

## **Proposal: Back on Track**

### *Project Background*

For nearly 25 years Homeboy Industries (HBI) has been providing hope, training, and support to formerly gang-involved and recently incarcerated men and women, allowing them to redirect their lives and become contributing members of the community. Located in a gang-neutral territory in Downtown Los Angeles, HBI's headquarters are home to social enterprises that provide job training as well as a multitude of free services that focus on education, training, financial responsibility, empowerment, and personal development for those in need.<sup>1</sup> Since 2010, about 8,000 former gang members from over 800 gangs (of the 1,100 gangs in the Los Angeles County) have come through Homeboy Industries' doors seeking specific services. The majority of HBI's clientele have faced unimaginable barriers and exposure to violence. Most were raised in severely low-income neighborhoods where access to education was limited; in East Los Angeles, where a large amount of HBI's clients reside, over 53% of adults over 25 years old never completed high school.<sup>2</sup>

I first learned about Homeboy Industries in high school, so upon arrival at Loyola Marymount University (LMU) in Los Angeles, I sought out a service opportunity that would take me to HBI. Throughout my time volunteering at this organization, I have been able to develop great friendships with both the clients and staff, and the more I became involved, I recognized a need for a financial literacy class for HBI's clients who earn minimum wage. Upon deciding to create a program for Homeboy Industries, I scheduled and conducted a meeting with HBI's Curriculum Department to perform a needs assessment. The results were:

1. The translation and communication of information will be critical to program success. The curriculum and materials must be communicated in a manner that relates to and engages this specific audience of former gang members to have maximum impact and effect.

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<sup>1</sup> "Overview of Homeboy Industries 02/2012" from the Development Office of Homeboy Industries

<sup>2</sup> "Education at Homeboy Industries" from the Development Office of Homeboy Industries

2. Having a "Train-the-Instructor" component that trains HBI staff members will produce several benefits: (1) it addresses the need for the translation of materials from people who already speak the intended audience's language. (2) It equips the HBI community with needed skills on a larger scope; (3) it allows the program to be sustained for years to come.
3. The HBI staff members have their own personal networks which we can use to identify graduates of HBI and invite them to return as motivational guest speakers. This idea has not been pursued previously.

### *Program Description*

Back on Track's main purpose is to equip the former gang members, parolees, and high-risk youth at Homeboy Industries with goal-setting, financial literacy, and self-empowerment instruction to aid them in turning their lives around successfully. The first phase of Back on Track is to finalize the program's curriculum and train the class instructors. Instructors will be made up of both HBI staff and LMU student volunteers (approximately 10 individuals). Once this step has been completed, classes with roughly 20-25 participants will commence at HBI and be held for 1-1.5 hours every week over a six to eight week timeframe. Back on Track will revolve around four main cornerstones: (1) Lessons on goal setting, (2) Lessons on wealth building, (3) Tangible incentives and interactive activities to put lessons into practice, and (4) Guest visits by Homeboy Industries' graduates as motivational speakers.

### *Partners and Resources*

The three main partners of Back on Track are (1) Homeboy Industries, (2) Sam X Renick an LMU alum and the Chief Executive Officer and Founder of It's A Habit Co, and (3) Loyola Marymount University student volunteers. I will team up with Homeboy Industries' Curriculum and Employment Departments to create an in-house curriculum and train their selected staff to be instructors of the Back on Track class, which will ensure its sustainability. Back on Track will also use HBI's classrooms to teach the weekly class to their clients. Additionally, Homeboy Industries' staff members and I will utilize their

personal networks to identify individuals, who have successfully graduated from Homeboy Industries, and invite them to return as motivational guest speakers for the program.

Another essential partner is Sam X Renick, the founder and CEO of It's a Habit Co., a financial literacy business. He will be a great resource in regards to financial consulting and obtaining the necessary educational materials for the program. Finally, I will utilize my connections as a student of LMU's Accounting Department and President of Underwings Praxis, an LMU service club, to gather committed student volunteers. They will serve not only as Back on Track instructors but also as friendly college students, who will motivate, provide encouragement, and share knowledge and stories with HBI's clients!

*Timeline*

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Activity</b>
<u>Start-Up: Design/Planning</u>	May - mid August 2013	Collaborate with HBI's Curriculum and Employment Departments to identify staff for the Train-the-Trainer component. Then, utilize their connections and resources to identify and contact potential HBI Guest Speakers. Develop class syllabus and compile course curriculum and resources. Determine an evaluation tool. Recruit regular class participants.
<u>Train-the-Instructor</u>	mid August - September 2013	Train the HBI staff members and LMU student volunteers to be regular class instructors. Contact potential HBI Guest Speakers. Recruit regular class participants.
<u>Class Implementation</u>	October - November 2013	Conduct regular, weekly Back on Track classes, including special visit days by HBI's motivational guest speakers.
<u>Evaluation</u>	December 2013 - January 2014	Perform class assessment and evaluation: Students/staff complete post-class surveys and interviews to measure success and seek improvement. Start plans for Back on Track Graduation.
<u>Class Implementation</u>	February - March 2014	Make modifications to program curriculum based on evaluation results to ensure future sustainability. Continue Back on Track Classes. Finalize details for graduation.
<u>Culmination Event</u>	April 2014	Hold Back on Track Graduation at Loyola Marymount University. Plan future of program.
<u>Throughout Entire Timeframe:</u> Recruit LMU volunteers. Research HBI success stories as future guest speakers as well as research for more funding. Document process thoroughly to ensure sustainability.		

*Budget*

<b>Expense Category</b>	<b>Detail</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Program Expenses	Stipend - Sam X Renick	\$ 1,000
	Guest Speaker fees (travel costs, food etc.)	1,200
	Financial Incentives and Class Activity Supplies	1,000
	Curriculum materials and supplies ( financial literacy books)**	1,000
	Curriculum materials and supplies (personal, take-home workbooks and journals)	800
	Culmination/Graduation Event (catering, certificates)	1,000
Donation for Sustainability	Homeboy Industries (next year's program needs)	1,000
Personal Stipend	Stipend for Anna Diaz (college tuition)	3,000
	<b>Total Request</b>	<b>\$ 10,000</b>

\*\*one-time purchase for future use

*Sustaining the Vision*

The Train-the-Instructor component of Back on Track will allow it to endure by internalizing the program within HBI's Curriculum Department. Throughout Back on Track's duration, each class as well as the program as a whole will be evaluated. The program will be thoroughly documented and adjusted in accordance with the feedback of Homeboy Industries' clients and staff. This will be done regularly to help insure effectiveness and sustainability. Also within my request for funding, I have appropriated a total of \$2,000 to Homeboy Industries so that Back on Track can continue after I graduate from LMU. Monies will go toward this year's program supplies (\$1000), a one-time purchase used for years to come, and the program needs for the following year (\$1000). Furthermore, I will apply for an LMU grant to provide additional funding for me to hold an annual Back on Track Graduation at Loyola Marymount University for participants and supporters. This event in April will serve 3 purposes: (1) celebrate Back on Track's participants, (2) bring awareness to the issue of gangs and its dangerous cycle, and (3) inspire future LMU students to apply for the Strauss Scholarship. Because Homeboy Industries is an integral volunteer site to Underwings Praxis, my greatest hope is that student members will continue to collaborate with HBI as a part of Back on Track, aiding former gang members to successfully turn their lives around.