



# Travis County Commissioners Court Agenda Request

**Meeting Date:** January 31, 2011

**Prepared By/Phone Number:** Deone Wilhite 854-9111

**Elected/Appointed Official/Dept. Head:** Commissioner Ron Davis, Pct. 1

**Commissioners Court Sponsor:** Commissioner Ron Davis, Pct. 1

**AGENDA LANGUAGE:**

CONSIDER AND TAKE APPROPRIATE ACTION ON FUNDING REQUEST FROM THE MEEELJ (MINORITIES FOR EQUALITY IN EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION, LIBERTY, AND JUSTICE, INC.) PROGRAM FOR SERVICES TO FORMERLY INCARCERATED PERSONS IN TRAVIS COUNTY.

**BACKGROUND/SUMMARY OF REQUEST AND ATTACHMENTS:**

See Attachments

**STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Please approve

**ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES:**

None

**FISCAL IMPACT AND SOURCE OF FUNDING:**

None

**REQUIRED AUTHORIZATIONS:**

Commissioner Precinct 1 Office	Ron Davis	Completed
County Judge's Office	Cheryl Aker	
Commissioners Court		

**AGENDA REQUEST DEADLINE:** All agenda requests and supporting materials must be submitted as a single pdf to Cheryl Aker in the County Judge's office, [Cheryl.Aker@co.travis.tx.us](mailto:Cheryl.Aker@co.travis.tx.us) by **Tuesdays at 5:00 p.m.** for the next week's meeting.

# **Minorities for Equality in Employment, Education, Liberty, and Justice**

Latreese Cooke, Executive Director

MEEELJ, Inc.  
PO Box 957  
Bastrop, TX 78602  
O. (512) 581-0211  
F. (512) 321-0212

# About MEEELJ, Inc.

## Mission:

To effect change and opportunity for youth, inmates, and disadvantaged persons.

## Vision:

To eliminate the barriers that prohibit persons from being successful, employable, educated, and empowered member of society.

"Effecting Change and Opportunity for All"

# MEEELJ, Inc

Minorities for Equality in Employment, Education, Liberty, and Justice, Inc. (MEEELJ, Inc.) is a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization in operation for seven years.

MEEELJ, Inc. was solely founded to aid families and those persons who have previously been incarcerated.

MEEELJ, Inc. has been able to serve over 600 adults and juveniles in Bastrop and Travis County who meet this criteria.

# MEEELJ, Inc

- State approved alcohol awareness classes for minors
- Anger management groups
- Assign/ locate legal counsel for participates
- Job Readiness training
- Adult basic education, GED proficiency preparation
- Assist in securing stable housing for participates

# IRON SHARPENS IRON PROGRAM

“As iron sharpens iron, one man sharpens another” – Proverbs 27:17

As iron sharpens iron



# Iron Sharpens Iron

- May 2011 MEEELJ, Inc. entered into a contract with the City of Austin to implement a pilot program – Iron Sharpens Iron (ISI).
- The purpose is to empower individuals so that they may fully realize their inherent and unlimited potential – in spite of a criminal history – to make a difference in their lives and in the Austin community.

# Iron Sharpens Iron

- For various reasons, ISI clients were unable to benefit from the community infrastructure designed to prepare the general population for the journey through life.
- MEEELJ, Inc. specifically designed the ISI program with that in mind.



# Iron Sharpens Iron

- The ISI pilot program will provide up to 36 clients per year and a 16 week peer-to-peer counseling and training sessions
- The training will start with an in-depth self-assessment test.

# Iron Sharpens Iron

- The training provided will be sufficient to start each client down a path that leads to earning a legitimate living and become a conducive member of society.

# ISI Pilot Program Performance Measures Phase I

Subject of Requirement	Number of requirements
Potential ISI system clients recruited for program	720
Potential ISI system clients recruited and agreeing to participate in program	360
ISI system partners contacted	50
ISI systems partners with signed MOU	25

# MEEELJ, Inc. Request

- Support the ISI Pilot Program funding request.
- The first phase funding, in fiscal year 2011, will be used to establish MEEELJ, Inc. operations in the City of Austin.
- The second fiscal year funding are monies to fully operate the ISI pilot.
- The stipend will be paid weekly to each participant as an incentive as well as a benefit to enable them to provide or contribute for their respective households and expenses .

**FORM #4: PROGRAM BUDGET**

Agency: MEEELJ, Inc

Program: Iron Sharpens Iron

Instructions: Provide whole dollar amounts for each applicable line item. **IMPORTANT: DO NOT INCLUDE ANY PROGRAM INCOME.**ON THIS PAGE. Note that the line items with asterisks \*\* will require prior approval - Refer to your Contract Language.

<b>IMPORTANT: All \$ amounts must be whole dollars only (no cents)</b>			
<b>PERSONNEL</b>	<b>Requested COUNTY Amount</b>	<b>Amount Funded by ALL OTHER Sources</b>	<b>* TOTAL Budget (ALL funding sources)</b>
Administrative Salaries - Regular Time	0	0	0
Direct Service Salaries - Regular Time	160,000		160,000
Administrative Salaries Overtime			
Direct Service Salaries - Overtime			0
Benefits	30,000		30,000
<b>A. SUBTOTALS: PERSONNEL</b>	<b>190,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>190,000</b>
<b>OPERATING EXPENSES</b>			
General Operating Expenses	57,000	0	57,000
Insurance/Bonding	8,000		8,000
Audit Expenses <i>(provide details for this line item in the Subcontracted Expenses form)</i>	5,000		5,000
Consultants/Contractual <i>(provide details for this line item in the Subcontracted Expenses form)</i>	30,000		30,000
Staff Travel - <u>within</u> Travis County	2,000		2,000
Conferences/Seminars/Training - <u>within</u> Travis County	2,000		2,000
** Staff Travel - <u>out of</u> County	1,000		1,000
** Conferences/Seminars - <u>out of</u> County	1,000		1,000
<b>B. SUBTOTALS: OPERATING EXPENSES</b>	<b>106,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>106,000</b>
<b>DIRECT ASSISTANCE</b>			
Food/Beverage for Clients <i>(NOTE: Alcoholic beverage expenditures are not eligible or allowable)</i>	3,000	0	3,000
Financial Assistance for Clients (e.g. rent, mortgage, utilities)	90,000		90,000
Other (Substance abuse counsel)	24,000		24,000
			0
<b>C. SUBTOTALS: DIRECT ASSISTANCE</b>	<b>117,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>117,000</b>
<b>EQUIPMENT/CAPITAL OUTLAY</b>			
** (Computer desktops, laptops and office furniture)	28,000	0	28,000
<b>D. SUBTOTALS: EQUIPMENT/CAPITAL OUTLAY</b>	<b>28,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>28,000</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL (A + B + C + D)</b>	<b>441,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>441,000</b>
<b>PERCENT SHARE of Total for Funding Sources:</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

**BUDGET SUBMISSION  
BUDGET REQUEST PROPOSAL**

<b>Name of Budget Request &amp; Priority #:</b>	Iron Sharpens Iron (ISI)
<b>Fund/Department/Division:</b>	Minorities for Equality in Employment, Education, Liberty and Justice, Inc. (MEEELJ)
<b>Total Amount Requested:</b>	\$ 441,000
<b>Collaborating Departments/Agencies:</b>	
<b>Contact Information (Name/Phone):</b>	Latreese Cooke 512-394-2055

**1. Summary Statement: Include one or two sentences to be included in Commissioners Court materials.**

Minorities for Equality in Employment, Education, Liberty and Justice, Inc. (MEEELJ) is a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization that has been in operation for eight years, solely founded to aid the families and those persons who have previously been incarcerated. MEEELJ, Inc. has been able to serve over 600 adults and juveniles in Bastrop and Travis County who meet this criterion.

In this proposal, MEEELJ is asking Travis County to underwrite a pilot program, Iron Sharpens Iron (ISI), which we will implement. This pilot program will help 36 persons during a fiscal year by offering three 16 week training sessions to 12 clients from the Austin area per session.

**2. Description of Request: Describe the request, including current issues and how the request relates to the mission and services provided by the department. Include historical information related to the request where relevant.**

MEEELJ's has over eight years of experience successful restoring and returning individuals, with a criminal history, back to their communities without a reliance on criminal activity as a means of survival. The ISI system was specifically designed by MEEELJ to address the challenging conditions Travis County presents individuals with criminal histories who are trying to get reestablished within the general community. The ISI system provides each program participant with the necessary survival skills needed to avoid a dependence on criminal activity in order to earn a living. The training starts with an in-depth self-assessment, which is used to develop the client's individualized 16-week training plan. The ISI system provides each participant with a weekly stipend as a financial incentive and matches each client with a peer partner to work through the reintegration process. The stipend helps offset some of the financial challenges confronting potential participants. The peer-to-peer partnership increases the probability of each client's finishing the program, because the payment of the stipend depends on the weekly completion of the individualized 16-week training plan by both participants. MEEELJ works with community organizations and government agencies in order to assist in the effective restoration of this segment of the population. This includes organizations with professional volunteers interested in providing staff time required to run an office, educational institutions with the capacity to provide client assessments, training, and student internship opportunities, professional counselors for substance abuse issues,; parole assistance,; career development; and financial planning; obtaining transportation and housing assistance; job placement offers from local employers; and direct program funding. The training provided is sufficient to start each participant on a path that leads to earning a legitimate living. In addition, each client's training will equip them to train one of their friends or family members who may or may not have a criminal background.

**3a. Pros: Describe the arguments in favor of this proposal.**

MEEELJ will employ the ISI system to break the cycle of recidivism, where individuals with criminal backgrounds continue criminal activity once released from the criminal justice system. If this cycle is not broken, the number of families involved in criminal activity within the community will continue to grow and become a larger percentage of the total community population. Successfully providing services to this population can indirectly deter problem conditions at the individual and community level. Because this population is a source, and often the root cause, of some community problems, transitioning them toward self-sufficiency aids crime prevention. Texas Department of Criminal Justice data shows from 2010-2005 over 23,000 incarcerated individuals were released into Travis County. Assisting these individuals benefits the communities and families to which they return and potentially provide an economic stimulus to the county of over \$.5 billion annually when these individuals reenter the community as legitimate market participants.

Fiscal Year	Releases from Prison	Releases to Parole	Total Releases
2010	2,666	1,014	3,680
2009	2,872	1,004	3,876
2008	3,084	1,076	4,160
2007	3,044	1,135	4,179
2006	3,006	1,147	4,153
2005	2,738	1,084	3,822
<b>Total</b>	<b>17,410</b>	<b>6,460</b>	<b>23,870</b>
<b>Average</b>	<b>2,902</b>	<b>1,077</b>	<b>3,978</b>
<b>Travis County per Capita Income = \$25,883</b>			
<b>Potential Economic Stimulus: 23,870 x \$25,883 = \$ 617,827,210</b>			

**3b. Cons: Describe the arguments against this proposal.**

Providing services to these clients directly deprives the county from funding other need community activities. Because these clients are considered a source, and often the root cause, of community problems, providing them with resources directs funding away from aiding crime prevention.

**4. Anticipated Outcome of Request and Proposed Timeline: Timeline should include the expected dates of results and may extend past the Fiscal Year**

The anticipated outcome of the ISI program is to establish a catalyst for the growing population of previously incarcerated released back into Travis County. The program successfully directs this segment of the population toward legitimate economic opportunities within the community. MEEELJ's work toward a successful transition from Bastrop County to Travis County is included in the following timeline which covers approximately two and one half years.

Task Name	Start Date	Finish Date
<b>Program Development</b>		
Develop program concept	Month 1	Month 3
Develop program staff needs	Month 1	Month 3
Develop program cost	Month 1	Month 3
Secure program funding	Month 1	Month 3
Develop program recruiting strategy	Month 4	Month 6
Recruiting community organizations	Month 4	Month 6
Recruiting program participants	Month 4	Month 6

Recruiting program funders	Month 4	Month 6
Staff Development		
Staff recruiting		
Staff training	Month 7	Month 12
Volunteer and mentor recruiting	Month 7	Month 12
Volunteer and mentor training	Month 7	Month 12
Program Implementation		
Participant selection	Month 13	Month 30
Participant assessment	Month 13	Month 30
Development of individual work plan	Month 13	Month 30
Record program activity	Month 13	Month 30
Review program results	Month 13	Month 30
Program Evaluation		
Program monitoring and data collection	Month 13	Month 30
Perform data analysis	Month 13	Month 30
Perform process evaluation	Month 13	Month 30
Perform impact evaluation	Month 13	Month 30
Prepare program recommendation	Month 13	Month 30
Make needed program adjustments	Month 13	Month 30

**5. Description of Program Measurement and Evaluation:** Describe how the proposal will be measured and evaluated and if this includes an independent evaluation component. In addition, indicate whether a comparative analysis of similar local programs is available.

MEEELJ shall make arrangements with one of several universities in the area with post graduate degree programs that traditionally evaluate a non-profit organization program as training for graduate student. This approach includes the planning of the evaluation, the implementations and final recommendations.

**6a. Performance Measures:** List applicable current and new performance measures related to the request and note the changes for Fiscal Year should this request be implemented.

Measure Name	Actual FY Measure	Revised FY Measure	Projected FY Measure at Target Level	Projected FY Measure with Added Funding
<b>Output Measures</b>				
Number of potential ISI system participants prescreened for the program			720	
Number of ISI system participants selected to participate in the program			360	
Number of ISI system participants provided individualized training plans			50	
Number of ISI system stipends awarded			25	



<b>Number of potential ISI system participants prescreened for the program</b>			<b>360</b>	
<b>Number of ISI system participants selected to participate in the program</b>			<b>36</b>	
<b>Number of ISI system participants provided individualized training plans</b>			<b>36</b>	
<b>Number of ISI system stipends awarded</b>			<b>36</b>	
<b>Outcome Measures</b>				
<b>Percentage of ISI recruits agreeing to participate in the program</b>			<b>50%</b>	
<b>Percentage of ISI partners agreeing to sign a MOU</b>			<b>50%</b>	
<b>Number of ISI system participants finishing the training.</b>			<b>36</b>	
<b>Number of ISI system participants enrolled in the training.</b>			<b>30</b>	
<b>Percentage of ISI system participants estimated to finish</b>			<b>83%</b>	

Form #8: **SUBCONTRACTED EXPENSES FORM**  
for 2012 Social Service Contracts funded by Travis County

Date prepared: 02/06/2012

Agency: MEEELJ, Inc Program: Iron Sharpens Iron

Please provide TOTAL PROGRAM information for all of this program's subcontractors whose professional services will be charged to this program. Include all subcontracts regardless of funding source.

SUBCONTRACT #1		
Name of Subcontractor	Inner City Development Corporation	
Term of Subcontract	Receive for services an amount not to exceed 10% of agency funding annually.	
Services to be subcontracted	This services provide MEEELJ with administrative, financial and program management and development assistance.	
Number of Clients to be Served (if applicable)		
Dollar Amounts by Funding Source:		
<u>TRAVIS COUNTY amount</u> \$ 30,000	<u>ALL OTHER Sources amount</u> \$	<u>TOTAL</u> \$ 30,000

SUBCONTRACT #2		
Name of Subcontractor		
Term of Subcontract		
Services to be Subcontracted		
Number of Clients to be Served (if applicable)		
Dollar Amounts by Funding Source:		
<u>TRAVIS COUNTY amount</u> \$	<u>ALL OTHER Sources amount</u> \$	<u>TOTAL</u> \$

SUBCONTRACT #3		
Name of Subcontractor		
Term of Subcontract		
Services to be Subcontracted		
Number of Clients to be Served (if applicable)		
Dollar Amounts by Funding Source:		
<u>TRAVIS COUNTY amount</u> \$	<u>ALL OTHER Sources amount</u> \$	<u>TOTAL</u> \$

(If needed for additional subcontracts, copy blocks above to a new page and re-number them accordingly)

**Minorities for Equality in Employment,  
Education, Liberty and Justice, Inc.**

**Funding Request**

**For**

**Iron Sharpens Iron Pilot Program**

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## **Executive Summary**

Minorities for Equality in Employment, Education, Liberty and Justice, Inc. (MEEELJ) are a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization that has been in operation for seven years, solely founded to aid the families and those persons who have previously been incarcerated. MEEELJ, Inc. has been able to serve over 600 adults and juveniles in Bastrop and Travis County who meet this criterion.

Through our programming, we strive to empower individuals so that they may fully realize their inherent and unlimited potential - in spite of a felony - to make a difference in their own lives and in their communities. Our mission and goal is simple: to Redeem, Empower, and Include by means of information, restoration of their voting rights, employment, and beating addictions. MEEELJ has discovered that a community can only be as strong and successful as are its citizens.

In this proposal, MEEELJ is asking the City of Austin to underwrite a pilot program, Iron Sharpens Iron (ISI), which we will implement. This pilot program will help 36 persons during a fiscal year by offering three 16 week training sessions to 12 participants from the Austin area per session.

ISI uses peer-to-peer counseling to successfully remove barriers that restrict services for participants who have criminal backgrounds. For various reasons, ISI participants were unable to benefit from the community infrastructure designed to prepare the general population for the journey through life.

The ISI system provides these persons with another opportunity to connect into the community infrastructure and transition out of poverty, using the same methods available to the general population. ISI is designed to help the participants gain access to the community infrastructure, like jobs and training. Gaining access to this community infrastructure and then successfully negotiating its bureaucratic barriers are the participants' first challenges on the journey toward non-criminal self-sufficiency.

MEEELJ will employ the ISI system to resolve the technical problems the participants encounter in attempting the transition: MEEELJ will provide professional guidance, financial and social support, and corrective feedback by monitoring client progress.

Successfully providing services to these participants can indirectly deter problem conditions at the individual and community level. Because these participants are considered a source, and often the root cause, of community problems, transitioning them toward self-sufficiency aids crime prevention.

## **Program Deliverables**

MEEELJ will employ the ISI system to break the cycle of recidivism, where individuals with criminal backgrounds continue criminal activity once released from the criminal justice system. If this cycle is not broken, the number of families involved in criminal activity within the community will continue to grow and become a larger percentage of the total community population.

MEEELJ's has over eight years of experience successful restoring and returning individuals, in spite of a background of a felony, back to their community's without a reliance on criminal activity as a means of survival. The ISI system was specifically designed by MEEELJ to address the challenging conditions the City of Austin presents individuals with criminal histories trying to get reestablished within the general community.

MEEELJ will establish partnerships with community organizations in order to assist in the effective restoration of this segment of the population. This includes the establishment of memoranda of understanding (MOU) between MEEELJ and organizations with professional volunteers interested in providing staff time required to run an office, educational institutions with the capacity to provide client assessments, training, and student internship opportunities, professional counselors for substance abuse issues, career development and financial planning. Obtaining transportation and housing assistance, job placement offers from local employers and direct program funding.

The ISI system requires screening recruits that qualify for the program and then matching each client with a peer partner to share in the reintegration process. This peer-to-peer relationship provides each client with a working partner to share in the reentry experiences, which increases the probability of each client finishing the program.

The ISI system provides each client with a 16-week training plan designed to equip each client with the necessary survival skills needed to avoid a dependence on criminal activity in order to earn a living. The training starts with an in-depth self-assessment, which is used to develop the client's individualized 16-week training plan.

The ISI system provides each client with a weekly stipend as a financial incentive to participate in the program, to complete the 16 week training plan, and as a recruiting tool. The stipend helps eliminate the largest barrier preventing participation of any potential client. The payment of the stipend depends on the weekly completion of the individualized 16-week training plan by both client and peer partner.

Finally, the ISI system delivers six two person teams – 12 people- at the end of each 16 week session. The graduates receive personal career counseling, substance abuse goals and daily counseling, financial planning, educational advancement, employment placement and 6 months of progress follow up.

The training provided is sufficient to start each client down a path that leads to earning a legitimate living. In addition, each client's training will equip them to train one or their friends or family members who may or may not have a criminal background.

**Performance Measures**

The performance measures are for the ISI Pilot Program. The measures represent the work required to establish MEEELJ operations in Austin and the work resulting from the actual implementation of the ISI pilot program.

<b>ISI Pilot Program Performance Measures</b>	
<b>Output Measures</b>	<b>Fiscal 2012 Annual Goal</b>
<b>Number of ISI system partners contacted</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Number of ISI system partners with a signed MOU</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Number of potential ISI system participants recruited for the program</b>	<b>720</b>
<b>Number of potential ISI system participants recruited and agreeing to participate in the program</b>	<b>360</b>
<b>Number of potential ISI system participants prescreened for the program</b>	<b>360</b>
<b>Number of ISI system participants selected to participate in the program</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Number of ISI system participants provided individualized training plans</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Number of ISI system stipends awarded</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Total number of ISI system participants enrolled in the training.</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Total number of ISI system participants finishing the training.</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Outcome Measures</b>	
<b>Percentage of ISI recruits agreeing to participate in the program</b>	<b>50%</b>
<b>Percentage of ISI partners agreeing to sign a MOU</b>	<b>50%</b>
<b>Percentage of ISI system participants estimated to finish</b>	<b>83%</b>

## Budget Request

The ISI pilot program funding request are monies to fully operate the pilot which includes providing a stipend and computer access to the program participants and a full-time staff for program intake, monitoring and general office administration.

The stipend will be paid weekly to each participant as an incentive as well as a benefit to enable them to provide or contribute for their respective households and expenses. The stipend is approximately \$2,400.00 per client for each 16-week session.

<b>MEEELJ, Inc. Budget Request FY2012</b>			
<b>Categories</b>	<b>Descriptions</b>	<b>Subtotals</b>	<b>FY2012</b>
<b>Personnel</b>	Executive Director Compensation (40 hours/week)		48,000
	Administrative Assistant (40 hours/week)		25,000
	Executive Assistant (40 hours/week)		35,000
	Program Coordinator (40 hours/week)		40,000
	Payroll Taxes		12,000
	Benefits	<b>190,000</b>	30,000
<b>Contractual and Professional Services</b>	Client Stipend		90,000
	Program Development		30,000
	Substance Abuse		9,000
	Career Development		9,000
	Financial Planning	<b>147,000</b>	9,000
<b>Travel and Training</b>	Travel and Training		6,000
<b>Equipment</b>	3 Desktop computers and accessories		5,000
	12 laptop computer and software		18,000
	Desk, chairs, cabinets, shelves, & tables	<b>28,000</b>	5,000
<b>Supplies and Direct Operating Expenses</b>	Rent and Utilities		36,000
	Workmen Compensation & Liability Insurance		8,000
	Annual Financial Audit		5,000
	Internet/Wireless Services		3,000
	Telephone		3,000
	Copier/Printer		6,000
	Maintenance		5,000
	Paper		3,000
	Printer cartridges	<b>69,000</b>	1,000
<b>Total</b>			<b>441,000</b>



## **Funding Requirement**

MEEELJ is requesting the following funding requirements for the pilot in order to ensure the successful level of service are provided for the Austin participants seeking assistance:

1. Funding for the executive director's compensation and staff will be provided upon reaching a contractual agreement between the City of Austin and MEEELJ.
2. Funding for approved budgeted expenses will be provided upon receipt of a valid invoice or bill for service when presented to the City of Austin from MEEELJ.

## **RESOLUTION**

**of the**

### **AFRICAN AMERICAN RESOURCE ADVISORY COMMISSION**

**WHEREAS**, the African American Resource Advisory Commission (the "Commission") is authorized by Austin City Code § 2-1-101 to advise the city council on issues related to the quality of life for the City's African American community; and

**WHEREAS**, the Commission is specifically authorized to recommend programs designed to alleviate any inequities that may confront African Americans in social, economic, and vocational pursuits, including (1) health care; (2) housing, including affordable housing, home ownership, and homelessness; (3) entertainment opportunities for professionals and students; (4) employment; and (5) cultural venues, including museums, theaters, art galleries, and music venues; and

**WHEREAS**, Minorities for Equality in Employment, Education, Liberty, and Justice, Inc. (MEEELJ) made a presentation to the African American Resource Advisory Commission on July 6, 2011; and

**WHEREAS**, MEEELJ's mission is to effect change and opportunity for formerly incarcerated persons, inmates, and disadvantaged youth and MEEELJ's vision is to eliminate the barriers this population faces in being successful, employable, educated, and empowered members of society; and

**WHEREAS**, at this time, MEEELJ serves at-risk youth and formerly incarcerated persons in Bastrop and Caldwell Counties, portions of Eastern Travis County and the Travis County Correctional Complex (also known as Del Valle) by providing state approved alcohol awareness classes for minors, anger management groups, assistance in locating legal counsel for participants, job readiness training, adult basic education, General Education Development (GED) proficiency preparation, and assistance in securing stable housing; and

**WHEREAS**, in May 2011 MEEELJ entered into a co-sponsorship with the City of Austin to implement a pilot program, Iron Sharpens Iron (ISI), with the purpose to empower individuals so that they may fully realize their inherent and unlimited potential—in spite of a felony—to make a difference in their lives and in the Austin community; and

**WHEREAS**, this pilot program provides up to 36 clients per year a 16-week peer-to-peer counseling and training session designed to successfully remove the barriers that restrict services for individuals who have criminal backgrounds; and

**WHEREAS**, the ISI system starts with an in-depth self-assessment which is used to develop the client's individualized 16-week training plan, specifically designed by MEEELJ to address the challenging conditions the city of Austin presents individuals with criminal histories trying to get reestablished within the general community; and

**WHEREAS**, the ISI system provides each client with a weekly stipend as a financial incentive to participate in the program, to eliminate the largest barrier preventing participation of any potential client in completing the 16-week training plan, and as a recruiting tool, and the payment of the stipend depends on the weekly completion of the individualized 16-week training plan by both client and peer partner; and

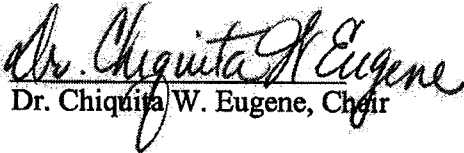
**WHEREAS**, the training provided is sufficient to start each client down a path that leads to earning a legitimate living, in addition to equipping each client with the skills required to train one of their friends or family members who may or may not have a criminal background.

**NOW, THEREFORE,**

**BE IT RESOLVED**

That the African American Resource Advisory Commission recommends the MEEELJ program.

I affirm that this Resolution was approved by majority vote of the African American Resource Advisory Commission at a regular commission meeting on Wednesday, the 7<sup>th</sup> of September 2011.

  
Dr. Chiquita W. Eugene, Chair



# City of Austin

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## City Manager's Office

P.O. Box 1088, Austin, TX 78767  
(512) 974-2200, Fax (512) 974-2833

*Michael McDonald, Assistant City Manager*  
[Michael.McDonald@austintexas.gov](mailto:Michael.McDonald@austintexas.gov)

December 8, 2011

To whom it may concern,

The City of Austin (City) has long strived to address significant equality gaps, both real and perceived, within our community, particularly the African American community. In 2005, a study was launched to identify these various gaps. Shortly thereafter, the African American Quality of Life Initiative was started, which provided an opportunity for the City and community to work together in addressing these matters in a more holistic and pragmatic manner. While much has been accomplished, there still remains a great deal of work to ensure our community is provided with the best opportunities to succeed.

Key to this Initiative were components of education and employment – specifically, improving opportunities and accessibility for those most underserved in our community. Recently, the City began working with Minorities for Equality in Education, Employment, Liberty and Justice, Inc. (MEEELJ) to address some of these very issues. Of particular interest is MEEELJ's work with at-risk and previously incarcerated individuals, and their efforts to align them with employment opportunities. It is no secret this population often encounters significant barriers to employment as a result of their criminal past. MEEELJ developed a model in Bastrop which has led to great success in bringing these individuals to a state of self-sufficiency.

Encouraged by this success, the City provided MEEELJ with assistance in laying the groundwork for a local Austin-based program to see whether the same successes could be replicated in our community. To no small degree, these efforts also coincide with the spirit of the abovementioned African American Quality of Life Initiative. As such, the City is excited to see MEEELJ become successful and fully supports their efforts to reduce inequalities within the community.

Sincerely,

Michael McDonald  
Assistant City Manager  
Austin, TX

**Year 2004-2011**

	Gender	Race	Help	Status
Male	85.38%			
Female	14.62%			
African American		40.35%		
White		27.49%		
Hispanic		19.88%		
Other		12.28%		
Legal Aid			18.13%	
Education			5.26%	
Employment			9.94%	
Counseling			14.04%	
Community Service			7.60%	
Parole Services			31.00%	
Inquiries			14.03%	
Integrated				85.96%
Incarcerated				14.04%

\* 171 Clients

MEEELJ Adult Intake Performance Measures

**2004**

	Gender	Race	Help	Status
Male	92.86%			
Female	7.14%			
African American		21.43%		
White		28.57%		
Hispanic		35.72%		
Other		14.28%		
Legal Aid			0.00%	
Education			7.14%	
Employment			14.29%	
Counseling			21.43%	
Community Service			28.57%	
Parole Services			28.57%	
Inquiries			0.00%	
Integrated				92.86%
Incarcerated				7.14%

**\*14 Clients**

**MEEELJ Adult Intake Performance Measures**

**2005**

	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>Help</b>	<b>Status</b>
Male	72.09%			
Female	27.91%			
African American		41.86%		
White		34.88%		
Hispanic		16.28%		
Other		6.98%		
Legal Aid			30.23%	
Education			13.95%	
Employment			9.30%	
Counseling			16.28%	
Community Service			2.33%	
Parole Services			20.93%	
Inquiries			6.98%	
Integrated				100.00%
Incarcerated				0.00%

**\*43 Clients**

**MEEELJ Adult Intake Performance Measures**

**2006**

	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>Help</b>	<b>Status</b>
Male	90.00%			
Female	10.00%			
African American		50.00%		
White		25.00%		
Hispanic		20.00%		
Other		5.00%		
Legal Aid			25.00%	
Education			10.00%	
Employment			10.00%	
Counseling			15.00%	
Community Service			5.00%	
Parole Services			0.00%	
Inquiries			35.00%	
Integrated				95.00%
Incarcerated				5.00%

**\*20 Clients**



MEEELJ Adult Intake Performance Measures

**2007**

	Gender	Race	Help	Status
Male	94.44%			
Female	5.56%			
African American		33.33%		
White		24.07%		
Hispanic		22.22%		
Other		20.38%		
Legal Aid			5.56%	
Education			0.00%	
Employment			3.70%	
Counseling			14.81%	
Community Service			9.26%	
Parole Services			55.56%	
Inquiries			11.11%	
Integrated				77.78%
Incarcerated				22.22%

**\*54 Clients**

MEEELJ Adult Intake Performance Measures

**2008**

	Gender	Race	Help	Status
Male	92.31%			
Female	7.69%			
African American		61.54%		
White		7.69%		
Hispanic		7.69%		
Other		23.08%		
Legal Aid			23.08%	
Education			0.00%	
Employment			7.69%	
Counseling			7.69%	
Community Service			7.69%	
Parole Services			15.38%	
Inquiries			38.47%	
Integrated				69.23%
Incarcerated				30.77%

**\*13 Clients**

**MEEELJ Adult Intake Performance Measures**

**2009**

	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>Help</b>	<b>Status</b>
Male	82.35%			
Female	17.65%			
African American		41.12%		
White		35.29%		
Hispanic		23.59%		
Other		0.00%		
Legal Aid			23.53%	
Education			0.00%	
Employment			23.53%	
Counseling			11.76%	
Community Service			0.00%	
Parole Services			29.42%	
Inquiries			11.76%	
Integrated				70.95%
Incarcerated				29.05%

**\*17 Clients**

MEEELJ Adult Intake Performance Measures

2010

	Gender	Race	Help	Status
Male	66.67%			
Female	33.33%			
African American		33.33%		
White		33.33%		
Hispanic		16.67%		
Other		16.67%		
Legal Aid			16.67%	
Education			0.00%	
Employment			16.67%	
Counseling			0.00%	
Community Service			16.67%	
Parole Services			33.32%	
Inquiries			16.67%	
Integrated				100.00%
Incarcerated				0.00%

\* 6 Clients

**MEEELJ Adult Intake Performance Measures**

**2011**

	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>Help</b>	<b>Status</b>
<b>Male</b>	<b>75%</b>			
<b>Female</b>	<b>25%</b>			
<b>African American</b>		<b>75%</b>		
<b>White</b>		<b>25%</b>		
<b>Hispanic</b>		<b>0%</b>		
<b>Other</b>		<b>0%</b>		
<b>Legal Aid</b>			<b>75%</b>	
<b>Education</b>			<b>0%</b>	
<b>Employment</b>			<b>25%</b>	
<b>Counseling</b>			<b>0%</b>	
<b>Community Service</b>			<b>0%</b>	
<b>Parole Services</b>			<b>0%</b>	
<b>Inquiries</b>			<b>0%</b>	
<b>Integrated</b>				<b>75%</b>
<b>Incarcerated</b>				<b>25%</b>

**\*4 clients**