



STARTUp Alaska

Self-Employment for Alaskans with Disabilities

September 29, 2008
STARTUp USA Grantee Meeting

STARTUp Alaska

- Overview of project - project partners.
- Model used to assist in business start-up.
- Unique/innovative characteristics.
- Policy changes made as a result of project.
- Resources assisting individual success.
- Case studies.

The Big Picture

Alaska Works Initiative Vision

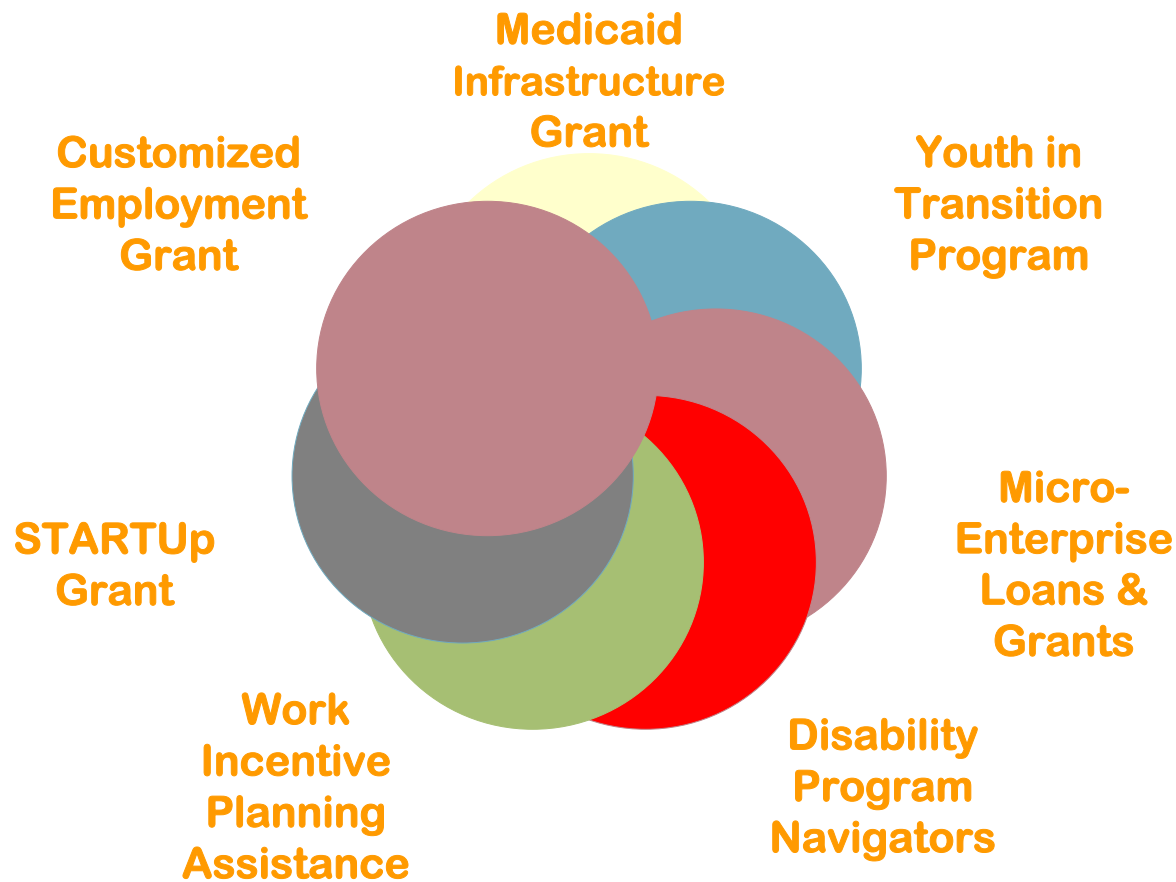
Alaskans who experience disabilities are employed at a rate as close as possible to that of the general population



AWI Framework

- ☞ Sustainable systems change
- ☞ Transform programs to emphasize employment for Alaskans with disabilities
- ☞ Help people with disabilities to pursue employment or self-employment

AWI Components



Business as an Expectation

- ➡ Promote entrepreneurship as a real option to Alaskans with disabilities, their families, and service providers
- ➡ Develop policy that supports Alaskans with disabilities who want to start businesses

Self-Employment Roadblocks

- Fear of losing benefits
- No comprehensive vocational services including benefit counseling
- Lack of work incentives knowledge
- Financial disincentives
- Fragmented systems
- Limited entrepreneurial opportunity



Project Goals

- **Assess training and technical assistance resources and policy.**
- **Develop and evaluate customized self-employment model at 3 one-stop job centers.**
- **Develop and evaluate business advisor model.**
- **Develop policies that change system to increase numbers of Alaskans with disabilities becoming self-employed.**

Project Outcomes

Individual Outcomes

People
start
businesses

People
increase
earnings

People
reduce
benefit use

People
accumulate
resources

Service
delivery
changes

Greater
grasp and
use of
resources
& options

Change
in
resource
use

Change
s in
outlook
and
attitude

Improved
statute
regulation
policy &
systems

System Outcomes

S.T.A.R.T. UP

Alaska

STARTUp Alaska Partners

- **Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education**
- **UAA Center for Human Development**
- **STARTUp Alaska Advisory Consortia**
- **Employment for All**
- **STARTUp USA**
- **Community Partners**

Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education

- **State Council on Developmental Disabilities**
- **Interagency Coordinating Council for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities**
- **Special Education Advisory Panel**
- **Governing Body of the Special Education Service Agency**
- **Alaska Mental Health Trust planning board**
- **Project grantee/lead**



UAA Center For Human Development

- ☞ **University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities**
- ☞ **Customized Employment training and resources**
- ☞ **Micro-enterprise resource guide**
<http://www.alaskachd.org/employment/self.html>
- ☞ **Benefits Planning**
- ☞ **Project Evaluation**
 - ✓ Training
 - ✓ Technical Assistance
- ☞ **IRB compliance**
- ☞ **Project contract administrator**

Advisory Consortia

- **STARTUp Alaska partners**
- **Entrepreneurs with disabilities**
- **Families and natural supports**
- **Tribal vocational rehabilitation**
- **Community rehab providers**
- **Private finance and business sector**
- **Veterans Administration**

Employment For All

☞ Customized Self-Employment technical assistance

- ✓ Implementation of customized self-employment at job centers
- ✓ Case consultations

☞ Agency Policy Analysis

www.employmentforall.org



S.T.A.R.T. UP

Alaska

Community Partnerships

- **YWCA Micro-enterprise Center**
- **Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District**
- **Mountain View revitalization project**
- **Kotzebue Senior Center Resource Room**



Project Milestones

- Dec 2006 - Convened key partners
- Jan 2007 - Advisory consortia meeting
- Apr 2007 - Technical assistance plans developed
- June 2007 - SE clients enrolled
- July 2007 - Training/TA launched
- Aug 2007 - First businesses launched
- Sep 2007 - All staff on board
- Nov 2007 - Anch clients enrolled
- Nov 2007 - Fbks clients enrolled
- Jan 2008 - Advisory consortia meeting
- March 2008 - Business Advisor concept
- April 2008 - Resource map data gathered



Project Numbers

Site	All Contacts	Enrolled Clients	Businesses Launched
Anchorage	23	10	6
Fairbanks	25	19	4
Juneau	40	22	6

The Model

☞ Customized Self-Employment

- ✓ Job Centers in Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Southeast Alaska
- ✓ 8 successful micro-enterprise start-ups at each of 3 sites

☞ Business Advisor

- ✓ Virtual resources statewide
- ✓ Business team member



STARTUp Alaska Process

👉 Eligibility and Process

- ✓ How does an entrepreneur qualify for STARTUp Alaska services?
- ✓ What must the entrepreneur do?
- ✓ Can anyone who wants to participate do so?



Customized Self-Employment

- **Discovery process - uncover entrepreneurial aptitude**
- **Technical assistance and support**
- **Links with business development resources**



Discovery Process

- ☞ Look at individual conditions, preferences and contributions.
- ☞ Look at the tasks needed
- ☞ Develop a Business Team
- ☞ Refine and review Business Concept (operations, marketing, labor analysis, financial aspects)
- ☞ Create a Business Plan
- ☞ Coordinate resources and start up business.

The Business Advisor

- Support business plan development as team member
- Provide ongoing technical assistance to entrepreneurs and teams
- Aid in resource acquisition
- Provide project training and technical assistance
- Ally with disability, finance, and business communities

Micro-Enterprise Grant Program

☞ Funding and administration

- ✓ \$100,000 annually
- ✓ Separate administrative entity

☞ Eligibility criteria

- ✓ Alaska Mental Health Trust beneficiary

☞ Status of program

- ✓ Administrative/process issues
- ✓ Participant and partner demand



Resource Map - Needs Assessment

👉 Survey Monkey Instrument

- ✓ Design
- ✓ Promotion

👉 Responses

- ✓ 172 responses
- ✓ 50% completed survey



RM - NA Preliminary Results

👉 Agencies/Providers

- ✓ 9 of 10 SE services/supports rated as effective and accessible by less than 35% of respondents
- ✓ 5 of 8 organization characteristics supporting self-employment rated at 50% or less
- ✓ Lack of staff training the key barrier to supporting SE

👉 People with Disabilities/Families

- ✓ 7 of 10 SE services/supports rated effective and accessible by under 29% of respondents; all under 37%
- ✓ 6 of 8 community characteristics supporting self-employment rated at 44% or less
- ✓ 5 of 7 barriers to self-employment identified as existing by over 60% of respondents

Policy Change Work

- ☞ **Concerns with DVR draft policy**
 - ✓ Assessment process as screening out tool
 - ✓ Self-employment as outcome on IPE, last resort?
 - ✓ Value of unrelated information - labor market
 - ✓ Role of supports and other services
 - ✓ Exclusions based on “community values”
- ☞ **Final policy addressed most concerns**

Anchorage Case Study - Mari

- Mari creates fun, affordable pens and jewelry to sell at bazaars and fairs.
- After losing a sub-minimum wage job, Mari wanted something more fulfilling that got her out into the community.
- First business managing vending machines



Anchorage Case Study - Mari

- ➡ Mari had pursued her businesses for some time, but hadn't really "owned" them.
- ➡ **STARTUp Alaska provided:**
 - ✓ Discovery
 - ✓ Benefits analysis
 - ✓ Training
 - ✓ Pricing assistance on vending machine items
 - ✓ Business formation
 - ✓ Encouragement, support and a sounding board

Anchorage Case Study - Mari

- **Barriers:** Effect on SSA benefits, pricing, financials, and legal.
- **Overcoming Barriers:** Support from staff and family. STARTUp AK help.
- **Advice:** Connect with people who know business, chase your dreams, believe in yourself.



Anchorage Case Study - Funding

- ☞ **Mari and team funded the business.**
 - ✓ Loan from mother for vending machines.
 - ✓ Repaid loan
 - ✓ Vending income put into business selling arts and crafts business.

Fairbanks Case Study - Dale

- ☞ **Carpet/floor/upholstery cleaning and repair business.**
- ☞ **Disabilities led to seeking freedom and control of self-employment.**
- ☞ **STARTUp Alaska contribution:**
 - ✓ **Timeline planning & keeping on track**
 - ✓ **Guidance with business plan specifics**
 - ✓ **Guidance in writing financial statements**
 - ✓ **Emotional support in anxiety episodes**

Fairbanks Case Study - Dale

☞ Barriers to starting business

- ✓ Dyslexia - business plan writing
- ✓ No current income
- ✓ Pension from former job precludes SSI/SSDI

☞ Helpful services or supports

- ✓ VR - new self-employment policy/plan consultant/matching funds
- ✓ SBDC classes
- ✓ MHT micro-enterprise grant

Fairbanks Case Study - Dale

- ☞ **Advice for other entrepreneurs:**
 - ✓ Do your research thoroughly
 - ✓ Be prepared to compromise on what you need to launch business
 - ✓ Take advantage of help



Lessons So Far

- Incubator model met no actual need
- Ongoing participant support needs
- Micro-enterprise grant fund demand and administration
- Disclosure and use of stories
- Participant buy-in to larger mission
- Engaging partners in system change
- Data collection issues