Social Enterprise Businesses: A Strategy for Creating Good Jobs for People with Disabilities

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- The Heldrich Center is dedicated to raising the effectiveness of the American workplace by strengthening workforce education, placement, and training programs and policies. The Center has particular expertise in efforts that increase employment for people with disabilities.

- Kessler Foundation is a public charity dedicated to improving the lives of people with physical and cognitive disabilities. Through its Program Center, the Foundation provides support that ensures vocational training and placement opportunities for people with disabilities in our communities.
Presenters

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Agenda

- Defining a social enterprise business
- Kessler Foundation role
- The profiles
- Key lessons learned from research
- Hudson Community Enterprises’ Document Management suite of businesses
- NORWESCAP’s Arthur & Friends Greenhouse Project
- Question & answer period
Social Enterprise =

- Socially minded and revenue generating = the “double bottom line”
- Operated by a nonprofit organization
- Planned and operated as a business
- Designed to be financially self-sufficient
- Has a business plan
- Has distinct resources devoted to it
Social Enterprise

- National organization: www.se-alliance.org

- Social enterprise businesses operate in many different industries and target many different populations:
  - At-risk youth and young adults
  - People who are homeless, or have histories of criminal convictions, alcohol, or substance abuse
  - People with mental illness and/or disabilities
  - Low-income women
Social Enterprise: People with Disabilities

- Work side by side with people without disabilities;
- Are paid at least minimum wage and preferably market or prevailing wages;
- Have a choice about whether to work for the Social Enterprise business; and
- Have regular skill assessment and opportunities to advance or, with the skills developed, move to another job with another employer.
Kessler Foundation Role

- Believes that Social Enterprise businesses offer a good opportunity for people with disabilities to be employed in real, stable businesses.

- Has made selective investments through its “Transition to Work” grants in Social Enterprise businesses in New Jersey that have done their homework.
The Profiles

Case study research looked at:

- Hudson Community Enterprises, document management suite of businesses in New Jersey
- GoodTemps, temporary staffing service in New York City and northern New Jersey
- Rubicon Landscape, full-service landscaping company in northern California
- Arthur & Friends, greenhouse project in New Jersey
Key Questions

- Why start a business?
- What business?
- Why is the business successful?
- What are the essentials to accomplishing business and social returns (the double “bottom line”)?
Key Lessons Learned

For the parent nonprofit organization:

- There is a need to identify a compelling and genuine market opportunity for which the organization has a potential market advantage.
- There must be professional business planning.
- The organization must have a strong entrepreneurial team and a supportive and engaged Board of Directors.
Key Lessons Learned

For the parent nonprofit organization:

- There must be adequate financing for start-up and the sound business practices and financial controls to support a business.

- There should be metrics to gauge the success of the enterprise.
Key Lessons Learned

For the Social Enterprise business:

- The enterprise management staff must possess skills for running a business.
- The organizational structure for the enterprise should be separate from the management structure of the parent nonprofit organization.
- It is best to diversify customer types so that the business is not overly dependent on one customer or customer type.
Key Lessons Learned

For the Social Enterprise business:

- It is sometimes a challenge to balance the dual mission – social and financial goals.
- The social enterprise must document what works in order to build and improve the business.
Hudson Community Enterprises

- The organization: About HCE
- Why start a business?
- What business?
- Business planning
- What is the business?
- How does it benefit people with disabilities?
- How does it benefit HCE?
- Why is the HCE social enterprise successful?
- Advice to others considering social enterprise
NORWESCAP’s Arthur & Friends

- The organization: About NORWESCAP and Arthur & Friends
- Why start a business?
- What business?
- Business planning

- How does it benefit people with disabilities?
- How does it benefit NORWESCAP?
- Why is Arthur & Friends successful?
- Replication and scalability of the business
Question-and-Answer Period
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