



Name of project	Prison Entrepreneurship Programme
Location	Texas, USA
Organisation leading the project	PEP

Project purpose

The Prison Entrepreneurship Programme (PEP) is a privately funded initiative that works with high-potential inmates in the Texas prison system, offering them business and entrepreneurship training alongside wider support to help the participants and their families as they adjust to life after release. Wider support includes help with housing, medical care, community activities, and a job placement scheme.

Project approach

PEP is based on the idea that convicted felons represent a vast untapped resource in the USA, and that business executives and inmates have more in common than is often thought: “many inmates come to prison as seasoned entrepreneurs who happen to run illegitimate businesses”. The programme is highly selective, working only with offenders who are considered to have a genuine wish to change direction in life. It equips them with the resources they need to begin a career in the world of legitimate business. Recognising the multiple barriers and strong prejudice faced by ex-offenders, and that these mean that training alone is unlikely to provide a sufficient basis for reintegration, the programme offers a wide support programme to its participants, giving them “no excuse to return to a life of crime”.

Key benefits and impact

- Less than 5% of the programme’s graduates have returned to prison, compared to the national recidivism rate of 66%.
- Over 97% of graduates of the programme are employed within 4 weeks of release.
- 43 businesses have been started by graduates of the programme since its inception in 2004.
- The programme also provides opportunities for business executives MBA students to engage with civic initiatives by acting as volunteers. Over 1,000 executives and over 400 MBA students have already volunteered with the programme.
- More than 70% of PEP graduates are donors supporting the ongoing work of the programme.

For more information, please visit <http://www.prisonentrepreneurship.org/>