

The Micro Business Development Program

The Micro Business Development Program of the Vermont Community Action Agencies provides training and counseling for low to moderate income Vermonters who are planning to start or expand a microenterprise.

Since 1988, MBDP has helped to strengthen the economic self-sufficiency of more than 10,000 Vermonters and the vitality of our communities. We have launched or expanded more than 2,000 Vermont businesses, created thousands of jobs, and helped entrepreneurs leverage more than \$14 million in financing.

Our program works:

With a small investment from the state, our program creates enormous returns for low income Vermonters and our communities. Many of these businesses are the core to Vermont's economic initiatives. They support our economy by collectively coming together to bring about a momentum such as the Food to Plate Initiative, the Working Lands Initiative, and the Creative Economy.

How we are different:

MBDP has state wide counselors that specialize in working with low income people who have significant barriers such as bad credit, disabilities, and / or very limited income. That is why our successes are so significant. The Micro Business Development Programs throughout the state help to bring positive change to people's lives.

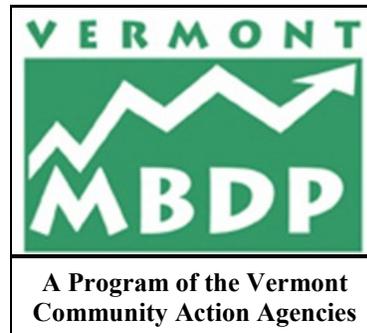
Flip the page over to see the great success stories of this past year!

How we make an impact:

In addition to business counseling, MBDP programs throughout the state offer a variety of financial education, credit building, and savings programs. We partner with other organizations to ensure that participants have the resources necessary to become self-sufficient in all aspects of their lives.

Average Annual Outcomes 2013 -2015

- **132 business starts or expansions**
- **72 new FTE jobs created**
- **\$949,058 in business capital accessed**
- **Cost per job = \$3,645 (VT General Fund)**



**"Business ownership is a proven pathway out of poverty, helping to increase income, create wealth, and move people off public assistance."*

SINCE 2010

5,466 LOW INCOME VERMONTERS PARTICIPATED IN MBDP

427 NEW BUSINESSES WERE STARTED

268 BUSINESSES WERE EXPANDED

523.7 JOBS (FTE) WERE CREATED AT AN AVERAGE COST TO THE STATE OF \$3,645 PER JOB

\$5,621,842 IN CAPITAL WAS LEVERAGED

**Source: The Vermont Department of Children and Families - Outcomes for 2016. Agency of Human Resources - Department for Children and families*

How Are You Supporting The Microenterprises In Your Community?

Farm to Plate ~ Working Lands Initiative ~ Culinary Tourism ~ Agritourism ~ The Creative Economy ~ Retail ~ Farmer's Markets ~ Manufacturing

Vermont Farm Tours, Chris Howell, Owner
Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity (CVOEO)

Chris Howell, owner of Vermont Farm Tours, began working with the Financial Future's Micro Business Development Program (MBDP) in 2009 and started his business later that year. Vermont Farm Tours, an agritourism business, provides full and half day tours to Vermont farms and food producers. Chris believes that "food is the foundation for strong communities, and it offers a unique window into Vermont's terroir." Farm Tours evolved to offer cheese making workshops, a farm bike tour and the popular cocktail walk! The business has grown from four person tours to offering corporate bus tours. As a result the business has connected thousands of visitors to Vermont farms and food producers, creating a unique connection to our state, one person at a time, while providing income and name recognition to these farmers and food producers. Vermont Farm Tours has been featured in Yankee's Best of New England 2011, USA Today and the Boston Globe.



While working with MBDP, Chris participated in the Growing Money Program's financial education classes, the Individual Development Program (IDA) and improved his credit through a secured credit card program. Says Chris, "Now, I am running my own business and own a home - thanks to good credit and smart use of financial tools."

Senior Circuit, LLC, John and Linda Bryant, Owners
BROC-Community Action in Southwestern Vermont

In April 2014, Linda arrived at BROC's Economic & Workforce Development Program. She was determined to start her own business. Because of her disability, she wanted to work from home and be able to work hours that would accommodate her fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue. Linda has always enjoyed computer work, so she used this passion to assist clients in resume preparation and other documents they would need to obtain and keep employment.

Because she did not have much money for a start-up company, a service based business seemed to be a good choice for her. After her initial meeting with BROC's business counselor, she enthusiastically began the work necessary to realize her dream. Her organized nature allowed her to forge ahead with her venture and she worked hard to make "it" happen. But due to Linda's health issues and a divorce, she had to abandon her pursuit of self-employment.

And then Linda's life began to change significantly for the better. In October of 2014, she had moved in with her boyfriend, and they began a new venture for life and for business. Because of Linda's previous experience with EWDP, Linda and John came well prepared to their business counseling appointment in February 2015. They had many of their marketing materials completed and business plan written for their new business, **Senior Circuit, LLC**, providing technology to senior citizens. Their business counselor assisted them with needed resources and information to complete their business plan.

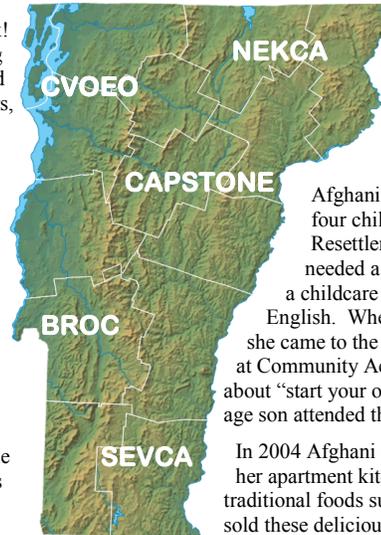
Since Linda was already enrolled in the IDA program, it was determined they would complete the IDA business plan to quickly get their business started. The following month, the IDA was complete and Senior Circuit was a dream realized. And we do believe in fairy tales. John and Linda were married in September of 2015.



Blue Thumb Woodworks, Dennis Frink, Owner
Northeast Kingdom Community Action Agency (NEKCA)

For over thirty years, Dennis has maintained a shop and equipment where he does woodworking and small repairs for friends, for personal pleasure, and at times to supplement his income. When he retired, he wanted to expand "Blue Thumb Woodworks" into a legitimate business but needed some assistance with the process. Dennis worked with NEKCA's Micro Business Development Program to learn the steps, write his business plan and seek funding. This past year he also completed the IDA program and was very appreciative of the financial literacy training that is included. The IDA program was key to helping him purchase additional woodworking tools and equipment.

Dennis will tell you that his experiences over the years have taught him the value of frugality, adaptability, and ingenuity, which are the essence of his creativity. Dennis offers a wide range of products, from the creation of a full scale train, which was commissioned by a local school for their playground to tiny hand carved wooden spoons. He feels very fortunate to be able to use his engineering background to create one of a kind items that bring others a lot of joy. To him, owning a small business means he can contribute to the economy and participate in his community.



Pakistani Food, Afghani Ayoubi, Owner
Capstone Community Action

Afghani Ayoubi and her four children came to Barre through the Refugee Resettlement Program in 2001. At first, Afghani needed a way to support her family so she worked at a childcare facility, which also helped her learn English. When it was time for her to have her taxes done, she came to the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program at Community Action in Barre. While there she learned about "start your own business" workshops. Her high school age son attended the workshops with Afghani to help translate.

In 2004 Afghani started her "Pakistani Food" business out of her apartment kitchen, making her native country's traditional foods such as Mantus and Samosas. Initially, she sold these delicious ready-to-eat products at the Barre and Montpelier Farmer's Markets. As the demand for her food increased she rented commercial kitchen space and sold at many other farmer's markets and food co-ops around the state of Vermont. The same year, Afghani joined the IDA (Individual Development Account) program. The \$1,000 that Afghani saved was matched with Federal and State money for a total of \$3,000. By May 2007 she was ready to spend the funds to expand her business by purchasing equipment and tools to help her increase her food production.



In July 2010 she purchased a home and three years later she built an addition that now houses her commercial kitchen. Afghani continues to consult with Capstone's MBDP.

Master Floor Technicians, Tony Taylor, Owner
Southeastern Vermont Community Action (SEVCA)

After working for a cleaning company for five years, Tony Taylor found himself unemployed several years ago. At that point, he already had an idea he wanted to go into business for himself, but he wasn't sure where to start. Finally, he found he could qualify for a VocRehab Vermont program to help start his business, and he learned about SEVCA's Micro Business and Individual Development Account (IDA) programs soon afterward.

Fast-forward a couple of years ... Tony now has a registered business—Master Floor Technicians--that delivers a full-range of cleaning and property maintenance services, bringing in \$5,000-7,000 a month through nine different cleaning contracts and subcontracts, as well as occasional once-off jobs. He has two part-time employees and is in the process of buying a company vehicle.

Tony began saving through the IDA program before his business was up and running, and he completed our Financial Fitness course to build his financial management skills. He was doing small jobs at that point that he got through existing relationships and word of mouth, so he had some income. SEVCA's assistance was instrumental in helping him to develop a cost-effective marketing plan, using low-cost or free resources wherever possible. When he completed his savings and received his match, he used it to purchase business insurance, a trailer to haul cleaning equipment (pictured above), and cleaning supplies.

