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Mariupol defenders begin business training with FUIB and the Rinat Akhmetov Foundation



Our bank [FUIB](#) has started Live Towards educational and grant programme for Mariupol defenders, their families and fellow soldiers. The season of the programme is delivered in partnership with the [Rinat Akhmetov Foundation](#) and its [Heart of Azovstal](#), Redut Business NGO and KSE Graduate Business School.

Our bank, First Ukrainian International Bank (FUIB), has started a special season of its Live Towards educational and grant programme for 15 teams of Mariupol defenders, their families and fellow soldiers. The programme is delivered in partnership with the Rinat Akhmetov Foundation and its Heart of Azovstal, Redut Business NGO and KSE Graduate Business School. After two months of training

and mentoring, finalists can compete for grant funding of UAH 500,000 (\$11,000) from FUIB.

What is the Live Towards programme?

Live Towards is an educational and grant programme that helps veterans, service members and their partners to develop their own businesses, from forming a business idea to launching or scaling a company. It was initiated and is funded by FUIB.

Why is there a separate season for Mariupol defenders?

FUIB and KSE Graduate Business School have been reliable partners of Heart of Azovstal in supporting the defenders of Mariupol for several years. For this reason, the partners decided this year to create a separate intake within Live Towards for Mariupol defenders, their families and fellow soldiers.

*"Finding a life's work that will be economically successful is an important part of Heart of Azovstal's big mission to support the defenders of Mariupol. While some of our programmes focus on physical and psychological recovery, this project helps veterans move towards financial independence. Owning a business is rehabilitation through action, an opportunity to move from the status of an aid recipient to a creator of change and new jobs. A veteran becomes an example for fellow soldiers and motivates others to develop and build a successful life after service," said **Tetiana Maltseva, Director of the Heart of Azovstal.***

What will participants learn?

Over two months, participants will gain practical knowledge from KSE Graduate Business School lecturers and receive mentoring and expert support from Redut Business NGO. Finalists will then defend their business plans and can compete for grant funding of UAH 500,000 (\$11,000) from FUIB.

"Together with our partners (FUIB, Redut Business NGO, Rinat Akhmetov Foundation and its Heart of Azovstal), we have created a special season of the Live Towards educational and grant programme for the Defenders of Mariupol. On the eve of Defenders Day, this confirmed that we show our support through actions, not words. The training will be the first step towards their own business: participants will test whether their business model is viable, prepare a business plan and budget, and learn to pitch their ideas to a jury, which will choose the winners who receive a grant," said Tetiana Izmailova, Academic Director of the Live Towards programme.

How does the programme fit into Heart of Azovstal's wider support?

The programme complements Heart of Azovstal's comprehensive support system for Mariupol defenders, which covers physical and psychological recovery, employment, veteran entrepreneurship, professional development and opportunities for self-realisation. For Heart of Azovstal, it is the first step towards creating its own unique veteran business space in the future, following the example of Dog Tag in the US.

[Dog Tag](#) is a veteran business space operating a fellowship program and bakery that provides entrepreneurship training, education, and business skills to veterans with service-connected disabilities, military spouses, and caregivers.