

**For Release: 9AM ET / 6AM PT Thursday, April 29, 2021**

## **The Ladies of Hope Ministries Joins Google’s Career Readiness for Reentry Initiative to Train 10,000 Formerly Incarcerated Individuals on Digital Skills**

*Grow with Google and Nonprofit Partners Created New Digital Skills Lessons to Serve Unique Needs of Formerly Incarcerated Individuals*

As part of [Second Chance Month](#) **The Ladies of Hope Ministries** is joining the Grow with Google Career Readiness for Reentry program, an initiative to provide free digital skills and job readiness training to formerly incarcerated individuals. The program is in partnership with five nonprofits who have successfully developed and delivered high-quality job training to returning citizens: [The Last Mile](#), [Center for Employment Opportunities \(CEO\)](#), [Defy Ventures](#), [Fortune Society](#), and [The Ladies of Hope Ministries](#). The program’s training will focus on fundamental digital skills such as how to apply for jobs online and create a resume, along with more advanced topics including entrepreneurship and business budgeting. In total, the program will train 10,000 participants this year.

Each year, [600,000 Americans](#) transition out of incarceration and face barriers to reentering the workforce. The unemployment rate for returning citizens is [five times the national average](#), and returning citizens who are Black experience an even higher [jobless rate](#) due to systemic racism. The increasingly digital nature of work presents another challenge to workforce reentry. [82 percent](#) of middle-skill jobs in the United States require digital skills, making the employment process difficult for those who lost access to technology while in prison.

“Lack of access to digital skills training and job coaching puts formerly incarcerated individuals at a severe disadvantage when trying to reenter the workforce and increase their economic potential,” said **Malika Saada Saar**, **Global Head of Human Rights at YouTube, a subsidiary of Google**. “We are thrilled to work alongside program partners who have demonstrated true expertise and leadership in supporting successful reentry through digital skills training to men and women, mothers and fathers, impacted by incarceration.”

"In today’s economy and its ever present and evolving technology landscape, digital skills are the table stakes for people who are returning to the workforce, working to build careers, or starting their own businesses. For people coming home from prison, learning those essential skills may seem daunting and can present a real barrier to rebuilding their lives,” said **Topeka K. Sam, Founder and Executive Director of The LOHM**. “By partnering with the Grow with Google Career Readiness for Reentry program, we’re able to offer free training to women and girls directly affected by incarceration on digital fundamentals and essential skills for people looking to start their own businesses, like the fundamentals of entrepreneurship and budgeting. The LOHM thanks Google for their commitment to this work and their support of our effort to end poverty and incarceration of women and girls."

Alongside other program partners **The Ladies of Hope Ministries** collaborated with Google and the program’s nonprofit partners to identify the needs of returning individuals, resulting in five program Learning Paths: (1)

Getting Started with the Basics, (2) Job Search, (3) Job Readiness, (4) Online Safety, and (5) “Next Step” Job Readiness Skills. **The Ladies of Hope Ministries** will integrate this curriculum into its existing job readiness programs and support women and girls who are impacted by incarceration in developing the skills needed to launch a successful business in the digital era.

The program’s content is a mix of video- and project-based learning on [Google’s Applied Digital Skills](#) curriculum and partner-facilitated workshops to accommodate the wide range of the reentry population needs. Googlers have been assigned to each nonprofit to support staff and to offer one-on-one coaching to help participants with job interviews and resume development.

The program is part of Google’s [racial equity commitments](#) and builds on the company’s ongoing investments in criminal justice reform. Since 2015, Google has given more than \$40 million to nonprofits advancing criminal justice reform, and \$60 million to organizations working to expand access to hands-on computer science learning.

Any nonprofit organization offering training to the reentry population can join the [Grow with Google Partner Program](#) and access resources, workshop materials and hands-on help, free of cost.

###

### **About Grow with Google**

[Grow with Google](#) was started in 2017 to help Americans grow their skills, careers, and businesses. It provides free training, tools, and expertise to help small business owners, veterans and military families, job seekers and students, educators, startups, and developers. Since Grow with Google’s inception, it has helped more than six million Americans develop new skills. Grow with Google has a network of more than 8,000 partner organizations like libraries, schools, small business development centers, chambers of commerce, workforce development boards and nonprofits to help people coast-to-coast.

### **About The Ladies of Hope Ministries**

The Ladies of Hope Ministries (The LOHM) mission is to create alternatives to incarceration, decarceration and post incarceration opportunities by providing access to resources for education, entrepreneurship, and sustainability through advocacy.

### **Partner Quotes**

“Due to a lack of access to the internet and computers while incarcerated, returning citizens are often at a disadvantage in today’s digital job market,” said **Sydney Heller, Chief Program Officer, The Last Mile**. “Programs like the new Grow with Google Career Readiness for Reentry program are monumental in leveling the playing field and moving us towards more equitable hiring by providing opportunity for people to gain proficiency in digital skills.”

“Digital skills are essential for career success and economic mobility,” said **Christopher Watler, Chief External**

**Affairs Officer, Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO).** “In a recent survey of CEO participants, 56 percent indicated a desire to learn digital skills. People leaving incarceration need immediate access to employment to support themselves and their families. Most can’t afford to miss work to attend educational or training classes. Grow with Google provides a flexible and free digital skills learning platform that helps CEO to meet the digital skills learning needs of our participants.”

“The ability to access and use digital tools, both personally and professionally, is not optional in today’s world,” said **Andrew Glazier, President and CEO, Defy Ventures.** “We are proud to be working with Google to address a profound digital divide that can make or break a successful reentry for formerly incarcerated people.”

“Justice involved individuals often have major deficits when it comes to digital literacy. The pandemic exposed these shortfalls in ways that were unimaginable before COVID. The Fortune Society is honored to partner with Google to help our participants increase their digital literacy skills and capacity to secure and maintain sustainable employment with a livable wage,” said **Ronald F. Day, Ph.D., Vice President of Programs at The Fortune Society.** “Thanks to Google, our participants will be equipped to compete in this highly competitive job market. When provided an opportunity our clients excel. This benefits our participants, their families, and the entire community.”