

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New Investments in Justice-Impacted People to Build the Next Wave of Black-Owned Businesses

Urban Rez Solutions launches the country's first business incubator built exclusively for Black, justice-impacted founders.

TORONTO, May 26, 2026. The story of Black entrepreneurship in Canada is about to be rewritten by 50 people who face the greatest barriers to attaining economic prosperity. A new wave of Black-owned businesses is emerging from a pipeline the economy has long ignored. Today, Urban Rez Solutions Social Enterprise announced the launch of Street Entrepreneurs 3.0, a 16-week program, funded by the Future Skills Centre, that will recruit and train 50 Black, justice-impacted founders, with a target of 50 fully registered, operating businesses by year-end.

It is the third edition of Street Entrepreneurs, a program Urban Rez has run for two previous cohorts of Black entrepreneurs. What makes this edition different is who it serves: this is the first time the program has been built ground-up for Black Canadians who are justice-impacted, a population historically excluded from every other path into the small business economy. This includes individuals who have been in custody, or have had repeated interactions with the justice system, as well as their family and loved ones who have been economically impacted as a result.

The program rests on the premise that the entrepreneurial instincts that allowed people to survive on the street, in custody, and through reentry are the same instincts that build companies. Street Entrepreneurs takes those instincts and gives them a registered business number, a website, an e-commerce store, financial literacy, mentorship, and access to capital pathways through project partners.

By the end of the 36-session curriculum, participants walk out with their own legally registered, operational business. Urban Rez is turning undervalued talent into Canada's next generation of business owners.

Why Now

Street Entrepreneurs 3.0 targets one of the most under-leveraged pools of entrepreneurial talent in the country, and the people leading the program have the receipts to prove it.

“You cannot keep telling Black people who have done time that the answer is to go find a job that won’t hire them,” said Roderick Brereton, Co-Executive Director of Urban Rez Solutions. “The answer is to give them the tools to build something they own. Street Entrepreneurs 3.0 is the first program in this country that says, plainly, this community will contribute to the next wave of Black business in Canada, and we are going to fund the launch.”

“We have spent eight years proving that the people excluded from the labour market, when provided the tools and resources, can be some of the brightest founders in this country,” said Farley Flex Nwaigbo, Co-Executive Director of Urban Rez Solutions. “Two previous cohorts of Street Entrepreneurs transitioned into registered business owners. This third edition takes that work and aims it squarely at Black justice-impacted Canadians, because that is where the gap is widest and the talent can be some of the deepest.”

“Testing new models to unlock the talent of Canadians who have often been overlooked by the labour market is a core part of our mission at the Future Skills Centre. This pilot with Urban Rez Solutions offers an opportunity to dig deeper on how tailored support affects the entrepreneurial path of justice-impacted Black Canadians, and what measures are needed to promote the full and effective participation of Canadians in training, education and employment,” says Noel Baldwin, Executive Director of the Future Skills Centre.

By the Numbers

Street Entrepreneurs 3.0 is targeting:

- 50 Black, justice-impacted founders recruited and registered.
- 46 program completions, a 92.5% completion rate.
- 50 fully registered, operating micro-enterprises.
- 70% of participants reporting stronger confidence in business planning, budgeting, marketing, and customer relations.
- 80% reporting greater comfort using digital tools to run a business.
- Reduced recidivism through pro-social entrepreneurial pathways and earned income.

About the Program

Street Entrepreneurs 3.0 is a hybrid training and incubation curriculum. Participants move through business planning, registration, branding, e-commerce, customer management, financial literacy, and access to capital. The program applies Afrocentric and trauma-informed pedagogy, includes mentorship from Black founders and community partners, and connects participants to capital pathways to fund their businesses. Recruitment opens in May 2026. The program runs through September 2026.

This project is funded through the Government of Canada's [Future Skills Program](#)

About Urban Rez Solutions

Urban Rez Solutions Social Enterprise collectively has spent decades supporting Black, Indigenous, and racialized justice-impacted Canadians through programs that integrate professional development, education, entrepreneurship, and crime prevention. Its flagship Inside-Out program builds relationships with participants inside correctional facilities before release and provides continuity of support after, including wraparound life stabilization supports and workforce development, an approach widely cited as a benchmark for community-led reentry. Co-Executive Directors Roderick Brereton and Farley Flex Nwaigbo are the lead spokespersons for the organization.

Learn more at urbanrez.org

About Future Skills Centre

The Future Skills Centre is a forward-thinking centre for research and collaboration dedicated to driving innovation in skills development so that everyone in Canada can be prepared for the future of work. We are founded by a consortium whose members are Toronto Metropolitan University, Blueprint, and Signal49 Research, and are funded by the Government of Canada's Future Skills Program.

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