



URBAN  
ALCHEMY

# GAME CHANGE

THE CAMPAIGN FOR URBAN ALCHEMY



# A REVOLUTION UNFOLDING

American cities are grappling with extreme poverty, mental health crises, addiction, and homelessness, all of which create turmoil in public spaces. Urban Alchemy, a nonprofit employment social enterprise, is leading a game-changing movement that transforms how we address these pressing challenges.

For over 50 years, remarkable innovation has transformed various fields, from technology and transportation to healthcare and education. But the evolution of public safety and social services delivery has lagged—until now.

Urban Alchemy has emerged as a game changer, demonstrating the transformative power of redemption and relationships, and it all starts with the formerly incarcerated individuals we hire. Once seen as shadows in our communities, these Urban Alchemy Practitioners now stand as pillars of light. Combining their hard-earned wisdom

with comprehensive training, they become agents of change who heal communities ravaged by poverty and inequity—and, in the process, transform their own trauma into pride and resilience.

Maintaining the status quo in public safety and social services delivery won't lead to victory.

If you are fed up with the slow progress in addressing these issues, put your support behind Urban Alchemy. Our approach is revolutionary, and our outcomes—from reduced crime to dramatically curtailed unsheltered homelessness—are changing lives and transforming urban spaces.

**Once seen as shadows  
in our communities,  
these Urban Alchemy  
Practitioners now stand  
as pillars of light.**





# THE CAMPAIGN FOR URBAN ALCHEMY: A \$30 MILLION INITIATIVE

**Game Change**, the Campaign for Urban Alchemy, is an invitation to become alchemists of hope, turning the base metals of adversity into the gold of community renewal.

This campaign will help us strengthen our services and expand our reach, building infrastructures of support that lead to meaningful, sustainable reductions in crime and unsheltered homelessness while creating jobs for returning citizens. Over the next three years, the campaign for Urban Alchemy will help us:

**Support returning citizens with over \$300 million in wages and benefits**

**Engage over 5 million people in struggling communities**

**Serve more than 25,000 people experiencing homelessness**

Our vision is to change the world by having Urban Alchemy Practitioners help heal the trauma and suffering that unfolds every day in our public spaces. Our remarkable success during the past six years compels us to continue developing, improving, and scaling our model to change the way society addresses some of our most complex challenges.

The Campaign for Urban Alchemy will advance the movement to make our cities healthier, safer, and more just. We ask you to join our early supporters, including Google.org, the Charles and Helen Schwab Foundation, the San Francisco Foundation, Downtown Austin Alliance, REDF, and others, and help us continue changing the game.





# WE HEAL TRAUMATIZED PEOPLE AND PLACES

Urban Alchemy Practitioners tap into their life experiences to build relationships rooted in respect and love, helping communities rebuild one person at a time. In cities where individuals are suffering, we offer solutions. When neighborhoods earn reputations as places to avoid, we turn them around.

Established in 2018, Urban Alchemy has rapidly grown from a small San Francisco-based program to a thriving employment social enterprise with over 1,200 staff across California, Oregon, and Texas.

Urban Alchemy puts words into action by focusing on what we call the 1-2-3.

## WE HAVE ONE MISSION:

to create great jobs for people who have been incarcerated, improving their reentry while reducing recidivism.

## WE SOLVE TWO PROBLEMS:

people falling through the social safety net, and the resulting turmoil this creates in public places.

## WE OFFER THREE GROUNDBREAKING INITIATIVES:

Safe Communities, Housed Communities, and Clean Communities. These initiatives foster health, safety, and peace through relationship-building rather than traditional enforcement and outdated social service programs.



## SAFE COMMUNITIES

Practitioners make communities safer by building relationships and serving as the community's helping hands and eyes on the street.

- **Community Engagement & Outreach:** Calming public spaces by forming bonds with residents, promoting positive behavior, activating spaces, and connecting people to local resources.
- **Community Crisis Response:** Responding to nonemergency 911 calls related to homelessness, mental health, and addiction.

## HOUSED COMMUNITIES

Urban Alchemy works to help individuals exit homelessness, emphasizing intake, referrals, and care coordination.

- **Homeless Outreach:** Working with our unhoused neighbors, using a strengths-based approach to connect them with services, shelter, and permanent housing.
- **Interim Housing:** Operating safe camping, safe parking, tiny homes, hotel-based shelters, congregate shelters, and other guest-centered alternatives to sleeping in public places.

## CLEAN COMMUNITIES

Practitioners address sanitation, space activation, and well-being, restoring a sense of pride and building relationships.

- **Hygiene Services:** Providing safe, clean, welcoming public bathrooms and mobile showers that offer dignity to those in need while improving public health.
- **Street Cleaning:** Removing garbage and debris from streets and other public places.





# BUILT BY AND FOR **PRACTITIONERS**

Urban Alchemy’s transformative work is propelled by individuals with first-hand experience with incarceration. Over 96% of our staff members, including our leadership, have navigated the challenges of incarceration, with many enduring long prison sentences. The trauma and deprivation associated with prolonged incarceration often compel individuals to embark on an inner journey of self-transformation. Through this profound process, they cultivate extraordinary emotional intelligence, resilience, and leadership skills, which uniquely position them to connect with the most marginalized individuals in our society. Urban Alchemy staff have grit and are less likely to grapple with the fear, frustration, and burnout that have historically been prevalent in the social services field.

Practitioners’ shared experiences foster a deep bond among our team members, resulting in a community of thriving employees who consistently deliver exceptional work with profound empathy.

Formerly incarcerated individuals, often deemed as lost causes by many, are not just finding jobs through Urban Alchemy; they are reclaiming their identities as contributing members of society, weaving tales of redemption in every paycheck. Through comprehensive training, competitive compensation, and ongoing support, we ensure our Practitioners’ success and pave the way for long-term personal and professional growth. Additionally, Urban Alchemy offers Practitioners the opportunity to give back to their communities—a profoundly important aspect of the reentry process. All these elements support Practitioners’ journeys as providers, family members, and community leaders.

**With 92% of our staff at all levels of the agency identifying as Black, Indigenous, or People of Color, Urban Alchemy organically nurtures cultural competence.**



## REVOLUTIONARIES AT THE HELM



Urban Alchemy was ignited by the revolutionary spirits of its co-founders, Dr. Lena Miller and Bayron Wilson. Raised in the crucible of San Francisco’s Hunters Point, they intimately understood the challenges faced by communities of color. Harnessing their profound insights, Dr. Miller, a clinical psychologist, and Mr. Wilson, a formerly incarcerated visionary, crafted a groundbreaking model for societal change. They recognized the often-overlooked skills and talents of people returning from prison and began a movement to harness their superpowers to transform trauma into resilience. Urban Alchemy’s staff, molded by these visionary leaders, stands unyielding in the face of our collective challenges, embodying the true essence of a game-changing revolution.



# 96%

OF OUR STAFF MEMBERS, INCLUDING OUR LEADERSHIP, HAVE NAVIGATED THE CHALLENGES OF INCARCERATION, WITH MANY ENDURING LONG PRISON SENTENCES.

THEY NOW PROVIDE FOR THEMSELVES, THEIR FAMILIES, AND THEIR COMMUNITIES.



A Practitioner showing love for a Guest displaying the key to his first-ever apartment.





# PROVEN RESULTS

Few people understand how to navigate the trauma and chaos prevalent on our streets better than those who have endured it themselves. Hiring returning citizens to clean streets, operate shelters, and conduct outreach may not seem like conventional public safety interventions or social service innovations, but our results speak volumes. And by doing this work, our Practitioners are enriching their own lives, creating a double bottom line for their communities.

## URBAN ALCHEMY CHANGES PRACTITIONERS' LIVES

In a 12-month period, Urban Alchemy supported the successful reentry of returning citizens by:



### CREATING JOBS

Providing over 1,000 formerly incarcerated individuals with stable, well-paying jobs



### REDUCING HOMELESSNESS

Ensuring the rate of homelessness among our staff is functionally zero, while formerly incarcerated individuals are 10 times more likely to experience homelessness



### LOWERING RECIDIVISM

Maintaining a staff recidivism rate at under 2%, in stark contrast to the national average of 40%-60%



### PROVIDING STABILITY

Paying over \$65 million in wages and benefits to returning citizens

## PRACTITIONERS TRANSFORM THEIR COMMUNITIES



### CLEANED UP COMMUNITIES

Removed nearly 500 tons of trash in the neighborhoods we serve



### SHELTERED THOUSANDS

Sheltered 1,200+ people nightly in low-barrier, client-centered facilities



### PROVIDED POLICING ALTERNATIVE

Resolved 2,000+ nonemergency calls in San Francisco and Los Angeles



### DECREASED DRUG CRIME

Achieved an 80% reduction in drug-related crimes at Urban Alchemy intersections in San Francisco's Tenderloin district



### REDUCED CITYWIDE HOMELESSNESS

Helped reduce unsheltered homelessness by nearly 50% in the Hollywood and Venice neighborhoods of Los Angeles



### DE-ESCALATED CONFLICT

De-escalated 50,000 incidents, increasing safety without police involvement



### CONNECTED TO PERMANENT HOUSING

Helped 1,000+ people exit homelessness through permanent housing solutions



### FACILITATED POSITIVE INTERACTIONS

Engaged with 5,000+ people in homeless encampments in Austin



### PROVIDED HYGIENE SERVICES

Provided 10,000 showers for people living in Oakland



### CONNECTED TO LOCAL SERVICES

Connected 4,000 people experiencing homelessness to shelter and services



# CHANGE IN ACTION



## KRISTOFER: A GUEST'S HOPE

Nineteen-year-old Kristofer—or “Krispy,” as friends call him—was living on the streets of Portland, Oregon, for a few years before Urban Alchemy’s outreach team invited him and his faithful dog to one of our Tiny Home Villages. From his first moments at the site, he captivated the staff and other guests with his charismatic personality and good sense of humor. He says he had lost his hope for the future before finding the Tiny Home Village but now is realizing the possibilities that lie ahead. He has obtained his ID and Social Security cards and successfully applied for rental assistance, which he is using to move into his own apartment.

## WESLEY: A PRACTITIONER'S PURPOSE

Wesley’s journey from incarceration to empowerment epitomizes the transformative force of Urban Alchemy. Emerging from two decades of confinement, Wesley found purpose as a Practitioner within the organization. His past became a superpower, connecting him intimately with those navigating similar struggles. At Urban Alchemy, Wesley discovered a renewed sense of purpose, offering vital understanding to others facing adversity. His story reflects the revolutionary impact of employment as a catalyst for personal and communal transformation—a testament to the game-changing ethos of Urban Alchemy.



## SHARON: A GUEST'S RESILIENCE

Sharon’s journey to one of Urban Alchemy’s Tiny Home Villages marked a paradigm shift in her life. Transcending the harsh realities of life on the streets, she found solace within a community built on love and compassion. Through the unique sanctuary provided by the Tiny Home Village, Sharon rediscovered joy and security. As a cherished maternal figure, she exemplifies the transformative power of love in rebuilding lives. Sharon’s journey embodies the revolutionary shift from homelessness to hope, as she seeks permanent housing and extends the cycle of love within her community.

## EMAN: A COMMUNITY MEMBER'S SUPPORT

Eman, the proprietor of a café in San Francisco’s Tenderloin neighborhood, witnessed the daily struggles outside her establishment until Urban Alchemy Practitioners intervened. Their presence transformed the neighborhood by addressing the chaos and suffering head-on. Practitioners not only beautified the streets, but also provided essential assistance to those in need. Eman works closely with Practitioners, and her café has become a haven for them when they need a break. This partnership exemplifies the Game Change concept, where community members and Urban Alchemy Practitioners unite to create a safer, more welcoming environment for everyone—an enduring testament to the revolutionary impact of collective action.





# CHANGE THE GAME

# URBAN WITH ALCHEMY



## BIG CHANGE REQUIRES BIG INVESTMENT

We believe in the power of your support to drive transformative impact. As an employment social enterprise, our business model isn't built on philanthropy. We cover most of our costs through the contracts we receive to do our work. However, to take things to the next level, we need to invest in our infrastructure and growth. Your contribution to this campaign will play a crucial role in advancing and expanding our self-sustaining model for community change.

Each year, **more than 75% of our budget directly returns to the community** through wages and benefits for returning citizens. Your support will create a ripple effect, fostering economic growth and concurrently reducing the societal costs linked to recidivism, crime, and homelessness.

When you contribute to Urban Alchemy, you're not just investing in an organization; you're reinvesting in the local economy and catalyzing positive change. The Campaign for Urban Alchemy is a pivotal initiative, and your support can propel us to remarkable progress. By June 2027, we aim to achieve substantial milestones, such as enhanced support for our Practitioners, increased scalability of our services, and fortification of a more resilient organization that guides even more individuals and communities toward healing.

Your generous donation is a catalyst for a future where Urban Alchemy's impact extends further, creating lasting change in the lives of countless individuals. Join us in this journey of transformation and be a vital part of the Campaign for Urban Alchemy.





# TIME TO LEVEL UP

**Urban Alchemy currently receives over 97% of our funding from fee-for-service contracts.** We designed our business model to ensure Urban Alchemy will remain financially sustainable as long as there is demand for our services. However, because most of our contracts are cost reimbursement and do not allow retained earnings, we are turning to philanthropy to support our development and growth.

Urban Alchemy's innovative model is a game changer for addressing society's greatest challenges. However, to continue improving our programs and

expand responsibly, we must advance our organizational development. With a growth rate of nearly 500% in under three years, we face the same challenges as most fast-growing startups.

With the support of consultants and advisors, Urban Alchemy's leadership has been carefully planning our growth and development. Based on this work, we have determined that Urban Alchemy needs to raise \$30 million to address seven priority areas. **The following is a summary of those areas and how we will spend these funds from July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2026.**

## ENHANCE SERVICES

**\$11,000,000**

Our contracts do not cover 100% of our operating expenses, such as move-in costs for our guests going to permanent housing, community activities, outreach supplies, etc. We must supplement contracts to allow more flexibility in operations.

## IMPROVE SUSTAINABILITY

**\$2,500,000**

Currently, philanthropy represents only 2% of our revenue. We must increase this amount to ensure a steady flow of unrestricted funds for long-term organizational health and sustainability. Urban Alchemy must expand our fundraising capacity so we can consistently raise at least 5% of annual revenue from philanthropic sources.

## SUPPORT PRACTITIONERS

**\$900,000**

Urban Alchemy's training program, HR systems, and benefits also require improvements. Campaign funds will help us upgrade our HRIS system, expand training programs, launch a leadership institute, create staff support groups, and improve employee benefits. These upgrades will help ensure that Practitioners can build careers, not just find jobs.

## EXPAND OUR REACH

**\$500,000**

To scale our model while testing new services, Urban Alchemy needs unrestricted funds. We will continue changing the game by conducting research and development to explore new markets and evaluate new initiatives such as disaster relief and emergency medical services.

## ENSURE RESPONSIBLE GROWTH

**\$13,000,000**

Urban Alchemy's contracts are on a cost-reimbursement basis, which is challenging for cash flow. Our accounts receivable is often over \$15 million. We currently have only 30 days of operating expenses in reserves. This campaign will help Urban Alchemy build adequate reserves for cash flow purposes that can also be used for growth capital and unforeseen challenges.

## ENHANCE EVALUATION AND LEARNING

**\$1,600,000**

Urban Alchemy's technology infrastructure is only 5 years old and does not meet the needs of an organization with an operating budget approaching \$100 million. We have prioritized investing in Urban Alchemy's data collection and IT systems so we can better measure impact and improve our efficiency.

## TELL OUR STORY

**\$500,000**

Historically, Urban Alchemy has not had the resources to adequately invest in communications. Making improvements in this area is critical if we are to change the narrative around returning citizens, share information about our model, and expand our reach. We plan to invest in a new website and expand our communications efforts.



# THE POWER OF YOUR INVESTMENT

With your donation, we will be able to accomplish the following over the next three years.



## SUCCESSFUL RETURNING CITIZENS



### INCREASE SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Support staff's reentry, facilitating a 25%+ increase in self-sufficiency during their first year of employment, as measured by the Arizona Self-Sufficiency Matrix



### REDUCE STIGMA

Change how society views formerly incarcerated individuals and their contributions to society, which will help reduce recidivism and poverty among returning citizens



### CREATE GOOD-PAYING JOBS

Pay over \$325M in wages and benefits to returning citizens



### REDUCE TURNOVER

Improve staff retention by reducing turnover to under 20%



### EXPAND STAFF

Increase staff size to 2,300, creating 1,000 new jobs for returning citizens

## BIGGER AND BETTER SERVICES



### ENGAGE

Conduct 5 million+ positive engagements and 250,000 de-escalations, increasing safety without police involvement



### SHELTER

Provide shelter and services to over 25,000 individuals, with at least 5,000 of them exiting homelessness



### EXPAND

Bring the power of Urban Alchemy to at least three new markets



### HOUSE

Further reduce unsheltered homelessness and crime in the communities we serve



### EVOLVE

Implement at least one new service line such as disaster relief or emergency medical assistance

## A STRONGER ORGANIZATION



### RESERVES

Maintain reserves equivalent to 90 days of operating expenses



### COMMUNICATIONS

Overhaul our website, branding, and communications strategies



### FUNDRAISING

Develop fundraising capacity that ensures 5% of our budget comes from unearned revenue each year



### INFRASTRUCTURE

Improve our administrative infrastructure to better support our staff and the people we serve while expanding responsibly



## THE EXTRAORDINARY COST OF

# FAILURE

City and state budgets are buckling under the weight of homelessness, addiction, and mental health crises. The status quo costs **tens of billions** of dollars in the U.S. every year.

**CALIFORNIA SPENDS \$42,000 PER HOMELESS PERSON ANNUALLY.**

**NEARLY 40% OF 911 CALLS ARE RELATED TO MENTAL HEALTH, ADDICTION, OR HOMELESSNESS; POLICE RESPONSE TO THESE CALLS COSTS CITIES TENS OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS EACH YEAR.**

**A STUDY BY A SENTENCING POLICY ADVISORY COUNCIL ESTIMATED THAT THE COST OF A SINGLE RECIDIVISM EVENT IS \$150,000.**

**ACCORDING TO THE NIH, DRUG-RELATED CRIME COSTS \$38 BILLION PER YEAR.**

## THE GAME-CHANGING SAVINGS OF

# SUCCESS

Not only does Urban Alchemy save lives and transform communities—we also save money.

**BY HELPING OVER 1,000 PEOPLE EXIT HOMELESSNESS, WE SAVED THE PUBLIC \$42 MILLION.**

**BY RESOLVING 2,000 NONEMERGENCY CALLS TO 911, WE SAVED CITIES MILLIONS OF DOLLARS.**

**IF OUR STAFF HAD A RECIDIVISM RATE LIKE THE NATIONAL AVERAGE, AT LEAST 400 WOULD HAVE BEEN INCARCERATED – WE SAVED SOCIETY OVER \$60 MILLION.**

**STANFORD UNIVERSITY FOUND THAT UA REDUCED DRUG CRIME BY OVER 80% IN A 12-MONTH PERIOD, SAVING SAN FRANCISCO MILLIONS OF DOLLARS.**





# BY THE NUMBERS

Your one-time gift to Urban Alchemy will build an organization that is ready to scale in both size and impact.

## URBAN ALCHEMY GROWTH PROJECTIONS

## FUNDRAISING CADENCE & ALLOCATION

CAMPAIGN FUNDRAISING	06/30/24	06/30/25	06/30/26	TOTAL
ANNUAL FUNDRAISING NEEDS	\$2.2M	\$3.8M	\$5M	\$11M
INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS	\$350K	\$3.15M	\$2.5M	\$6M
RESERVES/GROWTH CAPITAL	\$1.45M	\$7.05M	\$4.5M	\$13M
<b>TOTAL CAMPAIGN FUNDRAISING</b>	<b>\$4M</b>	<b>\$14M</b>	<b>\$12M</b>	<b>\$30M</b>

REVENUE	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26	FY27
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	\$69,110,552	\$86,499,580	\$104,959,496	\$126,391,395	\$153,269,674
% Fundraising Revenue	2%	2.5%	3.6%	4.0%	5.0%

EXPENSES	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26	FY27
<b>PROGRAM PERSONNEL</b>	\$53,402,227	\$62,770,303	\$75,869,622	\$91,043,546	\$109,252,256
<b>PROGRAM OPERATING</b>	\$5,256,952	\$9,682,617	\$13,656,532	\$16,387,838	\$19,665,406
<b>GENERAL &amp; ADMINISTRATIVE</b>	\$10,366,583	\$14,026,553	\$15,414,708	\$18,937,649	\$23,751,980
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	\$69,025,762	\$86,479,473	\$104,940,862	\$126,369,034	\$152,669,642
Total Staff	1,059	1,324	1,589	1,907	2,325

<b>NET REVENUE</b>	<b>\$84,790</b>	<b>\$20,107</b>	<b>\$18,634</b>	<b>\$22,361</b>	<b>\$600,032</b>
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# JOIN THE **REVOLUTION**

Urban Alchemy's vision is unapologetically bold: changing the world by harnessing the power of returning citizens to provide hope, health, and transformation. Urban Alchemy has brought revolutionary change to six cities, and your support will help develop and grow this movement. You will help us to better serve even more individuals struggling on our streets, calm chaotic neighborhoods without traditional law enforcement, and create new opportunities for returning citizens.

## JOIN US. BECOME A GAME CHANGER.

