ecofriendly led Delta Builds and Project Possible to encourage businesses with trucks who may cut lawns to enter recycling. Or, to encourage joint ventures between an electrician and a computer programmer to establish a company that will install and maintain charging stations for electric vehicles. The potential to forge investable businesses is massive and at the center of the DREAMS Realized project.

There are a number of economic and social reasons why Black businesses are concentrated in fields different than non-Black businesses—investment capital is one. Businesses in utilities, wholesale trade, and manufacturing (not to mention many tech sectors) require substantial amounts of startup capital, which home equity and individual wealth cannot easily support. Research from the Urban Institute demonstrates that Black entrepreneurs’ lack of access to startup capital relative to the resources needed to start a business and lack of access to business networks that inform technical developments leading to industry selection can influence which industries Black entrepreneurs start their firms in.¹³

¹² United Way. Louisiana ALICE Report, 2021.

¹³ Perry, 2021.

Carbon-free source for electricity, setting up and maintaining gigawatt-miles of interstate power lines along I-20 to deliver power, charging stations for electric vehicles at the museums or navigating. Healthcare, biotechnology and biomanufacturing, asset management, artificial intelligence, information security, supply chain resiliency or management, semiconductors, cloud computing or another high growth critical emerging technology - market-driven solutions to provide resources to underserved communities such as affordable housing solutions, food security, or climate-related technologies or services.

iii. *Maturity of businesses:* DREAMS will provide services to socially and economically disadvantaged individual (SEDI) entrepreneurs from idea generation and startup to emerging businesses who are ready for capital to operate and scale-up.

iv. *Delivery method:* Programs will be delivered in person and online.

v. *Recruitment Strategy:* DREAMS will invest in robust partnerships with existing CBO, NGO, government entities and other structures working in common geographic areas, through regular communication, coordination, events and referrals. The program will coordinate and create linkages with organizations including NGOs/CBOs/FBOs, schools, traditional leaders, associations, social pleasure clubs, krewes, fraternal orders, women's and men's groups, the Black Chamber of Commerce, the Monroe Press, the National Urban League of Louisiana, the NAACP, and others addressing community development, environmental, civil and racial justice. Based upon the database of DBEs housed within the City of Monroe, the members of the Black Chamber of Commerce and SEDD the DREAMS Team will engage with community leaders and invite them to initial community dialogues, which will be informatory in nature and open the discussion about what leaders and their networks want to do within communities to address economic development, crime, closing the racial wealth gap, education and overall wellbeing of the community. These engagement sessions will strive to build and rebuild trust, rapport and collaboration.

The Community Liaison Officer will be responsible for outreach to sole proprietors and entrepreneurs using the database that SEDD and the Black Chamber of Commerce have of all certified DBEs within the district. Unemployed and underemployed interested entrepreneurs will be identified from partners within the community and workforce development sectors. Participating youth maybe justice-involved or recent graduates from the community college, Grambling University or University of Louisiana Monroe. Others may have limited opportunities following high school and seeking a spark will also be invited to participate. Elected officials from Monroe are in support of this project and will encourage families residing in section 8 housing, particularly women caring for elders or young children, to participate.

D. Project Implementation Timeline

DREAMS Realized will be implemented over a 4-year period from July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2027. During the first 120-days of funding the DREAMS Consortium has a detailed plan to set up the operations, hire and engage staff, conduct outreach to subsets of SEDI to launch and ramp up the services. The project timeline and workplan is attached and uploaded as a key component of this proposal application.

E. Project Goal, Objectives, Activities and Performance Metrics

The DREAMS Consortium seeks to enable entrepreneurs to build businesses that are market-driven, investable and scalable grounded in financial viability. social impact, racial equity, and a demonstrated commitment to the prosperity of the greater Monroe, Louisiana region. SEDI entrepreneurs from conceptualizing ideas to developing and launching scalable, market-driven, solution based and investable businesses and in procuring contracts with government and the private sector. The project entitled DREAMS Realized in Monroe has the following goal and 3 interrelated objectives.

GOAL: To close the gaps in entrepreneurial opportunities for socially and economically disadvantaged individual (SEDI) entrepreneurs to unleash a new era of business growth, job creation, and wealth in the greater Monroe, Louisiana region.

Objectives:

- 1) To facilitate **capacity building** for at least 585 SEDI entrepreneurs to start and scale up their businesses in the greater Monroe, Louisiana region by June 2027.
- 2) To attract and provide at least 490 SEDI entrepreneurs in the greater Monroe, Louisiana region **access to networks** with corporate, government, investment, nonprofit and any other strategic partners by June 2027.
- 3) To attract and provide at least 219 SEDI entrepreneurs **access to capital** opportunities to start, expand and scale up business in the greater Monroe, Louisiana region by June 2027.

Objective 1 - Capacity Building:

Family money and background plays a critical role when it comes to starting up a business. In fact, it's one of the primary sources of funding for startups, well ahead of other options like bank loans and venture capital. And the more money mom and dad have, the better. A new study confirms this. "There is a strong connection between your parent's income and your chances of becoming a startup entrepreneur, with those from a strong financial background having a higher chance of becoming entrepreneurs,"¹⁴ said the project is aligned with the needs of the target participants and whether those participants are ready to engage with the project. Be specific in how the project will engage with one or more SEDI groups to help them start or grow viable businesses and build relationships with other entities in the entrepreneurship community. new skills, new connections, and a new outlook to match their new purpose

Approaches and Methodologies: Each workshop will be guided by learning objectives for the module with the Project Manager facilitating each session and subject matter experts, other

¹⁴ Shira Greenberg, the chief economist Israel's ministry of finance, in a recent report conducted by his agency and reported by the Jerusalem Post.

business founders, business leaders as guest speakers. Adult education methods will be employed catering to the range of learning styles with participants watching video clips, TEDX Talks, presentations on case studies, reading thought provoking articles, completing actionable worksheets through group and individual reflective exercises. A series of virtual field trips around the world will demonstrate what is happening further afield. Take home exercises to contemplate and complete during the online sessions facilitated by business advisors.

Orientation: This is a time to mingle with other Impact Accelerator participants, meet DREAM staff, and to learn more about the program. Headshots will be taken during the orientation to feature ventures, entrepreneurs and their stories, which will intensify the visibility of the services offered by DREAMS via social media and traditional media. A matchmaking between the database of business advisors and participants will be explored. what to expect for the Generator and Incubator, roles and responsibilities, assessment of any special barriers that the DREAMS Team can address such as care provision requirements, access to the Internet and a computer, social services, etc.

Design promotional materials: DREAMS will develop such promotional materials for distribution by Community Liaison, Project Manager, Director and other and community leaders. Other materials that will be adapted to DREAMS include visual and teaching aides for outreach and interactive activities, flash cards, quizzes, booklets, and guides. As the program develops, additional promotional materials will be designed and produced.

Graduation Day – Business development should not be shrouded in mystery. DREAMS seeks to hold public discussions related to the benefits of entrepreneurship by sharing the journeys of selected ventures. increase knowledge, challenge attitudes and modify behavior. Each of the Generator and Incubator training workshops will be finalized with a graduation celebration for the entrepreneurs. This is an opportunity for the DREAMS Project and all of the entrepreneurs to showcase their work in front of community members, especially youth, who will be invited to witness the launching of these businesses.

DREAMS Generator - Overview: The DREAMS Consortium seeks to offer a 12-week course aimed at generating business ideas for early-stage entrepreneurs. Sessions will be held on Saturdays at the University of Louisiana Monroe campus at no charge to the project. Sessions will be in-person for 5-hour sessions from 10 am – 12 pm with a working one-hour lunch featuring a guest speaker and 2 pm – 4 pm. Weekly 90-minute web classes will be arranged at the convenience of cohort members and one-on-one 90-minute sessions with assigned business advisors. training workshop to spark ideas to start a market-driven business. *Participant Description:* Each cohort will consist of 24 early-stage entrepreneurs who may require guidance in generating a business idea or may have several concepts that, with technical support, can become an opportunity. Here is an overview of the DREAM *Generator* curricula:

Module 1: Assessment of business propensity, skills, interests, likes, wishes and, of course, dreams. How to adopt a growth mindset to introduce ideas and data, and raise awareness of solutions for the environment and community to evolve a common vision of creating well-paying jobs through viable businesses. DREAMS will

support and mentor community leaders and institutions to implement, refine and sustain these commitments.

Module 2: Scenario planning brings multiple perspectives into a conversation about the community's future through storytelling and dialogue. Theatre of the oppressed methodology, which applies a system of games and interactive theatre techniques to pose dilemmas and challenges related to core social problems and power structures

Module 3: Blank check day - early-stage development, minimum viable product development

Module 4: Entrepreneurship: Attributes of an entrepreneur: self-motivated, risk taker, perseverance, unafraid, thinks outside the box, compassionate, disciplined, leader, multi-tasker, always learning, dedicated. Understanding the traits, behaviors and attributes are required to be a successful entrepreneur. Generating an entrepreneurial mindset to identify and assess opportunities that consider innovation in every facet of the business.

World Café Part 1 -Challenges related to socio-economic, being from a socially and economically disadvantaged community in Monroe. Discussions of building trust in the government, banking, funding and being able to compete with contracting and attracting business.

Web Class 1: Leadership in Action: Participants will explore their role in the economic and community development of the greater Monroe region. (Discussion with Moderators to synthesize readings, interactive activities, outings) Participants will be guided through readings that focus on the inspirational approach to leadership as entrepreneurs.

Module 5: YOU the entrepreneur: participants will take an assessment to compile a listing of their interests, capabilities, experiences, hobbies and credentials to create a list of possibilities for businesses. Participants will sharpen and fine tune the characteristics and behaviors to become a successful entrepreneur with their assessment findings.

Web Class 2: Personal development empowerment workshops: Begin with the end in mind, creation of life maps and – This exercise will encourage participants to dream about who they want to be and what they want to be like.

Module 6: Visions: What is your vision for your life? For your business? What's your motivation? A compelling vision provides the foundation for leadership, but it is the leaders' ability to motivate and inspire people that helps them deliver that vision. What did you wish to do more than anything as a child? What did you want to be when you grew up? Participants will create vision boards.

Innovation: Is it novel? Does it solve an urgent problem? Does it create value? Will it create jobs within the community? Why does innovation matter? More efficient

and effective work processes, business agility, saves time and money, leads to competitive advantages, increases customer satisfaction, helps drive sales and results, encourages and supports diversity, ecofriendly and green ventures.

Web Class 3: Choosing the right type of business structure to achieve your goals is a key decision in starting your own business including what how will it be structured. There are several business structures to choose from, including sole proprietorship, partnership, corporation, limited liability company and limited liability partnership.

Module 7: Bringing other voices and experiences into the room with the World Café and panel approaches to innovative business ideas. Whether it is a business installing and maintaining charging stations for electric vehicles that could be a perfect fit at the many museums throughout the greater Monroe area, installing solar panels, repurposing plastic bottles to be manufactured into fiber for furniture and clothing or Business Advisor Mr. Leonard Guillory from Delta Builds presenting on recycling and processing glass into sand and gravel for road base. or inventing a novel type of energy source.

Products and Services: minimum viable product development, product validation, business advisory,

One-on-One 1: Determine the business structure, ideal name, domain availability, registration of business entities with the Louisiana Department of State for \$100.

Module 8: Products and Services: minimum viable product development, product validation, business advisory,

Business Development: participants will learn what are the requirements to register a business in Louisiana. They will learn about articles of association, operations agreements, logistics, legalities, site, partnerships, occupational licenses, permits and other legalities.

One-on-One 2: The business advisor will assist with the preparation of articles of association, operations agreement, logistics and legalities to register the business and permitting required, type of site requirements, etc. legal assistance

Module 9: Innovation: Explore the importance of innovation in growing a successful business that creates jobs for you and others.

One-on-One 3: Coaching on the pitch perfect – during this session, participants will script and practice their pitches including the brief ‘elevator’, an 8-minute competition and a sit down with a potential investor.

Module 10: Pitch within the Cohort followed by dialogue walks and interactive leadership and trust building activities. Participants will pair up to share challenges related to entrepreneurship, living and starting a business in Monroe.

Web Class 4: Working together: legalities on how to establish a consortium, team, collaboration, joint ventures, mentor and protégé relationships.

Module 11: Every participant will have an opportunity to pitch in front of their cohort in preparation for graduation day. Questions that they will ask in support of each other includes: Does this problem matter to others? Do I honestly believe that there are solutions to this problem and that you have them? What are your strengths? Weaknesses? Threats and opportunities? How would things be different in your life is your dream came true? Who else shares your dream? Sharing your vision and building a team.

Module 12: Networking with funders, potential investors, etc.

Graduation Day

DREAMS Incubator - Overview: The DREAMS Consortium seeks to offer a 2-month Incubator training workshop to build ideas into start-ups for market-driven business. will consist of 8-weeks with an in-person 5-hour sessions from 10 am – 12 pm with a working one-hour lunch featuring a guest speaker and 2 pm – 4 pm. Bi-weekly 90-minute web classes will be held with small groups of cohort members and one-on-one 90-minute sessions with assigned business advisors.

Incubator Participant Description: Early-stage entrepreneurs who may have a registered business and participated in a program and/or sole proprietors who are keen to expand with new services or products. After graduating from the Generator, participants will be invited to continue onto a 2-month Incubator aimed at attaining the education and resources that are vital to building scalable and profitable businesses. Businesses ready to start-up will be invited to participate in the DREAMS Incubator will drive each cohort will consist of 24 start-up entrepreneurs in years 1 and 2 and 32 in years 3 and 4. Here is an overview of the DREAMS Incubator curricula:

Module 1: Thinking outside the boxes: becoming an innovative entrepreneur through starting up, adding or expanding market driven solutions. Discussion of what are in need startup and expansion ideas.

Web Class 1: Business Development: Set ambitious yet feasible goals and take initiative to follow through on progress towards those goals. who may require guidance in generating a business idea or may have several concepts that, with technical support, can become an opportunity.

Module 2: Your next moves: innovative growth strategies through the World Café methodology – exploring challenges related to entrepreneurship, innovation, science and technology

Web Class 1: Balancing Act: the personal and business finances of the entrepreneur – participants will learn about credit scores and how to improve one's score.

Module 3: Financial planning and literacy: this session will cover financial planning and developing projections for the new ventures. Participants will delve into the basics of finance for small businesses covering topics such as cash flow, income

statement, profit and loss. Accounting Basics – setting up book keeping and finance operations for your business needs.

Module 4: Marketing for growth: what is the best strategy for your business? Marketing training - media/social media training - How do you communicate your vision?

Who is the largest buyer of all? The United States Government...how does one do business with the U.S. government? What types of products and services does the U.S. government need at every level: city, parish, state, federal, international – there are export opportunities also.

Web Class 2: Data driven decision making – what you need to know about your customers and the market, and the industry, etc.

Module 5: Winning and keeping customers - Dialogue walks and interactive leadership and trust building activities. Participants will pair up to share challenges related to entrepreneurship, living and starting a business in Monroe.

World Café Part 1 -Challenges related to socio-economic, being from a socially and economically disadvantaged community in Monroe. Discussions of building trust in the government, banking, funding and being able to compete with contracting and attracting business.

Module 6: Preparing to lead – how to hire and keep good employees - Participants will explore their role in the economic and community development of the greater Monroe region. Discussion with Moderators to synthesize readings, interactive activities, outings)

Workforce development - Team Building and working together, identify those that would be a “good fit” for the community. In order to do this, communities and regional organizations need to develop market segments.

Web Class 3: Hiring in Louisiana, workman’s compensation, tax incentives for hiring ‘risky’ employees

Module 7: Pricing strategy – Business development specialists working in developing financial projections will facilitate these sessions. By the end of this module, participants will have an understanding of how to cover the cost of goods sold and profit.

What business certification is right for me? Getting certified as a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE), Minority Business Enterprise (MBE), Women Owned Small Business (WOSB), State of Louisiana Certification (LAUCP), city of Monroe certification and green or ecofriendly certifications.

Module 8: Capital Solutions: Ready to apply for the small business loans, SBIR or ... increasing awareness of basic credit practices and credit requirements, increasing

awareness of capital raising options under Federal securities laws, and assisting in the development of business plans, financial packages, and credit applications.

Graduation Day

DREAMS Accelerated – Overview – Ready for funds: The DREAMS Consortium - After conducting the intake and scoping sessions, each Venture will develop a work plan including at least 3 major goals for the program in finance, social impact, and racial equity. Accelerator businesses ready to expand and/or scale SEDD will invites entrepreneurs and leaders from mission-driven organizations to apply for Realized, an interactive 4-week program that helps startup entrepreneurs bring their idea from vision to reality and helps existing entrepreneurs scale their impact and reach. These modules will be held weekly reaching at least __ entrepreneurs

Module 1: During this workshop, participants will learn what it means to become bankable and how the personal finances of the entrepreneur are connected to the business. This session includes a deep dive into the components of a personal financial statement and why it is such a critical part of the funding package for small businesses. Participants will also learn how to examine the financial needs of their business, how to convey funding needs through a strategic business plan, and how to make the case for the estimated repayment plan.

Module 2: During this session, participants gain insights into how to get their business finances in order including ensuring that your balance sheet, income statement, and statement of cash flows are accurate. Attendees will receive tips on accounting systems, banking, equity needs and other important aspects of becoming bankable. Attendees will also examine the debt-to-income ratio versus the debt service coverage, as well as, one's personal credit score versus the business' credit score. This interactive session will also allow participants to begin the process of developing their own personal and business budgets to form the foundation of their financial statements.

Module 3: The final session of the series will focus on assisting participants in developing a plan of action for improving their financial position over the next 6-12 months and provides participants with final guidance on developing a funding package. This session will also cover best practices in finalizing a loan package, obtaining support, and how to prepare for follow up questions. Common mistakes and items overlooked will be revealed so that participants know what to avoid.

Module 4: Completing the loan paperwork

DREAMS Realized - Participant Description: Calling all business owners whether sole proprietors or employer companies who may have participated in varying ecosystem support programs via online through the SBA, New Voices or other programs. These are the entrepreneurs who have been hard at work and now, at long last, have access to funds. They may elect to have the DREAMS Business Advisors assist them with a particular area of focus to expand upon their existing enterprise to include the addition of an employee or add another product range. This workshop is

designed for emerging businesses that have moved beyond the earliest stages of getting established and need more sophisticated guidance and peer support to scale up the business with a view toward equity fundraising, selling the business, or filing for an initial public offering. Services may include advisory guidance around growth and expansion, exit strategies, exploring new markets, providing a network of specialized mentors, vendors and peer support, industry-specific curriculum, workforce development and preparing companies for institutional level due diligence, pitches for seed/accelerating investors or the sale of the company.

Service Providers: Each Venture has an allocated \$1,000 budgets for Generator and \$1,100 to compensate Subject Matter Experts for their time and/or to attain memberships, registrations, and filing fees. Use of the stipend outside of SME projects must be connected to work plan goals and must be reviewed and approved by DREAMS staff. Subject Matter Expert projects must be connected to work plan goals and Ventures must discuss their projects with their Mentors and DREAMS staff before requesting a Subject Matter Expert match up. DREAMS staff will coordinate with entrepreneurs to identify service providers for approved projects including deliverables and timelines to ensure completion and billing during the weeks following participation in one of the DREAMS courses.

One-on-one business counseling that is industry-specific. Interested and eligible entrepreneurs who do not have requisite certifications will be invited to participate in sign up afternoons wherein DREAMS project director and manager will be available to assist in applications. Additionally, the DREAMS team will facilitate requirements for business insurance whether general liability, workers' compensation and bonding assistance.

Objective 2: Access to Networks:

ii. *Extend Trust:* Prospects to enter these market-driven businesses has been unfair and exclusionary to African Americans who do care about the environment. America's tumultuous history with structural racism and disenfranchisement from networks, particularly in fields such as technology and the not-so-friendly to Black people 'green' spaces. Plus, embarking upon such businesses is capital intensive and draws heavily upon who one knows. Black entrepreneurs are underrepresented in employer firms of all types. The growth estimates needed to achieve business equity assume growth in high-revenue industries, which will require a much heavier lift than other sectors. The high-revenue industries of utilities, wholesale trade, and manufacturing demand larger sums of startup capital and access to networks of subject matter experts, small business owners in these sectors and government.

Every component, activity and event of DREAMS Realized will make certain that the 'who to know' in varying business disciplines are in the room with SEDI entrepreneurs. These real time interactions whether through mentorships, small business owners facilitating a small group session or government officials attending DREAMS Realized events will build and rebuild trust in the process and the system. All institutions operating in the business ecosystem can help mend the trust gap by extending trust to Black business owners through sustained action. SEDI entrepreneurs often lament unfavorable experiences of mistreatment as though their businesses are inferior or needing to prove their intellect and competence which has been noted as discouraging. Effective

network of contacts in the investment ecosystem that the applicant and/or strategic alliances can leverage to provide program participants with capital raising opportunities increasing awareness of basic credit practices and credit requirements, increasing awareness of capital raising options under Federal securities laws, and assisting in the development of business plans, financial packages, and credit applications.

DREAMS Realized events will facilitate the formation of professional relationships, strategic alliances, mentorships, corporate partnerships, joint ventures and agreements through the following networking sessions, technical support provision, peer support groups, social media campaigns and more.

Technical Support: subject matter expertise modules (coordination between awardees and other Federal agency programs and networks to supplement awardees' existing networks of subject matter experts), Each entrepreneur will be assigned a coach to meet with remotely once per week for 60-minute sessions. DREAMS will train community leaders to facilitate different types of community dialogues that can generate general awareness, identify and solve problems, build relationships, share knowledge and ideas, shape visions, resolve conflicts, make collective decisions or draw up action plans.

Networking: Broadening personal and professional networks, including introductions to key stakeholders to facilitate strategic alliances between entrepreneurs and well-established companies to form mentor protégé agreements. Mentorship program and to assist ventures in establishing governing and technical advisory boards. Coaching with a holistic understanding of entrepreneurship, with strong mindfulness and solution-oriented approaches towards personal and professional challenges faced by entrepreneurs, especially issues that disproportionately impact SEDI entrepreneurs and ventures.

Peer Support: Building social cohesion in the greater Monroe region through entrepreneurs who are leaders within the communities. *Work Force Cultivation and Development* to attract workforce and talent to the region will be held. *Social Media Campaign:* Reaching thousands, DREAMS will use electronic means including the internet, cell phones and other technologies for people to give input, vote and make recommendations toward a particular community issue or resolution. Interactive conversations will be held with community stations and a call in 'hot line' will be provided. DREAMS also notes that community dialogues can have an array of purposes and agendas all with the aim of building confidence in people speaking out and resolving the issues in their lives, households and within the larger communities.

SEDD and the Black Chamber of Commerce have networks of talented professionals to support SEDI entrepreneurs to achieve their goals as identified in their work plans. Subject Matter Experts will be consultants within various areas of expertise who will work outreach strategies to maximize participation of SEDI entrepreneurs and increase the likelihood of success with Ventures on short-term projects during the program.

Other networks that may be beneficial to program participants include the Home Builders' Association, LEED, Contractors, etc. Proposed alliances within the region including with FIFA as the 2026 World Cup will be held in North American cities such as Houston and Atlanta. DREAMS

will reach out to the Tourism Agency to promote driving along the I-20 Corridor as a way to see and experience the U.S.

Participation in DREAMS Realized does not stop at graduation. Rather, entrepreneurs will be guided throughout the life of the project to access networks to attain contracts and win bids to ensure success. PTAC and MPOL are state wide agencies that entrepreneurs will be referred to.

Objective 3 – Access to Capital:

iii. *Access to Capital* - DBE programs and small business training will never be enough to close the racial wealth gap in America—that’s just tinkering at the edges.¹⁵ President Joe Biden’s \$2 trillion infrastructure proposal promises to create opportunities for small businesses and advance racial equity. The DREAMS team agrees that one-way to accomplish both of these objectives is to invest in Black-owned businesses, which has been lacking historically. Accessing capital (for-profit and nonprofit), contracts, customers, and community, are key components of DREAMS, and we accomplish this through a vast and experienced network of mentors, strategy consultants, subject matter experts, program staff, a community of entrepreneurs, and curriculum. Our program enables entrepreneurs to build ventures grounded in financial viability, social impact, racial equity, and a demonstrated commitment to the prosperity of our city and region.

DREAMS will facilitate meetings between ‘graduates’ of the incubator, accelerator and those who are ready to realize their dreams of at last, having access to funds to expand or scale-up their ventures. This includes accessing the gov’t funding from the Louisiana SSBCI. Restoring trust within the system that has disappointed so many SEDI entrepreneurs, especially in Louisiana where examples of successfully navigating the funding is rare to nonexistent. The DREAMS team will facilitate meetings with investors, host and prepare entrepreneurs for their pitches from the ‘elevator’ version to a longer pitch guided by a Power Point presentation. DREAMS will host an annual pitch competition and a Demo-day to showcase the products and services of participating entrepreneurs.

It is worthy to note that there are no CDFIs in Monroe. The closest would be in Natchitoches. DREAMS will collaborate and connect with SSBCI Capital Programs that service the overall Louisiana jurisdiction and other government programs supporting small businesses. Each participating venture will be referred to apply for grants, loans and investors.

iv. *Performance Metrics*: All required project performance reporting to MBDA shall be conducted via the Internet using the designated Performance System that will be provided by the MBDA. The Project Manager (PM) will be responsible for all data entry from each event, training and activity. The PM will ensure that data are entered into the mainframe immediately following events, actions and activities especially feedback from enrolled SEDI individuals and businesses. Data gathered will be reviewed and analyzed on a monthly basis to make adjustments as needed for continuous improvements. Means of verification include registration forms, sign-in sheets, participant’s evaluation from each module, webinar and session. In addition, a quarterly survey will be sent to each participant throughout the life of the project to capture amount of capital raised,

¹⁵ Ashleigh Gardere, Senior Advisor to the President, PolicyLink

number of jobs created and qualitative data such as contracts attained that the entrepreneurs are keen to share. Data on newly registered companies will also be verified using the Louisiana State Department and information from loan applications will be tracked. The table below presents performance metrics with year 1 and overall programmatic goals:

Metrics	Year 1 Goal	Total Goal
#of SEDI entrepreneurs enrolled in the project	141	+585 participants ¹⁶
#of SEDI entrepreneurs that graduate from the project	119	+490 graduates
#of networking events held	18	+77 events held
#of SEDI entrepreneur or business pitches to capital providers	72	+294
#of SEDI-owned businesses formed and/or scaled	10	+40
Total amount of capital raised (equity investment, debt, grants)	80,000	+\$300,000
#of jobs created – (other performance measure)	5	+20 new jobs

F. Networks and Collaboration with Capital Ecosystem

i. The DREAMS Realized team is well versed on the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Louisiana and seeks to scaleup the offerings for entrepreneurs in Monroe. JDS Advisers has deep connections into Louisiana Economic Development (LED) who will be responsible for the state’s *SSBCI Capital Program*. DREAMS Realized team is aware that the SSBCI Capital Program is a component of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 reauthorized and expanded SSBCI to increase access to capital and promote entrepreneurship, especially in traditionally underserved communities as they emerge from the pandemic. U.S. Treasury guidelines ensure that very small businesses with fewer than 10 employees (VSBs) and small businesses owned by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals (SEDI) will receive critical resources to sustainably grow and thrive. Louisiana received official U.S. Treasury approval for up to \$113 million in SSBCI funds on Dec. 6, 2022. Access to the full \$113 million is dependent on state disbursements meeting federal funding benchmarks for VSBs and SEDI whose access to capital is a point of emphasis. Louisiana-based small businesses with fewer than 100 employees qualify. Establishes a revolving loan fund with Louisiana Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) and other qualifying lenders, to provide financial assistance to very small businesses with either start-up or expansion business needs micro lending for between \$1,000 and \$100,000.

Thus, DREAMS Realized will be the referral system for businesses in the greater Monroe area to access funding from this vehicle. In addition, DREAMS Realized has connections with local banks and regional venture capital firms and angel investors. The project will draw attention to Monroe as a city that is open for business and seeking equity for all of its residents.

¹⁶ The project assumes that participants from the Generator workshop could be counted three times within the course of the funding.

G. Applicant Capability

i. *Applicant Profile*: The DREAMS Realized program comes out of the experiences and capacities of a very strong and capable consortium, with international experience, Louisiana specific knowledge, a deep understanding of community mobilization and the unique sensibilities around SEDI business development. Led by Project Possible, the Consortium will have overall project planning, management, leadership, and reporting responsibility. Through the Project Director, DREAMS will manage and lead the implementation of all program components from outreach to local entrepreneurs and would be business owners, the engagement of local leaders through to the coordination of activities with consortium partners and liaising with MBDA and other government officials.

Project Possible is a Louisiana based community development corporation with 501(c) (3) status, formed in 2019. This small organization has undertaken a big mission of improving the quality of life for Louisianians, particularly African Americans. Project Possible maybe the quintessential SEDI story given that the founder, Executive Director Dr. Dorothy Nairne has managed community development programs, job creation and HIV prevention interventions in more than 10 African countries over 30 years. She has worked in the U.S. with founding and growing Project Possible which seeks to establish itself as a key partner in economic development and a technical leader in capacity building for SEDI to startup and scaleup ecofriendly innovative enterprises. Over the past five years Project Possible has: Roddenberry Foundation (2019, \$15,000); New Voices Family (2019, \$5,000). Dr. Nairne has an excellent track record in project implementation and financial management, and maintains superb relationships with donors including: the Bloomberg Foundation, USAID/South Africa, UNHCR. She has a Ph.D. in economic development and has worked extensively in community development, with focus on women's empowerment, men's participation, ecofriendly business development and job creation.

JDS Advisers is an LLC company registered in 1995 to respond to the business development requirements of socially and economically disadvantaged individuals. successful track record in working with early-stage businesses or working with emerging businesses that are poised to raise Capital, that have successfully raised Capital. Provided technical support to +100 SEDI-owned businesses in the Monroe region. Ms. Sonya Jacobs is a seasoned small business banker with Chase for over 20 years. For the past 9 years she has worked with 1,220 SEDI enterprises with a current database of over 200 clients helped 160 to attain the funding during COVID-19.

Delta Builds Enterprises is a Louisiana based LLC and serves as the industry partner with expertise and networks in ecofriendly manufacturing and recycling. Delta Builds awaits news on being the first and only African American owned firm to be a supplier recycling glass at the New Orleans Convention Center and to use advanced manufacturing to localize the \$500 million per year spent in China on Mardi Gras throws. Plus, the glass will be processed into grits and grades of sand and gravel for stormwater management. These are all business activities that can be started and thrive in Monroe.

Southside Economic Development District (SEDD): network of contacts in the investment ecosystem that the applicant and/or strategic alliances can leverage to provide program participants

with capital raising opportunities Leverage local business partners and Chambers to recruit participants for DREAM, promote startup entrepreneurial career pathways at HBCUs, community colleges, and in K-12 programs. Increase engagement with Regional Black Chamber of Commerce through mentorship opportunities and informational series. SEDD was established in response to legislative initiative shall prepare a plan specifying the public improvements, facilities, and services proposed to be furnished, constructed, or acquired shall conduct public hearings, publish notices with respect thereto, and disseminate such information assist, The mission of SEDD is to provide a path out of poverty for district residents by improving economic opportunities, critical infrastructure and access to capital, and neighborhood improvement resources.

iii. *Applicant Track Record and background working with SEDI entrepreneurs:*

The DREAMS Consortium members have worked with hundreds of SEDI entrepreneurs professionally offering technical support and business development assistance. In their personal capacities, they are well aware of the trust gap between Black business owners and the institutions in their business ecosystem is a rational, learned response to a racist society. It is ultimately informed by a combination of personal and shared experiences with racism, harassment, and discrimination. JDS Adviser CEO Mrs. Sonya Jacobs has worked with more than 1000 SEDI entrepreneurs navigating the rough terrain of banking, homeownership and launching startups. Delta Builds will be able to draw upon personal experiences starting up a ‘green’ business in Louisiana. Project Possible has years of experience taking and offering classes to build businesses.

SEDD has more than the long game in mind when working with hundreds of businesses on the southside of Monroe, corporate partners, government instrumentations and nonprofits. Culturally appropriate, upbeat and inspiring support to SEDI entrepreneurs who may feel as if they are languishing rather than thriving.

- iv. *Consortium and Organizational Structure:* implementation partners in the DREAMS Consortium – JDS Advisers, Project Possible and Delta Builds will each have a clear scope of work, well defined roles and responsibilities, activity work plans, timelines, and lists of deliverables.

Management Structure: Project Possible will serve as the lead applicant and will be responsible for maintaining separate records of disbursements related to the grant, keep receipts for at least three (3) years following receipt of the grant, make financial records available to MBDA upon request, disburse funds in accordance with the purpose of the grant application, disburse funds solely at the direction of the lead partner on this project. The Project Director will be hired by JDS Advisers and will receive guidance and input from a Technical Advisory Board comprised of senior staff from SEDD, Project Possible, Delta Builds as well as other subject matter experts. The Consortium Board will meet quarterly to review project progress during the four-year period. The Project Director will be supported by four staff: Project Manager, Community Liaison; the part-time Fiscal Administrator will be employed by Project Possible.

The finances will be managed by the Fiscal Administrator using web based Quick Books, which promotes the highest standards of financial stewardship and accountability and ensures compliance with MBDA and USG standards. The Quick Books system includes a state-of-the art accounting

system that separates funding by source, supports program budgeting, and allows managers to relate expenditures to specific areas, such as workshop costs, services for providers or supplies. Project Possible's Fiscal Administrator is to be determined, but will have extensive experience managing federal grants and giving oversight to projects with multiple partners. All financial transactions will be managed in strict adherence to USG standard financial procedures including monthly financial reports to track project expenditures in line with budgets and quarterly analyses. Cost-containment efforts include seeking the most advantageous prices for services and products, for example, by using competitively selected DBE certified vendors, working with a network of local partners to minimize overhead, and using JDS Adviser's established infrastructure in Monroe to reduce start-up costs and increasing value for effort.

iv. *Pending investigations*: There are no pending investigations amongst the DREAMS Realized Consortium Members.

H. Sustainability

Long after the funding is spent, the legacy of DREAMS Realized will be a vibrant entrepreneurship ecosystem led by SEDD. As a government sub-division, SEDD has enormous potential to be a force throughout the region to bring business development and capacity building from Shreveport to Jackson, Mississippi. The lasting impact of DREAMS Realized will be on the 548 participants of the capacity building pillar who startup and build businesses. This investment from MBDA would kickstart a brand-new movement and momentum to grow the region, especially the southside, and to have the first African American company that exits. This is the creation of wealth and a major step in closing the widening wealth gap. The legacy of DREAMS Realized would be long-term benefits on those who were given a chance to generate an idea with the technical support of a business professional and the guidance of a mentor followed by actual funds to make the operation happen. This project will create jobs and restore hope that even in Louisiana where life for African Americans is tough, change is possible and dreams can be realized.

DREAMS Realized – Timeline

TASKS and MILESTONES	2023		2024				2025				2026				2027	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
1. Start-up, Compliance and Close-out																
Sign cooperative agreement and finalize workplan and PMP, submit to MBDA																
Hiring and orientation of staff																
Convene DREAMS Board, Consortium and strategic partners meetings and working sessions																
Procure equipment and set-up office																
Attend MBDA/Depart of Commerce grants management workshops																
Establish a formal barrier reduction referral network including child care providers, transportation, social services, social worker/therapist, etc.																
Travel to Washington, DC for MBDA Capital Readiness Kick Off Meeting and annual MBDA events																
Finalize and annually update communications, promotional materials, public relations and outreach strategies																
Conduct quarterly progress and financial reports and submit annual and semi-annual reports																
Submit final agreement completion report to MBDA and close out program and conduct close out meetings																
Develop/support M&E system for informing programming and decision making																
Conduct evaluations, share results, work with leadership councils to strengthen programming based on evaluation results																
Identify, document and disseminate lessons learned and best practices																
2. Capacity Building																
Finalize materials and curricula for Generator, Incubator and Accelerator training workshops																

DREAMS Realized – Timeline

Mobilize and engage communities, social networks, leaders,																		
Engage with and sign agreements with subject matter experts and business advisors to facilitate modules, participate on panels and facilitate small group and one-on-one sessions with entrepreneurs																		
Orientation and monthly check in meetings for all facilitators, trainers, advisors, subject matter experts and DREAMS team and board members																		
Recruit and enroll participants in Generator, Incubator, Accelerator and Realized training workshops																		
Hold Generator, Incubator, Accelerator and Realized training workshops including group modules, small group web-based sessions, one-on-one coaching, mentoring and special support sessions																		
Subject matter experts, engineers and business advisors deliver business registration, marketing, operational, expansion, product development, financial services to entrepreneurs																		
Implement capacity building plans using a mix of evidence-based methods and monitor progress over time																		
Monitoring of all capacity building activities																		
3. Access to Networks																		
Outreach to engage with communities, schools, krewes, social organizations, clubs, professional associations, engineers without borders, universities and community colleges and nonprofits																		
Conduct special outreach events at schools, community centers and in the offices of JDS Advisers, Black Chamber of Commerce, etc.																		
Explore public and private partnerships to provide support and resources to entrepreneurs																		
Liaise with organizations within the entrepreneurial ecosystem such as the Urban League of Louisiana to outline specific areas for collaboration																		

DREAMS Realized – Timeline

Compile a database of corporate, professional, small businesses to serve as subject matter experts, panel participants, mentors and business advisors																			
Graduation Day events																			
Demo Day and Pitch Competition																			
Promote membership to economic development and business organizations and associations such as the Black Chamber of Commerce, etc.																			
Integrate information on entrepreneurship into community development, civil rights, environmental justice, peer education and other group activities																			
4. Access to Capital																			
Establish systems for easing the application process for entrepreneurs																			
Facilitate routine meetings between private, for-profit, and non-profit actors to support innovative financing strategies for entrepreneurs																			
Hold monthly first Tuesday office hours and one-on-one sessions to assist entrepreneurs to apply for SSBCI and other funds																			
Leverage existing programs in Louisiana throughout the region and nationally to access capital for entrepreneurs																			
Collaborate with Consortium members in outlining potential roles and areas for coordination to capitalize on strengths and contributions																			
Introduce and facilitate pitch meetings between entrepreneurs and VCs and angel investors																			
Assist entrepreneurs to access government and private contracts																			
Leverage additional funds to extend the DREAMS Realized Project into the northern Louisiana region and neighboring rural towns into Arkansas, Texas and Mississippi.																			

DREAMS – Logic Model

Problem: Socially and economically disadvantaged individuals have been systemically and structurally excluded from starting and growing businesses throughout the U.S.

Goal: To close the gaps in entrepreneurial opportunities for socially and economically disadvantaged individual (SEDI) entrepreneurs to unleash a new era of business growth, job creation, and wealth in the greater Monroe, Louisiana region.

Metrics	Means of Verification	Goal
#of SEDI entrepreneurs enrolled in the project	Registration forms, Sign-in/attendance sheets, reports	+585 participants ¹
#of SEDI entrepreneurs that graduate from the project	Sign-in/attendance sheets, reports, graduation certificates	+409 graduates
#of networking events held	Sign-in/attendance sheets, reports	+77 events held
#of SEDI entrepreneurs pitching to capital providers	Reports, assessments, sign-in/attendance sheets	+294
#of SEDI-owned businesses formed and/or scaled	Registration of businesses with state of Louisiana	+40 registered, +_ scaled
Total amount of capital raised (equity investment, debt, grants)	Receipts, reports, records from entrepreneurs and SSBCI	+\$300,000
#of jobs created	Reports and records from entrepreneurs	+20 new jobs

Rationale and Assumptions:

- 112 Generators, 134 Incubators and 129 Accelerators and 219 Realized Advisees – As entrepreneurs progress from one program to the next, they will be re-counted.
- Participants who successfully ‘graduate’ from the Generator will also be invited into the Incubator, Accelerator and ultimately have their DREAMS Realized, this project assumes that 70% will complete each course.
- 18 Graduation days for each workshop, 8 Demo Days, 3 annual Pitch competitions and First Tuesday of every month the DREAMS Realized component will host office hours to assist entrepreneurs apply for funding.
- +1 pitch per entrepreneur – from Incubator graduates - Pitching will be a requirement to successfully complete the course.
- Participants will be encouraged to collaborate which will consolidate the number of businesses registered.
- 30 ventures X \$10,000 per venture = \$300,000
- +1 job per newly established and/or expanded businesses

Resources	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes/Impact
Funds for establishing and implementing DREAMS training workshop to Generate ideas into businesses	Outreach to SEDI sub-groups to drive participants to DREAMS Generator – Enroll participants into 12-week workshop to generate business ideas	112 SEDIs enrolled in Generator	Reduction in crime Lower recidivism rate Jobs created Income generated Hope restored

¹ The project assumes that participants from the Generator workshop could be counted three times within the course of the funding.

DREAMS – Logic Model

	Implement, evaluate and graduate participants		
\$1000 per entrepreneur and stipends for service providers	Service providers and subject matter experts offer technical assistance and support to entrepreneurs (operational agreements, registration, business plans, marketing plans, financial projections)	Businesses newly registered with Louisiana State Department SEDI entrepreneurs mentored and supported to startup, grow, scaleup their businesses	Entrepreneurs attaining the American dream, self-sufficient, thriving, reduction in crime.
DREAMS staff salary, wages and fringe benefits	Outreach to SEDI sole proprietors, startups, graduates, Enroll participants into 8-week Incubator and 12-week Generator, 4-week Accelerator workshops to launch and expand businesses	585 participants enrolled in Incubators	A sense of hope restored in Monroe amongst the most vulnerable of SEDI.
Human resources Social media campaigns	DREAMS Realized hosts First Tuesdays Events to assist	96 SEDIs counseled and supported to apply for grants, loans and venture capital funding +\$300,000 in loans, grants and capital	Businesses excelling and contributing to the growth of Monroe’s economy
Payment for Service Providers and Subject Matter Experts	Service providers and subject matter experts Registration for \$100 for State of Louisiana Department of State Generator Entrepreneurs X \$1000 for service providers; Y3 and Y4 - 32 Generator Entrepreneurs X \$1000 for service providers	40 newly registered businesses	Jobs created Additional funds invested into Monroe Market-driven, ecofriendly businesses growing led by SEDIs launching in Monroe
Funds for Events	Events held Demo Day, Pitches, Open Houses for completing loan applications, Graduation Days	70 events held	SEDI children and youth in Monroe able to see entrepreneurship as a viable opportunity

External Factors: No natural disasters whether flooding after heavy downpours, hurricanes or tornados to destroy the area, political stability, safety within the neighborhoods, participation of the project grows including universities and colleges, corporate partners join the project including FIFA as the World Cup will be held in the region, the Black Chamber of Commerce, a representative from the banking industry will join the consortium

Grant Program: MBDA Capital Readiness DREAMS Realized in Monroe – Year One		Catalog of Federal	Estimated Unobligated Funds		New or Revised Budget		
Function		Domestic Assistance					
or Activity		Number	Federal	Non-Federal	Federal	Non-Federal	Total
(a)		(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)
1.	MBDA Capital Readiness				\$497,973	\$45,270	\$543,243
2.							\$0
3.							\$0
4.							\$0
5.	TOTALS		\$0		\$497,973	\$45,270	\$543,243
SECTION B - BUDGET CATEGORIES							
			GRANT PROGRAM, FUNCTION OR ACTIVITY				Total
6.	OBJECT CLASS CATEGORIES		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
a.	Personnel		\$247,680				\$247,680
b.	Fringe Benefits		\$76,781				\$76,781
c.	Travel		\$12,156				\$12,156
d.	Equipment						\$0

e.	Supplies		\$7,348				\$7,348
f.	Contractual		\$0				\$0
g.	Construction						\$0
h.	Other		\$108,738				\$108,738
i.	Total Direct Charges (sum of 6a-6h)		\$452,703	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$452,703
j.	Indirect Charges	10.0%	\$45,270	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$45,270
k.	TOTALS (sum of 6i and 6j)		\$497,973	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$497,973
7. PROGRAM INCOME							\$0
							Standard Form 424A (Rev. 7-97)
Previous Edition Usable			Authorized for Local Reproduction			Prescribed by OMB Circular A-102 Page 1	
SECTION C - NON FEDERAL RESOURCES							
(a) Grant Program				(b) Applicant	(c) State	(d) Other sources	(e) TOTALS
8.	MBDA Capital Readiness						\$0
9.							\$0

10.							\$0
11.							\$0
12. TOTALS (sum of lines 8 - 11)				\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
SECTION D - FORECASTED CASH NEEDS							
			Total for 1st Year	1st Quarter	2nd Quarter	3rd Quarter	4th Quarter
13. Federal			\$497,973	\$124,493	\$124,493	\$124,493	\$124,493
14. Non-Federal			\$45,270	\$11,318	\$11,318	\$11,318	\$11,318
15. TOTAL (sum of lines 13 and 14)			\$543,243	\$135,811	\$135,811	\$135,811	\$135,811
SECTION E - BUDGET ESTIMATES OF FEDERAL FUNDS NEEDED FOR BALANCE OF THE PROJECT							
(a) Grant Program				FUTURE FUNDING PERIODS (Years)			
				(b) First	(c) Second	(d) Third	(e) Fourth
16.	MBDA Capital Readiness						
17.							
18.							
19.							
20. TOTALS (sum of lines 16 - 19)				\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
SECTION F - OTHER BUDGET INFORMATION							
21. Direct Charges:		\$452,703		22. Indirect Charges		\$45,270	

				Calculated at rate of	10.0%		
23. Remarks				Base=MTDC (Excludes equipment and subcontract funds in excess of \$25,000)			

Grant Program – MBDA Capital Readiness DREAMS Realized in Monroe – Year Two		Catalog of Federal	Estimated Unobligated Funds		New or Revised Budget		
Function or Activity		Domestic Assistance Number	Federal	Non- Federal	Federal	Non- Federal	Total
(a)		(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)
1.	MBDA Capital Readiness				\$481,135	\$43,740	\$524,875
2.							\$0
3.							\$0
4.							\$0
5.	TOTALS		\$0	\$0	\$481,135	\$43,740	\$524,875
SECTION B - BUDGET CATEGORIES							
			GRANT PROGRAM, FUNCTION OR ACTIVITY				Total
6.	OBJECT CLASS CATEGORIES		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

a.	Personnel				\$252,634		\$252,634
b.	Fringe Benefits				\$78,316		\$78,316
c.	Travel				\$8,104		\$8,104
d.	Equipment				\$0		\$0
e.	Supplies				\$0		\$0
f.	Contractual		\$0		\$0		\$0
g.	Construction				\$0		\$0
h.	Other				\$98,341		\$98,341
i.	Total Direct Charges (sum of 6a-6h)		\$0	\$0	\$437,395	\$0	\$437,395
j.	Indirect Charges	10.0%	\$0	\$0	\$43,740	\$0	\$43,740
k.	TOTALS (sum of 6i and 6j)		\$0	\$0	\$481,135	\$0	\$481,135
7. PROGRAM INCOME							\$0
						Standard Form 424A (Rev. 7-97)	
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SECTION C - NON FEDERAL RESOURCES							

(a) Grant Program				(b) Applicant	(c) State	(d) Other sources	(e) TOTALS
8.	MBDA Capital Readiness			\$43,740			\$43,740
9.							\$0
10.							\$0
11.							\$0
12. TOTALS (sum of lines 8 - 11)				\$43,740	\$0	\$0	\$43,740
SECTION D - FORECASTED CASH NEEDS							
			Total for 1st Year	1st Quarter	2nd Quarter	3rd Quarter	4th Quarter
13. Federal			\$481,135	\$120,284	\$120,284	\$120,284	\$120,284
14. Non-Federal			\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
15. TOTAL (sum of lines 13 and 14)			\$481,135	\$120,284	\$120,284	\$120,284	\$120,284
SECTION E - BUDGET ESTIMATES OF FEDERAL FUNDS NEEDED FOR BALANCE OF THE PROJECT							
(a) Grant Program				FUTURE FUNDING PERIODS (Years)			
				(b) First	(c) Second	(d) Third	(e) Fourth
16.	MBDA Capital Readiness						
17.							
18.							

19.							
20. TOTALS (sum of lines 16 - 19)				\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
SECTION F - OTHER BUDGET INFORMATION							
21. Direct Charges:		\$437,395		22. Indirect Charges		\$0	
				Calculate d at rate of	10.0%		
23. Remarks				Base=MTDC (Excludes equipment and subcontract funds in excess of \$25,000)			
			Authorized for Local Reproduction				Standard Form 424A (Rev. 7- 97) Page 2

Grant Program – MBDA Capital Readiness DREAMS Realized in Monroe – Year Three		Catalog of Federal	Estimated Unobligated Funds		New or Revised Budget		
Function or Activity		Domestic Assistance Number	Federal	Non- Federal	Federal	Non-Federal	Total
(a)		(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)
1.	MBDA Capital Readiness				\$507,283	\$46,117	\$553,400

2.							\$0
3.							\$0
4.							\$0
5. TOTALS			\$0	\$0	\$507,283	\$46,117	\$553,400
SECTION B - BUDGET CATEGORIES							
			GRANT PROGRAM, FUNCTION OR ACTIVITY				Total
6. OBJECT CLASS CATEGORIES			(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
a.	Personnel				\$257,686		
b.	Fringe Benefits				\$79,883		
c.	Travel				\$8,104		\$8,104
d.	Equipment				\$0		\$0
e.	Supplies				\$0		\$0
f.	Contractual		\$0		\$0		\$0
g.	Construction				\$0		\$0
h.	Other				\$115,493		\$115,493
i.	Total Direct Charges (sum of 6a-6h)		\$0	\$0	\$461,166	\$0	\$461,166
j.	Indirect Charges	10.0%	\$0	\$0	\$46,117	\$0	\$46,117

k.	TOTALS (sum of 6i and 6j)		\$0	\$0	\$507,283	\$0	\$507,283
7. PROGRAM INCOME							\$0
						Standard Form 424A (Rev. 7-97)	
Previous Edition Usable			Authorized for Local Reproduction			Prescribed by OMB Circular A-102 Page 1	
SECTION C - NON FEDERAL RESOURCES							
(a) Grant Program				(b) Applicant	(c) State	(d) Other sources	(e) TOTAL S
8.	MBDA Capital Readiness			\$46,117			\$46,117
9.							\$0
10.							\$0
11.							\$0
12. TOTALS (sum of lines 8 - 11)				\$46,117	\$0	\$0	\$46,117
SECTION D - FORECASTED CASH NEEDS							
			Total for 1st Year	1st Quarter	2nd Quarter	3rd Quarter	4th Quarter
13. Federal			\$507,283	\$126,821	\$126,821	\$126,821	\$126,821
14. NonFederal			\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

15. TOTAL (sum of lines 13 and 14)			\$507,283	\$126,821	\$126,821	\$126,821	\$126,821
SECTION E - BUDGET ESTIMATES OF FEDERAL FUNDS NEEDED FOR BALANCE OF THE PROJECT							
(a) Grant Program				FUTURE FUNDING PERIODS (Years)			
				(b) First	(c) Second	(d) Third	(e) Fourth
16.	MBDA Capital Readiness						
17.							
18.							
19.							
20. TOTALS (sum of lines 16 - 19)				\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
SECTION F - OTHER BUDGET INFORMATION							
21. Direct Charges:		\$461,166		22. Indirect Charges		\$0	
				Calculated at rate of	10.0%		

Grant Program – MBDA Capital Readiness DREAMS Realized in Monroe – Year Four	Catalog of Federal	Estimated Unobligated Funds		New or Revised Budget		
		Federal	Non-Federal	Federal	Non-Federal	Total
Function	Domestic Assistance					
or Activity	Number	Federal	Non-Federal	Federal	Non-Federal	Total
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)

1.	MBDA Capital Readiness Program				\$467,917	\$46,792	\$514,709
2.							\$0
3.							\$0
4.							\$0
5.	TOTALS		\$0	\$0	\$467,917	\$46,792	\$514,709
SECTION B - BUDGET CATEGORIES							
			GRANT PROGRAM, FUNCTION OR ACTIVITY				Total
6.	OBJECT CLASS CATEGORIES		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
a.	Personnel				\$262,840		\$262,840
b.	Fringe Benefits				\$81,480		\$81,480
c.	Travel				\$8,104		\$8,104
d.	Equipment				\$0		\$0
e.	Supplies				\$0		\$0
f.	Contractual		\$0		\$0		\$0
g.	Construction				\$0		\$0
h.	Other				\$115,493		\$115,493

i.	Total Direct Charges (sum of 6a-6h)		\$0	\$0	\$467,917	\$0	\$467,917
j.	Indirect Charges	10.0%	\$0	\$0	\$46,792	\$0	\$46,792
k.	TOTALS (sum of 6i and 6j)		\$0	\$0	\$514,709	\$0	\$514,709
7. PROGRAM INCOME							\$0
							Standard Form 424A (Rev. 7-97)
Previous Edition Usable			Authorized for Local Reproduction			Prescribed by OMB Circular A-102 Page 1	
SECTION C - NON FEDERAL RESOURCES							
(a) Grant Program				(b) Applicant	(c) State	(d) Other sources	(e) TOTAL S
8.	MBDA Capital Readiness Program			\$46,792			\$46,792
9.							\$0
10.							\$0
11.							\$0
12. TOTALS (sum of lines 8 - 11)				\$46,792	\$0	\$0	\$46,792
SECTION D - FORECASTED CASH NEEDS							

			Total for 1st Year	1st Quarter	2nd Quarter	3rd Quarter	4th Quarter
13. Federal			\$514,709	\$128,677	\$128,677	\$128,677	\$128,677
14. NonFederal			\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
15. TOTAL (sum of lines 13 and 14)			\$514,709	\$128,677	\$128,677	\$128,677	\$128,677
SECTION E - BUDGET ESTIMATES OF FEDERAL FUNDS NEEDED FOR BALANCE OF THE PROJECT							
(a) Grant Program				FUTURE FUNDING PERIODS (Years)			
				(b) First	(c) Second	(d) Third	(e) Fourth
16.	MBDA Capital Readiness Program						
17.							
18.							
19.							
20. TOTALS (sum of lines 16 - 19)				\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
SECTION F - OTHER BUDGET INFORMATION							
21. Direct Charges:		\$467,917		22. Indirect Charges		\$0	
				Calculated at rate of	10.0%		

BUDGET NARRATIVE

I. Personnel: The Proposal requests a full-time team including a Project Director at the competitive annual rate of \$76,800, a Project Manager at \$67,200, a Community Liaison at \$46,080 and a part-time Fiscal Administrator paid \$48 per hour for 960 hours per annum costing \$57,600 to the project. Cost of living increases have been calculated for each year. Personnel costs are calculated for years 1-4 in the following table:

	\$	\$	\$	\$
\$ 247,680	252,634	257,686	262,840	1,020,840

TOTAL PERSONNEL: \$1,020,840

II. Fringe Benefits: Fringe benefits (cost of leave, employee insurance, retirement and pension, unemployment benefits and social security) are requested at 31% of Employees 1, 2, 3 and 4 salaries.

TOTAL FRINGE: \$291,691

III. Travel: Travel expenses including air and ground transportation, lodging, and per diem at the Federal US government rate for Washington, DC has been budgeted for 4-day trips for 2 staff persons to attend the MBDA's National Capital Readiness Program Implementation Meeting in Washington, DC, during the first year of the program (4 days per diem X 2 travelers + 2 X \$559 Round trip plane tickets from Washington, DC to Monroe) and lodging (GSA lodging \$258 per night + \$79 Meals and Incidentals + \$59.25 for first and last night which includes ground transportation). for \$16,208.00 in Year 1. Then, annual trips have been budgeted to attend the MBDA's National Travel Conference and Minority Enterprise Development Week for 2 travelers 4 days per trip for Years 1, 2, 3 and 4.

TOTAL TRAVEL: \$36,468.00

IV. Equipment: There are no equipment costs.

V. Supplies: Funds are requested for standard office supplies including 4 laptop computers (\$3,600), 2 wireless printers (\$600) and 2 data projectors (\$3,148) for use to meet project objectives.

TOTAL SUPPLIES: \$7,348

VI. Contractual: There are no contract costs requested.

TOTAL CONTRACTUAL: \$0

VII. Other

To set up the DREAMS office the proposal requests furniture (\$10,397), general liability insurance at \$450 per annum for 4 years, general funds to run the office including communications at \$173 per month X 12 months X 4 years at \$8,304, stationary for general office use (\$24 per print cartridges X 4 per month) \$96 + pens, paper, art supplies, flip chart paper, etc. R\$230 per month at a total of \$15,648 for the 4 years, a customer relationship management monthly service at \$45 per month X 12 months at a annual cost of \$540 for 4 years costing \$2,160.

Social marketing costs incurred will be \$450 per month X 12 months = \$5,400 per annum over 4 years costing \$21,600. Promotional materials have been budgeted for \$1,600 per annum X 4 years costing \$6,400.

BUDGET NARRATIVE

Work activities are under the other category including funds to provide services from subject matter experts to 24 entrepreneurs in Years 1 and 2 and 32 in Years 3 and 4 (\$1,100 per entrepreneur) at a 4 year total of \$123,200 for Generator participants. The cost of the 12-week Generator program costs \$165 (\$11 per lunch X 2 guests + 1 Moderator=15 people X \$11=\$165 per week X12 weeks for years 1 and 2. In Years 3 and 4 the cost will increase to add 4 more participants at the same judicious rate for meals with a grant total of \$18,288 for 4 years.

The DREAMS Incubator will be held over 8 weeks X \$11 per lunch X 32 participants per year with 64 participants in years 1 and 2. In years 3 and 4, 70 participants will be reached at a cost of \$5,632. The Incubator will reach 134 participants at a cost of \$23,584 over 4 years. Expenses to operate the Incubator for 64 entrepreneurs in Years 1 and 2 and 70 participants in Years 3 and 4 at (\$210,000) for 8 weeks twice per year plus a \$1000 budget for each entrepreneur to access subject matter expertise and business development services. Training supplies for \$30 X 112 participants for the Generator and 134 participants for the Incubator at a reasonable cost of \$4,132 over the duration of the project.

The Accelerator will be online only and participants for the Realized component will not receive supplies. An annual Pitch Competition will be held in Years 2, 3 and 4 and Demo Days held twice per annum. The DREAMS Team has budgeted \$518 per month for the duration of the project for outreach and recruitment of participants (Ground transportation .65 per mile X 30miles per trip X 4 times per month = \$19.5 = \$78 per month+ refreshments \$5 per person X 22 = \$110X4 weeks per month =\$518 per month X 12=\$6,216 X 4 years =\$24,864).

The total direct cost of the project is \$108,738 in Year 1, \$98,341 in Year 2, \$115,493 in Year 3 and \$115,493 in Year 4.

TOTAL OTHER: \$438,065

VIII. Indirect

Indirect costs are at the de-minimis rate of 10% for Project Possible: \$45,270 for Year 1, \$43,740 for Year 2, \$45,117 for Year 3 and \$46,792.

TOTAL INDIRECT: \$181,918

IX. Matching Contribution

The 10% indirect will be returned to the MBDA as the matching contribution to the DREAMS Realized in Monroe project.

TOTAL MATCH: \$181,918

TOTAL COST WITH MATCH: \$2,183,017

DREAMS Consortium

Matching Share Commitment Plan

The DREAMS Consortium is committed to assisting socially and economically disadvantaged individual entrepreneurs in Monroe, Louisiana to establish, startup and grow businesses. The total cost of the project named DREAMS Realized in Monroe is \$2,153,386. The total request from the MBDA is \$1,973,899, which includes the de minimis rate of 10% for Project Possible. Thus, the matching share would be the 10% indirect rate of \$179,487, which Project Possible would forfeit and apply as the match of 10%.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dorothy Nairne", written in a cursive style.

Dr. Dorothy Nairne
Executive Director of Project Possible



February 28, 2023

Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA), U.S. Department of Commerce

RE: DREAMS Realized in Monroe, Louisiana Capital Readiness Program MBDA-OBD-2023-2007775

Dear MBDA Review Committee,

My name is Mr. Tony Little I am the Chairman of the Board of Commissioners for the Southside Economic Development District (SEDD) in Monroe, Louisiana. SEDD is charged with building the historically neglected southside of our city, which is 62.2% Black. The mission of SEDD is to offer a path out of poverty for district residents by providing economic opportunities, resources for development, access to resources and capital for improvement. Over the years, SEDD held a series of participatory meetings and workshops to establish a blue print on how we will attain our collective vision. Input from the Southside Board of Commissioners, clergy, the business sector and representatives from throughout the community members fed into our strategic plan which is entitled *Southside Dream*. The 25-year plan was approved by the Monroe City Council in May of 2022, and will guide SEDD's economic development that is aimed at preventing crime, building safe neighborhoods, attracting businesses and fortifying the capacity of our entrepreneurs.

The DREAM Realized in Monroe grant application submitted to the MBDA Capital Readiness Program would be an impressive milestone toward the *Southside Dream* strategic plan. The grant application aims to fund activities to train varying types of entrepreneurs including those who are socially and economically disadvantaged and in need of guidance to translate their ideas into business plans and, hopefully also into thriving enterprises. I am also the Chair of SEDD's Disadvantaged Business Creation and Expansion Sub-Committee, which has given me great insight on the pitfalls and barriers our entrepreneurs face. For these reasons, I am eager to partner with Project Possible as the fiscal agent and JDS Advisers to drive varying community members whether single mothers with school aged children, justice involved youth who would like to enter into business or sole proprietors interested in expanding their operations, to enroll in the project.

Funding from the MBDA would be significant to and for the city of Monroe. It would ignite the capacity building component of our 25-year strategic plan and would also link entrepreneurs with funds including the SSBCI in Louisiana. I am committed to serving on the advisory board of the DREAM Realized program wherein I will contribute to governance, offer financial oversight and technical guidance. This program will make a sizable contribution to unleashing a new era of economic development, business acceleration, job creation, and build wealth in the greater Monroe, Louisiana region. I look forward to being at the helm of this transformation on the southside of Monroe, which intends to help us realize our dreams. Please feel free to reach out to me with any questions regarding the DREAM Realized project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tony Little".

Tony Little, Chairman SEDD



District One
Douglas Harvey

District Two
Gretchen H. Ezernack
Vice Chairman

District Three
Juanita G. Woods

City Council
City of Monroe, Louisiana
Post Office Box 123
Monroe, Louisiana 71210-0123
Phone: 318-329-2252
Fax: 318-329-3416

District Four
Carday Marshall, Sr.

District Five
Kema Dawson
Chairman

March 7, 2023

Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA)
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave NW Washington, DC 20230

RE: DREAMS Realized in Monroe, Louisiana Capital Readiness Program Funding Opportunity Number MBDA-OB-2023-2007775

Dear MBDA Review Committee,

Anyone who knows me can cite my favorite quote, which is *'It has to start with the children.'* there is a critical portion of the population that is underserved—younger people age 16 to 21. Similarly, to other cities of all sizes throughout the United States, Monroe is experiencing a rash of crime, which, in most instances, involves our youth. About 25 percent of the population in Ouachita Parish and Monroe is under the age of 18, which means we have a youthful community in need of opportunities. My name is Ms. Juanita Woods and I wear several hats in service to my city and community: I am an elected member of Monroe's City Council, a seasoned activist in my rural area and serve as the Director of Programs and Participant Services for the Workforce Institute of Northeast Louisiana's NOVA program. My life's mission is to forge economic opportunities for the betterment of people in my community. It is for these reasons that I am in full support of the MBDA grant submission on behalf of the DREAMS Realized in Monroe project from the consortium consisting of the Southside Economic Development District (SEDD), JDS Advisers and Project Possible.

I am committed to supporting the DREAMS Realized scope of work by encouraging community members, especially youth who are justice-involved, unemployed or underemployed to enroll in the DREAMS Generator. My understanding of the DREAMS curriculum is that over an intense 8 weeks, participants will be guided and supported to shape their ideas into business plans. Through my post as the Director for the Workforce Institute I will be able to refer individuals to enroll in the program wherein they will be advised and supported to startup small businesses then able to create more jobs. The training, technical support and, most importantly, access to funding to realize businesses will make a significant contribution to the enhance the lives of our most vulnerable community members. Growing Monroe's economy, particularly the southside, through inclusive entrepreneurship addresses so many of our historical ailments. These are exciting times and I look forward to contributing to the success of this project which aims to create at least 30 new and well-paying jobs, expand our economy through businesses that strive to improve our environment. We will all win with DREAMS Realized.

If there are any questions that I can answer, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,


Juanita Woods

James E. “Jamie” Mayo



M5 Consulting Group, LLC
33rd Mayor of Monroe, Louisiana

March 10, 2023

Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA)
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave NW Washington, DC 20230

RE: DREAMS Realized in Monroe, Louisiana Capital Readiness Program Funding Opportunity
Number MBDA-OB-2023-2007775

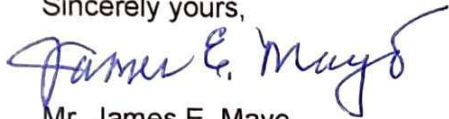
Dear MBDA Review Committee,

My name is Mr. James E. Mayo and I have been a proud citizen of Monroe for over 40 years. My dedication to the growth and development of Monroe spans throughout my life. Firstly, I am a graduate of the University of Louisiana Monroe, formerly Northern Louisiana University, where I attended as a scholar athlete on a basketball scholarship. Secondly, I was a small business owner for 17 years. Thirdly, I served in varying capacities elected to the city council then as the mayor of Monroe for 19 years.

As the Mayor of Monroe, I had six areas of focus: economic Development, public safety, partnerships in education, beautification, housing and growth, and marketing Monroe. The proposal entitled DREAMS Realized in Monroe is in total alignment with each of these areas. Further, during my tenure as mayor, the Southside Economic Development District (SEDD) was established and I am pleased to offer this letter of support in favor of this Monroe generated project. This project would extend opportunities for business development to socially and economically disadvantaged individuals who, for far too long, have not had opportunities to pursue their dreams and change their lives. I like that this project has educational components to assist entrepreneurs in building ecofriendly businesses, which will ultimately help the environment and beautify Monroe. In addition, I like that the DREAMS Realized project goes beyond training and certifications to assisting entrepreneurs to access funds to startup or scale up their businesses.

While I was the Mayor of Monroe, my administration believed firmly in embracing all our people, addressing our challenges head on and forming powerful partnerships to help move our city forward. DREAMS Realized takes action and, as I see it, is a legacy of my administration. I am committed to working together with JDS Advisers, Project Possible and SEDD to facilitate relationships with corporations, mentors and make introductions into networks throughout the state, region and nation. I am pleased to submit this letter of support and know that, by working together, we are making a difference and flowing in the right direction. Monroe is one city, with one future. If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact me directly.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "James E. Mayo". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping "M" at the end.

Mr. James E. Mayo



February 28, 2023

Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA)
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave NW Washington, DC 20230

RE: DREAMS Realized in Monroe, Louisiana
Capital Readiness Program Funding Opportunity Number MBDA-OB-2023-2007775

To the Selection Committee:

My name is Ms. Sonya Jacobs, and I am the Principal Founder | CEO of JDS Consulting, LLC. I support Project Possible's grant application to the MBDA that aims to provide build the capacity, provide access to networks and, most importantly, funding for socially and economically disadvantaged individuals to start and scale up their ventures. This grant aims to boost the local economy in Monroe's South Side. It will uplift morale amongst the mostly African American residents, it will redirect at-risk youth, and reinvigorate the many entrepreneurs who gave up because funding was nearly impossible to attain. Plus, the DREAMS Realized Project will enable African American businesses to enter into business activities that historically have locked us out.

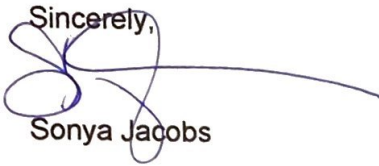
JDS Consulting has been providing technical support to socially and economically disadvantaged individuals since 2014. I fully understand that small businesses and organizations are the driving force of any economy. Therefore, our organization helps entrepreneurs grow and expand their businesses through strategic initiatives, online business tools, and hands-on technical support. We are especially interested in growing entities led by entrepreneurs of color and women to create new interventions and jobs. Further, I worked for 20 years in the banking industry and have extensive and wide-reaching contacts in the capital ecosystem, which will provide program participants with capital raising opportunities within federal and state governments, angel investors and corporate partners.

In my personal capacity, I am an active concerned community member of the South Side of Monroe and would like to see change within my neighborhood, which experienced a dramatic uptick in violent crime post COVID-19. As a leader within this community, I will direct justice-involved youth, single parents and others who would like to start a business into this program.

For these reasons, I support this grant application and am committed to being a lead partner in facilitating training sessions, accessing my extensive network for mentorships and pairing ventures with investors and other funding sources. I would love to see locally manufactured solar panels, battery recycling on the south side, electric vehicle charging stations along the I-20 Corridor and energy saving homes being built in my neighborhood.

It is my hope that the federal government will invest in these types of community-driven, innovative projects since we are the experts in our own lives. Then, and only then, will we begin to begin to rectify decades of racist policies and practices.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'S' followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Sonya Jacobs



March 7, 2023

Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA)
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave NW Washington, DC 20230

RE: DREAMS Realized in Monroe, Louisiana Capital Readiness Program Funding
Opportunity Number MBDA-OBDA-2023-2007775

Dear MBDA Review Committee,

I am Kenya Roberson, Executive Director of the Monroe Regional Black Chamber of Commerce, Inc. and a lifelong resident of Monroe, Louisiana. I know first-hand how the South Side has been underrepresented, neglected and has had stagnant economic growth over the decades. Then, during the COVID-19 shutdown, I watched 40% of Black owned businesses being shuttered. The mission of the Monroe Regional Black Chamber of Commerce, Inc. is to empower Black entrepreneurship in order to establish a stronger community. Our goals are to inspire, develop, educate, promote and cultivate economic success in the Greater Monroe Area. We provide seminars, workshops, guidance and technical assistance to small businesses throughout the area and have dozens of members.

Therefore, the Black Chamber of Commerce is pleased to present this letter of commitment as a strategic partner to the DREAMS Realized Project. We are committed to the DREAMS project and will gladly inform potential candidates to participate in capacity building opportunities such as the Generator and Incubator they propose to offer with MBDA funding. We will co-host networking events with the DREAMS Project and will refer long-standing member businesses to mentor new entrepreneurs. I have complete confidence that they are primed to provide quality, seamless programming to socially and economically disadvantaged individuals who have been left out of traditional entrepreneurial ecosystem programming.

They have what it takes to offer technical assistance to graduate hundreds of entrepreneurs into prosperity. Most importantly, I am confident that the DREAMS Project and their partners will be able to assist entrepreneurs to attain needed funding to startup and scale their businesses.

The success of this project builds the Greater Monroe Region and is a win-win-win for all of us. Please favorably review this proposal, which seeks to improve the quality of life for African Americans on the southside of the city of Monroe. Joining the chamber can be a smart move for your business. Businesses that participate in our membership help promote each other and work together, so your own business can grow and prosper quickly. This is the time for our community to network purposely, intentionally promote and provide the best service possible when given an opportunity. Good luck to the DREAMS Realized in Monroe team.

Well wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kenya Roberson". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over the printed name below it.

Kenya Roberson

Executive Director

Monroe Regional Black Chamber of Commerce

LOUISIANA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

110 S. Washington St.
Bastrop, LA 71220
P. O. Box 7563
Monroe, LA 71211
Email: hse016@legis.la.gov
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Fax: 318.556.7006



COMMITTEES:

Agriculture, Forestry, Aquaculture,
and Rural Development
Commerce
Natural Resources and Environment

ADRIAN FISHER State Representative ~ District 16

March 10, 2023

Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA)
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave NW Washington, DC 20230

RE: DREAMS Realized in Monroe, Louisiana
Capital Readiness Program Funding Opportunity Number MBDA-OB-2023-2007775

Dear Selection Committee:

As a business owner, I know that small businesses are the driving force of Louisiana's economy. I am Mr. Adrian Fisher a son of Louisiana's soil. In 2021, I was elected to serve District 16 in the Louisiana House of Representatives. The greater Monroe region where the DREAMS Realized Project proposes to operate is in my district. I firmly believe that improving the local economy starts with workforce development and the creation of better jobs that are in tune with the latest technology. The DREAMS Realized project led by a consortium including the Southside Economic Development District, JDS Advisers and Project Possible encompasses all of those pertinent pillars to make a meaningful impact on people and the economy.

I also like the DREAMS Realized approach to helping socially and economically disadvantaged entrepreneurs strategically startup, grow and expand their businesses through the offering of a hybrid series of courses both online and in person. The hands-on technical support that DREAMS Realized will provide to the entrepreneurs will make a marked difference in how they operate. Then, offering access to capital will take the dreams coupled with hard work and operationalize their plans. Since for me, it really is all about what is optimal for our citizens and communities, I am in support of this project. These are the types of projects I would like to see in my district, particularly in areas like the Southside of Monroe that have been neglected historically. I lend my support to this project because it is inclusive and actively engages with community members, organizations, government and more. I look forward to cutting the ribbon at the launch of DREAMS Realized and ushering in a new era of prosperity, safety, social and environmental justice for all our community members.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me.

Regards,


Adrian Fisher

LOUISIANA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

300 Washington Street
Suite 308
Monroe LA 71201
Email: hse017@legis.la.gov
Phone: (318) 362-3014

Legislative assistant:
Shontae Johnson



Rep. Patricia “Pat” Moore
State Representative ~ District 17

Committees
Health and Welfare; Transportation,
Highways and Public Works; Interim
member of Joint Medicaid Oversight
Committee; House Select Committee
on Women and Children

Memberships
Democratic Caucus; Louisiana
Legislative Black Caucus; Legislative
Women’s Caucus; North Louisiana
Legislative Delegation

March 10, 2023

Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA)
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave NW Washington, DC 20230

RE: DREAMS Realized in Monroe, Louisiana
Capital Readiness Program Funding Opportunity Number MBDA-OB-2023-2007775

Dear MBDA Review Committee,

This letter is in support of the DREAMS Realized in Monroe Project that is led by the consortium consisting of JDS Advisers, the Southside Economic Development District (SEDD) and Project Possible’s application to the MBDA in response to the Capital Readiness opportunity for funding. My name is Patricia Moore and I am the state Representative for Louisiana’s District 17, which includes Ouachita Parish and the city of Monroe.

I appreciate that the DREAMS Realized in Monroe Project reflects inputs from the private and public sector. It strives to build the capacity business owners and entrepreneurs who have been socially and economically disadvantaged. It works across sectors and communities including to guide would be entrepreneurs to first generate business ideas with innovation at the center whether in advanced manufacturing, recycling batteries or urban farming. The project seeks to facilitate networks of corporate partner to mentor entrepreneurs, to provide a budget for each participating entrepreneurs to attain technical support and, vitally, to link entrepreneurs with funding sources. This project holds solutions to many of the most pressing challenges for my constituents including: job creation, support for small businesses and opportunities to participate in ‘greening’ our environment. This project seeks to achieve multiple benefits for our environment, makes a contribution to the local economy and places people at its center. Plus, this is not a once off, but will be implemented over a 4-year period, which is essential to the wellbeing and development of my region.

These are the reasons that I am in support of DREAMS Realized and would like to see it fully funded by the MBDA. In case you have any questions regarding this submission, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Patricia Moore
Patricia “Pat” Moore
State Representative
District 17



507 N. 17th
Monroe, La. 71201

March 7, 2023

Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA)
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave NW Washington, DC 20230

RE: DREAMS Realized in Monroe, Louisiana
Capital Readiness Program Funding Opportunity Number MBDA-OB-2023-2007775

Dear MBDA Review Committee;

Since 1969 I have published the Monroe Free Press, a weekly newspaper in Monroe, La. Having served as a publisher in the Monroe community for over 50 years I am uniquely familiar with the challenges and opportunities the minority business community has faced, including the need to train prospective business leaders.

When I learned about the DREAMS Realized project, I was naturally excited. The project, as I understand it, seeks to build the capacity of socially and economically disadvantaged individuals residing in Monroe to startup, launch and grow their businesses to scale. Our newspaper stands ready to help promote the program's objective and solicit candidates to the DREAMS Generator and Incubator Programs.

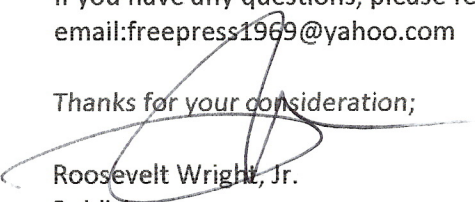
Should this project be funded, the Monroe Free Press would cheerfully spread the word and expand the visibility of the services far and wide throughout Monroe.

The funding of this project will help hundreds of minority entrepreneurs qualify and take advantage of business opportunities, particularly on the southside where opportunities have historically be limited.

The Monroe Free Press would be a proud and committed partner to the DREAMS Realized project.

If you have any questions, please feel free to reach me at 318-801-0143 or by email: freepress1969@yahoo.com

Thanks for your consideration;


Roosevelt Wright, Jr.
Publisher



February 28, 2023

Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA)
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave NW Washington, DC 20230

RE: DREAMS Realized in Monroe, Louisiana Capital Readiness Program Funding
Opportunity Number MBDA-OB-2023-2007775

Dear MBDA Review Committee,

For the 4th consecutive year, the *U.S. News & World Report* ranked Louisiana as the worst state to live in. This failed grade was earned from metrics including: healthcare, education, economy, infrastructure, opportunity, crime, corrections and the natural environment. I like that DREAMS Realized in Monroe seeks to make Louisiana better, especially for African Americans who comprise one-third of the population, yet reside in anguish on a daily basis. Creating well-paying, descent 'green' jobs is the objective but the vehicle must be Black-owned and operated businesses. As the owner of Delta Builds, which strives to be the premier supplier ecofriendly materials, I know first-hand the challenges faced by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals, particularly here in Louisiana where funding is lacking. These are the whys and wherefores, that led to my joining the DREAMS Consortium.

My name is Mr. Leonard Guillory and I am a 29-year-old African American man with a university degree in economics and financial management. One of my loves in this life is to share my smooth ability with numbers and finances with small businesses. Through this, Delta Builds will willingly participate in DREAMS Realized to provide training and technical support to entrepreneurs. I also have a solid network throughout the country and world, especially in African countries, to share with entrepreneurs who are interested in recycling, advanced manufacturing, electric vehicles, energy and more. This project would change the economic and social climate in northern Louisiana. For the MBDA to invest in Monroe would be smart and completely wise. Please fund this project and, I guarantee, a return on the investment will be generated that will impact the entire country. No longer will Louisiana be ranked as the worst state to live in. Help us help ourselves and follow through on the promises made to African Americans.

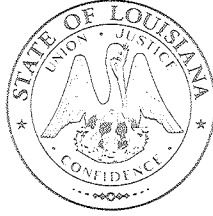
Sincerely yours,

Leonard Guillory, IV

Leonard Guillory, IV
Partner and CFO

SENATE STATE OF LOUISIANA

4106 DeSiard Street
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Toll Free: (855) 872-5197
116 Sparrow Street
Lake Providence, LA 71254



KATRINA R. JACKSON
STATE SENATOR ~ DISTRICT 34

COMMITTEES

Education, Vice Chairwoman
Agriculture, Forestry, Aquaculture
and Rural Development
Insurance
Finance, Interim Member
Joint Budget, Interim Member

March 10, 2023

Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA)
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave NW Washington, DC 20230

RE: DREAMS Realized in Monroe, Louisiana
Capital Readiness Program Funding Opportunity MBDA-OB-2023-2007775


Dear Review Committee,

I am pleased to be writing a letter in support of the DREAMS Realized in Monroe grant application being submitted to the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) for the Capital Readiness Program. I fervently support this grant application because its goal is to support and advise socially and economically disadvantaged budding entrepreneurs and it assists sole proprietors to expand. My name is Ms. Katrina Jackson and I am the Chair of the Louisiana Legislative Black Caucus, Secretary of the Women's Caucus and a member of the Rural Caucus. Thus, this project called DREAMS Realized in Monroe, affects my professional priorities and my political portfolio. Plus, I am a lifelong resident of Monroe and have dedicated my life to improving the quality of life for my home area, particularly within the Southside.

Monroe has plenty of room for growth and I see this project as a key opportunity to employ federal funding for the implementation of locally driven and applied solutions. The DREAMS consortium consisting of JDS Advisers, the Southside Economic Development District (SEDD) and the nonprofit Project Possible have resolve and approaches to many of the pain points including lacking opportunities, high unemployment and poverty experienced in my district and throughout Louisiana. Furthermore, the DREAMS Realized approach to capacity building offers a 12-week idea generator to guide new entrepreneurs in exploring their inner entrepreneur and are presented with mind-expanding options for businesses. This approach to entrepreneurship could be a game changer in business development. DREAMS Realized is particularly attractive because it does not treat social and economically disadvantaged individuals as a monolith but rather, attempts to reach out to varying demographics including justice-involved youth, single parents residing in section 8 housing and graduates all where they can be found. Most importantly, the DREAMS Realized project will link entrepreneurs to funding whether grants, loans or angel investors.

If the DREAMS Realized project is fully funded, I will do my part to promote this life changing prospect to my constituents. I will make introductions to corporate partners who may be interested in mentoring entrepreneurs or providing subject matter experts. Lastly, I will make certain that the business development environment in Monroe is seamless for startups. I am praying for the funding of DREAMS Realized in Monroe.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Katrina Jackson', with a large, stylized flourish extending to the right.

Katrina Jackson