Defy offers intensive entrepreneurship development, executive mentoring, business pitch showcases, access to financial investment, and startup incubation. Online instructors include influencers — such as Randy Komisar (Partner, Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers), Duncan Niederauer (former CEO, New York Stock Exchange), Stanley Tucker (CEO and Founder, Meridian Management Group), Steve Madden (Founder and former CEO of Steve Madden, Ltd.) Seth Godin (marketing guru), professors from Harvard Business School and Stanford Business School, and former EITs — who believe in second-chance entrepreneurs.

ABOUT DEFY COLORADO
Defy Ventures Colorado harnesses the talents of currently and formerly incarcerated men and women, redirecting them toward legal business ventures and careers. We support Entrepreneurs in Training (EITs) from incarceration through reentry into the community, providing entrepreneurship, employment, and personal development training and improving well-being. Defy Colorado builds an authentic, supportive community between EITs and executive volunteers as they experience their shared humanity. Our “blended learning” model combines video-based training with in-person facilitation, mentoring, and events and has the ability to scale globally and to empower the most under-served populations.

Each of us is more than the worst thing we’ve ever done. — Bryan Stevenson

IMPACT
• 3,500+ EITs enrolled nationally (both pre- and post-release)
• < 5% reoccidivism rate
• 139 businesses founded

LOCALLY
• 140+ EITs enrolled
• Over 80% graduation rate to date
• Active post-release graduates

SAMPLE COURSES
• Employment Coaching Series
• “Insights into Ideation”
• “Fear of Failure and the Entrepreneurial Journey”
• “Self-Limiting Beliefs”
• Entrepreneurship 101 Series
• Minimum Viable Product: Launching for less than $1K

For more information, email Bob Omer at romer@defycolorado.org or visit us at: defycolorado.org
Defy Ventures Colorado transforms the lives of business leaders and people with criminal histories through their collaboration along the entrepreneurial journey. We pair senior business executives, entrepreneurs, and other influencers with our Entrepreneurs in Training (EITs) — often people who once led drug rings and gangs — to coach EITs and support them in defying the odds.

If you’re ready to get involved with Defy Colorado and be inspired by our EITs, there are several ways you can help!

**Volunteer**
Join us for a coaching day in prison, become a post-release mentor, or share your expertise as a workshop leader or guest instructor in class. Defy Colorado seeks successful business executives, entrepreneurs, investors, and other skilled professionals to coach and mentor EITs. At Defy Colorado, you’ll use your core competencies to “pay it forward.” If you believe in underdogs, you’ll love volunteering with Defy Colorado.

**Donate**
Join us as we bring transformative opportunity to the scrappiest, most dedicated entrepreneurs around. If you believe in people with criminal histories — one of the most stigmatized and undervalued populations in America — consider using your influence, money and time to support Defy Colorado’s mission. Your donation to Defy Colorado is tax deductible. To donate, please go to: www.defycolorado.org/#donate.

**Hire an EIT**
Join us in advocating for people with criminal histories by helping open doors to stable employment. Close to 90% of those who go back to prison are unemployed at the time of their rearrest, so stable employment is critical to EITs’ success post-release. Through Defy Colorado’s rigorous entrepreneurship, sales, and management training, we have a cadre of motivated, personally accountable, enthusiastic, and charismatic prospective employees.

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JOIN US FOR A DAY ON THE INSIDE

Join Defy Colorado for an unforgettable experience inside prison that supports our Entrepreneurs in Training (EITs) in defying the odds. Volunteer events are critical to the success of our EITs, who gain inspiration in their journey to transformation from both the professional feedback they receive and the positive human connections they make during the day.

For both volunteers and EITs, these days challenge perceptions and take participants outside their comfort zones in a deeply impactful experience that builds hope, empathy, and human connection.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT AS A VOLUNTEER?

There are several types of volunteer opportunities with Defy’s prison program:

- **Business Coaching**
  
  Volunteer Role: Coach
  
  6 - 7 Hours
  
  The Business Coaching day takes place at the mid-point of the Defy Colorado program and is often the first event to bring EITs and volunteers together. In addition to exercises designed to create a supportive and inclusive community, you will review resumes and personal statements, help EITs practice networking and interview skills, and provide feedback on the early stages of their business ideas. These experiences reinforce EITs’ hope for a positive future as well as their commitment to personal transformation.

- **Business Pitch and Graduation**
  
  Volunteer Role: Coach
  
  8 - 10 Hours
  
  A Business Pitch Competition is the culminating exercise for Defy Colorado EITs. In addition to exercises designed to create community, volunteers serve as judges in a Shark-Tank style pitch competition. At the end of the day, volunteers vote to crown a winner, who will receive a $500 IOU payable after release. Volunteers then join EITs’ friends and family for a joyous graduation celebration, often an EITs’ first graduation ceremony.

- **Workshop Leader or Guest Instructor**
  
  3 - 4 Hours
  
  Join a Defy facilitator in the classroom to support EITs’ learning directly. Volunteers have gone inside to lead workshops on topics such as resume building, mindfulness, and dining etiquette or to share their expertise around challenging business concepts such as market positioning, branding, budgeting, or strategy development.

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CEO of Your New Life (CEO YNL) empowers Entrepreneurs in Training (EITs) to plan for reentry, increase their well-being, develop healthy thinking habits, gain skills to prepare for meaningful employment, learn the foundations of entrepreneurship and rebrand for their future. EITs participate in holistic training that provides comprehensive employment-readiness training, enhances professional etiquette skills, and introduces entrepreneurship concepts. EITs can start the program inside prisons or join the program in the community post release.

Pathways to Reentry supports EITs who have completed CEO YNL either in prison or in the community through the critical first 90 days of reentry. The program incorporates evidence-based work to develop a “Wellness Recovery Action Plan” and allows EITs to apply what they learned in CEO YNL in a real-world context. EITs participate in workshops that develop basic technology skills, format a professional resume, strengthen interview skills, improve financial literacy, and attain stable employment.

Defy’s Business Incubator includes advanced coursework in entrepreneurship and business management, supporting EITs through the process of incorporating, launching, and growing new businesses. EITs can apply to the Business Incubator after completing CEO YNL and Pathways to Reentry or the Entrepreneur Bootcamp. The Entrepreneur Bootcamp is open to potential EITs who have achieved stable housing and employment and did not have access to CEO YNL during their incarceration or reentry.

Defy’s Alumni Programs include an Alumni Association for EITs who have completed CEO YNL and an Entrepreneur Network for EITs who have completed the Business Incubator. Alumni programs keep EITs connected to a community of support through workshops and events.
Defy Ventures Colorado was founded in 2017. Originally founded as one of six states (California, Nebraska, New York, New Jersey and Connecticut) operating as a state chapters under Defy Ventures National, Defy Colorado (along with other states) started to localize all of their operations in early 2018 in order to deliver more impactful programming and outcomes in the community. While Defy Colorado continues to collaborate with Defy National on program design, Defy Colorado (as its own 501(c)(3) entity) is solely responsible for its curriculum development, technical assistance, facilitation training, impact evaluation, marketing, and financial management.

Defy Colorado’s team brings together first-hand knowledge of incarceration with extensive experience in national nonprofit management, reentry service provision, business and entrepreneurship, program design, standards-based curriculum design, impact measurement, and program evaluation.

UNIQUE VALUE

Our innovative, evidence-driven program for people with criminal histories — either in custody or transitioning from incarceration to the community — focuses on reentry planning, employment readiness, entrepreneurship, personal development, and well-being.

To address the social components of well-being, including positive social relationships and positive social activities, we bring Entrepreneurs in Training (EITs) together with business executives at in-person events — both in prison and in the community — and pair EITs with executive mentors post release. These in-person interactions provide EITs with hope and increased confidence, supporting them in “transforming their hustle” and successfully reentering the community upon release. Defy Colorado’s executive volunteers develop empathy for an overlooked and stigmatized talent pool, often becoming advocates who help shift societal perceptions and open doors to future employment.

MISSION

Defy’s mission is to transform the lives of people with criminal histories and business leaders through their collaboration along the entrepreneurial journey. Our goal is to break the cycle of recidivism, violence, and poverty to create communities of support and new legacies for the people whom we serve. We equip currently and formerly incarcerated men and women with the tools they need to leverage their entrepreneurial skills into the creation of profitable, sustainable, legal enterprises.

For more information, email Bob Omer at romer@defycolorado.org or visit us at: defycolorado.org
**Essential Program Elements**

**Creating Social Value**
Defy Colorado’s programs support the creation of increased well-being — for individual EITs, volunteers, and the communities in which they live. Program outcomes are aligned with the “Five Keys to Reentry Well-being,” which are detailed at the right.

**Key Components**
The following program components are critical to Defy Colorado’s impact:

**Curriculum, Facilitation, and Assessment**
The skills and knowledge developed through Defy Colorado’s curriculum are aligned with the Five Keys to Reentry Well-Being. Discussion-based facilitation supports the development of healthy thinking patterns, positive social engagements, and positive relationships. Measurement and evaluation of the program is conducted through assessment of EITs’ knowledge and skills as well as surveys of overall well-being.

**Milestone Events**
Defy Colorado’s in-person milestone events are essential opportunities for positive social engagement and building positive relationships. These capstone experiences are designed to foster an inclusive and accepting community and inspire EITs along their journey to transformation.

**Volunteer Engagement**
The ultimate social value that Defy Colorado creates is not one-sided. By participating in milestone events and mentoring EITs, volunteers develop empathy, become advocates for social change, and help open doors to sustainable employment. Ultimately, volunteers are integral members of the community of support who help improve economic opportunity, shift social perceptions, reduce recidivism, and improve public safety.

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1. The “Well-Being Development Program” and “Reentry Well-Being Assessment Tool” (RWAT) developed by Carrie Pettus-Davis et al., researchers for the Institute for Justice Research and Development, Florida State University.

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**Five Keys to Reentry Well-Being**

**Healthy Thinking Patterns**
Adaptive mental actions or processes, the presence of empathy, and the acceptance or internalization of values and norms that promote pro-social behavior.

**Meaningful Work Trajectories**
Sustainable compatibility of an individual’s goals and skills with the demands of that individual’s occupation and obligations.

**Effective Coping Strategies**
Adaptive behavioral and psychological efforts taken to manage and reduce internal and external stressors in ways that are not harmful in the short or long term.

**Positive Social Engagement**
Social experiences organized for beneficial social purposes that directly or indirectly involve others, engaged in during discretionary time, and experienced as enjoyable.

**Positive Relationships**
Reliable, mutually beneficial relationships between two people that range from brief to enduring in duration within formal or informal social contexts.

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How We Create Impact

MISSION
Transform the lives of business leaders and people with criminal histories through their collaboration along the entrepreneurial journey.

RESOURCES
Defy Staff, Curriculum, EITs, Corrections Partners, Families, Volunteers, Funders & Funding, Academic Partners

ACTIVITIES
Cohort Formation, Curriculum Facilitation, Support & Accountability, Events, Volunteer Partnerships, Community Partnerships, Fundraising

SHORT-TERM OUTPUTS
Program Engagement
- Healthy Thinking Patterns
- Meaningful Work Trajectories
- Effective Coping Strategies

SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES
- Positive Social Engagement
- Positive Relationships

INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES
- Behavioral Change
- Employment Readiness
- Personal Development

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES
- Network Capacity
- Sustainable Employment
- Community of Support
- Reduced Recidivism
- Increased Well Being

SYSTEM-WIDE OUTCOMES
- Shifts in Societal Perceptions
- Policy Changes
- Improved Public Safety
- Increased Economic Capacity
- Improved Facilities
- Family Stabilization

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