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City Startup Labs' 2020 Vision

Henry Rock [contact_point@citystartuplabs.com]

Sent: Tuesday, January 07, 2020 10:44 AM

To: Steve Johnston

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CityStartupLabs

Creating a *New Class* of Entrepreneurs

2020 Vision

Here we are on the cusp of not just a new year, but a new decade. It's hard to know what this year will bring, much less the next 10. Could we have anticipated the ubiquity of social media or pocket computers (aka cell phones)? Hardly. But we can get a pretty good idea of the possibilities if we sharpen our 2020 vision. Since hindsight is always 20/20, let's look back over City Startup Lab's 2019, before we bring the new year into view.

First of all, CSL has been active in Charlotte developing entrepreneurial talent and capacity among African American millennials, including working with



returning citizens (formerly incarcerated) through our ReEntry Entrepreneurship Program (REEP) - *more about that later*. When we started back in 2014, there were only a few players in the entrepreneurship space. Fast forward to today, and "everybody and their mammy..." has an entrepreneurial something going on. As a matter of fact, since you've read this paragraph, no doubt at least two more programs of this sort have started. So, it's definitely a thing.



- **Milestone #1** - This dynamic has led to reassess our role, relevancy and frankly what is City Startup Labs' *raison d'etre*. This resulted in us conducting a **strategic plan**, for which we commissioned Hannah Levinson and the [Lahayim Cooperative](#) to facilitate. We now have a strategy for building capacity as an entrepreneurial organization that will take us through the next couple of years.

- **Milestone #2** – CSL completed its [2nd co-ed cohort](#) of its Center of

Excellence (**Class 2018/19**) with a Demo Day in late March 2019 and it's likely to be our last for a moment. When we do resume, it will be a very different program and focus — as we say in entrepreneur-speak — *we are pivoting*. We had a great class of impassioned and enterprising visionaries, and they are bound to do great things, whether with the businesses they came or left with or with mastering other ventures. As we continue to evolve, we also need to hone our focus.

- **Milestone #3** – In 2018, City Startup Labs launched a [ReEntry Entrepreneurship Program \(REEP\)](#) pilot which ran through mid-summer 2019. We approached this new initiative with high hopes, several assumptions and learned a heck of a lot in the process. Those lessons have informed what REEP's direction will be in 2020 and beyond (more about this in a bit).
- **Milestone #4** – Conscious Company Magazine (media) selected Henry Rock - CSL's Founder/Executive Director – as one of [22 Conscious Business Leaders of 2019](#)
- **Milestone #5** – The **Reemprise Foundation** provided CSL with a grant that will allow us to begin to lay the groundwork on the outcome of Milestone #1.

2020 Vision – We kicked off the new year with a strategic grant from [REDF](#). I'm happy to say, that CSL was the first non-profit in the Queen City to secure both Rockefeller and Kauffman Foundation funding, and we're now adding REDF to that list of firsts as well.

As I mentioned earlier, CSL is 'pivoting' away from millennials to working with returning citizens with REEP 2020. We envision REEP becoming a tool for restorative justice — providing a bridge for those communities that continue to experience many forms of harm, are on the frontline of accepting folks coming back from prison* and are in need of reconciliation, with those who are coming home and need to have trust restored. Business building, enterprise deployment and job creation activated by returning citizens can be a positive and productive catalytic force within these communities and an anecdote to some of the aforementioned harm. *100+ return to the Charlotte Mecklenburg County area every month from state facilities.



We will be launching REEP 2020 in late Q1 based on a new model — **LEARN/EARN/BUILD**. This *21st Century workforce development* effort is designed to: (1) train formerly incarcerated persons in much-needed skills - along with entrepreneurship, (2) prepare the participants to secure apprenticeships, (3) be positioned to build a job/gig for themselves as independent contractors, build a business or build a well-paying career. [look for a forthcoming announcement regarding].

Another wonderful thing, City Startup Labs was selected to be in the Social Venture Partners - 2020 [SEED20](#)

Lastly, City Startup Labs will have a **new look & feel** coming this February. Stay tuned!

So, there was a recap and 20/20 glimpse into our exciting new year.

Let us know what you think.



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