WildTech-CCNV 2017 Training Strategy
Workforce Development for Homeless Shelter Residents

Education is critical for the homeless and shelter residents to break free from their circumstances. Although food and shelter provide for the most immediate needs, true hope and will not emerge until the root causes of homelessness are addressed. Education is central to this. More than 35 percent of shelter residents nationwide do not have a high school diploma, all in a world where higher education and technology skills are increasingly essential. Even with an education, employers almost always require work experience, which is difficult for anyone to obtain. Finally, even when training and work experience are in place, there are simply not enough jobs available, making entrepreneurship the only option. This is compounded by the fact that some shelter residents are returning citizens, making it difficult and even impossible to find gainful employment – regardless of skills, experience, and the availability of open positions. In fact, individuals returning home from prison often identify employment as the most important factor to keep them crime free.

WildTech-CCNV was recently named as the provider of education, training and job placement services for the residents of Federal City Shelter (CCNV), just three blocks from the US Capitol Building in downtown Washington DC. At four stories tall and a city block long, the CCNV is the second largest homeless shelter in America, and its training programs must serve 1250 shelter residents and be open to the entire homeless population of Washington DC – about 11,000 people in all.

Training is provided from a large classroom and a secondary vocational training and job counseling room, both with easy access to shelter residents and Washington DC's homeless population. WildTech-CCNV also has access to common areas throughout the shelter to provide future access to the Internet, possible sleeping quarters for outside trainers, and a number of smaller rooms to conduct work-based learning programs. Most training programs are designed to provide rapid access to employment – "shortening the distance from learn to earn." WildTech-CCNV listens to the training requests of shelter residents and researches the skill needs of employers. WildTech-CCNV then reaches out to potential partners and selects curricula and training providers aligned to those needs. We are designing our programs to provide a clear training pathway:

1. Foundational training for those that need it (literacy, numeracy, GED, digital literacy, and more),
2. Followed by vocational training. Examples include construction (proposed), computer service & repair, multimedia (proposed), tailoring (proposed), making and selling crafts (proposed) and more.
3. Most vocational training programs lead to industry-standard certifications allowing students to prove their skills to prospective employers.
4. This is followed by work-based learning in partnership with local businesses and through WildTech-CCNV, a work-based learning enterprise managed and operated by shelter residents.
5. This is followed by employment preparation including resume writing, interviewing skills and more. This is currently provided through our partnership with Job Squad from the National Academies.
6. For those seeking an employment pathway, we are building job placement partnerships with Project Empowerment from the DC-DOES, Jubilee Jobs, and others.

7. For those choosing an entrepreneurship pathway, where leadership, business management and financial management training are essential, work-based learning with WildTech-CCNV is especially important.

With an understanding that the training facility is not capable of reaching all shelter residents as well as the entire homeless population of Washington DC -- all while most shelter residents have available time to study outside the classroom – we plan to leverage technology to multiply the impact:

1. The broadband internet pipeline will be increased as we secure support from foundations, DC OCTO, Comcast and others.   This includes obtaining support for network filtering and security, essential for expanding internet access.
2. Computer-based training programs will be provided for most classroom curricula identified above. Once we are able to expand internet access, this will allow shelter residents owning a smart phone or laptop computer to access training courses and take tests all without being in the classroom.
3. Provisioning of free laptop computers to ALL students that complete WildTech-CCNV's basic digital literacy training program.   As one of Washington DC's largest computer refurbishing organizations, the WTA has the capacity to provide hundreds of free laptops to WildTech-CCNV, which in-turn can provide them to trained shelter residents on an annual basis. To ensure the laptops are not sold, they will be provided on-loan for a one-year period, after which title passes to the recipient.

Finally, the biggest obstacles sustainable livelihoods are often the social skills needed to work in a team and lead others. That is where the "wilderness" in WildTech becomes relevant. The WTA's award winning wilderness leadership programs provide individual responsibility, teambuilding, nurturing, constructive feedback, problem solving and leadership skills -- all in a high-impact environment. The WTA plans to eventually schedule biking, hiking, and even camping programs for shelter residents.   All are designed to take participants into new performance environments away from existing social groups and habits, where the consequences of ones actions or inactions have near-immediate impact, rapidly requiring the acquisition of individual responsibility and leadership skills, as well as nurturing, constructive feedback, continuous learning skills and more.   Using a philosophy born from Outward Bound and refined by the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS), for over 20 years, the WTA has guided at-risk populations on life-changing outdoor leadership programs tied to vocational training in technology leading to successful employment and entrepreneurship.

The WTA and WildTech-CCNV are actively soliciting grants and other funding to augment our offerings, both in quantity and quality. This includes the trainings we provide and the number of industry certifications we can subsidize. We are also seeking funding to improve on-site educational and career counseling and other supportive services.

APPENDIX I: ADDITIONAL DETAIL ON CURRENT AND PROPOSED OFFERINGS:

1. Instructor-led and on-demand computer-based training to provide the skills needed to pass the GED equivalency exam (proposed)
2. Instructor-led and on-demand computer-based basic digital literacy training, covering computer use, internet, email, word processor, spreadsheet and presentation program (current).
3. Instructor-led and on-demand vocational training in topics likely to lead to employment including:
   a. Construction skills, focusing on masonry, woodworking, plumbing and electricity (proposed).
   b. Technology skills focusing on computer service & repair and multimedia (proposed)
   c. Other skills taught by shelter residents. Many possess vocational skills they are willing to pass along to others. This includes jewelry making, tailoring and music production and more (proposed)
4. Business and entrepreneurship training to prepare residents for entrepreneurship. This includes project management, financial literacy, leadership and business skills (proposed).
5. Work-Based learning programs (Note: businesses that the homeless lead and operate under the WildTech-CCNV name and utilizing the WTA's non-profit business license in Washington DC):
   a. Construction skills. Students will help improve a 2-story Arts and Education building attached to the CCNV in need of improved plumbing, electrical, woodworking, and masonry work (proposed).
   b. Technology Skills. Students will operate a real high technology company that refurbishes surplus computers and provides them along with training to low-income DC residents, provides web-design services, and more (current).
   c. WildTech-CCNV merchandise. Students will sell homeless-made jewelry, tailoring services, music and more through direct sales, kiosks, and are flea markets in the DC area (proposed).
6. Job counseling. As funding and support allows, we plan to catalog the training and workforce development offerings of providers serving DC's homeless, then work one-on-one with shelter residents to: Facilitate enrollments, make referrals, and support progress. We also plan to actively engage with other homeless service providers through the ICH, their HMIS and other collaborative venues