

LaunchSpace Small Business Program

Independent Resources, Inc. Small Business Program

Funded by: Delaware Developmental Disabilities Council with funds provided by the Administration for Community Living

Launch Space, a Small Business Program at Independent Resources, Inc., was established to address the disparity between the employment rate of persons with disability and without disability in Delaware. The disparity between the two groups becomes clearer when one considers that in the age group 18-64 years old, 74.5% of those employed have no disability, while 36% of employed people in the same group have disabilities. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011 American Community Survey, American FactFinder, Table B18120). In addition, 11.3% of people with disabilities are self-employed in contrast to 6.5% of people without disabilities (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012).

In order to meet the needs of people with disabilities who choose to explore self-employment, the Delaware Developmental Disabilities Council has provided a three-year grant to Independent Resources, Inc. to develop this program. The project aims to increase the number of people with disabilities who will be employed or who will start up their own businesses. It also aims to increase the success rate of participants by providing workshops, hands-on training, individualized coaching with periodic assessments, and sustained follow-up activities.

There were 59 clients who signed up for the program during the three-year period. Seventeen of the clients dropped out because of personal/medical reasons, while the rest are in the different phases of business development (Table 1). Clients who are in the discovery phase (phase 1) are exploring the idea of self-employment. This is a self-assessment phase where an individual determines if he has what it takes to open a business. The support/self employment services (phase 2) include workshops, one on one coaching, business plan development, networking and community events to market the business. During this phase, clients have either started their business or are close to starting one. Some of them are taking certification courses that are essential in their line of business. Follow up activities (phase 3) are provided for those who have finished the first 2 phases. Services include assistance with business related issues, such as finding liability insurance, procurement of supplies, gathering of information about additional educational/marketing opportunities and finding additional resources and supportive services.

Table 1- Different Phases of Business Development

	1st year	2nd year	3rd year
Total Number of clients who signed up	20	19	20
Active clients	14	14	16
Phase 1 (Discovery Phase) *		5	9
Phase 2 (Support/Self Employment Services)**	10	6	5
Phase 3 (Follow-Up activities)***	4	3	2
Inactive Clients (medical/personal reasons)	6	5	6

The program provided the clients with the knowledge, opportunities and resources needed to make smart and winning business decisions. Individualized coaching was provided to all clients throughout the whole process. Clients were also encouraged to attend all the business workshops, which served as an integral part of business development. The LaunchSpace program provided different workshops to ensure that clients are equipped with the needed business knowledge and are prepared to face the challenges to being an entrepreneur. The workshops provided them with skills and confidence to make informed business decisions.

Forty-eight workshops were conducted within the three-year period. These workshops are organized under the following core areas:

1. Business Plan Development-

- a. Business Plan Preparation
- b. Business License/ Business Structure (sole proprietor, corporation)
- c. How to Conduct Business In Delaware

2. Business Start-Up and Funding

- a. How to Start a Business with Limited Funding”
- b. “Where’s the Money”
- c. Pricing and Profits

3. Business Marketing

- a. Different Marketing strategies
- b. Social Media Marketing and Business Networking
- c. How To Use Creativity to Market the Business

4. Managing Yourself

- a. Financial Management
 - a.1. Bookkeeping/Recordkeeping/Taxation
 - a.2. Credit and Debt Management
 - a.3. How to Secure a Solid Financial Future
 - a.4. "How to Pay Yourself"
- b. Self Improvement
 - b.1 Time Management
 - b.2. Public Speaking
 - b.3. How to Market Yourself
 - b.4 Business Psychology

5. Other topics that are relevant to Business Owners

- a. Social Security Benefits and Self-Employment
- b. Success Stories and Business Tips from Other Business Owners
- c. Government Contracting- Office of Supplier Diversity



Developing a Business Plan Workshop by Audrey Scott-Hynson



Marketing Strategy Workshop by Lillie Crawford

The free workshops and mentoring opportunities provided to all clients have been made possible by the strong community partnership established among the agencies and the different government and private entities. The partners played a critical role in supporting and assisting the clients with their business needs. They provided practical information, mentorship opportunities and business services that helped with the challenges faced by our budding entrepreneurs. Business partners in the government agency sector include: Small Business Administration (SBA), Small Business Development Center (SBDC), Office of Supplier Diversity, DE Economic Development Office, Delaware State University Office of Business Enterprise Development, Central DE Chamber of Commerce, Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE), Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), Division of Visually Impaired (DVI), Delaware Technical Community College, Delaware Procurement Technical Assistance Center, University of DE Student Project Center, Service Source, University of Delaware Office of Disabilities, Dover Public Library, DE Department of Education, Downtown Dover Partnership and Delaware Money School.

Representative partners from private business entities includes: First State CPA, Bell Marketing Strategies, Lillian Harrison ON Line, Wilson Accounting, Roger Wood, Ray Goode, Americare Home Solution, Fort Sill National Bank, De Divah Deals, 3-M Marketing Solutions, DE ShoutOut, Community

Integrated Services, Nutritionally Speaking, DBC Interactive , Vitas, Candy Connections, Blu Vintage , Parris Nail Lounge, Artful Barber and Inkredible Art LLC.

LaunchSpace has generated strong support from government officials, including Senator Brian Bushweller, Senator David Lawson, Representative Trey Paradee, Representative Timothy Dukes, Councilman Roy Sudler, and Dover Mayor Robin Christiansen.

Aside from the individualized coaching and workshops provided to all clients, the program presented clients with information and access to actively participate in different community events. These events gave them the opportunity to network and make their business visible to the local community, build partnership between community members and meet prospective business customers. Some of the events include: One Million Cups Delaware (available in all 3 counties in Delaware); Kent County is Open for Business (also available in New Castle and Sussex Counties); Life Conference; 25th American with Disabilities Act (ADA) celebration; Self-Advocacy Conference; Kent County Economic Summit; and Commission for Women Hall of Fame Award celebration.



Tina Riley (Owner of Tina Riley's Imaginarium)
2014 DE Self Advocacy Conference, Smyrna DE



Emmanuel Jenkins (CEO of We Stand 4 Something)
2015 Life Conference



Donna Townsend (Owner of Regis Music and Theater Production, LLC)
2016 DE Commission for Women Hall of Fame Award ceremony

Clients were encouraged and provided with opportunities to participate in different free training events offered by local institutions. Two clients attended the Kaufman Fast Trac which offered several courses to help them launch their business or expand an existing one. Some clients attended eCommerce and social media training, which enabled them to learn innovative ways on how they can use social media to market their business. Another client participated in the University of Delaware Business Student Project. This allowed the client to receive input from college students. Attendance of clients to all programs has been made possible by the partnership formed among partner agencies, such as DE Economic Development Office (for Kaufman Fast Trac and eCommerce) and Small Business Development Center (for the student project), and Independent Resources, Inc.

Another networking and learning opportunity that provided to clients is their chance to participate in the annual Dolphin Tank graduation and competition for Entrepreneur of the Year. Clients who have attended the workshops and are ready to start or expand their business present their business plans in front of selected judges and community members. All participants receive cash prizes and mentorship hours from local business owners. For the three-year period, the program was able to collect a total of \$10,343.00 in donations—\$1880.00 in cash prizes and \$8463.00 worth of mentorship hours (Table 2).

There were four clients who participated in the 2015 Dolphin Tank; three clients in 2016; and five clients in 2017 Dolphin Tank. The presentation was judged by a selected group of people, which includes: Senator Brian Bushweller, Ken Anderson, Barbara Monaghan and Antionette Blake 2015 Dolphin Tank; Senator David Lawson, Representative Trey Paradee, Councilman Roy Sudler, Michelle Morin and Pat Maichle for 2016 Dolphin Tank; and Senator Brian Bushweller, State Representative Timothy Dukes, Dover Mayor Robin Christiansen, Andrea Guest and Elisha Jenkins for 2017 Dolphin Tank.



1st Dolphin Tank Award Ceremony (March 12, 2015)

Front Row: Larry Henderson, Latoshia Caldwell (owner of Caldwell Helping Hands), Barbara Monaghan, Emmanuel Jenkins (CEO of We Stand 4 Something).

Second Row: Cathy Woodhouse, Khalil Abdul- Majid (Owner of Inspired by Touch Massage), Tina Riley (owner of Tina Riley’s Imaginarium and 1st prize winner), Ken Anderson, Senator Brian Bushweller, Antionette Blake, Jackie Reyes



2nd Dolphin Tank Ceremony (May 12, 2016)

Front Row: Dover Mayor Robin Christiansen, Larry Henderson, Dr. Tes del Tufo, Jackie Reyes, Pat Maichle

Second Row: Michelle Morin, Donna Townsend (owner of Regis Music and Theater Production, LLC), Deronte Moore (owner of New Age Accounting), Ken Anderson, Eric Saxton (owner of Saxton Travels, LLC), Representative Trey Paradee, Senator Dave Lawson, Councilman Roy Sudler.



3rd Dolphin Tank Ceremony (May 18, 2017)

Front Row: Dr. Tes del Tufo, Elisha Jenkins, Kyle Massey (owner of Hands on Menus and 1st prize winner), Deborah Economides (owner of Deb’s Dragonfly Social Media), Verita Turner (owner of Bible Scents), Tikiesha Mitchell(owner of TMM Consulting Inc.) and Jackie Reyes

Second Row: Troy Ashe (owner of The Ashe Family Network of Entrepreneurs, LLC), Andrea Guest and Dr. Despina Wilson

The following measures were used to evaluate program success and effectiveness: the amount of dollars leveraged (Table 2) and program outputs and outcomes (Table 3). The leveraged resources include program outputs, such as number of workshops offered and mentorship hours. This measure also includes the amount generated from the sale of the business owners’ products or fee for their services. It also includes donated contributions to the annual Dolphin Tank event (e.g., cash and mentorship hours).

Of the 59 clients who entered the program, fourteen clients have successfully launched and expanded their business (Table 3). They have applied the knowledge they learned from the program to develop, expand and sustain their business and successful market their products and services. These clients are on their way to achieving their dreams and realizing their full potential as business owners and as tax-paying citizens. LaunchSpace has been a successful instrument in promoting the full participation of people with disabilities in **socially valued roles**, in achieving and maintaining **independent life styles** of their choice and in becoming **financially independent**.

Table 2. Dollar: Grant Year 2015-2017

Revenue Source		1st year	2nd year	3rd year
Earned				
	# of workshop x time spent per workshop (including curriculum preparation and project planning) x \$120.00 (average hourly salary of workshop speaker plus distributed materials)	18 x 4 x \$120.00 \$8,640.00	17 x 4 x \$120.00 \$8,160.00	13 x 4 x 120.00 \$6240.00
	# of one on one meetings x time spent per meeting x \$50.00 (average hourly salary of partners)	11 x 1 x \$50.00 \$550.00	11 x 1 x \$50.00 \$550.00	9 x 1 x \$50.00 \$450.00
	Clients' Product sales/ service fee	\$8608.00	\$10,400.00*	\$16,830.00*
Contributed (Dolphin Tank event)				
	Cash Donations	\$980.00	\$200.00	\$700.00
	In Kind Contribution Including free training	\$2519.00	\$2225.00	\$3719.00
TOTAL		\$21, 297.00	\$21,535.00	\$27,939.00

*Includes earnings of clients who have been in the program since the 1st year.

Table 3. LaunchSpace Program Outputs and Outcomes

	1st year	2nd year	3rd year
Program Outputs			
Number of workshops conducted in 12 months	18	17	13
Number of workshop Attendees	145	152	117
Number of Community Partners	30	30	30
Program Outcomes			
Number of clients who started/expanded their business	4	7	3
Number of clients who are employed	1	4	4
Number of clients undergoing certification (for their business)	1	5	2