

URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/blog/videos/growing-a-social-venture>

Beverly Parenti and Chris Redlitz are the co-founders of The Last Mile, an organization that aims to break the cycle of incarceration by providing education and career training opportunities in prisons. Founded in 2010 at San Quentin State Prison, The Last Mile has become one of the most requested prison education programs in the United States. In this talk, joined by former TLM student and Healthy Hearts Institute founder Ray Harts, they discuss how to build and grow social ventures that make a difference.



## Transcript

Narrator Who you are defines how you build.. 00:00:06,940 (upbeat music) - Chris, Beverly, Ray, welcome to ETL.. 00:00:12,033 Really delighted to talk to you since your last visit seven years ago, in 2013.. - Thanks for having us.. 00:00:18,570 Great to be here.. - Really, really a pleasure.. 00:00:20,580 We're gonna do something fun this week since you were here seven years ago.. We're gonna talk about what's going on now, but we're gonna also play some short clips from your last visit to help tee up the conversation.. Now, I have to tell you, I am a huge fan of The Last Mile.. In fact, I've got my Last Mile sweatshirt on right now..

The talk you gave seven years ago stimulated me to start volunteering in the program.. And from my vantage point, it has been incredibly remarkable to see the program grow and expand.. I wanna start with a short clip with Beverly, talking about what motivated the launch of this program.. Let's start with a clip about what inspired this at the very beginning.. - My first reaction was, why would I want to spend 00:01:06,860 my free time, because I have so little of it anyway, why would I wanna spend my free time working with prisoners? But he had that passion, and he actually asked me not to make any judgements about something I knew very little about.. Reluctantly, I committed to do research about incarceration, and also to go and visit the men, to experience first hand, what he was so passionate about.. So, first was my research.. Well, I wanted to find out more about the issues facing the prison system in California, today.. And what I learned from my research made me realize that even a small scale effort could make a difference.. So here's some of the learnings..

In California, we spend more for prisons than higher education.. The average cost per prisoner, to taxpayers, \$45,000.00.. The rate of recidivism exceeds 60%.. So by the time many men are released from San Quentin, as taxpayers, we've already invested nearly one million dollars for their incarceration.. But without rehabilitation, many of them will return.. That's a bad investment.. If we could reduce recidivism by just 5%, billions of dollars could be saved in the next 10 years alone.. - Wow, really, really impressive.. 00:02:54,550 And I think that this was such an enormous opportunity to do something.. So, what have you learned over the last 10 years of running this program? - We've learned a lot..

00:03:05,556 Certainly that was very early on in the program.. Ray was there, we're gonna talk about that a little bit later.. But I think a few things that we've learned about how to operate a program in prison.. Because, both Beverly and I, have never had an experience in prison before just visiting prison, let alone running a program in prison.. And what we learned is how to work with corrections.. I come from the starved environment as a venture investor, and everything is very, very, zero to sixty, very quickly.. Corrections doesn't move that fast.. We realized that we had to do things very incrementally, and building relationships, top down, within Corrections.. So now we have, we're in six states today.. We have great relationships with the Department of Corrections and with the governors to each state..

And I think that's really important.. The second thing we learned is how to deliver a program that can scale.. Because San Quentin's very unusual because it's very close to San Francisco.. And, as you've done with your class, brought your students up to mentor in San Quentin, which is phenomenal.. But most locations are remote.. So today, we basically run all of our programs remotely.. We have a studio in San Francisco where we broadcast live into the classrooms.. And they have a learning management system there that they can log into.. Utilizing technology has really allowed us to scale the program.. - One of the things that I found very interesting 00:04:34,070 is that you started out teaching entrepreneurship..

Of course, that's what you knew.. You're in the world of venture capital.. And then you end up pivoting to decide to teach coding.. What motivated that change? - What really motivated the change was market demand.. 00:04:56,120 At the time, remember, this was almost a decade ago, we realized that there would be a shortage of one million software engineers by 2020.. That's what was predicted by 2020, which is where we are today.. So, we decided to teach skills, marketable skills, because our mission is to provide marketable skills that result in gainful employment.. And it was all a test.. It was just could we possible teach software engineering without the internet? I mean, we created all these challenges.. Software engineering, great jobs, high market demand, and great pay..

And those were the things that really drove us to start a coding program as a test.. - Very, very interesting.. 00:05:44,910 Well, I wanna bring Ray into the conversation.. And I know one of the most important things you did was to help people paint a picture of a future that was different than their past.. And I'd like to turn to Ray, who was a student in the program.. You did a magnificent job during the last ETL session sharing with us your one minute pitch.. This was something that I know was a very important part of the entrepreneurship training, is not just coming up with the idea, but figure out how do you pitch it to people to get them really excited about what you're doing.. I'm gonna play the pitch that you gave seven years ago and talk to you about how this venture has essentially evolved since then.. Let's play your one minute pitch.. - By show of hands, how many of you 00:06:30,280 have witnessed either a parent, a child, a friend, or maybe your spouse, struggle with obesity? You don't have to raise your hand for this one, but think about it..

Did you ever feel helpless in their struggle? If you have, you're not alone.. Many people who have lived in a low income community, like I have, where the obesity rate is above 50%, have experienced the same feeling of helplessness.. That's why, today, I'm doing something about it.. Good evening, my name is Horatio Harts, and I'm the founder of Healthy Hearts Institute, the co-op that would bring health and fitness back into our neighborhoods.. HHI will turn empty lots into gardens, and transform neighborhood food deserts into green, nutritional oases.. We will turn abandoned buildings into lead certified fitness centers, and provide our members safe places to exercise.. Our goal is to get us back to the good old days when the community was rife with nutritional foods, kids were outside running and playing, and the obesity rate was below 17%.. Join the Healthy Hearts Institute and let us empower the beat of your heart.. Thank you.. - Yeah, woo! 00:07:42,073 (audience clapping) - That was super, great pitch..

00:07:46,580 And you did it without any preparation.. You just pulled it off.. How did, can we start out with just how did the program, The Last Mile program, influence you, Ray? - First of all, thank you for having me back.. 00:08:00,190 Man, it's crazy to look back seven years ago and see where I was at then, and where I'm at now, and how the program has evolved.. Thank you for having me here.. If I think back about how The Last Mile influenced me, I think about my mindset at the time when I first encountered the TLM.. And I had a, I was just a year to the house, meaning I only had a year left before I'd be released.. And I had spent the last several years really focusing on educating myself, preparing myself to start my own business.. So, when I met Chris and Beverly, through The Last Mile, it was pretty exciting just thinking about how I could leverage what they were teaching into creating my own business.. - Ray-- 00:08:56,370 You're now running Healthy Hearts..

- Yeah, it's doing well.. 00:09:00,560 Over the last few years we've grown.. It took me a little while to get it started.. But in 2017, I got my first grant, and I turned that into a organization.. So we launched a community garden, started with 10 beds.. We got 20 garden beds and about 2200 square foot of growing space.. We're teaching mindfulness classes, nutrition classes, and cooking classes, gardening classes.. And we're feeding about 170 families twice a month with the food we grow, and with our partnership with the Contra Costa County Food Bank.. - Fabulous, I mean, really, really great.. 00:09:41,480 I couldn't be more delighted./ It's interesting to think about..

Teaching in prison has a lot of challenges.. I know that I've done a lot of classes, a number of classes with The Last Mile where I've brought up Stanford students.. We did, actually, one course which was taught jointly between Stanford and San Quentin.. No internet access, the power goes out.. There's lots and lots of challenges.. In fact, right now, there's a much bigger challenge with the COVID crisis that's happening at San Quentin.. It's interesting to start thinking about, given all the constraints, what are the metrics you use for success? And I wanna go to a clip from Chris, talking about the key performance indicators, or how are you gonna measure whether this program is successful, given all the constraints.. So let's play this clip and then talk about how that's evolved over time.. - So we started the program, 00:10:37,011 but we have to have, as you learn and talk about startups, what are our KPIs? How do we judge the success of this program? And first, the first thing that we had to understand and appreciate was does it resonate with the men in prison? Is this something they wanna learn? And can they really absorb the applications that we're presenting to them because they have no internet access, they have no access to technology.. And will the correctional system adopt what we're trying to do and be open enough to understand what we're trying to accomplish? - Really good question..

00:11:16,180 And so I'm wondering how your KPIs have changed over the last 10 years.. Chris? - They really haven't changed that much.. 00:11:23,983 The three that I mentioned then were, is it gonna resonate inside.. And that was a time when we were launching the entrepreneurship program.. The bigger question is, when we launched coding in 2014 was even a bigger question.. Is there going to be interest in that, and can we actually do it? That was a big question.. Those KPIs certainly have remained the same.. As we expanded, now we're in women's prisons, and youth facilities.. And we are constantly conscious about our curriculum resonating properly within the institution, and making sure that what we're teaching is really employable, remain the employable skills.. The second part was will the community participate..

Will people come in and volunteer? Will they do things, whether or not they financially donate and support it that way? And that, as you have said, because you have been a phenomenal volunteer.. Stanford has been really engaged.. We've had, really, I think the number's almost 1000 volunteers we've had, over time.. We check that box, for sure.. And then the third one was would companies hire.. And early on, the question was are they gonna pursue the ideas that they did in the entrepreneurship program, as Ray has done, or, as we expanded into coding, would tech companies hire? And that's absolutely the case today.. The KPIs remain the same.. The goals are a bit different, but our KPIs are definitely the same.. - Yeah, so Ray, were you aware of what the KPIs, 00:13:05,980 or the metrics, or goals were? And how did that resonate for you as someone who was in the program? - Yeah, I was aware of them.. 00:13:13,810 I think Chris had mentioned them early on in the classes..

And he mentioned his thoughts about would it resonate.. Yeah, definitely, I think that's the one that sticks with me the most.. It definitely resonated.. To have someone like Chris come in, and then some of the distinguished guests that he brought into the program, was super inspiring.. It exposed me to a different world, kind of like, I'm reading this book, Ta-Nehisi Coates, "Between the World and Me." And it kind of creates that parallel of where I come from and then where Chris comes from.. This program bridges that gap.. I think that it definitely resonated with me, and off to the races with it.. - Great, I wanna encourage people who are watching, 00:14:05,320 the Stanford students, as well as those people who are watching on YouTube, to ask questions.. The Q&A app is open.. And feel free to ask anything you'd like..

We're really eager to respond to the things you're curious about.. One of the things you brought up is getting support for the program.. And this is not inexpensive to run a program like this.. I know you've had to get a lot of very extensive computer equipment, and to build all sorts of internal tools, and lots of other resources that need to be available.. I wanna play a clip about how you thought about building alliances to support this program, and then to talk about the other sources of support that you've been able to get over time.. So let's play our fourth clip, looking at how you start bringing alliances in early on.. - So all of our funds and support will come privately.. 00:15:01,100 I think, when we went to Sacramento the first time, we finished the meeting with Matt Cate, who was the Secretary of Prisons at the time.. I think he was waiting for us to have our hand out.. And my hand was this, instead of this, and it made a big difference..

We can get a lot further by doing it outside of that.. And we really wanna show that you can marry private and public effectively without taking public funds.. So that's really been our strategy.. - I'm curious, Beverly, Chris, 00:15:29,650 what have been the most interesting, or most successful, sources of support over the last 10 years? - Yeah, at the time when we did that event, 00:15:37,615 it was all privately funded.. There was a resistance early on, from our perspective, to engage public funding because we wanna make sure that we established the program, we had success metrics that we could actually present.. Today, we have support from both public and private.. And, as I mentioned in that comment, it's really important that we have this public private partnership in every state that we're in.. Because it's, not only it's great to get public funding, but its even more powerful to bring in private companies because, not only do they bring their funding, but they also bring their employee base, and they allow their employees to participate in this which is really valuable today in today's market.. - I know you've had a lot of really interesting 00:16:26,810 innovative companies get involved, come to visit, and hire folks.. One of the things I'm most excited about is people could actually outsource their coding to the prison program, to The Last Mile..

The men who are there, or the women in other prisons, can actually be doing projects and have reference projects that they can put on their resume when they get out.. Can you talk a little bit about that? - Sure we can.. 00:16:53,320 And I just wanted to mention, just some of the funding groups, also.. I think it's really important to mention that Google.Org is a big funder of ours.. Stand Together is a big funder of ours.. Chan Zuckerberg, Bank of America.. And it's really, as I said, important a group to engage the employee base as part of that proposition.. I just wanted to call out those, I don't know if there's anybody else that you wanna mention? Obviously, California Department of Correction and CALPIA, which is Prison Industries, are a major partner of ours, as well.. - Well, actually, CALPIA is part of the story 00:17:31,730 of the development insight, as well.. But they are the ones that actually, it's Prison Industry Authority, they helped fund the original coding program at San Quentin, which is a CTE, or Career Technical Education..

And not only do the students learn these amazing skills, but they also get milestone credits towards their sentence.. For every six months that a student inside San Quentin successfully completes a cohort of The Last Mile, they earn seven weeks off their sentence.. - Wow, that's amazing.. 00:18:20,750 Is that true? - That's right.. 00:18:21,990 Yeah, that's true.. Unfortunately, because of the pandemic, that is closed down today.. So, TLM Works is what it's called.. And it's on hiatus because of the pandemic, so we can't actually operate it.. But the hourly wage inside, for our program, is a little over \$20.00 an hour.. Which is one of the highest wages paid in prison in the US..

So it's something where the participants can save and have money when they get out, which is super important.. Because, today, you know Ray can certainly attest to this, that, when you get out of prison the government gives you basically \$200.00 and, potentially, a bus ticket and that's it.. Where, here, they actually have savings that'll help them reestablish, get an apartment potentially, and get started.. - Just to put the \$20.00 in perspective, 00:19:15,858 the average prison wage is 32-95 cents an hour.. - Amazing, really remarkable.. 00:19:22,690 Ray, I'm curious, when you were in this program what did other people think about this program who were in it and those who were not in it? Was this looked at as very elite opportunity? How did you, how did other people view this within the system? - I was the second cohort to go through there.. 00:19:44,135 And so it hadn't exploded yet.. I think people were, it was gaining traction at that time, people were starting to become more

aware of it.. But I can speak to the participants, ourselves.. We were super excited to have this opportunity..

And then, as it progressed, and we did our second demo day, I think people became more excited about participating.. - The demo days are incredible.. 00:20:09,789 What an amazing amount of excitement to see these ideas come to life.. There's a question from one of the students, to Ray.. And it says, "what were some of the barriers you faced when you started Healthy Hearts," I'm assuming outside of prison, "and how did you overcome them?" - Oh man.. 00:20:30,770 Some of the barriers, I think, was just getting myself out there, letting people know who I was, and sharing my story, and having access to capital.. That's still a barrier.. Being able to hire talent, that's something that's super difficult, just because of where I'm at.. There are a number of things.. But, you know the main thing is to live with purpose..

I really feel like I live with purpose.. And when times seem hard, I lean on that.. When I see other organizations.. And I'll speak on this, real briefly, just because of the times that we're in.. When I see other organizations that are non-black, and they receive four times the amount of funding I receive in half the time, or they hire talent to build out their team, highly skilled people come out and volunteer to build their team.. Or you see, when I get a newsletter and it's well-written content, and they got videos, to boot.. I wonder, why don't I have something like that? What's the barrier for me, to where I'm not able to create that type of support, so my community can get the support that they need.. When I look at those type of barriers, especially.. The highlight right now is just talking about all of Black Lives Matter, and you see all these big brands speaking about it.. But when I think about what I've experienced, personally, it makes me think about is this a part of structural racism that I'm not receiving that..

Those are some barriers.. And I'm just gonna speak my truth.. I could sugar coat it and say, "Ray you're not working hard enough." And then, as an entrepreneur, you have to figure it out.. It doesn't matter if you're black or white, or whatever color you are.. If you're an entrepreneur, you have to figure it, you have to overcome these things, and you gotta stay the course.. And for me, I'll say to any entrepreneur.. If you're doing something purposeful, then lean on that.. If you have purpose, and you're living through purpose, lean on that, and you'll be able to overcome whatever obstacle it is, no matter what.. - I'm curious, have you been able to tap into 00:22:45,170 The Last Mile network outside of prison? I know there've been a lot of people who have graduated from the program and are out in the world.. Has that been a valuable network? - Yeah, definitely..

00:22:56,727 There's folks that I reach out to all the time.. A lot of, to be completely honest, a lot of the people that I know that are outside of my community some way were tied through The Last Mile.. If not directly, indirectly.. And, in that sense, definitely.. That network has definitely helped me.. Even on a personal note, being able to go to one of Chris' friends winery, Hourglass, with Jeff Smith, just being able to go there for my 45th birthday and take my family to experience something that we never get access to.. Everybody in my family, this is a year and a half later, they still talk about this was a moment.. This type of place, this type of network, it exposes us to different things.. Yeah, I definitely lean on my TLM network.. - Wonderful..

00:23:53,070 We have another question from another student.. And I encourage others to chime in with other things you're curious about.. Jessica asks, she says, "government can be infamously challenging and slow to work with, but they're necessary to have a legitimate impact.. Do you have any advice on working with bureaucracies to produce effective results?" What has been most effective, and what kind of clues can you give others.. - I think, really it's building an incremental relationship.. 00:24:27,970 What I mean by that is that you can't, if I went in to CDCR 10 years ago and said "I wanna build a technology center inside San Quentin to teach coding," they would have said, "there's the door." You have to start very early and develop relationships.. And also, this is not just government, but it's anything when you're trying to develop a business, is find champions that believe in your cause.. We had Matt Cate, who I mentioned in my talk 10 years ago.. He was the Secretary of Prisons, at the time.. He and I connected, and he understood the cause..

Chuck Pattillo, who was the GM of CALPIA, understood the cause.. And so we really built those relationships.. And now we do have a tech center in San Quentin, as you've been in there.. We have, we took the old print factory, gutted it.. We have five classrooms, soon to be eight classrooms.. It is, really, a flagship facility that many states now come and visit and see what they can do.. But I think, really, it's starting those incremental relationships are really important.. - One thing I would add to that 00:25:40,700 is that there are all these processes and procedures that are in place today, that have been in place for a long time.. I would say doing your research and understanding what the proper protocols and procedures are within whatever type of business or program you are trying to implement in that governmental agency and start working within the realm of what is available to you.. And then establish yourself..

And then, as you decide to change and add, you will have already situated yourself within the agency or with the relationship.. And I think one of the things that they said about us early on, is that we learned how to fit in and make incremental change but we didn't come in and try to change everything.. - Yep.. 00:26:34,870 - I think it's really interesting.. 00:26:37,593 You found some really strong advocates who were able to allow you to get in the door.. And then you demonstrated success.. I think that's the other thing is, it's not just getting other people to support you.. You need to demonstrate some early success that then everyone wants to be associated.. Like, "oh, that worked; I wanna support that." Over the six years that I've been working with you, it's amazing the accretion of more resources and more people.. The more you accomplish, the more people are willing to get onboard..

- And there's already trust.. 00:27:12,962 And trust is so vitally important in these relationships.. - One of the things that's

super interesting to me 00:27:19,670 is how you've expanded this program across the state and the country.. And I think it would be really powerful for people to understand, this isn't just at San Quentin anymore.. This is something that is expanding, and you've really created a franchise.. How has that worked? - Yeah, so, 00:27:39,100 it is really built around the franchise idea, even though we are a nonprofit.. I wanted to mention that Ray, actually, is a non profit.. And kudos to Cooley, who is our law firm who, all their pro bono work to help Ray get that started.. I just wanted to mention that.. But yeah, it is really a franchise..

We have a brand.. We have a curriculum.. We have a way of delivering.. We really package something that is very easy, now, to lift up in a particular state.. We're doing two new classrooms that'll be launching very soon.. And for us to be sort of from approval to operating, we can do it within 60 days.. We can do it very quickly.. But it is really built around the franchise model.. And the thing that's also evolved is, re-entry, which Beverly had mentioned, too.. That's been a component that we didn't have 10 years ago that is very much of a component of our program today..

- And also, piggybacking off the last question 00:28:35,870 about getting involved with governments and how do you do it.. It was actually the governor of Indiana, Governor Eric Holcomb, who reached out to us when he learned about The Last Mile in California, and said "we need The Last Mile for the Hoosier state, as part of our Next Level initiative." So we sent a crew out.. They came in, they looked at the program.. Within six months, we had our first program in Indiana at the Indianapolis Women's Prison.. Today, there are five facilities in Indiana, which we're very proud of.. We also have programs in Oklahoma, which are funded by Chan Zuckerberg, the Lobeck Taylor Foundation, George Kaiser Foundation, local funding along with big funders like Chan Zuckerberg.. We launched in Kansas.. Again, the department reaching out to us, Kansas Department of Corrections.. And Michigan, which is also funded by Google.Org.. But, again, I met the head of the Department of Corrections, the Lieutenant Governor came in for our launch, in Oklahoma, Governor Stitt came in to our launch..

And those are our five original programs.. And the sixth one, which is not open today, it's not programs, but states, the sixth state to be launched is, drum roll.. - North Dakota.. 00:29:55,019 North Dakota.. - Wow.. 00:29:57,610 - Well, we've got a bunch of questions 00:29:59,040 that have been pouring in.. One of them, a lot of people are super curious, can you talk about the logistics of teaching, the specifics of teaching coding in prison? How does it compare to what happens in a traditional class in a university.. - As I mentioned before, we have live broadcasts 00:30:19,790 into each classroom at least once a week.. And our learning management system has all of the, in this particular program, we teach primarily front end coding, a lot of JavaScript.. And it's two six-month cohorts..

The whole program is a year.. The participants do not have direct access to the internet.. But we do have connectivity to the classroom.. All of our content is cloud-based.. We push updates on a daily basis, through their LAN that is distributed through their machines.. Every day they get fresh content.. And that's really it.. The big difference is they don't have Google.. What we do now have is we have something called Academic Support Reps.. We have folks that are dedicated to specific locations where I'm a student, I can produce a ticket, put it in the LMS..

That question goes to our service reps.. They answer that question, or help out, and send that back within 24 hours.. That's their arm-length Google.. Everyone in that ASR team are all graduates of the program.. - Yeah, it's interesting.. 00:31:34,920 We had some fascinating challenges teaching a class remotely.. And one day a week we would have a live lecture.. We were able to put together a link, a digital link, between the prison, between the TLM classrooms, and then my classroom at the Dee school at Stanford.. We had one class where students were on one side of the screen on each side.. And then, once a week, the students would have a team meeting with their partners and they would do it via Zoom..

And we were able to, they had to be monitored, but they could be in a special room where they had access.. It was very cool.. Ray, there's a question for you, which is about what are the very specific marketable skills that you used, and that you gained, during this training? What do you go, "these are the things that I learned through this program," besides giving a fabulous pitch? - I think that was really the biggest thing that I learned, 00:32:34,487 was being able to succinctly talk about my idea.. And then the network, that access to the network.. I think, when you think about starting a business, or anything, you have to, again, you have to tap into something that you care about.. And I think that's kind of innate.. You have to have this drive for it.. And so, when you are introduced to an opportunity, then you can take advantage of it.. I think being able to talk about my business, and understanding the power of relationships and networks, transparency.. Because, when you come from a prison, you don't wanna tell everybody that you've been in prison..

And Chris and Beverly did a good job of encouraging us to be transparent.. And I think that was, you might not say a hard skill, but that's definitely a skill set, an awareness to do that.. That was some good insight that they provided.. - Very interesting.. 00:33:47,390 Someone else has another question for you having to do with, first of all, they say they love your shirt.. Got a compliment on your fashion.. I know we're all wearing black today, that's great.. That's super, very powerful.. The question is, "what piece of advice would you give to aspiring entrepreneurs about starting something?" And given what you've learned and the challenges that you've faced, what advice would you give those who are eager to start something, themselves? - Again, find something that has purpose.. 00:34:23,630 When times get hard, you can lean on that..

It'll help you through the marathon, to continue that marathon.. The other things is I practice, I made a habit of making self-care a practice, of getting up early in the morning, stretching for 20 minute, meditating for 20 minutes, drinking water

and coffee, not coffee, but tea in the morning, reading at night.. Those are just, develop some good habits that make your day a little bit easier.. One of the other things that I try to do, even throughout my day, is breathing.. Take some time throughout the day, take a deep breath.. I practice looking at an object maybe a few feet away and paying attention, observing the space between me and that object.. And I think about all the space in the universe.. And it kinda centers me.. And it gives me back focus.. I say, self care, have some purpose, and just keep going, just don't quit..

- It seems like a tremendous amount 00:35:24,350 has to do with mindset shift, that there is a knowledge, there's the skills, but an important piece is just changing your attitude towards yourself and to the world, and to the opportunities around you.. - Absolutely.. 00:35:38,780 - Clearly we have inspired a lot of people who are watching, 00:35:42,250 and Bev and Chris, some folks are asking about what sort of volunteer opportunities are there, how can people get involved from the community to support this effort? - Sure, can I take this one? 00:35:52,367 - You can go.. 00:35:57,830 that's really valuable to us.. We have a small team in TLM today.. We have 30 employees.. But we do have a, like I said before, a really robust volunteer group.. The best thing to do is reach out directly to [info@thelastmile.org](mailto:info@thelastmile.org).. Someone, we pay attention to that.. Someone will respond to that within 24 hours..

Because of what's going on today, we don't have in-prison visits.. Normally, pre-COVID, that was a pretty regular cadence for us.. But we do have, as I mentioned before, we are remote into classrooms.. Those classrooms that are open today, we can do that.. And there's help with curriculum, as well.. We're constantly evolving curriculum.. Today we do front-end engineering.. We're gonna be launching an IT certification program.. And something we just announced last week, is a music and video production program that we're gonna be launching.. And this is gonna be huge..

We're gonna be teaching folks to be audio technicians, video editors.. And we're also going to be going across the country discovering talent.. A good example of talent is Ear Hustle, which many of the folks, if they haven't listened to it, should listen to it.. That came out of San Quentin, out of a small studio in San Quentin.. So we're building a studio in our tech center as a prototype, so we can discover talent and teach additional trades, as well.. Those are, if people have expertise in any of those areas, we'd be happy to talk to them.. - That is so fabulous because I know you guys already have 00:37:37,933 a deep connection to the music industry.. What a great build out of this program.. I hadn't heard about that.. Very, very exciting..

There are a bunch of question about your business model.. There are questions about your funding model.. And someone said, "do you think that you could make it into a for-profit and maybe take a percentage of the income of people who participate in it?" Have you thought about different creative funding models for this? And what is working, and what are your thoughts going forward? - Yeah, we really looked at this, 00:38:12,430 coming from the venture side, when I look at companies, I look at performance first.. Once you invest, when you're looking at a company, you have to see performance metrics.. And so it was important for us to do that.. We really created some performance metrics that we relied on, and we got funding.. We don't spend a lot of time fundraising.. We spend more time really focused on results.. Could this be a for-profit? Sure, it could be.. We really haven't considered that seriously..

The challenge in nonprofits is that funding is fairly short-term.. Normally your commitment's maybe two, maybe three years.. But when you're venture funding, you're funding out for ten years, or at least five years.. It allows you to plan and grow a little more realistically, if you're a for-profit.. The model could work.. We're dedicated to the mission.. And I said before, the companies that are bringing us money are also bringing us a lot of effort, and it's very meaningful.. If you went the for-profit route, you may lose that.. But the model would work there, potentially, we just haven't gone down that route.. - It's interesting, one of the questions was for me, 00:39:33,840 and it says what have I learned working on this program, and has it changed the way I work as an educator..

I must say, it has really made me much more empathetic.. I have had to really understand that people come from really diverse different backgrounds.. And one of the things one of the men said when we were doing a check in with our students.. And he said, "how would you feel if you were judged by the worst thing you had ever done?" And I just realized that everybody has things in their life that they're proud of, and things that they're not, and things that have effected them, and that we need to everyone with compassion.. Right now, as a teacher, when we're having students all over the world, some in very different conditions.. My experience teaching at San Quentin has made me really understand the range of places people might be right now, and the situations they might be dealing with.. And so it makes me much more sensitive to that as I'm trying to teach.. Let's see, I have a lot of questions.. Another one just came in.. The one that came in is "how do you balance depth, providing more services to those you work with, versus breadth, reaching more people? - That's really interesting..

00:40:55,400 From day one, we decided that we wanted to prove what we did worked, and then scale it as far and wide as we possibly could, because of the systemic issues in society and how we could make a change.. Having more people in a specific facility versus having as many facilities as possible is really our goal.. Because the ripple effect of the work is just something that is just community focused, changing families, changing communities, role models.. Ray is a role model in his community.. Guys have come home, and women have come home, who have jobs as software engineers.. No one in their community ever even had a computer or was on a keyboard before.. And here they are being role models.. Those are the types of things that make us believe that scale is so vitally important.. And we continue education once our students are back in a position where they can attend bootcamps or continue their education.. It's more about reaching a far and wide as we can right now, being the best we can everywhere we go..

And having the model keep expanding.. One thing we have done, going deeper, is we've got much deeper in re-entry, in job placement, and there's programs like Next Chapter, that we've helped spawn.. And we've had support from folks in the valley, like Andreessen Horowitz, who launched a cultural leadership fund.. Those things are going deeper educating inside.. It's really important for us that we had pre and post gate, in a sense, where we continue that relationship.. So that's going deeper, for sure.. - Ray, I'd love to have your thoughts on this.. 00:42:51,900 Obviously you had this program in prison, and then you go out.. Do you think about what kind of programming would be helpful to you as you, through that transition, but also afterwards.. Chris, you mentioned there are some new opportunities..

How does TLM fit into the larger ecosystem of support for those people who are re-entering after being in the system? - If I understand your question right, 00:43:21,863 it's like what type of support do I think TLM could provide, different support? Is that correct? If that's the question, I think they're working on it with the re-entry piece.. There are specific things that guys need once they get out.. And people are taking different paths.. Some people are going out, they get the decoding education, and they're finding jobs, or they're looking at starting their own organizations to become entrepreneurs.. And so I think there's different needs that different folks have.. And so just creating this network where guys can communicate with each other, and then share the resources that they learned on their own.. Because if you're out, I would suggest don't just rely on TLM.. Or if you go to Stanford, don't just rely on what you learned at Stanford.. You still have to go outside and venture out, and figure things out.. There's a world of opportunity out there..

Don't limit yourself.. But as far as TLM, yeah, build this network so people who do find other resources can use those resources, as well.. That's my-- - Great.. 00:44:41,740 I wanna ask the last question to Beverly and Chris.. And that is, ten years you've been doing this, what would be your vision and your goal for this program for the next ten years? - As Beverly said, scale's important.. 00:44:56,500 We have a short term goal.. Within the next four years we wanna be in 50 classrooms, and we wanna make that within at least 10 states.. But we also wanna have a broader program.. As I mentioned, we have three programs that we have are launching soon.. The goal really is to become the de facto platform for education in prison, because we do have a platform that we built..

A lot of it will be don proprietary, so we've used a lot of tools, but the security of the system, and to make sure that we don't have breaches.. We put a lot of time an effort in IT that's specific to prison.. That's taken us five years.. We constantly iterate that.. But that's a really difficult thing to do.. Really, it's growing what we're doing.. We really think that other programs could build on top of what we're doing, almost in an open source environment, that other programs could build on top of our platforms.. - Plug in tree...