

2025 Impact100 East Bay Finalist Executive Summary



Organization: Hack the Hood

Project: Build.ai - Empowering East Bay Youth with Transformative AI Skills

PROJECT & NEED: Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming our world and our workforce, with AI-related jobs representing the fastest-growing sector nationwide. However, a critical gap exists between this explosive growth and access to AI training for marginalized communities (including girls/women, low-income individuals, and people of color). As AI reshapes industries at breakneck speed, East Bay youth are being rapidly left behind despite living in the world's largest tech hub, risking exclusion from perhaps the most transformative economic opportunity of our time. Hack the Hood is addressing this urgent need through Build.ai - an innovative 12-week program serving low-income youth ages 16-25. While numerous online AI certificate courses exist, they fail to serve Hack the Hood's target population effectively. These self-paced, isolated learning experiences lack the wraparound support essential for success among low-income youth who often face barriers including low tech access, competing work/family obligations, and limited technical support systems. Build.ai addresses this gap by combining rigorous AI training with the proven wraparound services that have made Hack the Hood successful: stipends, free laptops, cohort-based learning, peer networks, career navigation support, and ongoing mentorship.

ORGANIZATION: Hack the Hood is an Oakland-based nonprofit providing free tech education in Alameda and Contra Costa counties. Since 2013, we've served nearly 1,900 learners with proven results: 90% of graduates report growth in technical skills, professional competencies, and self-efficacy. With more than a decade of proven success in culturally-responsive, industry-aligned tech education, we are uniquely positioned to seize this critical moment, training the next generation of diverse tech creators who will shape technology's future in the Bay Area and beyond.

TRANSFORMATIONAL IMPACT: Build.ai has three measurable goals: ensure 90% of graduates increase technical skills in programming and AI proficiency; boost 90% of graduates' confidence in tech careers; and enable 75% to earn an industry-recognized certification. Starting with 40 participants, the program will grow to serve 50 to 100 individuals annually. This training helps to place individuals on pathways to high-demand entry-level positions including AI/Data Analysts, Junior Data Scientists, Junior Software Engineer, and Software Developers. These positions represent significant economic mobility opportunities, with many offering pathways to advance into higher-paying AI and data science roles.

PROJECT FINANCES: The total cost for the pilot project is approximately \$111,960. A \$100,000 Impact100 East Bay grant will cover staff salaries for curriculum development and pilot implementation, technical instructors, \$500 learner stipends, laptops, and certification fees. Beyond this grant, Hack the Hood will sustain and expand Build.ai through its robust funding portfolio, corporate partnerships, and growing philanthropic interest in AI education initiatives.