



MISSION

Renaissance Entrepreneurship Center (Renaissance) helps women and men who face barriers to economic opportunity due to race or gender, break the cycle of poverty through small business ownership. Our mission, since 1985, is to empower and increase the business ownership of socially and economically diverse women and men, and thereby strengthen our communities through the creation of sustainable new businesses, new jobs, and the promotion of financial self-sufficiency. In 2019, our centers in Richmond (serving Contra Costa and Alameda Counties), East Palo Alto (serving San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties), and South of Market and Bayview Hunters Point in San Francisco, served 1,991 lower-income English and Spanish speaking clients who in turn started and grew 581 businesses and created employment for more than 750 local residents.

PROJECT

With the Grant from Impact 100, Renaissance will launch a new level of service that will help 150 lower-income individuals and their families achieve economic security by igniting the power of entrepreneurship in under-resourced Contra Costa communities, focusing on the areas of Richmond, Antioch, Pittsburg, and Monument Corridor. We will help both business owners impacted by COVID-19 who are struggling to rebuild their operations and revenues as well as the surge of newly unemployed persons seeking opportunities of entrepreneurship to rebuild their livelihoods.

In light of the necessary Shelter In Place mandate, we will provide all programs online until it is safe to host them in person or through hybrid models of support. Working in partnership with nonprofit, civic and faith-based organizations, we will deliver customized training and support services that will create marketplaces to provide small businesses with opportunities to sell and promote their products and services. These marketplaces will serve as virtual town squares for neighbors to support neighbors by gathering and shopping locally. In addition, Renaissance will engage volunteers from Contra Costa corporate, business and civic sectors by convening one-day “Popup Advisors” events in which volunteers (ideally including Impact 100 Members) provide guidance and advice to our small business owners.

Finally, we will introduce a softer, gentler “Shark Tank- like” business pitch contests in which small businesses will make presentations to a panel of judges (ideally of Impact 100 Members) and winners will be awarded cash prizes to invest in their business launch or growth.

COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION

Our project will transform the communities it serves by uniting local stakeholders to help small business owners - especially lower-income women and people of color - succeed in our new “COVID-19 world”. We have a track record of positively impacting the lives of our clients, like Tracy Phillips, a recovered addict of more than ten years. Tracy fulfilled her lifelong dream of becoming a full-time entrepreneur last fall when she opened *Confetti This*, a retail store in Richmond dedicated to bath and body products, accessories and clothing. When Shelter in Place began, Tracy’s sales were decimated. Renaissance provided clients like Tracy, with a new level of training and support to pivot their operations online and rebuild their businesses. Our virtual and in-person marketplaces serve as crucial avenues for introducing small businesses to new customers and sales opportunities. With the support of Impact 100, our “pitch contest” and PopUp Advisors



events will help propel these entrepreneurs even further through the guidance, encouragement and resources from this broadened social network.