

IMPACT



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UI Extension Program Benefits Idaho Panhandle Entrepreneurs

The Situation

In 2003 the Small Business Administration Office of Advocacy estimated that 96.9 percent of businesses in Idaho were small firms. Small business makes a significant contribution to the U.S. and Idaho economies. In Idaho income from small business proprietors in 2003 was \$4.3 billion, a 3.4 percent increase from 2002, and these businesses accounted for 56.4 percent of the state's non-farm private workforce.

Entrepreneurship, as defined by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation in their Mapping Rural Entrepreneurship report, is the process through which entrepreneurs create and grow enterprises. There are many obstacles that hinder entrepreneurship in rural areas. Such obstacles range from limited networks, low levels of effective local demand, financial constraints, lack of role models and cultural barriers.

Our Response

Since 2002, the University of Idaho Extension has partnered with organizations including the Boundary County Economic Development Council, Idaho Small Business Development Center, Greater Sandpoint Chamber of Commerce, and University of Idaho S.A.R.E. program to develop and shape small business education in the Idaho Panhandle.

The Business and Agribusiness Education Program utilizes curriculum developed by the NxLevel Foundation. The NxLevel curriculum is designed to help participants complete a comprehensive business



NxLevel Participant Jayceen Morikawa

plan. It emphasizes the importance of planning and sound business practices. Participants receive training in a variety of topics including, planning and research, management, legal structures, marketing, cash flow and budget analysis, interpreting financial statements, ratio analysis, and financing strategies. In addition to the subject matter training, local guest speakers are used extensively. This incorporation of local experts provides an opportunity for small business owners to establish networks with outside professionals.

The Business and Agribusiness Education Program is conducted over 15 weeks, three hours a week. To date the course has been conducted in the Idaho Panhandle six times with a total of 80 participants. Post course evaluations and six-month follow-up evaluations are given to all participants. Additional surveys continue annually for three years following completion of the course. The evaluations rate the

overall quality and relevancy of the course as well as, business start-up and business performance over time.

Program Outcomes

The following results are based on five post-course; five six-month; four one-year; and two two-year evaluations. The response rate was forty percent for post course evaluations; thirty-seven percent for six-month evaluations; twenty-five percent for one year, evaluations and twenty percent for two-year evaluations. Results show the effectiveness of the Business and Agribusiness Entrepreneurship Program.

- 96% of the respondents stated that they would recommend the course to other people in business.
- 67% of respondents have reported a change in business practices as a result of taking the course.
- 60% of survey respondents continue to operate or have expanded their business six months after completing the course.
- The follow up surveys revealed that at least seven full-time and sixteen part-time jobs have been created by program participants.
- Respondents were asked to rate the usefulness of the class on a 3-point scale, with 1 being “not valuable” and 3 being “extremely valuable.” The average rating of the course was 2.56.

The Future

The Business and Agribusiness Education Program will continue to grow and adapt to changing need of small business owners. Future plans include business management workshops, a customer service program and computer technology programs.

For More Information

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